

Introducing Literature to an EFL Classroom: Teacher's Presentations and Students' Perceptions

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Abstract—This study documents a teacher-researcher's presentations of 24 literary works to a class of 28 Taiwanese EFL senior high school students during a fourteen-week experiment, and reports on those students' perceptions of the texts introduced and their attitudes towards literature in general. In preparing literary texts, the teacher explored the notion of computer assisted literature teaching (CALT), capitalizing on the Internet resources to prepare plot summaries of novels and plays. Some supplementary media materials were also used in the literature presentations. Results of participants' responses to a 50-item questionnaire showed that most of the students like the presented novels most, followed by plays, short stories, and then poems. Furthermore, about half of the students like to read literary works and also like to be introduced to literature. Specifically, students like to read contemporary literature rather than classic literature, and such works as movie novels, realistic fiction, fantasies, and mysteries are their favorites. In the end, the author argues that there is low literature threshold, if any, for teachers to cross before they can introduce literature to their EFL students.

Index Terms—literature teaching, EFL students' perceptions of literature

I. INTRODUCTION

It cannot be denied that in universities the language-literature divide in modern foreign language departments is well-known and longstanding (Tucker, 2006); nevertheless, the separation of language from literature in practice involves no rigid dichotomy because 'no teacher of literature ignores linguistic problems and no language teacher really wants to leave his students speaking a sterile impoverished version of the language' (Smith, 1972, p. 275). Thus, quite a few researchers have tried to bridge this language-literature gap, and 'literature teaching' in either L1 or L2 language classrooms has received considerable attention over the past few decades. There have been numerous books (e.g. Brumfit and Carter, 1986; Hall, 2005; Lazar, 1993; Probst, 2004) and articles or opinion papers (e.g. İçöz, 1992; Ghosn, 2002; Mckay, 1982; Sivasubramaniam, 2006; Spack, 1985) justifying the reasons of using literature in language classrooms. Researchers have argued that literature is valuable authentic and motivating material, which is conducive to students' linguistic development, personal involvement, and cultural enrichment (Carter & Long, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Mckay, 1982; Parkinson & Thomas, 2004).

To maximize the benefits of literature teaching in language classrooms, selection of literary text is a crucial issue (Mckay, 1982). Criteria for literature selection generally involve two aspects: students and the text itself. Regarding the students, the literary text selected should cater for the students' tastes, interests and hobbies, and should take into consideration their linguistic proficiency, cultural background, and literary background (e.g. Brumfit, 1981; Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993; Marckwardt, 1981). Regarding the literary text per se, the considerations include length, themes, genres, classic status, availability of the printed text, etc. (e.g. Brumfit, 1981; Carter & Long, 1991; Mckay, 1982).

Given the above criteria, selection of literary texts should partly depend on the target students' needs and preferences. However, in many 'literature teaching in language classrooms', students' attitudes toward literature are often neglected or not given due attention. Instead, the literary texts selected are usually determined by curriculum authorities, materials writers, or classroom practitioners. But these professionals' preferences of literature might not be similar to students', and their assumptions of which literary text will be motivating and appropriate for students might not always be correct. Since students are the main beneficiary of literature teaching, and investigations or surveys of students' attitudes toward literature are also less conducted in research (Davis, Gorell, Kline & Hsieh, 1992), it is worthwhile to investigate students' attitudes toward literature and their preferences over different literary genres.

In EFL contexts, although the overall picture of students' perceptions of different literary genres is less explored, there is some empirical research reporting students' favorable attitudes toward a specific genre used in their language classes, for example, poems (Chang, 2007), short stories of children's literature (Chen, 2006), and simplified novels of young adult literature (Yen, 2005). Nevertheless, the main purpose of these studies was to examine the effects of that particular literary genre on EFL students' development of language skills. Therefore, students' positive attitude toward the literary texts taught might be interpreted as their acknowledgement of literary texts as useful instructional materials, but probably not as their true appreciation of literature for literature's own sake.

Actually, literature is seldom taught for its own right in EFL classrooms. Literature teaching always has a bearing

either on analyzing the linguistic element of the literary text or on examining the linguistic benefit that literature teaching claims to provide for students. But, 'literature is always more than language' (Brumfit & Carter, 1986, p. 41), and I agree with Brumfit and Carter (1986) that a pure literature syllabus should not be confused with syllabuses for the teaching of language or of culture. I assume that as long as EFL students get immersed in their preferred literature which is taught for literature per se, without other appending purposes, the potential linguistic, personal, and cultural benefits of literature teaching are then likely to ensue. Whether my assumption is correct or not needs further investigation. But at the present juncture, there seems little research in exploring such literature syllabus in EFL context, or in examining EFL students' attitudes toward different literary genres. Consequently, I was motivated to conduct the current study, which was exploratory in nature.

The main purposes of this study were to document a teacher-researcher's (i.e. the author of this article) experiment of implementing a pure literature syllabus in an EFL classroom and to report on the students' perceptions of the literary works presented and their attitudes toward different literary genres. In documenting the exploratory literature syllabus in the EFL classroom, issues concerning 'what' literature to teach and 'how' to teach it were raised and discussed.

II. BACKGROUND

In this section, I will first discuss the rationales of my methodology involved in the literature syllabus, and then review the literature of students' attitudes toward the study of literature.

A. Teacher's Presentations of Literature

As a literature lover and teacher-researcher in an EFL senior high school, I explored the idea of 'literature syllabus' (Brumfit & Carter, 1986) in my classroom, with the hope of imparting the love of literature to students. According to Brumfit and Carter (1986), a literature syllabus has two stages. The first stage is to enable students to 'experience' literature, and the second is to enable them to describe, explain, or account for the experience. My interpretation of their idea is that such a syllabus should include a broad range of literary texts of different genres to involve students in discussing literature based on their own backgrounds and experiences. The assumption of such a literature syllabus determined my criteria of literary text selection and my instructional methods in literature teaching.

Literary text selection and preparation:

In this experiment, a total of 24 literary texts were introduced to students, and they were selected and prepared based on the following criteria. First, the texts should include works of different genres (Brumfit, 1981). In other words, the texts should provide a representative selection, however small, of the literature as a whole (Carter & Long, 1991). Thus, the literary texts taught in my experiment included such genres as poems, short stories, novels, and plays. Second, the texts should include works of familiar, established writers, or works with classic status (Brumfit, 1981; Carter & Long, 1991). It is because such texts have more 'face validity' and are more easily recognized by EFL students as literature. Moreover, since this experiment was to enable students to 'experience' literature, I consider it essential to include some classic literature, especially those which the students may have known the titles but are probably unfamiliar with the contents. In terms of this criterion, several plays of Shakespeare were included in my literature syllabus. Third, the texts should have a connection with students' here and now learning context. It would be motivating for students to study the literature which is currently being discussed in their society, particularly when that literature has been interpreted through other media, such as movies or musicals. Experiencing the 'here-and-now literature' would help students understand that literature is neither useless nor faraway, and that literature is part of our life. Based on this criterion, three literary works (i.e. *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *Turandot*) were included in this experiment because artistic performances of those works were held in Taiwan, the research site, either immediately prior to or during the experiment.

Despite the above three crude criteria, I admit that 'subjectivity' also played a role in my selection of literary texts. Sometimes the reason that one literary work was chosen instead of another was merely out of my own interest and preference. Even so, text selection was still no easy task because there are many interesting literary works to choose from, such as children's literature and young adult literature. Although researchers have argued that, compared with classic literature, children's literature is more suitable for EFL students (Chen, 2006) and that young adult literature is more appropriate for adolescents (Brown & Stephens, 1995; Gallo, 2001; Rönqvist & Sell, 1994; Santoli & Wagner, 2004), these two kinds of literature were still excluded in my literature teaching to the EFL adolescent students. This does not suggest that I am not interested in those literatures or do not recognize their value in EFL classrooms; the sacrifice of those literatures was due to my concern of classic literature over them (as mentioned in my second criterion) and the short time span of the experiment.

There is one more particular feature regarding the literary texts used in this study. Except for the poems and short stories, the novels and plays presented to the students were neither extracts nor complete works, but were synopses or plot summaries drawn from the literature resources on the Internet, that is, the online version of 'slim books' or 'cribs', in Carter and Long's (1990; 1991) words. It might be argued that using plot summaries of literature is not teaching literature at all because they lack authenticity; in addition, plays 'in narrative form' are not plays anymore. Nevertheless, I think of those summaries as legitimate literary texts used in this exploratory study. My considerations are as follows. First, with the purpose of introducing to students as many literary works as possible and my assumption that the spirit of

a novel or a play lies in its storyline, synopses or plot summaries are appropriate teaching materials since complete works are too long in length and the extracts are not informative enough to tell the whole story. Second, although the plays were presented in narrative not in dialogue form, thus lacking ‘face validity’ of a play, the selected plays, even in narratives, were still considered ‘plays’ by the students because they were the famous established classics written by Shakespeare.

In preparing those synopses and plot summaries, I explored the possibility of computer-assisted literature teaching (CALT). Nowadays, technology has made teaching and learning easier and more efficient. Nevertheless, most of the technological applications are concerned with language teaching and learning (e.g. the widespread applications and discussions of computer-assisted language learning), and there have been few technological applications regarding literature teaching and learning. Since there are also countless literature resources online, teachers should be encouraged to use them to make their literature class more interesting. As Carter and Long (1990; 1991) have noticed that ‘cribs’ might be indispensable for students who want to pass literature examinations, the ‘online cribs’ are also valuable resources for teachers who want to prepare literature teaching materials. In addition to using technology to expand interpretations of literature through multimodalities (e.g. Whitin, 2009), I think that ‘materials design’ is an aspect on which more applications of computer-assisted literature teaching can focus.

Instructional methods:

Unlike the language-based approaches to literature teaching suggested in some resources books (e.g. Carter & Long, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1987; Lazar, 1993), presentations of literary works in this experiment, focusing on teaching literature for literature’s own sake, were based on reader-response theory, conducted in the fashion of a teacher-moderated, whole-class discussion, in both English and Chinese, students’ first language.

Reader-response approach to literature has gained a prominent role in the field of literature teaching (Church, 1997), and has been considered a useful method of literature teaching in language classrooms (Elliott, 1990; Hirvela, 1996; Yen, 2005). Originating in the field of literary criticism, reader-response theory acknowledges the reader’s active role in the creation of meaning while reading a text, which is often missing in the traditional text-oriented theories whose focus is on the text itself or on the authorial intention in a text (Hirvela, 1996). The most widely cited and discussed reader-response theory is Rosenblatt’s (1978) ‘transactional theory’, which places a great deal of emphasis on the role of the reader. According to Rosenblatt (1978), the meaning of a text derives from a transaction between the text and reader within a specific context. Meaning creation, thus, does not reside in print alone, but is the results of the reader ‘transacting’ his or her own experiences with the text. Since no two individuals have similar backgrounds, experiences, or prior knowledge, each individual’s interpretation or transaction of a text is unique. Rosenblatt (1978) also distinguishes between two kinds of stances a reader adopts while reading a text, namely, the *efferent* stance and the *aesthetic* stance. While adopting the *efferent* stance, the reader is primarily concerned with what he will carry away as information from the text; while adopting *aesthetic* stance, the reader focuses primarily on the experience lived through during the reading (Probst, 1987). In reading literary texts, it is the *aesthetic* stance that readers are encouraged to adopt. It is because, in *aesthetic* reading, readers attend not only to content but also to the feelings evoked, the associations and memories aroused, and the stream of images that pass through the mind during the act of reading (Probst, 1987).

Based on Rosenblatt’s (1978) transactional theory, a large proportion of the presentation of each literary work in this study involved questions and discussions aiming to elicit students’ personal response to the literary work introduced. Despite the common practice of having students work in small groups when discussing literature, as in literature circles (Daniels, 2002), most of the discussions in this experiment were conducted in a whole-class fashion, moderated by the teacher. It might be assumed that such a teacher-led literature class does not invite students to develop their own responses or sensitivities to literature as a student-centered class does. However, research does not totally agree with this assumption. Scott and Huntington (2007) investigated how novice learners of French, using their L1 (English), interpreted a French poem in small peer groups and in the teacher-moderated discussion session. The results showed that students in small peer groups, primarily engaged in translation talk, language talk, and off-task talk, were unable to interpret the content and cultural implications of the poem. By contrast, students in the teacher-moderated group, engaged mainly in interpretative talk, were encouraged to reflect on the meaning of the poem and were led to a holistic understanding of the poem. These qualitative differences between students’ interpretations in the two settings, according to Scott and Huntington (2007), could be attributable to the guided discussions in students’ L1. Their study thus demonstrates that teacher-moderated whole-class discussion can also be an effective method to help students interpret literary works.

In the current study, literature presentations and discussions were not only moderated by the teacher but were also conducted alternately in English and Chinese, the students’ L1. Use of students’ L1 is considered appropriate in this experiment since the purpose of this study was to introduce students to literature, but not to use literary texts as the means for linguistic study or for communicative language teaching. Furthermore, use of students’ L1 in literature discussions can make interpretations of literary works easier because ‘certain kinds of critical thinking activities are most productive when carried out primarily in the L1’ (Scott & Huntington, 2007, p. 5). In addition, students might be more willing to share their responses to the literary text in their L1 in case that they are not equipped with the necessary target language to talk about their evoked feelings or aroused emotions while transacting with the text.

Besides the regular literature discussion sessions in the experiment, interpretations of literature through other media,

such as music, pictures, or films, were introduced to students occasionally. Literature is often thought to be conveyed through print, and studying and teaching literature means to engage with the printed text. However, 'literature is an art which depends on more than one medium' (Baird, 1976, p. 283). Thus, the full exploitation of literature in every available medium can not only engage one's interest in the literature per se, but can also break the passivity of solely reading the text (Kaes & Offstein, 1972). It is expected that having students experience literature in different modes of delivery may add variety and pleasure to literature classes. Moreover, literature in music, pictures, or films might motivate students to read literature in print. Therefore, with the available literature-related audio books (e.g. CDs and MP3s), picture books, and DVDs, students in this experiment were given opportunities to appreciate some literary works presented in other media.

B. Students' Perceptions of Literature

Compared with the substantial amount of research on students' attitude toward general foreign language study, research on students' attitude toward literature is quite slim. In this less explored area, three survey studies (Akyel & Yalçın, 1990; Davis, Gorell, Kline, & Hsieh, 1992; Hirvela & Boyle, 1988) are worth our attention in that they were the first attempts to examine students' attitudes toward literature.

Davis, Gorell, Kline, and Hsieh (1992) investigated university students' attitudes toward the study of literature in a foreign language as well as the factors affecting their opinions about literature in general. The participants in their study were undergraduates enrolled in introduction to literature courses in departments of French and Spanish. Analyses of the participants' responses to a questionnaire showed that most of them held positive attitudes toward foreign language literature. Moreover, two factors were found to be significantly related to their attitudes toward literature study, namely, the amount of leisure reading done in the foreign language, and the preferred learning styles, such as being given opportunities to express their personal opinions, to look for the underlying meaning of the text, and to read about people and experiences different from their own. In other words, students' attitude toward literature may be influenced not only by their own reading habits but also by the teachers' instructional methods.

While Davis, Gorell, Kline, and Hsieh (1992) were concerned with students of languages other than English, Hirvela and Boyle (1988) and Akyel and Yalçın (1990) were concerned with learners in ESL/EFL settings. Hirvela and Boyle (1988) surveyed ESL working adult learners' attitudes toward literature courses offered in a part-time degree program in a university. The aim of their survey was to find out which literary genres were most favored or feared by the students and which aspects of literature gave the students most trouble. Results of their survey showed that the students enjoyed 'prose fiction' (i.e. novel and short story) most and feared 'poetry' most; in addition, the students found 'interpretation of theme' most difficult when studying literature, followed by some language-related aspects of literature (e.g. vocabulary in non-modern texts). These results are valuable for literature teachers because, with students' preferences and perceived difficulty of literature in mind, teachers can provide students with more suitable literary texts and more crucial or immediate help.

Akyel and Yalçın (1990) investigated EFL senior high school students' reactions to the specific contributions of prose fiction, drama, and poetry, in developing language competence and literary competence. Their survey results showed that the students regarded 'novel' as the most effective literary form in helping them develop their linguistic skills and cultural awareness, and 'drama' as the most effective in helping them improve oral expressions. Moreover, the students considered 'poetry' and 'short stories' not having much effect on their language skills. 'Poetry' in particular was thought to make the least significant contribution to their language skills development. The survey also revealed a link between the students' language proficiency and their attitudes towards literature: Those who rated their English proficiency as high appreciated the literary texts selected; by contrast, those who rated their proficiency as average found the literary texts boring and difficult.

The above three studies, targeting different populations, do shed some light on our knowledge of students' attitudes toward literature. For example, ESL/EFL students, in general, seem to appreciate 'novels' most and 'poetry' least as indicated in Hirvela and Boyle (1988) and Akyel and Yalçın (1990). Nevertheless, there is still a need to investigate EFL learners' perceptions or attitudes toward different literary genres. For one, although Hirvela and Boyle (1988) had investigated students' preferences over different literary genres, their participants were working adult ESL learners, whose literary tastes might not be similar to those of adolescent EFL students in normal educational settings. For another, Akyel and Yalçın (1990), though involving EFL high school students, surveyed their reactions to literature as means of developing their language skills, not as the ends of study per se. It is possible that students have different perceptions of 'literature for pleasure' (i.e. reading literature for its own sake) and 'literature for instrumental use' (e.g. reading literature to sharpen language skills). To accept or deny this possibility, another survey of EFL students' preferences of literature seems to be a reasonable solution.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to document a teacher-researcher's teaching of literature and to explore students' perceptions of the literary works introduced and their attitudes toward different literary genres. Concerning students' perceptions of and attitudes toward literature, two sets of research questions were addressed:

1. What are EFL students' perceptions of the literary works presented in class?

- a. What literary works do they like most and least in the presentations?
- b. What literary genres do they like most and least in the presentations?
- c. Are they motivated to read the literary work in its original text after the work has been introduced through a plot summary?
2. What are EFL students' attitudes toward literature in general?
 - a. What literary genres do they like?
 - b. What specific types of literature do they like to read?

IV. METHOD

A. Participants

The participants in this study were 28 EFL students (23 females and 5 males) in a senior high school in northern Taiwan. They were the third-year students, aged 17 to 18, in an applied English class in that school. This particular class was chosen as the participants due to the following reasons. First, except for the regular English course required by the curriculum, the applied English class had additional courses in English language skills which the other normal classes didn't have; thus, inviting them to participate in this experiment, which was conducted in one additional language course taught by me, would not affect their regular English course learning. Second, students in the applied English class generally had a higher English proficiency than their peers in the other classes, and most of them were planning to major in English or in applied English when attending university. Therefore, they might be interested in being introduced to literature, which is often the required course in the English department in universities.

Before the experiment, the participants had already read some literary texts in their textbooks used in the regular English course. They had studied five adapted short stories, six poems, one novel excerpt, and one short drama in the previous two years. In other words, literary texts were not new to them. But since I was not their English teacher who taught those literary texts to them, I did not know how those texts were presented in class or the students' attitudes toward them. Given that students had encountered some literature in their regular classes, the 24 literary texts in the experiment were carefully selected so that none of them were included in their previous textbooks.

B. Teaching Materials

Twenty-four literary works were chosen and used in this experiment based on the criteria discussed in the above 'literary text selection and preparation' section. The materials included nine poems, seven short stories (including articles), two novels, and six plays. As mentioned before, the poems and short stories were presented in their original entirety, whereas the novels and plays were introduced through synopses or plot summaries drawn from the literature resources on the Internet. The names and the sources of the literary texts used in this study were listed in Appendix A. Each of the literary texts was re-typed and edited to fit on an A4 size of paper. They were then distributed to the students as handouts in every literature presentation.

In addition to the printed texts, some other media of literature-related works were also included in the presentations. Those supplementary materials included recorded readings of two stories (*The Red Mahogany Piano* and *Love Can Last Forever*) on CD, a picture book and opera songs of *Turandot* on CD, and a musical performance of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* on DVD.

C. Teaching Procedure

The experiment lasted for about fourteen weeks in one semester. The literature presentations were made in a two-period course (100 minutes) once a week, and the total 24 literary texts were introduced in the order of poems, short stories, and plays. The literature teaching procedure, in general, was as follows. First, the author and some background information of the literary text were briefly introduced to students. If the author was an important figure, such as Shakespeare, more time was then spent in describing the author's life. Afterwards, the literary text was presented and explained to students in both English and Chinese, and the unknown words in the text were translated to students as well. Finally, some questions, including those concerning the theme of the literary text, were raised for students to discuss, and students were invited to share their opinions or experiences related to the text.

Besides these general instructions, some activities designed for specific literary texts were held to enhance students' understanding of the text. Moreover, students were given chances to appreciate some literary works in other media (e.g. picture illustrations and musical performances) after each of them was introduced and discussed in class. The following two episodes briefly exemplify some of the particular teaching activities held in the experiment.

Episode 1 (Presentation of poems):

In the presentation of some poems, students were first put into groups for warm-up activities. For example, in learning *To See a World in a Grain of Sand*, students were asked to arrange the four jumbled lines of the poem in its correct order. Being introduced to *40 Love*, students were given the content of the poem in one sentence, and were asked to re-shape the sentence into the format of a poem. Moreover, when learning *Money* and *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time*, students were asked to do the blank-filling exercises. It was only after the warm-up activities were finished that the content of the poems were explained to students.

Episode 2 (Presentation of plays):

In discussing Shakespeare's plays, which often involved many characters, a diagram of the relationship among the characters in each play was drawn to help enhance students' understanding of the plot. The diagram was usually drawn by the students and I as a review of the whole play after it had been presented. For example, as *King Lear* had been introduced, we drew a family tree of King Lear, not only figuring out 'who's who' in the play but also putting the names of his three daughters and sons-in-law in correct positions.

Since five out of the six plays introduced were tragedies, at the end of the experiments, students were guided to have a lively discussion of what tragedy was, and such core issues as love, hatred, greed, fate, and death in the plays.

One last word on the literature teaching procedure is that there were no tests or exams on the literary texts introduced. For one, the purpose of this experiment was not to measure students' understanding of the literary works, but to survey their perceptions of those texts. For another, exams might deteriorate students' interest in learning those literary texts or affect their true perceptions of those works. Therefore, there was only a perception questionnaire at the end of this exploratory study. After all, literature testing is not an easy task, and it deserves other further investigations.

D. Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a 50-item questionnaire designed specifically to examine students' perceptions of literature. This student perception questionnaire was a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The design of six points instead of five points on the scale was to leave no neutral option for the students to choose, thus forcing them to either agree or disagree with the statement. The internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale was .92.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts, targeting the two sets of research questions in this study. The first part included 32 items, investigating students' perceptions of the literary works presented in class. The second part, made up of 18 items, explored students' attitudes toward literature in general and their preferences over different literary genres. The questionnaire, along with results of students' responses to it, was shown in Appendix B.

E. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

In the last literature class, when all the 24 literary texts had been presented, the participants were asked to respond to the perception questionnaire to express their attitudes toward the literary works introduced in the experiment and their preferences over different literary genres. As students were answering the questionnaire, they were reminded of each literary work introduced since some of them were presented earlier in the experiment and students might forget about them. Students were also allowed to ask questions if they did not understand the literary genres mentioned in the question statements. It took students about 20 minutes to finish the questionnaire.

The main analysis procedure involved two stages. At first, students' answers to each item in the questionnaire were tallied for frequencies for each option (point) and computed for means and standard deviation. Then, for the convenience of interpretation, results of the six points on the scale were further combined and simplified into two parts – *Disagree* (including points 1, 2, and 3) and *Agree* (including points 4, 5, and 6). In order to answer different research questions, further descriptive analysis was made on the basis of the initial analysis of the results of the questionnaire. All of the data were computed by using the statistical package, SPSS 13.0 for Windows. Results of the questionnaire were presented in Appendix B and were discussed below.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results of Research Question One: *What are EFL students' perceptions of the literary works presented in class?*

Students' perceptions of the 24 literary texts were shown in their responses to items 1 to 26 on the questionnaire, and descriptive statistics of the total frequencies and the grand mean of those items were presented in Table 1. The data showed that about 71% of the participants agreed that they like those 24 literary texts introduced in class, and that only 29% of the participants showed disagreement. Moreover, the grand mean of the 24 items was 4.16, suggesting that the students generally held a positive attitude towards those literary works in the experiment.

TABLE 1.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF QUESTIONS 1 – 26

N	Disagree		Agree		Grand mean	S.D.
	(Frequency)	(%)	(Frequency)	(%)		
24	197	29	475	71	4.16	.59

Note: Questions 19 and 21 were excluded.

What literary works do students like most and least in the presentations?

In order to answer this question, the top ten works that students like most and least were selected based on the following three criteria. First, the literary works were initially chosen from the top ten works that students agreed (or disagreed) most frequently. Second, those selected works were then ranked on the basis of their means since some of them had the same frequency counts. Finally, the means of the works students like most should be higher than 4 on the scale, and those students like least should be lower than 4. The results were listed in Table 2 and Table 3.

TABLE 2.
LITERARY WORKS STUDENTS LIKE MOST IN THE PRESENTATION

(Rank)	Literary works		Agree		Mean
			(Frequency)	(%)	
1	The Hunchback of Notre Dame	(novel)	28	100	5.32
2	The Red Mahogany Piano	(short story)	26	93	4.86
2	The Appointment in Samarra	(short story)	26	93	4.86
4	The Unicorn in the Garden	(short story)	24	86	4.96
5	Turandot	(play)	23	82	4.71
6	40 Love	(poem)	23	82	4.61
7	Hamlet	(play)	23	82	4.25
8	Love Can Last Forever	(short story)	22	79	4.43
9	King Lear	(play)	21	75	4.50
10	Be Your Own Master	(short story)	21	75	4.36

The top ten works that students like most in the literature presentations included five short stories, three plays, one novel, and one poem. In general, the participants liked prose fiction (e.g. short stories and novels) most among the 24 presented texts. Although the other novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, was not on the list, it was ranked 11th, its mean being 4.32. Moreover, those texts which students had chances to experience in other media (e.g. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Turandot*) were generally welcomed by the students, and the literary performances themselves were liked by them very much as shown in items 19 (rated 5.54) and 21 (rated 5.00) on the questionnaire. This demonstrates that literary works presented in other media can help students appreciate the works more. Given the large number of produced literary media materials on the market (e.g. audio books and DVDs), it is recommended to use those media as supplementary materials in the presentation of literature. Yet, it all depends on the teacher as for how and when to use those supplementary materials in his or her literature class. Only one poem, *40 Love*, hit the top ten. This poem stood out because it differed from other poems in its arrangement of words. Students probably like this novelty of poem presentation. Yet, in short, students seemed not to like poems as much as prose fiction.

The top ten literary works that students like least included seven poems, two short stories, and one play. This revealed again that the participants do not like poems as much as they like prose fiction. However, the top two works students like least were short stories, which seemed to contradict with the previous finding that students like prose fiction most. This result demonstrated that students probably do not like all kinds of prose fiction. In other words, they might prefer some kinds over others. Thus, short stories or articles containing educational or disciplinary tones, such as those used in the experiment, were not favored by students.

TABLE 3.
LITERARY WORKS STUDENTS LIKE LEAST IN THE PRESENTATIONS

(Rank)	Literary works		Disagree		Mean
			(Frequency)	(%)	
1	The Art of Success	(short story)	20	71	2.64
2	Self-Education	(short story)	17	61	3.32
3	A Red, Red Rose	(poem)	15	54	3.43
4	Money	(poem)	12	43	3.86
5	Fire and Ice	(poem)	11	39	3.75
6	To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time	(poem)	10	36	3.71
7	How Do I Love Thee	(poem)	10	36	3.89
8	To See a World in a Grain of Sand	(poem)	10	36	3.96
9	Othello	(play)	9	32	3.79
10	A Poison Tree	(poem)	9	32	3.93

What literary genres do students like most and least in the presentations?

The descriptive statistics of students' responses to the four literary genres were shown in Table 4. The data revealed that, among all the 24 texts introduced, most of the students like novels (88%) most, followed by plays (75%), short stories (70%), and finally, poems (64%). This result was generally in accordance with the previous finding that students favored prose fiction over poetry in the experiment. Yet, there was a slight difference between the two results in that the top ten most-like list included five short stories (out of seven) and only three plays (out of six), while the plays as a whole (six in total) were rated slightly higher (4.26) than short stories (4.20) as shown in Table 4. This minor difference could be explained by the fact that there were two short stories being rated as the top two works that students like least (see Table 3). The low mean scores of these two like-least stories thus lowered the grand mean of short stories as a genre. In short, compared with other genres in the presentations, poems were not so favored by most of the students despite the fact that the poems were still liked by more than half of the participants.

TABLE 4.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LITERARY GENRES IN THE PRESENTATIONS

	N	Disagree		Agree		Grand mean	S.D.
		(Frequency)	(%)	(Frequency)	(%)		
Poems	9	90	36	162	64	3.92	.32
Short stories	7	58	30	138	70	4.20	.89
Novels	2	7	13	49	88	4.82	.71
Plays	6	42	25	126	75	4.26	.32

There are two additional notes worthy of our attention. First, the numbers of literary work in each genre were not equal, there being nine poems but only two novels. Thus, the results found here could not be interpreted as students' preferences over certain literary genres in general, which was discussed in the next section, but only as their attitude towards the literary works presented in the experiment. Second, due to the different features of each literary genre and the availability of the supplementary media materials, each literary work was not presented in the similar way except for the general teaching guidelines. The use of supplementary materials might have helped raised students' likeness for certain works, for example, the novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Therefore, it is possible that the instructional methods could affect students' attitude towards certain literary works. But since this variable was not the main focus of this study, it was left unexplored in the experiment.

Are students motivated to read the literary work in its original text after the work has been introduced through a plot summary?

Items 27 to 32 on the questionnaire provided answers to this question, and the descriptive statistics of those items were presented in Table 5. The data showed that about 56% of the students disagreed with the question statements that they would like to read the original literary texts. The grand mean, 3.39, further corroborated this. It could be inferred from the results that the plot summaries of those literary works presented in class (i.e. novels and plays) were not able to motivate students to read the literary works in their original forms. Two possible explanations were as follows. First, novels and plays usually have longer texts, and plays are presented in dialogues, a format students are not familiar with in their reading experiences, so students probably do not think they could read and understand the original texts of novels and plays by themselves. Second, the plays introduced in the experiment were mostly Shakespeare's tragedies. Students might have the preconception that Shakespeare's plays are full of archaic words and are difficult to read and understand. Therefore, being EFL high school students, they might consider it enough to know the storyline of the play through a plot summary, and do not want to venture the original text.

TABLE 5.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF QUESTIONS 27 – 32

N	Disagree		Agree		Grand mean	S.D.
	(Frequency)	(%)	(Frequency)	(%)		
6	94	56	74	44	3.39	.33

Although the use of plot summaries failed to motivate half of the students to read the original literary texts in this experiment, this did not suggest that the technique is ineffective in introducing literature to students. In fact, students like the novels and plays presented via plot summaries as their positive attitude towards those texts showed (see Table 4). It is possible that plot summaries, presenting other suitable texts, could arouse most students' interest in exploring their original, longer texts. Whether this assumption is true deserves further investigation.

B. Results of Research Question Two: *What are EFL students' attitudes toward literature in general?*

This question could be answered via items 33 and 39 on the questionnaire (see Appendix B). About 54% of the participants agreed with the statement that 'I like to read literary works', and 68% of them agreed with the statement that 'I'd like to be introduced to more literary works.' These results suggested that about half of the participants would enjoy reading literature, and more of them would be glad to know more about literature. Thus, literary works as teaching materials in EFL classes are feasible since the materials would be embraced by at least half of the students.

What literary genres do students like?

Questionnaire items 34, 35, 36, and 37 (see Appendix B) were designed to answer this question. Students' responses demonstrated that most of the participants like short stories (86%) most, followed by novels (82%), plays (43%, mean = 3.68), and finally poems (43%, mean = 3.25). This result was consistent with our previous finding that most of the students preferred prose fiction to poetry. In addition, the result was in line with Hirvela and Boyle (1988), whose survey showed that their participants enjoyed prose fiction more than poetry. Those findings, taken together, have implications for literature teaching in ESL/EFL contexts. That is, when introducing literature to ESL/EFL students, prose fiction (i.e. short stories and novels) is a better start than drama or poetry. Yet it does not suggest that poems or plays are not suitable for those students. Instead, poems are also valuable teaching materials if they are carefully selected and are presented along with some engaging activities. Plays can also attract students if they are presented with other supplementary media materials.

What specific types of literature do students like to read?

Two sets of questionnaire items (40–43 and 44–50; see Appendix B) provided answers to this question. Students' responses showed that the majority of them (82%) like to read contemporary literature and that only about half of them (46%) like to read classic literature. This result was explicable since students always consider classic literature more difficult to read or understand than contemporary literature. Nevertheless, if the classic literature is written by a famous writer, say, Shakespeare, it would still attract students' interest as the data in Table 2 showed. The other two types of literature, young adult literature and children's literature, were favored by 75% and 61% of the students respectively. This suggested that these two types of literary works might be suitable teaching materials for EFL adolescents although they were not included in the present study.

Students' responses to items 44 to 50 (see Appendix B) revealed more details of their literary preferences. Among the seven types of literature listed in the questionnaire, movie novels are liked by most students (86%), followed by realistic fiction (79%), fantasies (75%), and mysteries (71%). The other three types of works seem not to interest many students, science fiction being favored by 43% of the participants, historical fiction, 36%, and biographies or autobiographies, only 25%. The result that movie novels are most welcomed by students may be due to the reason that students can have an opportunity to enjoy the movie before or after they read the movie novels. This again reveals the usefulness of media supplementary materials in presenting literature to EFL students.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study documents a teacher-researcher's experiment of implementing a pure literature syllabus in an EFL class and reports on the students' perceptions of literature introduced and their attitude towards literature in general. In the fourteen-week experiment, students were introduced to 24 literary works, which included nine poems, seven short stories, two novels, and six plays. At the end of the experiment, students responded to a perception questionnaire to express their opinions of literature. The results of the questionnaire are summarized as follows.

First, most of the participants held a positive attitude towards the literary works introduced in class. Among the four genres presented, most students preferred prose fiction (i.e. novels and short stories) and plays to poems. Second, students usually favored the works which they had chances to appreciate the performances on other media. Third, plot summaries of novels and plays could motivate fewer than half of the participants to read the original texts, most of which were Shakespeare's tragedies. Fourth, concerning literature in general, about half of the students like to read literary works, and more of them would like to be introduced to literature. Specifically, students like to read contemporary literature rather than classic literature, and such works as movie novels, realistic fiction, fantasies, and mysteries are their favorites.

The results of this study have some pedagogical implications. To begin with, in the presentations, I explored the concept of computer-assisted literature teaching (CALT), capitalizing on the literature resources on the Internet in preparing some literary texts. In addition, some supplementary materials (i.e. other media performances of the literary works) were used to add varieties to the presentations. Students' positive feedback on those texts and materials suggest that they are quite useful resources for literature teaching. In fact, there are countless resources on the Internet and on the market for teachers to explore in teaching literature. If teachers are willing to introduce literature to students, they can find all kinds of aids and materials they need to have an enjoyable literature class. Thus, teachers, especially those non-literature majors, should not avoid or be afraid of using literary texts in their classes. I argue that there is low *literature threshold*, if any, for teachers to cross before they can teach literature. Once they are willing to try teaching literature, they are sure to find any materials that suit their teaching purposes and their students.

The findings of this study also shed some light on *what* literature to teach in EFL classes. In general, many EFL students are interested in prose fiction. Thus, short stories and novels, especially movie tie-in novels, can be first introduced to students since those works might easily arouse students' interest. Furthermore, literary works which can be enjoyed through other media than print are also good options in literature classes. It is because there are many literary works presented either in audio books (in CD or MP3 format) or in live performances (as recorded in VCDs or DVDs). These supplementary materials can be best companions to literature teaching. On the other hand, poems or plays can be introduced later in EFL classes and should be presented with some well-designed activities.

The suggestions made here so far, based on results of the participants' responses in the present study, are tentative guidelines in selecting literary texts. Given the fact that every individual literary taste differs, teachers are recommended to survey their students' literature preferences before teaching literature to them. It is because that, as argued in the beginning of this article, only when students get immersed in their favorite texts are they likely to receive the potential linguistic, personal, and cultural benefits that literature teaching claims to provide, and this is also the ultimate purpose of using literature in EFL language classes.

In conclusion, literature teaching in EFL contexts is a fertile area worth exploring. Since the present study has exemplified only one possibility of how literature can be introduced to EFL students and has reported on the feedbacks of only a small population, more studies, involving different literary texts, instructional methods, or student populations, are encouraged. It is hoped that as many teachers introduce literature to EFL classes, more EFL students will develop interests in literature and will further learn the English language through literature. After all, literature is made from language, and it would be a pity to exclude literature in EFL language classes.

APPENDIX A LITERARY WORKS PRESENTED IN THE STUDY

<i>Poems</i>	<i>Sources</i>
1. To See a World in a Grain of Sand	Kennedy (1991, p. 590)
2. 40 Love	Carter and Long (1991, p. 33)
3. Fire and Ice	Kennedy (1991, p. 568)
4. A Red, Red Rose	Kennedy (1991, p. 603)
5. A Poison Tree	Kennedy (1991, p. 697)
6. Money	(from a poetry teaching workshop)
7. The Arrow and the Song	(from a poetry teaching workshop)
8. How Do I Love Thee	(from a poetry teaching workshop)
9. To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time	Kennedy (1991, p. 825)
<i>Short stories and articles</i>	
1. The Red Mahogany Piano	Cosmax Publishing (2004, pp. 55-59)
2. Love Can Last Forever	Cosmax Publishing (2004, pp. 69-72)
3. The Unicorn in the Garden	Kennedy (1991, pp. 15-16)
4. The Appointment in Samarra	Kennedy (1991, p. 2)
5. The Art of Success	Bookman Books (1988, pp. 15-16)
6. Self-Education	Bookman Books (1988, pp. 21-22)
7. Be Your Own Master	Bookman Books (1988, pp. 28-29)
<i>Novels</i>	
1. The Da Vinci Code	http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/davincicode/
2. The Hunchback of Notre Dame	http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmHunchback07.asp
<i>Plays</i>	
1. Turandot	http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/history/stories/synopsis.aspx?id=180
2. Oedipus the King	http://www.freebooknotes.com/page.php?link=http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/oedipus&book=497
3. Hamlet	http://www.jiffynotes.com/Hamlet/PlotSummary.html
4. Macbeth	http://www.jiffynotes.com/Macbeth/PlotSummary.html
5. Othello	http://www.studyworld.com/studyworld_studynotes/jnotes/Othello/PlotSummary.html
6. King Lear	http://www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmKingLear06.asp

APPENDIX B RESULTS OF STUDENT PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

<i>Instructions:</i>						
1: Strongly Disagree		2: Disagree		3: Slightly Disagree		
4: Slightly Agree		5: Agree		6: Strongly Agree		
				Disagree	Agree	Mean
				(1, 2, 3)	(4, 5, 6)	S.D.
				<hr/>	<hr/>	
				F	%	F
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
(N=28)				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
1. I like the poem <i>To See a World in a Grain of Sand.</i>				10	36	18
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
2. I like the poem <i>40 Love.</i>				5	18	23
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
3. I like the poem <i>Fire and Ice.</i>				11	39	17
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
4. I like the poem <i>A Red, Red Rose.</i>				15	54	13
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
					64	3.96
					82	4.61
					61	3.75
					46	1.11
						1.26

5. I like the poem <i>A Poison Tree</i> .	9	32	19	68	3.93	1.39
6. I like the poem <i>Money</i> .	12	43	16	57	3.86	1.38
7. I like the poem <i>The Arrow and the Song</i> .	8	29	20	71	4.11	1.10
8. I like the poem <i>How Do I Love Thee</i> .	10	36	18	64	3.89	1.40
9. I like the poem <i>To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time</i> .	10	36	18	64	3.71	1.08
10. I like the story <i>The Red Mahogany Piano</i> .	2	7	26	93	4.86	.97
11. I like the story <i>Love Can Last Forever</i> .	6	21	22	79	4.43	1.07
12. I like the story <i>The Unicorn in the Garden</i> .	4	14	24	86	4.96	1.14
13. I like the story <i>The Appointment in Samarra</i> .	2	7	26	93	4.86	1.08
14. I like the article <i>The Art of Success</i> .	20	71	8	29	2.64	1.22
15. I like the article <i>Self-Education</i> .	17	61	11	39	3.32	1.39
16. I like the article <i>Be Your Own Master</i> .	7	25	21	75	4.36	1.25
17. I like the novel <i>The Da Vinci Code</i> .	7	25	21	75	4.32	1.09
18. I like the novel <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> .	0	0	28	100	5.32	.72
19. I like the musical <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> .	1	4	27	96	5.54	1.04
20. I like the play <i>Turandot</i> .	5	18	23	82	4.71	1.15
21. I like the music of the opera <i>Turandot</i> .	2	7	26	93	5.00	.94
22. I like the play <i>Oedipus the King</i> .	9	32	19	68	4.18	1.52
23. I like the play <i>Hamlet</i> .	5	18	23	82	4.25	.97
24. I like the play <i>Macbeth</i> .	7	25	21	75	4.11	1.20
25. I like the play <i>Othello</i> .	9	32	19	68	3.79	1.13
26. I like the play <i>King Lear</i> .	7	25	21	75	4.50	1.23
27. I'd like to read <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> .	14	50	14	50	3.89	1.37
28. I'd like to read <i>Oedipus the King</i> .	14	50	14	50	3.50	1.43
29. I'd like to read <i>Hamlet</i> .	17	61	11	39	3.11	1.40
30. I'd like to read <i>Macbeth</i> .	18	64	10	36	3.00	1.39
31. I'd like to read <i>Othello</i> .	17	61	11	39	3.29	1.61
32. I'd like to read <i>King Lear</i> .	14	50	14	50	3.57	1.45
33. I like to read literary works.	13	46	15	54	3.86	1.56
34. I like to read poems.	16	57	12	43	3.25	1.35
35. I like to read short stories.	4	14	24	86	4.79	1.07
36. I like to read novels.	5	18	23	82	4.54	1.37
37. I like to read plays.	16	57	12	43	3.68	1.52
38. I like tragedies.	17	61	11	39	3.32	1.39

39. I'd like to be introduced to more literary works.	9	32	19	68	4.07	1.25
40. I'd like to read classic literature.	15	54	13	46	3.46	1.20
41. I'd like to read contemporary literature.	5	18	23	82	4.39	.92
42. I'd like to read children's literature.	11	39	17	61	4.11	1.55
43. I'd like to read young adult literature.	7	25	21	75	4.21	1.20
44. I'd like to read realistic fiction.	6	21	22	79	4.64	1.10
45. I'd like to read mysteries.	8	29	20	71	4.36	1.45
46. I'd like to read fantasies.	7	25	21	75	4.46	1.37
47. I'd like to read science fiction.	16	57	12	43	3.25	1.48
48. I'd like to read historical fiction.	18	64	10	36	2.93	1.51
49. I'd like to read biographies or autobiographies.	21	75	7	25	2.75	1.21
50. I'd like to read movie novels.	4	14	24	86	4.71	1.15

Note: F=Frequency

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