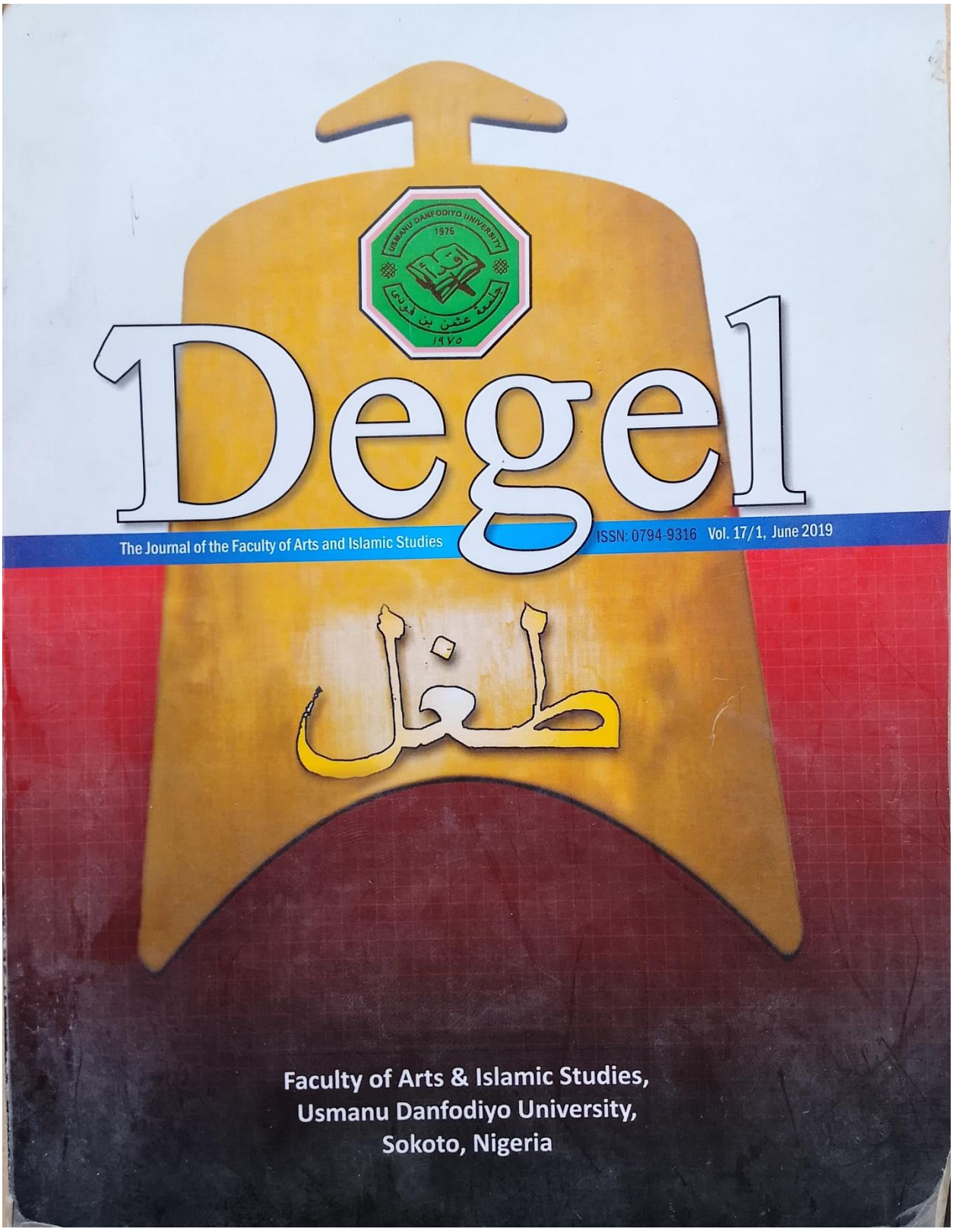

USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY
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The Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies
ISSN: 0794-9316 Vol. 17/1, June 2019
طغل
Faculty of Arts & Islamic Studies,
Usmanu Danfodiyo University,
Sokoto, Nigeria

DEGEL:

The Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Islamic Studies

Editor-in-Chief
Prof. Isa Muhammad Maishanu

Volume 17(1), June 2019

ISSN 0794-9316 (Print)
ISSN 2672-9316 (Online)

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The Relevance of Integrative Approach to the Teaching of Literature in ESL Context

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Abstract
Literature is usually conceived to be one of the dreadful subjects to students. The approach to teaching the subject is one of the factors causing students' aversion to the subject. This study therefore aims at investigating the approaches employed by teachers of literature in Nigerian context where English is used as a Second Language (ESL). To achieve this aim, the study identifies the various approaches employed by teachers teaching literature; explores the teachers' explanations for using the particular approach they used; and uncovers the implications for using a particular model with a view to suggesting possible solutions. The study specifically covers10 selected Secondary Schools within Birnin Kebbi metropolis. The investigation involved the use of questionnaire and oral interview. The findings reveal the following: the Cultural Model Approach is commonly employed by teachers, followed by the Language-Model Approach and the Personal Growth Model Approach; teachers explain they take recourse to the Cultural Model Approach because of their students' inability to exhibit relevant language skills in English; and the effect of using the Cultural Model Approach above all is that the general aims of teaching literature will not be attainable. The study therefore concludes that the use of integrative approach which takes cognizance of the general aims of literature should be adopted by teachers.

Introduction

In the context of Nigeria, English is used as a Second Language (ESL). In Junior Secondary Schools, components of literature were incorporated in the

English Language syllabus with a view to enhancing the acquisition of relevant language skills by students. In Secondary Schools, literature is one of the compulsory subjects, especially for students in the arts class. The objectives of teaching the subject are explicitly stated in the National Policy on Education in relation to language/literature teaching. Among the secondary school students, however, literature is received with attitudes of disdain and hostility because it is perceived as a subject laden with herculean tasks of reading voluminous literary texts. A condition that worsens the negative attitudes is the fact that students also conceive of literary texts as materials written in cryptic, recondite and nerve-racking expressions which could only be dissected by a special class of people.

Stemming from the aforementioned circumstance, the aversion towards literature is strongly expressed in subject selection which is demonstrated in how students often opt for other subjects they consider simpler to literature. Where literature is, however, made compulsory, especially for students in the arts class, poetry is often seen as an intimidating and nerve-tasking genre of literature. This explains why Adewoye (1998, p.4) asserts that "Poetry constitutes a bazaar of fear and confusion for its reader, especially students." Hirvela and Boyle (1988, p.180), however, warn that "Students' attitude of dislike for any genre of literature does not make teachers jettison the genre from the syllabus. But it must mean that the teachers should appreciate the atmosphere in which the genre is going to be taught." Widdowson (1983, p.34) also adds:

> In a way, literature has suffered as a result of hasty decision about language teaching methodology; literature was dismissed as irrelevant because it seemed not to be practical. Literature should not be banished from language teaching...because literature is a resource for developing learners on the ability to use knowledge of language to interpret discourse.

Not minding the attitude with which students might have been treating literature; the relevance of the subject in the society is inexhaustible. Writers of literary texts do not just set out to write; they often employ the power of self-intuition to restore orders to a world which had been entangled in chaotic political wrangle-net, religious vacuity and economic policies that promote inequality and extortion. They write to fight for the poor, the peasant, the

underprivileged, the unheard of, the unspoken of, and the never-do-well of the society.

A close observation of the works of most Nigerian writers demonstrates that some post-independence experiences which inform their artistic compositions include: economic mismanagement, despotic rule, moral decadence, insecurity, religious intolerance, famine, and hunger with their debilitating effects on the populace. One would admit that the teaching of literature would help in raising a generation of people that would employ their moral values and linguistic endowments to condemn the various societal maladies. The present study therefore, investigates the various approaches adopted in the teaching of literature in the ten selected secondary schools within Birnin Kebbi metropolis. To achieve this aim, the study identifies the various approaches employed by teachers teaching literature; explores the teachers' explanations for using the particular approach they used; and discovers the implications for using a particular model with a view to suggesting possible solutions.

Research Methodology

The present study utilised both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Data collection involved the use of questionnaire and oral interview as the primary instruments. The study was limited to 10 Secondary Schools (both private and public) selected within Birnin Kebbi metropolis. The major targeted group in this research is the English Language teachers who teach literature in the selected schools. In order to obtain primary data for this study, a set of questionnaires was designed to consist of Yes or No items followed by open-ended question items which allow the respondents to express their opinions and give suggestions on matters related to the research topic.

Review of Literature

National Policy on Education in Relation to Language/Literature Teaching

Uwaifo (1979) reviews the philosophy of Nigerian education as reported in the National Curriculum Conference (1969); he enlists the objectives of teaching literature to include the following:

a. fostering clear communication of thought and making relevant judgement;

b. raising a generation of people who can think reflectively for themselves;
c. helping students to appreciate and understand Nigerian
d. culture as well as the world's cultural heritage; catering for the difference in talents, opportunities and roles open to students after their secondary education;
e. encouraging students to develop a desire for achievement, continual self-education and self improvement both in school and later in life.

In addition, Osunkentan (2004, p.315) enumerates the major aims of the (1981) National Policy on Education to include the following:

a. respect for the growth and dignity of the individual;
b. faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
c. moral and spiritual value on interpretation relations;
d. shared responsibility of the common good of the society;
e. respect for the dignity of labour; and
f. promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of children.

A careful exploration into the general aims of teaching literature as provided in the National Policy on Education has revealed the various sets of values which literature can bestow on the students. Other insightful benefits of teaching literature, which are not explicitly stated therein, are presented by the researcher as follows:

a. Literature enriches students' vocabulary and enhances the acquisition of relevant language skills.
b. Literature exposes students to different cultures through which the right sets of values are inculcated.
c. Literature is a therapy for boredom.
d. Literature encourages and inculcates the reading habit among students.
e. Literature corrects social maladies

Literature as a Tool for Social Change

We live in a world entangled in socio-economic, socio-political and socio-religious nets. As agents of social reformation, literary writers often employ their works to systematically call our attention to the perceived inadequacies of the society we live in so that we may seek an escape from our entangled world. For instance, the various entanglements which permeate the Nigerian

socio-economic and political terrains are enumerated in the following words of Osunkentan (2004, p.325) who points out that:

> The Nigerian society is at present bedevilled by mutual suspicion, religious intolerance, ethnic loyalty, political banditry, and tension, inter-ethnic clashes, and the likes. Nigeria's low level of literacy significantly contributes to these problems and such other problems as ignorance poverty, and despair, political disenchantment or apathy.

If it is a common claim that there is a connection between literature and the community that produces it, thus the various problems can be solved if the right sets of values are inculcated in students through the teaching of literature. This view is corroborated by Ogundokun (2013, p.21) when he submits that:

> Literature is a veritable tool for actualizing societal developments and global advancement in general. With literature, good governance and best practices can be achieved; since this will create rooms for transparency, accountability, youth empowerment, women liberation and eradication of barbaric traditions among other societal ills.

Nwoga (1978, p.26) also adds that:

> Our literature must be seen as part of the struggle for the liberation of Africa, politically, and morally. It must reflect a full respect for the value of human life, our aspiration for human life and that of humanity in general.

If the literary texts are constructed to reflect the sets of values (educational, moral and social), the advantages in the teaching of literature would be inexhaustible.

Models of Teaching Literature

Applied linguists such as Carter and Long (1991) extensively discuss three models of teaching literature. Each of these models is reviewed as follows:

1. **The Cultural Model:** The Cultural Model is regarded as a traditional approach to the teaching of literature. This approach focuses mainly on sets of moral values which literature will inculcate in students. Hwang and Embi (2007, p.3) assert that:

> The Cultural Model views literature as a source of facts or information and therefore, reading tends to be based on obtaining information. In this model, the teacher transmits knowledge and information to the students.

The literary text according to this model is a cultural artefact where learners can explore to discover the social, political, literary and historical context of the text. This method allows the teacher to simplify a difficult text by using lucid expressions as opposed to the complex expressions used in the text. The teacher using this approach supplies useful cosmological information forming the contextual factors for the construction of the text. The teacher is the active participant who supplies background information surrounding the text. In this approach, students are not motivated to read and discover the information in the text themselves. This is an approach which concentrates on moral values which students would learn while reading a particular literary text. The approach is evaluative and judgemental of the characters in the text. The model is credited with an attempt to expose students to different cultures, ideologies, and world views other than their own. However, Savvidou (2004) reports that TEFL (Teaching of English as Foreign Language) rejected this model on ground that it is a teacher-centred approach; and does not give opportunity for extended language work.

2. **The Language-based Model:** The Language-based Model is a theory of Applied Linguistics, which sees literature as a relevant subject that can be applied to solve aspects of language teaching related problems. This view believes that literature has content, determines teaching methodology and serves as a means of obtaining language material. The Applied Linguists, such as Eagleson and Kramer (1976) and Maley (1989) who champion this model, see literature as a resource for language learning. Hwang and Embi (2007, p.3) reveal that "The Language Model seeks a closer integration

between language and literature. Students can improve their language proficiency by using literature as a resource in language learning." Thus, the Language based model conceives literature teaching as having a symbiotic or symmetrical relationship with language teaching because the model allows the teacher to bring the linguistic knowledge to the interpretation and the teaching of literary texts. Experts in the field consider the approach to be highly beneficial to the students because learners have an opportunity to access a text in a systematic, factual, and objective way. Babatunde (2005) is of the view that "literature texts can be used to develop four levels of reading: factual, evaluative, creative and inferential in the students". Simpson (2004, p.3) also posits that "Exploring language offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of literary text."

The Language-based Model sees literary texts as relevant language materials from which the teachers can apply the various methods used in language teaching such as summary writing, creative writing, grammatical patterning, etc. to the analysis of literary texts in order to serve specific linguistic goals. This approach equips learners with linguistic knowledge of language system in the text. This is done by helping the students to acquire knowledge of contextual meanings of linguistic expressions. A presentation of literary text requires that students use linguistic resources to the utmost for the interpretation of literary texts. Savvidou (2004) however observes that the Language-based Model has its own shortcoming in that students engage mainly with literary texts which provide a series of language activities purely for linguistic practice.

2. The Personal Growth Model: The Personal Growth Model sees the literary text as a stimulus for personal growth. The model is credited for being the learner-centred approach. It gives room for personal development of the students by allowing them to express their personal views on the literary texts based on their personal experiences of the world. The approach concentrates on eliciting personal response and foster students' personal development by allowing them to personally explore the text in searching for the meanings contained in the text. Hwang and Embi (2007, p.3) submit that:

> The Personal Growth Model seeks the opportunity for students to relate and respond to the themes and issues by making a connection to their personal lives. Consequently, students'

growth in terms of language, emotions and character development are stimulated.

The model gives room for personal exploration of the reality in the text, and also offers the students the ability to bring out personal feelings, opinion, to the interpretation of circumstance encountered in the text. This model could be credited for developing the skill of self-expression and application of past experiences to the interpretation of the events in the text. The Personal Growth Model is not without its own flaw. Students' experiences are heterogeneous; therefore, interpretations of a text cannot be identical.

Data Analysis and Findings

Demographic Profile of Teachers

A total of 48 teachers in the ten selected schools responded to the questionnaire constructed to obtain information for this study. Table 1 reports the breakdown of respondents according to the respective aspects namely gender, academic qualification, area of specialization (option), experience in teaching English as well as training in the literature component in English.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

	Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	21	44%
	Female	27	56%
Academic Qualification	NCE	32	67%
	First Degree	12	25%
	PGDE	4	8%
	Master	0	0%
Teaching Experience in English/Literature	Less than 5 years	32	67%
	5-10 years	14	29%
	15 years or more	2	4%
Literature in English bias	Yes	19	40%
	No	29	60%

Approaches Employed by the Teachers

The table that follows reports the approaches employed by teachers in the teaching of literature.

Table 2. Approaches Employed by the Teachers

Items Associated with each Approach	Frequency of Teachers Using each Item	Percentage
Language-Based Approach		
1. Guide students to infer meanings from clues in the text	6	13%
2. Guide students to read between the lines	0	0%
3. Guide students to express opinion towards a text	5	10%
4. Set simple language activities in literature lesson	0	0%
5. Generate language practice using the text	1	2%
Personal-Growth Approach		
6. Guide students to relate the themes to personal experiences	2	4%
7. Ask students to compare the text to any text they have read earlier	0	0%
8. Elicit students' response to a text	1	2%
9. Encourage students to express feeling towards the issues raised in the text	2	4%
10. encourage students to re-tell the event in the text	4	8%
The Cultural Model Approach		
11. Incorporate moral values in the lessons	7	15%
12. Tell students directly the moral values found in the text	13	27%
13. Ask students the values they learn from the text	2	4%
14. Guide students to search moral values from a text	1	2%
15. Raise students' awareness of values derived from the text	4	8%
Total	48	100%

Obviously, the findings of the questionnaire presented in Table 2 and figure 1. above reveal that the cultural model approach (56%) is popularly applied by teachers. This is followed by the language-based approach (25%) whilst the personal-growth approach remains the lowest (19%). Findings also corroborate with item No.12 "Tell students directly the moral values found in the text" which has the highest percentage (=27%); some of the respondents reported that they used simple terms to explain literary texts to students. This is followed by item number No. 11. "Incorporate moral values in the lessons" which has the second highest percentage (=15%); many of the respondents stated that they "explain[ed] the contents of the text to the class". In addition, No. 1"Guide students to infer meanings from clues in the text" sets the third highest percentage (=13%).

Summary of the Findings of Oral Interview

This study assessed the approaches employed by the teachers in the teaching of Literature in English in the 10 selected schools. The major findings in the study are listed below.

a. Majority of the respondents agreed that they employed cultural model approach in the teaching of Literature in English.
b. It was discovered that the teachers take recourse to cultural model approach in the teaching of literature because of students' inability to exhibit relevant language skills.
c. It was also discovered that teachers resulted to the use of Hausa (which is the language of the immediate environment of the students) as the medium of instruction to teach literature.
d. The study also revealed that the effect of the students' inability to exhibit the relevant language skills has forced the teachers to spoon feed the students with information on the literary texts.
e. Equally, the study showed that teachers resort to the use of the cultural model approach which affords them the opportunity to supply necessary information on the texts because of students' attitude to literary materials which the students considered unnecessary to purchase.
f. Majority of teachers said they employed the cultural model approach for students' external examination purpose. Therefore, students are fortified with necessary information for them to pass the exams.

Implications of the Findings

The underlisted points are considered to be the serious implications of the findings listed in the preceding section.

a. The undue preference for the utilization or adoption of the cultural model in which teachers are the active participants defeats the purpose of education by denying students' ability to explore information themselves. Thus, the model does not put the learners at the centre of teaching.
b. Certain aspects of the objectives of entrenching Literature into the curriculum would not be achieved. For instance, literary passages which require students to utilize linguistic resources to the utmost for meaning potential would be lost.
c. Personal interpretative skills would not be developed in students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the bases of the various findings in this study, the following recommendations are offered with a view to enhancing effective teaching of Literature in schools and colleges.

a. Teachers are encouraged to integrate other approaches (Language-based approach and Personal-Growth approach) with the cultural model approach. Otherwise, certain aspects of learning useful for the students would be denied the learners.
b. The goal of the curriculum designers is to identify and consider the common needs of the society with a view to recommending literary materials for students. Therefore, literary materials suitable to the themes of social reformation, moral rectification and peaceful revolution should be recommended.
c. The language of literary texts to be recommended for students by policy makers and curriculum designers should be contemporary; because language is a potential weapon to interrogate societal maladies. Texts that will expose learners to quality works without frightening them off literature should be recommended. This would help learners to acquire relevant language skills needed to express themselves in the society; bearing in mind that many Nigerian citizens remain hapless and

hopeless in the squalor of sufferings because they don't have the linguistic wherewithal to articulate their deprivation.

d. The use of the language of the immediate environment of the learners should be de-emphasized by teachers in the teaching of Literature. The use of the language of the immediate environment of the learners may blur the vision of instilling the relevant language skills on the students to communicate with the wider world through English language rather than the local language which has limited reach.
e. The government should assist the poor students in the provision of literature texts.
f. Teachers should also adopt the use different audio-visual aids in teaching Literature.
g. The government should assist to convert stories in the literary texts into drama acted in the films. In this age of technological advancement, students prefer viewing films to reading books.

As already discussed in the preceding section that literature enriches vocabulary; instils moral values; interrogates societal maladies; encourages students to develop a desire for achievement; and helps students to appreciate Nigerian cultures. It is obvious then that the subject is very relevant to the Nigeria's Transformation Agenda. It is believed that if the various stakeholders take cognisance of the various recommendations suggested above, Nigeria would produce a generation of students who would be morally fit, intellectually capable and linguistically endowed to reform our crumbling society.

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