



Adapting or Avoiding: In-depth Exploration of Lecturers' Attitudes and Beliefs on Literature in EFL Classrooms

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Abstract. The selection of English literary works is significant for educators and learners as it ensures a balanced fusion of linguistic complexities and cultural awareness. The present study focuses on four English language lecturers who have different standpoints on incorporating literary works into EFL teaching and learning. To be more specific, two of the lecturers regularly use it, one of them infrequently use it, and another one declines using it entirely. In-depth interviews and capturing the literary works used were conducted to explore the lecturers' attitude and beliefs on literature for their EFL classroom. The analysis is rooted to four core factors influencing their decisions: the use of literature in EFL teaching, linguistic aspects, motivational aspects, and sociocultural aspects. The results indicate that the process of selecting literary works varied among lecturers; they are influenced by existing frameworks, multicultural factors, as well as personal preferences.

Keywords: English Literature, EFL Teaching, Lecturers' Attitudes, Beliefs.

1 Introduction

Literature conventionally held an essential part in language education, presenting as an influential instrument for culture, fostering critical and creative thinking, as well as promoting empathic awareness and cultivating empathic awareness [1], [2], [3], [4]. The integration of literature and language learning in classroom not only increase students' language skills but also enhance deeper appreciation towards different point of views. With respect to education, literature analysis requires students as well as teachers with complex viewpoints to deal with their real life and timeless human experiences [5]. However, different perspectives occur as some teachers concerned about the complexity of literary language causing EFL students' confusions [6], [7]. Regarding these, it is crucial to examine the viewpoints of teachers on the integration of literature as a means of language learning, for their role in outlining language curriculum and pedagogical methods is of utmost importance [8].

Although literature has long been seen as a useful asset in language education, changes in educational paradigms and the increasing popularity of alternative teaching methods have led to a reassessment of its significance in EFL classrooms. In-depth understanding on educators' attitudes and beliefs is necessary due to the

ever-changing nature of language teaching and learning; and still bearing with features like cultural background, educational viewpoint, and many other requirements of students [9]. Regarding to students' requirements, Mohaideen [8] explained that most of teachers preferred local literary works rather than international texts as those are more relatable to their students. Moreover, Keen et.al investigated teachers' perspectives resulting authors' gender as well as ethnic origins became a significant contemplation in selecting literature for teaching [10]. These studies have been done in particular setting; different geographical settings might bring different results.

Arafah conducted a research about how literary texts give contribution to students' vocabulary building [11]. The results showed that a frequent understanding and representing literature can increase students' language ability, specifically their vocabulary. Likewise, Watson et al. investigated EFL teachers perspectives towards instructional materials focusing on literature [12]. It is found that different aspects contribute to teachers' decision such as their pedagogical beliefs, their classroom environments and context, as well as their students' characteristics. A study conducted by Borsheim-Black et.al pointed out the significance of literary works for promoting critical literacy competences [13]. It concluded that literature can encourage students to actively interact with variety of perspectives and narratives.

With respect to the present study, in an institution rooted in *Pesantren* principles (a traditional Islamic boarding school system prevalent in some countries, specifically Indonesia), the significance of English language teaching and learning may be perceived as negligible. Nevertheless, the acquisition of English language proficiency remains essential due to its importance globally. Hence, it is imperative that English language instructions are still agreed under the consideration across all departments at the Higher Education level. At the Investigated institution, there are four lecturers who specialize in the field of English language teaching. In particular, three of them have been utilizing literary works as a pedagogical tool for the language teaching, and one of them has been refusing it. The process of selecting the literary works used appeared to vary across different lecturers. Additionally, relying on primary research, their standards of selecting literature for teaching are led by intercultural aspects and their personal attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, the present study is aimed to investigate the EFL lecturers' attitudes and beliefs, providing nuanced understanding regarding to their viewpoints on adapting or avoiding literature in EFL classroom. In particular, the objectives of the study are addressed as follows: 1. What are the EFL lecturers' consideration to adapt literature in their EFL class?; 2. What are the EFL lecturers' consideration to avoid literature in their EFL class?

Furthermore, EFL Educators and learners have critical concern in evaluating the use of English literary works for their teaching and learning process in classroom. The subject matters of the course, students' characteristics and context, as well as the literary texts' features and content [14]. The study highlights the importance of selecting literary works that aligned with EFL learners' linguistic as well as cultural requirements. Watson et.al argue that the complexity of target language features and significance cultural elements can be learnt equally if literary works selected sensibly [12]. Additionally, students with a wide range of "language pattern, idiomatic

expressions, and contextual subtitles” is a result from learning language using literary works. These studies are remarkable in supporting cautious considerations in choosing literature for English language teaching due to the needs of attentions to both language and culture in EFL context.

The acknowledgements of positive impact in using literature for EFL teaching do not stop some authors for having drawbacks and doubts in its utilization. Mussa and Fente explain that using culturally inappropriate and complex texts for learners does not support their learning progress; a stable teaching strategies under the consideration of language complexity and cultural comprehensibility is crucially important [6]. Likewise, by emphasizing the significance of contemplating students’ viewpoints and interests in selecting literary works, Dibekulu argues that without personal engagements, enhancing their language competences through literary works could not be achieved [15]. Sirico proposed several advantages of using literature for language learning and those are divided into three categorizations: linguistic, motivational and sociocultural aspects [16]. In addition, as the present study is conducting an in-depth exploration of EFL lecturers’ attitudes and beliefs in deciding to adapt or to avoid literature in their EFL classrooms; the use of literature in EFL teaching is added.

1.1 The use of Literature in EFL Teaching

The intention of using literature for EFL teaching and learning is because of its utility to facilitate students with extensive linguistic and cultural settings, assisting them to have experience beyond traditional language teaching and learning [17]. Literature for EFL teaching entails more than merely instructing students to read or see literary works as well as subsequently summarize their content. It is crucial for teachers to comprehend and implement teaching approach proficiently [18]. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate each student’s attainment by considering their educational progress [19]. The need of teacher training has been proven with respect to enhancing their expertise and competences in integrating literary works within the context of education, specifically for EFL teaching [4].

1.2 Linguistic Aspect

The intention of using literature for EFL teaching and learning is because of its utility to facilitate students with extensive linguistic and cultural settings, assisting them to have experience beyond traditional language teaching and learning [16]. Literature can help improve students’ syntactic proficiency and their capacity to establish connections between ideas. Utilizing a language-based approach, connected to stylistics, has the potential to enhance students’ understanding and skill level [20]. Literature also amplifies linguistic creativity, critical self-reflection, and linguistic metacognitive awareness. Additionally, it facilitates the acquisition and application of grammatical structures, listening abilities, and pronunciation [16].

Conversely, expressing apprehensions over linguistic challenges, Mussa dan Fente explored this viewpoint, warning that intricate linguistic characteristics of literary works could present challenges for learners, particularly those at the intermediate skill levels [6]. Abdelaziz highlighted the significance of taking into account learners’

language skill levels when choosing and using literary works to guarantee that linguistic complexities do not impede comprehension and involvement [14]. Literature facilitates the development of a high level of proficiency in the English language among students. Therefore, teachers of English can utilize literature to enhance the effectiveness and dynamism of their language instruction [21]. Regarding to teaching approaches, Greater classroom engagement and increased student autonomy were shown to be associated with students reporting personal and societal insights more frequently. However, this correlation may also be partially attributed to students' greater familiarity with fiction and their more favorable attitude towards literary reading [22].

1.3 Motivational Aspect

The incorporation of literature in language training is advantageous as it elicits emotional reactions and has the potential to create enduring imprints in students' recollections [20]. There are two approaches to literature: "Literature as content" and "Literature for personal enrichment" [16]. The former concentrates on historical characteristics, socio-political context, literary genres, and figure of speech. The latter promotes students to analyze their own experiences and emotions, enhancing the process of acquiring a foreign language. Literature enhances students' creativity, perceptiveness, analytical skills, and problem-solving capabilities [23]. Additionally, it stimulates discourse, cultivates proficiency in listening and speaking, and fosters individual engagement [24]. Literature has the ability to unveil intricate ideas and employ surprising language techniques, resulting in an unforeseen depth of significance. Utilizing genuine materials enhances self-assurance and provides exposure to genuine contextualized examples of linguistic patterns and grammatical principles [25].

The pedagogical criteria for selecting literary texts include the learner's linguistic proficiency, cultural and literary background, and the relevance of the text to the learners' language needs [14]. These considerations are crucial for the success of the course and help the teacher choose the most suitable text for the majority of the learners. Specifically, students' reasons for learning literature, their interest and hobbies, and their previous experience in literature theories and reading are considerable [14].

1.4 Sociocultural Aspect

Exposing students to literature from different cultures can enhance their awareness of diverse values, beliefs, and social structures, promoting personal growth and cultural understanding [16]. Literature plays a vital role in the development of students as individuals, in their relationships with others, and in their engagement with institutions, which is often overlooked in textbooks [3]. The concept of culture is dynamic and co-constructed through interactive processes, and both students and teachers may have biased perceptions of it. However, literature can serve as a tool for students to become intercultural travelers, deepening their understanding of another culture and its people [26]. The study of a foreign language has long been recognized as a means to enhance comprehension of another culture and its people. Literature is

regarded as a manifestation of the culture of the nation in which it originated, often distinct from other circumstances or the author's personal identity [27].

Student's cultural heritage and comprehension of a literary work are key elements in achieving a successful interpretation [28]. Incorporating cultural, social, and political aspects into their courses is necessary for teachers to prevent the exclusive interpretation of texts based on the learner's own cultural background [21]. Teachers can strengthen the learner's cultural background by including disciplines such as British and American society, General Culture, Arabic Literature, and Psychology [14].

2 Methods

This study aims to gain an in-depth exploration of four EFL lecturers' perspectives on the use of literature in the EFL classroom. In order to do this, the study employs the methodology of multiple case studies [29]. To strengthen the credibility of this case study, various techniques such as thick description, triangulation, and member verification are employed [36]. Semi-structured interview and the literary works used by the lecturers are employed to investigate the lecturers' attitudes and beliefs on the adaptation or avoidance of literature in their classrooms [30].

2.1 Data Collection

The scope of this study was restricted to four EFL lecturers employed at the institution under investigation. Based on the initial inquiry, there are two lecturers who frequently use literature in their EFL classrooms, one lecturer who rarely uses literature (almost never, but still considers it as an additional or optional activity), and one lecturer who completely avoids using literature in his EFL classroom. All participants will be required to provide informed consent. Utilizing data triangulation enhances the construct validity of a case study [30]. In order to achieve triangulation, data were gathered from several sources, such as in-depth interviews with teachers and relevant documents. In-depth interviews were done with each participant at the end of the semester. Every interview is both recorded and transcribed [31]. In addition, the literary works used during the teaching and learning process are also captured.

2.2 Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed for two purposes: to gain a thorough understanding of the content and to enhance familiarity with the material for further analysis. All qualitative data, including interview transcripts and relevant documents, were categorized and analyzed using the Six Steps of theme analysis as outlined by [32]. The process commenced with a within-case study to establish preliminary codes; involving adapting and avoiding. Subsequently, the ultimate topics were delineated as: 'the use of literature in EFL teaching; linguistic aspect; motivational aspect; and sociocultural aspect.' These themes serve as the framework for single case report. In order to enhance the reliability of this qualitative study, the technique of member

checking was utilized. Following the completion of the Findings section, the participants were reached out to validate the interpretation of the data. Any inconsistencies were addressed through discussions section [30].

3 Results and Discussion

The study is aimed to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of EFL lecturers on the integration (to adapt or to avoid) of literature in English language learning. Through conducting in-depth interviews and analyzing documents (literary works used by the lecturers), it became apparent that the four specialized EFL lecturers in a *Pesantren*-based institution had varying viewpoints regarding the incorporation of literature in EFL classrooms. The two lecturers were observed to be consistent and frequent in integrating literary works into their lectures, considering educational values of the works. Furthermore, the third lecturer was observed to be using literary works as an extra and alternative activities during English teaching and learning process. Contrastingly, the last lecturer declined to utilize any literary works for the EFL classroom due to the consideration of cultural, religious and ethical elements.

3.1 Adapting

The first lecturer basically has a deep admiration for English literature; as she perceives that literature has linguistic as well as cultural values to be learnt. The instructional materials focusing on enhancing students' cultural and intercultural awareness reflected by the English literary texts. The teaching strategies to integrate literary texts in teaching EFL is characterized by its dynamic nature, as it is perceived as a valuable instrument to develop students' language skills as well as cultural competences, as she stated:

"I always make sure to choose literary works consistently with our cultural context and I see the language complexity as well. I want to find the ones that are challenging but do not make my students overwhelming."

The lecturer prioritizes the use of real-life language situations, the improvement of critical thinking skills, and the exposure to a wide range of linguistic variations. The process of choosing literary texts is complex, considering cultural implication, the complexity of the language used, as well as the interests of the students. The students' literary background is also an essential consideration, as she stated:

"By selecting works that align with their personal experiences, I am able to enhance the relatability of the learning process... students were able to establish a correlation between the story and their own cultural context."

The lecturer promoted and fostered student engagement and dialogue by utilizing interactive exercises and multimedia materials, so establishing a learning environment centered around the students. The results highlight the beneficial influence of

literature on language acquisition, cultural comprehension, and the overall growth of students learning English as a foreign language, within the analyzed teaching methodology.

Although lacking enthusiasm for literature herself, the second lecturer recognized its significance in facilitating students' exposure to a wide range of cultural expressions, language patterns, and modes of expression. Literary use is regarded as a method to enhance the authenticity and appeal of language acquisition. The selection of literary works by the lecturer is informed by well-established frameworks, cultural sensitivity, and appropriateness for language learners, taking into account varying levels of proficiency.

"I tend to choose texts that in line with material I'm teaching, also, I prefer texts with cultural sensitivity and are suitable for my students... Wel, I of course will choose texts with language that are suitable with my students' English proficiency levels, well a little bit challenging, that's fine."

The lecturer stressed the importance of adapting the literary works chosen when dealing with classroom consisted of diverse English proficiency level students. In dealing with students who has lower proficiency level, the lecturer tended to simplify the language and provide language scaffolding for them.

The lecturer realized that the utilization of literary texts generally develops the students' motivation, interests and involvements; it is actually related to personal preference. The selection of the literary works is line with the students' background, so the language used is more relate to their cultural and social experiences. In link to cultural considerations, the lecturer remained balanced strategies in selecting culturally acceptable and appropriate literature. The lecturer respected the students' cultural background and different perspectives.

"I also ask them to share about their culture, their point of views, how they feel or think about this... during discussion section."

The third lecturer considered literature as a substantial element, which meant it was not the main tool to teach EFL class. The use of literary works is seen as an entertainment, extra or alternative classroom activity for students. Factors to consider in choosing the literary works for the EFL classroom are topic or materials taught, students' English language competences and cultural elements, as she stated:

"Even though I prefer... focusing on my teaching materials or topic of the day, I also consider my students' language ability. I choose literature or literary works that are not too difficult for my students, to understand. Something in it that has connection to culture is also become my-mum concern. I don't want to make my students confuse."

The lecturer actually realized that the influence of literary works for the students' interest. The students became more motivated and engage for some literary works; but some others did not. The lecturer did not have any critical consideration relating to the

students' cultural background as well as the literary works cultural elements. As those are seen as alternative activities to interest students for some reasons.

3.2 Avoiding

The fourth lecturer recognized a lack of personal disposition towards English literature, assigning this as a prediction of pragmatic aspects in language learning. Real-life context and communication skills as a result of EFL teaching in classroom is considered to be meaningful for the lecturer. He utilized a conventional teaching methodology, prioritizing grammatical knowledge, vocabulary comprehension and dialogue practice using English language. Literature infusion remained abstained in the classroom due to the cultural and religious values; moreover, the institution is a *Pesantren*-based college which does not prefer some certain cultural adaptations. The decision of avoiding particular kinds of literary works might be caused by the lecturer concern about the literary works influence on students' identity, morals and characters, as he stated:

"I don't think I need literary works to teach English. Besides, most of the are not in line with our believes, with I believe as-um-our culture is different. I don't really like those characters illustrating bad things... negative moral. No. I don't want my students learn bad things from them."

The lecturer preferred to employ traditional teaching methodology to facilitate students in practicing their English ability. Some specific strategies such as exercises, quiz, grammatical drills, and real-life setting communications are employed instead of using literary works. The EFL assessment practices are consisting of written examinations, verbal presentation, and authentic situation. In particular, the lecturer concern that some literary works failed to grab students' interest due to their personal preference. In addition, there was an apprehension that exposing students with literary works may result limited scope of knowledge moreover can transform them into consuming individuals, specifically avid readers.

"There is a risk, yes. Literature is bringing something; foreign cultures are introduced which might have contradiction with our culture and religious principles. I don't want that...no. I want to just stay like this."

Regarding to cultural concerns, the lecturer had been questioning and not sure about the cultural acceptability as well as appropriateness when selecting literary works. There were perceived concerns that there might be possibilities of the literary works presented to the students conveying foreign ideas that have contradiction customs, traditions, culture, moral values, and religion. Therefore, the lecturer chose to avoid integrating any literary works for his EFL classroom.

The results show that the differences in the lecturers' viewpoints emphasize the complex nature of integrating literature in their EFL classroom. In addition, the results of this study are the delicate interaction of established frameworks, intercultural considerations and individual attitudes which influence the lecturers'

decisions in current specific educational environment. Based on the results, the discussions explore the consequences of the results into four points: the usage of literature in EFL teaching, linguistic aspect, motivational aspect and sociocultural aspect.

The significance of literature as an effective teaching tool is emphasized by the two instructors who regularly combine literature into their EFL classrooms. In their point of view, literature as an active tool for improving language proficiency, promoting critical analysis and offering genuine linguistic situations. The two instructors' methodology is related to other studies that highlight the beneficial effects of literature on language learning, cognitive growth and cultural sensitivity [3], [17], [33]. On the other hand, the lecturer who infrequently combine literature into their teaching approach shows a more thoughtful attitude, regarding it as an optional or supplementary effort. The two ideas consistent with research that recognizes varied attitudes towards using literature in language classes [6]. The fourth lecturer has different idea that the use of literature can potentially crash with cultural and religious values. This consistent with the previous research about the relationship between literature and cultural sensitivity in EFL settings [34].

Additionally, the linguistic aspect involved in choosing literary works are important. The lecturers who frequently combine literature into their teaching emphasized its significance in improving vocabulary, familiarizing students with idioms and broadening language skill. This consistent with research about literary texts provide abundant linguistic input, which increase language development [2]. The fourth lecturer, although purposely avoiding literature, expresses worries over potential inconsistencies with Islamic principles. This aligns with study that emphasizes the significance of cultural and religious sensitivity when choosing literary works [8].

Furthermore, the use of literature in EFL classes is meaningfully influenced by motivational aspect. The lecturers who frequently use literature into their teaching highlight its capacity to fascinate students by providing of authentic situations and broadening of viewpoints. This aligns with motivational theories which emphasize significance of using genuine materials and cultural appropriateness [12]. The lecturer who rarely combine literature, shows a readiness to regard it as a supplementary or optional effort, incorporating an acknowledgment of its potential for engaging motivation. However, the lecturer opposes of literature, shows a worry that literature can bring about particulars and moral dilemmas, which could potentially decrease motivation. This consistent with study on the influence of content on learner motivation and engagement [20].

Finally, the discussions mainly feature sociocultural aspect. The lecturers, who frequently combine literature into their teaching, focused on the significance of selecting works that align to students' cultural origins, encouraging for cultural variety and educating an urbane comprehension of global viewpoints. This result aligns with Mustofa and Hill who proposed about sociocultural theory [28]. It suggests that learning takes place within a cultural framework. Nevertheless, the fourth lecturer focuses on cultural and religious factors than literature, that bring into line with broader discussion on cultural sensitivity in EFL settings [35]. The complex

interaction between cultural values and educational goals are emphasized by the various viewpoints on the social function of literature.

4 Conclusion

The process of choosing literary works differed among instructors, being influenced by existing frameworks, multicultural factors and personal viewpoints are indicated as the results. The numerous ways based on literature are included into the curriculum demonstrate the intricate interactions between teaching methods, cultural awareness and personal viewpoints of English lecturers. In the end, shed light on the intricate terrain of lecturers' attitudes and ideas toward literature in EFL classrooms of *Pesantren*-based institution are talked in this study. This study offers insights to the dept discussion relates to literature in EFL teaching. It emphasizes the importance of using context-specific methods which deliberate linguistic, motivational and sociocultural aspects. The findings highlight the significance of recognizing and valuing the variety of viewpoints within educational environments that are strongly influenced by cultural and religious norms.

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