

## Use of Literature to Enhance Motivation in ELT Classes

Haldun Vural\*

*ELT Department, Mevlana University, Konya, TURKEY*

---

<b>Article history</b>	Foreign language teachers need to motivate their students to learn English. Literature can be a good means to achieve motivation in ELT classes. There has recently been a revival of interest in literature as a practical, motivating and an effective resource available for language learning. Therefore, we can assume that literature and authentic literary materials, especially short stories can enhance motivation of ELT students. Keeping this in mind, this study was carried out in an ELT classroom by using two homogeneous groups: an experimental group and a control group. First, for one semester, Experimental Group was provided with unabridged, authentic short stories, whereas Control Group was exposed to abridged and simplified texts and reading passages. The findings showed that the Experimental Group's overall results of final exams and outcomes were better than that of the Control Group. Second, an attitude survey was used to understand the level of motivation of literature and to determine whether literature has a positive effect on reading and writing. The results suggested that use of short stories enhances learning and may be good motivational means in second and/or foreign language teaching settings through developing integrated reading, speaking, writing and listening skills. The results of this study may be beneficial to language practitioners in their classroom teaching.
<b>Received:</b> 16.07.2013	
<b>Received in revised form:</b> 01.09.2013	
<b>Accepted:</b> 05.09.2013	
<b>Key words:</b> ELT; motivation; literature; authentic literary materials	

---

### Introduction

Recently, there has been a remarkable revival of interest in literature as one of the most motivating resources for language learning (Duff & Maley, 2007). In addition, the use of literature in ELT classrooms has attracted a great deal of interest among EFL teachers since the 1980s (Clandfield & Foord, 2006). Because foreign language teachers must find new ways to motivate their students during lessons and because motivation is one of the most important aspects of the learning process, the use of literature in classes might be a good way to increase student motivation. Several studies addressed this issue focusing on motivating EFL students with the use of literature (Brumfit & Carter, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1990; Benton & Fox, 1985). In these studies students were given some samples of exercises and communicative activities that might be used with literary works. Researchers also gave recommendations that short stories are often an ideal way of introducing students to literature for motivation and improvement in their reading and writing skills in EFL classes.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether the use of literature in ELT classrooms may have positive learning and motivational effects in ELT classes at a Kazakh university, because no such studies focusing on using literature as a means of motivation in ELT are present in a Kazakh context. This study was conducted to prove the motivational effects of using literature

---

\* Correspondence: *ELT Department, Mevlana University, Konya, TURKEY, hvural@mevlana.edu.tr*

in ELT after the instruction through a semester at a Kazakh university. The study was a part of reading lessons of 34 prep-school students. Students were divided into two groups; the first was experimental group where new methods and the activities related to ELT with the use of literature were applied; and the other was control group where traditional methods with abridged and simplified books and texts and reading passages about subjects outside of literature were applied.

## **Literature Review**

An abundance of definitions of literature and motivation can be found. Numerous sources have explained literature in various ways. For example, in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English literature means books, plays, poems and so on that people think are important and good (2003). Literature is writing what is considered to be a work of art in The Oxford Wordpower Dictionary (1998). Literature is defined as writings whose value lies in beauty of form or emotional effect in The Concise Dictionary of Current English (2011). And motivation can be defined as the reasons underlying behavior which is characterized by willingness and choice (Guay, Chantal, Ratelle, Marsh, Larose & Boivin, 2010). It is also defined as the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something (Gredler, Broussard & Garrison, 2004).

When it comes to motivation, there are two kinds of motivation: Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the type of motivation that is animated by personal enjoyment, interest, or pleasure, engaging in an activity because it is enjoyable and satisfying to do. The other is extrinsic motivation, managed by reinforcement contingencies to achieve some instrumental result, such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment. According to educators intrinsic motivation is more desirable and results in better learning outcomes than extrinsic motivation does (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999).

Here it can be claimed that the components of motivation overlap with those of literature since literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied body of written material, which is important because it speaks about fundamental human issues, which is enduring rather than ephemeral. A literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country or a different time. It expands language awareness, encourages interaction and discussions, and educates the whole learner's personality. It is also enjoyable and motivating (Clandfield & Foord, 2006), because there is a secret formula in literature that literature reaches the parts of a person's feelings, dreams, fantasies, and experience that other texts can't reach (Pulverness, 2007).

These functions are also among the objectives of teaching a foreign language, and parts of good teaching. Foreign language teachers should use non-defensive approaches in classes, because ELT has linguistic, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural objectives, and literature meets them (Ellis, 2002). Language is a means of teaching communicative competence, language competence, discourse competence and lingo-cultural competence. A fundamental purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate in a foreign language in oral and written forms, including reading its literature. Literary language may be said superior to spoken language because it is more elaborate (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

To put it simply, it is suggested that there are three main reasons for using literature: linguistic, methodological, and motivational (Duff & Maley, 2007). First in terms of linguistic reasons, Hedge (1985) suggests that literary texts can develop the student's knowledge of language at the levels of vocabulary and structure and at the level of textual organization. The

rise of communicative language teaching valued literature as authentic texts in which the opportunity for vocabulary acquisition, the development of reading strategies, and the training of critical thinking, that is, reasoning skills happen to be (Kramersch & Kramersch, 2000). Also literary language is often surprisingly ordinary, as ordinary language is often surprisingly poetic (Carter, 1999; Hall, 2001).

Second, when it comes to methodological reasons, meanings in literary texts bring out different understanding, reactions, and interpretations. This means variety in opinions and this variety may inspire discussions and sharing feelings, and all these mean that literature encourages interaction (Duff & Maley, 2007; Clandfield & Foord, 2006). Also second language reading does not differ greatly in principle, from first language reading and can often be studied using the same or adapted techniques and methodologies (Verhoeven, 1999).

Finally, literature involves affective, attitudinal, and experiential factors and so may motivate learners to read (McKay, 1986). So literature is motivating because it deals with situations and themes that the writer considered important to address and the motivational effect of the genuineness of literary texts is increased when the topics relate to the learner's personal experience (Duff & Maley, 2007). With the use of literature learners may build new vocabulary as well as they expand their understanding of words they already knew (Ono, Day & Harsch, 2004). Also literature may help students to have the habit of reading, and if students can develop the habit of reading especially for enjoyment and interest, they may increase confidence and fluency, and gain the habit of reading in a foreign language (Brown, 2000). This is important for students' further independent motivation in learning a foreign language.

Despite the benefits of using literature in classroom, literature's importance was faded as linguistics has become the center of language programs (Widdowson, 1992). Despite the claims of its enthusiasts, it is asserted that the use of literature is not always necessarily pleasurable or meaningful for all readers and that classroom uses of literature put off at least as many students as they encourage (Hall, 2003). As an additional criticism it is also suggested that foreign language literature often fails to make any sense of progression, and rather than advances in skills or abilities it specifies items of knowledge (Brumfit, 1981). Therefore, it was suggested that because of literature's structural complexity, lack of conformity to standard grammatical rules, and remote control perspective, it should be excluded from the foreign language curriculum (Topping, 1968). These linguists also stated that there is no positive contribution of literature to ELT students' practical aim of linguistic proficiency acquisition. Teachers do not prefer literature in their ELT classes because of limited time during classroom period and because some teachers think they are not equipped methodologically to use literary texts (Paran, 1998), mostly due to the difficulty of choosing the texts for classroom (Dawson, 2005).

As seen above there have been pros and cons of literature in ELT, and I would like to favor the positive ideas and agree that the linguistic difficulty of literature has been overstated (Povey, 1972). Therefore, advantages often outweigh the disadvantages. Using literature in classroom means a different approach to ELT involving motivation, pleasure and enjoyment for students and teachers. Bamford defines the main target as "the time when students are silently at one with the written word while seated at a desk at school, standing on a crowded train, or stretched out on the floor at home over an open book, unaware that the written words are in English" (Brown, 2000). Because literature is considered to hold high status in many cultures and countries, students can feel a real sense of achievement at understanding a piece of highly respected literature (Clandfield & Foord, 2006).

In addition it is also claimed that literature encourages personal involvement in readers, and hence literary texts are useful in language learning process and that “engaging imaginatively with literature enables learners to shift the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system” (Collie & Slater, 1990). Because there exist many cross-curricular and cross-cultural relations in it, literature educates personality of whole learner's. It can be said there are two advantages of literature for teachers; first literature may develop positive attitudes towards reading and learning languages, and second learners' attitudes to values may be improved by literature, because literature may increase learner's understanding and tolerance for cultural differences. It should also be noted that in literary texts different cultural environments and backgrounds are expressed, and this may cause some difficulties in reading and general comprehension.

Yet this difficulty can be overcome through exploring foreign cultures rather than avoiding the use of literature in ELT contexts (Duff & Maley, 2007; McKay, 1986). McKay carries this claim one step further and suggests that literature may increase learner's understanding and tolerance for cultural differences (McKay, 1986). Literature can also be a special resource for personal development and growth, since it offers many linguistic opportunities to the language teacher and allow many of the most valuable exercises of language learning to be based on materials capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement (Carter & Long, 1991). Thus it can be claimed that literature allows students to become intercultural travelers (Carroli, Pavoni & Tudini, 2003). It is the invisible culture in language that the students are expected to discover and notice the complicated link between language form and meaning, and share their learning experience with their classmates (Lo Bianco, 2003).

Literature can enhance the reading and writing skills as well since it helps the transfer of reading and writing skills and strategies from the mother tongue to English, and so, through teaching specific skills, literature may increase the students' general understanding of language and their ability of reading and writing in English (Hedge, 1985). Literary texts help students to practice and develop their reading and writing skills and strategies. This can be said to contribute to the development of their reading fluency and proficiency, and writing accuracy. As a result there may be an increase in students' reading and writing speed and self-confidence, and thus the students are able to pay more attention to the overall meaning of what they are reading (Bamford & Day, 2004). Besides through literature, students learn new vocabulary and expand their understanding of words they knew before, which contributes positively to their reading and writing skills consequently (Ono, Day & Harsch, 2004).

To investigate the issue further, and because in the context of ELT in Kazakhstan there was no study about the use of literature, and its motivational aspects at college level, I decided to perform the present study in Kazakhstan with university students. Therefore, the general purpose of this study was to see whether the use of literature in ELT at university level could increase motivation of the students and have a positive effect on reading and writing skills. Hence, the paper aims at finding answer to the following research questions:

1. Are there significant relations between the use of literature in ELT and motivation of students at university level?
2. Can the use of literature attribute a positive effect on reading and writing to language learning?

## **Methods**

### ***Participants***

The participants of this study consisted of 34 students of prep classes of Two-Languages Department of Suleyman Demirel University, Almaty, Kazakhstan. The participants took part in this study voluntarily and their ages ranged from 15 to 19 with the average of 17. The heterogeneous groups or participants of this research consist of 13 girls and 21 boys which were divided into two groups; experimental group (EG) where new methods and the activities related to ELT with the use of literature were applied and the control group (CG) where traditional methods with abridged and simplified books and texts and reading passages about subjects outside of literature were applied. At the time of data collection, (second semester of 2004-2005 educational year) they had studied English as a foreign language and their English level was lower than pre-intermediate, and during the data collection period they had 2 (fifty-minute) hours of reading lessons sessions.

### ***Instruments***

In order to collect data, the instruments used in this study were

1. PET Handbook (Preliminary English Test by Cambridge University) which is a qualification at intermediate and pre-intermediate levels recognized by educational institutions as well as other sectors, and shows that a person can deal with everyday English at these levels. PET helps students to find out their strength and weakness in reading and writing. It provides real situations in which students can use English. Reading skills, such as skimming and scanning are tested. Students are expected to understand different kinds of texts such as public notices and signs, packaging information, communicative messages (e.g. notes, emails, postcards); read texts (e.g. from journals, websites, leaflets, newspapers and magazines) of a factual nature and show understanding of the structure of the language, as it is used to express notions of relative time, space, possession, etc.; scan factual material for information in order to perform relevant tasks, disregarding redundant or irrelevant material; read texts of an imaginative or emotional character and appreciate the central sense of the text, the attitude of the writer to the material and the effect the text is intended to have on the reader.

2. Writing section consists of 3 parts; part 1 focuses on grammatical precision. Students are required to complete five sentences, all sharing a common theme or topic. Part 2 requires students to produce a short communicative message of between 35-45 words. Students are told who they are writing to and why, and must include three content points, which are set out as starting points in the question. Then part 3 asks students to write either an informal letter or a story. Both tasks require an answer of about 100 words. For the letter, candidates are given an extract of a letter from a friend of theirs, which provides the topic they should write about. For the story, candidates are given either a short title or the first sentence.

3. Attitude scale (questionnaire), (Adapted from Hedge, 1985) was suitable because it was necessary to focus on contrasting and combining results from different questions, in the hope of identifying patterns among question results, sources of disagreement among those results, or other interesting relationships that may come to light in the context of multiple questions.

Stories' summary sheets: At the end of each story, the students are asked to write the summary of the story to show their improvement in writing, but these were used for reflection only, and the results were not taken into consideration, and not included in evaluation.

### **Procedure**

The materials were given to students during their classes. Students in the control group read the texts in their course books, which were some abridged and simplified books, and some storybooks of levels from 1 to 5. None of the books or texts was authentic and original. Conversely students in the experimental group studied the following unabridged short stories belonging to native English-speaking authors; also same literary materials were given to experimental group students as assignment. The aim of this was to motivate them for individual reading of literary texts, and towards independent self-reading. These full-length short stories are: “Old Man at the Bridge” by Ernest Hemingway; “The Pendulum” by O. Henry; “The Monkey’s Paw” by W.W. Jacobs; “A Cup of Tea by Katherine Mansfield; “A Haunted House” by Virginia Woolf; “Araby” by James Joyce; “The Winepress” by Josef Essberger.

A pre-experimental reading and writing paper format of a PET test was given to both groups and at the end of the first lesson an attitude questionnaire was given to students in order to measure students’ attitudes. During the experimental study short stories were introduced because short stories are often ideal ways of introducing students to the literature in the foreign language classroom. During reading comprehension exercises such as pre-reading questions, true or false questions, who said what questions, and what-comes-next questions were included in reading activities. In short, the characters, the plot, language, and topic issues were dealt with reading activities. After reading, types of activities were differed. For writing, activities such as writing a summary or a recommendation, re-writing the story from a character's point of view or a letter to a character were included; for speaking, activities such as role-plays, dramatization or interviewing with the characters were included. Also projects such as drawing illustrations, preparing a series of pictures for comics, or posters were included.

### **Data Analysis**

On the basis of stories’ summary sheets and reading reports the assessment of the students was realized. A program evaluation and attitude scale (questionnaire) were applied to experimental group, and after the comparison of the answers, the change of students' attitude towards reading and English learning was evaluated.

### **Results**

According to the data obtained and showed in Table 1, the results in performance of EG students was better than CG students. It is shown that experimental application has contributed better to academic success of the students ( $u=75.50$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). It can, therefore, be claimed that the experimental application has affected the academic success of the students positively, at a significant level. We observed that four students (No 5th, 7th, 10th, and 16th) improved in a considerable amount, whereas one student (No 14th) seemed not to have improved himself at all. In Table 1 findings about the differences in academic success of the students after the experiment are summarized.

**Table 1:** Results and perceptions of the students in groups

		Average	Total
Groups			Average
Academic Success	Exp.	17	21,56
	Cont.	17	13,44

	Total Point
Mann-Whitney U	75,50
Wilcoxon W	228,500
Z	-2,426
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,015
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	,016

In terms of attitudes, our results of attitude scale in Table 2 indicate that the number of students, who enjoy reading literature in English, are interested in reading literature in English as a good way of learning and will read stories in future, increased. This observation indicates that the use of literature in ELT classrooms can improve students' performance abilities and increase their positive attitude towards reading, and towards their motivation in language learning.

**Table 2:** Comparison of attitude to reading and English language learning

	Before UoL		After UoL		Difference	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	%
Learning English through literature is fun.	4	13	6	11	+2	13
I enjoy reading literature in English.	6	11	10	7	+4	27
I am going to read stories also after the study.	6	11	10	7	+4	27
The use of literature is a good way of learning English.	7	10	11	6	+4	27
Average data	5.75	11.02	9.25	7.75	3.27	19.2

The evidences suggest that literature is one of the most motivating resources for language learning. To determine whether the use of literature in ELT classrooms had positive motivational effects in ELT classes, we had two groups; EG where unabridged stories were applied with new ELT methods and the activities, and CG where abridged and simplified reading passages in students' course books were applied.

## Discussion

Our results suggest that the use of literature in ELT increases the motivation of students at university level. We have identified that the performance of students studying English through literature, with an improvement result of  $u=75.50$ ,  $p<0.05$ , was better than the students studying English without literature. Also the use of literature in ELT improved students' writing performance and positively affected their attitude to both reading and language learning, with a 19.2% increase in average.

We observed that literature should be included in ELT classrooms as a complement to curriculum because it provides comprehensible input necessary for the English language acquisition and develops the students' abilities, as students may build new vocabulary as well as they expand their understanding of words they already know (Ono, Day & Harsch, 2004). In our study we found that instead of reading short extracts presented in course books, short stories were more suitable complete texts for students to become fluent and competent language users.

Our data, 19.2% improvement in average students' attitude to reading and language learning, shows that literature helps students to have the habit of reading, especially reading in a

foreign language (Brown, 2000), which is important for motivation in learning foreign language. It is claimed that different cultural environments and backgrounds in literary texts may cause some difficulties in reading and general comprehension. However, in our study, we have not met this difficulty since we explored foreign cultures rather than to avoid using literature in ELT context (Duff & Maley, 2007; McKay, 1986). Therefore, literature contributed to the students' autonomy in learning and therefore, to successful results in students' exams.

To our surprise one student in EG group showed no improvement with 0 (zero) increase. The reason for this can be explained with his cultural gap with other students and different cultural background from them.

In summary, our study reveals that the use of literature in ELT classrooms may motivate students better than abridged and simplified reading passages in students' course books. The results show the motivational effects of the use of literature in ELT, so literature can be used as a positive stimulation to motivate students, and a good means to improve reading and writing skills. In our study it is also proved that especially short stories are ideal literary means for classroom usage. Our results imply the importance of the use of literature in ELT, and that literature should be part of teaching-learning process. We had this study in Kazakhstan and got positive results about motivation, and reading-writing in ELT; however, further research should explore the issue in a different country, and with students at different levels.

## References

- Bamford, J. and Day R. R. (2004). *Extensive Reading Activities for Teaching Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Benton, M. and Fox G. (1985). *Teaching Literature. Nine to Fourteen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, R. (2000). Extensive Reading in the EFL Class. *Extensive Reading*, 3 Nov.
- Brumfit, C. (1981). Reading skills and the study of literature in a foreign language. *System* 9 (1): 243–8.
- Brumfit, C.J. and Carter R.A. (1991). *Literature and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carroli, P., Pavone A. and Tudini, V. (2003). *Face Value: teaching Italian verbal and social-cultural interaction*. Melbourne, Australia.
- Carter, R. (1999). Common language: corpus, creativity and cognition. *Language and Literature* 8 (3): 195–216.
- Carter, R. A. and Long, M. N. (1991). *Teaching Literature*. London: Longman.
- Clandfield, L. and Duncan F. (2006). "Teaching Materials: Using Literature in the EFL/ESL Classroom".
- Collie, J. and Slater S. (1990). *Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dawson, N. (2005). *Penguin Readers Teacher's Guide to Using Graded Readers*. Essex, UK: Pearson.
- Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, USA: Plenum Press.
- Deci, E. L., Koestner, R. and Ryan, R. M. (1999). A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 627-338.



- Duff, A. and Maley, A. (2007). *Literature*. (Second edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, G. (2002). Learning English through Children's Literature. *Teaching English*, 18 Dec.
- Gredler, M. E., Broussard, S. C. and Garrison, M. E. B. (2004). The relationship between classroom motivation and academic achievement in elementary school-aged children. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 33(2), 106–120.
- Guay, F., Chanal, J., Ratelle, C.F., Marsh, H. W., Larose, S. and Boivin, M. (2010). Intrinsic identified and controlled types of motivation for school subjects in young elementary school children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80, 711-735.
- Hall, G. (2001). The poetics of everyday language in J. McRae (ed.) *Reading beyond Text: Processes and Skills*. CAUCE. 24. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla.
- Hall, G. (2003). Poetry, pleasure and second language classrooms. *Applied Linguistics* 24 (3): 295–9.
- Hedge, T. (1985). *Using Readers in English Teaching*. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Kramsch, C. and Kramsch, O. (2000). The avatars of literature in language study. *Modern Language Journal* 84: 553–73.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (1986). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- “Literature”, Def.1. (2003). *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. UK: Pearson.
- “Literature”, Def. (2011) *The Concise Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- “Literature”, Def. (1998) *The Oxford Wordpower Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lo Bianco, J. (2003) *Culture; visible, invisible and multiple*. Melbourne, Australia.
- McKay, S. (1986). ‘*Literature in the ESL Classroom*’ in “*Literature and Language Teaching*, Christopher J. Brumfit, and Ronald A. Carter (eds.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 191-198.
- Ono, L., Day, R. and Harsch, K. (2004). Tips for Reading Extensively. *English Teaching Forum Online*, 42.04.
- Paran, A. (1998) Helping Learners to Create and Own Literary Meaning in the ELT Classroom. *Ideas*. Feb.1998: 83-84.
- Povey, J. (1972). ‘*Literature in TESL Programs: The Language and the Culture*’ in *Teaching English as a Second Language*, H. Allen and R. Campbell (eds.) New York, USA: Mc. Graw Hill.
- Pulverness, A. (2007). The Ghost at the Banquet. *English Teaching Professional*, May 2007.
- Topping, D. M. (1968). Linguistics or Literature: An Approach to Language. *TESOL Quarterly* 2 (2): 95-100.
- Verhoeven, L. (1999). ‘*Second language reading*’ in D. Wagner, C. Venezky and B. V. Street (eds.) *Literacy: An International Handbook*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1992). *Practical Stylistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.