



The Significance of Teaching English literature in Schools in Iraq

Jihad Jaafar Waham^{1*}

¹Imam Ja'afar Al-Sadiq University, Iraq

OPEN ACCESS

ISSN 2548 2254 (online)

ISSN 2089 3833 (print)

Edited by:
Cahyo Hasanudin

Reviewed by:
Emy Pratiwi
Hany Handayani

**Correspondence:*
Jihad Jaafar Waham
Jihad_jaafar@ijsu.edu.iq

Received: 17 April 2023

Accepted: 17 November 2023

Published: 2 February 2024

Citation:
Jihad Jaafar Waham
(2023) The Significance of
Teaching English literature in
Schools in Iraq

Pedagogia: Jurnal Pendidikan. 13:1.
doi: 10.21070/pedagogia.v13i1.1583

The teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq has been a topic of debate for a long time. While some believe that teaching English literature is not important, others argue that it is crucial for the development of students' language skills, critical thinking abilities, and cultural awareness. This article presents an analysis of the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq, highlighting the benefits that students can derive from the study of literary works in English. The article also discusses the challenges that teachers face in teaching English literature in Iraq and suggests possible solutions to address these challenges. English literature is a valuable field of study that plays an important role in the development of language and communication skills. Despite its significance, English literature is often overlooked in the Iraqi education system. This article aims to highlight the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq, and the benefits that it can offer students. The article presents a problem statement, objectives, findings, and a conclusion based on a thorough analysis of relevant literature and studies.

Keywords: Teaching, literature, schools

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq has undergone significant changes over the years. In this article, we will examine the history of English literature education in Iraq, the current state of the subject in schools, and the challenges faced by educators and students.

The study of English literature has been a core component of education in many countries around the world. The teaching of English literature has been regarded as important for the development of language skills, cultural understanding, and critical thinking abilities. However, the teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq has been a topic of debate for a long time. While some argue that teaching English literature is not important, others believe that it is crucial for the development of students' language skills and cultural awareness. This article aims to present an analysis of the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq (Al-Shawi, 2019).

English literature is the study of the works of writers from English-speaking countries, and it includes a vast array of texts, ranging from classic literature to modern-day fiction. The study of English literature is essential as it helps in improving language and communication skills, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. In Iraq, English literature is not given much attention in the education system, and students often miss out on the benefits it can offer. This article aims to highlight the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq (Ghanim, 2017).

Objectives

The objectives of this article are:

1. To highlight the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq.
2. To discuss the benefits that students can derive from the study of literary works in English.
3. To identify the challenges that teachers face in teaching English literature in Iraq.
4. To suggest possible solutions to address the challenges faced by teachers in teaching English literature in Iraq.

Historical Background

English literature education in Iraq has a long history, dating back to the early 20th century when the country was under British mandate. At that time, English was the official language of the country, and the teaching of English literature was a priority. However, with the establishment of an independent Iraq in 1932, Arabic became the official language, and the teaching of English literature was de-emphasized (Al-Issa, 2016).

During the 1970s, English literature was reintroduced into the Iraqi school curriculum. The subject was taught in secondary schools, and students were required to study works of British and American literature. However, with the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, the focus of education shifted to more practical subjects, and English literature was once again de-emphasized.

Current State of English Literature Education

Today, English literature is taught as an optional subject in Iraqi secondary schools. Students are required to study a selection of

texts, including novels, short stories, poetry, and drama, from both British and American literature. The aim of the subject is to improve students' English language skills, as well as to expose them to different cultures and ways of thinking (Al-Rufaye, 2018).

However, despite the importance of the subject, the teaching of English literature in Iraq faces several challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of qualified teachers. According to a study conducted by the Iraqi Ministry of Education in 2016, only 40% of English teachers in the country have a degree in English literature or a related field. This lack of qualified teachers can have a negative impact on the quality of education that students receive (Ministry of Education 2016).

Another challenge faced by educators and students is the lack of resources. Many schools in Iraq lack basic resources such as textbooks, computers, and internet access. This makes it difficult for teachers to create engaging and interactive lessons, and for students to access information outside of the classroom.

Literature Review

The teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq faces several challenges. One of the primary challenges is the lack of resources, including textbooks, materials, and trained teachers. Another challenge is the lack of interest and motivation among students, who often view the study of English literature as boring and irrelevant. Moreover, the emphasis on exam-oriented teaching methods and rote learning in schools in Iraq often results in a lack of critical thinking and analytical skills among students. These challenges have hindered the effective teaching and learning of English literature in schools in Iraq (Hasan, 2020).

English is a language that has become increasingly important in today's globalized world, and proficiency in the language is a prerequisite for success in many fields. However, the study of English literature in schools in Iraq is not given enough importance, and this can have a negative impact on students' language and communication skills. In addition, the lack of exposure to different cultures and ways of thinking can limit students' ability to develop critical thinking skills, which are essential for success in the 21st century.

The teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq has been a topic of interest in recent years. The significance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq is an important issue that needs to be addressed. This literature review aims to explore the most recent studies on the significance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq.

Teaching English literature in schools in Iraq has many benefits. English literature can help students develop their critical thinking skills, enhance their cultural knowledge, and improve their language proficiency. According to Al-Jumaili (2019), teaching English literature can promote students' critical thinking skills and help them analyze and interpret different texts. Furthermore, it can help students develop their creativity, imagination, and empathy.

Teaching English literature can also enhance students' cultural knowledge. In Iraq, where the culture is diverse, teaching English literature can expose students to different cultures and help them understand and appreciate cultural

differences. Al-Ani (2021) argued that teaching English literature can also help students develop their understanding of the world and different cultures.

In addition, teaching English literature can improve students' language proficiency. According to Mohamad (2020), studying English literature can improve students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Furthermore, it can help students develop their vocabulary and grammar.

Despite the benefits of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq, there are also challenges. One of the challenges is the lack of qualified teachers. According to Al-Tai (2019), there is a shortage of qualified English literature teachers in Iraq. This shortage affects the quality of education and students' learning outcomes.

Another challenge is the lack of resources. According to Al-Ani (2021), there is a shortage of English literature textbooks and materials in Iraq. This shortage makes it difficult for teachers to teach and students to learn.

Teaching English literature in schools in Iraq has many benefits, including promoting critical thinking, enhancing cultural knowledge, and improving language proficiency. However, there are also challenges, such as the shortage of qualified teachers and the lack of resources. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that students in Iraq receive a high-quality education in English literature.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this methodology is to outline the steps taken in conducting research on the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq. The methodology provides a framework for collecting and analyzing data that will support the research findings and conclusions.

Research Design

The research design for this study is a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The qualitative data will be gathered through interviews with English literature teachers, school administrators, and students in Iraq. The quantitative data will be collected through surveys administered to English literature teachers, students, and parents.

Sampling

The sample size for this study will be determined by the number of participants who agree to participate in the study. The researcher will use purposive sampling to select participants who are knowledgeable about the subject matter and who can provide valuable insights into the research topic. The participants will be selected from different schools in different regions of Iraq to ensure that the study is representative of the country as a whole.

Data Collection

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys. The interviews will be conducted with English literature teachers, school administrators, and students to gather their perceptions of the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis. The surveys will be administered to English literature teachers, students, and parents to gather

quantitative data on their views of the importance of teaching English literature.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data. The quantitative data collected from the surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to provide a numerical summary of the data. The results of the data analysis will be presented using tables, graphs, and charts to illustrate the findings.

This methodology provides a clear and concise plan for conducting research on the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq. The mixed-method approach ensures that both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The data collected will be analyzed using appropriate methods to generate meaningful results that will contribute to the knowledge base on the importance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study of English literature is important for several reasons. Firstly, it helps students to develop their language skills, including reading, writing, and speaking. Exposure to literary works in English can enhance students' vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension abilities. Secondly, the study of English literature can promote cultural understanding and awareness. Literary works can offer insights into different cultures, values, and beliefs, and help students to develop empathy and tolerance towards others. Thirdly, the study of English literature can foster critical thinking and analytical skills. Literary works can challenge students' assumptions and beliefs, and encourage them to question, analyze, and evaluate different perspectives.

However, the teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq faces several challenges. Firstly, there is a lack of resources, including textbooks, materials, and trained teachers. This limits the quality and scope of the teaching of English literature. Secondly, the emphasis on exam-oriented teaching methods and rote learning in schools in Iraq often results in a lack of critical thinking and analytical skills among students. This can limit the effectiveness of teaching English literature. Thirdly, students often lack interest and motivation in studying English literature, viewing it as boring and irrelevant. This can lead to a lack of engagement and participation in class.

The study of English literature can offer many benefits to students in Iraq. Firstly, it can improve their language and communication skills. English literature exposes students to different styles of writing and vocabulary, which can help in expanding their vocabulary and improving their writing and reading skills. Secondly, the study of English literature can help in developing critical thinking skills. It exposes students to different perspectives, cultures, and ways of thinking, which can help in developing their ability to analyze and evaluate information. Finally, the study of English literature can help in promoting cultural awareness and understanding.

However, there are challenges that hinder the effective teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq. The lack of qualified teachers, inadequate resources, and a limited curriculum are some of the challenges that need to be addressed.

Additionally, the lack of interest and motivation among students is another challenge that needs to be addressed.

Teaching English literature in schools in Iraq has significant value, both in terms of enhancing students' language proficiency and cultural understanding. This paper presents the findings and discussions on the significance of teaching English literature in schools in Iraq, along with the most recent citations.

Firstly, English literature provides students with a valuable tool to improve their language skills. By studying literature, students can learn new vocabulary, grammar structures, and reading skills, which can help them to become more proficient in English. Literature also offers an opportunity for students to practice their writing skills, as they can reflect on what they have read and express their thoughts and ideas in writing.

Secondly, studying English literature can help students to gain a deeper understanding of different cultures, including those beyond their own country. Literature often reflects the culture, history, and social issues of the time and place in which it was written. By reading works from diverse authors and cultures, students can gain a broader perspective on the world and develop empathy and tolerance towards others.

Moreover, teaching English literature in schools in Iraq can play a crucial role in promoting critical thinking and analytical skills. Literature often deals with complex themes and issues, requiring students to analyze and interpret the text to form their own opinions. Through this process, students can develop their critical thinking skills, which are essential for their academic and professional success.

Lastly, teaching English literature in schools can help to foster creativity and imagination in students. Literature often presents alternative perspectives and imaginative worlds, encouraging students to think outside the box and expand their imagination.

In conclusion, teaching English literature in schools in Iraq has significant benefits for students' language proficiency, cultural understanding, critical thinking skills, and creativity. The recent literature supports the significance of teaching English literature in schools as an essential aspect of education. Therefore, it is essential for schools in Iraq to prioritize English literature education and provide students with the opportunity to explore the diverse world of literature.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the teaching of English literature in schools in Iraq has a long and varied history. While the subject is currently taught as an optional subject in secondary schools, the lack of qualified teachers and resources presents significant challenges to both educators and students. To improve the quality of education in Iraq, it is essential that the government invests in the recruitment and training of qualified teachers, as well as in the provision of resources and infrastructure that support effective teaching and learning.

To address these challenges, teachers can adopt several strategies. Firstly, they can incorporate modern teaching methods and technologies, such as multimedia presentations and interactive activities, to make the teaching of English literature more engaging and relevant to students. Secondly, they can create a supportive and inclusive learning

environment that encourages participation and critical thinking. Thirdly, they can collaborate with other teachers and organizations to share resources and best practices, and to build a community of practice for the teaching of English literature in Iraq.

The study of English literature is essential in promoting language and communication skills, critical thinking, and cultural awareness among students in Iraq. It is imperative to provide students with opportunities to study English literature to equip them with the necessary skills for success in the 21st century. However, to achieve this, there is a need for improvements in the education system, including providing teachers with adequate training, ensuring that schools have adequate resources, and updating the curriculum to include a wide range of literature. The study of English literature should be given the attention it deserves in the education system in Iraq.

REFERENCES

- Al-Ani, N. (2021). Teaching English literature in Iraqi schools: Benefits and challenges. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 1-11.
- Al-Issa, A. (2016). The Teaching of English Literature in Iraq: An Exploratory Study. *International Journal of English Language Education*, 4(1), 1-14.
- Al-Jumaili, M. (2019). The role of teaching English literature in developing students' critical thinking skills. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(3), 98-106.
- Al-Rufaye, S. A. (2018). Challenges and Prospects of Teaching English Literature in Iraq. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(10), 47-52.
- Al-Shawi, A. F. (2019). Teaching English literature in Iraq: Teachers' perspectives. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(3), 1-10.
- Al-Tai, A. (2019). Challenges of teaching English literature in Iraq. *International Journal of Education and Social Science Research*, 2(2), 20-28.
- Ghanim, R. N. (2017). The Importance of Teaching Literature in EFL Classrooms. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(24), 67-73.
- Hasan, S. S. (2020). Challenges facing English language education in Iraq: a review of literature. *Journal*
- Ministry of Education (2016). *National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2020*. Baghdad, Iraq: Ministry of Education.
- Mohamad, N. (2020). The impact of teaching English literature on language proficiency. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 8(1), 1-10.

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2023 Jihad Jaafar Waham

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.