



Prospective German, French, English Language Teachers' Views on Literature in Their Teacher Education Program¹

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ABSTRACT

Literature is being increasingly used in foreign language education. Literary texts enable the use of cultural differences in language teaching as well as the development of language skills. The ability to use literary texts, analytical thinking and interpretation skills in foreign language teaching are among the learning achievements of literature courses in the foreign language education program. The aim of this study was to evaluate the views of prospective language teachers on the literature course and to make some suggestions according to the results. The sample of the study is comprised of 30 students studying at Bursa Uludağ University, Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Language Education in the 2018-2019 academic year. The students were from three different departments, namely German Language Education, French Language Education and English Language Teaching. As a data collection tool, semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions prepared by the researcher was used. The data were analyzed using content analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The use of literary texts was quite common among foreign language teaching methods initially; however, it has become to the point of extinction later on. As the methods which appeared after traditional approach have gravitated towards listening and speaking skills this has caused a recession in the use of literature. Literature has always been a component of language teaching, but its role has changed in parallel with the changes in teaching practices. Kramsh and Kramsh summarized its changes “Literature has been used for the aesthetic education of the few (1910s), for the literacy of the many (1920s), for moral and vocational uplift (1930s-40s), for ideational content (1950s), for humanistic inspiration (1960s-1970s), and finally providing an authentic experience of the target culture (1980s-1999)”(2000,p.568). Nevertheless, due to the fact that literature provides sources appropriate for all skills and constitutes various kinds of activities in foreign language teaching, it again shows itself in the area of language teaching. The intended uses and benefits of literature in foreign language classes are different. For instance, according to Arak (2013, p.92) literature “primarily serves as a means to understand oneself and the world. Expanding one’s horizon, openness, developing empathy, understanding the foreigner, cross-cultural communication and most important of all developing tolerance for the different are among its objectives”.

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Conducted studies have also concluded that literature supports foreign language teaching. Students encounter complex themes through literature and students can relate their own lives and experiences in literary texts (Picken,2007). For example, the study by Abdalı (2011) which investigated the effects of using comic strips in English Reading Classes at intermediate level stated that there was a significant difference which demonstrated that between two groups, reading performances of the students were affected from the use of comic strips. However, Özkan's study (2013) which examined the use of literature in reading classes taught by teachers of English who graduated from teaching departments and by those from language and literature departments indicated that the former group believed the importance and necessity of literature in reading classes just as the latter group did; however, the former group of teachers did not consider themselves as proficient in use of literature as the latter group of teachers did. Oran's study (2014) which examined the opinions and attitudes of Primary School English Teachers on the use of literary texts reached the following results; particularly literature department graduate teachers advocated the use of literature, every teacher regardless of experience preferred the use of literature, teachers with 20 or more years of experience did not prefer the use of internet, for the use of literature generally teachers chose to employ additional resources to the syllabus instead of preparing classroom activities or using themselves as resource. Genç and Öztürk also point out (2009, p.79) that literature has advantages such as "acquiring a cultural background in which learner will see the different linguistic models of the language". Literature contains cultural characteristics in tales since it presents different image cultural to learners. Aytekin (2011, p. 152) emphasizes the usefulness of the tale in foreign language teaching that "the tale allows to stimulate the creativity of the learners, to utilize the notions learned in class in fun and to memorize structures". But, Küçükoğlu and Arıkan (2011) stated that most of the prospective teachers of ELT believe that the literature course help to learn the target culture, however they don't agree that speaking can be developed through literature.

Literature is important topic for curriculum of department of foreign language education. However, there are some difficulties in integrating literature courses in foreign language teaching program in Turkey. Literature courses are reviewed and revised in terms of content and program in foreign language teaching. Higher Education Council has updated the courses and course content of 25 undergraduate programs in education faculties in May 2018 and the updated programs have been put into effect as from September 2018.

Upon the review of 2018 Foreign Language Department German, French and English Language Teaching programs, it is seen that there are numerous aspects that are different from 2006 program. Foremost among these are decrease in course hours, cancellation of some courses and addition of new ones and change in the semesters of some courses. The changes in literature courses between 2006 and 2018 programs draw attention. Literature courses in 2006 programs were compulsory courses and had more course hours. The information regarding literature courses in 2006 and 2018 German Language Teaching undergraduate programs are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Literature Courses in 2006 and 2018 Programs: German Language Teaching

2006	2018
German Literature I (compulsory)	German Literature I (compulsory)
Theoretical:3	Theoretical:2
2nd Semester	3rd Semester
German Literature II:(compulsory)	German Literature II
Theoretical: 3	(compulsory)Theoretical:2

3rd Semester Review and Teaching of Literary Texts I (compulsory) Theoretical: 3	4th Semester Literary Texts in Teaching German I (compulsory) Theoretical: 3
5th Semester Review and Teaching of Literary Texts II (compulsory) Theoretical:3	5th Semester Literary Texts in Teaching German II (compulsory):3
6th Semester Interpretation of Short Texts (elective)Theoretical:2	7th Semester Drama in Teaching German(elective) Theoretical:2
3rd Semester Current Text Studies (elective) Theoretical:2	
8th Semester German Literature and Cinema Adaptation (elective) Theoretical:2	
8th Semester	

(Yök,2007, 2018)

The information regarding the state of literature classes in French Language Teaching undergraduate programs in the years 2006 and 2018 is given in the table below.

Table 2. Literature courses in 2006 and 2018 Programs: French Language Teaching

2006	2018
French Literature I (compulsory) Theoretical:3	French Literature (compulsory) Theoretical:2
3rd Semester	3rd Semester
French Literature II (compulsory) Theoretical:3	French Literature II (compulsory) Theoretical:2
4th Semester	4th Semester
Novel Analysis (compulsory) Theoretical:3	Contemporary French Literature (elective)Theoretical :2
6th Semester	
Selections from World Literature (elective) Theoretical:2	Drama in Teaching French (elective)Theoretical:2
4th Semester	
Short Story(elective)Theoretical:2	
5th Semester	
Literature and Language Teaching, I (elective) Theoretical:2	
5th Semester	
Literature and Language Teaching II (elective) Theoretical:2	
6th Semester	
Theater (elective) Theoretical:2	
7th Semester	

Poetry (elective)
Theoretical:2
8th Semester
(Yök,2007, 2018)

The information regarding the state of literature classes in English Language Teaching undergraduate programs in the years 2006 and 2018 is given in the table below.

Table 3. Literature Courses in 2006 and 2018 Programs: English Language Teaching

2006	2018
English Literature I (compulsory) Theoretical:3 3rd Semester	English Literature I (compulsory) Theoretical:3 3rd Semester
English Literature II (compulsory) Theoretical:3 4th Semester	English Literature II (compulsory) Theoretical:3 4th Semester
Literature and Language Teaching (elective) Theoretical:2 5th Semester	Language and Literature Teaching I (compulsory) Theoretical: 3 5th Semester
Poetry Analysis (elective) Theoretical: 2 5th Semester	Language and Literature Teaching II (compulsory) Theoretical: 3 6th Semester
Drama in Teaching English (elective) 5th Semester Theoretical:2	Drama in Teaching English (elective) Theoretical: 2
Literature and Language Teaching II (elective) Theoretical: 2 6th semester (Yök,2007, 2018)	

It can be seen that different studies in the use of literacy for teaching foreign language are discussed. In this case, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the views of prospective teachers who have taken literature courses in their teacher program. For this purpose, the following research questions are taken into account:

Question 1-What do you think about teaching foreign language through literature?

Question 2-Do you use literature in your classroom when you are a teacher? Why should it be used in language teaching?

Question 3-Should literature be compulsory or optional in foreign language teaching programs?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Case study, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the present study. “The major key feature of qualitative case study is that one or more cases are investigated thoroughly. That is, the factors (environment, individuals, events, procedures, etc.) related with a case are investigated with a holistic approach and it focuses on how they affect the related case and how

the related case is affected by these factors” (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011, p. 77). Case study is a qualitative approach in which the researcher gathers detailed and in-depth information and presents a case description or case themes by means of a current limited system (a case) or multiple limited systems in a certain period of time, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents and reports (Creswell, 2007).

Study Group

Prospective teachers studying in German Language Teaching, French Language Teaching and English Language Teaching programs in Education Faculty of Bursa Uludağ University form study group of the present study. Criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in the present research. The researcher forms study group according to the previously determined criteria in criterion sampling. In the present study, “taking literature course” criterion was considered while forming the study group. The research was conducted with a study group consisting a total of 30 prospective teachers (10 from French Language Teaching, 10 from German Language Teaching and 10 from English Language Teaching programs).

Table 4. The demographic disturbance of the participants

	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	22	73,3
	Female	8	26,6
Total		30	100

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interview technique was used to evaluate prospective teachers’ opinions about literature courses. Similar to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are also prepared with a form; however, they are not contingent upon a certain rule. The researcher is quite flexible in semi-structured interviews.

Interviews with each group were implemented at different times. Open-ended questions related with literature in language teaching were asked to prospective teachers in these interviews. Questions used in articles in related literature were considered when the form including the questions was composed. Final state of the form was controlled by two researchers working on the use of literature in foreign language teaching. Semi-structured interview form consisting of 3 questions was developed by consulting expert opinions. The interviews lasted for an average of 20 minutes. Content analysis was used in analyzing the interviews. Primary aim in content analysis is to reach concepts and relations that may explain gathered data.

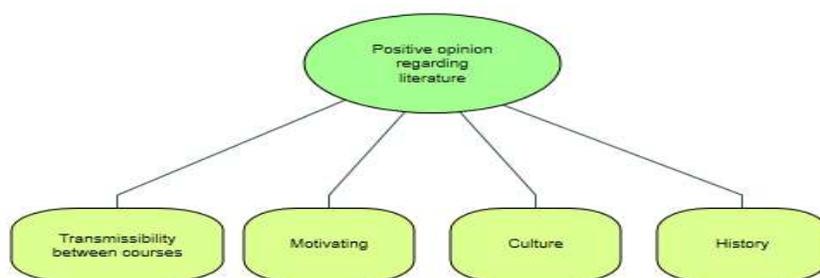
In the present study which aims to display opinions regarding the use of literature in foreign language teaching, verbally expressed opinions were recorded and later on turned into written document by using Nvivo 11 pro program. Using computer in qualitative research made reaching data easier and making comparisons among the data possible. Data were coded and processed in order to reach concepts and the resulted ones were transferred into Nvivo 11 pro program. The researcher computerized the interviews which were recorded as A1, A2, A3, A4,

AA5 through Nvivo 11 pro program. Each and every interview was assessed separately, the most repeated words were noted and the most emphasized points by the participants were gathered under certain themes. Direct citations were given to support and increase reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section includes the opinions of prospective teachers in foreign language teaching departments on literature courses. The responses of study group prospective teachers to the question “What do you think about teaching foreign language through literature?” in semi-structured interview form are given below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Opinions on contributions of literature



According to the participants who state the literature course support to learning such as transfer from the courses, culture and history of target language, motivating learners. Some of the answers of the participants to question are given below.

A1: “We have used the technique we have learned in teaching foreign language to young learners we have asked them to complete the poem particularly for writing skill” (1)

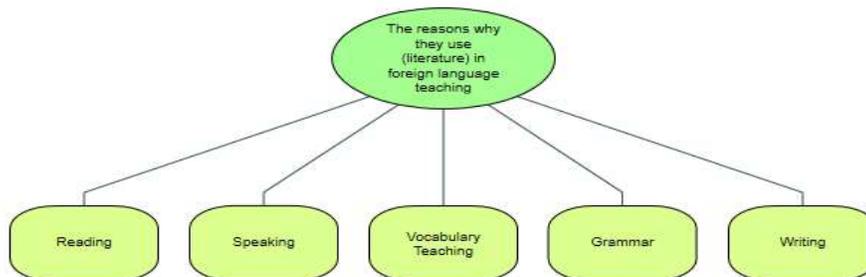
A2: “We were asked to generate an activity to acquire writing skill. We have learned how to make a young learner write a poem at the most basic level there. We have applied what we have learned in Poetry Analysis.”

A3: “We are learning sentence patterns and we can use them in other courses. I can use them in Academic reading and writing”.

The participants defined literature as transfer of culture from target language.

The question “Do you use literature in your classroom when you are a teacher? Why should it be used in language teaching?” was asked to the prospective teachers of language education who participated in the study. The codes in which the opinions of study group on the skills that literature contribute to while learning or teaching a language are placed are given below in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The reasons of use in foreign language teaching



Upon reviewing Figure 2, it can be noted that the reasons for using literature in language classes are reading, speaking, vocabulary teaching, grammar and writing categories. Some of the answers of the participants to question are given below:

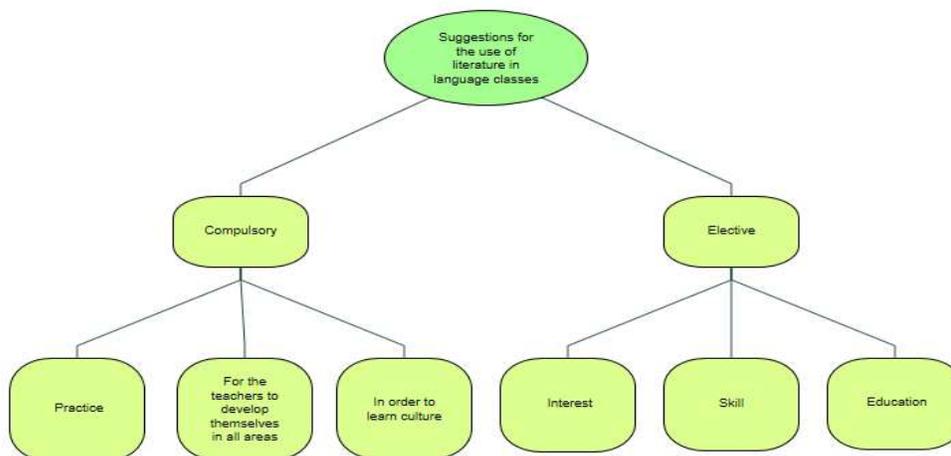
A3: *“Reading, because (the student) can see different uses of the word.”*

A4: *“It contributes more to speaking and grammar. You take that sentence pattern that way and you can memorize it easily.”*

A5: *“As it is completely cognitive it provides thinking in the foreign language. Since it develops vocabulary it contributes to speaking.”*

The prospective teachers were asked the question “Should literature be compulsory or optional in foreign language teaching programs?”.

Figure 3. The suggestions for the use of literature



Upon reviewing Figure 3, it can be seen that opinions of prospective teachers for the use of literature in language classes are gathered under two themes. According to Arıkan’s study (2005), fourth year prospective English language teachers think that literature courses are a necessary but prospective English, German and French language teachers think that it shouldn’t be necessary. Tehan, Yüksel and Inan (2015) also point out that the students had some reservations about use of literature in language teaching and its inclusion as compulsory course in the curriculum.

Prospective teacher who suggested literature to be compulsory in undergraduate programs of Education faculty indicated that literature courses should be practical rather than

theoretical, that literature would help them to improve themselves in teaching profession and that it should be compulsory in order to learn culture of the target language whereas prospective teachers who suggested that literature should be elective stated that literature courses should be chosen by the students who are interested and skilled in that area and that it should be chosen by the ones who wanted to receive literature education. Some of the participants to question are given below:

Opinions regarding “it should be compulsory” category are as follows:

A15: “It (literature) should definitely be compulsory. We are shying away from reading. Reading in the target language is a higher level. I think all literature courses should be compulsory.”

A16: “It should be compulsory, Foreign language teachers should not aim to teach the foreign language only, they should improve themselves in various areas; such as literature, history, sociology. Teaching the foreign language should not be teaching its grammar only. I do not want to be a teacher, but if I become one, I would definitely follow a path paved with literature, I love literature.”

A20: “It should be compulsory but the content should not be as comprehensive as literature departments. The students studying in literature departments are dealing with a more comprehensive content. It would be better if we learn the things that we can use.”

The opinions for “elective” category are as follows:

A9: “I think it (literature) should be elective. That is, if the student is not fond of literature, he is having a lot of difficulty. Thus, if it is elective, I do not think that a lot of students will choose literature. It would be a much more sufficient practice. But we do not study it in the sense that how we can utilize it when we become teachers.”

A10: “I think it should be elective. Content Knowledge Exam for Teaching is cancelled for German and French Language Teaching departments. There were literature questions in that exam. It should be removed in German and French Language Teaching departments. If it becomes elective, they can choose it if they want teaching. There are some who would like to work in the private sector.”

CONCLUSION

According to the results obtained from the findings of the present research, opinions of prospective teachers on the use of literature in foreign language classes differ from each other. In the interviews conducted with prospective teachers, it is generally stated that literature should be used however if literature course is to be compulsory in the programs of education faculty it should be practical rather than theoretical.

Therefore, the practice hours of literature course in undergraduate programs in which prospective teachers learn how they can use literature in teaching profession rather than theoretical knowledge should be increased. Prospective teachers are of the opinion that they should improve themselves regarding literature courses. Thus, there should be studies where prospective teachers put what they have learned theoretically into practice while teaching.

One other result of the present study is that prospective teachers indicated that they will not be able to implement what they have learned in literature courses in undergraduate programs in the field. The reason they have given for this is that they do not think that the practices related with literary texts written for young learners are not sufficient. While Literature and Language Teaching course was elective in 2006 undergraduate program in English Language Teaching,

this course is updated as Literature and Language Teaching I and II in 2018 program. Updated program overlaps with views of prospective teachers. However, there is no literature and language teaching course in updated German and French Language Teaching undergraduate programs. Literature and Language teaching course should be compulsory in other foreign language teaching undergraduate programs as well.

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