



Literature and TEFL: Towards the Reintroduction of Literatures in English in the Francophone Secondary School Curriculum in Cameroon

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Abstract

Literature was once regarded as being inappropriate for the teaching of the English language. Nowadays, the importance of applying literature in the development of learners' language skills is receiving a lot of attention by EFL/ESL practitioners worldwide (Lee 2009). In spite of such "remarkable revival of interest in literature" in the English language classroom (Duff & Maley 1990: 3), literature as a component of the English language teaching programme in secondary schools in Cameroon "remains the exception rather than the rule" (Macalister 2008: 248). This paper seeks to examine the impact of the withdrawal of English Literature from the English as a foreign language curriculum of French-speaking Cameroonians. In the article, we statistically compare the performances of French-speaking and English-speaking Cameroonian teacher trainees of the department of Bilingual Studies of the Higher Teachers' Training College of the University of Maroua in English Literature and in French Literature. We also discuss the importance and effectiveness of the different models and approaches in the development of the cultural competence and communicative skills of learners. The results obtained reveal that the studying of literatures in French by Anglophones at the Advanced Level positively influences their performances in French in Higher Education. The poor performances of Francophone Student-teachers in courses like LBL 11 (Introduction to English Literature) are attributable to the fact that they do not study literatures in English at the secondary school level.

Keywords: Critical thinking, real-life communication, authentic tasks, authentic texts

1. Introduction

"Why are we not taught and tested in literatures in English as is the case with Anglophones?" (Atou'ou Linge Zanga, Djoko and Njinke Lengya (2010)). This was a desperate lamentation made by French-speaking student-teachers enrolled in the departments of English and Literatures of English Expression and those of Bilingual Studies of the Higher Teachers' Training School of the University of Maroua in Cameroon. In both departments we have French and English-speaking Cameroonians who enroll to read among others, English and Literatures in English. This article focuses on the English language learning profiles and performances of French-speaking student-teachers in these departments. In fact, most of these French-speaking student-teachers who were admitted in the department of English and Literatures of English Expression and that of Bilingual Studies had thought that the English courses they were to follow in higher education were extensions of the grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension passages and essay writing exercises that they were used to in secondary school. Most of them were completely disappointed when they encountered courses like Literature and Ideas, Early American Literature, Cameroon, Continental and Diaspora Literature, Introduction to English Literature or Post-Colonial Literature with so many original texts to read, do assignments and answer examination questions thereon. English-speaking students (those who had undergone the Anglo-Saxon secondary school system) on the other hand were not surprised to encounter these subjects and so performed significantly better (12.73 mean) than their French-speaking counterparts (6.33 mean) in the first and second semester examinations of the 2009 academic year. On the other hand, they were not very shocked to meet courses like English Speech and Usage, Grammar: Morphosyntax etc. with a mean performance of 10.12 as opposed to 10.89 for the English-speaking classmates. These results are physically revealing and thus do not necessarily warrant the application of inferential statistics to test their levels of significance.

In the department of Bilingual studies, the mean performances and standard deviations in literature in French of both categories of student-teachers stood at 13.76 ± 2.26^a for the French-speaking and 13.51 ± 2.02^a for the English-speaking ones. Both groups' mean performances and standard deviations from the mean in the Literature in English courses were

13.09 ± 1.95^a for the Anglophones and 9.87 ± 2.35^b for the Francophones. The ANOVA table below summarises the test scores.

	LBL11	LBL15
Anglophone	13.09 ± 1.95 ^{a*}	13.51 ± 2.02 ^a
Francophone	9.87 ± 2.35 ^b	13.76 ± 2.26 ^b

*Means column with different superscripts on the same are statistically different at the 95% confidence interval.

The courses for which student-teachers' performances were analysed in the Department of Bilingual studies were LBL 11: Introduction to English Literature and LBL 15. Littérature Française du Moyen Age au XVIe Siecle. These courses deal with the study of English and French literary texts. The statistics on the table above clearly reveal that at an alpha level of 0.5, Anglophone student-teachers performed significantly better than their Francophone counterparts in LBL 11. In LBL 15, with a mean of 13.57 and a standard deviation of 2.02 for Anglophone student-teachers against a mean of 13.76 with a standard deviation of 2.26, the performances of French-speaking student-teachers were not significantly better than those of their English-speaking classmates.

These results therefore reveal that the studying of literatures in French by Anglophones at the Advanced Level positively influences their performances in French in Higher Education. The poor performances of Francophone Student-teachers in courses like LBL 11 are therefore attributable to the fact that they do not study literatures in English at the secondary school level.

It should be noted that in the French-speaking subsystem of general education, the English language paper is compulsory in the (Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle) BEPC, Probatoire and Baccalaureate examinations and in each examination, the paper is made up of four sections: Section A: Grammar, Section B: Vocabulary, Section C: Reading Comprehension and Section D: Essay Writing. An oral component which existed only at the Baccalaureate examination was suppressed in the early nineties in spite of the fact that Carter and Long (1991) say that it was during the 1980's that the situation radically changed and that this was the period during which literature was going through serious reconsideration among professionals of English language teaching. No authentic texts and tasks-based activities are done at any of the levels. Authentic texts are texts which are written or spoken for any other thing except for language teaching purposes. Newspaper articles, popular songs, novels, radio interviews, traditional fairy tales, myths and legends are examples of authentic texts. Texts, such as stories that are written to illustrate the use of reported speech or a dialogue that is written to exemplify ways of inviting and even a novel in simplified version, are not considered as authentic texts because they are specifically tailored for illustration and not for real life use.

Similarly, authentic tasks are tasks that require the learners to use the target language in a way that simulates its use in the real world or real life outside the language classroom. When learners are asked to fill in the blanks, change verbs from the simple past to the simple present, give the correct forms of adjectives or adverbs and completing substitution tables, they are not by so doing performing authentic tasks. This is because such exercises are not what we use language to do in our everyday life; and therefore, not the aim of learning the language.

On the other hand, in the English-speaking subsystem and at the ordinary level (O'L) of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination, the French Paper which is code 545 is compulsory to all the candidates and is made up of Papers One, Two and Three. Paper One is entitled *French Language*; Paper Two, *Essay Writing* and Paper Three, *Reading Comprehension and Translation*.

At the advanced level (A'L), the French Paper for the A1 series (students reading French, English Literature and History) is coded 745 and comprises three Papers. Paper One is *Literature* and it is made up of two sections: Section A: Drama and Section B: Prose. Paper Two is entitled *Essay Writing* and Paper Three, *Translation and Reading Comprehension*. In the Paper One, students are expected to answer drama questions on authentic works like *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard* by Marivaux and *Une Tempête* by Aimé Césaire. In the prose section, the students answer questions on *La Peste* by Albert Camus, *Terres des Hommes* by Saint Exupéry, *Mission Terminée* by Mongo Bety and *Les Soleils des Indépendances* by Kourouma. Other French texts like *Britannicus* by Jean Racine, *Phedre* by Pierre Corneille, *Ville Cruelle* by Eza Boto, *Aventure Ambigue* by Cheik Hamidou Khan, *L'Ecole des Femmes* by Molière, *L'Etranger* by Albert Camus, *Eugenie Grandet* by Honoré de Balsac etc had been studied at the Advanced Level by Anglophone Cameroonians over the past years

In the French-speaking subsystem, there used to be a series called 'Anglais Renforcé' (Intensive English) [our translation] which was done at the first cycle of the system. Here, apart from the grammar, vocabulary reading comprehension and essay writing exercises, students read and answered questions on authentic texts like *Kwabena and the Leopard* by Kenjo Jumban and *The River that Changed its Course* by James Ngugi. Unfortunately, this series, though limited only to the first cycle which ended with the BEPC examination, was suppressed just like the oral component of the Baccalaureate examination.

Though there was a time when literature was considered to be ill suited for English language teaching, the value of using literature in the language classroom has been justified and advocated by many ESL/EFL educators and

researchers all over the world in the last few decades (Lee 2009). In spite of such "remarkable revival of interest in literature" in the English language classroom (Duff & Maley 1990: 3), literature as a component of the English language teaching programme in secondary schools in Cameroon "remains the exception rather than the rule" (Macalister 2008: 248).

All these notwithstanding, the state of Cameroon keeps deploying enormous human, financial and material resources as it struggles desperately to attain its French/English bilingual option. The adoption of French and English official bilingualism as a national policy by the Cameroon is the adoption of a way of life respectively for French-speaking and English-speaking Cameroonians. They have to struggle to acquire a new language, a new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling and action. This also means and requires that learners commit themselves wholly and deploy complete physical, intellectual and emotional energy if they have to succeed in effective listening, speaking; reading and writing (Nkwetisama 2012). All these can be acquired through Literature. Unfortunately, Literature is neglected and was scrapped off the English language learning programmes of French-speaking students in spite of the importance it can have in enhancing bilingualism and opening Cameroonians to other cultures as Biya (1987:34) realizes and points out:

Bilingualism (French and English) should be promoted on a permanent basis in order to ease communication further between Cameroonians of all linguistic backgrounds and to project our country's cultural identity in the world. This will constantly open our country to the great civilisations of today.

In this article, we statistically compare the performances of French-speaking and English-speaking Cameroonian student-teachers of the department of Bilingual Studies of the Higher Teachers' Training College of the University of Maroua in English Literature and in French Literature, discuss the importance, the different models and approaches as well as the effectiveness of using literature in the development of the cultural competence and communicative skills of learners.

2. Separation of Language and the study of Literature

During the 18th century and right up to the middle of the 19th century, English Literature was considered a broad subject that included poetry, fiction, history, biography, scientific, didactic and expository writing. Literature during this period was part and parcel of the teaching of classical rhetoric. The aim of the teaching of classical rhetoric was to develop learners' skills or capacities to discover and to communicate (Spack, 1985). Such incorporation underscores the inherent potential that literature can exert in fostering 'communicative competence' in language learners. Literature and language studies at this time were inseparable. During the latter part of the 19th century, there was growing concern for formal correctness at the detriment of focus on communication. This was the starting point in the rift between literature and language studies. According to Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010), the change of focus to the overt teaching of grammar, error analysis and correction caused by pedagogical and socioeconomic concerns and this shift probably constituted the initial ominous indicator of the contestable position of literature in the teaching of language. Consequently, the hitherto inextricably intertwined relationship between language and literature studies was dissociated and became questionable for several reasons. For McKay (1982), the use of literature may seem irrelevant because of the following:

The structural complexity, the sometimes nonstandard and unique use of language in literature precludes grammar teaching and grammar teaching constitutes the principal focus of some language teachers. Savvidou (2004) confirms McKay's view by saying that "...the creative use of language in poetry and prose often deviates from the conventions and rules which govern standard and non-literary discourse."

Secondly, the academic and professional needs of learners vary greatly and Literature may not have any significant benefits learners of EAP (English for Academic Purposes) or to those of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). This is because Literature is culturally dense and this may be a hindrance and not a facility to learning the language.

In spite of these arguments against the use of literature in TEFL, there are some views and assumptions as well as contemporary theory that is backed by research in language acquisition, teaching and learning that highlight the importance of literature in teaching and learning the English language.

Within the framework of the language awareness approach, the teaching of grammar to attain communicative competence lays emphasis on appropriate and effective language behavior. Besides, the clear separation that is made between language usage and language use jointly justify the potential use of texts of literature in language classes. This is because a literary text can be used in developing the comprehension of language usage through the several approaches, methods and techniques available for form-focused teaching and consciousness raising of word forms, common expressions and grammatical structures.

In spite of the fact that ESP and EAP are tailored to meet specific goals of learners, literature can enhance the motivation of learners to read and to write; thereby standing the chance to improving on their overall proficiency; if not, it can equally serve their work, occupational or academic needs. (McKay 1982). It can be inferred from this that the importance of literature in fostering ESL/EFL lies more in the skill with which it is taught rather than on the question whether it should be taught or not.

Concerning the controversy over the issue of Literature being loaded culturally, Chastain (1988) argues that the teaching the cultural is an organized and component of the contents of many language programmes and that this due to the inseparable relationship between language and culture as well the importance of an awareness of, understanding of and tolerance for intercultural differences.

Savidou (2004) believes teachers, designers of courses and examiners are often reluctant to include unsimplified texts into EFL syllabuses. This is because of the view of the particular complexity and inaccessibility of literature for the foreign language students and the belief that it can instead detrimental to their language learning efforts. This perception is corroborated by Akyel and Yalcin (1990) who hold that the desire to widen the horizons of learners by exposing them to classic literature often has that are quite disappointing.

In spite of the counter arguments for the inclusion of literature in language curricula, Gajdusek (1988) believes that since literature is not only literally but also decontextualized figuratively, it can be an excellent way for the development of communicative competence among students because of its internal coherence and conscious patterning. The internal coherence of literature is underscored by the fact that every line interrelates with other lines and thus creates an internally coherent meaning. Such self-reliance and sufficiency of literature texts engage the students in interpreting, negotiating meaning, and coming out with coherent discourse-based meaning. On the other hand, the language of a literary texts – especially that of poetry - is meticulously woven into recurring structures and meanings, sound patterns, and connecting different emotional, physical and intellectual perceptions and experiences. All these patterns are important and necessary for the interactional and communicative development of learners' competences.

3. Advantages of literature in ESL/ EFL

The controversies over the use of literature to promote efficacious language teaching and learning notwithstanding, there are, in addition to the earlier discussed reasons for including it in the language classroom in Cameroon, many other gains.

Van (2009) puts forth these other benefits:

- i. The encouragement of critical thinking
- ii. The appeal to imagination and enhancement of creativity of learners
- iii. The provision of meaningfully rich contexts
- iv. The square fitting in of literature with CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) tenets
- v. The involvement of a broad range of dialogues, vocabulary and prose
- vi. The development cultural awareness

As concerns the tying up of literature with the communicative language teaching principles, Van (2009) shows how the contents and tasks are useful in the English language classroom:

Since meaning results from the interaction between the reader's experience and the language of the text, it implies that, literature will undoubtedly facilitate the grasping of meaning given that meaningful contexts is a keystone in language learning.

Learning is eased by joyful involvement, and this joyful involvement can be created by the style of the text. Besides, literature reading creates room for more active learning and critical thinking.

Authentic or real life involvement and active communication facilitates learning. Consequently, literature can be really useful as it shall provide good chances for learner-centered, learning-centred activities through collaborative group work which are landmarks in modern language pedagogy.

Learner or participant autonomy is encouraged in CLT, and so reading literature will create individual meanings, and as such this goal of autonomy is attained. The role of the CLT teacher is that of facilitating, active planning and guiding and this is embedded in the process of literature reading and the analyses done in and out of the classroom.

It follows from the advantages of teaching literature in an ESL/EFL classroom that the same points against its teaching (its structural complexity, cultural load, and non-normative or unique use of language) are the very ones used to teach it. In fact, associating culture through language teaching and learning can lead to a more profound national and international understanding that is necessary nowadays within the framework of global education. Cameroonians or the other multitudes of peoples in the world will come to know each other, thereby eradicating stereotypes and stigmas about each other and stepping towards world peace.

Further justifications for the use of literature in the language classrooms are posited by Zoreda and Vivaldo-Lima (2008) as they say:

- i. It helps language teachers in the fostering of their personal linguistic, cultural and skills of interpretation.
- ii. It introduces variety into the language teaching classroom.
- iii. It involves students overcome negative attitudes, if any, toward the target culture.

The upsurge of interest in the introduction of literature to the English as a second or foreign language curriculum is further exemplified by Gajdusek (1988), Arthur (1968), Nasr (2001) and Ladousse-Porter (2001). Gajdusek (1988) admits that:

- i. It is an excellent means of constituting contents for content-based lessons.
- ii. It helps generate meaningful referential questions.
- iii. It leads to a dramatic growth of vocabulary and the teaching of complex sentence grammar in real contexts.
- iv. It encourages interaction and talking.
- v. It makes for motivated pair or small group work.
- vi. It provides much stimulus for writing composition.

To Arthur (1968), some syntactic patterns, like subordinate clauses and syntactic word order inversions are encountered more frequently in literary texts. He equally points out that the vocabulary enrichment brought about by reading literature is as a result of the greater range of vocabulary used in written English and in literary texts than in spoken ones.

On his part, Nasr (2001) holds that relevance of literature is multidimensional in that:

- i. It consolidates the acquisition of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- ii. It opens up learners' intellectual perspectives, and facilitates their cognitive maturation.

Ladousse-Porter (2001) draws our attention to the fact that apart from literature's strong appeal to the creativity and imagination of learners, it also activates and boosts the students' emotional intelligence, thus making it (literature) particularly suited to the language classroom where the components of emotional intelligence like self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (Goleman, 1998), all contribute to more effective language learning.

On the whole, literary texts are written in language and a person who is interested in language will certainly be interested in literature and according to Povey (1972) literature increases all language skills because literature extends linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage as well as complex and exact syntax. Besides, McKay (1986) holds that literature can be useful in developing learners' linguistic knowledge both at the use and usage levels. In addition it enhances students' motivation to read and interact with a text, and thus ultimately increasing their reading proficiency. Povey finally posits that through literature, students could examine a foreign culture and that may increase their understanding of that culture and that could encourage them to engage in their own imaginative writing. From the foregoing, one can conclude that reading literary texts, interacting with and enjoying them can lead to a better understanding of the second or foreign language. Furthermore, as authentic texts, novels, plays or poems in the second or foreign language offer students with real world experiences and shows them the relationships between society and the people where is spoken.

Carter and Long (1991) further put forth the following reasons for including literature in the ESL/EFL classroom: the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model. With the cultural model, using literature to teach English will enable students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies that are different from their own in time and space. It equally enables them to perceive the tradition of thoughts, feelings, and artistic forms in the culture that goes along with the target language. As regards the language model, literature teaching is aimed at putting students in touch with some of the more subtle nuances and varied denotative and connotative uses of the language. The personal growth model has as its main objective in teaching literature, the attempts to help students to achieve an engagement with the reading of literary texts. Lazar (1993: 3) corroborates Carter and Long as she points out that:

Using literature in the classroom is a fruitful way of involving the learner as a whole person, and provides excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinions, reactions and feelings.

She further proposes that using literature in an ESL/EFL classroom has the advantages that the material is motivating, there is access to cultural background, it encourages greater language acquisition, it expands students' language awareness, it develops students' interpretative abilities, and that it educates the learner as a whole person.

Furthermore, the exposure of learners to literary text is a good opportunity to expose them to authentic language in meaningful contexts. It is certainly for this reason that Krashen (1993: x) recommended the FVR (free voluntary reading) where learners are encouraged to read whatever they choose to read without any assignments given on the text and believes that reading freely in a second or foreign language "... is one of the best things an acquirer can do to bridge the gap from the beginning level to truly advanced levels of second language proficiency." Such exposure will not only enhance learners' reading skills but will eventually enable them to develop a reading habit; something which is very much lacking in the Cameroonian public.

This general agreement on the value and potential of the integration of literature into the English as a second or foreign language programme hereby provides sound grounds for the review of the curriculum of English to Cameroon Francophone secondary school learners at all level if the country genuinely looks forward to attaining its prized bilingual option. It is worth noting that the consensus on the vital role of literature is based on or informed by current research in language teaching, Language learning and acquisition, and psychology (Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010).

4. Teaching Literature in ESL/EFL

4.1 Approaches and models to teaching literature

When teachers understand the various ways through which literature can be taught to learners, it goes a long way to determine how best to invest the resources literature provides with the purpose of improving language learning programmes. Maley (1989) makes a general classification of approaches to teaching literature and provides a clear distinction between the study of literature as a cultural artifact and the use of literature as a resource for language learning. For Maley (1989:10), the studying of literature as a cultural artifact can be either critical or stylistic:

1. The critical literary approach: The principal focus of this approach is on the literariness of the texts being studied; that is motivation, characterization, or background. This approach requires that learners have a reasonable degree or level of language proficiency and familiarity with literary terms and literary conventions

2. The stylistic approach: This is an approach whose objectives are among others to make textual discoveries and interpretations through the description and analyses of the language of the literary texts that are being studied. The stylistic approach too like the critical one requires a good deal of linguistic competence in the target language for it to serve appropriately the language learning and teaching purpose in an EFL classroom. Maley gives preference to an approach that does not make any distinction between language and literature, and which uses literature as one of the many resources for language learning and teaching. He believes that this approach enhances motivation and sharpens an awareness of the language functions in learners as they get engaged and interact with the texts they are studying.

As for models, the cultural, the language and the personal growth ones are highlighted.

The Cultural Model

The model according to Carter and Long (1991) constitutes the traditional approach to teaching literature. With this model, learners are expected to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of given literary texts. Through this model the universality of social, political, literary and historical thoughts is not only exposed but learners are encouraged to understand various cultures and ideologies that are different from their own. This too will certainly lead to international understanding and an unconscious step towards peace education that humanity needs today. However, EFL teachers criticise this model for being teacher-centred with very little room for extended language activities.

The Language Model

Carter and Long (1991) call this model the language-based approach and it is the most common approach to literature in the EFL classroom. With the language model, learners access a text in a systematic and methodical way in a bid to sort out examples of specific linguistic features such as literal and figurative language or direct and indirect speech. The model makes use of many of the strategies employed in language teaching. These strategies include: cloze procedure, prediction exercises, jumbled sentences, summary writing, creative writing and role play. These strategies are used to deconstruct literary texts in order to serve specific linguistic goals. However, Carter and McRae (1996) frown at this model for consisting of a reductive approach to literature because the activities are not related to the literary goals of the specific text given that the activities are applicable to any text. The engagement of the learners with text is very minimal since their objectives are purely linguistic; literature is off-rooted from its *raison-d'être* in order to serve a purpose for which it was not meant.

The Personal Growth Model

The personal growth serves as a bridge to link the cultural model and the language model. It lays emphasis on the particular use of language in a text and places the language in a specific cultural context. To do so, teachers encourage learners to express their opinions and feelings and link their own personal and cultural experiences to the ones expressed in the text. This model also blends the development of knowledge of ideas language through the variety of themes and topics. This role of the model underscores one of the theories of reading which emphasises the interaction of the reader with the text. Cadorath and Harris (1998:188) hold that the "...text itself has no meaning; it only provides direction for the reader to construct meaning from the reader's own experience". This is because the interpretation of texts by learners brings about personal responses from readers by touching on significant, interesting and engaging themes. Through such interaction, reading no longer remains a receptive skill but a proactive communicative skill.

5. An Integrated approach for Teaching Language through Literature

Having examined the critical literary and stylistics, the cultural, the language and the personal growth models individually, it is worth examining how they can be integrated in the language classroom.

Duff and Maley (1990) maintain that the aims of integrating these aspects are linguistic, methodological and motivational. At the linguistic level, when learners are introduced to a wide range of authentic texts, they are by so doing being introduced to a variety of types and difficulty levels of English language. Within the framework of methodology, it is obvious that literary discourse or texts exposes and sensitises readers to the processes of reading; for example the use of schema, strategies for intensive and extensive reading. Motivationally speaking, literary texts

reading in an EFL classroom gives priority to the enjoyment of reading. According to Short (1996), an integrated model will be a linguistic approach which makes use of some of the strategies used in stylistic analysis through the exploration of literary and non-literary texts, from the perspective of style and its relationship to content and form. It consists of an in depth analysis of the stylistic features of a text; that is vocabulary, structure or register in a bid to find out not just what a text means, but also how it comes to mean what it does. Such analysis may not be too technical and rigorous for the EFL learner.

Maley (1989) and Savvidou (2004) propose the following stages in the presentation of a literary text; stages that can be adapted to any level and to any text type:

Stage 1: Preparation and Anticipation

This stage elicits learners' real or literary experience of the main themes and context of text.

Stage 2: Focusing

Learners experience the text by listening to and or reading and focusing on specific content in the text.

Stage 3: Preliminary Response

Learners give their initial response to the text - spoken or written

Stage 4: Working at it - I

Focus is on comprehending the first level of meaning through intensive reading.

Stage 5: Working at it - II

Focus is on analysis of the text at a deeper level and exploring how the message is conveyed through overall structure and any special uses of language - rhythm, imagery, word choice etc.

Stage 6: Interpretation and Personal Response

The focus of this final step is on increasing understanding, enhancing enjoyment of the text and enabling learners to come to their own personal interpretation of the text. This is based on the rationale for the personal growth model.

6. Further approaches to literature in English language teaching

As stated earlier, an understanding of the various approaches to studying a text can enable EFL teachers to adapt any text to the enhancement of the language proficiency of their learners. The rationale behind this section of this article is the hypothesis that most EFL teachers and perhaps English language educational authorities in Cameroon shun the incorporation of literature in ESL/EFL teaching because of ignorance of how to proceed with literary texts. Van (2009) presents the following approaches: Reader-Response, Language-based, Critical Literacy, New criticism, Structuralism and Stylistics. Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010:4-5) present a summary of these approaches as follows:

Reader-Response

The reader-response approach juxtaposes the learners' feelings, opinions and personal experiences as a whole and the literary text. As such it brings literature to the reach of the learners; makes the learning experience more personal and motivating for. It also calls for group participation and student-centredness.

Language-based

This approach encourages experiences of students with literature. This is done through activities such as summarizing or précis, jigsaw reading, brainstorming and cloze. These activities enhance learners' motivation, autonomy and interactive collaboration

New criticism

With new criticism, literature learning is self-sufficient and does not depend on the authors' as well as the texts' economic, socio-political or historic backgrounds. Elements of form and literary devices constitute the focus of activities in this approach.

Structuralism

This is a scientific approach to the handling of texts of literature. It focuses on the themes, processes, the formal mechanical relationships and structures that are needed for the creation of meaning and for the placing of the text in a hierarchical system that is real or meaningful.

Stylistics

Features of the language of literature (unconventionality and ungrammaticality) are the focus of this approach. This enables learners to appreciate and interpret literature texts on the basis of their linguistic knowledge.

Critical Literacy

This approach emerged from studies of critical language, educational sociology and feminism to portray the relationship between social power and language use. The approach is within the realms of transformative pedagogy wherein learners are expected to be critically aware of the place of language in creating social relationships, and to see how political and social factors mold the target language.

7. Literature in ELT Theory

According to Van (2009), the six approaches examined above, which override those of Maley (1989) have their unquestionable merits as far as EFL/ESL teaching is concerned, but, holds that the Language-based and the Reader-Response ones appear to be the best for EFL classrooms. Placed in the order of their usefulness in the face of the multidimensionality of diversification of the challenges in the language classroom, Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010) on their part point out the undeniable preponderance of the approaches of critical literacy, personal growth, and that of reader response over the others. To them, these approaches are reflections of insights obtained from recent research in second language acquisition and applied linguistics and are student-centred.

As its name implies, Williams and Burden (1997) believe that the personal growth model underscores some of the principles on which the humanistic approaches to language teaching are based. These tenets include the following:

- i. Involvement of whole persons in learning processes;
- ii. Engagement of learners' emotions and feelings in the learning processes.
- iii. Development of the personal identity of learners.
- iv. Encouragement of self-evaluation and self-knowledge.
- v. Establishment of a sense of personal or individual value in students.
- vi. Encouragement of creativity in learners..

The emergence of the reader response model is based on the claim that "individual responses to literary works could be as valid as authoritative, formal techniques of literary exploration" (Spack 1985:708). This method accords Widdowson's (1979) claims cited in McKay (1982) and quoted by Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010) that reading does not necessarily consist of having to react to a self-sufficient piece of work that requires interpretations that are objective. The underlying assumption here is that when readers have to interact with, and not to have to react to a text, their level of motivation is very high. The reader-response approach is also informed by the theory of language processing involving the schemata which bestows importance on the active, rather than passive involvement of the reader in the tasks of reading. Gajdusek (1988:231) cites Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) saying "Comprehension never occurs in a vacuum, and the reader's prior knowledge, experience, and even emotional state are an important part of the process by which meaning is created." This implies that reading has been conceptualized and centred on the reader and not on the text and by so doing classroom techniques foster the development of the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are drawn from literary texts.

The critical literacy approach is another informed approach to literature teaching. The approach is based on the transformative or critical pedagogy in language education which highlights the empowerment of learners. Shor (1992:129) describes critical pedagogy as:

Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, delivered wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse."

This approach views learners as active rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Learners are individuals with social identities who actively engage in the exploration of the surrounding cultural, social, and political assumptions of a text. As concerns the type of text that can veritably trigger these attitudes in learners, Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010:7) believe that Literature is now one of the viable resources for the fostering habits like that in the EFL/ESL classrooms and Oster (1989) holds that since the adoption of a critical perspective towards what one reads might involve great risks, literature gives a safe opportunity to enable learners to see from different perspectives on the grounds of its fallibility and since it is man-made.

8. Choosing literature texts for EFL language classrooms

One of the main difficulties in integrating literature in the EFL classroom is the choice of the texts that best suit the learners. The answer to this preoccupation is that the text be one that can create literary experience among the learners. The attainment of literary experience requires that learners already master a vocabulary that is rich, the textual syntactic structures that are complex, the socio-cultural assumptions that underlie it; and a mastery of these aspects presupposes that the learner already knows the language and does not need to learn it any more as a language learning device. To overcome this dilemma of the linguistic and cultural complexity, a careful selection of the kind of text will be required. Such texts may include the following:

Simplified texts

Although simplifying the text may reduce the readability, density of the information and cohesion of a text, literature testifying the effectiveness of the use of such texts exists. Zoreda and Vivaldo-Lima (2008: 22-23) have reported the

success of using simplified novels that are accompanied by the film and audio versions of these novels to enhance the intercultural and linguistic skills of learners.

Young adult texts

McKay (1982) holds that the principal characteristics of these texts consist of the cast of characters that is small, real-life relevant themes like personal growth and the simplicity of the style. The major setback here may be that the texts may not be appealing to adult learners.

Easy texts

It is not easy to ascertain what an easy text is. The consideration and choice of an easy text will only be based on intuition since one cannot posit that there exists universally accepted criteria to establish the complexity of literary texts in terms of their characterization, plot, the other literary qualities as well as the cultural assumptions that underlie them.

In addition to the teaching frame presented earlier by Savvidou (2004) and Maley (1989), Gajdusek (1988) suggests a sequence comprising four levels for classroom activities. He uses a story to exemplify his approach and says that this story approach can reliably be applied any other type of literature text.

1. Pre-reading work

Pre-reading and vocabulary development

- i. Drilling learners on the words that have clues the emotional and cultural meaning of the work.
- ii. Cloze tasks or exercises for unknown words whose meanings learners can obtain from the context.

2. Factual work in the classroom

Textual Point of view

- i. Identification and discussion of the implications of point of view.
- ii. Using a different point of view to rewrite the story.

Characterisation

- i. Writing down the principal characters of the text;
- ii. Examining the relationships, the conflicts and motivations of the main actors of the texts.

Textual Setting

- i. Let pre-reading tasks consist of the teacher giving the author's background information to students.
- ii. Group learners and tell them to work and come out with information on the general and specific place and time.

Action in the Classroom

- i. Check for understanding by asking questions to students.
 - ii. Get the students to work and come up with the time line of the story in the text;
3. Analysis

Text Structure (Plot, conflict, climax)

- i. Get the learners to investigate into the plot as regards to the conflict, climax, and denouement.
- ii. Put students for them to work out the climax line and thereafter, they compare and contrast their ideas.

Thematic development

- i. The teacher elicits many topics and calls on students to use the topics in articulating the themes elicited by the teacher.
- ii. The articulation of the themes is done by focusing on the analyses of paragraphs.

Stylistic development

- i. Examine the figurative language as well as the different patterns of the text.
 - ii. Students are told to segment the text into major sections and then, with name these sections with words or titles that reflect the purpose of the author.
4. Extending activities

Activities in the classroom

- i. Outright debate of issues in the text;
- ii. Simulations, dramatizations and Role-plays.

Student writing

- i. Student with a low language proficiency could be told to practice grammar at sentence level by writing.
- ii. Learners are assigned to carry out different types of writing tasks like critical essays or writing for a journal.

On his part, Davies (1990) proposes a procedure which exploits drama texts to get from plays the maximum for classroom language learning. The following procedure is proposed:

- i. Learners are made to listen to the recording of the text only after reading it.
- ii. A discussion of the text by students and teachers then follows.
- iii. The text is either read or its recording played for the second time, with pauses made in order to elicit certain ideas or to draw learners' attention to specific emotions, utterances or attitudes.
- iv. Students are put into small groups wherein they discuss to be completely acquainted with the characterization and setting of the drama piece.
- v. The learners are made to choose their roles in order to practice the rehearsing of the play
- vi. The whole play, a scene or scenes of it are performed by the students.
- vii. Finally, each performance is followed by a classroom discussion.

Drama texts with are interactive texts par excellence will thus be very effective tools for the enhancement of the linguistic, cultural and strategic competence of language learners both in foreign and second language learning contexts.

9. Conclusion

The statistical results obtained within the framework of this paper reveal that the studying of literatures in French by Anglophones at the Advanced Level positively influenced their performances in French in Higher Education. These results equally infer that the poor performances of Francophone Student-teachers in courses like LBL 11 are attributable to the fact that they do not study literatures in English at the secondary school level.

Therefore, in spite of the controversies inherent in the development of learners' language skills through literature, there are many benefits. Literature widens learners' perception of their culture and that of other people; therefore, fostering intercultural or even international understanding. ;It offers learners many opportunities to interact with authentic language. Such interactions certainly militate for the development of the micro skills of grammar, spelling, vocabulary and pronunciation as well as the macro ones of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This shows the learner the how and why different discourse types and forms are used in different communication acts. If the Cameroonian EFL/ESL syllabus designers, material developers, and teachers adopt and adapt the appropriate approaches or models, the appropriate tasks and activities, it is certain that Literature will be a strong pedagogic weapon for the enhancement of the linguistic and sociolinguistic skills of Cameroonian learners and they will not regret not studying Literatures in English that parallels the literatures in French that is taught to their Anglophone counterparts.

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