

Utilising Fiction to Promote English Language Acquisition

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P U B L I S H I N G

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To the greatest father: Dr. Eyad Al-Alami, and most wonderful mother: Mrs. Da'ad Al-Alami, who have *taught* me what millions and billions of books could never do.

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ABSTRACT

Towards the end of the university stage, students residing in the United Arab Emirates and specialising in subjects other than English are expected- amongst other university requirements- to have acquired adequate communicative competence as well as a repertoire of critical thinking skills. Despite the efforts made within the field of teaching English to EFL university students in the country, the output gained in terms of acquired skills and competencies is still below expectations. The main concerns of the current thesis are, therefore, a) to investigate the factors which inhibit EFL university students' progress in the areas of acquiring adequate communicative competence as well as critical thinking skills, and b) to propose a course book and pedagogic methods to improve students' progress in the areas of acquiring adequate communicative competence as well as critical thinking skills.

Believing in the essential role literature plays in enhancing critical thinking and promoting communicative competence on the part of EFL learners, the current study introduces a course, designed and implemented by the researcher: **LEARN AND GAIN**. The proposed course is fiction-based language teaching, adopting the view that literature is a resource rather than an object, thus advocating the use of literature as one of the main resources in foreign/second language acquisition. Investigating whether or not the proposed course was effective in promoting EFL university students' communicative competence as well as enhancing their critical thinking skills, a study sample taken from the study population was selected. Adopting an experimental design, the research project involved two groups: experimental and control. The experimental group students were exposed to the proposed course whilst the control group students were exposed to a general English language course. To examine treatment effectiveness, the researcher set and administered a pre-post test. Divided into two main parts, communicative critical reading competence and communicative critical writing competence, the pre-post test measured subjects' communicative critical reading competence and subjects' communicative critical writing competence. In addition, a pre-post questionnaire was administered and a semi-structured interview was conducted involving the experimental group students, to gain an awareness of students' attitudes towards learning literary texts in general, and the

proposed course in particular. To examine issues of interest and relevance, gender differences: male vs. female, and university major: science vs. non-science, were also examined for enrichment purposes.

For the purpose of gathering sufficient data about subjects' achievements on the pre-post, the following statistical tests were conducted: Mann-Whitney test, and paired data t-test. Based on the statistical findings, the experimental group students' performance on the communicative critical reading competence pre-post test and the communicative critical writing competence pre-post test was significantly better than their counterparts of the control group students. Speaking of gender differences in relation to language performance on the communicative critical reading competence pre-post test and the communicative critical writing competence pre-post test, no significant differences were cited. Neither did the researcher cite any significant performance differences between science/non-science students on the communicative critical reading competence pre-post test and the communicative critical writing competence pre-post test. As far as the questionnaire's findings are concerned, the experimental group students' responses to the post-questionnaire's items were more positive than those of their responses to the pre-questionnaire's, thus indicating some positive attitudes towards literature, which students possibly gained throughout the course of implementation. Relating the discussion to the interview's results, students conveyed their satisfaction with the proposed course, emphasising that promoting English language skills through the use of literary texts was rewarding.

In the light of findings and conclusions, a number of recommendations as well as implications have been proposed. The current study aimed to arrive at some appropriate suggestions to a number of enquiries, yet concluding with some areas of enquiry to be explored for further research.

Key Terms

Communicative Competence in EFL Contexts

Critical Thinking in Relation to EFL Instruction

Novels and Short Stories within EFL Contexts

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used throughout the current book. This part defines each term, based on factual data and/or the researcher's viewpoint.

Communicative competence in EFL

Communicative competence in EFL is a repertoire of language knowledge and skills required for effective communication in English as a foreign language. Looked at from the researcher's definition, this competence is split into language receptive and productive skills. Four components make up the construct of receptive skills: linguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and socio-linguistic competence. Productive skills, on the other hand, incorporate functional performance, discourse production, strategy application, and socio-linguistic response.

Critical reading

Critical reading reflects higher order thinking skills, referring in particular to both analytical thinking and investigative enquiry. For the purpose of the current study, the following critical reading skills have been identified:

- Distinguishing facts, opinions, and reasoned justifications.
- Grasping feelings, opinions and attitudes implied.
- Deducing meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context.
- Making judgments based upon personal knowledge and experience.

Critical writing

Critical writing refers to higher conceptual skills of synthesising stretches of written discourse. For the purpose of the current study, the following critical writing skills have been identified:

- Employing cohesion devices in a written piece, as appropriate.
- Producing coherent pieces of written discourse.

EFL

English used as a foreign language

ESP

English for special purposes

Literary competence

Literary competence reflects the abilities and skills employed whilst dealing with a literary piece- oral and written. Considered from the researcher's point of view, this competence is split into receptive and productive skills. Four components make up the construct of receptive skills, namely, literary awareness, linguistic awareness, cultural awareness, and aesthetic awareness. Productive skills, on the other hand, incorporate literary application, linguistic performance, cultural appreciation, and aesthetic response.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction and Key Theoretical Issues

Towards the end of the university stage, undergraduate students residing in the United Arab Emirates and specialising in subjects other than English are expected- amongst other university requirements- to have acquired adequate communicative competence in English, as well as a repertoire of critical thinking skills. Despite all efforts made in the field of teaching English to EFL university students in the country, the output gained in terms of acquired skills is still below expectations (Al Alami: 2008).

The teaching of English in the United Arab Emirates is based upon the communicative approach, which aims at equipping students with sufficient communicative competence, so that in the long-run they will employ language skills for communication purposes, as appropriate (see Al Ghurair University: 2008). Personal experience and the author's colleagues' observations, however, show that some EFL university students fail to achieve adequate communicative competence, which in turn does not qualify them to exploit the foreign language of English as required by their curricula as well as by today's world. Another issue which the author would like to raise in this context is the gap existing between the declared aims of university education in the United Arab Emirates on the one hand, and the output gained in terms of acquired critical thinking skills on the other. Bearing in mind that critical thinking is central to university education in the United Arab Emirates (Al Ghurair University: 2008), it seems reasonable then to assume that all EFL university students are well-equipped to tackle a reading text and to handle a writing task, demonstrating through such activities an adequate repertoire of critical thinking skills. Personal experience and the author's colleagues' observations, however, indicate that this does not apply to all EFL university students.

What are some of the major factors which inhibit EFL students' progress in the areas of communication and critical thinking skills? As I see it, a variety of factors contribute, the most prominent of which being

students' insufficient exposure to literary texts. The English language courses usually offered to EFL university students in the United Arab Emirates are General English, and in some cases, ESP courses as well, with little or no reference to literature (Al Alami:2008).

Seeking an *effective* remedy, the author argues that utilising literature in the EFL classroom would be beneficial in terms of many essential aspects. This belief is in harmony with many specialists' suggestions for utilising literature to promote communication and critical thinking skills. McRae (2008), for example, believes that the use of stories in language teaching has an extremely positive effect in that stories encourage students to read for pleasure. Eager to know what will happen next, keeps the reader interested as well as keeps the reader reading. Hall (2007) states that in EFL as well as ESL contexts, utilising literary texts can be seen as a means of promoting one's proficiency in vocabulary and reading, as well as enriching cultural knowledge. Processing literary texts is often considered difficult, yet worth the effort as a rich source of relevant language data from which one can acquire language. What is more, a growing interest in affect in foreign/second language acquisition proposes that, pleasure and involvement of the type that literary reading creates can significantly contribute to language acquisition.

As far as utilising novels for teaching purposes is concerned, Shaw (2007) discusses the rationale behind choosing novels for teaching EFL students. Accessibility of language, engaging and true to life nature of characters/relationships/events, developing imagination, visualising settings and characters, as well as being emotionally evocative, are amongst the most prominent reasons for utilising a novel in EFL contexts. Chen (2006) explains that narrative is one of the two modes of our thinking. Whilst communicating with others, regardless of culture and background, one can describe an incident as a way of explaining thoughts or a part of an argument. Accordingly, narration can be regarded as an essential prose genre which can be included in a university composition course for EFL learners. Literature, in general, represents various uses of the language—both conventional and literary, displays a broader range of communication strategies than any other single teaching component does, and extends linguistic knowledge on the levels of both use and usage. When a student reads a literary piece, he/she learns the foreign language in context rather than memorising rules and words. Literature provides an informal, yet supportive environment for EFL students to normally develop their linguistic system. In addition to the linguistic benefit, literature opens the door for EFL students to the foreign culture.

According to De Naples (2002), when students learn how to understand fiction in the form of drama and poetry and engage in characters' lives, asking questions about the worlds authors create, they very often ask questions about their own lives and issues they encounter. Vocabulary, sentence structure, and patterns of organisation offer students many points from which to learn or to broaden understanding. De Carlo (1999) is also of the opinion that literary narrative has the capacity to reconcile seemingly contradictory aspects of experience: the particular and the universal, near and far, strange and familiar, as well as expressible and ineffable. This richness of subject-matter and the multiplicity of possible levels of interpretation, allow the reader to identify with others and to identify others with him/her.

Concerned with its effect upon cultural awareness, Hock (1999) explains that a story can be an appropriate model for forming identity, and therefore, the value of story as an effective educational means should be stressed. The information a reader gains through story reading helps him/her identify patterns and themes that will re-appear in their own works. Looked at from Booth's point of view (1998), it is in stories; in narratives large and small rather than in coded commandments, that students absorb lessons in how to confront ethical complexity. It is in dealing with narrative conflicts that students imbibe the skills required when our real values, values that are not merely social constructs, clash.

It would be reasonable to conclude then, that literature in EFL contexts plays an essential role not only in promoting language skills, but also in enhancing critical thinking on the part of learners. The current study, as such, seeks to investigate the extent to which this viewpoint is valid and reliable, through presenting a fiction course-designed and implemented by the author. The proposed course is fiction-based language teaching, adopting the view that literature is a resource rather than an object in itself, thus advocating the use of literature as one of the main resources in foreign/second language acquisition (see Baba 2008).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem of the current study can be stated as follows: Despite the stated aims of university education in the United Arab Emirates, and in spite of the efforts EFL practitioners have made in implementing the curriculum, a number of EFL university students' academic achievement in English remains below expectations.

The main concerns of this research therefore are: a) to investigate the factors which inhibit EFL university students' progress in the areas of

acquiring adequate communicative competence as well as critical thinking skills, and b) to propose a course book and pedagogic methods to improve students' progress in the areas of acquiring adequate communicative competence as well as critical thinking skills.

1.3 Purpose and Rationale of the Study

The current study aims to explore the effectiveness of utilising a fiction course in enhancing communicative critical language competence on the part of EFL university learners, residing in the United Arab Emirates. Under this wide umbrella, two related issues necessitate some exploration and examination. Firstly, the issue of gender: male vs. female, as to whether or not the proposed treatment has any significant differences on the two categories. Female and male subjects' language performance has been examined for study purposes. Secondly, the issue of specialisation: science vs. non-science students, as to whether or not the proposed treatment has any significant differences on language performance of the two categories. The paragraphs to follow deal with the rationale behind designing a fiction course as a means of treatment rather than any other means and genres.

The English language has been playing an increasingly remarkable role in a world where almost all countries have become a small town, communicating through English. Speaking of the United Arab Emirates' universities' context, English proficiency is a university requirement as the medium of instruction at both government and private universities is English. Generally speaking, however, EFL learners' achievement in English is not satisfactory enough, which can be due to a number of factors amongst the most prominent of which is lack of exposure to literary courses. Presently, literature is being regarded as a written form far removed from every day communication, and as such, literature courses are being mainly taught for English language/literature specialists in the country (see Al Alami: 2008).

A large number of specialists advocate the idea that literature plays an essential role in promoting communicative competence and enhancing critical thinking skills on the part of EFL/ESL learners. In Savvidou's view (2004), for example, communicative competence is more than mastery of form and structure. It also involves acquiring the ability to interpret discourse in its social and cultural contexts. Utilising literature, therefore, can provide a powerful pedagogic tool, ensuring learners' linguistic development. Reese (2002) argues that it is through literature that we can launch our students on a voyage of discovery, exploring other

ways of thinking and living. Through careful, guided enquiry and by linking disciplinary study to the world at large, we are preparing students to be well-informed about a variety of issues around the world.

In Rafei's view (1996), literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied body of written material, in the sense that it touches upon fundamental human issues. A literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country, or a different period of history. According to Appiah (1995), literature teaching should be prioritised for the following reasons: to develop students' scope of literary understanding and critical judgment for aesthetic purposes, to present a broad spectrum of the ideals and values as expressed in the world's great works, and to present the cultural ideals and social values relevant to the needs and interests of students. Based on the study he carried out to question the potential place of fiction writing in college writing pedagogy, McClure (1993) argues that writing fiction creates potentials for students who choose to engage in their own self-creative work, as well as increases their capabilities as writers and thinkers.

Nada (1993) emphasises that the study of literature not only supports and enriches the study of language, but also helps the student to think in this language. In a literary study, the analysis of characters helps students in developing their way of thinking and building up a personal point of view based upon the reading and understanding of the work of art, to get as close as possible to the way the writer is thinking. Through the teaching of literature, we are exposing the learner to language within a meaningful as well as purposeful context. In Abou-Seif's view (1990), literature offers significant potential benefits for students of English as a foreign language. It can serve as a unit of linguistic study in the classroom, with several activities involving the application of the four language skills. Providing students with engaging literature experiences is, then, central to effective instruction. When students interact with interesting literature selections, they are developing each aspect of the comprehension process: affective consideration, readiness consideration, decoding knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and discourse knowledge. Literature, therefore, is a unique and powerful instructional tool which can be used to promote all aspects of the comprehension process (see Hyland 1990).

Collie and Slater (1987) describe the benefits gained whilst dealing with short stories. For the teacher, a short story offers many immediate and striking advantages; for example, offering a greater variety than longer texts, being of value for continuous intake adult classes, as well as being practical when considering the time factor. Concerned with promoting writing skills, Sterns (1987) explains that literature serves as a model for

writing, whether guided or controlled. Controlled model-based exercises are primarily designed to give contextualised activities in using grammatical structures. Used mostly in beginning-level writing, they entail the rewriting of passages in various arbitrary ways, depending on the structure or grammar point being studied. With regard to guided writing, literature can first become a regular model for writing during the guided stage, which usually corresponds with intermediate-level writing. Last but not least, Byram (1980) states that the teaching of literature can help students go beyond immediate information, improve their writing ability, enrich their judgment and choice of reading, and change their thinking about the world in general and their society in particular.

To end with, the viewpoints mentioned above highlight the essential role literary texts play in relation to enhancing language skills and elements, promoting critical thinking, shaping mentality, and enriching knowledge for life-long learning. Based on her experience as an EFL practitioner, the author's viewpoint is in support of the aforementioned viewpoints. It is this personal experience as well as the desire to verify other researchers' beliefs, therefore, that has led the researcher to pursue this research.

1.4 Study Questions

The current study seeks some convincing answers to the following enquiries.

Question One

What are the components and specifications of a fiction course, proposed for promoting EFL university students' communicative competence, and enhancing their critical thinking skills?

Question Two

To what extent is the proposed fiction course effective in promoting EFL university students' communicative competence, and enhancing their critical thinking skills?

Within these two major questions, a number of sub-questions have been addressed to investigate some issues of relevance and interest to the field in general and the current research project in particular (see Chapter Four for details).

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study is limited and confined to EFL undergraduate students, studying in the United Arab Emirates and specialising in subjects other than English language, as the study population. Readers may enquire why EFL English language specialist students have been excluded. This is because such a category of students would normally enhance English language skills throughout their four-year university study journey.

Out of the study population, a number of students studying at the Al Ghurair University in Dubai- where the author works- were selected as a representative sample. The piloting and re-piloting of the study involved different groups within the academic years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010. Implementing the study was then conducted involving different groups within the academic year 2011-2012. Rather than covering the whole content of the proposed course which was quite impossible to attain, a number of texts were used for implementation purposes. The implementation, which the current research bases the findings and conclusions on, is limited to one academic semester, that is to say, fifteen teaching weeks amounting up to forty-five hours. Lastly, the university course which the researcher replaced her proposed course with is the Communication Skills ENL 102 course, as this course seeks to promote students' communicative competence in English, using general texts.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The current study is hoped and expected to be of use and interest to the following categories:

- applied linguists and researchers within the field of EFL as the study proposes a model for integrating the teaching of language, literature, communication and critical thinking, with the ultimate purpose of promoting communicative competence and enhancing critical thinking on the part of EFL learners,
- curricula designers because the study introduces a course for the enhancement of communicative competence and critical thinking on the part of EFL/ESL learners,
- EFL instructors since the study offers instructional material which can be adopted or adapted when teaching EFL learners,
- specialists in language assessment due to the study's inclusion of some assessment materials, which can be both entertaining and useful, and;

-EFL university students since the study offers some language input, which is likely to serve as cognitive and affective inspiration.

1.7 Organisation of the Book

Excluding Chapter One, the book is divided into five chapters followed by references and five appendices. Chapter Two is a detailed review of related literature, including the areas involved: literary texts, i.e. novels and short stories in perspective, reading skills, writing skills, critical thinking skills, communication skills, research within the field of applied linguistics, and gender differences in relation to language acquisition and performance. Chapter Three is a detailed presentation on the conduct of the study, discussing the *what*, *why* and *how* issues. The treatment; that is, the proposed course, is discussed in relation to the following points: general aims and target attainments, principles of selecting literary texts for inclusion, content organisation along with specific objectives for each section, teaching methodology and approaches, suggested instructional procedures for each section, instructional tips and proposed ways of examining novels and short stories in the EFL classroom, recommended activities for teaching-learning contexts, proposed strategies to extend learner thinking, and language assessment. The main aim of including the aforementioned points is to shed light on the treatment the researcher proposes, so that readers can be convinced by its adequacy and effectiveness.

Concerned with the study design as well as methodology, Chapter Four is a detailed description of the current research, presenting the following points: study questions, study hypotheses, study design, subjects of the study, setting of the study, study variables, current research's ethical considerations, and current research's data collection methods. The main purpose of including the aforementioned points is to adequately discuss the current study in relation to both research methodology and design. Chapter Five is a detailed analysis of the statistical analyses conducted for the purpose of the current research. Including the study hypotheses along with the statistical treatment implemented for each and every case, Chapter Five aims to represent the statistical findings objectively and comprehensively, so that the reader can be persuaded that the results are both valid and reliable. Last but not least, Chapter Six is a detailed discussion of the current research's findings, conclusions, implications as well as recommendations for further studies. The main aim of this last chapter, therefore, is to reflect upon what the researcher arrives at, concludes and recommends. Finally, the last chapter is followed by a list of references along with five appendices, for documentation purposes.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Review of Related Literature: Introduction

Chapter Two sheds light on seven main areas involved in the current research, presenting a number of related theories and approaches, opinions and suggestions, as well as studies and researches. These are: firstly, entering the world of fiction: elements and features of fictional texts-novels and short stories, theories and approaches, methods and strategies, activities and procedures, as well as a number of related studies. Secondly, reading skills: what reading comprehension entails, points to consider, theories and approaches, strategies; activities and procedures, as well as a number of related studies. Thirdly, writing skills: theories and approaches, strategies; activities and procedures, as well as a number of related studies. Fourthly, critical language skills: critical thinking, critical reading, critical writing, strategies; activities and procedures, as well as a number of related studies. Fifthly, EFL communication skills: promoting communication skills in the EFL classroom, teaching in the communicative classroom, as well as a number of related studies. Sixthly, research within the field of applied linguistics: definition, main design types, ethical considerations, and data collection methods. Last but not least, gender differences in relation to language acquisition and performance: food for thought.

2.1.1 Entering the World of Fiction: Introductory Word

The current study project seeks to investigate the effectiveness of utilising fictional texts: novels and short stories, in promoting communicative competence and enhancing critical thinking, on the part of EFL learners. The author, as such, believes that for her to cover all the related areas would be fruitful and enriching. Amongst the areas the current study involves and therefore, the current part includes are: main elements and language features in relation to fictional texts, theories and approaches, proposed methods and strategies, suggested activities and

procedures, as well as a number of studies and researches within the context of the current study.

2.1.2 Elements and Features of Fictional Texts: Novels and Short Stories

Each genre has its elements and features which usually distinguish it from other genres. Such elements and features require a reader's careful study. What elements and features should we focus on whilst examining a novel/short story in the EFL/ESL classroom? This part of Chapter Two points out the elements and features, which should be highlighted throughout the reading and discussion stages of a novel/short story.

To begin with, it is agreed that the main elements of a novel/short story are: point of view, character, plot, setting, theme, and style (Al Alami: 2008). As far as point of view is concerned, Shen (2010) points out that first-person narration as well as third-person narration can use different modes of point of view. The 'I' in terms of first-person narration can be the protagonist in the story or an observer, for example. In discussing point of view, therefore, it is essential to realise the difference between two dichotomies. Firstly, 'internal' point of view: the viewing position being inside the story, versus 'external' point of view: the viewing position being outside the story. Secondly, inside view: penetrating into a character's consciousness, versus outside view: observing a character's outward behavior. Point of view, Simpson states (2010: 294), extends from the likely limited viewing position of a participating first-person narrator to the much wider point of a third person omniscient narrator. Speaking of this element, we need to differentiate between what is delineated in the fictional world on the one hand, and the perspective from which it is delineated, on the other. Clark (2007), on the other hand, believes that point of view can be used in different ways. It can refer to a visual perspective. In addition, it can refer to the ideological framework of a text. Moreover, it can be used to differentiate between the various kinds of relation of the teller to the tale in the narrative.

According to McRae (2007), the issue of point of view and narration goes further than speech and thought presentation, free direct and free indirect speech. It requires decisions about time, realistic perspectives, narrative distance, as well as the wider aims of narration as much as they can be assessed. Durant, et al. (2000) explain that in a fictional text, the choice of events and the way events are described can be governed by one single point of view. This point of view could be explicitly a narrator-a character involved in the events and as such, has his/her particular

perspective as well as angle on the events. The use of a narrator is an aesthetic strategy which can be employed in different ways for a variety of purposes. The simplest distinction that can be made in point of view is between two kinds of narration; namely, a first person: I narration, and a third person: the third person narration.

First person narration can be found in a wide range of novels and short stories where the narrative is told by the central protagonist. First person narration can also be told by a character other than the central protagonist-the viewpoint of a minor character for example. Whatever the case, first person narration projects us inside the consciousness of a character in the novel/short story, providing the events from one defined observer's position. On the other hand, third person narration can be used in such a way that a reader is unaware of the role of the narrator, who acts as an outsider observer. Hence, the narration process seems to be operating as a window on the events taking place in a novel/short story. Equally important is the fact that there are contrasting options within third person narration which can be summed up as follows: internal versus external, and restricted versus unrestricted knowledge. External third person narration refers to observing events and characters from outside. Internal third person narration, by contrast, provides access to the internal consciousness of characters by telling readers the way they think as well as feel. Another difference can be made in third person narration, that is, the difference between narration with no restrictions on the knowable (omniscient narration) and narration with restrictions on the knowable (see Durant, et al. 2000).

Seen from Jacobus's point of view (1989), we cannot have much of a narrative without a point of view, characters, a setting, a dramatic situation, and a shaped action. Point of view refers to a writer's method of reporting events - either in the third-person narrative using the pronoun he/she, or in the first-person narrative using the pronoun I. Character is created in terms of description, action and dialogue. Setting is the geographical space in which the story takes place. The dramatic situation has to do with some kind of action. And the shaped action is the narrative purpose manifested in careful shaping of actions.

In studying a short story/novel, Roberts (1988) recommends, we should consider the issues of point of view, characterisation, plot, setting, and theme. Point of view refers to first-person narrators who may have complete understanding, partial understanding, or no understanding at all; second-person narrators where the pronoun you is used when speaker has more authority on a character's actions than the character himself or herself; and third-person narrators where he, she, or it can be used to either

report actions and speeches, explain the inner workings of the minds of any or all characters, or focus on thoughts and responses of one major character limitedly. As far as characterisation is concerned, there are two main types of characters: namely, round and flat. The flat character is undistinguishable from other persons in a particular group or class. Therefore, a flat character is not individual but representative. The round character, on the other hand, stands out totally identifiable within the class, occupation, or circumstances of which he or she is a part. Plot may be analysed in terms of things such as impulses, goals, ideas, values, issues, and historical perspectives. Setting is the total of references to physical and temporal objects and artifacts, which can be examined in relation to characters, organisation of the work, and the atmosphere or mood of the story. Theme refers to a major idea which runs throughout a story and ties things together much like a continuous thread.

So far, focus has been made on the elements point of view, character, plot, setting, and theme. The remaining paragraphs of this part pinpoint the element of style which usually tends to characterise the language features of novels and short stories. A genre of literature, fiction normally manipulates the sort of language which other genres of literature normally manipulate to impress readers; namely, figurative language. Durant et al. (2000) explain that figurative language refers to a kind of literalness. The words of a language always have a literal meaning; that is, the meaning which is related to each word as part of the vocabulary of the language. In constructing a non-literal meaning, a sentence should be interpreted as having meaning other than its literal one. The reader has to invent a meaning which is plausible for the sentence, relying on a number of factors. The meaning must be capable of being true; it must fit with the rest of the work to have some relation with what is actually said. The processes of working out the literal meaning and the non-literal one of a text are very different from one another. While working out the literal meaning of a text, one decodes the text. On the other hand, working out the non-literal meaning requires making a guess, as well as making use of appropriate pieces of evidence.

According to Durant, et al. (2000), figurative language entails using, amongst other devices, metaphor, simile, and irony. As far as metaphors are concerned, they can be classified according to the types of transference of meaning they employ. A concrete metaphor uses a concrete term to talk about an abstract thing. An animistic metaphor uses a term usually associated with animate things. A humanising metaphor uses a term which is usually associated with human beings to talk about a non-human thing. In addition, metaphors can be divided into extended and mixed metaphors.

An extended metaphor is a common literary device referred to in a piece of language where several vehicles based on the same area of thought are used. A mixed metaphor, by contrast, refers to the combination of two or more metaphors the vehicle of which comes from different areas.

Some specialists believe that metaphor is an integral part to be considered when examining literary language. Littlemore (2006), for example, emphasises that metaphoric competence has an important role to play in all areas of communicative competence. It can highly contribute to textual competence, grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, illocutionary competence, and strategic competence. Metaphor is; therefore, relevant to second language learning, teaching and testing, from the very beginning to the most advanced phases of language learning. Cameron and Low (1999) explain that metaphor takes a range of various forms; it is ubiquitous and has a surprisingly large number of functions-cognitive, social, affective, rhetorical, and interaction-management. It is crucial in relation to acquiring a language, yet, there has been very little research into metaphor in second language acquisition, and very little into teaching control over metaphor.

According to Deignan, et al. (1998), more attention should be given to the teaching of strategies for comprehending and generating metaphors in the second language. Awareness-raising through discussion and comparison of metaphors in the native language and the target language would be a useful approach to helping learners understand and produce metaphors. Low (1988), on the other hand, is of the opinion that metaphor should be given a more important place in language teaching than it has been in the past, for three reasons. Firstly, it is central to the use of language. Secondly, it pervades large parts of the language system. And thirdly, enough is known to make such reconsideration a feasible proposition. It is proposed that a reinterpretation of some of this knowledge in skill terms is a helpful pre-requisite to the design of instructional programs.

Simile is a subdivision of metaphor in the sense that it draws our attention to a similarity between two terms. In metaphor; however, the link between the terms is implied whereas in simile, it is made through an explicit signal. In a simile, there may only be a literal meaning, and the parts of the simile which correspond to vehicle and tenor may both be parts of the literal meaning of the sentence. Irony is a somewhat indirect method of communication; it is a way of using language in which what is said or written is different from what the speaker or writer really means, even though there is a relation between what is said/written and what one means. Two main types of irony are: verbal and situational. Understanding how verbal irony works involves considering the composition of the

meanings we convey. A communicated meaning can be analysed into two parts: a proposition and an attitude towards the proposition. Situational irony can be analysed into the two components of proposition and attitude; however, the people who disbelieve the proposition are removed from the text. In other words, the situational irony focuses on the character that does not have the correct attitude of belief (Durant, et al.: 2000).

To sum up, the main elements which we need to examine while dealing with a novel/short story are: character, setting, point of view, theme, plot, and style. Character can be described as the personages of a text, interrelated in different ways, and built up of different traits of personality. This area requires analysing characters in terms of their function within the structure of the narrative text. Setting-time and place-involves the physical surrounding that is described in the narrative text, within which characters live their lives. Point of view-type of narrator-requires examining from whose point of view the story is told and what effect it has on the reader. Theme-text's prominent topic/issue-neecessitates careful examination of the text as a whole whilst considering other areas involved. Plot – a series of actions leading to the climax and resolution - entails a chronological arrangement of events whilst considering other contributing elements such as character. Style-writer's manipulation of language including choice of diction; grammatical structures; literary devices; as well as overall organisation, requires deep analysis of the text in terms of language norms and standards-both literary and non. Since literal interpretation of fictional language may sometimes be misleading, it is recommended that learners read between and behind the lines. Some of the major questions which EFL/ESL instructors can raise to help students read between and behind the lines would be: how do literary devices work in the text to contribute to a coherent piece of writing? How is the work an exceptional piece of writing? What are the relationships between various types of symbols and motifs in the text? What are the dominate characteristics of major and minor characters? What kinds of myths and stories are embedded in the text?

2.1.3 Theories and Approaches

Language acquisition is a complicated human process whereby a variety of variables are involved, contributing either positively or negatively. Amongst the most prominent variables is the quality of instruction a practitioner possesses as well as exhibits whilst carrying out tasks and fulfilling requirements. This part of Chapter Two seeks to

delineate a number of related theories and approaches within the field of EFL/ESL literature.

A number of specialists recommend employing a stylistics approach in the EFL/ESL classroom. What does a stylistics approach mean and entail? Both Busse and McIntyre (2010: 6) explain that stylistics in its most general sense refers to 'the study of style in language and how this results from the intra-linguistic features of a text in relation to non-linguistic factors such as author, genre, historical period, and so on.' According to Leech (2010: 17), stylistics can simply be defined as a 'way of using language.' When we examine language style, we talk about the style used in a certain textual domain, corpus for example, or the style of a particular text or an extract from a particular text. Busse (2010) proposes that new historical stylistics should be considered as a combined discipline of 'linguistic description and literary interpretation', characterised by being functional and formal. What is more, this inter-discipline offers theoretical explorations along with practical applications. A new historical stylistic analysis of a text presumes an adequate knowledge of the context, the period, and the language in which the text is/was produced. Some context-related information guides our reading of a text, generic knowledge for example.

Depicting stylistics in today's world, Carter (2010) thinks that it has a significant role to play in relation to methodology in the instruction of literature, and accordingly, in pedagogy developments in both first and second language teaching contexts. Amongst the most prominent developments is focus on 'textual transformations' whereby comparative text analysis can be used through rewriting a literary text from different positions, hence translating the text from textual to dramatic, verbal to visual, or spoken to written. Looked at from Prieto's point of view (2010), a stylistics-inspired pedagogy of both literary and non-literary texts has the advantage of providing learners with genuine chances for enhancement. Speaking of real-life language functions, such genuine chances are of great benefit in relation to enriching/expanding knowledge: creative, analytical as well as critical.

Warner (2010) discusses how pragmatic stylistics-an interdisciplinary branch of literary linguistic study that deals with literary texts as 'social acts of interactive communication'- can function as a methodological basis for a pedagogical strategy of what can be referred to as 'contact pragmatics'. According to Warner, contact pragmatics can be defined as the literary work's relation to both 'intended' and 'non-intended readers' as well as the convergence of these universes of expectation. Contact pragmatics stresses the relations between linguistic function and form, and

as such, can be employed to promote learners' sensitivity to the use of linguistic choices, enabling them to recognise interpretation in certain social and historical contexts.

Zyngier and Fialho (2010) explain that one of the problems with literature instruction and pedagogical stylistics is their divorce from theories of education. Of great importance for instructors to consider are both the instructional content and the context in which it is conducted; the social conditions in which they teach. Critical pedagogy is likely to help enhance literary awareness in an EFL stylistic context. If learners' voices can lead to informing effective instructional strategies, both instructors and learners reflect on what is taking place in class, considering what has gone wrong or has not been implemented effectively, as well as how and what action to take instead. What is more, the relationship between instructors and learners has to be based on mutual understanding and respect rather than superior to inferior relations. Thus, there has to be some intimate bonds between both parties. Lastly, the class has to be a healthy environment encouraging autonomy learning of major types: cultural, critical, and emotional.

The role of emotion in education has taken on more and more importance in the field, particularly as it relates to the teaching of literature in English in different cultural contexts, where the experiences recounted in novels, short stories and poems can be far removed from the day to day experiences of students in a context such as that of the United Arab Emirates. Proponents of the importance of emotion in literature testify to an underlying universality of experience we all share, regardless of differences in cultural and social contexts. A number of specialists state that, understanding and managing our emotions has impacted the educational sphere (Dawson, 2007; Brearely 2000). Stressing the significant role emotion plays, Dawson (2007) introduces a reading theory for the teaching of World Englishes Literature. The proposed reading theory emphasises the universality of human emotion, and is based on affective responses to literary works. According to the researcher, happiness; fear; anger; and sadness are what make up the embodiment of a universality of human emotion, and therefore, should be viewed as the main vehicle for engagement with a literary piece. The theory is referred to as emotion tracking pedagogy, and has been initiated as an approach for the teaching of World Englishes literature. The role that emotion plays in reading is significant; it is the primary resource a reader holds to make text mean. While decoding a text at various levels, a reader strives for the text to mean. Affect plays a primary role in this meaning construction. When

discussing the role of affect, attention should be given to the importance of response, affective response in particular.

Believing in its beneficial effects in relation to both language and literature, a number of researchers and practitioners advocate the use of an integrated approach whilst teaching literature. Savvidou (2004), for example, believes that adopting an integrated approach to teaching literature in EFL contexts offers learners the opportunity to develop not only their linguistic and communicative skills, but also their knowledge about the foreign language in all its discourse types. Based on an integrated approach to teaching language and literature, O'Brien (1999) proposes an integrated model. The proposed model integrates linguistic description with interpretation of the text, including the following stages:

Stage one: Preparation and anticipation to elicit learners' real or literary experience of the main theme and context of text.

Stage two: Learners focus on specific content.

Stage three: Preliminary response to the text being discussed.

Stage four: Working at it (1)-Focus is on comprehending the first level of meaning.

Stage five: Working at it (2)-Focus is on analysis of the text at a deeper level exploring how the message is conveyed.

Stage six: Interpretation and personal response to increase understanding, and enable learners to come to their own interpretation of the text.

Considered from a different perspective, Zafeiriadou (2001) presents a pedagogical approach to the teaching of literature based on learner-centredness approach. The overall philosophy of this pedagogic approach can be summarised as follows:

- * Literary texts should appeal to the students' interests, concerns and age.
- * The teaching of literature in an EFL context should aim to elicit the students' responses to the text, and to guide them to a personal discovery.
- * Literary texts should be approached as a resource and a fruitful opportunity for students' education and their personal growth.
- * Literature in the language classroom should be explored in the light of a learner-centred pedagogy, and as such, teaching should focus on students' communicative needs.
- * This global perspective of learner-centredness on language teaching is implemented through the learner-centred curriculum, which is

expressed by the view that language education should aim to establish the conditions for autonomous learning.

* A new role and responsibilities for the teacher should be established. The teacher is not anymore the unquestionable authority in the language classroom.

* Regarding the implementation of this approach in the language classroom, this is attained through a language-based classroom practice where literary texts are explored as a resource for literary and linguistic development.

* The exploration of texts comes closer to the students' personal experiences and to what relates to their life through teaching techniques and practices, and is divided into pre-reading, while-reading, and after-reading activities.

With the advent of creative reading approach, Carter and McRae (1999) and Carter and McCarthy (1994), and the heightened importance of reader-response theory, two major principles have been stressed; namely, process and activity. According to the process-based principle, the reader is involved in the reading of literature in the form of a process. It is argued that the reader is more likely to appreciate the literary text as he/she is experiencing it directly as a process. The activity-based principle, on the other hand, signifies the reader's active role in approaching the literary text. Traditional teacher-led literature interpretation classes have no role to play in this respect. Besides the researchers mentioned above, both Giroux and McLaren (1994) believe that the reader-response approach has initiated a decentralisation of the literature classroom as the reader is considered the potential knower. Techniques employed in reader-response, it is argued, help the reader realise his /her active role as a reader, thus becoming more involved.

As Close (1992) explains, literature can be understood in different ways. Adopting a critical approach; therefore, would move students away from searching for the all-important right answer. Getting students to stretch their minds helps them discard the notion that only teachers have the right answer, and that they are too inexperienced or dumb to know the answer. Balabanis (1991) proposes using a learning-experience approach to create a class story. The learning-experience approach follows three basic steps: a common experience is shared in the class, students contribute sentences to develop a class composition based on the experience, and teacher as well as students review the class-produced text together for content and language. Creative writing becomes creative learning experience.