

## Literature in English as a Foreign Language: A Case Study with Higher Education Students

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**Abstract:** This paper shows that integrating various literary texts is a powerful tool for learning foreign languages. An experimental group with thirty-two students was exposed to poems, songs, long texts, short stories, novels, and movie reviews for one semester. The results reveal that students liked the topics dealing with current social developments since they initiated more debates and fostered students' critical thinking and creativity in a learner-centered environment, more independent learning, and more collaboration via the paraphrastic approach. All these led to language enhancement compared to the control group, comprised of thirty-one students. The ideas presented in this study are likely to inspire these students to incorporate a variety of literary texts and topics into their teaching courses beyond EFL classes, serving as guides and agents of social change.

### Anahtar Sözcükler:

Hedef dil  
Edebiyat  
Yeniden yazma  
Yüksek öğretim  
İngilizce öğretimi

**Özet:** Bu makale, çeşitli edebi metinlerin bütünlendirilmesinin yabancı dil öğreniminde güçlü bir araç olduğunu göstermektedir. Eğitim Fakültesi öğrencileri (gelecekteki öğretmenler) ile ilgilenmektedir ve bu öğrenciler İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenmektedir. Otuz iki öğrenciden oluşan bir deney grubu, bir dönem boyunca şiirler, şarkılar, uzun metinler, kısa öyküler, romanlar ve film eleştirilerine maruz bırakılmıştır. Sonuçlar, öğrencilerin güncel sosyal gelişmelerle ilgili konuları sevdiklerini ortaya koymaktadır; çünkü bu konular daha fazla tartışma başlatmış ve öğrencilerin eleştirel düşünme ve yaratıcılıklarını, öğrenci merkezli bir ortamda, daha bağımsız öğrenme ve daha fazla iş birliği yoluyla teşvik etmiştir. Tüm bunlar, otuz bir öğrenciden oluşan kontrol grubuna kıyasla dil gelişimine yol açmıştır. Bu çalışmada sunulan fikirler, bu öğrencilerin sadece EFL (İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak Öğrenme) derslerinin ötesinde öğretim kurslarına çeşitli edebi metinler ve konular dahil etmeleri için ilham kaynağı olma ihtimalini taşımaktadır ve sosyal değişimin rehberleri ve ajanları olarak hizmet etmektedir.

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## 1. Introduction

Modern education has transformed the practice of teaching, although its fundamental principles remain consistent. It requires a more humanistic and holistic approach that promotes and encourages personal and professional development. Nowadays education can be conducted by integrating wide-ranging content and broad-minded skills appropriate for students' needs (Morales et al., 2022). These needs are related to cognitive, cultural, economic, educational, amusement, business, or travel components, which cannot be fully pursued if the current society lacks the knowledge of a foreign language. Khatib et al. (2011) argue that "globalization cries for joining hands not only in economy, politics, and sociology but also in language-related fields such as ELT" (p. 202). Moreover, the desire to learn a foreign language quickly and become a fluent speaker has consistently driven educational systems, adding numerous books, methods, and techniques for this issue.

Nowadays, higher education institutions provide English as a foreign language (EFL) course across various fields of study. These courses typically utilize specialized textbooks tailored for EFL learning, that often focus on the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), B2 level, or higher levels: C1 or C2 level, depending on the students' needs. The topics presented in such textbooks are general everyday topics, or there are ESP topics (English for Specific Purpose). Literature is sparsely presented only in General English (GE) textbooks. Drawing upon existing literature research, our objective is to conduct a study that integrates a literary theme into these EFL courses and see if literary themes facilitate learning the English language. As such, this study aims to examine how university students learn EFL through an additional literature class. More precisely, this study posed the following questions:

1. Which types of literary works are best suited for inclusion in EFL classes for students of the Faculty of Education (future teachers)?
2. What are the most popular EFL approaches among university students when introducing literary work in class?
3. How willing are students to participate in team or group work in EFL classes when using literary works?

The study aims to discuss the importance of practical perspectives on the integration of literary texts in an FLT classroom, in which three learning rationales: teaching methodology, linguistic presentation, and students' motivation can be adapted and modified as an integrated approach to teaching literature (Khatib et al., 2011).

It is hoped that the study findings will provide the most effective approach in EFL classes when literature is introduced; ideas on the application of various literature topics to enhance EFL learning; and, give suggestions to English language teachers when implementing literature in educational programs to maximize students' FLL demands, in addition to appreciating interculturality (Zorba, 2023).

Before delving into the relationship between literature and EFL, defining what constitutes a literary text is beneficial. Based on Isariyawat et al. (2020), a literary text is the writing of either prose or poetry that is in a good writing style (i.e., poems, short stories, or novels) (Torres, 2012). Good reading practices of good literary texts in English lead to faster English comprehension. Regardless of the writing style, Greenwood and Flanigan (2007) agree that students need to become aware of various levels of context explicitness and be able to discuss them. Students can eventually determine for themselves how supportive the context is.

Although the social sphere is diverse, it is not limited to including various learning approaches for diverse linguistic populations (Neugebauer and Currie-Rubi, 2009). As such, various activities can be used in the communicative language classroom (in English classes). They can make the students active as they include tasks such “as comparing sets of pictures, giving instructions, completing a map, solving problems, discussions, dialogues, role plays and so on” (Daskalovska and Dimova, 2012 p. 1182), shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction (Torres, 2012), adding the cultural effect (Uştuk, 2017; Yıldırım, 2012), and intercultural awareness (ICA)(Zorba, 2023), being always focused on language and cultural enrichment (Collie and Slater,1987). In conclusion, literature can catalyze change by contributing to the emotional development of society and fostering positive interpersonal and intercultural attitudes, i.e., literature can influence aspects of the human condition(s), as Ghosn (2002) pointed out.

A significant group of researchers have taken a broader normative approach to FLL through the study of literature (Almeida et al., 2020; Daskalovska and Dimova, 2012; Hänninen, 2021; Khatib et al., 2011; Neugebauer and Currie-Rubi, 2009; Okyar, 2021; Lazar, 1993; Torres, 2012; Uştuk, 2017; Zorba, 2013; 2023). For example, Almeida et al. (2020) point out that learning a foreign language through literature provides students with intercultural skills that are necessary in the contemporary globalized world, while Daskalovska and Dimova (2012) state that

literary texts make the students more aware of the language they are learning, help them develop skills and strategies they can apply in many different situations and contexts, increase their interest and motivation, and make the learning of the language a more enjoyable and worthwhile experience (p.1186).

Similarly, Mustakim et al. (2014) consider literature an enjoyable tool to promote language proficiency and literacy, and Isariyawat et al.(2020) claim that students who read for joy or those who study literature are better at perusing cognizance have a richer vocabulary, and they are better in cooperative abilities. As such, we argue that foreign language teaching (FLT) and EFL need research areas that correlate various factors towards providing sustainable learning opportunities. For example, integrating literature in FLT classrooms affects cultural awareness, promotes thinking and basic language skills, and enhances personal development (Okyar, 2021). In today’s world, it is imperative to employ comprehensive strategies intentionally and systematically for learning and teaching new words (Neugebauer and Currie-Rubi, 2009), as new words help to determine the construction of meaning (Greenwood and Flanigan, 2007). Daskalovska and Dimova (2012) mention the benefits of authentic books in EFL as the best option for language improvement. In addition, the congruence between various literature topics and their modifications and EFL goals need to be examined. Providing authentic input for language acquisition offers motivating and meaningful context (Ghosn, 2002). Since “Students need to be sensitized to the various types of context clues that are available to them” (Greenwood and Flanigan, 2007, p. 249), this study is concerned with exploring literature in EFL classes and its importance to building EFL students’ interest and critical thinking (i.e., to have a concise overview of EFL and to show student’s willingness in EFL learning clearly). This aligns with the challenges identified by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Education 2030, which emphasizes the importance of high-quality content, i.e., content must be of high quality. Only then will the students fully engage in learning and acquire a deeper understanding. In addition, Morales et al. (2022) argue that the teacher’s role is crucial for the student-centered learning process, as it is the teacher’s responsibility to support the

students, guide, coach, and mentor them; similar to Collie and Slater (1987) claims who mention the teacher's help when exploring literature.

Naturally, literature can be present in EFL classes in various ways, and its application has numerous advantages: it improves cognitive and emotional skills, and students enhance their language skills and gain knowledge about specific societal customs, values, and habits (Hanninen, 2021). Likewise, Isariyawat et al. (2020, p. 1321) state that the reader uses literature "to see the images of society, culture, politics, and economy of the era in which the author has reflected through his perspective, and understand people's feelings about those situations as well." Zorba (2023) adds that literature helps in 'understanding Self'- as a cultural being, similar to Okyar (2021, p.332) who points out that "Literature gives readers a sense of experiencing real-life events", while Arikan (2005 p.31) believes that literature offers "world-views and ideologies through which they are sensitized towards other cultures and individuals other than their own", enhancing teaching skills and critical thinking (Zorba, 2012). Moreover, Khatib et al. (2011) have succinctly summarized the merits of literature in EFL/ESL: authenticity, motivation, cultural/intercultural awareness and globalization, intensive/extensive reading practice, sociolinguistics/pragmatic knowledge, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, language skills, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking. McKay (2014), points out that literary texts help learners develop sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence, allowing them to pose questions appropriately within specific contexts.

Encouraging students to enjoy reading and improve their EFL skills is a challenge. Since reading habits develop from a young age (Hanninen, 2021), teachers are responsible for selecting literature that suits the needs of their students and society. Since EFL needs research areas that correlate various factors toward providing sustainable learning opportunities, we try to relate our arguments about the use of literature in EFL classes with the research gap in previous research findings. This is confirmed by Ghosn (2002), who points out that "traditional ELT materials may fail to provide adequate support for the development of second language academic literacy" (p.172), then how to adapt literature in teaching and learning practices in classes with a large number of students and with various levels of foreign (English) language knowledge is a challenge. Arikan (2008) raises questions about whether literature should be taught primarily for its exemplary language use, or for its cognitive, social, or ideological impacts. Surely, if literary texts are chosen carefully and used effectively, they can add to the student's linguistic development as well as their personal growth (Okyar,2021). Moreover, this personal growth correlates with students' exposure to the reality of our interconnected world (Morales et al., 2022). Therefore, the type of literature to be introduced in EFL classrooms to make the students want and enjoy learning is the impetus to raise questions. Based on the issues of how and what the students do to address EFL difficulties through literature, our study considers OECD's (2018) project, The Future of Education and Skills 2030, and aims to discuss the approaches that enable students to thrive in EFL learning through literature and how the EFL classroom can effectively develop these knowledge and skills.

The following pages describe different EFL learning skills and possibilities of this kind of intentional learning. The paper will also discuss to what extent these EFL skills are beneficial, how and where they differ significantly, and suggest a literature reading-based approach that considers the comprehensiveness of EFL through literature.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Design**

The study is based on Neugebauer and Currie-Rubi's (2009, p. 393) research-based literacy practices for read-aloud techniques (i.e., how the students are engaged in deep vocabulary learning). As pointed out by Daskalovska and Dimova (2012), students can be encouraged to participate in a conversation, and this can be done by offering them meaningful content and context that provokes students' interest and makes them talk about and capture their imagination. When seeking an answer to the abovementioned questions, this study aimed to discover students' possible tendencies in literature reading for EFL based on the researchers' observations in one semester. As the study sought classroom exploration, the research design was also based on Morales et al. (2022), who consider that it is the teacher's responsibility to support the learning process through the initial stages, and only then can it become the pedagogical guiding paradigm. As there are control and experimental groups, the research design used in this study is quasi-experimental. The teaching was conducted in two groups: one followed the regular English language class according to the syllabus, while the second group participated in an additional English language literature class.

## **2.2. Participants**

The study was conducted with the second year higher education students with EFL classes for one semester (i.e., 135 minutes per week), and targeted students of B1.2 Level of the CEFR. Precisely, 32 students (31 female and one male) volunteered to participate in the study, whereas the other group/control group followed the syllabus schemata, i.e., this group consisted of 31 female students. The experimental group was provided with literary texts that included reflection of students' everyday life experiences with rich vocabulary in a period of 9 meetings; precisely this group was taught 60 minutes additionally (45 regular minutes, plus an additional 15 minutes for specific activities), compared to the controlling group. And received explicit instruction regarding EFL through literature. Two researchers monitored and observed these students' EFL progress throughout this quasi-experimental research

The study covered aspects of EFL by exploring a range of topics in the literature, conducting various inquiry activities in the literature, cooperating with learning groups, and developing classroom applications. Dependent variables, such as information, response, and language in the context of EFL, are all combined in teachers' reports. More precisely, by the time these students enter university, they have already had EFL for eleven years (i.e., since the age of 7); evidently, their English is intermediate level, and their average grade retrieved from SMU (University Management System revealed average grade 8.4).

## **2.3. Procedure**

"Language improvement cannot occur if the students are passive recipients of the teachers' input" (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012, p. 1184). Based on Morales et al. (2022) initial stages of pedagogical processes need guidance, coaching, mentoring, and support by the teachers, therefore, the researchers advised the English language teacher to conduct pre-reading, reading, and post-reading techniques in each meeting, to obtain reliable, unbiased data. While the readings had to be done by all the students, this would also help them approach the suggested texts appropriately, thus creating a dynamic learning environment. It is important to note that, regardless of their genre, the texts contained relevant ideas and values (Torres, 2012) and were similar to practical activities presented by Collie and Slater (1987). To be more specific, the study is also based on Savvidou (2004) who offers six stages in her integrated model preparation and anticipation as stage 1, focusing as stage 2, preliminary

response as stage 3, working at it as stages 4 and 5 and the final stage: interpretation and personal response.

After informing these future teachers (the experimental group) about the aim of the study, various preparatory instructions were provided to them during the anticipation stage of each meeting, which occurred every fortnight. The study reflected Lazar (1993, p. 1) that “every teaching situation is different, every literary text is different and every theory explaining literature itself or how to use it in the classroom is different”. Thus, the research design included students as participants in each meeting. They were as follows:

Meeting 1: The participants/students were asked to choose and read a story as their classwork assignment. The topics were: (1). Who was Buffalo Bill? (2). The story of blue jeans? (3). The story of Coca-Cola, (4). Elvis-he is still the king, and (5). America’s oil-a love affair, retrieved from <https://linguapress.com/inter.htm> They were given a sheet containing a table divided into five parts. In the initial part, the participants wrote down the story and how it started. In the second part, the participants had to write 5-10 adjectives from the story and write a synonym for each adjective. In the third part, the setting(s) of the event(s) were recorded, and the participants had to put down around five locations/places. In the fourth part, the students were asked to compare the chosen topic with current trends, and in the fifth part, they were asked to include the closing remarks by writing the story’s conclusion. Then, these students (future teachers) were divided into groups where they would discuss what they wrote in the parts of the table described above. There were four groups with five students (of future teachers) and three groups with four students.

Meeting 2: This in-class activity is based on Naji et al. (2019), “Listen and draw.” The teacher informed the students that they would listen to a story about Hetty Robinson. The students listened to the story, and then they had to draw what they had understood from each paragraph. They were given 3 minutes between each paragraph to discuss the illustrations with their friend sitting next to them. At the end of the class, the students had to write their own story based on their drawing(s). The written assignments were shared among friends. At home, they had to check their friends’ writing.

Meeting 3: Reading assignment: Before coming to class, the students were assigned to read *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens (Intermediate level). In-class activity: Compare the life of *Oliver Twist* and the life of orphans nowadays. What advice would you give to Oliver? What would you do if you were Oliver? How do your surroundings impact your decisions/actions? How would you finish the story if you were the writer? Write down three questions you would ask Oliver if you had a chance to meet him.

Meeting 4: The participants were instructed to watch the movie “A Walk to Remember,” the 2002 American romantic drama directed by Adam Shankman, and read the reviews. The students were asked to analyze the reviews and consider their accuracy. The students were asked to suggest alternative titles for the book and discuss why those specific titles. Tasks were given to compare the characters’ lifestyles with the students’ lives. They were also asked to prepare an interview directed at the movie’s main characters that included 1 to 15 questions.

Meeting 5 and 6: The participants were assigned to read parts of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) by Khaled Hosseini. Each student was given a ten-page copy to read at home. They were asked to underline the part that had affected them the most and prepare to discuss it in class. In class, the students were observed to see if they described the story chronologically

or not, how they related the story to contemporary issues, and how much English they used and how they used it.

Meeting 7: Based on the question posed: “What is the best way to use songs and poetry in the language classroom?” by Almeida et al. (2020, p. 1), the students listened to the song. “The Wind of Change” by Scorpions in class. Before listening to the song, they were given copies of the lyrics with words missing. They had to listen to the song and fill in the gaps. Then, the lyrics were presented, and the students could check the words they added to their copies. Followed by 5 minutes to write about the meaning of this song and finally relate it to world issues.

Meeting 8: As the participants were future teachers, the researchers aimed to introduce a song regarding education in the late 70s: “Another Brick in the Wall” by Pink Floyd. Each student had a copy with the lyrics. Ten minutes were given to read the lyrics and write down questions regarding the lyrics. Then, they were asked to collaborate with their pairs to respond to the questions, followed by a group of four combining the questions and checking the responses. In the final phase, the video with the song was presented. The question posed by the teacher was: 1. How can you describe the education system shown in this video? Then, they were asked to compare and contrast the current education system with the system presented in the video. Finally, they were asked to write down three advantages and disadvantages of each education system and describe the ideal education system.

Meeting 9: Copies of the poem “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost were handed out to the students. They were given enough time to read and analyze the poem. Three students were asked to read the poem aloud. Discussion regarding this poem was opened.

Table 1.

*Observation sheet*

Week	Title of the book/poem/song;
Information-Based Approach	
1	Students can elicit information from the text.
2	Students gain knowledge based on what they have read.
3	Students can explain the content of the text.
Personal-Response Approach	
1	Students relate topics to personal experiences.
2	Students can express feelings toward the issues of the text.
Language-Based Approach	
1	Students actively participate in the process of understanding the meaning of the text.
2	Students work with their classmates in the process of understanding the text.
3	Generate language practice using the text.
Paraphrastic Approach	
1	Students discuss what the author says in the text
2	Students use simple terms to explain what the story is about
3	Students can tell the storyline of the text
Stylistics Approach	
1	Encouraged language awareness among students.
2	Students are encouraged to discuss beyond the surface meaning of the text.

The researchers advised the English language teacher to introduce variety across instruction, as well as a variety of activities, a variety of assignments, and a variety of resources during this research period. These resources included stories with compelling reasons suitable for these students’ learning. The students’ engagement is a process of adaptation and building

confidence while learning, and it is the teachers' job to develop a range of strategies for teaching and fostering student involvement (Torres, 2012). The study was focused on this variety as it is evident that the maximum and clear contribution to learning is through variations in teaching and learning. The source of the study was Mustakim et al. (2014, p. 42), and the observation sheet regarding activities was employed, modified, and adapted to align with the aims of this study.

The sheet regarding approaches was filled out at the end of each meeting by both researchers/observers. The table above (Table 1) provides an example of five Likert-type questions: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree(D), Neutral(N), Agree(A), and Strongly Agree (SA). For a better analysis, the data was first categorized, enabling a fair comparison between the variables. By recording the data, we managed to have numerical questions (scale).

Table 2.

*Total number of students*

Grades before the research						
Students	7	15	5	17	19	Total no of students: 63
Students' grades	6	7	8	9	10	Average grade: 8.4

\*The highest grade is ten, and the lowest passing grade is six.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with the following parameters: Crosstabulation, correlation, and t-test, were used for more detailed analysis. Grades retrieved from the SMU, before and after the research, were compared to see if EFL enhancement had an impact when literature was introduced to the students.

### 3. Data Analysis

The results are based on several self-reporting questions. This design of literature introduction to these future teachers is tailored to expose and enrich the students with the most needed learning skills nowadays, which are considered a 'society necessity.' Literature in these English classes gave these students the basis for intercultural skills. These skills are necessary in this globalized world (Almeida et al., 2020). The explanation of the impact of the presentations on various topics is presented in Table 3, which reports the outcomes of each meeting.

The data show that the research started by involving easily comprehensible reading material, later shifting to more extensive reading. As shown, the most wanted topics were "The Wind of Change" and "1000 Splendid Suns", whereas the least wanted was the review discussion regarding "A Walk to Remember."

Table 3.

*The most wanted topic*

Nr.	Titles	1	2	3	4	5
1	Meeting 1				4.12	
2	Hetty Robinson				4.19	
3	Oliver Twist			3.77		
4	A Walk to Remember			3.04		
5	One Thousand Splendid Suns				4.23	
6	The Wind of Change				4.5	
7	The Road Not Taken			3.27		
8	Another Brick in the Wall			3.65		



The obvious benefits of integrating a literature approach indeed offered challenges similar to Collie and Slater (1987) claims. Literature that triggered critical thinking and creativity, which were clearly demonstrated in discussions about the song "The Wind of Change" and the poem "The Road Not Taken." Khatib et al. (2011) claim that "poetry is usually criticized for its complex and far-fetched syntactic structures, but it can simultaneously be a good source for practicing grammatical structures" (p. 202). In our case, the students showed full engagement in discussions about poetry, similar to Arikani's (2005) findings when the students experienced satisfactory classroom interaction. The question: "Are the students able to tell the storyline of the text?" had the most positive answers (56.3%), which are included as the paraphrastic approach item, whereas the question which had the most neutrality and the most negative answers was "Encouraged language awareness among students" with 43.8% of responses, as an item of the stylistic approach.

The most influential category among all the approaches applied in those meetings is the paraphrastic approach, followed by the information-based approach, whereas, the personal-response approach and the language-based approach share similar influence among these students. The results reveal that the stylistics approach is the least desired. Based on Lazar (1993) who points out that different situations need different literary texts, the results clarify each topic's impact and which of the weeks/meetings was better in each category. The results reveal that short topics in the first meeting, the long novel in weeks 5 and 6, and the song in the seventh week are more informative weeks. More precisely, based on the data obtained, the students were more eager to use the information-based approach for "1000 Splendid Suns" and "The Wind of Change". These data align with Morales et al. (2022) regarding real-life connections. The least focused on information was "The Road Not Taken."

The data regarding the personal-response approach show that this kind of literature introduction for EFL learning encounters unique challenges: Each approach and each question corresponds to different data. "Oliver Twist" and "The Road Not Taken" are the most unpalatable in this approach. The language-based approach is more noticed in "The Wind of Change" and "Hetty Robinson," whereas the review of "A Walk to Remember", "The Road Not Taken" and "Oliver Twist" are the least noticed examples of the language-based approach. "The Road Not Taken" and "Oliver Twist" are the least wanted topics within the personal approach and the language-based approach.

The results explicitly reveal that the Paraphrastic Approach holds the highest scores as the most applicable approach in each meeting. Again, the discussion regarding the reviews read about "A Walk to Remember" remains far behind the other literature categories. When analysing the stylistic approach, the data reveal that this group of students pays little attention to stylistics. "The Wind of Change" is the leading literature topic regarding students' stylistic approach. While in Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall," students did not focus on stylistics. The tables below show the differences in language enhancement (in grades) at the end of the semester in both groups:

Table 4

*Experimental groups' grades*

Experimental group: Grades after the research						
Number of students	1	4	9	9	9	Total Number of students: 32
Students' grades	6	7	8	9	10	Average grade: 8.6

\* The highest grade is ten, and the lowest passing grade is 6.

The descriptive statistics show a slight positive difference compared to the control group results. What is noticed when comparing and contrasting, the data reveal that the students in the experimental group had higher grades than the control group.

Table 5  
*Control group grades*

Control group: Grades after the research						
Number of students	6	2	6	7	10	Total Number of students: 32
Students' grades	6	7	8	9	10	Average grade: 8.4

\* The highest grade is 10 and the lowest passing grade is 6.

With the primary focus on the effect of implementing literature in EFL among these university students, the most appropriate reading approaches seem to be noticed as students' interest. There are two types of data regarding the experimental group: the researchers' perceptions for each kind of literature presented every second week (i.e., what approach was most noticeable: the information-based approach, personal-response approach, language-based approach, paraphrastic approach, or the stylistic approach). The results reveal that the paraphrastic approach is the leading approach used by this group of students. The second data reveals the students' progress based on students' grades at the end of the research. The results based on this data will be discussed succinctly before concluding. Comparison between the experimental and control groups relies solely on general final exam scores. Additionally, the introduction of this additional variable, not initially included in the research questions, is beneficial as it can have an impact on these students' overall EFL learning

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The rich diversity of topics introduced in English-medium academic setting(s), either intentionally or spontaneously, definitely facilitates the development of learning skills. Naturally, this learning framework applies (OECD, 218). Knowing that students' perceptions of literature are as important as teachers' perceptions (Okyar, 2021), the amount of literature presented in EFL classes in one semester intellectually contributes to university students.

Regarding the first question: Which types of literary works are best suited for inclusion in EFL classes for future teachers, the study reveals that the students are more interested in song listening, filling the gaps in lyrics, and discussing poems/songs. In agreement with this, these students prefer long stories about social issues. In addition, they prefer to have their own choices, as in Meeting 1. These align with Khatib et al.'s (2011) models of implementing literature via methodological approaches to teaching literature: content or culture model, literature as personal growth or enrichment (also supported by Lazar, 1993; Okyar, 2021; Yıldırım, 2012), language-based approach, and critical literacy. These 'readers' (future teachers) are taught to understand social, political, and psychological change(s), respect the values of other groups, and expand their imagination and creativity (Torres, 2012). Naturally, this specific song presented to the students may have sparked lengthy debates and garnered significant interest in discussions, given the ongoing social and political upheavals in Europe that have global implications.

Bearing in mind that the literature approach should be 'intellectually engaging' and likable to the students, it also fosters basic language skills and sharpens critical and creative thinking

skills (Okyar, 2021), as revealed with the selection of “A Thousand Splendid Suns” and “The Wind of Change” as the most wanted topics. The findings align with Zorba (2023), emphasizing that teachers need to find ways to teach cultural aspects and raise their learners’ ICA, which is a crucial factor in today's world. Neugebauer and Currie-Rubi (2009) point out that students gain a deep knowledge of words through their understanding of words. In our case, these future teachers were more eager to approach their EFL through various types of literature, as they had opportunities to reflect on their prior experiences (Zorba, 2023). These literature topics and their modifications enable these future teachers to stay on track with the EFL objectives. As the results show, learning English through literature is a means of connecting to natural language, and the students were able to foster vocabulary development, similar to Ghosn (2002), as in the example where “Students can tell the storyline of the text,” which was the most chosen item. The discussion about implementing literature clearly shows the facts related to the improvement enabling these future teachers to acquire better and more fluent English, which is in line with Daskalovska and Dimova (2012), who claim that the processes involved in arriving at an interpretation are more important than the result of the interpretation, i.e., “The active involvement of the learners in interpreting the text through noticing, inferencing, negotiation, interaction, and imaginative involvement promotes language acquisition” (p. 1184). Thus, students who were more aware of the language were noticed in this study, using the paraphrastic and information-based approaches. Based on the data, the ten-page reading text in meetings 5 and 6 and “The Wind of Change” made these students adopt different viewpoints and enhance intercultural awareness (Almeida et al., 2020; Torres, 2012; Zorba, 2023). In meetings 5 and 6, these future teachers could compare and contrast important ideas and facts in the novel “A Thousand Splendid Suns” and discuss the most critical parts of it. The results reveal the students’ interest in this book. They tried to discuss all significant factors for the specific period mentioned in the book. They could discuss behaviors or feelings for a specific culture (Lazar, 1993). In our case, discussions about appropriate vs (in)appropriate cultural, social behaviour. The findings show the effect on learners’ learning of literature; causing a change in students’ perception Arikani (2008). Similarly to the claims of Torres (2012) and Zorba (2023), the student’s role became more active from the point of the cultural perspective, adding Morales et al. (2022) who claim that students develop their voice at the time that they interact by broadening, enriching, and challenging their learning experience.

As a competence category, the students have become more aware of the literature and are responsible for giving feedback on each assignment. Through collaboration with their friends, these future teachers have tried to create an inclusive and responsive ELL environment (all being classroom-based environments). The observations reveal the inclusion of the 4Es: engage, explore, explain, evaluate, and the 4Cs: collaborate, communicate, create, comment, i.e., a creative and cooperative engagement (Almeida et al., 2020) through the results of each approach.

This research observed that the English language used in classes is similar to that used in everyday communication, such as paraphrasing long sentences. However, the students have developed critical thinking skills and developed language awareness, which is in line with Daskalovska and Dimova (2012), Almeida et al. (2020), Naji et al.’s (2019) and (Zorba, 2013; 2023) claims. Although this study reveals a slight development of language awareness compared to other skills, literature application enhances language learning. The students need to practice “how to use context as they read large amounts of appropriately challenging texts” (Greenwood and Flanigan, 2007, p. 250), thus overlapping teaching strategies that enable

these students to make connections of the individual word meanings to the text need to be improved, i.e., using the appropriate literary strategies (Lazar, 1993).

Regarding the second study question about the most prominent EFL learning approaches among university students when engaging with literature, the study reveals that the Paraphrasing approach is the most applicable in EFL classes. This means that students mostly paraphrase or reword the text to more straightforward language while they are interested in discussions and debates on all kinds of topics of literature presented within a semester. It is also revealed that these students/future teachers are not interested in reading reviews, but prolonged or short stories, poems, and songs are mostly preferred. This is also the response to the third study question regarding how much the students are willing to collaborate in team/group work in FLT through literature. In addition, this information/knowledge gained, its sharing, students' critical thinking, and their integration into research activities surely convey a progressive transition toward a student-centered environment (Morales et al., 2022).

The data obtained from the observation sheets for each meeting show that to fulfill the requirements of this kind of EFL learning, these future teachers initially gained an understanding of basic concepts of English learning skills and then grasped various classroom applications of these concepts. Then, they created, adapted, and/or modified those learning activities to encourage more inquiry and engagement through collaboration by commenting on the topics presented, explaining, and evaluating them, as shown with the questions in each approach presented.

The general findings of this study provide enough evidence on the most effective approach in EFL classes when literature is introduced to these students, which is the Paraphrastic Approach, conducted by various literature topics. This literature variety enhances EFL learning, revealing that literature on social and global issues is quite popular. In addition, the study also provides ideas to English language teachers when implementing literature in educational programs to maximize students' EFL demands. In such classes, the students have the opportunity to change from passive recipients of knowledge to critical thinkers and creators, become self-directed, being led to a higher level of engagement (Morales et al., 2022).

To sum up, the idea that "one-size-fits-all" remains blurry concerning pedagogical practices in EFL nowadays, and it is difficult to make all the students in class read or listen in English as a target language (TL). Traditional EFL approaches, relying solely on EFL course books, remain narrow among traditional teaching, whereas the application of literature in English classes reaches far beyond plain EFL learning. Various literature discussed in EFL classrooms helps these students approach society and its issues more understandably. As such, the thorough discussion (and training) about using literature in EFL classes must be prioritized.

Determining how to effectively introduce literature in an EFL classroom to foster students' interest and appreciation for the subject is crucial. Literature-oriented courses are needed (Zorba, 2013) and literature and learning EFL can become interesting when introduced to students who use English as TL (Collie & Slater, 1987). However, selecting appropriate literature that aligns with students' proficiency levels, particularly those with limited exposure to the target language outside the classroom, presents a significant challenge, in addition to challenges such as various English language levels, finding the most appropriate and

applicable learning material, and balancing appropriate teaching/learning approaches such as the stylistics approach, the information-based approach, the personal-response approach, the paraphrastic approach, or the language-based approach. The original ideas presented in our study show that they are effective for classroom practice and scholarly investigations (Almeida et al., 2020). As such, the originality of this study lies in the instruction of some literature applications in different EFL classroom meetings among university students, aiming to relate the student's language level and the teachers' approaches towards the introduction of literature in EFL classrooms.

Disregarding whether reading literature in English is a desirable way to be applied in a diverse class, the underlying assumption seems that these future teachers have acquired elements of sustainable EFL. As noted by Arikan (2008), literature has been shown to offer cognitive, social, and ideological impacts. It has impacted the students' linguistic development and personal growth, which aligns with Torres (2012) and Okyar (2021). These future teachers are keen on EFL learning through literature, and they prefer discussions related to social issues sparked in songs/lyrics and short or long novels. The Paraphrastic Approach, which activates classroom collaboration and communication, makes them more independent learners. The students' judgments go far beyond that specific topic, enhancing their critical thinking and communication skills. The literature approach is a multidimensional field (Arikan, 2005) which triggers class discussions and effective Socratic seminars, shifting the center of instruction from the teacher to the students (Torres, 2012). As such, several factors that make EFL learning through literature distinct from traditional EFL learning are noticed in this study: The literature approach to EFL does not imply any form of learning failure, affluent literature can be effectively introduced to students learning EFL, and this approach can be modified and adapted to suit their needs. The internet offers rich resources, including poems, texts, and songs, allowing students and teachers to search for materials appropriate for the learners' proficiency levels, it can also be linked to social issues and other subjects, promoting social, intellectual, and emotional development, there is a continuous opportunity for learning something new, and various types of literature can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of students within the same class.

What results from exploring literature in EFL classes are consistent with general sustainable learning. Literature in EFL classes is enjoyable and essential since it promotes teaching skills and critical thinking (Zorba, 2013). Teachers should carefully select suitable literary texts. Appropriate literature presented in EFL classes should be a 'must' to encourage the students to engage actively in reading, communicating, collaborating, and creative thinking. The study also recommends specific instructional modifications based on the suggested literature, identifying students' learning preferences and analyzing their efforts and behavior to overcome EFL difficulties. Furthermore, we may add that successful literature learning and FLL will primarily be more beneficial, particularly if the students actively use the TL inside and outside their classrooms.

### **Ethical Issues**

The authors confirm that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country (Date of Confirmation: (09/07/2024)).

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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