

## **Recipe for an EFL Literature Class**

### **A survey of literature in preparation for the creation of an English literature class in an EFL context**

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#### **Keywords**

EFL, literature analysis, language acquisition, cultural understanding, cultural disconnect, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, assessment

#### **Abstract**

Using the research in this article, a framework for a proposed EFL literature class has been developed. This class will utilize authentic books which are in most cases inappropriately difficult for language study, and because of this the goal of language acquisition will be subordinate to literature analysis. Therefore, the primary goal of the class will be to guide students using the literature to access and contemplate other cultures. Class books that expose different cultures must be chosen, but care must be taken so as not to overextend the reach of the students' language aptitude and cultural awareness. Secondary to culture studies is the application of students' critical thinking skills and emotional intelligence. Assessments and assignments will gradually progress from content comprehension to literary concept usage, and from teacher-led discussions to individual assignments.

#### **Introduction**

*I am the infamous creature you have heard of, that lives among the thieves, and that never from the first moment I can recollect my eyes and senses opening on London streets have known any better life, or kinder words than they have given me, so help me God! Do not mind shrinking openly from me, lady. I am younger than you would think, to look at me, but I am well used to it. The poorest women fall back, as I make my way along the crowded pavement ...Thank Heaven upon your knees, dear lady,' cried the girl, 'that you had friends to care for and keep you in your childhood, and that you were never in the midst*

*of cold and hunger; and riot and drunkenness, and—and—something worse than all—as I have been from my cradle. I may use the word, for the alley and the gutter were mine, as they will be my deathbed.*

(Dickens, 1838/1992)

My mother, trying to supplement my studies, started paying me to read when I was in elementary school. At that time, I had not yet developed an appreciation for literature, nor a joy for reading. She hoped that blatant bribery would eventually spawn in me a love of reading, and her plan might have worked but for the fact that she chose the wrong books. She started me off at age nine with *Oliver Twist*. Unsurprisingly, Dickens' circumlocutionary sentence structure, with clauses imbedded in clauses imbedded in clauses, confounded me. After finishing a sentence, I was often forced to go back to the beginning of the sentence just to remind myself what the original subject was. The speech above from *Oliver Twist* given by Nancy to Rose Maylie is just one example of the phraseology that my nine-year-old self was faced with. Of course, language was not the only barrier in my way. At that tender age, I had yet to be educated in the particulars of Victorian-era England class-struggles. Nor thankfully did I have much notion of adult concepts such as rape and prostitution. It is no surprise that I couldn't make heads or tails of passages like the one above. So I read, but only as much as necessary to pass my mother's quizzes, and only enough to collect my allowance. Needless to say, I took no pleasure in this reading and gained little from it.

It is having undergone this experience that I contemplate starting an English literature class for EFL students in Japan. The situations are not dissimilar. Like my mother, as teacher I will be choosing the books my students read. I will also be the one to give them incentives, though they will be grades instead of money. The students will be trying to tackle books whose English is more challenging than the graded readers they are used to, and these books and the topics in them will be mainly from foreign cultures. My students will face some of the same challenges I did when I tucked into *Oliver Twist*: those of language and culture. With my mother's failure in mind, I thought it appropriate to explore the foreseeable challenges and possible rewards of teaching English literature to Japanese EFL university students. The following will be a summary of various opinions on the topic and will serve as a guide to my implementation of this class.

## **1. A preface about the definition of literature**

As there are numerous volumes written on the subject of what constitutes ‘literature’, and as many of them disagree with one another, it seems important to define what kind of written works will be taught in this proposed literature class.

First, and most importantly, graded readers will not be considered for this course. Graded readers and extensive reading (ER) can be extremely useful and effective in giving students the exposure needed to progress along the road of language learning. Graded readers can help students increase their reading speed (Iwahori, 2008), as well as attitude (Cho & Krashen, 1994) and motivation (Elley, 1991) towards language learning. While there are a few examples that transcend the genre, most graded readers are compromised as literature because they are simplified to better fulfill their primary purpose of being accessible and useful to English learners. (Yoneda & Valvona, 2021)

Secondly, in order to be considered literature for this class, a work must have an analytical component. It must be written so that it can provoke contemplation of something above and beyond the words on the page and the plot of the story. The work must have some sort of theme, moral, or *raison d’être*, either purposefully woven into the text or creatively conceptualized by the reader.

Lastly, works studied in this class must have an emotional component. This can be achieved through various means, but through this emotional component the text must shed light on the human condition and its complexities, breaking through the superficial and giving insight into the deeper intricacies and essential natures of characters, author, and/or reader.

Of course, the latter two prerequisites are subjective and a bit hand-wavy. Suffice it to say that texts for this class must be both analytical and emotional *in the opinion of the teacher*, because it is the teacher that will be tasked with guiding students in understanding the various facets of these works. In short, literature for this class must be true to itself without artificial restrictions of vocabulary or complexity. It must not simply inform, but also inspire contemplation. It must not simply entertain, but also engender emotion.

## **2. Language development vs. language barrier**

There can be little doubt that reading English literature exposes students to new vocabulary, idioms, and sentence structures. This exposure can possibly lead to acquisition, and it can possibly lead to frustration. As students reading literature are likely to run across a great many new words and challenging sentence structures, it is vital to explore the dichotomy that exposure to new language creates. On the one hand, exposure to new or unlearned language items is an opportunity to learn these items. On the other,

encountering new language items leads to a certain amount of confusion, as the overall meaning of the sentence or paragraph may be somewhat obscured by their unfamiliarity. The exploration of this dichotomy is not merely academic; it has real bearing on the path this class will follow. In an EFL context, most English classes have students' English language development as their main goal. However, literature classes usually focus on issues and themes, loftier and more scholarly goals than the mechanical workings of language. To be certain, comparing Dickens' intricate sentence structure to that of Hemingway's sparse prose is a perfectly valid subject for an English literature class. However, in literature classes questions of purpose and impact are always lurking behind these linguistic choices. Literature studies are rarely a study of language use alone, but instead encompass inquiry and debate about language choices and what effect they have on the overall impact of the work. In short, the question is: in the context of EFL learners, is it better to primarily use literature as language learning materials, or to rather use literary texts to study the art of literature?

Exposure to new vocabulary is essential for language learning, but current scholarship regarding unknown vocabulary exposure stresses that new words should be encountered rarely while reading. According to Laufer (1992), 95% of a book's vocabulary must be known by a reader in order for that student to score a 56% or above on a comprehension test of the book's contents. Hu and Nation (2000) raised the bar to 98% comprehension in order for students to "gain unassisted comprehension of a text." These percentages do not bode well for using literature to increase EFL students' language proficiency. Any student who can understand without aid from teacher or dictionary 98% of the vocabulary contained within *The Catcher in the Rye* is not likely to still be considered an English language learner. However, the studies cited above are aimed at vocabulary thresholds regarding graded readers and ER. The assumption being that in ER, students carry out their reading generally alone and unassisted, and should read fluently and extensively. It is this unassisted and unfettered reading experience that gives students the exposure necessary to learn language through ER.

The goals of a literature class are necessarily different from that of an ER class. Not only do students in a literature class all read the same book at approximately the same pace, but there is also a great deal of scaffolding and discussion where students can confirm their understanding of the text. There is also a question of whether a student in a literature class requires the same amount or the same type of comprehension as does a student completing an ER task. A humorous example from one of Povey's literature classes demonstrates this.

*My students saw this when we found Rip Van Winkle sitting under a sycamore tree and one worried individual lamented that he could not understand because he did not know what a sycamore was. I discovered with some embarrassment that I didn't know what a sycamore was either - at least in any botanical sense. We then agreed that if we got as far as "tree," as the context dictated, we would have got as far towards comprehension as that detail needed. (1967)*

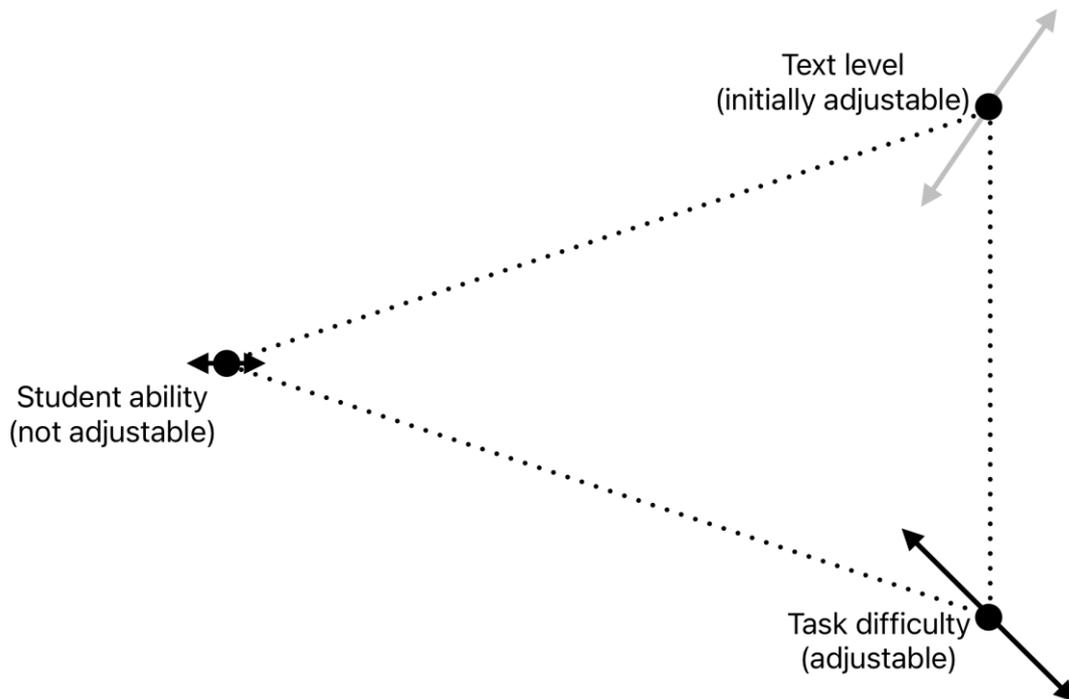
Povey and his student were unsure about what a sycamore tree is, or at least what sets a sycamore tree apart from any other tree. However, the themes of Rip Van Winkle that Povey wished to touch upon didn't require the student to understand whether sycamores are broadleaf or evergreen, just that they are a tree large enough for a man to fall asleep under. The fact that American sycamores are broad-leaved, long-lived and can grow to great proportions are interesting pieces of information, but ultimately unnecessary to understanding the analytical and emotional components of the literary work. Most importantly though, Povey's student was able to know that the particulars of sycamores are inessential to Rip Van Winkle because Povey was able to confirm this directly. Because the instructor of a literature course is along for the ride, they can easily navigate students past the superfluous and toward the salient parts of a text. Alternatively, Povey could have chosen to steer into the skid and assign research into the qualities of sycamore trees to engage student curiosity as to why the author Irving may have chosen this particular species. The key takeaway is that in a literature class, the teacher is present as a guide.

Furthermore, exploring the author's intent about the choice of single word or aspect of a story are unwise strategies in an ER context. Indeed, students would likely not be able to read very extensively were they to analyze their graded readers so deeply. In the same way, focusing on enabling independent, extended reading sessions that are the backbone of many ER programs would be unwise in a literature class where doubt, debate, and introspection are tools to be used to explore the depths of texts, authors, and readers.

Therefore, as the aims of, and the resources available to students in the proposed literature class are quite different from those of ER programs, it is probable that the 98% set by Hu and Nation is inapplicable to a literature class. Yet while students might not need to understand 98% of the vocabulary used in a particular book, it also is probable that beginner-level students would be ill-served by being assigned Dickens or Chaucer. These two extremes beg the question of what levels of texts are appropriate for a literature class in an EFL context.

Unfortunately, definitive answers to this question are hard to find. In an article addressing the use of authentic texts in EFL classes, Guariento and Morley set a “post-intermediate level” (2001) as the point at which a large number of authentic materials such as novels become accessible to learners. This is no doubt true for a certain value of post-intermediate, but unfortunately the term ‘post-intermediate’ does not have a universally agreed-upon definition. In addition, the authors put the focus solely on the level of the learner rather than on the relative levels of learner and text. They also unnecessarily simplify the different facets that go into determining the level of a language learner. Instead of labeling learners as beginner or advanced, cognitive linguists such as Skehan (1998) view the aptitude of language learners as a complex combination of skills. These skills include, for example, the ability to understand and quickly reproduce learned phrases, the ability to apply language rules and systems to new vocabulary and situations, etc. There can also be other influences on language learning such as motivation, personality, etc. (Skehan 1991) which can have an effect on the ability to perform language tasks. There are many different models for dissecting the different attributes that go into determining a learner’s level, of which Skehan’s is but one. However, if language proficiency is indeed better classified as a combination of skills and abilities, then it can only follow that the extent to which a task conforms to those abilities should determine whether that task is level-appropriate or not. It follows then that the difficulty of the text is perhaps not as important as whether the tasks using said text are achievable given the students’ skill set.

These distinctions are extremely useful, as they take into account the complexity of the text, the complexity of the task, and the aptitude of the student. These can be used to create a triangle of difficulty (Figure 1 below) in which the area of the triangle can indicate difficulty level.



*Figure 1: the triangle of difficulty*

One of the three axes of the triangle is the skill set of the student and is thereby fixed, or at least not able to be freely manipulated by the teacher. The second axis is the level of the text, which is initially modifiable and only becomes fixed once the book has been decided and assigned. The third axis is the difficulty and suitability of the tasks to be initiated using the book, and these are adjustable to a great degree and can even be adapted mid-task. By pushing and pulling the two adjustable axes, the difficulty is able to be adjusted to suit student ability.

In conclusion, it seems that in the dichotomy of language development and language barrier, the barriers posed by language difficulty are of more concern than the possibility of language acquisition in an EFL English literature class. That being said, these language barriers are not insurmountable with careful text selection and judicious activity planning and implementation. Given there is likely to be a sizable discrepancy between the materials and the ability of the students, it is clear that acquisition should not be the primary goal of the proposed EFL literature class. No doubt language learning will

take place, but it should be ancillary to the goal of understanding the thematic and conceptual values of the texts in question.

### **3. Cultural understanding vs cultural disconnect**

Literature has the ability to project the reader into an infinite variety of settings and situations. Books can help readers experience an idyllic childhood on the edge of the expanding American frontier or feel the fear of being under the thumb of an all-powerful, futuristic surveillance state. Yet no matter how fantastic the material, literature is always tethered to reality by the anchor of its author, whose life and experiences are vital to understanding the underlying motivations behind their writing. Through the lives of characters and authors, literature can be a window into a myriad of different cultures and societies. Stories and their authors are also products of their time, giving insight into societal norms and challenges of people in the past, the realities of the current zeitgeist, and possible lifestyles in the future, not to mention the sometimes-painful transitions from one generation to the next. Literature also deals with social issues that are applicable worldwide in any time period such as racism, poverty, and gender inequality. Lastly, literature can shed light on philosophical issues such as truth and beauty, right and wrong, good and evil, and in doing so can uncover cultural differences in these seemingly universal ideals. Experiencing these lives, eras, issues, and ideas through literature can give readers new perspectives on inquiries they may previously have considered settled. In these ways, literature can provide insights into culture, history, and society, in turn helping students gain a deeper understanding of cultural nuances, values, and perspectives. However, with every cultural leap and with every era transversed, students may find the contents of the texts more and more challenging. With a relatively shallow pool of worldly experience, students can easily be stymied by cultural references, historical events and even then-famous celebrities, leading to confusion. However important it may be to learn about cultural differences, those differences may also prove so drastic as to cause uncertainty, shock, and even disgust. Like the duality of language barriers and language learning, it is vital to explore the benefits and drawbacks of cultural studies that will inevitably arise in an EFL English literature course. However, unlike the previous duality of language development and language barriers, this is not a question of whether an English literature class in an EFL context will focus on culture or not. Culture is so embedded into literature that its inclusion cannot be avoided. The issue at hand is rather how to best deal with cultural differences, and what advice the research has on text selection and teaching techniques that can be used to deal with possible cultural disconnect.

Reports of educators successfully integrating culture into EFL literature classes are plentiful and wide-ranging. (Floris, 2005) (Ilyas & Afzal, 2021) (Divsar & Tahriri, 2009) A cursory sample of research on the topic seems to indicate that integrating culture education into an EFL literature curriculum is on the whole a good idea. While this is reassuring, it is not exactly a surprise. Literature and culture are inexorably intertwined, so they form a natural pair. Research of this nature also has a selection bias towards implementation and success, i.e., researchers are not likely to write about what they ultimately decided not to attempt and are only somewhat less likely to write about something they attempted to do but failed. It is not perhaps surprising then to find a plethora of successful stories such as the ones listed above. In this situation it is more productive to focus on reports that contain the strategies that were necessary for these successes to come about.

Unsurprisingly, one common way to avoid cultural disconnect is to avoid straying too far from the culture students are most familiar with: their own. In listing a series of four general aims for his ESL literature class, Povey questions to what the extent mono-cultural aspects of the text - aspects that belong solely to the target culture - should be emphasized over multi-cultural aspects. Multi-cultural aspects will be more easily understood, but aspects exclusive to the culture of the author or characters may offer a better opportunity to expand students' cultural knowledge. In choosing which texts to teach, Povey ultimately decides that it is better to err on the side of works that have the "clearest analogies with the students' first-language culture." (1967) This is a logical choice and suggests that teachers would do well to assign literature that has at least some aspects that are analogous to those in their students' culture.

A common problem with many English literature programs is the excessive number of texts written by white male authors from western countries. This is an unfortunate result of the centuries of privilege bestowed on white males in English speaking countries where they generally enjoyed higher levels of education and more leisure time. For this reason, English literature, especially early English literature, is almost exclusively populated by texts written by white men from privileged classes. This in turn creates a dilemma for EFL teachers that wish to use English literature to study culture. On one hand, an over-abundance of texts from a narrow band of perspectives prevents them from teaching a more comprehensive cultural survey. In support of multicultural inclusion, McKay argues that because English is now considered an international language, EFL literature classes should "establish a sphere of interculturality." (2000) Yet on the other hand, if literature written by old white men is

taken off the table or severely restricted, the smaller number of multicultural texts makes finding level-appropriate material more difficult. Not only is there a larger selection of material from white male authors available, but cultures from countries such as that of America and England are more likely to resonate with EFL students, as a great deal of modern entertainment media has its origins in these countries. Having already absorbed some of western culture through mass media, cultural aspects from these countries will perhaps be easier for students to grasp. The goal of exposing students to heretofore unknown cultures is laudable, and while literature from various cultures should be represented in literature courses, in an EFL context it doesn't seem prudent to sacrifice student understanding simply to achieve a sense of multiculturalism. McKay acknowledges the difficulty in preparing students for cultures that differ with their own experiences, stressing the need to "help gain an understanding of...how their cultural assumptions differ." (2001) This implies that the teacher needs more than a passing interest in the culture in question, and if possible, needs to be well-versed in the target culture. This being the case, it might be prudent for the teacher to choose books primarily from his/her own cultural comfort zone, even if this may somewhat skew the curriculum toward books from a certain country, region, or time period. The question of whether to stick to literature from more-familiar cultures or to branch out and give students a more well-rounded selection of texts is not one that can be answered easily. It seems vital though that student comprehension be given priority, and cultural familiarity is one way to ease cultural disconnect.

Student familiarity with the target culture is not only beneficial for understanding aspects of that culture. That familiarity can also help their comprehension of the text as a whole. According to research performed on 46 Iranian university-level ESL students, cultural disconnect can be more detrimental to understanding than linguistic complexity of the text. In other words, lack of cultural knowledge can be more counterproductive to comprehension than lack of linguistic knowledge. Johnson performed a detailed study of these two aspects and found that "the cultural origin of the story had more effect on the comprehension of the ESL students than the level of syntactic and semantic complexity." (1981) This being the case, the cultural aspects of text selection are of the utmost importance. The prudent course of action seems to be to choose texts from cultures that students have some understanding of, perhaps from cultures that they have experience with or interest in, and cultures that are well-understood by the teacher.

One of, if not the main benefit to introducing literature into an EFL student's curriculum is the opportunity to introduce aspects of different cultures. However, exposing students to literature from an unknown culture comes with an inherent risk of

confusion and difficulty understanding the text to be studied. This risk can be mitigated using much the same methods as discussed before in the previous section: careful text selection and judicious activity planning. Promotion of multiculturalism and equal exposure for cultures that are frequently underrepresented are laudable goals, but of greater importance is intelligibility. In cases where students can more readily grasp the cultural elements of texts written or based in western countries, use of those should be preferred to a more balanced but more difficult selection of texts.

#### **4. Soft skills vs assessment difficulties**

Literature is more than just reading and understanding the words on the page. Literature is about people and the situations they find themselves in, and as mentioned above these descriptions can give students valuable awareness of other cultures. The way characters react to the situations they find themselves in can be educational in other ways as well. Oster, in her fascinating article about her experience teaching literature in an EFL context said it quite eloquently:

*...stories told from a single, limited point of view or through the eyes of one character make excellent vehicles for demonstrating the extent to which limited knowledge or an emotional stake in the events colors a character's vision. As students respond to stories and analyze their impressions, they see how their information was filtered through a point of view and limited by it; furthermore, they begin to see how their own experiences, cultures, or values affect their views. (1989)*

There is perhaps no educational tool better suited to engaging students in critical thinking and emotional intelligence than literature. The rich interaction between reader and text gives the study of literature the ability to unlock student awareness of these skills. By questioning the motives of decisions made by literary characters, students can learn about their own motivations. By decoding the symbolism suggested by the author, students can start to see the hidden symbols that pervade our daily lives. By laughing at and crying with the humorous foibles and tragic flaws of literary characters, readers can gain the emotional intelligence to deal with similar situations in their own lives. In these ways and others, students can learn analytical skills, critical thinking, and empathy by utilizing literature in EFL classes.

Unlike language skill use and acquisition of language items, soft skills such as critical thinking and emotional intelligence are challenging to directly address and can be even more challenging to include in assessment criteria. In order to better understand how

literature can be used to sharpen these skills, and to explore ways in which these skills can be reliably measured, two studies will be subjected to detailed review.

#### 4.1 Tung & Chang

The first of the two studies was carried out at the College of Humanities and Sciences in Feng Chia University. In 2009, researchers Chi-An Tung and Shu-Ying Chang investigated the effectiveness of literature reading on critical thinking skills. Participants in the study were lower-level, non-English majors. At the beginning of the semester, prior to each class discussion, participants were required to prove they finished their reading using short, simple quizzes. Students then took part in Socratic-style class discussions led by the instructor. Students who distinctly showed critical thinking in these discussions were given stickers which could be traded for points later. Once the participants had become more comfortable with thinking critically about the readings, the class activities shifted to presentations where groups of students would take turns preparing, practicing, and presenting their ideas to the class. Finally, participants were required to individually write three structured essays on the literature studied during the class. After receiving teacher feedback, students were given the chance to rewrite their essays. Results supported the idea that “literature reading did help the weak thinkers improve their overall critical thinking.” Critical thinking skills were assessed using the California Critical Thinking Skills Tests. This test was used solely as a research tool and not in the formulation of student grades. Other findings of note include a lack of correlation between English proficiency and critical thinking skills, a lack of correlation between students who are interested in critical thinking and those who are proficient in it, and wide agreement between the participants that in-class discussions helped them think more deeply. It is clear that this literature-based course helped students improve their critical thinking skills.

Students in Tung and Chang’s class were assessed in various ways. Comprehension of the assigned literature was confirmed by pop quizzes. Bonus points were awarded to students who displayed critical thinking skills in class discussions. Students were judged by their performances in both group presentations and individual essays. This multi-faceted approach to assessment in an EFL literature course seems both comprehensive and prudent. Also, the different styles of assessment give students indications about what kind of knowledge or skills are being assessed. The pop quizzes are comprised of knowledge-based questions and provide the students with motivation to carefully read the texts to be discussed. Class and group discussions are assessed by the depth of thought that went into reading and analyzing the texts. Individual essays allow the evaluation of both the quality of critical thinking and the ability to cogently

communicate these ideas.

The gradation of activities in Tung and Chang's class is also a good model to follow. Starting with teacher-led whole-class discussions, graduating to group activities, and finishing with individually completed essays gives students plenty of scaffolding and peer-support to lean on as they make their way through the course. One other aspect, which unfortunately is only cursorily described in the research, is student use of "learning logs." In so far as the research describes, these are notebooks that each student keeps individually, making notes about characters and themes in the text being studied. However, they also seem to be bi-directional in nature, as at the end of each log entry is a section for students to write their own questions. This kind of ungraded, or perhaps participation-based assignment would dovetail nicely with earlier class- and group-based activities as it would give students the chance to voice individual opinions and questions without worries of qualitative assessment.

Though Tung and Chang's article is primarily proof that literature can be an effective vehicle for promoting critical thinking, it also serves as a rich and varied source of assessments and activities.

#### 4.2 Dishari & AlAfnan

The second study was carried out 2023 at the American University of the Middle East. The authors, Samira Dishari and Mohammad Awad AlAfnan used literary short stories to introduce participants to emotional intelligence skills. The participants were grade 11 and 12 boys and girls from private schools in Lebanon. After being introduced to the concept of emotional intelligence, students read short stories and analyzed the emotional attributes of the characters in these stories. Among topics that these stories introduced were fear, bullying, and misjudgments. Students would study these stories on three levels: reading and understanding the content of the text, understanding of the concepts suggested by the content, and analyzing any emotional value these concepts and contents have. Active and passive learning methods were utilized including discussion in groups and viewing short videos. After reading the target texts, students were asked to give the literary characters advice on how to behave using more emotional intelligence. While the course as a whole was assessed using assignments, debates, and oral presentations, the activities that revolved around emotional intelligence were ungraded. The Shutte Social Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) was given to participants as well as to a control group before and after the experiment, and the results showed a significant positive change in participants' emotional intelligence. There was no discernible difference, however, in the overall academic performance of both groups. This lack of

academic progress doesn't change the fact that a transition from the factual, to the conceptual, and culminating in the emotional, is a logical progression that certainly would help students better understand the content and its deeper ramifications.

While detailed descriptions of classroom activities weren't as forthcoming in this research as they were in Tung & Chang, giving advice to the literary characters being studied is an approach that would be appropriate to both emotional intelligence and critical thinking studies. Also, the very straightforward approach of not assessing the parts of the class that deal with emotional intelligence is worth considering. Soft skills such as critical thinking and emotional intelligence are so individualized and personal that the mere existence of standardized tests to measure these skills, such as the ones used by these two studies, was quite surprising.

While questions of assessment remain, the research of Dishari & Alafnan paired with that of Tung & Chang suggest that a literature based EFL class would be a good vehicle for the development of both critical thinking and emotional intelligence.

## 5. Conclusions

Using the research in this article, I have successfully developed a framework for a proposed EFL literature class. I will choose authentic books which are in most cases inappropriately difficult for language study. Because of this, the goal of language acquisition will be subordinate to literature analysis. Therefore, the primary goal of the class is to guide students using literature to access and contemplate other cultures. Books that expose different cultures must be chosen, but I must take care not to overextend the reach of the students' cultural awareness. Secondary to culture studies is the application of students' critical thinking skills and emotional intelligence. I will gradually shift assignments and assessments from book contents to literary concepts, and from teacher-led discussions to individual assignments.

It was quite a disappointment to realize that language acquisition must necessarily take a back seat to literature analysis. As the vast majority of my teaching career has been as an EFL teacher, my main goal has always been to improve student language ability. However, the gap between most EFL student English abilities and texts that are complex enough to be analyzed is wide enough to make a decision between these two goals inevitable, and in a literature class it is only logical to choose literary analysis. Rest assured that English language learning will happen. Students will need scaffolding to be able to approach the language found in these books, and some of that scaffolding will be based on vocabulary and grammatical items. I imagine that this pre-reading work

will also be assessed. However, it will be clear to both the students and to myself that the language learning done in this class will be in service to the primary goal of understanding and analyzing the texts for literary and cultural insights. This being said, scaffolding and preparation can only help students so much. The books studied in this class must be chosen carefully according to the level of the English the students can understand.

The cultural exploration that authentic literature enables is the most promising area for student development in this class. Authentic literature enables students to transcend time, space, and age, and this is a benefit that far outweighs language acquisition in my opinion. Yet, in selecting texts, I must be aware of their relative cultural position in relation to the students' home culture. Students will already be challenged by the language found in these texts, and to compound that with cultural differences that are too far removed from the students' own cultural experience could result in overwhelming confusion and lost motivation.

Lastly, students can increase their critical thinking skills and emotional intelligence by examining literary characters, the situations they find themselves in, and decisions those characters make. Hopefully none of my students will have to make Sophie's choice or Schindler's list, but there is much to be gained by looking at these unthinkable situations and the logic and emotion that do battle in the minds of the characters that make such impossible decisions.

So, to succeed where my mother failed, I must carefully select the literature to be studied in this class. Books must be accessible in two ways. Firstly, they must be approachable to the students in terms of language and vocabulary used. Secondly, but certainly not secondarily, they must give students an opportunity to discover different cultures without causing cultural disconnect and confusion. They should also provide students the ability to experience and judge the logical and moral choices made by the characters so they can vicariously learn more about the variables used in their own life choices.

Though I have guidelines to follow, as yet I have no actual experience. My first attempts at selecting literature could be too optimistic or too cautious. My first assignments could likewise be ill-advised. It is with this in mind that the following chapters of this research will be dedicated to the books, activities, and assessments I assign throughout the next few years teaching this EFL literature class. It is my hope that these next chapters will both help me grow as a literature teacher and provide a point of entry for any other EFL teachers who find themselves in a similar situation.

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## 要旨

### EFL 英文学科目の作り方

### EFL 英文学科目のための文学調査

ラーソン ジョン

この調査によって、EFL 英文学科目のフレームワークを開発した。使用される本は通常英語学習には適していないので、この科目の目的は英語学習よりも文学の分析が優先される。使用する本を選択するには、言語的に適切なレベルであるの注意しなければならない。学生の文化的意識を超えないように注意も必要だ。文化の研究に次いで、学生は批判的思考力と感情の知性を身につけることができる。評価と課題は、内容の理解から文学的概念の使用へ、そして教師主導のディスカッションから個別の課題へと徐々に発展する予定。