

Teaching Literature as Language in the ESL Classroom: Undergraduate Response

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Abstract – In many places in the world, it has been established that interaction with literary texts helps ESL learners improve their analytical, interpretive, and communicative skills. A carefully made selection of literary texts in English that addresses the students' needs, interests, cultural backgrounds, language levels, and subjective requirements is meant to contribute to an effective teaching-learning process by inspiring student-centered activities such as role plays, debates, and dialogues based on questionnaires, quotations, and visuals, short compositions, and many other forms of pair work and group work. In accordance with the premise developed here, a literature-based ESL project was launched at a state university over a period of 15 weeks, with 40 undergraduate students, using materials of different genres such as poetry, drama, short fiction and novel with a focus on enhancing the four language skills along with a reasonable command in English grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. In addition to the weekly monitoring of the student performance in classroom activities, the students' perception of the experience was studied by means of a questionnaire survey with open-ended and close-ended questions and focus group discussions. The participants' responses revealed that literary texts could be used in authentic interactive contexts, increasing their motivation to study English. Specifically, the data suggest that teaching language through literature becomes efficient in enhancing specifically the writing and speaking skills of the participants.

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