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Literary Materials in Teaching Reading Skill: From Teachers Perspective in Shanto Secondary and Preparatory School

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Abstract

The present study entitled “Literary Materials in Teaching Reading Skill: Teachers Perspective in Shanto Secondary and Preparatory School”. It is believed that learners need to know how to succeed in improving their reading skill and using literary texts in teaching reading skill provides opportunities for them to develop literal understanding, and promote problem-solving ability. For this reason, Ministry of Education in Ethiopia launched to incorporate literary texts in EFL students’ textbook. However, it was not yet implemented effectively and teachers were observed unresponsive in teaching reading skills through literary materials found in the textbook. In response of this, the study mainly focuses on investigating teachers’ practices and perceptions and hindrances they encountered in teaching literary texts. To conduct the study qualitative research design was employed. In-depth interview and classroom observation were used as data gathering tools. In-depth interview was administered for four English language teachers. On the other hand, among the total of ten sections, seven sections were selected randomly and observed four times each. While observing, semi-structured observation checklist was used. The data depicted that English language teachers in the study school are found de-motivated and have negative perception towards teaching reading skill through literary texts found in the students’ textbook, and many of them are not found in creating opportunities for the students to read different literary texts and practice pre, while and post-reading activities in the form of group work, role-play, storytelling, discussion, pair work, and debates. Furthermore, teachers’ practices of teaching reading skill through literary texts have challenged by a number of factors. Of which teachers’ perception, lack of experience and preparation, text authenticity, difficulty, length, and large class size, students’ motivation, and perception, shortage of time, and lack of in-service training are found the major ones. Finally, to meet the needs and interest of the teachers’ and students’, English language curriculum, syllabus designers, should consider their cultural background, linguistic level, and communicative competences.

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Introduction

Literary materials and teaching reading skill have a strong relationship after the advent of communicative language teaching approach in and around the world.

Teaching reading using literary materials is to create a long-term and valuable effect upon the learners’ linguistic and extra linguistic competencies. It is believed that the use of literary materials in reading lessons have great influence in promoting learners with literarily

transfer skills, communication competencies and collaborative skills (Murat 2005). Moreover, teaching reading using literary materials in the classroom can create an exposure for students to practice extensive and intensive reading. Furthermore, it is proved that incorporating literary materials in reading lesson can help students to master literal understanding of the characters, setting, and them; in comprehending these, students are motivated to work collaboratively and promote problem-solving abilities Mohammad (2011) as cited in Murat (2005).

Due to various roles and contribution of literately materials for language teaching purposes, Yeniale (2014) admitted that literary texts are now part of the Ethiopian English language curriculum and syllabus. For these reason, among various authentic materials used for language teaching purpose, literary texts like short stories, poems, and biographies have been using as a fundamental and decisive inputs incorporated in Ethiopian grade nine, ten, eleven and twelve students' textbook.

Accordingly, a number of scholars and researchers argue that in reading literary texts, students can develop the exposure to learn and practice various communicative and linguistic competencies (Murat, 2005). On the other hand, Haileleul (2012) confirmed that in Ethiopian context, teaching literary reading texts in English language classroom has found vital and serves as a means for students' language advancement and inter cultural competences, provision of linguistic and cross cultural explanation and development of feeling for language learning.

Furthermore, scholars argue that in the era of globalization there are universally shared needs and wants rather than individual needs. To meet such a need incorporating literature in teaching reading is an inevitable part of the language curriculum and syllabus since literature deals with universal concepts. Thus, there is an urge to grab on literature as an input source for flourishing language learners' competence as it promotes cultural and intercultural awareness especially in the era of globalization as Mohammad (2010) as cited in Murat (2005).

Therefore, there is a strong relationship between reading and literary materials to teach reading skill as literary materials are included in Ethiopian curriculum. If so, it is important to study how teachers perceive and practice teaching reading through literary materials.

Research problem

Different studies indicated the significance and importance of literary materials in teaching reading skill. For instance, concerning the contribution in language teaching and learning, Haileul (2012) and Yeniale (2014) conducted an experimental study and found that literary materials have great contribution in fostering students' interest and developing their linguistic and communicative competences. Similarly, a case study conducted by Murat (2005) and Ahmad (2014) on the use of literary materials in fosters language learning. Both of them recommend that literature serve as a popular content for teaching reading skill. However, none of the studies explored what approaches are used by teachers in the teaching of reading using literary texts.

On the other hand, the content analysis by Talene (2012) found that teachers and students have positive perception towards the practice of literary materials in reading lesson. However, teachers' perception is not compatible with their actual practice. In other words, even if the perception of teachers is positive towards the use of literary texts in reading lessons, the practice of using literary texts in the classroom is scant. Due to this, the question remains what are the factors that are influencing teachers in the actual classroom teaching of reading using literary texts have been unanswered. Moreover, the study also shows that literary materials presented in the students' textbook do not meet the students' and teachers' cultural background. Consequently, they are not able to understand the contents of reading texts. His study has a methodological gap for the fact that it failed to specifically explore the perception and practice of teachers towards the use of literary texts in reading lesson. Strikethrough, this raised the need to make a comprehensive study in order to have an understanding of teachers perceptions and practices in the research area.

Furthermore, the researchers' preliminary study result indicates, English language teachers in the study school seem unenthusiastic in teaching reading skills using literary materials found in the students' textbook. Few teachers have shown an interest and attempt teaching reading skill using literary materials. However, the majorities of the teachers ignored the reading passage and skipped by giving a home assignment when the reading texts are literary.

In general the observation of EFL teachers 'perceptions and practices' need a comprehensive study on the use of literary materials in teaching reading skill could make

this study different from the above studies and would fill the gaps that the researchers failed to do so.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the current study is to investigate grade twelve teachers' perceptions and practices of teaching reading skill using literary texts particularly in Shanto Preparatory and Secondary School. Based on this, the specific objectives are:

To explore the perception of EFL teachers in teaching literary texts in reading lesson.

To investigate EFL teachers' practices of teaching reading using literary texts.

To identify deterrents EFL teachers encounter in teaching reading using literary texts found in the students' textbook.

Research questions

How do teachers perceive teaching reading skill using literary materials in their lessons?

How do teachers practice their reading lesson in their reading classes?

What are the prevailing factors teachers encountered when they teach reading skills using literary texts from students' textbook?

By achieving these objectives the current study would have paramount importance for both teachers and students:

By creating awareness on the contribution of literary materials in improving students' language skills and its pedagogical implementations in language classroom. By giving an insight for English language textbook writers, curriculum and syllabus designers to have an awareness on the roles of literary materials in teaching reading skills and to consider certain factors hindering its pedagogical implementations related to teaching reading skill by using literary materials.

Scope of the study

The focuses of this study is to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions, and practices, in teaching reading skills using literary materials found in grade twelve students'

textbook. In addition to this, the study is confined to Shanto Secondary and Preparatory High School. It is selected because the one of the researcher has been given eight months pedagogical training for school teachers. Such close attachments with teachers might create ample opportunity to observe teachers current perceptions, practices and challenges in teaching reading using literary materials found in the students' textbook and to get reliable and valid data.

Research design

To meet the intended research objectives and answer the research questions, the researchers used qualitative research design. The qualitative design helps the researchers to gather data from actual research setting in detail. In a more umbrella term the study is subscribed under interpretive research philosophy with the intent to gather quality data. In-depth interview and classroom observation are employed as a tool of data collection. These tools are used to gather data from seven English as a Foreign Language teacher who have been teaching grade twelve students in Shanto Preparatory and Secondary School which is found in Ethiopia.

Instruments of data gathering

In-depth interview

For an interpretive research paradigm, in-depth interview is a primary method of data collection tool (Creswell, 2003). Hence, in-depth interview was employed with four teachers with the purpose to uncover their perception, approaches, and the factors they encounters in teaching reading skill using literary texts in the classroom scenario. When interview carried out, audio recorder was used to keep all the raw data accessible for data interpretation and analyses.

Observation

The purpose of observation was to crosscheck data gathered from other tool in such a way that maximize research legitimization. Besides, its purpose is to observe the approaches teachers employed while they are teaching reading skill using literary materials found in the students textbook and to investigate the deterrents they confronted during teaching learning process. To this end, among the total of ten sections, seven sections were selected randomly and each was observed four times. While observing, semi-structured observation checklist was used through overt participant observation method.

data analysis and interpretation procedures

After sufficient data collected from in-depth interview, and observation, each collected data was organized and grouped thematically under similar continuum. After that, the data collected from the two tools were summarized, transcribed, interpreted and analyzed qualitatively.

Data collected from teachers interview

The findings of the interview data regarding teachers' perceptions in teaching reading skill using literary texts revealed that they do not have positive perception in teaching literary text; even though, they have a clear understanding about its role in improving students reading skill. Similar to this, the observation result confirmed teachers were briefed students concerning the importance of the literature; however, all the interviewee replied that they are not positive because the literary texts found in the students textbook are not interesting to read as many of the reading texts are relatively long, and many of the contents and language are not easy and clear to understand their themes. They further explained that the contents of the extracted novels, short stories and poems are not addressing the cultural, economical and socio-political issues of both the teachers and learners. To this end, Murat (2005) asserted that literary texts used to teaching reading should be selected carefully by considering the needs and interests, expectations, and difficulty levels of the language into accounts. This helps to maximize and facilitate the comprehensibility of the reading text and minimized students' cultural, political and economical crisis. Besides, it should be selected based on their relevance to the real-life experiences, emotions, or background of the students so as to maximize motivation and interest of the teachers and students in teaching and learning of literary texts.

While the participants were asked to respond about their practices during pre-reading, while and post-reading stages, and strategies used in the course of teaching reading skill through literary texts, four of them replied, they teach some of the reading texts in which they have found interested to read and easy to understand if not they let the students to read and do activities as a home taken assignment. In such a way, they tried to cover the contents of the lessons. Among the respondents, one of the teachers; however, replied that he has the experience in teaching many of the literary texts in his reading lessons, though; he sometimes skipped texts having content difficulty and boring lengthy.

In addition, for the question engaging students to actively involve during the three phases of reading, they stated that they have the experience of doing so. Nevertheless, the classroom observation proved that almost all of the teachers do not have consistency in practicing and engaging students with the three phases of reading (pre, while and post-reading activities). Thus, it can be concluded that teachers' involvement in presenting reading lessons effectively in general and engaging students to pre, while and post-reading activities in particular remain unstructured and unanswered. Concerning the importance of teaching three phases of reading, Haileleul (2012) stressed that to overcome the teachers pedagogy gaps, and improve learners' reading skill, employing active learning methods during pre, while and post-reading stages and using strategies like storytelling, pair discussions, reflections, presentations, role play, cooperative learning, and debates are crucial so as to increase the interest and participations of the students learning.

The third question was intended to elicit data with regard to teachers' exposure in motivating students to literary texts they have read to the context of their own personal experience, feeling and opinion. With this regard, all teachers were agreed that they have experiences in motivating students to read other literary materials of their own interest and relate to the context of their personal experiences, but they admitted not to motivate their students in an organized and consistent manner. The data collected from classroom observation, however; shows that teachers' dedication in motivating students to read different literary materials and relate them to their own personal feelings and experiences was not seen at all. Therefore, it is said to be that EFL teachers in the study setting have minimal exposure in creating opportunities for the students to read different literary texts like poems, novels, and short stories to improve the students' linguistic, communicative and cultural competencies.

Item four sought students' interest in learning reading skill through literary texts. Almost all of them agreed not to have interest in reading literary texts. They justified the reason that the literary texts in the students' textbook are not designed in a ways that motivate teachers and students. Besides, they confirmed that literary reading texts are too long to read, and too difficult to understand as a result they are not interested and motivated to learn. To avoid such barriers, and enhance EFL learners' interest and motivation, scholarly it is suggested that literary texts should be selected carefully by considering

learners' background of the target language, cultural background, and maturity, and literary skill development level (ibid).

The fifth question was attempted to know the types of literary reading texts suit students learning. All of them suggested poem, short stories, diaries; biographies of a famous person of the nation might be motivating since they are authentic and directly related to their own cultural, political, and economical contexts. In addition, they recommended literary reading texts should be developed by having appropriate length to be covered in the classroom so that teachers and students get motivated to read.

The sixth question which was designed to extract information on challenges teachers confronted in teaching reading through literary texts. Almost all of the interviewee replied, they were faced challenges. In addition to the aforementioned challenges teachers faced, text length, students' motivation, large number of students, teachers pedagogical skill gape and experience of teaching literary texts, shortage of time and their own perception were found the major shares.

The last question was the all over evaluations of teaching reading skill through literary texts found in the students' textbook, all of the participants agreed that few of the literary texts found in the students textbook are interesting and clear to understand; even though, majority of them are not found interesting and suitable to teach reading skill. Many of the literary contents are not addressing teachers' and students' cultural background; as a result, both of them become de-motivated during teaching-learning process.

Data analysis from teachers observation

Seven teachers identified as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, and T7 were observed four times while they delivered literary texts for reading lessons. Among the observed lesson, T2's, T3's, T4's, T6's, and T7, for instance, were teaching reading text entitled '*Under the Telephone Pole*' a poem by Carl Sandburg. They began the lessons by introducing the topic and giving instructions to students on pre-reading phase. On the other hand, T1, T5, and T6 were read the poem loudly during pre-reading stage for the whole class. Then, they grouped students based on their seat and let them read the poem again silently and do the activities on vocabulary and practice the while-reading activity. After some minutes, they invited interested students to participate in

responding the questions of reading activity. In the same way, they proceed to the second reading activity, and students read silently and do the activity at the same time. After a while, the teachers stopped the students doing the activity and let them participate in sharing the answers for the questions to on post-reading phase. Few students were observed raised their hands and participated; however, the majority was observed passive during the teaching learning process. Finally, the teacher end up the day's lesson by ordering students to read other similar poem available to their compound.

On the other hand, T2, T3, T4, and T7 introduced the lesson at pre-reading stage; they instructed and brief students on what they will do after they read the poem. These teachers did not read the poem loudly to the whole students as T1, T5, and T6 did, and instead they invited volunteer students to read it to the whole class students. Then, the teachers encourage them to read the poem silently and individually and do the activities. In such ways, T2 and, T3 T4 and T7 were tried to make students get involved in reading the poem and doing the activities. Even though, students were passive and did not show active participation. Finally, in almost similar lesson conducted; the teachers winded up their lessons after they give the correct answer for each activity. Though, different teachers pass with different process of teaching, almost all of their products were the same that students failed to react on the activities by the teachers.

Hence, from the presented data above, we can infer that even though, T1, T5, and T6 attempted in engaging students to practice loud reading of the poem, it seems difficult to say teachers are conducted effective on how to read literary text (poem). However, practicing loud reading is vital for the students to be familiarized with the sounds of rhymes and ways of reading poems. With this regard, it is recommended that teachers are expected to read the poem loudly as it helps students to model their teachers on the ways how words and rhymes are pronounced. In addition, teachers should encourage and support students to practice loud reading so that students can have an exposure and opportunities in developing their reading, pronunciation and listening skills (Tungesh 2011). Moreover, seven of the observed teachers are still exposed to traditional ways of teaching in that they failed to engage students with a pre, while and post-reading activities and made reading lesson communicative. On the contrary, the theories of teaching reading recommended EFL teachers should come up with a dynamic, student-centered approach toward teaching reading skill using literary text.

Appendix A

Interview for Teachers

I would like to inform you that all the information that you will give in this interview will be kept strictly confidential; and will only be used for purpose of this research. This interview session will focus on your current practices in teaching reading using literary texts, and challenges you encountered in the process of implementation. If you do not understand any of the questions, please feel free to ask or interrupt the interview.

1. Are you interested in teaching reading using literary materials found in the text book?
If you say yes, how do you teach them, if not why?
2. Do you think that literary texts provided in the textbook are relevant to teach reading skills? If you say No, would you explain how?
3. What strategies do you use to teach literary materials in your reading lessons?
4. Do you encourage students to relate the topics and themes of the literary text they read to their own personal experience, feelings and opinions?
5. Will students find the literary materials in the textbook useful and enjoyable to learn reading skill?
6. What types of reading texts are interested to teach students reading texts?
7. Have you ever faced any difficulty in using literary texts when you teach reading?
What types of difficulty do you faced: methods or contents difficulty? Or other if any?
8. Would you explain the overall evaluation about the literacy materials found in the students' text book?

Appendix B Classroom Observation Checklist

No	Item	Yes	No
1	Do teachers use literary materials to teach reading skills?		
2	Do teachers encourage students to actively participate in the process of understanding the literary texts when they teach reading?		
3	Do teachers employ active learning methods like storytelling, discussions, presentations, debates, cooperative learning etc. when they teach reading?		
4	Do teachers adapt literary reading texts based on students linguistic level and based on the length, and complexity of reading texts?		
5	Do teachers give the chance for students to read, understand, interpret and appreciate literary texts in the reading lessons?		
6	Do teachers provide mechanisms when students face challenges in treading and understanding literary texts?		
7	Do students participate actively when they learn reading skill using literary texts?		
8	Do students have courage to learn literary texts in their reading lessons?		
9	How do teachers face challenges when they teach reading skill using literary texts?		

Appendix C

The following reading lessons are found in grade twelve students’ textbook.

1. Under a telephone pole (poem) page 49;
2. Building the nation by Henry Barlow (poem) page 82;
3. Extract from a novel ‘No longer at ease’ by Chinua Achebe page 83-84;
4. Extract from a novel ‘From Devil to the Cross’ by Ngugiwa Thiong page 94
5. A taxi driver on his death poem by Timothy Wangusa page 162
6. Vultures (poem) by Chinua Achebe page 187.
7. Extract from a novel ‘The Money-Order’ by Senbene Ousmane page 215
8. An interview with a film star page 246 and
9. A review of Titanic page 260

In the second phases of classroom observation, all of the teachers were observed when they teach: ‘*Building the nation*’ a poem by Herr Blow. T1, T3, T4, T6 and T7 started the lesson by reminding students the previous lesson. Following this, they instructed the students to read the poem individually and motivated them to practice loud reading turn by turn; however, many of the students were not interested to read the poem individually and/or loudly. As a result of this, almost all of the teachers did not observed using other pedagogical strategies to make students keep motivated in reading the poem loudly, and students were observed inactive during

the teaching-learning scenario. This passiveness, for instance, made T1, and T3 annoyed which made them to end up their lesson by reminding students to do the activities themselves in the textbook. T4, and T6, and T7, on the other hand, were observed letting students to read the poem loudly and keep the students participating in doing the activities from the reading text. With such controlled practice, few students in all sections were observed participating in reading and doing the activities.

From the data above, T4, and T6, and T7 have shown efforts in motivating students to practice loud reading.

However, none of the teacher read the poem aloud as model on the ways of reading poem and pronunciation of words and word rhymes. For this reason, it seems possible to conclude that among many deterrents teachers encountered, lack of students perception and interest, lack of teachers' experience, pedagogy skills, and understanding the content of the literary texts hindered their effectiveness. In support of this, Murat (2005), recommended that in order to teach reading lesson using literary texts, and make the lesson effective, EFL teachers are advised to present the lessons using communicative teaching-learning strategies like group activities, general classroom discussion, panel-discussions, and debates so that students become motivated in learning reading through literary texts.

In the third classroom observation, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, and T7 were observed when they teach extracted novel entitled '*No longer at Ease*' by Chinua Achebe. In teaching this lesson, all of them were come up with an almost the same teaching approach. They were guiding the students to read the novel independently for about fifteen minutes and do comprehension questions in pair after wards. Then, teaching- learning was keeping going in the form of asking and answering questions. With such practices, only T6 was tried his best in encouraging students to give him the correct answer. T2 and T4 on contrarily, did not observe motivating and doing all the activities with the students rather they do some of the activities together with few students' participation, and wind up the lesson by reminding them to do the rest of the activities at home. From this, one can infer that teachers' presentations were not well organized in a ways which could help them to achieve the intended lessons objectives and worked on students reading skill improvement. Such unstructured lesson presentation results from lack of pedagogical knowledge and awareness with regard to teaching reading through literary texts. However, "the principal aim of teaching literary texts in the reading lesson is to make students aware of the language elements from the presented texts. Therefore, teaching-learning should be conducted actively so as to create interaction between the reading texts and the languages so that learners improve their reading and interpretation skills" (Tungesh, 2011).

The last classroom observation was '*The Money Order*' extracted novel by Senegales. In delivering this, T1, T3, T4, and T7 presented it by asking students about the main ideas of the reading text. Then, they organized them into certain groups and engaged them with while-reading activities (comprehension questions)

accordingly. On the other hand, T2, T5, and T6 have presented their lesson by reminding students to open their textbook on page 125 and read the extracted novel independently for about ten minutes. After the given minutes were over, they stopped them reading and reminded them to do comprehension questions together with their fallow mate seating besides them. Hence, from these one can infer that all of the observed teachers have by far better in teaching extracted novel than teaching poems.

To sum up, we can conclude that almost all the observed teachers in the study school are not interested and motivated to teach reading lesson through literary materials. Besides, they did not engaged students with different learning activities at pre' while and post-reading stages. These all seem to result from teachers own negative perception and awareness of teaching reading.

Major findings and conclusions

Based on the data analysis and research findings, the researchers forward the following as major findings and conclusions:

The finding of the data analysis from both tools depicted that EFL teachers in the study school are found demotivated and have negative perception towards teaching reading skill through literary texts found in the students textbook. Hence, it is possible to conclude that their negative perception results from the types of literary texts found in the students textbook. Hence, it can be generalized that lack of experience and awareness are resulted from lack of in-service training.

Besides, with regard to teachers' practices of teaching reading through literary texts, the data shows EFL teachers have taught literary reading texts in an inconsistence manner. Even though, some teachers have shown an effort to teach, many of them are still exposed to traditional approach of teaching reading skill. They are not found having a spotlight in creating opportunities for the students to read different literary texts aloud and practice pre, while and post-reading activities in the form of group work, role-play, storytelling, discussion, pair work, and debates. We can conclude that teachers are not effectively conducting their reading lesson and working on the improvements of students' reading skill in general and literary concepts in particular.

Above all, we infer that EFL teachers' implementation and effectiveness of teaching reading skill through literary texts have been challenged by various factors. Among those that minimize their effectiveness are: teachers' negative perception, lack of experience in teaching literary texts and lack of preparation, content authenticity, difficulty, length, and students' motivation, and perception, large class size, shortage of time, and lack of in-service training are found the major ones.

Recommendations

On the bases of the data findings and conclusions, the following are presented as possible solution to overcome teachers' negative perceptions, practices and challenges in teaching reading through literary materials.

It is found that EFL teachers have negative perception about teaching literary texts found in grade 11 students' textbook. To overcome such perception, the educational officers and language professionals should work hand in hand in order to create awareness and provide in-service training on the ways how teachers become effective in teaching reading through literary texts and on the relevance of literary texts in improving learners' reading skill.

On the other hand, the data interpretation depicted that almost all of grade 11 teachers are not consistent and effective in teaching reading skill using literary texts found in the students textbook. Hence, to empower teachers' practical implementations with regard to teaching literary reading texts, training should be given by professionals, and educational capacity building offices focusing on communicative language teaching strategies.

To sum up, grade 11 language teachers in the study school have faced various challenges in delivering their reading lesson effectively. Of which, unstructured and

unorganized literary reading texts, content authenticity, difficulty, and the length of reading texts that did not suit and motivate teachers and students interest are the major ones. Besides, as presented in (appendix C), all of the teachers also confirmed that literary texts like poem, short stories, extracted novels, diaries; biographies of a famous person are not authentic in addressing their cultural, political and social elements. Therefore, so as to meet the needs and interest of the teachers' and students', English language curriculum, syllabus designers should also be careful in considering the students cultural background, and linguistic level, so that teachers and students keep interested in teaching and learning reading in a more rewarding and real life situations.

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