

The essence of English Literature in communicative based ESL classrooms: Reflections on Namibia's state of affairs

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ABSTRACT

This study is a depiction and portrayal of the views of Namibian Grade 11 and 12 teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) on the use of English literature in ESL classrooms. The study also presents the rationale and conceptualisation underlying the significance of the use of English literature in the quest to improve English proficiency levels of students. The study was premised on a Humanistic Communicative Approach which is anchored in the Learner Centered Philosophy; a vanguard of Namibia's epistemology for language learning and teaching. A questionnaire that contained both qualitative and quantitative items was used to gather data. The respondents in general agreed that the study of literature could be used to enhance learner proficiency in the ESL classroom. They agreed that the benefits of literature in an ESL classroom are multidimensional. These benefits include among others; attainment of pragmatic skills, grammar and vocabulary expansion, extensive reading motivation, intercultural awareness, language skills and critical thinking skills.

Keywords: English, Literature, Humanistic, Communicative

1. INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the English language as a language of all formal communication, senior secondary school learners in Namibia are expected to communicate clearly in the English language for a variety of purposes and audiences. However, generally many learners after graduating from high school tend to grapple with academic discourse in tertiary institutions. Some of them tend to have problems accessing content of other courses/disciplines that are offered in English. In Namibian Senior Secondary Schools, the literature component is not compulsory in the ESL curriculum. i.e., although literature is part of the curriculum, not all learners are required to study it. Those who opt for the English Ordinary Level do not study literature as part of their curriculum. Whereas, those who opt for the Higher Level are required to critically analyse literature as a pre-requisite

for passing ESL. This situation therefore, justifies research in order to ascertain the significance of literature in Namibia's ESL classrooms.

The above scenario implies that learners at ordinary level are deprived of the attainment of reading skills, thinking skills, depth in English language, insufficient development in speaking and writing skills. Scholars, linguists and researchers (Shang 2006, Burke & Brumfit 1999, Lazar 1993, Oster 1989, Gajdusek 1988, Collie & Slater 1987 and Raymond n.d., and Nyathi 2001) claim that the study of literature can greatly enhance the above skills.

According to Ministry of Education (2009), in order to assess their communication skills, learners are required to write in a variety of forms, adopting a voice suitable to the intended audience. They should further use the writing process independently to produce a final written version of an essay or a piece of creative writing. Moreover, ideas ought to be organised and linked logically and effectively in written texts such as narratives and essays. Additionally, they must use the sentence patterns and conventions of standard English in their writing with the degree of accuracy necessary for continued success in subject classrooms at the college and/or university level.

In order to investigate the problem above, the study sought to answer the following questions;

What are the views of ESL teachers towards the use of English literature to improve learners' proficiencies in their use of English?

How can ESL teachers use English literature to improve learners' ESL proficiency levels in their ESL learners?

What barriers and/or challenges do ESL teachers encounter when teaching English literature?

This paper is structured as follows; the orientation of the study, problem statement, questions of the study, research methods, population and sampling procedures, data collection procedure and analysis. Finally, the results and recommendations for embracing literature in Namibian schools are presented.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is a hybrid of both the qualitative and quantitative research designs (a mixed method research approach). The study required both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to provide rich responses to the questions of the study. A survey was conducted with the aid of a questionnaire to assess the teachers' views. Bulsara (n.d.) defines mixed methods research as an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core



assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.

Population

The population for this study consisted of all grade 11 and grade 12 ESL teachers in the Khomas Educational Region. These included all ESL teachers from all schools that follow the ESL curriculum as set by the Ministry of Education in Namibia.

Sample

The purposeful sampling procedure was used to select the sample. Ten government schools and one private school that taught ESL on both higher and ordinary levels were selected. According to Best and Kahn (2006, p. 19), "purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select those participants who will provide the richest information, those who are most interesting, and those who manifest the characteristics of most interest to the researcher". It consisted the sample that provided a total number of 28 subjects.

Instrument and instrumentation

Data was collected through a self-designed structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of a combined set of scaled, open ended and "yes or no" questions.

Pilot

After pilot testing and adapting the questionnaire, it was administered to the selected sample. In order to obtain access to ESL teachers, permission was granted by the regional education office of the Khomas region. Thereafter the selected schools were visited and once more permission to access the concerned teachers was obtained from the principals.

Data analysis

The scaled and "yes or no" data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Open ended questions were interpreted in the most objective way possible and the responses were either presented descriptively or in tables.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

On the question of whether the respondents were trained to teach ESL, 92.86% of the respondents were trained to teach ESL, whereas 7.14% were not. Since the majority of the respondents indicated that they were trained in this area, they were therefore expected to provide valuable information on the questions of the study. When asked about the subject they studied in their ESL teacher training programs, they indicated that they did an Introduction to linguistics, Aspects of syntax, Literature, Sociolinguistics,

Psycholinguistics, Constituents of English, Complex and Basic English patterns, English grammar, Phonetics and Phonology, and Creative writing.

On the question of whether the study of literature they were taught as teacher trainees played a significant role in the improvement of the respondents' English proficiency they generally acknowledged that it enhanced their own academic writing skills. 42.9% of the respondents "strongly agreed" and 39.3% "agreed". In support of this claim they contended that the critical analysis of texts displayed different styles of writing. As a result they were exposed to formal and informal writing. This in turn taught them about connotations and denotations of words, colloquialism; the intention of the writer and the writer's sense of audience. One respondent wrote: *"My command of the English language improved drastically. I learned to appreciate good books and got acquainted with new words, idioms, figurative language and structures of the English language which in turn helped me to write well."*

The respondents that "strongly agreed with the statement, further explained that literature enlarged their expressive abilities therefore encouraging them to write well, as they acquired new vocabulary. They also claimed that their command of the English language improved drastically. They learned to appreciate good books and they became acquainted with words, idioms, figurative morphology and syntax as well as the structure of the English language which in turn helped to improve their academic writing skills. Moreover, other respondents explained that literature improved their vocabulary and grammar usage; it broadened their knowledge and helped them to compare different writing techniques which in turn improved their language skills. This is congruent with Hismanoglu's (2005) arguments that literature provides learners with an extensive range of vocabulary and syntactic items. Learners become accustomed to aspects of the written language, through reading a substantial and contextualised body of text. They learn about the syntax, discourse and functions of sentences, the variety of possible structures and the different ways of connecting ideas which develop and enrich their writing skills.

The respondents further explained that the study of literature made them keen and enthusiastic writers. Moreover, other respondents felt that as the study of English literature involved much research, it sharpened their perception of the world, stimulated their imagination and improved their capacity for logical thinking. In one respondent's words;

"It enabled me to develop skills to draw support/quotations/substantial evidence to support my opinion from texts".

Some said that the use of English literature not only broadened their thinking, but also enhanced their analytical skills required for academic writing. This, they said was enhanced by the fact that they were expected to write academic critiques on various literature texts.

Another important finding was that the majority of the respondents perceived their teacher training as pertinent and had amply equipped them with sufficient skills to be



proficient teachers of ESL literature. Of these, 42.9% “strongly agreed” whilst 35.7% “agreed” that they were better teachers of English literature because of the teacher training they had acquired. However 21.4% of the respondents did not take a stance as they preferred to be “neutral” on this item –‘item’ is not the best word – consider changing it.

The respondents who “strongly agreed” (42.9%) and “agreed” (39.3%) explained that the study of literature, in their teachers’ training, enabled them to analyse and discuss literature with their learners as they were introduced to different literary forms, different genres and common elements in literature. They further said that learning English grammar rules in Basic English Patterns and Aspects of Syntax enabled them to be proficient in both the written and spoken English. This therefore, they claimed helped them to mutually teach both poetry and prose with ease. Other respondents believed that literature was a crucial aspect of their training. They explained that the wide range of these texts prepared them on how to approach and teach literature to ESL learners. They further expounded that English literature enabled them to understand the uniqueness of sociolinguistics attributes that existed in society. It further enhanced their teaching skills and broadened their general understanding of language teaching. Another respondent felt that the knowledge from their teacher training course was complemented by the knowledge they shared with other teachers of ESL.

However, on the other hand, 17.9% of respondents felt differently and opted for the “neutral” response. They claimed that their teacher training did not equip them with enough skills to teach the study of literature to grade 11 and 12 ESL learners. In order to support their claim they argued that the training introduced them to literature, but it was only studied in two modules and consequently their lack of comprehensive skills in teaching it to their learners. Though they were taught how to teach literature, understand and explain it to a certain level, they were not taught how to captivate the interest of learners who seemed to lack interest in it. In addition, they stated that even though they were taught different aspects of the English language, it was very challenging to transfer this knowledge to their learners. Moreover they pronounced that despite the fact that the training equipped them with adequate skills to teach ESL literature, they also learned a lot when they started teaching.

3.1 Views on workshop attendance

On the question of the frequency of their workshop attendance offered by the Ministry of Education, 50% of the respondents indicated that they “sometimes” attended workshops on ESL teaching whilst 25% indicated that they “rarely” attended the workshops. It was also indicated that 10.7% of these teachers had “never” attended a workshop on ESL teaching whilst the other 14.3% “often” attended them. 12% of the respondents “often” attended workshops that dealt with the teaching of the study of literature, 36% of the respondents showed that it was only “sometimes” that these workshops dealt with the study of literature, 44% of these respondents indicated that the workshops “rarely” dealt

with the topic at hand, and 8% of the respondents implied that the workshops they had attended “never” dealt with the study of literature.

The above statistics indicate that there is a great need for more workshops that deal with the teaching of ESL and the study of literature. According to Tas (2009, p. 275) the main objective of in-service education is to inform teachers about change and improve an understanding of education and to help them acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that are beneficial and efficient in the teaching process. This means that with in-service-training, teachers would improve in the approaches they use to teach their students. The ESL teachers should then use this platform to discuss their challenges and problems in teaching among others and ultimately find solutions to these problems.

3.2 Views regarding the type of literature that is taught to grade 11 and 12 learners in Namibia

The respondents indicated that the kind of literature they taught their students was in three categories; prose, poetry and drama. On whether the study of literature that the grade 11 and 12 learners were exposed to had an impact on their language skills, 35.71% of the respondents “strongly agreed”. 32.14% confirmed that they “agreed” with the statement. Nevertheless 32.14% opted for “neutral” on this question.

Some believed that the study of literature taught the learners good sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, spellings, enhanced their vocabulary and broadened their general knowledge. One respondent felt that the novels that the learners studied improved their communication skills thus improving their academic writing skills as well. This is supported by Clandfield (2006) who argues that the study of literature encourages learners to interact with the literary texts they read. As they interact, they are taught how to infer meanings of vocabulary from the context in which they are used. Clandfield (2006) further argues that literature expands language awareness. This means that when learners are asked to examine sophisticated or non-standard examples of language which occur in literary texts, they easily recognize them and become more aware of the norms of language use.

The respondents who opted for the “neutral” choice felt that the study of literature did not enhance the academic writing skills of the learners; rather the study of literature encouraged learners to become critical thinkers. There is an element of contradiction in this statement as it is generally believed that critical thinking fosters critical writing. Another respondent claimed that the study of literature that the Namibian learners are exposed to is too difficult but their poetry motivated them (the learners) to be creative creators of their own poetry. The latter is underpinned by Hismanoglu (2005, p. 60) who contends that poetry can pave the way for the learning and teaching of rudimentary language skills. This author further maintains that it is a metaphor that is the most outstanding link between learning and poetry. This is because most poetry consciously and unconsciously makes use of metaphors as one of its prime methods poetry offers a significant learning process.



The respondents who opted to disagree with the statement given argued that academic writing can only be inculcated through lessons based on academic writing. Compatible with this argument is the explanation provided by the respondent who felt that since the study of literature is written in different styles, it is not a source that can be used to improve learners' academic writing skills. In agreement with the above respondents, another respondent felt that the aim of teaching the study of literature to learners is not to improve their academic writing skills but rather to test their comprehension of a literary text. This respondent wrote "learners are taught to write shorter pieces that are informal not academically structured."

One can argue further that Namibia has also seen the emergence of local writers whose books can be used in Namibian schools. There are also other classical literary texts that have surfaced internationally. "King Lear" for example was written in 1606. Most learners are not familiar with the language of that time thus hampering the understanding and enjoyment of this literary work. "Things Fall Apart" was written in 1958, and though the language used is challenging, Namibian learners should be able to understand and analyse it as the culture in this novel emanates from the African continent.

One of the respondents also pronounced that the literature that Namibian learners are exposed to does not have an impact on their academic writing skills since the assessment of the literature paper does not penalise the learners for incorrect grammar or spellings. However contrary to this response NIED (2009, p. 15) in the higher level syllabus stipulates among its assessment objectives (7, 8, 9) of the literature paper that learners should be able to;

Communicate effectively, appropriately and clearly in both spoken and written language, using a range of vocabulary;

Show a sense of audience and an awareness of style suited to the language level;

Demonstrate an awareness of the conventions of grammatical structures, paragraphing, spelling and punctuations.

The above three objectives illustrate that when the teachers of ESL assess the literature paper, they must also assess the grammar elements as well. Therefore it is paramount for all the grade 11 and 12 ESL teachers to familiarise themselves with the syllabus and the curriculum at large. Another alternative is that the line Head of Departments should induct the teachers and ascertain that they act as mentors to the new teachers so that they know and understand the broad ESL curriculum.

3.3 Views on whether the study of literature should be mandatory for grade 11 and 12 learners

Of the entire respondents, 39.3% of them "strongly agreed" that both ordinary and higher level ESL learners should study literature, 28.6% simply "agreed", 21.4% remained "neutral" and 10.7% of these respondents "strongly disagreed" with the statement.

The respondents who “strongly agreed” and “agreed” (60.7%) explained that since the study of literature exposes learners to different cultures, all the learners in Namibian schools needed to study it. They further explained that literature would also enhance the writing skills, vocabulary, spelling and figurative language of all the learners. Congruent with the above assertions Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010, p. 3) contend that the study of literature provides meaningful contexts, involves a profound range of vocabulary, appeals to the imagination and enhances creativity and it encourages critical thinking. Furthermore they argued that the stratification in the Namibian education system should not be encouraged as all the learners should be given the same educational opportunities.

Another respondent argued that some of these students are bound to become teachers of the English language therefore they should be exposed to literature as they will have to teach it when they become teachers. They argued that literature also improves language proficiency, encourages critical thinking, thus all learners should be taught to understand and appreciate literature. Another respondent contended that due to a limited number of teachers in schools, it is almost impossible to teach higher level learners apart from the ordinary level ones.

The respondents who opted for the “neutral” option maintained that learners have varied capabilities, and the ordinary level learners would find it difficult to analyse literary texts. Moreover some learners are simply not interested in the study of literature. The respondents who “strongly disagreed” with the statement explained that it should not be made mandatory since they only study it in depth in grade 12; and those that opted for the higher level struggled with understanding it. Another respondent pointed out that some learners could hardly read in the English language therefore the study of literature can only complicate their studies. However, as explained in section 1 under the subheading “orientation of the study”; the fact that the English language is not the mother tongue of many Namibians warrants teaching and learning strategies that would enable Namibian learners to efficiently and effectively acquire a good command of spoken and written English. Therefore, a good foundation of learning English should be laid from primary school.

In the same vein, Cummins (2003) draws attention to the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). According to Cummins (2003), BICS are acquired to a functional level within two years of initial exposure to a second language, whereas at least five years is usually required for learners to acquire CALP (See section1, Orientation of the study). This therefore implies that by the time Namibian learners are in grade 11 they should be proficient enough in academic aspects of the second language (reading, writing, speaking and listening).

3.4 Views on whether the respondents had problems in teaching literature

In response to the question whether the respondents had problems in teaching literature to their grade 11 and 12 learners, the majority of them, 35.71% strongly disagreed and



another 35.71% opted for neutral. 17.86% disagreed and 10.71% agreed that they had problems in teaching the literature to their students.

Those that “strongly disagreed” and “disagreed” with the statement explained that they were well qualified and had enough experience in teaching literature to their learners. Some of them claimed that they did not have problems and they enjoyed teaching literature to their learners since the teaching of literature was the most effective way of teaching language. The latter is congruent with the explanation by Padmini (2009, p. 43) who posits that the setback with some teachers is that they fail to discuss prescribed literary texts at different levels. They just read and interpret the texts. Padmini (2009) furthermore argues that this is a wrong method. Instead of reading what is said, or what happens to whom, for what reasons, where and when, literature should be used as a resource for teaching language. (p. 43)

Literature should be used to engage learners in activities that will lead in the first place, to the development of language.

On the other hand the respondents that chose the “Neutral” option argued that in most cases the learners lacked interest in studying literature because the books prescribed used very difficult vocabulary; therefore it was difficult for these teachers to motivate them to be interested in these literary texts. As a result of this problem, they usually found it difficult to analyse the texts as they were required to. Obviously a teacher would not want to use a text that is completely beyond the learners’ intellectual capacities. This would ultimately be frustrating for everyone involved. However, the immediate difficulty with vocabulary in a text might not be an obstacle to its comprehension. Learners can be trained to infer the meaning of difficult words from context. The selection of a text must be given careful thought, but also the treatment of the text by the teacher (this means that one has to think about the tasks set for the reading of a piece of literature, not just the text).

Some respondents felt that they lacked experience in teaching literature, thus making it difficult for them to help the students as they should. One respondent felt that a lack of guidelines for teachers on how to teach literature was a stumbling block to the effective teaching of this component of language learning and development. In response to the above claims; there is a greater need for teachers to have a mentor (perhaps in the form of a senior teacher, or advisory resource person from NIED) who should guide and provide them with advice on how to go about teaching literary texts. Subject advisors are experts on different subjects in schools; they can also visit different schools and classes and provide the much needed advice, especially to the inexperienced teachers. This could alleviate some teaching problems that some teachers encounter. The two respondents that selected the “Agree” option explained that it was difficult to teach literature when there is a lack of additional resources and set books (see table 10).

Opinions regarding the stage at which learners should start studying literature

Those (35.7%) that indicated “grade 1” argued that there was a need to develop the reading culture in Namibia; therefore, they observed that there was no better place to start than the beginning of primary school. They further explained that this would eliminate problems associated with spelling, sentence structure and reading when the learners got to secondary schools.

The ones that indicated grade 5 explained that it was a better option because by then the learners would be able to read and understand texts. The familiarization of literature to learners at this stage would acquaint learners with the challenges that it comes with, thus eliminating the problems that the grade 11 and 12 learners encounter. They further argued that the study of literature facilitated proficiency development in both written and spoken English. This, they said, would enable the learners to be interested in reading.

The respondents that chose “grade 8” felt that since the study of literature was complicated it would be better to start it in this grade. This would enable them to acquire more language skills by the time they are in the senior secondary level. Finally the respondent who opted for the “grade 11” option felt that this is the most appropriate grade as the two years before tertiary education are crucial.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature reviewed for this study indicates that the study of literature can play a significant role in promoting ESL learners’ academic writing skills. This was also supported by the findings where a significant number of the respondents agreed that the study of literature had a role to play in language acquisition. In this regard, 35.71% of the respondents strongly agreed that the study of literature that the grade 11 and 12 learners in Namibia are exposed to has an influence on their academic writing skills. This was followed by 32.14% of the respondents who confirmed and concurred with the statement. Nevertheless, 32.14% decided to be neutral on this statement, however their explanations to this question indicated that in one way or another they did agree that the study of literature has some impact on learners’ academic writing.

While the Ministry of Education is constantly revising school curricular and policies to equip learners with skills that would enable them to effectively and efficiently participate in a knowledge-based economy, several setbacks seem to hamper the achievement of this goal. Recently there has been a national outcry on the competency of Namibian teachers in the English language. This therefore calls for the interrogation of several aspects that pertain to the delivery of subject matter in Namibian schools, in this case, the teaching of English as Second Language.

Teachers need to be trained to be proficient in both written and spoken English, otherwise Namibian learners will graduate from high school with language deficiencies. Since independence in 1990, the English language has been the medium of instruction in Namibia's government classrooms, but the majority of teachers whose call is to teach



English language seem to be failing in English competency tests, therefore there is an urgent need for change, especially in the training of those teachers whose responsibility is to teach ESL. The Namibian government's commitment to the English language as the main language of education has been undermined by revelations that 98% of the southern African country's teachers are not sufficiently proficient in the language. This was illustrated by disclosing the results of government English proficient tests carried out in 2011 that revealed that all but 2% of teachers needed to undertake supplementary in-service-training in the English language.

According to Hamdoun and Hussain (n.d.) learners in schools need to be taught English in such a way that they will understand scientific and technical vocabulary for specific purposes. The two authors claim that the standard of English has declined due to the teaching methods employed in different schools. Therefore, teachers should develop learners' abilities to make them capable of using the language for a variety of communicative purposes. They moreover claim that the study of literature plays a significant role in developing language learning abilities by training learners to infer meaning through different language clues. This in turn, they contend, enforces stimulating and enjoyable linguistic communication. "Literary discourse offers perspectives, which inspire learners to use the language in a sensible and effective way. Language is power and power cannot be asserted and impressed if it is not effectual" (Hamdoun & Hussain, n.d.).

The results of this paper also provide a consensus on the mandatory need to use literature in grade 11 and 12 in Namibia's ESL classrooms. However appropriate methods and approaches should be employed in order to get the most out of the literary texts used in senior secondary schools. It is therefore the role and responsibility of all stakeholders, for example material developers, syllabus designers, trainers of teachers and the teachers themselves to determine the study material to be used and how to use them in order for the learners to effectively benefit from these materials. Learners' activities and assignments should be tailor made in such a way that they (learners) ultimately become proficient in both written and spoken English. This would in due course enhance learning and teaching experiences by analysing the distinctive characteristics of the classrooms and education system in which they would be used.

The literature review of this study and the ESL teachers who completed the questionnaire agree that the study of literature has a number of advantages when used appropriately in the ESL classroom. The rationale for introducing all grades 11 and 12 ESL learners to the study of literature is that studying literature would contribute to the learners' intellectual development; it also would increase the levels of interest in linguistic acquisition thus in turn enhance learners' degrees of linguistic competence. In the main, the constant exposure to reading texts would provide Namibian grade 11 and 12 learners with the necessary awareness skills about language in use and as a result of this, the attainment of efficient academic writing skills would be promoted. This study therefore proposes that there is a strong case for exposing all grade 11 and 12 ESL learners in the mandatory study of literature. As stated above, the benefits of the study of literature in an ESL classroom are multidimensional as expressed below:

4.1 Vocabulary expansion

Reading and writing are interdependent; it is generally believed that good readers tend to be good writers as well. When learners read different texts that are written in the English language they in turn acquire the meanings of different words they come across as they read. This acquisition can be done either individually or through class discussions. The ESL teachers should encourage their learners to tease out the meanings of different words in the context they are used. Consequently, this would create an awareness that words in the English language contain more than one meaning. Therefore as the learners are constantly exposed to different words they would be able to use these words effectively in their own writing.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005) vocabulary is defined as "all the words that a person knows or uses". For that reason, for the purposes of this paper, vocabulary may be defined as the knowledge of words and word meanings in a specific context. Studies seem to point out that vocabulary knowledge is highly linked with reading comprehension; the reason for this is that in order to grasp the meaning of any text learners need to be in the know about a wide range of words. They also need to develop techniques to understand the meaning of words from their context, and later adding them into their vocabulary. These techniques could be obtained through the study of different literature texts. In agreement with the above assertions, Shoebottom (2012) explains that educational researchers have found a strong correlation between reading and vocabulary knowledge. In other words, students who have a large vocabulary are usually good readers. This is not very surprising, since the best way to acquire a large vocabulary is to read extensively, and if you read extensively you are likely to be or become a good reader, hence an effective academic writer.

According to Khatib, Rezaei and Derakhshan (2011, p. 203) vocabulary knowledge can be expanded through considerable exposure to literary texts which treat both formal and informal language. Reading these literary texts is a good exercise for enlarging the learners' vocabulary domain of knowledge as many of these texts are so replete with many new words which can be beneficial to learners of ESL. In so doing Namibian grade 11 and 12 ESL learners would acquire the vocabulary that may enhance their academic writing experience.

4.2 To develop writing skills

Literature can be used to enhance writing skills of learners. This means that writing has to be a fundamental component of literature instruction. It can be used to teach the writing process for paragraphs, essays and research papers. The topics and themes should be generated from those discussed in class. Literature can also be used as a vehicle to teach and improve higher order thinking skills which learners tend to lack. Critical thinkers tend to be critical readers and eventually critical writers. Studying literature texts could serve as a foundation for critical thinking and writing among ESL learners. Teachers of ESL should approach the reading materials in such a way that they encourage their learners to



reflect on their own lives and learning and language experiences. This would allow learners to question, interpret, connect and explore ideas as many literature texts are prolific with ideas to look at.

Namibian teachers in the study of literature should be made aware that they have a great responsibility of ascertaining that their learners develop Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). According to Khatib et al. (2011, p. 203) in today's global world, critical thinking is the cornerstone of education especially at advanced levels of education because it (critical thinking) prepares learners to survive and not take things for granted and attempt to unravel the hidden meanings of texts. Critical thinking informs critical discourse analysis in ESL learning. Assessment in most subjects is done through writing literature studies which could enhance the writing of the learners as they are exposed to different words and forms of writing.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2006) "to be literate is to read and write in many different ways". Subsequently, effective writing skills are imperative in most if not all academic subjects in Namibian schools and tertiary institutions. It is through writing that learners are graded at the end of each class. Good academic writing skills are the realisation of all the grammar and vocabulary concepts previously learned into a piece of text. ESL learners should be motivated to develop outstanding writing skills because writing is one of the most important parts of the examinations in Namibian schools. These writing skills can be developed through different language activities and the study of different literature books can be used for this purpose.

Furthermore, Shoebottom (2012) states that Educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. In other words, a learner who is a good reader is more likely to do well in school and pass examinations than a learner who is a weak reader. This implies that good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications. As they go through the study of literature, they should be encouraged to determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context in which they are used. In brief, good readers can extract from the writing what is important for their writing tasks. Khatib et al. (2011, p. 203) further agrees with the above assertions by asserting that the study of literature can be set as good ground for writing practice; this can be done by assigning learner tasks that require them to write about a theme they have learned from their readings or they can be asked to complete a poem or short story in a closed form. They can also write the end of a story in their own words or narrate a story from the point of view of another character in a short story, novella or novel. This will not only encourage them to be creative writers but will also help them to use language effectively.

4.3 To gain fluency

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005), fluency is the quality of being able to speak or write a language, especially a foreign language, easily and well. This

ability to speak, read and write smoothly and easily can be acquired through the study of literature. ESL teachers should recognize that cultivating English fluency in their learners is one of their principal responsibilities since their learners grapple to be fluent in this language that is accorded the official language status in Namibia. This study set out to explore the views of grade 11 and 12 ESL teachers on the use of literature on learners' academic writing in the Khomas region. It was concluded that their views are important as they are the implementers of the curriculum. Their views were also highly regarded so as to determine the problems they encounter when teaching the study of literature. From the literature review, analysis of the results and discussion of the findings, several conclusions were made and presented.

Proponents of the study of literature in ESL classrooms (Shang 2006, Burke & Brumfit 1999, Lazar 1993, Oster 1989, Gajdusek 1988, Collie & Slater 1987 and Raymond n.d.) emphasise on the significance of the study of literature in an ESL classroom. Among other benefits of language acquisition they also claim that the study of literature can be employed as a resource to teach ESL learners effective academic writing skills. There are several motivations in support of the study of literature in an ESL classroom. Hamdoun and Hussain (n.d.) argue that literature provides subject matter that has the power to motivate learners and help them in exploring the possibilities of usages and meaning that enhances their language competence in a significant manner. Since the material that is authentic should be selected for the learners, these literary texts should be used to explore the resources of language to its maximum capacity. The wide range of language structures that is offered through the study of literature should be used in such a way that it enhances the learners' understanding of the range of language usage. This understanding could be seen to have a direct impact on the learners' ability to learn and use language not for mechanical responses but for the expression and responses of those thoughts and ideas which would be stifled in the brain in the absence of rich language resources, therefore regarded in this matter, the study of literature can become a vehicle for language learning and proficiency.

According to Clandfield (2000-2011) there are different models that can be employed to teach literature in a language classroom, these are cultural model, language model and personal growth model. For the purpose of this research study only the language model be explained. According to Clandfield (2000-2011) the language model aims to be more learner-centered. As learners proceed through a text, they pay attention to the way language is used. In other words, they come to grips with the meaning of different words and phrases and increase their general awareness of the English language. Within this model of studying literature, the teacher can choose to focus on general grammar and vocabulary or use stylistic analysis. This involves the close study of the linguistic features of the text to enable learners to make meaningful interpretations of the text. It aims to help learners read and study literature more efficiently and effectively.

Khatib et al. (2011) further echoes that for speaking purposes, themes and incidences in literary texts can be dealt with in such a manner that they are associated with learners' own life experiences. Such practices would encourage the ESL learners to debate and discuss these experiences thus gaining confidence in the spoken form of the language.



They might also gain new vocabulary from their peers as they learn the English language. Having the learners freely reflect on the events and encouraging them to critically comment is also facilitative for advancing speaking proficiency.

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