EVALUATION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF LITERARY TEXTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AND FRENCH

Christina APOSTOLIDOU

South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria

ABSTRACT

Languages, in our globalised world, are exchanged in daily basis and citizens of different countries, traditions and ethnical backgrounds interfere and communicate exchanging perspectives, traditional values and ethics, something that it is very common in big cities of European countries. This is why language teaching, especially of English and French, which are the most widely spread languages in Europe, is important, because it gives a common framework when citizens of different countries communicate. But also very important is the cultural exchanges between these citizens. Because of globalisation in addition with immigration which is very intense, especially the last twenty years in Europe, this becomes crucial. This could also help on the preservation of harmony and mutual cooperation between different nationalities in European countries. So, the case is to be explored alternative ways of language teaching, especially of English and French in Europe, in order, on the first hand, the languages to be taught more quickly and on the second hand, to lead also on the exchange of cultural elements between people of different nationalities in addition of course to other pre-existing forms of cultural interaction between them, like gatherings, activities etc. One way for this, is the use of literary texts in English and French teaching. Consequently, a survey will be conducted, giving questionnaires on teachers and language experts in order to be explored if these benefits, in combination with others exist with the use of this method in language teaching and if there are some challenges that arise.

1. Introduction

The study of languages is critical for developing connectivity in today's constantly linked worldwide community. This can be particularly evident in the European continent, whose residents of many national and heritage backgrounds routinely connect, professional as well as personal. English and French, which are European commonly used tongues, serve as a common foundation to facilitate such contacts, bridging disparities in culture and fostering mutual comprehension (Brown, 2000). Alongside the gaining of linguistic ability, contemporary language immersion stresses social interaction and the cultivation of intellectual abilities (Lazar, 1993). This includes the abilities required for students to succeed as engaged attendees in an environment that is multilingual.

The study of literature, especially narratives, brief tales, and poems, provides a realistic and rich supply of spoken language which assists students acquire languages effectively. It introduces pupils to a variety of language structures, filing cabinets and terminologies, as well as the intended the tongue's culturally and social environments. According to Collie and Slater (1987), reading in the learning environment functions as both an instrument over instruction in languages and an entrance into the society, beliefs, and customs of the tongue that is being instructed. This multimodal strategy for language instruction, which combines theoretical knowledge with sociocultural and intellectual study, transforms literature into a powerful instrument in the linguistic curriculum.

In Europe, the need of enhancing language proficiency in both English and French is particularly pressing. Since industrialization and emigration transform how people interact, Greek pupils must not simply master foreign languages as well as grasp the societal implications that accompany their usage. The incorporation of works of literature in the foreign language teaching allows for a concurrent fulfillment of either the above aims. Literary helps pupils to connect using speech in its original and factual develop, extending above procedural terms and phrases study and allowing individuals to communicate alongside the tongue upon a more thoroughly, greater significance dimension (Lazar, 1993).

Furthermore, as instructors strive to educate learners for a globalized society, they must combine instructional strategies that foster intellectual curiosity and understanding of other cultures (Tomlinson, 2011). Classical writings, which explore common subjects including affection, disputes, and belonging, are a great setting for this type of studying. Investigation has shown that children whom participate in literary in foreign language classes were more probable to acquire conceptual abilities and greater awareness of socioeconomic subtleties, which renders them more prepared to handle the complexity of an international classroom (Thornbury, 2006).

This project proposes to investigate the influence of literary texts on the language ability of Greek English and French learners. The research project is going to concentrate at the way literature can strengthen syntax, word purchase, and awareness of culture, as well as the way those modifications can be effectively incorporated into the overall language program. The current investigation will use strategies for project leadership to guarantee that the investigation procedure is structured and productive, resulting in useful outputs that are beneficial to both foreign instructors and individuals.

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of my research is to investigate English and French teachers' perceptions of the use of literary texts in the classroom and to identify the practices and challenges they face. The study will be conducted using a questionnaire designed for this purpose. It is of vital importance to seek the teacher's opinion on this issue, since sometimes some teachers either avoid using literature for this purpose or consider it unnecessary. Therefore, such a questionnaire is important in order to give teachers the opportunity to express their views on this issue and also to give feedback on the challenges they face when using literary texts in language teaching.

2.1. Significance of the study

Understanding teachers' views can help to improve teaching practices and create more effective curricula that make use of literary texts. This is because opinions will be

given either from teachers who avoid using literary texts in their teaching, or teachers who use this method will be given the opportunity to describe the challenges they face when teaching using this method. For the former, they can express their views on this method and justify why they avoid it, while for the latter, they can describe the challenges and propose methods to overcome them. Moreover, Tomlinson (2011) states that it can promote teachers' professional development as they can also integrate this method into their existing teaching methods, but it can also improve students' learning experiences.

2.2. Methodology
Questionnaire design

The questionnaire design is based on an extensive literature review and interviews with experts in the field of language teaching. The questionnaire includes the following topics.

- Borg (2006) refers to personal and professional characteristics of teachers (e.g. years of experience, level of education). The first category of questions concerns the demographic characteristics of English and French teachers, information from their CVs, how many years of experience they have in education, as well as information about their studies. The purpose of this group of questions is to draw conclusions as to whether the above data or characteristics are related to their answers to the subsequent questions in the questionnaire regarding the integration of literary texts in their teaching.

- **Use of literary texts**

Paran (2006) talks about frequency and mode of use of literary texts in education. In this set of questions, we will identify whether teachers use literary texts in their teaching, how much they use them if they use them, and how they use them in terms of teaching methods. The aim is to draw conclusions about whether they use them, how often they use them and their teaching methods.

- **Beliefs and opinions**

According to Carter & Long (1991) opinions, using literary works to enhance language skills is generally positive and has a good effectiveness, as they argue that literature can significantly improve learners' linguistic competence and cultural understanding. But I will make my own research on this topic. This is why there will be questions for this topic on the questionnaire. The purpose of these questions is to report teachers' views on whether they think that literary texts help in foreign languages teaching. Thus, and in conjunction with the previous category of questions, to draw as a conclusion why those who do not use literary texts do not use them, and what are the opinions of those who do use them about their effectiveness.

- **Challenges and difficulties**

As discussed by Brumfit & Carter (1986) there are several challenges and difficulties encountered when applying literary texts in language teaching. So, the purpose of this group of questions is to enable teachers to report on the challenges they face when teaching using literary texts. For example, students may not prefer this method and classroom incidents may occur when using it, or literary texts may contain cultural elements that cause students to be unhappy (e.g. negative comments about the dressing of some minorities).

- **Suggestions and improvements**

Duff & Maley (1990) offer suggestions and improvements for using literary texts in teaching materials, emphasizing how these texts can be more effectively integrated into language learning.

Some of these suggestions are:

a)   adaptation of texts to fit the language proficiency level of students,

b) contextualization, providing background information on the cultural and historical context of the literary works, for the students to grasp the deeper meanings and themes within the text,

c) interactive activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and debates for students to engage them actively with the texts,

d) suggestions for teachers to explore universal themes within the literary texts, such as love or conflict and not only give emphasis on language and

e) integration of literary texts with other skills such as writing, listening, and speaking, to create a more comprehensive learning experience.

So in this category of questions there will be exhortations to teachers to suggest their own methods to improve the use of literary texts in the teaching of English and French. For example, the use of literary texts at specific stages of teaching or avoiding literary texts with culturally sensitive content.

Guidelines from Dörnyei and Taguchi's (2010) study on questionnaire design in second language research were used to develop the questionnaire this investigation concerning the situation in Greece.

2.3. Pilot test

In order to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot test will be conducted with a small group of teachers from Greece. The resulting comments will be used to improve and finalize the questionnaire. The data from the pilot test will be analyzed using statistical methods to evaluate the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. I believe that this is better as it can lead not only to finding answers to existing questions, but also to qualitative evaluation of existing questions, together with the addition of additional questions. Finally, the statistical techniques that will be used are quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data.

2.4. Distribution and data collection

As stated by Bazeley & Jackson (2013) questionnaires will be distributed to English and French teachers via email and educational networks. Data will be collected using digital analysis tools such as SPSS for quantitative analysis and NVivo for qualitative analysis. Data analysis will include descriptive statistics to describe the sample and analytical statistical techniques to explore the research questions.

For the sake of the survey, it would be valuable to add in this article a pilot test questionnaire with the first 20 research questions in order for the reader to acquire a broader opinion on the scopes of this survey.

Language Teacher Survey Questionnaire

Demographic Information:

1. Gender:

 - Male

- Female

- Other (please specify)

2. Age:

  - Under 25

  - 25-34

  - 35-44

  - 45-54

  - 55 and above

3. Which language(s) do you teach?

  - English

  - French

4. Country of Birth:

 - [Open text field]

5. Mother Tongue:

 - [Open text field]

Teaching Context:

6. What age range and gender do your students typically fall into?

7. What type of school do you teach in (e.g., public, private, language institute)?

8. How many hours per week do you teach?

9. Do your students learn both English and French at school?

 - Yes

 - No

10. If yes, how many hours per week do they study English and French?

Language Skills and Literature:

11. In your opinion, what language skills do your students need general reinforcement in?

12. Do you incorporate literary texts into your language lessons?

 - Yes

 - No

13. If yes, how do you believe literature can help with the teaching of foreign languages?

14. Do you think using literature enhances your pupils' language skills in relation to foreign languages?

15. Do you believe literature is linked to foreign language learning?

 Technology Integration:

16. Do you use new technologies in the teaching of literature in English and French lessons?

 - Yes

- No

17. How do you integrate technology to enrich your lessons with digital and literary material?

Literature as a Sole Teaching Tool:

18. Do you believe pupils can learn English and French exclusively by using literature in their lessons?

  - Yes

  - No

19. What influence does literature have on the learning of English and French in your opinion?

Comments and Additional Information:

20. Please provide any comments or descriptions regarding the effectiveness of literature in achieving your teaching objectives in the classes of Greek students.

This is only a pilot questionnaire and this will be enriched with 10 approximately more questions.

2.5 Expected Benefits
2.5.1 Understanding Perceptions

This study will provide an understanding of teachers' perceptions and attitudes about the use of literary texts. This may lead to improved teaching practices and policies. More specifically, as noted above, it will explore why a portion of teachers do not use literary texts and those who do use them, what their outcomes are, what challenges they face, and what improvements they suggest to those challenges.

2.5.2   Recognition of good practices

Thornbury (2006) states that through research, examples of good practices and successes in the use of literary texts that could be adopted more widely by the educational community are highlighted. Literary texts are aesthetically pleasing and offer social

models, knowledge values and skills. It is therefore evident that the didactic utilization of literature in the classroom can only yield successful results as it not only cultivates social sensitivity and empathy among students but also other important skills such as enhancement of their self-esteem, self-concept, sense of mutual help, etc. characteristics that are consistent with the creation of a healthy personality.

2.5.3   Challenges and suggestions

Scrivener (2005) states that identifying challenges and difficulties helps to develop strategies to address them and that teachers' suggestions can help improve the use of literature in teaching. In particular, in addition to the teachers' suggestions for addressing the challenges arising from the use of this method, teachers will be given the opportunity to list all the challenges and difficulties they have encountered. Thus, strategies to address these challenges will be suggested by this study at the end. The aim is to improve the use of literary texts in the teaching of English and French.

2.5.4 Improving academic knowledge

Larsen-Freeman & Anderson (2011) claims that research findings enrich the literature and provide new data on the use of literary texts in language instruction. This will encourage further research and exploration in this area. To the learning process, it adds an experiential and entertaining character that not only expands the level of students' knowledge but also contributes the development of values and attitudes. Incorporating literary texts in the classroom will not only benefit students academically, but also socially, behaviourally and emotionally.

3. Conclusion

This paper describes the process of developing a questionnaire designed to assess teachers' perceptions of the use of literary texts in foreign language teaching. This process included the development of the questionnaire based on literature and expert interviews, pilot testing and data analysis. Our aim is to propose methods to improve the use of literary texts in the teaching of English and French, to enrich the literature and to

encourage further research and studies in this field in order to further develop this scientific field. After the completion of this survey, I expect positive results regarding the use of literature texts in English and French teaching. Moreover, I expect to propose methods for the improvement of the use of literature texts in English and French teaching. In my opinion, literature opens up horizons, cultivates social skills and introduces people to a creative world, full of positive and optimistic messages that can improve the way of life of all of us.

3.1. Prospects for future research

Richards & Rodgers (2014) states that future research could be extended to other languages and educational settings by examining variations in teachers' perceptions and practices. In addition, the impact of using literary texts on the development of specific language skills, such as writing and reading, could be explored. Finally, this method could be combined with other methods and the efficiency of these methods combinations could be explored. I will close by quoting a saying by Patsios and Kalogiros (2013): "Literary texts, thanks to the palimpsests and multiple readings of their readers, constantly travel the reader in space and time, helping the recipient to form new perspectives, opinions and perceptions of reality".

3.2. Contribution to teaching practice

Harmer (2007) claims that findings of the research are expected to contribute to improving teaching methods and more effective curriculum design using literary texts. This is expected to improve the learning experience for students and increase teacher satisfaction and professionalism. Mustakim, & Lebar (2012) state that literary texts in education aim to develop the potentials of students in a holistic, balanced and integrated manner by including the intellectual, emotional and physical aspects in order to create a balanced and harmonious human being with high social standards.

So, indeed through this research will be detected the validity of assessments and opinions of some authors such as the aforementioned and it will be confirmed whether or not literary texts have actually a positive contribution to teaching practice.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Author Contact Information

E-mail: ：christinathess@hotmail.com

References and Appendices:

Bazeley, P. and Jackson, K., 2013. *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*. United States: Sage.

Borg, S., 2006. *Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice*. United Kingdom: Bloomsbury.

Brown, H.D., 2000. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. United States: Longman.

Brumfit, C.J. and Carter, R.A., 1986. *Literature and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carter, R. and Long, M.N., 1991. *Teaching Literature*. United States: Longman.

Collie, J. and Slater, S., 1987. *Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z. and Taguchi, T., 2010. *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing*. United States: Routledge.

Duff, A. and Maley, A., 1990. *Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Field, A., 2013. *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*. United States: Sage.

Harmer, J., 2007. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. United States: Longman.

Lazar, G., 1993. *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, T.S., 2014. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scrivener, J., 2005. *Learning Teaching: A Guidebook for English Language Teachers*. United Kingdom: Macmillan.

Too, W.K., 2006. Young Adult Literature: An Alternative Genre in the Classroom Reading List. *Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 6(1), pp. 40-59.

Tomlinson, B., 2011. *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thornbury, S., 2006. *An A-Z of ELT: A Dictionary of Terms and Concepts*. United Kingdom: Macmillan.

Widdowson, H.G., 1984. *Explorations in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Πάτσιου, Β. and Καλογήρου, Τ., 2013. *Η δύναμη της λογοτεχνίας. Διδακτικές Προσεγγίσεις Αξιοποίηση Διδακτικού Υλικού*. Αθήνα: Gutenberg.