ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning English in Yemen have many problems. These problems begin in the schools where the students study English language for the first time. It starts from class 7 and continues to class 12, the last year of the secondary school education. Teaching English in the schools fails to provide the students the basic of English language skills. The problem is more aggravated when they join the university to study English language in the departments of English, faculties of education to develop their English language skills. In the English department, students study 39 English subjects distributed in four major areas: literature, linguistics, language skills and ELT. The chief among them are the literature courses – Literary Forms, Survey of English Literature, Poetry 1, Poetry 2, Poetry 3, Drama 1, Drama 2, Novel 1, Novel 2 and Literary Criticism. These 10 courses constitute 26% of the courses. The literature components are confined to 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th century English literature (from Chaucer to Eliot).

The teaching of English Poetry in the departments of English, faculties of education, Hodeidah University begins in the first semester of the third year. In this semester, the students are exposed to Poetry 1. In the second semester of the third year, they are exposed to Poetry 2. In the first semester of the fourth year, they are exposed to Poetry 3. So, it is difficult to imagine how the low-proficient learners of English cope with the problems that arise due to old poems: archaic language, irrelevant culture, difficult grammatical structures and high literary forms. They cannot understand the content/element of such poems. Besides these, teachers follow the old prescribed syllabus for English Department and the same old traditional methods in their teaching. Teachers do not use the right reading materials and strategies which can help the students comprehend the contents of these poems. The language is old and archaic. Theme, figure of speech and poem’s construction are difficult. Hence, the literary texts selected for Yemeni students should be suitable to the students’ proficiency not to their age, so that it becomes easier for them to develop their language. Selecting poems according to the students' proficiency to develop their basic language skills would help them acquire the ability to understand the literary skills easily.
The present study is mainly experimental. It aims at designing poetry courses for the English departments, Faculties of Education, Hodeidah University, Yemen to develop the students’ basic language and literary skills. Before designing the courses, the researcher makes use of a field survey and different well-known methods associated with the social science research. So, the research methods can be divided into two sections: secondary and primary tools. The secondary tools are materials evaluation, classroom observation and students’ questionnaire. The primary tools are materials design and experimentation. This includes pre- and post-tests and classroom questionnaire.

Currently, thirty six hours are available to teach the prescribed poetry in one semester. Simple and modern poems by different poets are selected. Twelve classes of three hours each is prepared to help the students to develop their basic language and literary skills. These materials are tried out and experimented in the first semester of the academic year 2014/2015. Pre-and post-tests are used to measure the development of the students before and after the experimentation. The results of the pre-and post-tests show that the increase of the students’ scores on the post-test over pre-test and there is a significant improvement of students on the English language proficiency. This means that the course could bring a positive change in the students’ proficiency through the intervention.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one presents a brief introduction about the study, the scope of the study, the needs for the study, the statement of the problem and the objectives. It also presents the research instruments, the population and sampling of the study. It ends with brief background information about the context in which the study has been taken.

Chapter two reviews the existing relevant literature relating to the present study. It reviews books, articles and researches related to teaching language skills through literature in general, developing students' English language and literary skills through poems, the advantages and disadvantages of using literature in the EFL classrooms, course design; materials development and the criteria for selecting literary text for the EFL classroom. This chapter also ends with a brief review of the teaching/learning of poems in the primary and secondary schools and in the English departments, Faculties of Education, Hodeidah University.
Chapter three gives detailed information about the research methodology used in the current study. It presents a clear description of the methodology used in this study. This includes the research design that is applied, instruments used to obtain the data, a clear description about the instruments’ design, its validity and reliability and data analysis. The chapter also ends with a brief survey of the location of the study.

Chapter four is devoted to data analysis of the field survey. It presents the interpretations of data collection. This includes the interpretation of the teaching/learning materials, the classroom observation, the students’ questionnaire and a brief summary.

Chapter five is devoted to the materials preparation. This includes the course description, structure, goals, objectives, setting, implementation, main features of the courses, use of new methods and approaches, selection and grading of the materials and activities and a brief summary of every lesson (poems) of the remedial courses.

Chapter six is devoted to the tryout and the experimentation of the materials. It explains the steps the researcher used before the experimentation of the materials with the students as well as the methods of experimenting the materials. This chapter ends with data analysis of the experimental tools.

Chapter seven concludes with the summary of the major findings of the study and limitations. It also presents the researcher’s recommendations about language through literature in the Yemeni universities in general and developing learners’ language skills through poems for the future studies.

The uses and findings of the research can be extended not only to other Yemeni universities but also to some of the universities of the Arab world.