



Reviving English Literature Basics in the Arabic Secondary Schools

Authored by:

Ms. Nahid A. Elawad

Program Unit. Applied College. Jazan University. Jazan, KSA

nawad@jazanu.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

This is a literature-based study that builds on the established correlation between creative writing in L1 (Arabic) and L2 (English) in emphasizing the significance of teaching English language literature in the Arabic secondary schools. The literature-based study which Pare (2017) defines as, “that wherein the data is found in existing literature rather than found through primary research,” has widely been employed in EFL teaching. The issue which prompted this study is of two disparities. The first is that, while the secondary school students are ‘fed up’ and fully saturated with Arabic language literature, they barely know how English literature looks like. The second is that, despite secondary schools’ English subject course book’s limited literature content, it sits idle and barely entertained by teachers. The study reviews literature on creative writing within the context of both; Arabic and English languages in secondary schools. The reviewed studies include models that were based on earlier studies on L1-L2 correlation in creative writing including those by Hanauer, 2014; Martínez, 2001; and Nicholes, 2015. The paper concludes the study with a preview of balancing students Arabic-English Literature knowledge in form of an actable two-axis plan. outlining what and how such literature content can be incorporated; mainly Arabic-to-English translated literature and children literature.

Keywords

Creative writing, Literature, Secondary school, Linguistic Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Background

Adult Arabs who are above 50 years old, still remember the school simplified English stories and poems in the English subject course books. That early intermediate and secondary school literature content was part of the simplified English series that were mainly published by Longman Academic Series and included stories, prose and poetry in the folds of reading syllabus. The school graduates of that era therefore still live the memory of literary works by the Alfred Hitchcock, Richard Taylor and others such Mövenpick, Don Quixote, Tom Brown School Days besides several others. On the other hand, the secondary school Arabic literature curricula is no way short of being described as complete and mature. Unlike in English literature, the Arabic secondary school Arabic literature constitutes a significant portion of both the science stream and the literature stream of the school majoring stage which is the third year secondary school Mutlaq, (2016). In the middle of this gap of intensive secondary school’s Arabic literature and shallow English

literature, there is a portion of students with purely linguistic intelligence and prone to excel at literature; neither at commerce, nor at the branches of science.

Problem statement

Are the Arabic schools' English curricula going too pragmatic? It is a plausible question to ask with the philosophy of the curricula schools seem to be more of "job market" oriented, i.e., qualifying the students for future career education; commerce, science, technology, etc. What about the talented students who were born with linguistic creativity and to lead literary careers? We may answer this question with another one: how many notable Arab figures we may think who are leading careers in these English language professions:

- Poets, novelists
- En/ Ar. interpreters
- Journalists, YouTubers
- TV hosts, presenters
- Social activists, politicians

Even though the above posed is only a rhetorical question, yet it is worthy of responding with the fact that –if any, such notable figures are either graduates of western education, born in western countries, or else English linguistic genius. This last assumption brings the argument of this paper home: the absence/ presence of the literacy content in secondary schools' English curricula is of some impact. Science or literature, are the two school majors available for the students to choose from in their second or third year secondary school in all the 22 Arab world's educational systems (Al-Bassam & Ibrahim, 2000). This early school majoring sounds logical and it is even adopted in foreign educational systems such as in the USA and in Europe. The anomaly though, is in dedicating whole tertiary schools for commerce and vocational crafts, while excluding schools for "literary creativity". Thus, depriving a slice of talented students who enjoy potentials of future literature genius.

Questions of the study

- How early do school students show signs of L1 literary creativity?
- Is the literary creativity talent in L1 associated with that in L2?
- How important is English subject's literature to the Arabic speaking secondary schools' students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deliberate Creativity and Formulaic

Language Use

Istvan Kecskes

Abstract The paper examines the relationship of formulaic language use and

Between Chomsky's, 1966 definition of linguistic creativity, "as a humans' mental ability to comprehend and produce novel utterances which they have never encountered before..."; and by Kadarisman, 2011; as, "a set of special cognition that consists of principles and parameters which serve as the basis for understanding and producing grammatical sentences..."; a lot lies in-between. For example, Kecskes (2016) views language creativity in L1 in relevance with L2 through the perspective of "deliberate" vs. "formulaic" where the later is the proper use of is one of the conditions for linguistic creativity which is a discourse level rather than just a sentence level phenomenon.

Native English children literature as a learning resource for older EFL learners, is suggested in several studies including early ones such as that by Whereas, Bland's; 2013, study on the introduction to children's

literature in ESL education proposes that children's literature promotes EFL learners' intercultural education. Balnd pinpoints topics such as extensive reading, creative writing in the language classroom, the use of picture-books and graphic novels in L2 language teaching. Whereas, the study by Novasyari (2019) highlights the advantage as being it enables the use of textbook teacher-centered strategy in classroom in teaching and learning process without introducing new material literature text and without involving students. The study included instances such as the kids' song for Latin alphabet learning that goes, "*The big brown fox jumps over the lazy dog*". Novasyari's study is based on the earlier model for teaching young learner introduced by Diem (2011) whose 3-Ls—libraries, literature, and literacy; approach presented an instructional model for EFL learners. Diem's experimental model showed high engagement and performance in children literature among the control group of the EFL learners. The same pro-children literature from the teachers' view expressed by Grahm & Walldén (2022) arguing that teachers express a positive attitude towards using children's literature in their teaching and suggest several important factors when choosing and using it with EFL learners. The article include a sample kids' song for learning the months -spelling and order, that goes, "*January sparkling snow; February icy cold; March begins the springtime April rain and sunshine; May with flowers everywhere ... etc.*" Arabic literature as well includes online articles that address English language learning among the school students through songs and national anthems in order to attend to the school students' linguistic creativity. The platform Al-Maany (2020) posts these two Ar-to-En translated texts suggesting they are simple for school students to memorize:

National Anthems of Saudi Arabia and Egypt English translation

The Saudi Anthem	Egypt Anthem
Hurry and rise	My homeland, my homeland, my homeland,
To the highest glory	My love and my heart are for thee.
Glorify the Creator of the Sky	My homeland, my homeland, my homeland,
And raise the green flag	My love and my heart are for thee.
Which carry the guidance light	Egypt! O mother of all lands,
Repeat: Allahu Akbar	My hope and my ambition,
My country,	How can one count
Live as the pride of all Muslims!	The blessings of the Nile for mankind?
Long live the king	Egypt! Most precious jewel,
For the flag	Shining on the brow of eternity!
And homeland	O my homeland, be forever free,
	Safe from every foe!
	Egypt! Noble are thy children,
	Loyal, and guardians of thy soil.
	In war and peace
	We give our lives for thy sake.

Arabic literature –in Arabic language too, is full of studies and articles dedicated to topics as growing deterioration of the student's creative writing skills, Arabic semantics and Arabic literature in general among the school students. The difference however compared to the school English literature, is on the productive side of literature learning rather than on the receptive side. This is evident from the published literature such as that by dignified pan-Arabic institutions including Azhar Academy, 2016 of Egypt; King Abdul-Aziz University; KAU, 2014; of Saudi Arabia. The subject of critics and worriers of these recognized pan-Arabic institutions on the school students' literature productive competency refers to the curricula contents; namely:

- Pre-Islamic era literature
- The Umayyad era poetry and prose

- The Abbasid era poetry and prose
- Modern era poetry and prose

No doubt, these Arabic literature areas are wide enough, deep enough and varied enough for secondary school students as noted by the teachers' platform Manhaji (2022) that is decimated to Arabic language curricula.

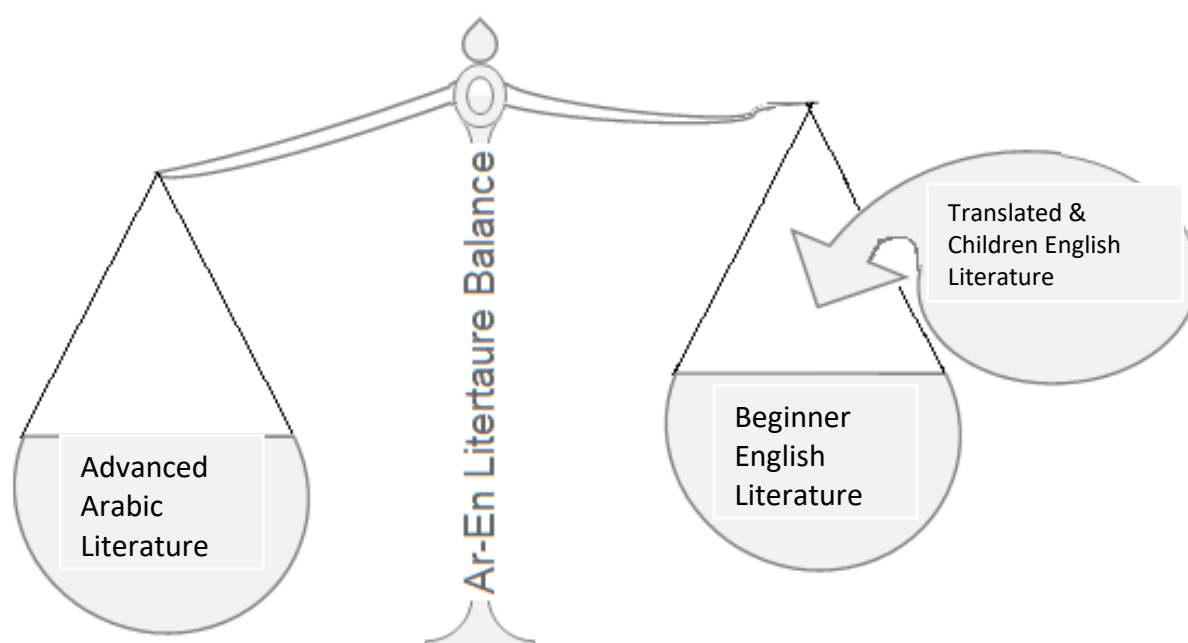
Theoretical Framework

For establishing a correlation between creative writing in L1 and L2 in order to formulate a framework applicable to the context of the Arabic speaking EFL secondary school students, as study by Al-Sharif & Necoles (2017) is consulted. The study is on L1-L2 metacognition and creative writing and it models its findings on Hanauer, 2014; Martínez, 2001; and Nicholes, 2015; on this regard. Not only have the two researchers Al-Sharif & Necoles (2017) confirmed the L1-L2 correlation in creative writing, but they also identified variance between the poetry and short story genres using Mann-Whitney U Test. The study concluded with confirming the positive influence of teaching L2 (English) poetry and short story of the L1 learners as illustrated in the diagram below:

hD Candidate: English Composition and TESOL

English Department

Balancing Students' Ar-En Literature Knowledge



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper concludes the study with an actable proposition of a plan for balancing the Arabic-English Literature knowledge of the population of the Arabic speaking secondary school students. The proposed plan previews two axes of what and how such literature content can be incorporated in the English subject course books, and here outlined and broken down

First, the suggested literature content is in form of translated En-to-Ar literature –lyrical and prose, themes as well as English children literature content. As EFL learners with an overall low level of English competency and limited vocabulary, such suggested literature should be convenient as a good start as outlined here:

Suggested En-to-Ar Translated and English Children Literature

Lyrical Texts	Prose and Stories
National anthems, patriotic and folkloric songs, popular songs.	1. Folk tales, e.g., Joha, Sindbad, Ali Baba and other Arab culture themes.
1. Poems for memorizing scientific laws and concepts	2. Sermons and prose texts by national orators and historical figures.
2. Limericks of daily life, events, anecdotes, platitudes, etc.	3. Biography of renowned world figures, e.g., discoverers, artists, heroes, etc.

Secondly, the suggested way how English literature can be revived –both the translated En-to-Ar and the existing literature on secondary school English subject’s course book, is through the following scenarios that can be adopted:

- 1) Reviving and/or creating a school ‘English Language Literature Society’ as part of or parallel to the already prevalent Arabic language one within the school premise.
- 2) Allocating extracurricular activities involving literary presentations English language teachers.
- 3) Fostering En-Ar translation activity dedicated to translating all forms of literature; poetry, prose, plays, etc.
- 4) Reaching out to literature societies and clubs within the community of the school English language teachers
- 5) Creating an online literature platform and/or phone-based one for the students to share their literature interest and activities.
- 6) Making the best of the already existing literature in the English subject’s course book; like by having volunteer students to memorize and present them in class.

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