CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1. Background

Teaching aboriginal literature in English as a subject in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context has been an integral constituent of the ELT curriculum of higher learning institutions and tertiary scholarship. The aboriginal literature can be taught as a subject with the objective of augmenting the literary adeptness, personal mellowness, linguistic adroitness, cultural advancement of the learner and growth of the knowledge of the literary history of a country. In the same context, an important objective of teaching this literature is to improve the communicative competence of the learner. Again, in an EFL situation, where indigenous literature is also taught to English language majors in the tertiary context, the objective can be to develop the creative, pragmatic, sociolinguistic and the functional competencies of the learner. It empowers the prospective English teachers with both linguistic and literary competence. However, do all tertiary institutions acknowledge the pedagogic relevance of aboriginal literature in English?

The relevance of literature teaching has been extensively studied in L1 situations. However, in L2 contexts, like in Africa, the relevance of literature remains contentious. Educators and researchers argue that it should be studied as a basis for communication. According to Brumfit’s study of the relevance of literature teaching in the Tanzanian context, literature teaching needs to consider language in action, creative writing and literary relevance (236-243). In Brumfit’s study, the relevance of literature teaching includes service to the community, development of enquiring minds and empowerment of the skills of criticism. The study also identifies the effects of literature teaching: first, it increases the competence in English and understanding how language works; second, it develops a basic critical competence; third, it enhances the
understanding of the historical situation of Swahili and African writing in relation to
European and other traditions and of the literary arts in relation to other arts and
activities of man (239).

Brumfit also provides a list of African texts, along with the European literary texts,
with twentieth century themes. On the contrary, disparaging Brumfit’s proposal and
providing an alternative list of African literary texts in English, Pettit argues that
literature teaching in the East African context provides ‘a construct reality with effects
on the consciousness, recreation and immediate experience’ (244-245).

Teaching literature is also regarded as a valuable and authentic means for cultural
development, language enrichment and personal involvement (Collie and Slater 3-5).
Equally relevant functions in teaching literature include: basis for language usage and
use (MacKay 193), advancement of intercultural competence (Nault 132), acquisition
of literary refinement and the development of language competence (Pickett 271),
development of social sensitivity (Sivasubramaniam 266), provision of linguistic and
cross-cultural explanations (Kachru 148) and development of a feeling for language
(Long 42).

The inquiry at this point is how academicians, researchers and ELT curriculum
designers regard literary texts in the tertiary context. If poetic texts, say for example,
are seen as a special use of language to communicate messages, literary texts can be
authentic sources to develop the communicative competencies of the learner. This area
has immense potential for research. Poetic texts can help teach specialized language
use and achieve two goals at a time: developing both the literary and communicative
competencies.

In the Ethiopian context, literature teaching at tertiary level has been contentious. A
review of the language curriculum of eight Universities in the country shows that the
number of literature courses is dwindling. A study conducted in Addis Ababa
University states:
...according to the revised curriculum for undergraduate programs put forward in March 2000 in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Addis Ababa University, students in the teachers stream take only 15 credits hours in literature. This shows a 50% cut in literature courses offered to trainee teachers. The review also shows that the literature courses have been replaced by a duplication of mechanical skill course (Birhanu 14).

Plummeting literature courses. ELT curriculum designers incorporated a number of courses on language methodology. The reduction of literature courses implies that the relevance of literature at the higher education institutions has not been intensively studied in Ethiopia. None of the English Departments in the Ethiopian universities have a course on “Ethiopian Literature in English”. In these universities, only five literature courses are included in the degree curriculum of English regular programs. Courses such as “fundamentals of literature”, “prose fiction”, “verse and drama”, “literature as applied to language” and “African Literature” are commonly given in the universities. “Stylistics” as a subject is given by a single department at Hawassa University. Short story and poetry topics are either merged with other courses or totally excluded from the syllabus. An appraisal of the objectives of these literature courses confirms that the primary aim is to enlarge the students’ ‘knowledge about literature’, not ‘knowledge of literature’. A review of the objectives of the course entitled “Fundamentals of Literature” for the first year language students at Adama University exemplifies why literature taught. “Fundamentals of Literature” aims to:

- introduce students with the concept of literature and the nature of literary discourse
- introduce students with the oral literature and its relevance
- develop the fundamental literary skills of the students
- introduce students with four literary genres: novel, short story, poetry and drama
- acquaint students with the elements of literature and other literary terms
• develop a critical appreciation of the themes and techniques of important works of the four major genres

The objectives stated above also imply the type of methodology the teacher has to use. To ‘effectively materialize’ these objectives within a semester (3 hours a week and 48 hours a semester), the teacher has to use the lecture method for two fundamental reasons. First, the students heavily lean on the teacher because they have no or little experience of reading literature. A background survey conducted for this research shows that out of 95 students who were taking this course at Adama University, 87% of the students did not read any single literary text in English before joining the Department of English. Therefore, they had to rely on lectures, handouts and notes to complete the course. Secondly, as the in-depth interview with the teachers of the same course shows each teacher has to complete the entire course outline to get a very good appraisal from his/her students. To finish the course, the lecture method is the most preferred method as it saves time. Since the course is vast and students lack the basic communicative competence, the teacher finds it too difficult to integrate active learning methods. The teachers assume that active learning methods are time consuming if the students lack basic language skills.

The second critical problem in the delivery of this course is the selection of the texts. Table-1 below shows the texts prescribed for this initial course at Adama University.

Table-1: List of Literature Texts at the English Department of Adama University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wuthering Heights</td>
<td>Emily Bronte</td>
<td>Novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Bear</td>
<td>Anton Chekhov</td>
<td>Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Last Leaf</td>
<td>O’ Henry</td>
<td>Short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Horse Dealer’s Daughter</td>
<td>D.H. Lawrence</td>
<td>Short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Cask of Amontillado</td>
<td>Edgar Allen Poe</td>
<td>Short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Road Not Taken</td>
<td>Robert Frost</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ode to a Nightingale</td>
<td>John Keats’s</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sonnet XVIII</td>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
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</table>
Students who opted for (with the researcher) these European and American literary texts identified three fundamental problems. First, they found the language of these texts extremely difficult. After the course was over, it was found out that only 45% of the students finished reading “Wuthering Heights”. Others needed much more time to understand the novel and depended on a dictionary to find out the meaning of strange words. As many of the students did not finish reading this novel on time, the film version of the text was screened. Second, the students reported that they lacked the motivation to read some of the texts above because the texts did not touch their own experience. (Students enjoyed reading “The Road Not Taken” and “The Horse Dealers Daughter”). Although themes such as courtship, love, revenge and helpfulness are universal, it is the presentation of the Victorian values and the Euro-American cultural practices and stylistic presentations in these texts which demotivated the students. The presentation of some of these themes is remote culturally, historically and geographically. Third, they could not easily envision the practical relevance of these texts in their future career. Knowledge of the biographies of these authors, the study of the literary history of the respective countries and the analysis of literary techniques are not transferable skills and do not equip students with appropriate skills. The students required more courses on language for specific purposes.

Therefore, due to researchable but complex problems, literature as a subject, poetry in particular, is at a disadvantage. The absence of proper poetry teaching methods, failure to envision the relevance of poetry, inaccessible poetic texts, lack of poetic motivation and low undergraduates’ reading skill to understand poetry could have been the inherent problems leading to the reduction of poetry and other literature subjects. In the Ethiopian EFL context, therefore, the prime objective of teaching and learning poetry as part of the subject (in fundamentals of literature) is not specific, measurable, achievable, reliable and timely. More critical still is the challenge faced by an EFL learner of British and American poetry. How many of the students really know the relevance of taking poetry as a subject or even part of a subject? How many of the students comprehend the poems taught in the class? How many of the teachers practice student-fronted poetry teaching? In the age of multiculturalism coupled with
globalization, the pedagogic relevance of teaching and reading poetry should have been incorporated with the advancement of the communicative competence of the learner. Its relevance could have been enhanced through selection of the right methods and appropriate poetic texts. Consequently, a radical shift of objectives and methods of teaching and learning poetry needs to be foregrounded and researched to maximize its relevance.

In the Ethiopian higher education context, the methodology of teaching literature has not changed over time. To tone down methodological problems, this research work in pedagogic stylistic practices is proposed. Eclectic pedagogical stylistics research is assumed to solve methodology problems.

While proposing an eclectic pedagogical stylistics research, the researcher has been greatly influenced by various “New Stylistics” theories: formalist, functional, cognitive, critical, practical, pedagogic, pragmatic and feminist stylistics. The influence of communicative language teaching (CLT) is also huge. Various researchers in stylistics made these huge impacts. For example, Verdonk’s stylistic poetry teaching project in the English Department of University of Amsterdam (The Language of Poetry, 241-266) is highly relevant and influential. Although Verdonk’s stylistic approaches are not completely eclectic, his stylistics project elucidates how poetry should be taught in a university classroom. In his seminar-cum-lecture method of a course in stylistics with 30 students, he eclectically practiced two models. First, he successfully applied Leech’s model of linguistic stylistics which includes cohesion, foregrounding and foregrounding of cohesion. His second successful model was the one proposed by Widdowson in which literature was studied as a mode of communication. His students of stylistics were both engaged and successful.

A very strong and vibrant recommendation of an eclectic stylistic methodology comes from the work of Jeffries. In Jeffries’ argument, an eclectic stylistic method is relevant because it is mutually beneficial, multi-theoretical, cross fertilizing, integrationist, flexible, more insightful and evident (1-16). Though the approach is not stylistic,
Collie and Slater also argue for the relevance of diversifying the repertoire of language and literature teaching procedures. Diversification of methods in L2 context promotes interest, involvement, responses, knowledge and experiences (8-9). Prabhu sees eclecticism as the ‘development of new perceptions, operation with a combination of perceptions or procedures and a convergence of similar pedagogic perceptions’ (108).

The diversified repertoires of the various stylistic theories are practiced to evaluate the pedagogical relevance of stylistics in communicative language development. The theories employed in this thesis are derived, therefore, mainly from the five trends of stylistics which include formalist stylistics, functionalist stylistics, cognitive stylistics, pragmatic stylistics and feminist stylistics. With a theoretical conceptualization that pedagogical stylistics encompasses all these trends of stylistics, each theory was eclectically and pedagogically practiced using Ethiopian poems in English. It is also conceptualized that the integration of all these stylistic research results and experiences will contribute to an all rounded linguistic development of the students.

It is also conceptualized that eclectic stylistics pedagogy allows an easy integration of active learning methods, which are grounded on CLT theory. The active learning methods (ALM) enable the implementation of an eclectic communicative language teaching. ALM can also change the roles of the teacher. These methods can help implement student-centered poetry teaching. Thus, each pedagogical stylistic practice is designed to encompass practices like facilitating cooperative poetry teaching/learning, task based teaching, creative poetry writing, story telling, pair discussion, reflection, presentation, role play, debate, home works, and drawing pictures. These methods change the traditional roles that the teacher assumes. The teacher assumes the role of a facilitator and leader, not a lecturer. The leader-teacher can use poetic texts to teach both the receptive and productive skills besides helping the class in the appreciation of the poem and hence developing literary competence. Consequently, a student centered situation is created which in turn advances poetry interpretation, creative writing and thinking.
The purpose of teaching poetry needs to be clear for both the teacher and the learner. An eclectic stylistics pedagogy research can advance this clarity. Through out this research work, it is argued that the main purpose of teaching poetry or literature in the Ethiopian context is to improve both productive and receptive skills of students and then their linguistic, functional, creative, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competencies. While developing these skills and competencies, contexts are created for the development of the linguistic, functional, pragmatic and sociological competence of the learner. In an EFL context, literature should be taught so that undergraduates can be efficient writers, speakers, editors, readers and listeners in English. It provides vocabulary, which is fundamental to communicate effectively. Therefore, an eclectic stylistic pedagogy research can help see the dynamics of this interrelation and integration.

In this research, the inclusion of Ethiopian poetry along with African/American/British poetry/literature course is proposed because indigenous knowledge, wisdom and experiences of the learners and the teacher can be brought to the classes. It enables the teacher to integrate Ethiopian sense and sensibility to language and literature teaching. In turn, the student is enabled to respond sensibly to the intellectual, aesthetic, cultural and moral values of Ethiopians as envisioned and recreated by their own poets. The experiences of both groups can elicit discussions, debates and then creative writing in English and as a result, communicative competence can be improved. Ethiopian poets can be taken as role models by the students and teachers. Both the teacher and the students can evaluate the standard of poetic language as used by Ethiopian poets. Therefore, the inclusion of indigenous poems in English can advance the motivation to learn or teach poetry. As the survey for this research shows, out of 45 literary texts published, 17 are poetry books which are available in the current market or in the libraries. (See also Appendix _12 for the list of 45 works.)
Although a sample survey of the current book market shows that there are a number of literary publications in the market, especially from the Diaspora, the universities have not yet introduced courses on the Ethiopian Literature in English.

Ethiopian poetry, mostly, is written in Amharic, the official language in Ethiopia. However, there are a handful of great poets who write in English and whose works are not accessible to Ethiopian students. As a result of compounded problems, students majoring in English have missed a significant genre, which reflects the beauty of their landscape and the culture and ideology of their own people. Consequently, the present research work proposes presentation of Ethiopian poems stylistically and suggests active learning methods while delivering the course to solve the problems of teaching and reading poetry in English. Ethiopian poems are selected with the belief that they

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of the Text</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Type of Work</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Blessed Ocean on the Land of Sin</td>
<td>Ruth Meabere</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seductive Spell of Passion</td>
<td>Ashenafi Mengistu</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorous Decorum</td>
<td>Asafa Telera Dibaba</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Texture of Dreams</td>
<td>Fasil Yitbarek</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Vent to Stifled Emotions</td>
<td>Alem Haile</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ribbon of the Heart</td>
<td>Lulit Kebele and Wossen Mulatu</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soaring Spirits</td>
<td>Yemane Kidane</td>
<td>poetry</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massacre at Day Break</td>
<td>Befekadu Bekele</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Seal</td>
<td>Biruk Gebremedhin</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Voice</td>
<td>Assefa G.M.T.</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Poetaster: A Book of Anthology</td>
<td>Fikreslassie Yemane</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems</td>
<td>Tsegaye Gebremedhin</td>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held at a Distance: My Rediscovery of Ethiopia</td>
<td>Rebecca G. Haile</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes from the Hyena’s Belly</td>
<td>Nega Meleka</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Mirror of Love</td>
<td>Yemane Deneke</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defiance</td>
<td>Abbie Gubegna</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castaway Pearls : Claiming Our Inheritance</td>
<td>Medina Gebremariam</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Afersata: An Ethiopian Novel</td>
<td>Sahle Selassie</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glimpse of Life</td>
<td>Michael Daniel A.</td>
<td>Short Stories</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oda Oak Oracle</td>
<td>Tsegaye Gebremedhin</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
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</table>
can create the motivation and a congenial situation for language development. This research implies a more inclusive approach as clearly argued by Derrick:

Finally in our current age of globalization where English is an international language, the current narrow focus on Anglo-American literature in EFL programs should give way to a broader study of world literatures in English. This more inclusive interpretation of English-language literature will better help students understand and prepare for the diverse ways English is used and perceived worldwide (148).

While selecting the poems, the recommendations of other educators were considered. For example, Lazar recommends three major factors while choosing a literary text for classroom purpose: the students’ cultural background, linguistic proficiency and literary background. Lazar also suggests that teachers should also include factors such as availability of texts, length of the text, exploitability and suitability with the syllabus while selecting texts. While considering the linguistic proficiency of the students as a significant factor in text selection, the teacher has to ask the following questions:

1. Are the students sufficiently familiar with the usual norms of language use to recognize when these are perverted?
2. How much of the language in the text will the students be able to infer?
3. Will students find it useful enjoyable to study the text or will they feel demotivated by the difficulties of the language? (Lazar 55-56)

Brumfit’s selection criteria were also considered. The criteria includes: the linguistic level of the students, cultural level, length, pedagogic goal, genre representation and classic status (Language and Literature Teaching 190). To select these poems in English, criteria such as language difficulty, conceptual difficulty, stylistic complexity and purpose, students’ linguistic level and level of understanding were taken into account. While selecting, poems with the themes of prostitution, poverty, exile, death and rebirth, return and departure, tradition and modernity, identity and nothingness, loss and gain were given priority. Since one of the objectives of the research is to collect Ethiopian poetry in English and raise them to the classroom status, the selection of ten poems was intriguing. They were introduced to the teachers of
literature in eight universities. Each experimental group attended five presentations of Ethiopian poetry through five stylistic methods and active learning with the assumption to solve the three major problems of the research.

1.1.2. Problem Statement

In the English departments of Ethiopian universities, the teaching and learning of literature: poetry, novel, drama and short story, as subjects has been a craggy problem. Equally demanding is the reading of poetry. Presently, the number of literature subjects, which were initially designed and delivered to advance the literary competency of the undergraduates who target English teaching as a profession, has been reduced. These courses are either being replaced by ELT methodology courses or being merged. Those classical and modern literature courses, which were sources of rich language content, are now on decline. Inundated with a cornucopia of ELT methodology subjects, the future English language teachers graduate almost with little or no knowledge of poetry. Upon graduation, they “teach” English in secondary and preparatory schools or in the Universities.

In this research, primarily, it is argued that the relevance of poetry teaching in advancing the linguistic, functional, creative, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competencies of EFL learners has not yet been fully researched in the Ethiopian context. In addition, the research findings elsewhere have not been fruitfully implemented and evaluated timely. In the English departments where English is taught as a foreign language, English majors may not even recognize why they are taking a course in poetry or drama. Is it to strengthen their command over English language or improve their communicative competencies? Which one should come first: linguistic competence or communicative competence?

In these contexts, the undergraduates lack both the receptive and productive skills required to understand literary texts. A minimum linguistic competence is required, according to Brumfit, to develop literary capabilities (Literature Teaching 106). The
field survey in eight universities in Ethiopia shows that the entry level linguistic behavior of the undergraduates requires holistic improvement. They come from preparatory schools where literary works, especially poetry, are not included in many of the texts designed for English language teaching. English as a subject does not appeal to the imagination or to the heart of Ethiopian learners. Since the subject matter at the preparatory level is dry and does not appeal to the heart of the learner, most of the learners lack the interest and vocabulary command, which is the basis for foreign language learning. The dull and dry content also directly affects the methodology the teacher uses to teach English. Course writers often exclude poetry content; as a result, this has negatively affected poetry and creative writing in English. Insufficient training of future teachers of English in the universities has a cyclical impact on both literature and language teaching. English departments now are producing insufficiently trained undergraduates who will have a negative impact on English teaching in Ethiopia.

Poetry teaching methods also affect both the receptive and productive capabilities of the learners. Are the methods student-centered or still traditional? How are poetry teaching methods selected? Is the effect of these methods evaluated? Is there any indigenous poem in English in literature courses? How should students take poetry as a subject? What are the theories behind language and literature teaching? To find solutions to these seemingly simple problems, this research has based on both the theories of stylistics and communicative language teaching (CLT). Consequently, the thesis grounds itself on methodological problems of poetry teaching, analysis, reading and evaluation, on one hand and the failure to envision the relevance of poetry to ELT, on the other. All in all, the present research deals with three fundamental problems in the teaching of literature in the Ethiopian higher education contexts:

1. First, it addresses the problems in selecting proper texts relevant to the situation of Ethiopian learners of English at the tertiary level. More specifically, Ethiopian literature in English has been neglected in the tertiary instruction and research.
2. Second, the research deals with the problems of methodology in the teaching of poetry at the tertiary level.

3. Third, stylistics has not gone ahead of the teaching of the receptive and productive skills to include the functional, creative and pragmatic competencies of EFL learners. Its relevance has not been evaluated in the Ethiopian literature teaching context.

Consequently, to address these three fundamental problems in this research work, a hypothetical framework has been constructed to guide the experimental research design.

1.1.3. Hypothesis

The main aim of the research is to test the pedagogic relevance of stylistic practices in teaching Ethiopian poetry in English in a tertiary context. In order to test its relevance, an experimental research design is selected. The research hypothesizes that an eclectic pedagogical stylistic methodology of teaching poetry does not have significant relationship with the development of the communicative competencies of EFL learners of poetry. This major hypothesis was guided by the following five interrelated null hypotheses clarified by basic research questions. Each significant section of the experiment opens with one of the following subsections of the major hypothesis:

1. There is no significant relationship between formalist stylistic method of teaching poetry and the development of the linguistic competence of EFL learners.

2. There is no significant relationship between functionalist stylistic method of teaching poetry and the improvement of the functional competence of EFL learners.

3. There is no significant relationship between cognitive stylistic method of teaching poetry and the advancement of the creative writing skills of EFL learners.

4. There is no significant relation between pragmatic stylistic framework in poetry teaching and the development of the pragmatic competence of EFL learners.
5. There is no significant relation between feminist stylistic method of teaching poetry and the development of gender free language use.

The various levels of the major hypothesis above are made more clear using basic research questions below.

1.1.3.1. Basic Research Questions

It is assumed, in order to make the null hypotheses stated above more understandable, it is essential to rewrite each in the form of a basic research question. The following basic research questions are, therefore, raised to support the null hypotheses stated:

1. Is there any significant relationship between formalist stylistic method and the development of the linguistic competence of EFL learners?
2. Can functionalist stylistic framework contribute to the functional competence of EFL learners?
3. Is there any significant link between cognitive stylistic method and the creative writing skills of EFL learners?
4. Does pragmatic stylistic model of teaching poetry contribute to the development of the pragmatic competence of EFL learners?
5. Is there any link between feminist stylistic method of teaching poetry and the gender free language use in EFL context?

All these research questions or their equivalent null hypotheses guide the experimental research work and help achieve the objectives below.

1.1.4. Major Objective of the Research

The present research is conducted to:

1. augment the linguistic competence of EFL learners of poetry,
2. empower the functional competence of EFL learners of poetry,
3. advance the creative writing skills of EFL learners of poetry,
4. enlarge the pragmatic competence of EFL learners of poetry,
5. fortify gender free language use in EFL context,
6. boost the relevance of poetry through selection of appropriate methods and poetic
texts,
7. amalgamate active learning methods and stylistics in the teaching of poetry.
8. amass and bring Ethiopian poetry to higher learning and scholarly research.
9. contribute to the body of knowledge in language education in EFL context
following pedagogic stylistic methodology.

1.1.5. Significance of the Research

Literature teaching has been researched extensively in L1 contexts. Several educators
and researchers have proposed several approaches to the teaching of literature for non-
native speakers of English. However, the relevance of teaching Ethiopian poetry in
English for communicative competencies (linguistic, functional, creative, pragmatic
and sociolinguistic) of the learner in the Ethiopian context has not been studied. This
research makes the first attempt. Therefore, the present thesis deals with a stylistic
analysis of Ethiopian poetry in English with the intention of bringing indigenous
poetry to the level where it can help develop both language learning and literary
appreciation. The thesis also provides eclectic stylistics practices so that students can
be equipped both with transferable, analytical skills and communicative capabilities.
The major beneficiaries of the research, therefore, are undergraduate students
majoring in English in Ethiopian universities. As the research brings Ethiopian poems
in English to the classroom scenario and proposes practical poetry teaching strategies,
poetry teachers and ELT syllabus designers in the country can benefit from the
research results. It attempts to turn on the green light for Ethiopian poetry so that other
researchers who wish to undertake further research into Ethiopian literature in English
in general and the relevance of poetry teaching in particular can benefit from the
findings. Language policy makers can benefit from the research and see the relevance
of literature in English teaching in Ethiopia. The results of the research can be
implemented in other African universities where English is taught as a foreign
language. All in all, EFL learners, English teachers in EFL contexts, ELT curriculum
and syllabus designers, ELT material writers, language policy makers and researchers

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can benefit from this research. With these beneficiaries in mind, the research method of the thesis has been designed.

1.2. Research Design and Method

In an EFL context, it is assumed that literature teaching has dual aim. First, literature courses are designed primarily to develop the literary competence of the students. These courses are designed and delivered to pave the way for writing and thinking creatively, assuming literature as profession, developing journalistic writing capabilities, writing literary critical articles and understanding literary techniques. The creative capabilities are enhanced so that the students’ perceptions of the world are developed gradually. It is also assumed that literature helps students see the world and life differently and sensibly. Second, literature courses are offered to improve both the productive and receptive skills of students. This is mainly because literature classrooms create a congenial milieu for persuasion, argumentation, comprehension, analysis and creative writing practices. Vocabulary development strategies are intentionally integrated into literature teaching. Therefore, since stylistics is the bridge between two subjects: English language and English literature, according to Widdowson (Stylistics and The Teaching of Literature. 4), application of stylistic research method is appropriate and fits this dual aim. Consequently, within this dual goal of literature teaching in Ethiopia and within the broader stylistic research framework, the study subjects, the poetic texts and discourse analysis methods, data collection tools and data analysis strategies are selected. The strategies validated the relevance of stylistics in poetry teaching and language development. Therefore, to test the relevance of an eclectic pedagogical stylistics, experimental research design was chosen.

1.2.1. Sampling Procedure

The main subjects of the experiment were undergraduate students who major in English at Adama University. Through a systematic sampling procedure, out of a total
population of 300 English majors as in 2008/2009, 190 students (63.33%) were taken, that is, 95 as the experiment group and 95 in the control group. Therefore, the total sample size was 190. The students in the experimental group took the course following stylistic method whereas the students in the control group with a traditional method. The sample size was assumed to be representative and appropriate to generalize the pedagogic relevance of stylistics in the teaching of poetry. The implications of this study can be relevant for other universities in Ethiopia for two reasons: first, all students majoring in English are placed by the Ministry of Education at a national level; second, other English majors in other Universities may not have an entry knowledge of stylistics. However, in order to generalize and augment the results, a pilot survey and tests were conducted in seven old Universities.

1.2.2. Research Instruments

The inductive (fresh data) and the deductive reasoning (stylistics models) adopted in this research allow the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The major tools chosen to carry out this research, therefore, included: pre and post tests, classroom experiment, stylistic text analysis, curriculum review, structured observation, questionnaire and in-depth interview. The research heavily relied on five pre-tests and five post tests. An experimental research design was followed.

1.2.2.1. The Pilot Survey and Test

To find out the situation of literature teaching in the Ethiopian universities, the researcher carried out a pilot survey in seven public universities in Ethiopia. The Universities included in the pilot survey were: Mekele University, Bahir Dar University, Haremaya University, Hawassa University, Gondar University, Arba Minch University and Jima University. In each university, a randomly selected 30 students took a sample test. They were also told to comment on the tests at the end. The sample tests were given in these universities to validate and increase the relevance of the experiment. Each instructor of literature in these universities also gave a written
evaluation of the tests, the method proposed and the poems selected. The pilot study has shown that students were unfamiliar with Ethiopian literature in English and stylistics. Stylistics as a literature teaching method was entirely strange. (It was given as a course by a single university at undergraduate level). Students have not read Ethiopian literary texts in English. Many never knew that Ethiopians wrote literary texts in English. After the survey, the stylistic modules, methods and all tests were critically revised. The pilot study paved the way to carry out the pedagogical stylistic experiment.

1.2.2.2. Pedagogical Stylistic Experiment

In order to solve the fundamental problems in literature teaching an experimental design was followed. While carrying out the experiment, the students, both in the experimental and control groups, studied ten poems. Five stylistic methods, which included formalist, functionalist, cognitive, pragmatic and feminist stylistics, were introduced to the students. The poems were taught integrating active learning methods. As opposed to the students in the treatment group, students in the control group took the poems following traditional poetry teaching methods. In the control class, the lecture method was often used. Each time before and after a new stylistic method was introduced, both groups took pre and post-test. All students who took Fundamentals of Literature participated in the study of ten Ethiopian poems.

1.2.2.3. Pre-tests

Two types of tests were designed. The first type included five different types of pre tests administered to 190 students (both in the control and experiment group) at Adama University. Each pre test was administered before each stylistic model of teaching poetry was conducted in the classes. The pre tests were divided into five parts on the basis of the five stylistic models. Each test included contents from two poems and stylistic methods. The basic contents of the tests depended on a stylistic analysis
of the poems chosen. Stylistic method was used as a way of arriving at meaning through the analysis of linguistic features of the poems.

1.2.2.4. Post-tests

The second type of test was given to students in the experimental and control groups after each stylistic presentation of Ethiopian poetry in English and active learning experimentations were over. The post tests helped evaluate the validity of the variables with reference to the relevance of stylistics, the impacts of each active learning method and the use of Ethiopian poetry in English for the development of different types of competencies. The contents of each pre test were repeated at the end of each new stylistic method of teaching poetry. The experiment was integrated into a course entitled Fundamentals of Literature, a course all English majors are taking. Besides the pre tests and post tests, to evaluate each student’s performance continuously in Fundamentals of Literature (FLEE 122) where poetry is a chapter, the performance of each student was recorded as of the first day of the session. In order to find out the pedagogic relevance of stylistics to poetry teaching and language development, besides these tests, continuous assessment procedures were followed.

1.2.2.5. Text Analysis

The prime intention of stylistic interpretation of ten poetic texts in this broad experiment and research framework was to describe the relationship between stylistic methodology, poetry teaching and language development in the Ethiopian tertiary language learning context. An eclectic stylistic experiment was carried out using principles from formalist stylistics, functionalist stylistics, cognitive stylistics, pragmatic stylistics and feminist stylistics. An eclectic perspective was used because the relationship between stylistics, poetry teaching and language development was understood as a complex system. The relationship should be explained in terms of the contribution of literature teaching in developing the linguistic, functional, creative, pragmatic and sociological competence of an EFL learner. The experimentation was assumed to lead to a fresh generalization on the pedagogic relevance of stylistics.
For the wider stylistic interpretation and classroom activities, ten poems by Ethiopian writers were analyzed. The texts were analyzed following five stylistic trends. It was a discourse analysis. This concept agrees with Widdowson’s statement: “We interpret literature not as text but discourse” (Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature. 48). Fowler also underlines the significance of interpreting literature as discourse: “To treat literature as discourse is to see the text as mediating relationship between language users: not only relationship of speech, but also of consciousness, ideology, role and class” (Literature as Discourse. 77).

1.2.2.6. Curriculum Review

The major part of the research as indicated above was pedagogical stylistic experimentation. Besides the stylistic experimentation, the national English curriculum for undergraduate program and the national language policy documents were reviewed. The findings were used to describe the objectives and status of literature and English teaching in the Ethiopian higher education contexts. It was observed that all higher education institutions follow similar language curriculum. The curriculum did not include any single course on Ethiopian literature in English. The curriculum included only five literature courses in all universities.

1.2.2.7. Structured Observation

Before the stylistic presentation of Ethiopian poetry in English was made, four classroom structured observations were carried out in Adama University. Similar structured observations were conducted in Jima University, Bahir Dar University, Jima University, Haremaya University, Hawassa University, Gondar University and Arba Minch University. The observations were made on the basis of checklists like time management (teacher’s time as opposed to student’s time), methods of presentation, student’s participation in literature classes, content presentation, objectives of each lesson, language use and application of active learning methods and
methods of teaching literature. The observation shows that teaching methods are still traditional although some active learning methods are being introduced; students lack literary appreciation skill and fundamental linguistic competence to understand texts. Since English department is the last choice, they lack the motivation to actively participate in discussions.

1.2.2.8. In-depth Interview

To assess the relevance of literature teaching for language development in the Ethiopian contexts, in-depth interviews were conducted with heads of English departments, students and literature course instructors in the eight universities (including Adama). The views of these instructors and heads of departments were used to substantiate the research questions of the thesis and to find out the current situation of literature teaching in the Ethiopian Universities. Basically, their views were used to crystallize the problem and revise the testes. The interview shows that these language departments operate under similar problems and contexts. In all the universities students lack both fundamental linguistic and literary skills. They have little or no knowledge of literature and their motivation to specialize in English is very low. None of the students interviewed read even a single book on Ethiopian literature in English.

1.2.2.9. Questionnaire

To augment the classroom experiment, a questionnaire with 19 items was administered to the students in the experimental group at Adama University. These helped the researcher find out the academic background of the students in the English department, the challenges in literature teaching, the methods for language teaching and the significance of stylistics in language teaching through literature in a tertiary context. All in all, triangulation of methods (experiments, tests, observations, curriculum reviews, in-depth interviews, expert responses and questionnaires) were used to improve the validity of the data.
1.2. Data Analysis

In this research, both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used. Mean scores, frequencies and percentages were used to describe statically the results of the tests. Two tailed t tests, with 188 degree of freedom, were used to compare the progress made by students in the treatment and control groups. The t test was instrumental in validating the pre and post test results. In the qualitative research process, emphatic neutrality helped describe the nuances of multiple realities in literature and language teaching objectively. The discourse analysis was augmented by textual evidence and context analysis. Responses, poetic effects and reflections were best described qualitatively. Whenever applicable poems were analyzed following stylistic methodology. However, significant of all, to find out the existence of significant relations between the control group and the treatment group, t-test analyses were made using SPSS 16.0 for 10 tests using a sample size of 190 students. The researcher accepted a p-value of 0.05 or below as being statistically significant. It provided a convenient basis for drawing conclusions in the hypothesis-testing.

1.3. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has seven chapters. The first chapter presents the background and the research method. Although the research design was made after reviewing relevant literature, it appears before the literature review chapter. The literature review and the conceptual framework lay the basic structure for the succeeding two chapters on the analysis of the ten Ethiopian poems in English. These two chapters were originally treated as if they were one but for the convenience of analysis and presentation, they were divided into two on the basis of textualist and contextualist stylistic practices. The chapters present the classroom experiment and the analysis of the poems. These chapters lead to chapter six which presents the findings of the classroom experiment. The final chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations. As indicated above, the next chapter on literature review should be understood as a chapter which has immensely nourished the research design of the experiment already presented.