

## Students' Perception towards Literature Integration in the English Language Departments at Duhok and Zakho Universities

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the students' perceptions towards literature integration in language learning in the English Language Departments (henceforth ELD) at Duhok and Zakho universities. Knowledge about students' perceptions will influence their interest and language learning development. Literature is an important part of the syllabus at most ELDs in the Kurdish universities. Although studies have shown the importance of the learners' perception, no studies have examined the students' perceptions towards their literature modules in the ELDs at the Kurdish universities. The study is based on the responses of 268 undergraduate students to a questionnaire consisting of close-ended, multiple choices (quantitative data) and open-ended questions (qualitative data). The quantitative data is analyzed using the statistical analysis software (SPSS) and the qualitative using thematic analysis. The majority of the students have positive perceptions towards literature integration in their study program. They show that it contributes to their language development in general and their vocabulary, speaking and reading skills in particular and novel is selected as the most beneficial literary genre for language development. Additionally, literature contributes to develop the learners' cultural awareness in general and helps to identify the similarities and differences between the English culture and the learners' own culture. The study also shows the contribution of literature to the learners' personal growth in terms of active participation in class activities, increasing their critical thinking and analytical skills and helps them to understand their and other people's experiences. The students are satisfied with the selected literary texts and topics and to some extent with the teaching methods which are mostly teacher led, but they suggest more students' involvement. However, students face some difficulties, mostly language difficulty, that need to be taken into consideration. Thus, it is recommended that literature should be kept in the ELDs curriculum and teachers and administrators should make students aware of the value of the literature, understand the students needs and work to overcome the problems they encounter in literature study. Generally, knowing the students' perceptions towards literature classes will be helpful for the researchers, educational policy makers and the language teachers to determine English language learners' genuine needs, motivation or challenges and issues in relation to the use of literary texts as teaching materials and to develop a suitable teaching approach to use the literary texts.

### INTRODUCTION

In Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and pedagogic practices, research indicated the influential role of the students' beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about the pedagogic strategies, learning preferences and text selections in language teaching and learning (Brown, 2009). Perception is a subjective process which shows how individuals acquire, interpret, organize and generally make sense of the environment in which they live and it also measures the rate to which such perceptions influence individual behaviors and attitudes depending on the individuals past experiences, biological makeup, expectations, goals, and/or culture (Lavrakas, 2008). An awareness of the perceptions and attitudes of learners is helpful to develop an understanding of

the teaching and learning process (Carroli, 2008; Brown, 2009; Bernaus and Gardner, 2008) not only among teachers and learners but also among administrators and educators. Additionally, taking the learners' perceptions seriously into consideration protects their self-esteem and reduces the pressure that is placed on them as non-native readers (Kramsch, 1985). In other words, it relieves the learners psychologically and gives them the impression that they are important members of the learning and teaching process. Besides, the way that learners perceive a certain subject in their learning environment plays a crucial factor in their success or failure (Derakhshan et al., 2015; Chalak & Kassaian, 2010; Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009; cited in Othman et al., 2015, p. 106). Furthermore, learners with positive perceptions will

be more willing to learn the language and will develop their own strategies to accomplish it such as 'asking questions, volunteering information and answering questions' (Baker, 1993, as cited in Ghazali, 2008).

However in the Kurdish universities, students' perceptions towards their learning environment generally and the subjects they study particularly are often neglected. In the ELDs at Duhok and Zakho universities (henceforth UOD and UOZ), literature modules are studied as an important part of the language learning curriculum. The main literary modules provided at these universities are presented in table 1. These modules are integrated in the language curriculum and literature is used as an object of study, i.e. they are studied for their literary qualities. Nevertheless, students' perceptions towards such integration has never been investigated. In other words, no studies have examined the perceptions of the learners towards their modules in general and literature in particular in the ELDs at UOD and UOZ. Besides, it is not clear whether these modules contribute to students' language development, cultural awareness or personal enrichment. Different studies have investigated students' perceptions towards literature classes in other contexts (such as Davis et al, 1992; Halim, 2006; Carrolie, 2008; Sivapalan and Subramanium, 2008; Nasharudin, 2008; Alfauzan & Hussain, 2016; Wasti, 2016), but these studies are different for they concentrated on the perception of literature for language learning only, while cultural awareness and personal growth are not taken into consideration.

Thus, The present investigation is the first attempt to study the perceptions of students towards the integration of the literature modules/classes in the ELDs at UOD and UOZ. It aims to investigate the students' perceptions about literature in terms of developing the students' language competency primarily and also in terms of developing their cultural awareness of the target language and students' personal development through studying literature. Additionally, it aims to identify students perception towards the teaching methods, text selection and towards the relevance of literature to their overall education.

Since literature is a significant component in the curriculum of ELDs, it is worth investigating the students' perceptions and perspectives towards the role of literature in developing their language proficiency, cultural awareness and developing their personal skills. Knowing the perceptions of the students will be helpful for the researchers, educational policy makers and the language teachers to determine English language learners' genuine needs, motivation or challenges and issues in relation to literature classes. In

this way, the study can also help the educational policy makers and teachers to develop a suitable teaching approach to use the literary texts. Carroli (2008 cited in Wasti, 2016) stated that learners' choice is considered central to successful language learning.

Thus, The study will answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the students in the ELDs at selected Kurdish universities about literature and its relevance to their language learning, cultural awareness and personal development?
2. What are the students' perceptions towards teaching methods and text selection?
3. What are the students' perceptions towards the relevance of literature to their overall education?

The paper is structured as follows: in section 2, a theoretical background and a review of previous works in the integration of literature in EFL classes are presented. Section 3 details the methodological issues used in the data collection and analysis. In section 4, we present the main results arrived at throughout the data analysis. The conclusions and implications of our analysis are discussed in section 5.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### Literature in ESL

Literature comprises genres like novels, short stories, plays and poems which are fictional and the message they carry is shown through its careful language: "language which is rich and multi-layered." (Lazar, 1993 cited in Finsrud, 2017, p. 4). Thus, language and literature complement each other, to get into the imaginative world of characters, events of a short story or a poem all depend on the language that they are written in their different ways (Widdowson, 1990, p. 180). Literature can be used as an 'object' or as a 'resource' for language learning (Maley, 1989). Literature as an object looks at literary texts as the object of study and 'they are studied for their literary qualities', while literature as a resource means it is primarily used 'as just one among many other kinds of texts' which can be used to teach language (Maley, 2001: 181 cited in Baba, 2008).

The relationship between literature and English language teaching was never a smooth one. In the early 1900s when the grammar translation method was the dominant method, literature was used for grammatical purposes (Carter, 2007; Cook, 1994; Lazar, 1993; Maley & Duff, 1990). By

**Table 1.** The literary modules taught at UOD and UOZ

| University | 1 <sup>st</sup> year          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> year | 3 <sup>rd</sup> year             | 4 <sup>th</sup> year |
|------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| UOD        |                               | Poetry               | British Literature               | Topics in Literature |
|            |                               | Novel                | American Literature              | Literary Criticism   |
|            |                               | Drama                | World literature                 |                      |
| UOZ        | An Introduction to Literature | Elizabethan Drama    | Drama                            | Modern Poetry        |
|            |                               | Short story          | Victorian Novel                  | Modern Drama         |
|            |                               |                      | Neoclassical and romantic Poetry | Modern Novel         |

the 1960s, literature importance in English as a Second Language (henceforth ESL) melted away because it is thought that literature does not offer the much-needed linguistic skills (Topping, 1968 cited in Stern, 1991, p. 329). In the mid-twentieth, the area of language learning abandoned literature and rejected its role, and paved the way for linguistic based approaches (Carter, 2007). But this rejection of the role of literature didn't last long as in the mid-1980s, literature in language teaching was given attention again and was at the heart of interest of many researchers among them Brumfit (1986); Brumfit and Carter (1986), Boyle and Hirvela (1988) to name a few. Stern (1991, p. 344) discusses the wide interest that literature has gained in the last few years as an integral and integrated component in the language curriculum. The role of literature is shifted from its traditional role as the ultimate aim of English instruction to an important component of the language curriculum. He adds that today the role of literature is redefined and that it offers linguistic, cultural and aesthetic potentials to second language learning. Likewise, Wasti (2016) and Tseng (2010) state that in recent years, literature has gained a rebirth in language education in general and language learning and teaching in English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL)/ESL contexts in particular. Also in most of the modern foreign language departments at universities worldwide, language and literature are divided into two different departments (Tucker, 2006 as cited in Tseng, 2010). Thou in reality this separation is impossible because "no teacher of literature ignores linguistic problems and no language teacher really wants to leave his students speaking a sterile impoverished version of the language" (Smith, 1972, p. 275 as cited in Tseng, 2010).

Despite of its great role in language teaching and learning, literature, up to this day, has come across much criticism and hard talk by educationalists and researchers. One party is for and the other is against using literature in ESL contexts. It is important to have a look at both views.

### *The for-literature view*

The for-literature followers value literature place in general language teaching for the linguistic, cultural, motivational, academic and intellectual benefits that it offers (Ghouti, 2013: p. 11; Widdowson, 1990; McKay, 1986; Brumfit, 1985).

Linguistically, literature contains a language that is used in the widest range of contexts and discourses which helps the learners to develop their language proficiency and this can help them to passionately express emotions and attitudes (Elliot, 1990 cited in Wasti, 2016, p. 2). Additionally, it provides a mastery of vocabulary, grammar and language skills (Stern, 1991; Ur, 1991). What is more, it is regarded as a suitable source for in depth language learning. In other words, English language teaching needs what is called "Dimension of depth" meaning a deeper insight into language rather than the current focus on the communicative competence. The term refers to the mental involvement in what the learner hears or says and this kind of involvement leads to a kind of communication that is deeper and not just a superficial (Stern, 1991).

Culturally, literature raises cultural awareness in the learners (McLeod, 1976 cited in Jiang, 2011, p. 6). It invites learners to encounter universal human experiences within the context of a specific setting and the consciousness of particular people (Stern, 1991).

As for the motivational benefits, Adler (1972, cited in Wasti, 2016), Murphy (1997), Paran (2006), Ur (1991) and Lazar (1993, p. 19) put heavy emphasis on the personal involvement that literature may generate in the reader. Adler says that this involvement will make learners more motivated in developing their language and cultural awareness of the target community; as the learners' "personal empathy" creates a contact between the reader and the author from one hand and between the reader, the characters and the events on the other hand. It also provides the ground for highly motivated small-group work (Long & Porter, 1985).

Academically, and intellectually, literature has the power of educating the whole person and it stimulates learners' imagination that in turns develops their critical abilities and also stimulates their emotional awareness (Lazar, 1993; Ur, 1991). Furthermore, it helps to develop critical thinking skills and matured judgments (Hargreaves, 1969 as cited in Stern, 1991, p. 329). It also encourages learners' oral skills (Enright & McCloskey, 1985) and develops active problem-solving ability (Gajdusek, 2004 cited in Jiang, 2011, p. 6).

Finally, Stern (1991, p. 328-329) adds that integrating teaching literature to EFL has aesthetical benefits: it means teaching literature for its own sake. It is the teaching for the "perceptive insight it provides into man's existence within the artistic and intellectual boundaries of a literary framework." Whereas, Ur (1991, p. 201) states that reading literature can be so enjoyable and contributes to world knowledge.

### *The against-literature view*

On the other hand, the opponents of integrating literature in ESL (Rivers, 1981; Littlewood, 1986, to name a few), doubt the benefits of literature in ESL classrooms. They claim that literature is "an uncertain business". They devaluate its role as a source for language learning/teaching.

Culturally, It is claimed that literature is imagination; therefore, it does not represent the true picture of the target community (Rivers, 1981). Additionally, because literature is highly culturally charged it is found strange by the EFL learners, and for that reason it is difficult for them to understand the conceptual notions that literature carries (Savvidou, 2004).

While linguistically, literature is found unsuitable model for teaching and learning the language because it contains unfamiliar lexicon and syntactically complex structures which will cause difficulty for learners to comprehend it (MaKay, 1986). Besides, if the objective in EFL is language learning, literature cannot serve to attain this need for its language is far away from the everyday language (Hall, 2005; Collie and Slater, 1987 as cited in Ainy, 2007, p. 10-12). Furthermore, to communicate in the target language many functions are needed to be learnt like grammar, developing language skills according to needs, vocabulary learning besides learning social skills like turn taking, politeness strategies and interac-

tional awareness, to many literature hinders these processes to take place (McRay, 1991).

Finally, MaKay furthers that "The study of literature will contribute nothing to helping our students meet their academic and/or occupational goals" (1986, p.177). To educate EFL learners through classic literature exposure usually ends up with disappointing results (Akyel and Yalçin, 1990). Despite all, "the literary text, after all, is not specifically written for instructing EFL/ESL classes." (Jiang, 2011, p. 9) As the result, the role of literature in language teaching has been questioned for these reasons. Ur (1991, p. 201) summarizes the major disadvantages and problems of literature teaching:

1. Learners may find language of literature difficult to read.
2. To use simplified versions makes poor representation of the original ones.
3. Many literary texts are long and time-consuming to teach.
4. The target-language culture on which the literature is based is alien to learners and may be difficult for them to relate to.
5. By using texts as a basis for language teaching we may spoil learners' enjoyment and appreciation of them as literature.

### **Approaches to Teaching Literature in EFL Contexts**

Different approaches to teach literature in EFL are evolved. Carter and Long (1991) suggest three approaches: (1) the language based approach (2) the cultural approach and (3) literature as a source for personal growth or enrichment. In addition to language based and personal enrichment approaches, Lazar (1993, p23-39) introduced literature as content approach. Most recently, Savvidou (2004 cited in Ghouti, 2013) has come out with another approach which is referred to as the integrated approach. In this section, the main approaches, namely, the language model, the cultural model, the personal growth and the integrated models will be discussed.

#### ***The language model***

It is a student-centered approach in which linguistic goals are achieved through literary texts. It mainly concentrates on language features such as grammar, vocabulary and different discourses. In other words, linguistic knowledge is taught through literature. According to this model, the focus on the language used in the literary text leads to fine interpretations of the text indirectly and this is done through different activities such as the cloze procedure, prediction exercises, jumbled sentences, summary writing, creative writing, and role play (Brumfit, 1985; Duff and Maley, 1990; Carter & Long, 1991 cited in Yimwilia, 2015, p.15).

Advocates of this approach (Brumfit, 1985 and Duff and Maley, 1990) claim that the aesthetic appreciation of a text will be achieved too. The model helps students to approach the text in a systematic and methodological way by studying linguistic features, literal and figurative language, and direct and indirect speech (Carter & Long, 1991, cited in Yimwilia,

2015, p.15). A detailed analysis of the language of the literary texts will help students to make meaningful interpretations... [and] at the same time, students will increase their general awareness and understanding of English.' (Lazar, 1993) Violetta-Irene (2015, p.75) states that teachers prefer to use language model for teaching literature in order to give students knowledge with some sense of the more subtle and varied creative uses of language. However, the approach neglects the learners' response to the text which may cause losing the pleasure of reading literature (Mackay, 1982 cited in Ghouti, 2013, p. 18-19).

#### ***Cultural model***

The cultural approach or 'literature as content' as identified by Lazar (1993, p.24) is considered the most traditional one among others. It is more teacher-centered approach where the literary text is used as a product and a means to learn about the target culture. That is why the teacher concentrates on the cultural aspects of the text such as the social, political and historical background of the literary texts. Furthermore, the approach emphasizes the history of literary movements, the different genres, biographical facts about authors and various synopses (Ghouti, 2013, p. 16). Teaching literature within the cultural approach raises the learners' awareness of other cultures and ideologies as well as their own (Carter and Long, 1991 cited in Ghouti, 2013, p. 16-18; Yimwilia, 2015, p.15 & Ainy, 2006, p. 41). The approach connects cultures and develops a sense of acceptance and understanding towards otherness in the learners. However, this method has no systematic relation to the development of language skills (Carter and Long, 1991 cited in Ainy, 2006, p. 41).

#### ***Personal growth model***

The approach connects both language model and cultural model as it stresses particular use of language in a piece of literature and at the same time places it in a certain cultural context simultaneously. It is also named the enrichment model by Lazar (1993). It paves the way for the students to express their personal feelings and ideas. It calls for the students' active involvement with the text and compare and contrast their experiences with those of the text. The approach stresses the group working activities (Lazar, 1993, p.24). Generally, it aides students to develop knowledge of ideas and language, content and formal schemata, through different themes and topics. Carter and Long (1991 cited in Ghouti, 2013, p. 19) claim that students are engaged with literature and reading literary texts which will help them to grow as individuals and encourage them to make their own interpretations about the text and avoid readymade ones. Students, therefore, are seen as active participants both intellectually and emotionally for letting out their opinions, thoughts, personal experiences and feelings. They also give meaning to the text by the interaction between them and the text on the basis of their own experience (Cadorath and Harris, 1998, p. 188). As for the role of the teacher, he is paramount in selecting the texts not just depending on their stylistic features but also the choice has to be according to

the learners' needs and interests (Ghouthi, 2013, p. 19) or according to the learners' expectations and language level (Hismanoglu, 2005, p. 55). Thus, to encourage personal growth teachers have to select texts to which students can respond and to which they can use their ideas and imagination creatively (Violetta-Irene, 2015, p. 76).

### ***The integrated approach***

The integrated approach combines the teaching of literature with the mastery of the language including the vocabulary, grammar and the four language skills, and it raises the learners' awareness and understanding of the British, American, and other English speaking cultures (Stern, 1991, p. 330). In other words, the approach integrates the teaching of language, culture and personal skills via literature, and for that reason it is also referred to as a multidisciplinary approach. In this approach the teacher refers to a variety of teaching methods, techniques, and technical devices (Adeyemi, 2010 cited in Yimwilia, 2015, p.14).

The integrated approach helps students to make connections, generalize, and transfer knowledge to a variety of problem-solving situations in the real world (Lucan, 1981, p. 59). In addition, the learning process in this approach is more comprehensive and interesting which makes the classroom environment more enjoyable and thought-provoking (Adeyemi, 2010, p. 12). Moreover, the integrated approach can facilitate collaborative learning and help students to become independent problem solvers (Knowles and Smith, 2001).

### **Previous Studies on Students Perceptions towards literature**

Investigating the students' attitudes towards their classes is important. Many researchers have investigated students' perceptions towards literature classes in different contexts (such as Davis et al, 1992; Halim, 2006; Carrolie, 2008; Sivapalan and Subramanium, 2008; Nasharudin, 2008; Alfauzan & Hussain, 2016; Wasti, 2016). These studies are different for they concentrated on the perception of literature for language learning only, while cultural awareness and personal growth are not taken into consideration. Besides, all of them have been investigated outside Kurdistan, so this work is the first attempt to reveal the students' perceptions in the Kurdish universities and the contribution of literature to language learning, cultural awareness and personal enrichment.

In some of these studies, the learners show positive attitudes towards literature classes. For, example, Davis et al (1992) show that learners have positive attitudes towards the study of the target literature and this leads to a great amount of leisure in reading it and this helps to arrive at the preferred learning style. Additionally, Carroli (2008), in his study of the students' perceptions of Italian literature in an Australian context, reveals that learners perceive literature positively as a means for language learning. Likewise, Alfauzan & Hussain (2016) investigate the attitude and perception of 59 Saudi undergraduate students towards English literature courses as a part of their BA English Program at a large public university in KSA. The results show that the participants have

positive attitude towards literature courses which is due to the learners' social environment (family, friends, classmates, teachers...etc.) that significantly contributes in constructing positive attitudes and enhancing their perception towards literature as medium of learning English language. In addition, Wasti (2016) carries on a research in a Pakistani context in which she investigates the perceptions of 268 undergraduate Pakistani EFL learners towards literature to identify the issues and challenges that students face in terms of literature. The results show that literary texts seem to motivate these young learners for learning English; and they enjoy reading some literary texts and analyze the socio-cultural details mentioned in these texts, which may possibly contribute to their personal development. However, the study reveals that participants' lack of prior linguistic competence and intercultural awareness may challenge their ability to understand and comprehend some references of foreign cultures and vocabulary items used in the classical literary texts taught in the context of the study.

On the other hand, in some studies, the learners have negative attitudes towards literature. For instance, Sivapalan and Subramanium (2008 cited in Wasti, 2016), in their investigation of the perception of the young adult learners at an engineering university in Malaysia towards the study of literature in their English study, reveal that the learners have negative attitude towards integrating literature in their program because they think that it is irrelevant to their main course of study. Similarly in his study of the perceptions of literature, Halim (2006 cited in Othman et al., 2015, p. 106) finds that the majority of students hate literature for its difficult indirect language, vocabulary and it needs a lot of reading. Likewise, the learners Nasharudin's study (2008 cited in Othman et al., 2015, p. 106) have positive attitudes towards learning English language but negative attitude when it comes to literature learning. Furthermore, Ghouthi (2013) conducts a study at Tlemcen University in Algeria to investigate the attitudes of 35 tertiary learners towards literature and the different strategies their teachers implement in delivering literature courses. It is shown that a considerable number of students shows a negative stance towards literary studies and despite the latest reforms in the Algerian system of education which aims to shift towards more learner centered pedagogy, literature teaching is still teacher-fronted. The study has also shown that a great number of the students have displayed their dissatisfaction with the way literature is being instructed.

In most of the previous studies on literature in ESL classes have viewed literature as a resource and not as an object. In other words literature is used as a material not as a subject of study, for literature sake. While, in the current context under research literature is taught separately from other classes.

## **METHOD**

### **The Participants**

The participants include 268 undergraduate students at two selected governmental universities in Kurdistan, namely UOD and UOZ. Only students of third and fourth year at

ELDs were chosen because they studied literature and have more experience than first and second year. The data was collected at the very beginning of the academic year (2018-2019). The demographic information and the number of the participants are presented in table 2.

The participation of all the students and teachers was voluntary and did not imply any kind of compensation. The participants were chosen according to the 'convenience sampling method' (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006 cited in Baba, 2008, p.8). A group of students were selected who were available and accessible. However, in order not to affect their responses their participation was made voluntary.

**The Questionnaire**

The research instrument used in this study to collect the perceptions of the students toward literature classes is a questionnaire (attached in appendix 1). "A questionnaire is an instrument for the collection of data, usually in written form consisting of open and/or closed questions and other probes requiring a response from the subject." (Nunan, 1992, p. 231) A questionnaire is used because it can be analysed with ease and it preserves the anonymity of the informants which may lead to reliability of data (Ghouti, 2013). Additionally, it is one of the tools that can be used to collect data from large numbers of people quickly. Because the population of the current study is a large one it is best seen to collect data needed through a questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of three parts: part one (close-ended), part two (multiple choices) and part three (open-ended) for gathering qualitative and quantitative data. The questions are adopted from Carrolie's (2008) orientations of perceptions and Davis et al. (1992). However, some items are designed by the researcher based on the purpose and context of the study and also based on the knowledge developed through literature review. Before administrating the questionnaire to the participants it is piloted.

The closed-ended part of the questionnaire includes 19 items which are responded by a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (number one) to strongly disagree (number 5). This part is distributed on the following themes: literature classes contribution to develop language proficiency (items 1-8), literature classes contribution to enrich cultural awareness (items 9-10), literature classes contribution to the overall personal development or growth (items 11-16) and the last theme text selection and teaching methods (items 17-19).

The multiple choice questions (items 20-35) have the general theme perceptions towards the relevance of literature to education. In this part, each question carries more than one pre-defined responses to choose from. The students are given freedom to choose more than one choice and to write down their own choices if there are any based on their preferences. The reasons behind including this part are that firstly, the researcher get as much information as needed from the participants to know their perceptions more deeply. Secondly, in the option part of the questionnaire, the item is written along with the choices and this gives students more chance to understand the matter and respond more comprehensively to the items.

The open-ended questions are mainly about how to make literature classes more interesting in the opinion of the participants, the problems they face in literature classes, and what literature added to their education linguistically, culturally and personally. The objective behind using open-ended questions is not for statistical analysis but to explain (Gorard, 2006, as cited in Wasti, 2016). Furthermore, the open-ended question is a good method when elucidating the perceptions of respondents because it gives them space to write down their own perspectives on aspects being asked (Wasti, 2016). This sort of data helps the researcher to collect subjective, in-depth and context-specific perceptions and interpretations from the participants of the study (Cohen et al., 2007). To add more, the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended part, assists the researcher to gather as well as generalize the perceptions of a large population of participants (Morrison, 2007). All in all, the open-ended questions help to further clarify the participants views on the subject.

**Questionnaire validity**

Validity is defined as "the meaning that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data that are important" and it is one of the requirements of research (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 136). For the purpose of validity of the questionnaire; It was sent to 6 jury members (professional academic staff). The questionnaire was revised according to the jury comments and feedback which formed support for construct validity. Additionally, the study has used a questionnaire which give different types of data: quantitative (close-ended and multiple choices parts) and qualitative (open-ended part). The use of different methods also constructs validity (Cohen et al, 2007). The validity of the questionnaire is measured using SPSS construct validity. The construct validity of the items in part 1 and 2 is presented in table 3.

The construct validity of the items of the questionnaire is significant (0.000) which is less than the default level of the current study (0. 05). Besides, the value of the truth coefficient for all the expressions of the first part is (0.854) and for part two is (0.767) which indicates high levels of credibility according to the standard value of this parameter, which is (1) meaning that the more the value of the construct validity is closer to (one) the more it indicates the high levels of credibility of that part.

**Table 2.** The participants of the study

| Level                | UOD | UOZ | Total |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-------|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year | 88  | 62  |       |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> Year | 76  | 42  | 268   |

**Table 3.** Construct validity of the questionnaire

|                      | Part 1 | Part 2 |
|----------------------|--------|--------|
| Validity Coefficient | 0.854  | 0.767  |
| Sig. (2-tailed)      | 0.000  | 0.000  |
| N                    | 268    | 268    |

### Questionnaire reliability

It is important to check the reliability of an instrument used for data collection in a research. Cronbach alpha is one of the forms used to check the reliability of such instruments. It usually measures the internal consistency of the tool and calculates a coefficient of reliability that ranges from 0 to 1 (Cohen et al., 2007). It is the average correlation among all the items in question, and is used for multi-item scales. The reliability of the questionnaire adapted for the present study was measured using SPSS (version 21) following Cronbach alpha, see table 4. It is found to be (0. 869) for all items which is considered highly reliable in comparison to the standard value of the humanitarian studies which is (0. 60); and separately it reaches (0. 841 and 0. 632) for part one and two respectively, noting that the value of part one is higher than the second part. Thus, It can be concluded from the results of the reliability that the measurements taken for the tests of the questionnaire parts and items meet the stability requirement.

### Pilot study

The questionnaire was piloted. For this purpose 12 students (6 boys and 6 girls) were chosen randomly by their teachers from fourth and third years at ELD, UOD. The selected students were asked to respond to the questionnaire and point out any difficulties too that may affect its effectiveness. Before, administering the questionnaires, the instructions were given to the participants. They were asked not to write their names on the questionnaire to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

The participants found difficulty in understanding a couple of terminologies and confusing structures which made the researchers to replace and edit them with simpler terms, words and structures for comprehension purposes. Ghouti (2013) states that it is important to test the consistency of the instrument and whether it is reliable or not for the sake of achieving realistic results from the data gathered.

### Data Collection Procedures

The procedures of data collection started in October and extended to November, 2018 at the start of the academic year 2018-2019. The data was collected during classes after getting permission from departments and teachers. The teachers helped the researcher with arranging time and place and agreed to give the participants time needed to complete the questionnaire which was 20 to 30 minutes. The students answered the questionnaires during their classes as it was impossible to reach all the students after the classes as they had other activities or might leave the college. The students

**Table 4.** Reliability coefficient of the questionnaire

| Questionnaire items | Items No. | Cronbach's value |
|---------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Part 1              | 19        | 0.841            |
| Part 2              | 16        | 0.632            |
| All Items           | 35        | 0.869            |

had full schedules of classes and this affected the students and some of them didn't answer all the questionnaire parts, especially part three.

It is worth mentioning, ahead of the data collection, all students were informed of the purpose of the study. Besides, they were also informed of anonymity issues too and data collected would be just used for research purposes. Then the questionnaire was administrated and was explained clearly as it is consisted of three parts and the arrangement of each part was different from the other. The students were also informed to feel free to ask any questions they didn't understand from the questionnaire. The researcher was present during each class of the data collection and answered the participants' questions.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The study employed a mixed method approach for analyzing the data because of the different sets of data (qualitative and quantitative) obtained from the participants. A mixed method approach is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research "techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language" in one study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p.17 as cited in Wasti, 2016, p. 63). The two methods are used for deeper investigation and finding of the area of study.

The quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire (namely part one and two) was analyzed using the statistical analysis software (SPSS). In this regard, Morrison (2007) mentions one of the advantages of the quantitative method saying that this method assists the researcher to gather and generalize the opinions of big numbers of populations. This is called generalizability which is one of the points of maintaining validity.

The data obtained from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire was analyzed using qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis "is a matter of interpretation especially the researcher's interpretation of what respondents and participants say and do" (Gibbs, 2007: p.7). In qualitative research, a researcher commits to view the social reality through the eyes of respondents and participants (ibid). The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions was coded based on themes then prepared for analysis in terms of frequency using excel. The process is called thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is defined as the process of encoding qualitative information (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4 as cited in Baba, 2008). In other words, the process involves codes that are generated based on the development of themes. The Qualitative approach is used for the following reasons:

1. It helps gathering subjective and in-depth as well as context specific information from the respondents (Cohen et al., 2007).
2. When it comes to analyzing the interpretations and perceptions of a reality, these kinds of data give the researcher a more comprehensive picture of the issue to be studied (Morrison, 2007).

The exploratory nature of this approach assists the researcher to explore those areas which lack existing literature and research (Creswell, 2005, as cited in Wasti, 2016, p. 66). Because the perceptions of students in the Kurdish

EFL context is left unexplored, it seems wise to adapt this approach to uncover the issue of literature teaching and learning in the present context.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Language Development**

This section provides students perceptions towards the relevance of literature to their language learning. Items 1-8 from the first part of the questionnaire and items 33-35 from second part provide the answer. Table 5 shows the students responses to items 1-8 related to the contribution of literature to develop students' language proficiency.

The table shows that the majority of the responses to this theme fall above the midpoint of the scale (2.5) which means that students perceive it positively. Vocabulary improvement through literature classes gets the highest mean (4.31) followed by reading skill (4.07), understanding symbols and meaning in literary texts (3.98), "Studying literature increases my interest to learn English language" scored a mean of 3.88. As far as the other skills are concerned, speaking reaches 3.81, writing (3.69), grammar (3.64) and listening (3.52) respectively.

Items 33, 34 and 35 from part two of the questionnaire are also related to students' language development through literature classes. The responses are presented in table 6.

The table indicates that a large number of informants representing 55.2% agree that literature should be used in their language learning. Besides, a significant number of students representing 63.8% choose novel as the most beneficial genre in developing their overall language proficiency. 21.3% ticked poetry; drama and literary criticism were ticked by 19.0 and 17.2 percent of the students respectively. Finally, the results show that speaking (61.9%) and reading skills (50.4%) are mostly improved through studying literature. Other skills score lower percentages, writing 35.1% and listening 27.2%.

It is clear from the responses that literature classes are perceived positively by the learners in terms of language development. This could be due to that the literary texts are full of words and expressions and they are rich in language elements. Also they help students to understand and be familiar with symbols and meaning of other English texts through literary ones. These findings align with those of Wasti (2016) which emphasize that the learners are aware of the benefits lit-

**Table 5.** Students' responses to items 1-8 related to the contribution of literature to develop students' language proficiency

| No | Item   | Strongly disagree |      | Disagree |      | Uncertain |      | Agree |      | Strongly agree |      | Total | Mean | STD  |       |
|----|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-------|------|------|-------|
|    |  | F                 | %    | F        | %    | F         | %    | F     | %    | F              | %    |       |      |      |       |
| 1. | Studying literature increases my interest to learn English language.                         | 14                | 5.2  | 28       | 10.4 | 24        | 9.0  | 113   | 42.2 | 89             | 33.2 | 268   | 100  | 3.88 | 1.140 |
| 2. | My knowledge and use of grammar has improved as a result of work done in literature classes. | 6                 | 2.2  | 30       | 11.2 | 61        | 22.8 | 129   | 48.1 | 42             | 15.7 | 268   | 100  | 3.64 | 0.952 |
| 3. | English literature helps me to improve English language vocabulary                           | 8                 | 3.0  | 11       | 4.1  | 25        | 9.3  | 71    | 26.5 | 153            | 57.1 | 268   | 100  | 4.31 | 1.004 |
| 4. | Literature classes help me to understand symbols and meanings of English texts easily        | 9                 | 3.4  | 14       | 5.2  | 32        | 11.9 | 132   | 49.3 | 81             | 30.2 | 268   | 100  | 3.98 | 0.967 |
| 5. | My writing skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes.            | 7                 | 2.65 | 31       | 11.6 | 57        | 21.3 | 115   | 42.9 | 58             | 21.6 | 268   | 100  | 3.69 | 1.018 |
| 6. | My reading skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes?            | 4                 | 1.5  | 20       | 7.5  | 28        | 10.4 | 117   | 43.7 | 99             | 36.9 | 268   | 100  | 4.07 | 0.951 |
| 7. | My speaking skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes?           | 8                 | 3.0  | 29       | 10.8 | 47        | 17.5 | 107   | 39.9 | 77             | 28.7 | 268   | 100  | 3.81 | 1.063 |
| 8. | My listening skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes?          | 17                | 6.3  | 38       | 14.2 | 66        | 24.6 | 82    | 30.6 | 65             | 24.3 | 268   | 100  | 3.52 | 1.185 |



**Table 6.** Student's responses to items 33-35

| No | Item   | Not ticked |      | Ticked |      | Total |     | Mean | STD   |
|----|--|------------|------|--------|------|-------|-----|------|-------|
|    |  | F          | %    | F      | %    | F     | %   |      |       |
|    | 33. Do you think that literature should be used in language learning?                                    |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a- | Yes  | 120        | 44.8 | 148    | 55.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.55 | 0.498 |
| b- | No   | 219        | 81.7 | 49     | 18.3 | 268   | 100 | 0.18 | 0.387 |
| c- | I don't know   | 200        | 74.6 | 68     | 25.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.25 | 0.436 |
|    | 34. Which type or genre of literature do you benefit the most from when developing your language skills? |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a- | Poetry   | 211        | 78.7 | 57     | 21.3 | 268   | 100 | 0.21 | 0.410 |
| b- | Drama  | 217        | 81.0 | 51     | 19.0 | 268   | 100 | 0.19 | 0.393 |
| c- | Novel  | 97         | 36.2 | 171    | 63.8 | 268   | 100 | 0.64 | 0.481 |
| d- | Literary criticism   | 222        | 82.8 | 46     | 17.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.17 | 0.378 |
|    | 35. What language skill (s) does studying literature help improve specifically?                          |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a- | Speaking   | 102        | 38.1 | 166    | 61.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.62 | 0.486 |
| b- | Listening  | 195        | 72.8 | 73     | 27.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.27 | 0.446 |
| c- | Writing  | 174        | 64.9 | 94     | 35.1 | 268   | 100 | 0.35 | 0.478 |
| d- | Reading  | 133        | 49.6 | 135    | 50.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.50 | 0.501 |

erature offers them in all language areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing also grammar and vocabularies) and that literature helps them to acquire language competence to a certain extent and get interested in English language. The main perceived beneficiaries are reading English literature leads to language learning which got the highest agreement in that study followed by speaking and vocabulary. While in this study vocabulary gets the highest agreement followed by reading and other skills. Ghouti (2013) in his study arrives at the same findings that literature develops language awareness in learners (49%) though majority (51%) shows their lack of preference towards literature due to its creative use of language.

Conversely, these findings contrast those of Edmonson's (1997) which show that students have negative attitudes about the assumed role of literature in language learning. The researcher examined the impact of literature in the language learning of students enrolled in applied linguistics. The researcher used a questionnaire which included items like rock music and literature. Most of the students stated that the rock music had a better impact on their language learning than literature. However, Carrolie states that these findings of Edmonson cannot be generalized to other contexts as the researcher didn't provide information about that context's curricula. Additionally, McKay (1985, p. 191) presented arguments against using literature in EFL and states that one of the most basic goals of teachers is to teach grammar of the target language but literature language contains complex structures and unique use of language and thus cannot serve the mentioned goal. However in the present study learning grammar through literature is perceived positively by the students. Disagreeing with McKay (1985), Povey (1972, p. 187 as cited in McKay, p. 191 & Jiang, 2011, p. 5) summarizes the advantages of teaching literature in ESL classes and claims " literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage,

and complex and exact syntax." The latter argument by Povey is applicable and similar to the students' perceptions of literature in the current study. The findings are further justified by Aina (1979) who claims that language can either be taught within itself by focusing on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing or across disciplines by integrating concepts, themes, and ideas from different subjects (cited in Yimwilai, 2015).

Finally, the study shows that novel is the most beneficial genre in language development. This result contrasts those of Lazar (1990) and of Gareis, Allard & Saindon (2009). Lazar (1990, p. 204) argues that when using, for example, a novel as a textbook, she writes "Will students be overwhelmed by too much new vocabulary?" and "How the teaching of the novel can be successfully integrated into a syllabus?" Similarly, Gareis, Allard & Saindon (2009, p. 145 as cited in Jiang, 2011, p. 9) stated "Novels do not present curricular items in a particular sequence as textbooks."

### Developing Cultural Awareness

This section provides students perceptions towards the relevance of literature to their cultural awareness. The results show that literature contributes to develop the learners' cultural awareness in general. Table 7 shows the general responses of the participants.

The table indicates that the perceptions of the students of learning culture through literature classes are highly positive with a mean of 4.41 as well as studying literature helps to identify the similarities and differences between the English culture and the learners' own culture (4.23).

Literature classes can function as a good source of knowledge for developing learners' cultural awareness, learners' own culture and the foreign culture. In the light of their responses, literature classes are further perceived as an opportunity for students to compare and contrast cultures (foreign cultures and their own). These results are support-

**Table 7.** Students' responses to items related to the contribution of literature to develop students' cultural awareness.

| No  | Item   | Strongly disagree |     | Disagree |     | Uncertain |      | Agree |      | Strongly agree |      | Total | Mean | STD  |       |
|-----|--|-------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-------|------|------|-------|
|     |  | F                 | %   | F        | %   | F         | %    | F     | %    | F              | %    |       |      |      |       |
| 9.  | Literature classes help learners to get knowledge about the English culture (values, behavior, beliefs and basic assumptions). | 6                 | 2.2 | 8        | 3.0 | 14        | 5.2  | 83    | 31.0 | 157            | 58.6 | 268   | 100  | 4.41 | 0.892 |
| 10. | Studying literature helps to identify the similarities and differences between the English culture and my own culture.         | 7                 | 2.6 | 10       | 3.7 | 28        | 10.4 | 93    | 34.7 | 130            | 48.5 | 268   | 100  | 4.23 | 0.962 |

ed by previous studies (for example Stern, 1991, Ur, 191; McLeod, 1976 cited in Jiang, 2011, p. 6 and Wasti, 2012). Stern (1991, p. 342-343) states that nonnative readers must understand the cultural assumptions, attitudes and activities that are foreign to them for the literary appreciation and in order to form correct impressions about the target culture. Furthermore, Wasti (2016, p. 51) points out that “culture is an element that elicits various interpretations in divers contexts and texts.” Additionally, Ur (1991, P. 175) claims that there are many ways to teach culture through one of those ways and most importantly is the target literature.

However, students should be notified by their teachers that every cultural aspect in a literary work is not over generalized to the target culture. The relationship between culture and literature tends to be a complex one in nature as it raises questions whether the literary texts present the ‘genuine’ picture of the target society or it does not (Lazar, 1993 and Rivers, 1981). Lazar confirms that there is the danger of generalizing one aspect of culture presented in the work of literature to the whole culture and society of the target language by the ESL learners.

**Developing Students' Personal Growth**

As for the students perceptions towards the relevance of literature in developing their personal growth, there is a general agreement that literature contributes to the development of the learners' personal growth. The main responses are presented in table 8.

The table shows that the responses to this theme are also positive. The highest mean score is 4.04 for item 13 which indicates that the majority of the students show that literature helps them to participate in the class discussions, group working and presentations. The second high score is given to critical thinking skills (4.03) as the majority of the respondents perceived literature classes helpful in developing their critical thinking. Furthermore, the majority of the students have a positive attitude in that literature classes help them to learn more about life and grow personally, intellectually and emotionally (the mean score is 4.00). Additionally, most students came to an agreement that literature helps them

understand theirs and other people's experiences (mean score is 3.89). The majority also agree that the classes increase their personal interpretative opinions and analytical skills (with mean 3.81). Finally, a great number of the students perceive literature as part of their personal growth (with mean 3.62).

The data show that learners have developed a sense of awareness about their own growth through literature. The literature classes give them opportunity to discuss, comment, analyze, participate, share opinions and gain knowledge about other people's experiences and connect and contrast with their own. In other words, they understand themselves through others because literature provokes their critical thinking skills. This finding is supported by an argument by Hussein (2007, p. 115, as cited in Wasti, 2016) which states that the experience of reading literature “demands a personal response from the learners and encourages them to draw on their own experiences”. Additionally, these findings are similar to those of Wasti (2016) mainly about the learners' personal responses to the literary texts. Furthermore, writers such as Shanahan, 1997; Ghosn, 2002; Hall, 2003 and 2005; and Rana, 2009 (as cited in Wasti, 2016) show that literary texts can function as a source of knowledge to EFL learners' personal growth (development). Thus, most of the participants in this study value literature classes as part of their personal, emotional, and intellectual growth.

**Students Perceptions Towards Text Selection**

This part investigates students' perceptions of texts being studied in terms of difficulty and interesting themes, in other words whether they match or mismatch students' language level and interests because it affects their perceptions. The main responses on the items related to text selection are presented in table 9.

The table shows that there is an agreement that the selected literary texts are interesting to the students (with mean 3.47) and most students agree that the literature classes are designed according to their needs, expectations and interests (with mean 3.09).

Furthermore, the study also investigate the satisfaction of the students with the number of the literary topics and their

**Table 8.** Students' responses to items related to the contribution of literature to develop students' personal growth.

| No  | Item   | Strongly disagree |     | Disagree |      | Uncertain |      | Agree |      | Strongly agree |      | Total | Mean | STD  |       |
|-----|--|-------------------|-----|----------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-------|------|------|-------|
|     |  | F                 | %   | F        | %    | F         | %    | F     | %    | F              | %    |       |      |      |       |
| 11. | I have the ability to interpret and comment on the literary texts according to my own understanding of the text. | 5                 | 1.9 | 17       | 6.3  | 55        | 20.5 | 137   | 51.1 | 54             | 20.1 | 268   | 100  | 3.81 | 0.892 |
| 12. | Literature helps students to participate in the class discussions, group working and presentations.              | 7                 | 2.6 | 12       | 4.5  | 32        | 11.9 | 130   | 48.5 | 87             | 32.5 | 268   | 100  | 4.04 | 0.927 |
| 13. | Literature helps me learn and understand about people and their experiences similar to my own experiences.       | 4                 | 1.5 | 23       | 8.6  | 49        | 18.3 | 115   | 42.9 | 77             | 28.7 | 268   | 100  | 3.89 | 0.969 |
| 14. | Literature classes help to develop my critical thinking.   | 6                 | 2.2 | 23       | 8.6  | 34        | 12.7 | 100   | 37.3 | 105            | 39.2 | 268   | 100  | 4.03 | 1.033 |
| 15. | Literature helps me to learn more about life and grow personally, intellectually and emotionally.                | 10                | 3.7 | 23       | 8.6  | 31        | 11.6 | 98    | 36.6 | 106            | 39.6 | 268   | 100  | 4.00 | 1.093 |
| 16. | Literature is an important part of my personal development.  | 19                | 7.1 | 34       | 12.7 | 54        | 20.1 | 85    | 31.7 | 76             | 28.4 | 268   | 100  | 3.62 | 1.220 |

**Table 9.** Students' responses to items related to text selection

| No  | Item   | Strongly disagree |     | Disagree |      | Uncertain |      | Agree |      | Strongly agree |      | Total | Mean | STD  |       |
|-----|--|-------------------|-----|----------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|-------|------|------|-------|
|     |  | F                 | %   | F        | %    | F         | %    | F     | %    | F              | %    |       |      |      |       |
| 17. | I find the literary texts selected by the teacher interesting                          | 15                | 5.6 | 25       | 9.3  | 84        | 31.3 | 106   | 39.6 | 38             | 14.2 | 268   | 100  | 3.47 | 1.029 |
| 18. | The literature classes are designed according to my expectations, needs and interests. | 21                | 7.8 | 51       | 19.0 | 95        | 35.4 | 86    | 32.1 | 15             | 5.6  | 268   | 100  | 3.09 | 1.022 |

perceptions towards the difficulty of the selected texts. The main responses are presented in table 10.

The table indicates that the students are sometimes satisfied with the number of literary topics covered in the academic year (63.1%); only 11.2% are always happy. Whereas, 19.0% add that they are rarely satisfied, and 6.7% of students think that there are a lot of topics to be covered and that hinders their learning. Besides, the majority of the students (64.9%) admit that literary texts they study are fairly difficult in terms of language; also another group of respondents

(17.5%) claimed that the language of the texts is very difficult. Only 16.4% of students find it easy.

The literary text selection is highly important in EFL contexts as it affects learners' way of viewing and perceiving literature. The findings come out mostly positive in terms of interesting literary texts, satisfactions of the learners' needs, expectations and interests and in terms of the number of the topics covered. Also in her study, Wasti (2016) figure out that learners interests are greatly influenced by texts and that it affects their reading habits too. Though, the study shows that

**Table 10.** Students' responses to items related to the difficulty of the selected texts

| No   | Item             | Not ticked |      | Ticked |      | Total |     | Mean | STD   |
|--|------------------|------------|------|--------|------|-------|-----|------|-------|
|  |                  | F          | %    | F      | %    | F     | %   |      |       |
| 22. Are you satisfied with the number of literary topics covered during the academic year? |                  |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-   | Always           | 238        | 88.8 | 30     | 11.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.11 | 0.316 |
| b-   | Sometimes        | 99         | 36.9 | 169    | 63.1 | 268   | 100 | 0.63 | 0.484 |
| c-   | Rarely           | 217        | 81.0 | 51     | 19.0 | 268   | 100 | 0.19 | 0.393 |
| d-   | Never            | 250        | 93.3 | 18     | 6.7  | 268   | 100 | 0.07 | 0.251 |
| 26. How do you find the texts you are dealing with in terms of language?                   |                  |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-   | Very difficult.  | 221        | 82.5 | 47     | 17.5 | 268   | 100 | 0.18 | 0.381 |
| b-   | Fairly difficult | 94         | 35.1 | 174    | 64.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.65 | 0.478 |
| c-   | Easy             | 224        | 83.6 | 44     | 16.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.16 | 0.371 |

the language of texts is viewed difficult by the majority and this is something normal to have such a view as the language is a foreign language and when it comes to its literature it is even more difficult for EFL learners because the language is figurative and contains lots of difficult vocabulary. The learners who find no difficulty with language may have a good language background or simply they love literature or it could be due to the simplifications that teachers make for students to make texts' comprehension easier for students.

**Students' Perceptions to Literature Teaching Methods**

Generally, the students perceive the teaching methods being employed positively with a mean reached 3.49 which is above the midpoint of the scale meaning that there is a general agreement.

Furthermore, the questionnaire includes some other items (items 25, 27-30) which further investigate the students' perceptions towards the teaching methods. Table 11 presents the main responses for each of these items.

For item 25, the table shows that none of the options is ticked by the majority: 48.5% of the responses indicated that literature classes are led by the teacher followed by note taking, 39.6% described them as a sort of class discussion and 26.1% described them as a sort of small group discussions. Thus it is difficult to decide that the classes are teacher- or student-centered. Similarly, for item 27 regarding whether teachers provide background information useful to comprehend the text, none of the options is ticked by the majority: 49.3% ticked sometimes, 33.6% said always but 9.7% chose rarely (9.7%) and 7.1% never. As for item 28 about whether teachers involve students in group working in their literature classes, the option sometimes is ticked by the majority (50.7%) while 21.3% of the students are rarely involved in the activity. Yet, 16.4% are never put in groups; only 11.2% ticked always. Furthermore, the study also investigates whether the students are given chance to express their personal interpretations and opinions and also to figure out their teachers' reactions (item 29). None of the options scored the majority of the responses: 48.9% of the respondents ticked sometimes 28.4% chose always. While 17.5% ticked rarely and 3.7% never. Additionally, how teachers react to students opinions is also examined in item 30 of the questionnaire.

53.7% of students said that their teachers usually correct wrong interpretations while 35.8% said that s/he usually accepts wrong interpretations. Only 17.9% of students state that their teachers reject their interpretations and provide them with their own literary judgments.

The responses to this part are mixed. The students are mostly satisfied with the model adopted because it focuses on literature, culture and language which makes the class topics diverse and avoids causing boredom. Additionally, the responses indicated that the classes are mostly teacher led, although a group claimed their classes are mostly discussions which mean students are involved. The mixed opinions concerning teacher- or student-centered method could be due to the following reasons: the teacher use different methods based on the need of the lecture, or depending on the stage. As the participants are from third and fourth stages and they are told by different teachers, it is expected that the methods will be different.

Background information ahead of the real discussion of the topics is important in literature classes and it is revealed that teachers sometimes provide it. What is meant by background is the author's biography, political setting and other socio-cultural facts (Ghouti, 2013). Using group work also exists in this context in spite of the big number of students the majority claimed that they are put in groups though not always but sometimes. I think group work is a technique used by the teacher to deal with the big number of the students. That is why it is got a majority of responses. Wasti (2016) finds that small group work is practiced in teaching literature. Again the big number of students is not a big barrier to neglect students' opinion as most students claimed that they are sometimes asked about their opinions. Teachers reaction to students' opinions is also investigated to see to what extend students opinions are taken into consideration, in this respect, the majority's opinions are corrected and often their opinions are accepted. It is also found that some teachers use spoon feeding and provide their own interpretations.

Finally, as indicated above it can't be generalized that whether the literature classes are teacher-centered or student-centered in this study because it seems that the teacher use a mixture of both. However, Ainy (2006) claims that teacher-centeredness is a dominant method and traditional way of literature teaching (the teacher analyzing and ex-

**Table 11.** Students' responses to items (25, 27-30) related to students perception towards teaching method

| No  | Item  | Not ticked |      | Ticked |      | Total |     | Mean | STD   |
|---|---|------------|------|--------|------|-------|-----|------|-------|
|   |   | F          | %    | F      | %    | F     | %   |      |       |
| 25. What do the literature courses you are taking look like?                                      |   |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | Lectures led by the teacher followed by note taking | 138        | 51.5 | 130    | 48.5 | 268   | 100 | 0.49 | 0.501 |
| b-  | A sort of small group discussions                   | 198        | 73.9 | 70     | 26.1 | 268   | 100 | 0.26 | 0.440 |
| c-  | A sort of class discussion                          | 162        | 60.4 | 106    | 39.6 | 268   | 100 | 0.40 | 0.490 |
| 27. Does your teacher provide background information useful to comprehend the text?               |   |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | Always  | 178        | 66.4 | 90     | 33.6 | 268   | 100 | 0.34 | 0.473 |
| b-  | Sometimes   | 136        | 50.7 | 132    | 49.3 | 268   | 100 | 0.49 | 0.501 |
| c-  | Rarely  | 242        | 90.3 | 26     | 9.7  | 268   | 100 | 0.10 | 0.297 |
| d-  | Never   | 249        | 92.9 | 19     | 7.1  | 268   | 100 | 0.07 | 0.257 |
| 28. Do you do group working in literature classes?  |   |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | Always  | 238        | 88.8 | 30     | 11.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.11 | 0.316 |
| b-  | Sometimes   | 132        | 49.3 | 136    | 50.7 | 268   | 100 | 0.51 | 0.501 |
| c-  | Rarely  | 211        | 78.7 | 57     | 21.3 | 268   | 100 | 0.21 | 0.410 |
| d-  | Never   | 224        | 83.6 | 44     | 16.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.16 | 0.371 |
| 29. How often are you asked to express your opinion and your personal interpretation of the text? |   |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | Always  | 192        | 71.6 | 76     | 28.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.28 | 0.452 |
| b-  | Sometimes   | 137        | 51.1 | 131    | 48.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.49 | 0.501 |
| c-  | Rarely  | 221        | 82.5 | 47     | 17.5 | 268   | 100 | 0.21 | 0.660 |
| d-  | Never   | 258        | 96.3 | 10     | 3.7  | 268   | 100 | 0.07 | 0.579 |
| 30. What is your teacher's reaction to your opinion and interpretation?                           |   |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | S/he usually accepts wrong interpretations.         | 172        | 64.2 | 96     | 35.8 | 268   | 100 | 0.36 | 0.480 |
| b-  | S/he usually rejects wrong interpretations.         | 220        | 82.1 | 48     | 17.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.18 | 0.384 |
| c-  | S/he corrects wrong interpretations                 | 124        | 46.3 | 144    | 53.7 | 268   | 100 | 0.54 | 0.500 |

plaining the text, students listen, take notes and memorize to pass examination). Students memorize what teachers or other critics have said and their own interpretations are neglected.

### The Integration of Literature in the Language Learning

The study analyzes the motive behind students' choice of ELD and whether literature is part of that motive and how they perceive it. The main responses are presented in table 12.

For item 20, the table shows that 'to learn English language' is ticked by the majority of the respondents (70.9%), while the options of the pleasure of reading and studying literature and that to learn about English literature are ticked by a very small number of respondents 16.4% and 14.9% respectively. As for item 21, none of the options got the majority score. The highest score is that students prefer to learn about English language (43.7%); though 39.9% of them prefer practical language skills. However, 28.7% of the respondents show their preferences to the current situation, a mixture of language and literature course. Yet only 10.4% show their desire to be involved in literature for literature

sake course. Concerning item 24 about students' opinions about learning literature, the table shows that the majority of the students ticked literature is a good source for developing their language proficiency (60.1%) and increases their cultural awareness of different cultures (55.2%). All the other options are chosen by only a small number of the students. Despite these different opinions about learning literature, item 31 indicated that the majority of the students (57.8%) like literature as part of their education. yet, 19.4% say that they don't like literature. Although, 14.6% of them stay neutral and didn't show their interest about literature being part of their study program or not. 11.9% of students want literature to be replaced by other topics. Furthermore, item 32 about whether literature helps students to achieve their academic goals, none of the options scored the majority score: 42.2% believe that literature fulfills their academic goals, 33.2% stand in neutral position and 24.3% of the participants do not view literature achieving their academic goals.

It can be seen from the findings that our students' reason behind joining ELD is to learn English language and surprisingly literature got the least appreciation. We can conclude that students have more tendencies to learn and know about

**Table 12.** Students' responses to items (20, 21, 24, 31, 32) related to students' perception towards the integration of literature in their study

| No  | Item   | Not ticked |      | Ticked |      | Total |     | Mean | STD   |
|---|--|------------|------|--------|------|-------|-----|------|-------|
|   |  | F          | %    | F      | %    | F     | %   |      |       |
| 20. Why you have joined English Language Department?  |  |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | To get a degree.   | 209        | 78.0 | 59     | 22.0 | 268   | 100 | 0.22 | 0.415 |
| b-  | To learn about English language.   | 78         | 29.1 | 190    | 70.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.71 | 0.455 |
| c-  | To learn about English literature  | 228        | 85.1 | 40     | 14.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.15 | 0.357 |
| d-  | A qualification in English will help you get a job?  | 160        | 59.7 | 108    | 40.3 | 268   | 100 | 0.40 | 0.491 |
| e-  | To learn about the culture and traditions of English-speaking people                       | 215        | 80.2 | 53     | 19.8 | 268   | 100 | 0.20 | 0.399 |
| f-  | You are interested in reading and studying literature (e.g. novels, poetry, drama)         | 224        | 83.6 | 44     | 16.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.16 | 0.371 |
| 21. What kind of university English course would best serve your needs or wants? One that consisted of: |  |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | Literature only  | 240        | 89.6 | 28     | 10.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.10 | 0.306 |
| b-  | Practical language skills  | 161        | 60.1 | 107    | 39.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.40 | 0.491 |
| c-  | Knowledge about language   | 151        | 56.3 | 117    | 43.7 | 268   | 100 | 0.44 | 0.497 |
| d-  | A combination of the above   | 191        | 71.3 | 77     | 28.7 | 268   | 100 | 0.29 | 0.453 |
| 24. What do you think about learning literature?  |  |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | It helps me improve my proficiency in the English language.                                | 107        | 39.9 | 161    | 60.1 | 268   | 100 | 0.60 | 0.491 |
| b-  | It helps increase cultural awareness between different cultures                            | 120        | 44.8 | 148    | 55.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.55 | 0.498 |
| c-  | It provides fun  | 206        | 76.9 | 62     | 23.1 | 268   | 100 | 0.23 | 0.422 |
| d-  | It is motivating   | 216        | 80.6 | 52     | 19.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.19 | 0.396 |
| e-  | It is rewarding outside the classroom  | 253        | 94.4 | 15     | 5.6  | 268   | 100 | 0.06 | 0.230 |
| f-  | It is boring and waste of time.  | 250        | 93.3 | 18     | 6.7  | 268   | 100 | 0.07 | 0.251 |
| g-  | It is difficult because literary texts are difficult to comprehend                         | 243        | 90.7 | 25     | 9.3  | 268   | 100 | 0.09 | 0.291 |
| h-  | It is not important to me because it contributes nothing to my future professional career. | 240        | 89.6 | 28     | 10.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.10 | 0.306 |
| i-  | It helps me to grow personally, intellectually and emotionally                             | 188        | 70.1 | 80     | 29.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.30 | 0.458 |
| 31. Do you like literature as part of your study (education) at university?                             |  |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | I do like it   | 113        | 42.2 | 155    | 57.8 | 268   | 100 | 0.58 | 0.495 |
| b-  | I don't like it  | 216        | 80.6 | 52     | 19.4 | 268   | 100 | 0.19 | 0.396 |
| c-  | I want other topics  | 236        | 88.1 | 32     | 11.9 | 268   | 100 | 0.12 | 0.325 |
| d-  | I don't mind   | 229        | 85.4 | 39     | 14.6 | 268   | 100 | 0.15 | 0.353 |
| 32. Do you think literature helps you to achieve your academic goals?                                   |  |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | Yes  | 155        | 57.8 | 113    | 42.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.42 | 0.495 |
| b-  | No   | 203        | 75.7 | 65     | 24.3 | 268   | 100 | 0.24 | 0.429 |
| c-  | Neutral  | 179        | 66.8 | 89     | 33.2 | 268   | 100 | 0.33 | 0.472 |

English language more than about its literature, although they like it as part of their study as indicated in item 31. The main reason behind this could be that students join the department to secure their future careers as knowing English in this context is a privilege to have better jobs and income for English is a main requirement to be accepted in an institution. These results are partly similar to those of Nasharudin (2008) which show that some students hold positive attitudes towards learning English language but negative attitude

when it comes to literature learning (cited in Othman et al., 2015, p. 106). The students' negative attitude towards literature is further supported by item 21 about kind of courses students' prefer; the majority prefers language learning and practical language skills over literature.

Also students' perceptions about learning literature are varied though the majority likes it as part of their education. Yet language learning is the main reason behind liking literature and knowing about cultures comes the second. Wasti (2016)

in her study achieved the same finding that students value literature more for language learning than cultural competence.

Furthermore, a number of learners perceived it positively in terms of achieving their academic goals namely language learning, although not the majority. On the other hand, the negative perceptions are circled around perceiving literature as not important for contributing nothing to learners' careers and academic goals, also it is difficult and devaluing literature as being boring and nothing but waste of time that some students called for replacing it with other subjects. Similarly, McKay (1985, p. 191) in discussing the arguments against using literature in EFL, indicated that literature cannot serve the students' academic or/and occupational needs which are at the heart of any today's ESL course. Furthermore, those who value literature for learning language may want to pursue language studies not literature. Ghouti (2013) arrived at the same finding in his context of study. Carroli 's study (2008, p. 54) also revealed that learners perceived literature as a means for language learning.

To conclude, the findings of the current study show that most of the students do appreciate literature as part of their education unless it is for developing their language proficiency in the first place, cultural awareness, secondly and personal development thirdly. In this respect, students need more understanding of the value of literature generally. As it is indicated by Chambers and Gregory (2006) that there is always a common question asked by students to their teachers about the relevance of literature to their study or education 'why do we have to read this stuff?' If the teachers answer is no more that 'Because it is required' then we know nothing about literature and we contribute a lot to the world of those who view literature study as nothing but "mere trifle." The main concern of the teachers should be teaching their students how to connect with those humanity universals that students will face through studying literature. Furthermore,

in Ghouti's findings students' negative attitudes center on that students do not want to embrace literature studies; literature does not contribute much to their careers. For that reason the researcher claims that teachers and administrators should make students aware of literature value professionally, academically and most importantly in educating the whole individual (Ghouti, 2013).

### Students' Responses To Open-ended Questions

In the final part of the questionnaire, the students are given three open-ended questions about how to make literature classes more interesting, the major problems they face, and lastly what literature added to their education, personally, culturally and linguistically. The reason behind this part is to give the students more opportunity to pen their own perceptions about literature classes. It is worth noting that only 150 students out of 268 responded to this part.

### Suggestions for making literature classes interesting

The first item is seeking students' responses regarding how to make literature classes more interesting. In their responses, students suggest different strategies. Table 13 presents the major responses together with their frequency and percentage ranging from highest to lowest.

The table shows that the majority of the students (26.6 %) ask for more participation and discussion to make the classes more interesting, while two students only state that presentations should not be given as they are boring. It can be observed that a number of students (7.3%) ask for removing literature claiming that it adds nothing to their learning.

This part gives the learners a chance to pen their perceptions and preferences of interesting literature classes. Some learners provided good suggestions while others showed their dislike of these classes as they contribute nothing to

**Table 13.** Students' responses to how to make literature classes more interesting

| Q1.  | Question                        | No of students: 150 |     |      |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----|------|
|  |                                 | F                   | W   | %    |
| How to make literature classes more interesting? | Students' responses             |                     |     |      |
|  | Participation and discussion    | 40                  |     | 26.6 |
|  | Students' opinions              | 36                  |     | 24   |
|  | Text selection                  | 28                  |     | 18.6 |
|  | Group work                      | 28                  |     | 18.6 |
|  | Body language, fun and acting   | 17                  |     | 11.3 |
|  | Provide background information  | 14                  |     | 9.3  |
|  | technology                      | 13                  |     | 8.6  |
|  | Remove literature               | 11                  |     | 7.3  |
|  | teacher                         | 9                   |     | 6    |
|  | More time                       | 7                   |     | 4.6  |
|  | presentations                   | 6                   |     | 4    |
|  | Less material and busy schedule | 4                   |     | 2.6  |
| Easy language                                    | 4                               |                     | 2.6 |      |
| No presentations                                 | 2                               |                     | 1.3 |      |

their education, they claimed. Using a variety of activities inside literature classes will get the students actively involved in the learning process and most surprisingly students show their preferences for such a thing which means they are ready to take charge and be the center of their learning. Wasti (2016) finds that in order for learners to participate in classroom involvements, it depends on the learners' own confidence, interesting lessons and teachers' role in raising their interest. Also students want their opinions to be of value. This is a good sign that our learners have the ability to participate in literature discussions though it is hard. It means that they themselves can make the classes interesting if given opportunity and encouragement instead of being passive audience. Lazar (1993, p23) supports this idea by stating that a 'detailed analysis of the language of the literary texts will help students to make meaningful interpretations... [and] at the same time, students will increase their general awareness and understanding of English.' Lazar continues that the learners approach the text linguistically as the learners analyze the language of the text to make meaningful interpretations and evaluations of the literature they work on (Lazar, 1993, p. 23, cited in Finsrud, 2017, p. 4 & Ainy, 2007, p. 41-42). In other words, the in depth analysis of the language of a piece of literature leads to unconscious interpretations of the content of that literature.

Teacher's role in literature classes is important as students need constant guidance and information to comprehend the difficult texts, using body language, and creating a friendly atmosphere lay within teachers' roles. In Wasti's (2016) study the findings show that learners highlighted the teachers' role in language learning through literature which will affect their perceptions to a great extent. In this respect Khattak et al. (2011) conduct a study addressing the anxiety among university students, they find that when learners are unable to understand the teacher there is a danger of building nervousness and gap of understanding (as cited in Wasti, 2016)

On the other hand, literature classes need more time and efforts for explanation and reading texts. A call for simple texts that suit students' language level and modern language rather than old are preferred more by students because in the modern world students need the up to date language to communicate with. The other last point to be discussed here is the amount of material covered. Based on students' perceptions less material will make these classes more interesting. In other words, it should be a matter of quality and not quantity, for students to cover more than 10 novels in a

novel class and let say 7 poems and 8 dramas and even they have more literature classes is a demanding work and it may not be rewarding. We can say that this might be one of the reasons for those who reject literature.

Ainy (2006) arrives at similar motivational factors which make literature classes more interesting from students' perspectives. They include: a suitable methodology in dealing with literature, a call for more student centeredness classes, learner-autonomy and respecting and understanding their opinions. Also they need friendly supportive and tolerant teachers with their mistakes.

**Major problems students encounter in literature classes**

Concerning difficulties and problems students encounter in literature classes, in response to item 23 in the multiple choices part, a number of the students (44.8%) finds difficulty in understanding the language of the texts. 41.8% complains about lack of time to read the texts. 26.1% finds difficulty with unfamiliar ideas, experiences and cultural differences contained in texts. Table 14 presents the main responses.

The table shows that none of the items scored the majority. Language difficulty gets the highest score. Wasti (2016) comes across the same finding about difficult language namely, vocabulary difficulty and Ghouti (2013) states that students find literature difficult in terms of its creative fictional language. The second problem is that literature is time consuming and learners lack time. Likewise, in Halim's study (2006) the majority of the participants hates literature for its difficult indirect language, vocabulary and it needs a lot of reading (cited in Othman et al, 2015, p. 106). While unfamiliar cultural ideas is the third problem. Also McKay (1985) argues that the particular culture that literature presents; as she puts 'on a conceptual level' it may cause difficulty for students.

In item 2 in the open-ended questions, we further investigated the major problems students encounter in literature classes. Other problems students encounter are presented in table 15.

The table shows that the major problem students encounter is difficult texts as it is mentioned by a number of the students (26%) and it gets the highest score. The difficulty lies in language and vocabulary difficulty (usually reading old English not modern), difficult ideas and the students lack of language. 20.6% of the students stated another problem which is the big amount of material that has to be covered.

**Table 14.** Students responses to items (23) related to students difficulties in literature classes

| No  | Item  | Not ticked |      | Ticked |      | Total |     | Mean | STD   |
|-----|---|------------|------|--------|------|-------|-----|------|-------|
|     |   | F          | %    | F      | %    | F     | %   |      |       |
| 23. | What difficulty do you face in literature classes?          |            |      |        |      |       |     |      |       |
| a-  | I find difficulty in understanding the language of the text | 148        | 55.2 | 120    | 44.8 | 268   | 100 | 0.45 | 0.498 |
| b-  | Unfamiliar ideas, experiences, or culture in the text       | 198        | 73.9 | 70     | 26.1 | 268   | 100 | 0.26 | 0.440 |
| c-  | Not enough time to read and study the text carefully        | 156        | 58.2 | 112    | 41.8 | 268   | 100 | 0.42 | 0.494 |



**Table 15.** Students' major problems in literature classes

| Q2.  | Question                         | No. of students: 150 |      |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------|------|
|  | Students' responses              | F                    | %    |
| What are the major problems you encounter in literature classes? | Difficult texts                  | 39                   | 26   |
|  | Too much material to cover       | 31                   | 20.6 |
|  | No problems                      | 28                   | 18.6 |
|  | Literature teaching              | 20                   | 13.3 |
|  | Remove literature                | 16                   | 10.6 |
|  | Not interesting topics or texts  | 15                   | 10   |
|  | Students' opinions are not asked | 7                    | 4.6  |
|  | Feeling shy                      | 3                    | 2    |
|  | Difficult exam questions         | 2                    | 1.3  |

They said that literature needs more time for reading and discussion as they study a lot of themes, long texts and symbols. Less material will help them overcome this problem. 13.3% of the students complain about the way literature is taught, they ask for more background knowledge about writers, the literary work and culture ahead of teaching the other elements, and also some of them are against presentations which they consider boring. Another point is that in their opinions some teachers are not motivated enough and lack literature teaching experience, beside that they don't use technology inside the class which makes the class boring. Another important point raised by 10% of students about the topics chosen; they are not interesting enough because of unfamiliar ideas culturally, for example one of the students wrote that works that tackles Islamic traditions should also be chosen as its related to our own traditions, and repetitive themes are boring. Not taking their opinions into account (4.6%) and feeling shy to express them (2%) along with difficult exam questions (1.3%) were among other problems students encounter. Despite these problems, 18.6% of the participants claimed that they have no problems and they like literature classes. While another group (10.6%) asked for removing literature.

The problem of low language proficiency is the major one. Students have ideas but have no language to express. This might be due to the poor language background students have in their earlier stages of study, for example high school. Therefore, the majority find literature difficult. Ainy (2006) refers to the same reason: weak language foundation in previous stages demotivates learners. To avoid such complications, Paran (2006, p. 5, as cited in Wasti, 2016) suggests 'unlearn their previous attitudes towards language and re-engage them in the texts'. In other words, it is the teacher who can help the students to clear their misconceptions of lack of language and help them built new attitudes. This can be done as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, through text selection and teaching methods. Ainy (2006) in her study points out that motivation rises with proper teaching methodology. Also taking their needs into consideration ahead of teaching to avoid or lessen the problems mentioned.

Students also complain about teachers' lack of teaching experience in literature. In this respect Ainy (2006) states that untrained and unskillful teachers are among factors that

demotivate interest in literature. Ahmad and Aziz (2009, p. 24) comment on the importance of teachers' role to "create an appropriate classroom environment and learning mood for the students to feel comfortable with language learning and not feel sacred and intimidated" (as cited in Wasti).

Feeling shy is another problem students encounter. The reason behind this could be lack of language or that those students lack confidence or fear to be subject of fun by their fellow students. This finding is in line with a finding found by Ahmad and Sajjad (2011 as cited in Wasti, 2016) in which students valued various kinds of activities (debates, discussions, language games) but felt reluctant to take part of. Wasti (2016) relate this to that students are aware of their poor language competence and they feel shy when making mistakes in front of the class because others will make fun of them. Wasti says "the consciousness of the presence of others around seemed to leave participants confused and less confident of their English language competence". This will lead to forming gaps between students and teachers as they lack confidence to communicate their problems with the teachers.

It can be found that most of the students' suggestions of interesting classes (asking for their opinions, difficult texts, choosing interesting texts, teaching literature, too much material) are translated to problems if not taken with importance. Since most of the learners' responses to each question are echoed in the other.

#### ***Literature contribution to education: personally, culturally and linguistically***

The final item in the open-ended questions is targeted to know the extent literature affect the students' education in terms of personality, culture and language.

Personally, the majority of the students (66%) perceive literature as having a positive impact on their personalities. They claim that literature has broadened their perspectives on themselves and life in general in a way that they become more aware, motivated, open-minded. In addition, it helps them to understand and accept others ideas and think more critically and deeply. While, 8% of the students point out that through literature they become familiar with books, writers and literary language. Furthermore, love and appreciation

**Table 16.** the role of literature in developing language proficiency

| Categories | Language in general |      | Speaking skill |      | Writing |    | Reading |    | Listening |   | Vocabulary |      | Grammar |     | Other language areas |     |
|------------|---------------------|------|----------------|------|---------|----|---------|----|-----------|---|------------|------|---------|-----|----------------------|-----|
|            | F                   | %    | F              | %    | F       | %  | F       | %  | F         | % | F          | %    | F       | %   | F                    | %   |
| Students   | 41                  | 27.3 | 25             | 16.6 | 18      | 12 | 18      | 12 | 3         | 2 | 46         | 30.6 | 7       | 4.6 | 11                   | 7.3 |

of literature are evolved in them. Only 21% of the students react negatively to the question.

Culturally, students perceptions towards learning about culture through literature are mostly positive. (80%) of the students think that through literature they develop awareness of other cultures, their traditions, life style, behavior, their writings, and history. In addition to that their awareness of their own culture is also developed through differences and similarities between cultures which lead to accepting other cultures. However, 16.6% of them respond negatively to the question.

Linguistically, the students emphasize the role of literature in developing their language, language areas and speaking skills. However their responses according to these area differ as presented in table 16.

Table 16 shows that literature contribute positively to develop the students' vocabulary (30%) and language in general (27.3%), language skills (speaking 16.6%, reading and writing, 12%, listening 2%), and language areas (grammar 4.6%) as well. Also 7.3% students mentioned other language areas like pronunciation, spelling, word formation as well as new ways of expressions. Finally, one of the students mentions that he knows more even about his native language through literature. While only 28 (18.6%) students perceive the question negatively.

Learners' perceptions towards this question and its sub parts are positive. They value literature classes as a place where they develop language skills, cultural awareness about foreign cultures and their owns, and most importantly, they are educated personally through the classes which is overwhelmingly a great finding as the major goal of any university department should be building personalities and broad minded educated individuals.

The findings of this part and that of Likert scale about language learning through literature classes are highly positive. This can be related to that our learners at English Language Departments perceive literature more as texts for language learning than literature teaching.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the integration of literature in the language learning at the ELDs at the Kurdish universities especially in terms of the learners perceptions towards this integration. The results indicate that students have positive perceptions towards literature integration and it contributes to the learners' language development, their cultural awareness and personal growth in general. Linguistically, literature helps to improve vocabulary, language skills, grammar and understanding symbols and meaning in literary texts.

The students identified novel as the most beneficial genre in language development. Additionally, they show that speaking and reading skills are mostly improved through studying literature. The contribution of literature to language development is supported by other studies (such as Wasti, 2016; Ghouti, 2013 and others). Culturally, literature helps to learn about the English culture and to identify the similarities and differences between the English culture and the learners' own culture. This is supported by previous studies such as Stern (1991), Wasti (2016) and Ur (1991). Personally, literature helps to develop learners' participation in different classroom activities (such as class discussions, group working and presentations) and it is helpful in developing their critical thinking, personal interpretative opinions and analytical skills. Besides, it is beneficial to the learners to learn more about life, grow personally, intellectually and emotionally and understand theirs and other people's experiences. The role of literature in personal enrichment is supported by other studies (such as Hussein, 2007; Shanahan, 1997; Ghosn, 2002; Hall, 2003 and 2005; and Rana, 2009 as all cited in Wasti, 2016).

The students also have positive perceptions towards the selected literary texts and the teaching methods. The majority point out that the selected literary texts are interesting and that the literature classes are designed according to their needs, expectations and interests. The students are sometimes satisfied with the number of literary topics covered in the academic year, however they find that the language of the literary texts is fairly difficult. Wasti (2016) emphasizes the importance of text selection because it will affect their interests and reading habits. Finding the language of the literary texts difficult is normal as it is a foreign language, figurative and contains lots of difficult vocabulary. As for the teaching methods, it is not clear whether a teacher- or student-centered method is used in the literature classes. Sometimes, the classes are described as teacher-centered, i.e. led by teacher followed by note taking and the teacher is responsible to provide the background information useful to comprehend the text. However, sometimes students are also involved in group working activities, given the chance to express their personal interpretations and opinions, but the teacher usually are involved to accept the correct interpretations and correct the wrong ones. The mixed opinions concerning the teaching method could be due to the fact that the teacher use different methods based on the need of the lecture, or depending on the stage. Ainy (2007) claimed that teacher-centeredness is a dominant method and traditional way of literature teaching (the teacher analyzing and explaining the text, students listen, take notes and memorize to pass examination).

As for the integration of the literature in the language learning at ELDs at Kurdish universities, the majority of the

students like literature as part of their education because it is a good source for developing their language proficiency and increases their cultural awareness of different cultures. However, their main motive to join the ELDs is to learn English language not to learn about literature because literature does not help the students to achieve their academic goals. Thus, the main reason behind joining the department is to secure their future careers as knowing English in this context is a privilege to have better jobs and income for English is a main requirement to be accepted in an institution. Literature cannot serve the students' academic or/and occupational needs which are at the heart of any today's ESL course (McKay, 1985). These results are partly similar to those of Nasharudin (2008) which show that some students hold positive attitudes towards learning English language but negative attitude when it came to literature learning (cited in Othman et al., 2015, p. 106). Students value literature more for language learning than cultural competence (Wasti, 2016 and Ghouti, 2013). In this respect, students need more understanding of the value of literature generally. Teachers and administrators should make students aware of literature value professionally, academically and most importantly in educating the whole individual (Chambers and Gregory, 2006; Ghouti, 2013).

Finally, the study identified some problems that students face in literature classes such as difficult texts in terms of language, big amount of material that has to be covered, teaching methodology, unfamiliar ideas, experiences and cultural differences contained in texts, feeling shy and difficult exam questions. These problems needs to be taken into consideration and teachers should identify them and find solutions for them because they will affect their perceptions.

Generally, the study identifies the students perception which is very helpful to develop an understanding of the teaching and learning process (Carroli, 2008; Brown, 2009; Bernaus and Gardner, 2008). It is recommended that literature should be kept in the ELDs' curriculum and be given more attention. Literature classes turned quite helpful in developing those individual students thus they should be encouraged to be incorporated in other levels of study too because to get developed, building personalities and broad minded educated individuals through a class is a privilege and that is the main goal of any educational program, the researcher believes. Additionally, knowing the students' perceptions towards literature classes will be helpful for the researchers, educational policy makers and the language teachers to determine English language learners' genuine needs, motivation or challenges and issues in relation to the use of literary texts as teaching materials and to develop a suitable teaching approach to use the literary texts.

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## APPENDIX

## Appendix 1. The questionnaire

## Part One

Each of these below statements is followed by a 5-point scale. Please encircle your choice among the items given, Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), disagree (3), Strongly disagree (4), Uncertain (5).

Your perceptions towards literature classes in developing your language proficiency or development:

| Item  | Strongly agree (1) | Agree (2) | Disagree (3) | Strongly Disagree (4) | Uncertain (5) |
|---|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 1. Studying literature increases my interest to learn English language.                         |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 2. My knowledge and use of grammar has improved as a result of work done in literature classes. |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 3. English literature helps me to improve English language vocabulary.                          |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 4. Literature classes help me to understand symbols and meanings of English texts easily.       |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 5. My writing skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes.            |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 6. My reading skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes?            |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 7. My speaking skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes?           |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 8. My listening skill has improved as a result of the work done in literature classes?          |                    |           |              |                       |               |

Your perceptions towards literature in enriching your cultural competence and awareness:

| Items   | Strongly agree (1) | Agree (2) | Disagree (3) | Strongly Disagree (4) | Uncertain (5) |
|---|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 9. Literature classes help learners to get knowledge about the English culture (values, behavior, beliefs and basic assumptions). |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 10. Studying literature helps to identify the similarities and differences between the English culture and my own culture.        |                    |           |              |                       |               |

Your perceptions towards literature as a tool for enriching your personal growth:

| Items  | Strongly agree (1) | Agree (2) | Disagree (3) | Strongly Disagree (4) | Uncertain (5) |
|--|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 11. I have the ability to interpret and comment on the literary texts according to my own understanding of the text. |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 12. Literature helps students to participate in the class discussions, group working and presentations.              |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 13. Literature helps me learn and understand about people and their experiences similar to my own experiences.       |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 14. Literature classes help to develop my critical thinking.   |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 15. Literature helps me to learn more about life and grow personally, intellectually and emotionally.                |                    |           |              |                       |               |
| 16. Literature is an important part of my personal development.  |                    |           |              |                       |               |

Your perceptions towards explanation, text selection and teaching methods:

| Items   | Strongly agree (1) | Agree (2) | Disagree (3) | Strongly Disagree (4) | Uncertain (5) |
|---|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 17. I find the literary texts selected by the teacher interesting |                    |           |              |                       |               |

- 
18. The literature classes are designed according to my expectations, needs and interests.
19. The teaching method (model) used by the teacher is interesting.
- 

**Part Two**

**Please encircle the appropriate choice (you can choose more than one item)**

**Your perceptions towards the relevance of literature to your education:**

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20. Why you have joined English Language Department?
- To get a degree.
  - To learn about English language.
  - To learn about English literature?
  - A qualification in English will help you get a job?
  - To learn about the culture and traditions of English-speaking people?
  - You are interested in reading and studying literature (e.g. novels, poetry, drama)
  - Please add any other reasons that you can think of:
21. What kind of university English course would best serve your needs or wants? One that consisted of:
- Literature only
  - Practical language skills
  - Knowledge about language
  - A combination of the above
  - None of the above options (please give details if you chose the last option)
22. Are you satisfied with the number of literary topics covered during the academic year?
- Always
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
23. What difficulty do you face in literature classes?
- I find difficulty in understanding the language of the text
  - Unfamiliar ideas, experiences, or culture in the text
  - Not enough time to read and study the text carefully
  - Other reasons (please mention below)
24. What do you think about learning literature? You can tick more than one item
- It helps me improve my proficiency in the English language.
  - It helps increase cultural awareness between different cultures.
  - It provides fun.
  - It is motivating.
  - It is rewarding outside the classroom.
  - It is boring and waste of time.
  - It is difficult because literary texts are difficult to comprehend.
  - It is not important to me because it contributes nothing to my future professional career.
  - It helps me to grow personally, intellectually and emotionally
  - Other reasons:
25. What do the literature courses you are taking look like?
- Lectures led by the teacher followed by note taking.
  - A sort of small group discussions.
  - A sort of class discussion.
  - Others:
26. How do you find the texts you are dealing with in terms of language?
- Very difficult.
  - Fairly difficult.
  - Easy
27. Does your teacher provide background information useful to comprehend the text?
- Always
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
28. Do you do group working in literature classes?
- Always
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
29. How often are you asked to express your opinion and your personal interpretation of the text?
- Always
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
- 
30. What is your teacher's reaction to your opinion and interpretation?
- S/he usually accepts wrong interpretations.
  - S/he usually rejects wrong interpretations.
  - S/he corrects wrong interpretations.
-

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 31. Do you like literature as part of your study (education) at university?                              | a. I do like it.<br>b. I don't like it.<br>c. I want other topics.<br>d. I don't mind |
| 32. Do you think literature helps you to achieve your academic goals?                                    | a. Yes<br>b. No   |
| 33. Do you think that literature should be used in language learning?                                    | a. Yes<br>b. No<br>c. I do not mind   |
| 34. Which type or genre of literature do you benefit the most from when developing your language skills? | a. Poetry<br>b. Drama<br>c. Novel<br>d. Literary criticism                            |
| 35. What language skill (s) does studying literature help improve specifically?                          | a. Speaking<br>b. Listening<br>c. Writing<br>d. Reading                               |
- 

### Part Three: Open-ended questions

Please write down your answers to the following questions (**you can write your answers in the form of bullet notes**)

1. In your opinion how to make literature classes **more interesting**?
2. Any comments you may wish to add about **problems** you experience when studying literature?
3. Throughout your experience of studying literature, what did it add to your education **personally, culturally** and **linguistically**?