

# **PALA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2010**

**Paper Title:** A Case Study in Using Literary Texts to Promote Communicative Competence and Enhance Critical Thinking Skills

**Author:** Dr. Suhair Al Alami

**Affiliation:** Al Ghurair University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**Postal Address:** Dr. Suhair Al Alami, Al Ghurair University, P.O. Box 37374, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**Email Address:** supaeg@yahoo.co.uk

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Part</b>	<b>Page</b>
List of Tables	3
Part One: Abstract	4-5
Part Two: Introduction and Theoretical Background	5-8
Part Three: Statement of the Problem	8
Part Four: Study Questions	8-10
Part Five: Study Population, Sample, and Setting	10-11
Part Six: Study Variables	11
Part Seven: Instruments of the Study	11-12
Part Eight: Conduct of the Study	12-13
Part Nine: The Proposed Course in Perspective	13-18
Part Ten: Statistical Treatment	18-32
Part Eleven: Discussion of Results in Relation to Study Questions	32-35
Part Twelve: Study Recommendations	35-37
Part Thirteen: Concluding Word	37
Part Fourteen: References	37-38
Part Fifteen: Appendix-List of Abbreviations and Definitions	39

## **List of Tables**

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table One: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis One	18-19
Table Two: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Two	20-21
Table Three: Paired Data t-Test for Hypothesis Three	22-23
Table Four: Paired Data t-Test for Hypothesis Four	24-25
Table Five: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Five	26-27
Table Six: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Six	27-28
Table Seven: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Seven	29-30
Table Eight: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Eight	31-32
Table Nine: Steps Taken for Setting the Components and Specifications of the Proposed Course	33

## **1.0 Abstract**

**Towards the end of the university stage, students residing in the United Arab Emirates and specialising in subjects other than English are expected-amongst other university requirements- to have acquired adequate communicative competence, as well as a number of critical thinking skills. Nevertheless, and despite every effort made in the field of teaching English to EFL university students in the country, the output gained in terms of acquired skills and competencies is still below requirements (Al Alami: 2008).**

**Seen from the researcher's point of view, literature plays an essential role in promoting EFL students' communicative competence and enhancing their critical thinking skills. It is therefore the aim of the present research to offer a solution to EFL university students' disappointing achievements, through proposing and presenting a fiction course: LEARN AND GAIN.**

The present research as such has sought convincing answers to the following enquiries.

### **Question One**

What are the components and specifications of a fiction course, proposed for promoting EFL university students' communicative competence and enhancing their critical thinking skills?

### **Question Two**

To what extent is the proposed fiction course effective in promoting EFL university students' communicative competence and enhancing their critical thinking skills?

**As far as methodology is concerned, the paper is based upon empirical research, undertaken at the Al Ghurair University in Dubai where the researcher works. The research has adopted a true experimental design, incorporating an experimental group and a control group. The instruments of the current research are: a pre-post test and a student's questionnaire.**

**In the light of results, findings are discussed and recommendations are made.**

## **2.0 Introduction and Theoretical Background**

**Towards the end of the university stage, under-graduate students residing in the United Arab Emirates and specialising in subjects other than English are expected- amongst other university requirements- to have acquired adequate communicative competence, as well as a number of critical thinking skills. Nevertheless, and despite every effort made in the field of teaching English to EFL university students in the UAE, the acquired skills and competencies are still less than those required by both university curricula as well as today's world (Al Alami: 2008).**

The teaching of English in the United Arab Emirates is based upon the communicative approach, which aims at equipping students with sufficient communicative competence, so that in the long-run they will employ language skills for communication purposes, as appropriate (see Al Ghurair University: 2008). Personal experience and the researcher's colleagues' observations, however, show that the majority of EFL university students fail to achieve adequate

communicative competence, which in turn does not qualify them to exploit the foreign language as required by their curricula as well as by today's world.

Another issue which the researcher would like to raise in this context is the gap existing between the declared aims of university education in the UAE on the one hand, and what happens in reality on the other. Bearing in mind that critical thinking-higher order thinking skills- is central to university education in the UAE (Al Ghurair University: 2008), it seems reasonable then to assume that EFL university students are well-equipped to tackle a reading text and to handle a writing task, demonstrating an adequate repertoire of critical thinking skills. Personal experience and the researcher's colleagues' observations, however, indicate that this does not apply to the majority of EFL university students.

What are some of the major factors which inhibit EFL students' progress in the areas of communication and critical thinking skills? Seen from the researcher's point of view, a variety of factors contribute with the most prominent of which being students' insufficient exposure to literary texts. The language courses offered to EFL university students in the UAE are General English, and in some cases, ESP courses as well.

Seeking an *effective* remedy, the researcher argues that utilising literature in the EFL classroom would be beneficial in terms of many essential aspects. This belief is in harmony with many specialists' suggestions for utilising literature to promote communication and critical thinking skills. McRae (2008), for example, believes that the use of stories in language teaching has an extremely positive effect in that

stories encourage students to read for pleasure. Eager to know what will happen next, keeps the reader interested as well as keeps the reader reading. Hall (2007) states that in EFL as well as ESL contexts, utilising literary texts can be seen as a means of promoting one's proficiency in vocabulary, reading, growth, as well as enriching cultural knowledge. Processing literary texts is often considered difficult, yet worth the effort as a rich source of relevant language data from which one can acquire language. What is more, a growing interest in "affect" in second language acquisition proposes that, pleasure and involvement of the type that literary reading creates can significantly contribute to language acquisition.

As far as utilising novels for teaching purposes is concerned, Shaw (2007) discusses the rationale behind choosing a novel when dealing with EFL students. Accessibility of language, engaging and true to life nature of characters/relationships/events, developing imagination, visualising settings and characters, as well as being emotionally evocative, are amongst the most prominent reasons for utilising a novel in EFL contexts.

Chen (2006) explains that narrative is one of the two modes of our thinking. Whilst communicating with others, regardless of culture and background, one can describe an incident as a way of explaining thoughts or a part of an argument. Accordingly, narration can be regarded as an essential prose genre which can be included in a university composition course for EFL learners. Literature, in general, represents various uses of the language-both conventional and literary, displays a broader range of communication strategies than any other single teaching component, as well as extends linguistic knowledge on the levels of both use and usage. When a student reads a literary piece, he/she learns the foreign

language in context rather than memorising rules and words. Literature provides an informal, yet supportive environment for EFL students to normally develop their linguistic system. In addition to the linguistic benefit, literature opens the door for EFL students to the foreign culture.

It would be reasonable to conclude then, that literature in EFL contexts plays an essential role not only in promoting language skills, but also in enhancing critical thinking on the part of learners. The present study, as such, has sought to investigate the extent to which this viewpoint is valid and reliable, through presenting a fiction course, designed and implemented by the researcher. The proposed course is fiction-based language teaching, adopting the view that literature is a resource rather than an object in itself, thus advocating the use of literature as one of the main resources in foreign/second language acquisition (see Baba 2008).

### **3.0 Statement of the Problem**

The problem of the present study has been stated as follows: Despite the declared aims of university education in the UAE, and in spite of the efforts EFL practitioners have made in implementing the curriculum, EFL university students' academic achievement in English remains disappointing.

### **4.0 Study Questions**

The current study has sought convincing answers to the following enquiries.

### **Question One**

What are the components and specifications of a fiction course, proposed for promoting EFL university students' communicative competence, and enhancing their critical thinking skills?

### **Question Two**

To what extent is the proposed fiction course effective in promoting EFL university students' communicative competence, and enhancing their critical thinking skills?

Within these two major questions, the following sub-questions have been addressed to further investigate the main issues discussed in the current research.

- I. What differences are there between the experimental and control groups' performance, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test?
- II. What differences are there between the experimental and control groups' performance, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test?
111. What differences are there between the experimental group students' performance, on the communicative critical reading competence pre-post test?

**IV.** What differences are there between the experimental group students' performance, on the communicative critical writing competence pre-post test?

**V.** What differences are there between the performance of male subjects and that of female subjects, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test?

**VI.** What differences are there between the performance of male subjects and that of female subjects, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test?

**VII.** What differences are there between the performance of subjects belonging to colleges of science and that of subjects belonging to non-science colleges, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test?

**VIII.** What differences are there between the performance of subjects belonging to colleges of science and that of subjects belonging to non-science colleges, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test?

## **5.0 Study Population, Sample, and Setting**

The study population is EFL university students residing in the UAE and specialising in subjects other than English. The sample is a number of first-year students studying at Al Ghurair University in Dubai where the researcher works. Piloting the study took place during the first and second semesters of the academic year 2008-2009, with two different groups of the same language proficiency level-

upper intermediate English. Conducting the experimental study took place during the first and second semesters of the academic year 2009-2010, with two different experimental groups and two different control groups of the same language proficiency level-upper intermediate English.

## **6.0 Study Variables**

The experimental and control groups have included males and females; some of whom belonging to non-science colleges: College of Business Studies, and College of Interior Design, and some belonging to colleges of sciences: College of Computing, and College of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. The study variables can be summed up as follows:

- Independent variable: the proposed course- **LEARN AND GAIN**.
- Dependent variable: students' achievement on the communicative critical competence pre-post test.
- Moderator variables: gender- male/female, college- science/non-science.

## **7.0 Instruments of the Study**

The instruments of the current study are a pre-post test involving the two groups: experimental and control, and a pre-post questionnaire involving the experimental group students. The pre-post test was administered to the experimental and control groups, prior to and following implementation. Incorporating two parts: communicative critical reading competence and

communicative critical writing competence, the test aimed to investigate, whether or not, the proposed course was of any significant effectiveness whilst at the same time examining the effects of the other variables involved: gender and college types.

As far as the pre-post questionnaire is concerned, it was administered to the experimental group students, prior to and following the implementation of the proposed course. The questionnaire aimed to: gather sufficient data about how subjects rated their abilities in dealing with the short story and novel in English, get a clear idea about what story genres subjects preferred most, and form a clear picture about what reading and writing activities subjects' practised, prior to and following treatment.

## **8.0 Conduct of the Study**

Seeing the proposed fiction course as her *newly born academic baby*, the overriding question which the researcher has always raised is: 'Why do I implement what I implement the way I implement?' To ensure quality implementation, therefore, the researcher herself conducted the study in her workplace: Al Ghurair University in Dubai, UAE. The implementation of the current study can be divided into two parts: two essential pre-implementation stages, and two actual on-site implementation stages. This part reports on these stages which the implementation went through.

The first pre-implementation stage was a thorough reading of many related references within the current research's context. The second pre-implementation stage was designing the proposed course. Initiating the slogan-*love it, live it*-the

designing process of the proposed course was an interesting process. The designing process of the proposed course resulted in the following outcomes: setting the main aims and attainment targets, initiating an approach to the field of EFL, selecting two novels and fifteen short for inclusion as language input, organising the content of the whole course considering which activities could serve certain objectives for each of the seven sections included in the proposed course, and lastly, setting the course as a whole.

The first actual on-site implementation stage was piloting the proposed course, which took place twice in class with two different groups during the academic year 2008-2009. Last but not least was the second actual on-site implementation stage of the course, which took place in class during the academic year 2009-2010. This last stage was carried out twice with two different experimental groups. The duration of implementation was three hours a week, lasting for fifteen weeks each semester.

## **9.0 The Proposed Course in Perspective**

Initiating a slogan-love it, live it-the proposed course: **LEARN AND GAIN**, includes fifteen short stories and two novels, chosen to illustrate various modes of narration as well as a variety of settings; characters and plots, as well as to provoke reflection and discussion on a range of issues. All texts illustrate how great writers can with their insight and gift for words; help us to see the world we live in, in new probing and exciting ways.

What characterises the proposed course, the researcher believes, is the integration of the skills of literary competence, communicative competence, and critical

thinking within the same mould. This essentially combined input incorporates the two receptive skills of listening and reading, and the two productive skills of speaking and writing. Section Nine describes the proposed course in relation to the general aims and main targets, content organisation, as well as teaching approaches.

## **9.1 The Proposed Course: General Aims and Main Targets**

Upon the completion of the proposed course, learners are expected to:

- Read to find and handle information for a range of purposes, as well as read to enjoy and respond to a variety of texts.
- Write for a range of purposes, to convey meaning in language appropriate to purpose and audience.

Learners are required to develop their abilities to read critically. In so doing, they should be able to:

- Distinguish facts, opinions and reasoned justifications.
- Grasp feelings, opinions and attitudes implied.
- Deduce meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context.
- Make judgements based upon personal knowledge and experience.
- Recognise the adequacy and effectiveness of employing literary devices for appreciation purposes.

Moreover, learners are required to improve their abilities in writing critically. In so doing, they should be able to:

- Write coherent pieces of written discourse.
- Utilise cohesive devices in a written piece appropriately.
- Employ literary techniques in writing effectively.

## **9.2 The Proposed Course: Content Organisation**

**LEARN AND GAIN** is comprised of seven main sections. This part presents the sections in sequence, along with the specific aims for each section.

**I. Warm-up.** The aim of this section is to arouse learners' motivation. This section includes two instructional activities: *brainstorming* and *advance organisers*.

**II. Reading in Action.** The aim of this section is to promote reading skills with particular emphasis on critical reading. This section includes the following:

- As you read find out (speed reading for literal comprehension).
- Keeping track (reading for detailed comprehension).
- Close study (focus on story elements – character, plot, setting, context, theme, and narrator).
- Reader's response (responding to literary texts making personal as well as critical judgements).
- Follow up (enrichment activities such as cultural connections and reading games).

**III. Language Practice.** The aim of this section is to expand learners' knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, as well as to instil in them an appreciation sense of literary devices used in literary texts. This section includes the following:

- Word finder: vocabulary in context.
- Grammar focus: grammar in context.
- Literary qualities: literary devices in context.

**IV. Oral Production.** The aim of this section is to enhance listening and speaking skills through creating life-like situations in class.

**V. Writer's Workshop.** The aim of this section is to improve writing skills by focusing on a variety of writing purposes and styles.

**VI. Self-Evaluation.** The aim of this section is for learners to reflect on their progress in English, using the charts provided for this section.

**VII. Building up Your Portfolio.** The aim of this section is to offer further practice in all four language skills, whilst emphasising learners' autonomy.

### **9.3 The Proposed Course: Teaching Approaches**

The proposed course adopts an eclectic approach, thus selecting what would be appropriate for a particular teaching situation. Aiming to integrate language; literature; communication; and critical thinking within one frame to ensure better academic outcomes, the *communicative critical language competence approach* has been proposed and initiated by the researcher. The approach is based on a number of previous approaches related to the areas involved. The linking of the language of linguistics, the analysis of literary texts, the skills of communication and interaction, and the skills of critical thinking; is essentially the domain of this approach. Within this domain, listeners and speakers, readers and writers, are all

partners. Of paramount concern for this approach is the impact a literary text has on learners as listeners, speakers, readers, and writers. Aesthetic response is conceived in terms of interaction between a text and a learner.

The pre-requisites for the effective study of a literary text can be summarised as follows: capacity for sustainable attention, willingness to entertain risks rather than avoid them, tolerance for mistaken responses; paradox and uncertainty, flexibility and openness to diverse cultures and views, as well as appreciation of literary techniques. Whilst dealing with a literary text, the following analyses are proposed:

- Conceptual analysis: analysis of major elements of a text such as theme and characterisation.
- Comparative analysis: seeking similarities in texts of the same genre, theme, setting and so on.
- Contrastive analysis: identifying differences amongst texts considering areas such as genre, theme, setting, style, and so on.
- Critical analysis: judgements reflecting upon main points/views stated or otherwise implied.

This approach assumes that it is the context rather than the individual words that should be an area of concern, for no utterance can properly be absorbed and internalised apart from the context it is originally made within. The language used in a literary text is multi-dimensional. Any word has the potential to function on at least two levels. Although a literary text does communicate, the message is sometimes multi-dimensional, and in many cases there is no one single interpretation.

To end with, the approach assumes that it can serve four aims: mastering language skills, acquiring communication competencies, appreciating literary techniques, and meeting critical thinking requirements.

## **10.0 Statistical Treatment**

For the purpose of the current study, a number of hypotheses have been formulated in accordance with the study questions mentioned earlier (see Section Four). To portray the statistical findings of the current study transparently, this part presents the study hypotheses, along with the statistical treatment conducted for the purpose of testing each hypothesis.

### **Hypothesis One**

There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' performance on the communicative critical reading competence post-test, in favour of the experimental group.

To test the first hypothesis, *Mann-Whitney* test was conducted. Table One below shows the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis.

**Table One: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis One-Ranks, Test Statistics, and Study Groups**

$$H_0: \mu_e = \mu_c$$

$$H_1: \mu_e > \mu_c$$

Since the one *tailed p-value* ( $0.008/2$ ) =  $.004$  is less than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  ( $0.05$ ), we reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ , that is to say , there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' performance on the communicative critical reading competence post-test, in favour of the experimental group.

### **Hypothesis Two**

There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' performance on the communicative critical writing competence post-test, in favour of the experimental group.

To test the second hypothesis, *Mann-Whitney* test was conducted. Table Two below reveals the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis.

**Table Two: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Two-Ranks, Test Statistics, and Study Groups**

$$H_0: \mu_e = \mu_c$$

$$H_1: \mu_e > \mu_c$$

Since the *one tailed p-value* ( $0.007/2 = .0035$ ) is less than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  ( $0.05$ ), we reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ , that is to say, there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' performance on the communicative critical writing competence post-test, in favour of the experimental group.

### **Hypothesis Three**

There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group students' performance on the communicative critical reading competence pre-post test, in favour of the post-test.

To test the third hypothesis, *paired data t-test* was conducted. Table Three below displays the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis. It is worthwhile clarifying that the experimental group students are ten. Out of those ten, one was not present on the day of conducting the pre-test. Therefore, the number-as shown below- is nine. This is also applied to the other statistical treatment involving both pre and post tests.

**Table Three: Paired Data T-Test for Hypothesis Three-Paired Samples' Statistics, Paired Samples' Correlations, Paired Samples' Tests, and Study Groups**

$$H_0 : \mu_{\text{post}} = \mu_{\text{pre}}$$

$$H_1: \mu_{\text{post}} > \mu_{\text{pre}}$$

*Paired Data t-Test:*

Since the *two tailed p-value* = 0.001 is less than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  (0.05), we reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ ; that is to say, there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group students' performance on the communicative critical reading competence pre-test and the communicative critical reading competence post-test, in favour of the post-test.

#### **Hypothesis Four**

There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group students' performance on the communicative critical writing competence pre-post test, in favour of the post-test.

To test the third hypothesis, *paired data t-test* was conducted. Table Four below reveals the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis.

**Table Four: Paired Data T-Test for Hypothesis Four-Paired Samples' Statistics, Paired Samples' Correlations, Paired Samples' Test, and Study Groups**

$$H_0: \mu_{\text{post}} = \mu_{\text{pre}}$$

$$H_1: \mu_{\text{post}} > \mu_{\text{pre}}$$

*Paired Data t-Test:*

Since the *two tailed p-value* = 0.001 is less than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  (0.05), we reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ ; that is to say, there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group students' performance on the communicative critical writing competence pre-test and the communicative critical writing competence post-test, in favour of the post-test.

### **Hypothesis Five**

There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of male subjects and that of female subjects, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test.

To test the fifth hypothesis, *Mann-Whitney* test was conducted. Table Five below displays the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis.

**Table Five: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Five-Ranks, Test Statistics, and Study Groups**

$$H_0: \mu_{\text{post reading (M)}} = \mu_{\text{post reading (F)}}$$

$$H_1: \mu_{\text{post reading (M)}} \neq \mu_{\text{post reading (F)}}$$

***Mann-Whitney Test:***

Since the *two tailed p-value* = 0.470 is greater than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  (0.05), we fail to reject  $H_0$ . We have insufficient evidence to conclude that the performance of male subjects is significantly different from female subjects', on the communicative critical reading competence post-test.

**Hypothesis Six**

There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of male subjects and that of female subjects, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test.

To test the sixth hypothesis, *Mann-Whitney* test was conducted. Table Six below shows the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis.

**Table Six: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Six-Ranks, Test Statistics, and Study Groups**

$$H_0: \mu_{\text{post writing (M)}} = \mu_{\text{post writing (F)}}$$

$$H_1: \mu_{\text{post writing (M)}} \neq \mu_{\text{post writing (F)}}$$

***Mann-Whitney Test:***

Since the *two tailed p-value* = 0.411 is greater than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  (0.05), we fail to reject  $H_0$ . Thus, we have insufficient evidence to conclude that the performance of male subjects is significantly different from that of female subjects, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test.

### **Hypothesis Seven**

There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of subjects belonging to non-science colleges and that of subjects belonging to science colleges, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test.

To test the seventh hypothesis, *Mann-Whitney* test was conducted. Table Seven below reveals the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis.

**Table Seven: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Seven-Ranks, Test Statistics, and Study Groups**

$$H_0: \mu_{\text{post reading (Sci)}} = \mu_{\text{post reading (Hum)}}$$

$$H_1: \mu_{\text{post reading (Sci)}} \neq \mu_{\text{post reading (Hum)}}$$

*Mann-Whitney Test:*

Since the *two tailed p-value* = 0.884 is greater than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  (0.05), we fail to reject  $H_0$ . Thus, we have sufficient evidence to

conclude that the performance of subjects belonging to colleges of science is not significantly different from that of subjects belonging to non-science colleges, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test.

### **Hypothesis Eight**

There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of subjects belonging to non-science colleges and that of subjects belonging to science colleges, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test.

To test the eighth hypothesis, *Mann-Whitney* test was conducted. Table Eight below shows the statistical data in relation to this hypothesis.

**Table Eight: Mann-Whitney Test for Hypothesis Eight-Ranks, Test Statistics, and Study Groups**

$$H_0 : \mu_{\text{post writing (Sci)}} = \mu_{\text{post writing (Hum)}}$$

$$H1 : \mu_{\text{post writing (Sci)}} \neq \mu_{\text{post writing (Hum)}}$$

*Mann-Whitney Test:*

Since the *two tailed p-value* = 0.086 is greater than the specified level of significance  $\alpha$  (0.05), we fail to reject  $H_0$ ; that is to say, there is no statistically significant difference between the performance of subjects belonging to science

colleges and that of subjects belonging to non-science colleges, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test.

## **11.0 Discussion of Results in Relation to Study Questions**

As mentioned earlier, *question one* has been stated as follows: What are the components and specifications of a fiction course, proposed for promoting EFL university students' communicative competence, and enhancing their critical thinking skills? No hypotheses have been formulated in relation to this question. To gain a deep insight into what could make up the components and specifications of such a challenging course, the researcher sought the wealth of knowledge offered by authors' writings within the pertinent literature. Reading through many valuable references, **LEARN AND GAIN** has been designed for study purposes. Table Nine below reveals the steps taken to set the specifications and components of the proposed course (for details about the specifications and components of the proposed course, refer to Section Nine).

**Table Nine: Steps Taken for Setting the Components and Specifications of the Proposed Course**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Step</b>
One	Identification of students' needs.
Two	Thorough readings of pertinent literature.
Three	Setting of attainment targets and main aims.
Four	Selection of skills for enhancement.

- Five Deciding on criteria for selecting novels and short stories.
- Six Choosing *raw material*: fifteen short stories and two novels, in the light of set criteria.
- Seven Adopting a number of approaches for teaching purposes, besides introducing the researcher's approach.
- Eight Designing instructional activities to go with the material.
- Nine Highlighting appropriate means of assessment for course evaluation.

As explained previously, *question two* has been stated as follows: To what extent is the proposed fiction course effective in promoting EFL university students' communicative competence, and enhancing their critical thinking skills?

In an aim to investigate *question two* thoroughly, a number of sub-questions have been derived, each of which dealing with one particular area (see Section Four for details). In addition, a number of hypotheses have been formulated in accordance with the sub-questions (see Section Ten for details). Based on the statistical treatment, the following results have been arrived at:

- There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' performance on the communicative critical reading competence post-test, in favour of the experimental group.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' performance on the communicative critical writing competence post-test, in favour of the experimental group.
- There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group students' performance on the communicative critical reading competence pre-test and the communicative critical reading competence post-test, in favour of the post-test.

- There is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group students' performance on the communicative critical writing competence pre-test and the communicative critical writing competence post-test, in favour of the post-test.
- There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of male subjects and that of female subjects, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test.
- There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of male subjects and that of female subjects, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test.
- There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of subjects belonging to colleges of science and that of subjects belonging to non-science colleges, on the communicative critical reading competence post-test.
- There is no statistically significant difference between the performance of subjects belonging to colleges of science and that of subjects belonging to non-science colleges, on the communicative critical writing competence post-test.

The answer to the second question therefore is: The proposed fiction course **LEARN AND GAIN** has been significantly effective in promoting EFL university students' communicative competence and enhancing their critical thinking skills.

## **12.0 Study Recommendations**

The current study can be seen as an attempt to diagnose as well as to address some problematic issues within the field of second/foreign language acquisition. Relying on study results, a number of recommendations have been made for practitioners within the field. This part is concerned with discussing the recommendations.

To begin with, utilising literary pieces in the contexts of EFL/ESL would be of great value in terms of many aspects such as developing language skills, promoting communication competencies, and enhancing critical thinking. Through the utilisation of a literary text, we can launch students on a voyage of discovery, exploring ways other than ours of viewing things. A literary piece offers great benefits for EFL/ESL students. Linguistically, a literary piece can help students master the vocabulary and grammar of the language besides the main language skills. Culturally, a literary piece provides exposure to the culture of its speakers by examining universal human experience within the context of a particular setting and the consciousness of particular people. Aesthetically, a literary piece offers a unique experience that provides perceptive insight into man's existence within the artistic and intellectual bound of a literary framework.

Concerned with promoting *communicative critical reading competence* and *communicative critical writing competence* in EFL/ESL contexts, the second recommendation stresses the role literary texts play in this regard. The knowledge students gain through reading a literary text serves them by offering a breadth of experiences and ideas, by developing creative thinking, and by providing skills in communication. Whilst reading a literary text, students engage in characters' lives and raise enquiries about the worlds authors create. When students make comparisons with their own lives, they embark on a life-long journey of critical

thinking that could make their lives rich and rewarding. Generally speaking, a literary text represents various uses of the language-both conventional and literary. As students read a literary text, they learn the foreign/second language in meaningful contexts which require active interaction with the text. What is more, literary texts are an immensely important area of writing that covers a vast terrain. Studied as a product, literary texts can be considered as models of writing to be emulated. Seen as a resource, literary texts are valuable tools for the teaching of writing, for focusing on language, and for developing writing skills through a variety of activities such as encouraging learners to construct a text rather than simply to respond to an existing canon.

For EFL/ESL students to acquire adequate *communicative critical reading/writing competence*, the third recommendation points out instructors' role in this regard. The instructor should no longer be the unquestionable authority in class. His/her role is that of a catalyst, a coordinator, and a facilitator rather than that of a director or a dominator. Both instructors and learners need to reflect on what is taking place in class, considering what has gone wrong or has not been implemented effectively.

As far as selecting appropriate pedagogical approaches is concerned, adopting an eclectic approach would be of great support. Each approach has its positive, and possibly, negative effects under certain circumstances. An experienced instructor's knowledge and skill regarding selection of instructional methods may be compared to a technician's toolbox. The instructor's tools are teaching methods. Just as the technician uses some tools more than others, the instructor will have to use some methods more often than others under certain circumstances.

## **13.0 Concluding Word**

The current research has been of use to the researcher as well as to the study field in the sense that the researcher has investigated a problematic issue, initiated a remedy, and obtained some fruitful results. It is hoped that the current research will also be of genuine use to the practitioners within the field of English language teaching.

## **14.0 References**

Al Alami, S. (2008). Literature in a Globalised World: Challenges to Meet. Paper presented at the *AUS First International TESOL Conference February 2008*, Sharjah: American University of Sharjah.

Al Ghurair University (2008). *Student's Guide to University Education*. Dubai: Al Ghurair University.

Baba, W.K. (2008). *An Investigation into Teachers' and Students' Attitudes towards Literature and Its Use in ESL Classrooms: a Case Study at a Matriculation Centre in Malaysia*. PhD Thesis. Leicester: University of Leicester.

Chen, Y.M. (2006). *Using Children's Literature for Reading and Writing Stories*. [www.asian-efl-journal.com](http://www.asian-efl-journal.com).

Hall, G. (2007). Stylistics in Second Language Context. In Watson, G. and Zyngier, S. (eds.). *Literature and Stylistics for Language Learners: Theory and Practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

McRae, J. (2008) *Creative Reading and Literature with a Small 'l'*, Manil: ANVIL.

Shaw, P. (2007). Teaching the Novel: The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency in Advanced Reading Skills Class. Paper presented at the *TESOL Arabia Thirteenth International Conference March 2007*, Dubai: The Marriot Hotel.

## **15.0 Appendix: List of Abbreviations and Definitions**

### **Communicative Critical Reading Competence**

The following skills have been identified for the purpose of the current research:

- Distinguishing facts, opinions, and reasoned justifications.
- Grasping feelings, opinions and attitudes implied.
- Deducing meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context.
- Making judgements based upon personal knowledge and experience.
- Recognising the adequacy and effectiveness of employing literary devices for appreciation purposes.

### **Communicative Critical Writing Competence**

The following skills have been identified for the purpose of the current research:

- Employing cohesion devices in a written piece, as appropriate.
- Utilising literary techniques effectively.
- Producing coherent pieces of written discourse.

### **EFL**

English used as a foreign language.

**ESL**

English used as a second language.