

The Impact of EFL Algerian University Students' Attitudes on Literary Texts Reading Motivation: The Case of Second Year English Students at Setif 2 University

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To cite this paper:

Mellit, D., & Idri, N. (2019). The Impact of EFL Algerian University Students' Attitudes on Literary Texts Reading Motivation: The Case of Second Year English Students at Setif 2 University. *Revue Traduction et Langues 18(1)*, 98-114.

Received: 07/01/2019; Accepted: 12/ 07/2019, Published: 31/08/2019

Abstract: *Motivating EFL students to read in English has captured the attention of different researchers in the field of foreign language learning for decades. The present study aims chiefly at probing into the attitudes held towards reading English literary texts by second-year Algerian EFL learners at the Department of Foreign Languages, University of Setif2. It seeks to study the learners' attitudes towards reading English literary texts and their impact on their reading motivation. It also fetches the factors controlling EFL learners' motivation in reading English literary texts. Moreover, it tackles sensible concern often encountered in literary text teaching: is there a correlation between learners' attitudes and reading motivation? To this end, Data were collected through a perception questionnaire that was handed to a randomly selected sample of 150 students. The data analyses were descriptive. Results demonstrated that the students have low reading motivation due to their negative attitudes towards reading English literary texts. Based on these findings, it is suggested that literature teachers should incorporate the most convenient methods and techniques to meet EFL learners' reading needs and interests. Thus, technology and new media should pave its way into the literature classes.*

Key Words: *Attitudes -EFL Students-Foreign Language Learning-Literary Texts-Motivation-Reading.*

الملخص: إن عملية تحفيز متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على القراءة بالإنجليزية قد استحوذت على اهتمام العديد من الباحثين في مجال تعليم اللغة الأجنبية على مدى عقود. يهدف هذا البحث أساساً إلى دراسة ميول ومواقف طلبة السنة الثانية

تخصص الإنجليزية في جامعة سطيف 2 تجاه قراءة النصوص الأدبية الإنجليزية وتأثيرها على دافع القراءة لديهم والعوامل المتحكمة في هذه الدوافع. وعليه فإن هذه الدراسة تقوم على الإشكالية التالية: هل توجد علاقة بين مواقف ودوافع القراءة لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية؟ وبغية تحقيق هذا القصد، تم جمع البيانات من خلال تقديم استبيان إلى عينة مختارة عشوائيا من 150 طالبا. ومن أهم النتائج التي تم التحصل إليها، أن الطلاب يعانون من تراجع دافع القراءة بسبب مواقفهم السلبية من قراءة النصوص الأدبية الإنجليزية. وعلى ضوء ذلك، يجب على أساتذة الأدب الإنجليزي أن يعتمدوا على أساليب وتقنيات ملائمة لتلبية احتياجات ودوافع القراءة لدى الطلبة. وبالتالي فإنه من الضرورة الاعتماد على التكنولوجيا في حصص الأدب الإنجليزي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مواقف، تعليم اللغة الأجنبية، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، النصوص الأدبية، التحفيز، القراءة.

1. Introduction

In the world of education, motivation and attitudes are key factors that play a significant role in the learners' success of second or foreign language learning (Ehrman, 1996; Grabe, 2009; Harmer, 2001; Van Lier, 1996). As such, many researchers acknowledged the importance of the high correlation between the strength of motivation and the level of learners' attitudes. In fact, motivation regarding foreign language reading is a relatively important area (Erten, Topkaya & Karakas 2010). It impacts deeply the learners' reading development.

Learners bring basic attitudes toward foreign language reading to the learning environment they are in (Grabe, 2009), and these reading attitudes drive the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation (Alexander & Filler cited in Yamashita, 2004, p.3). For this reason, learners' attitudes towards reading apparently impact their motivation and achievement by influencing the amount of time spent on reading (Lazarus & Callahan, 2000). That is, learners holding hostile or negative attitudes towards foreign language reading encounter serious difficulties in fostering the optimum level of reading motivation and vice versa. Apparently, Algerian learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are no exception when this problem is put under the lens.

Although considerable attention has been paid recently to attitudes and motivation in learning a foreign language, there seems to be little research in examining Algerian EFL students' attitudes towards reading literary texts in English and its effects on their motivation in the Algerian context. Consequently, this study is a fastidious investigation of the Algerian learners' attitudinal patterns towards reading literary texts and the way they influence their reading motivation.

2. Review of Literature

For several years, different publications have appeared to document important issues such as learners' attitudes, motivation, beliefs, and perceptions of learning and teaching, particularly within the sphere of foreign and second language acquisition (Gardner, 1980; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). Numerous sources have explained motivation and attitudes in different ways. Dörnyei (2006) views motivation as "the direction and magnitude of human behavior" in terms of people's choices for "particular actions, their persistence and the effort they spend on it" (p.7). Put differently, it signifies the motive, the desire and the

incentive that provoke one to engage in or perform a particular action or a given activity or not. On the other side of the fence, Gardner (1980) offers an important definition for the term attitude as "the sum total of a man's instincts and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic" (p. 267). Simply, Attitudes are predispositions that influence a person's behaviour, feelings and thinking toward an entity.

At this point, learners' attitudes towards the learning situation are to be highlighted due to their effects on the students' level of motivation in the acquisition of a foreign language. Prominent researchers as Masgoret and Bernaus (2001) elucidated that these attitudes serve as foundations for motivation. A similar view is expressed by Gardner (2010) who stressed the fact that learners' motivation in L2 is highly influenced by individual attitudes and willingness to engage in the language learning process, and this means that motivation is strongly associated with attitude. Departing from the obvious reality that some L2 learners are successful in their language learning while the attempts of others are doomed to failure necessitates bringing to light the role of their attitudes towards the target language which are believed to affect FLL and motivation to the core. In this respect, negative attitudes can harmfully hinder students' progress while positive feelings can make language learning more effective and enjoyable (Merisuo-Storm, 2007; Oxford, 1990).

Attitudes and motivation regarding second or foreign reading is relatively a new domain. Reading, in turn, which has been gaining momentum in a foreign language context (Ouahmiche & Boughouas, 2015, p.18), can be defined as the process of acquiring information from a written or printed text, and relating it to what one already knows to construct a meaning from the text as a whole (Eskey, 2002). In other words, reading literary texts is regarded as a pleasant, fruitful adventure through which any serious and committed reader can fully experience diverse, limitless knowledge. In fact, Zhou (2008) asserts that the acquisition of L2 reading skills is a priority for many language learners around the world as it has been regarded as the main of the four language skills. Hasbun (2006) also underlines the value of reading by stating that reading skills "lie at the heart of formal education" (p.38) and it is difficult to achieve many things without having the ability to read effortlessly and with good comprehension.

Concerning reading motivation, most studies have been accredited to Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) who were important figures that tried to ground motivation research in a domain specific framework. In 1999, they enriched the literature by spotting the light on some motivational constructs which can be domain specific. In fact, they introduced a new type of motivation which is named as 'reading motivation'. This term is clarified as "the individual's goals and beliefs regarding reading" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999, p. 199). They further explained that what affects reading engagement is different from what affects engagement in other skills. Their Reading Motivation Theory covers a general dimension that is parallel to some motivational factors such as beliefs, values, and goals which control reading engagement.

Reading attitudes, on the other hand, is a multifaceted theoretical construct which is defined in different ways. Alexander and Fuller (1976) proposed that it is "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation". In a similar vein, Smith (1990) defined it as "a state of mind, accompanied by

feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable". In other words, reading attitudes are different types of sentiments towards reading that hamper or urge students to read.

Quite recently, second and foreign reading attitudes and motivation have held sway in the field of foreign and second language acquisition. Obviously, it has gripped the attention of both fledgling and experienced researchers. Lazarus and Callahan (2000) assert that learners' attitudes affect both their motivation and future reading success by affecting the amount of time that learners' spend on reading. Day and Bamford (1998), similarly, attempted to form a theoretical model of motivation to read in a second language. In their model, two main constructs, which are expectancy and value components, are included to underscore the multi-faceted nature of second language reading. Expectancy is related to the constructs regarding materials and reading ability while value components include attitudes toward reading in the second language and the socio-cultural environment. Following the same line of thoughts, Mori (2002) attempted to develop a new instrument to study the pillars of the L2 reading motivation in the Japanese setting. She concluded that L2/FL reading includes four main components namely; the intrinsic value of reading, extrinsic value of reading, which encompasses items concerning instrumentality or consequences that might arise from the mastery of the L2 English, the importance of reading, and reading efficacy. In fact, the intrinsic value of reading encompasses attitudes, perceptions, and feelings which are an all-important ingredient in second and foreign reading motivation.

Lately, Yamashita (2004) demonstrated the importance of understanding learners' attitudes (particularly feelings) to read both in L1 and L2 for encouraging L2 learners' involvement and motivation in extensive reading. Apparently, almost all recent research on foreign reading motivation and attitudes has been conducted in foreign language context. Thus, there is an obvious gap in the lack of research on Algerian EFL university settings which the present study endeavours to fill.

3. Methodology

Owing to the paramount importance of attitudes in promoting learners' motivation into reading literary texts, the research at hand revolved around the basic assumption that the lack of motivation of the Algerian university learners in reading was primarily due to holding negative attitudes towards it. Also, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- What are the EFL learners' attitudes towards reading English literary texts in the classroom?
- What are the factors controlling EFL learners' motivation on reading English literary texts?
- Is there a correlation between reading motivation type of Algerian EFL learners and their reading attitudes?

3.1 Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the Department of English Language and Literature at Mohamed Lamine Debaghine, Setif 2 University during the academic year 2018/2019. Random sampling was adopted to select the participants of the study. This kind of sampling was selected for its straightforward probability sampling strategy. In this type of sampling, each member of the represented population was equally likely to be chosen as part of the sample. A total of 150 Algerian second-year undergraduate students, who were non-native speakers of English and whose future career would be teaching EFL, voluntarily participated in the study.

3.2. Materials and instruments

In this study, a survey methodology was used because of its overriding advantages in obtaining quantitative data through a wide range of forced-choice responses which were at 100% rate. Accordingly, a questionnaire, which aimed to explore the impact of students' attitudes in FL reading on reading motivation, was developed and used due to its effectiveness in gathering data from a group of people in short time, with less effort and financial resources. Besides, it easiness to be prepared, and quickness to be administered (Dörnyei, 2003). This questionnaire consisted of 18 questions in three different sections thereby respondents were requested to place (√) under the most convenient option. In addition, they were provided with a space to add more information or to answer open questions.

The first section consisted of four items on General Information about learners' English learning background. The second section was made of four other questions about learners' attitudes towards the English literature and literary texts. The final section comprised ten questions about learners' attitudes towards reading English literary texts and reading motivation. It also included an introductory explanation about the purpose of the study, and apart to thank the participants for their contribution to the study. The usability of this questionnaire was tested through a pilot study of 10 students who were excluded from the sample. For all parts, students seemed to have no trouble understanding and responding to the sections of the questionnaire. It was also given to an English teacher to elicit her views as to the correctness, clarity and appropriateness of the instrument. Thus, it was reviewed and corrected according to her recommendations.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

For the first stage of data collection, permission was granted from the administration at the Department of English at Setif 2 University. The researcher randomly selected five classes as every class had an equal chance of being selected. Some general explanations were given to the students about the study and how to fill out the questionnaire which was administered in English. They were informed that the data provided was going to be kept confidential and their anonymity would be respected. Participants filled out the questionnaires during the normal classroom time. They spent about 20 minutes on average to complete it.

4. Results

The study aims at investigating the relation between EFL undergraduate students' reading attitudes and their reading motivation. To this end, Algerian learners studying at Setif 2 University responded to a questionnaire that was primarily designed for such a specific purpose.

As far as the first section is concerned, it is devoted to general information about the learners' English learning background. In the first question, 70% of the students responded that they spent 2 years studying English while 30% wrote 9 years. It is aimed basically to spot the students' experience and familiarity with the English language in order to pave the way to the second question that seeks information about their perceptions of such experience. More than half of the second year students (60% from the total) enjoyed learning English. Other (40%) students described it as a hard endeavour. However, no one of the respondents disliked his experience in learning English. In the third question, the students are required to identify the reason behind their failure in achieving a task. 45% of the students assumed that it is due to having problems in their language learning ability, 25% of them think that task's difficulty is the reason and only 30% of them chose lack of interest. In the last question, different answers emerged as it was an open one inquiring about the reason behind choosing English as a major. The most written answers were teaching, traveling and finding a job; these can fall either in the instrumental (teaching and getting a job) or the integrative (travel) type of motivation. Results of the second section are concerned with the learners' attitudes towards English literature and literary texts.

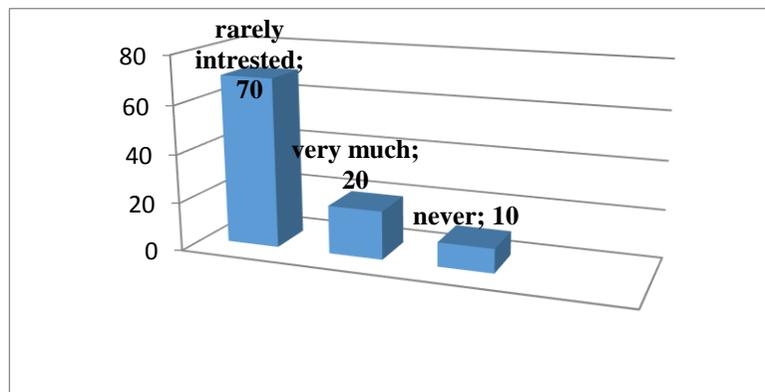


Figure 1. Students' interests in literature and literary texts

To begin with, in question five, learners are asked about their interest in literature and literary texts. As presented in figure 1, the majority said they were rarely interested, some answered sometimes and very much (20%) and only (10%) were not interested at all.

The next question is about learners' opinion to see whether English literary texts are enjoyable (Figure 2). For their answers, (65%) disagree, (25%) agree and (10%) opted for neutral.

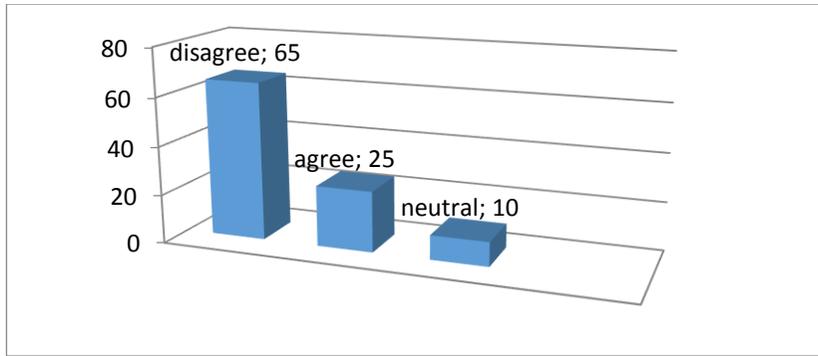


Figure 2. Students' perceptions of literature and literary texts to be enjoyable

The seventh question is about the literature courses taught in English classes. Results indicated that (60%) of the participants found it difficult, (13%) opted for easy and good, and 14% for very difficult. Some justified their answers by:

- It is easy because the teacher tries to simplify the content of the lessons.
- It is difficult due to the complicated lessons, and the used language genre with which students are not familiar.

The eighth question is devoted to eliciting the learners' preferences regarding the literary text they favor to tackle. They answered that they prefer novels and short stories rather than poems (52%), (39%) and (9%) respectively as presented in Figure 3.

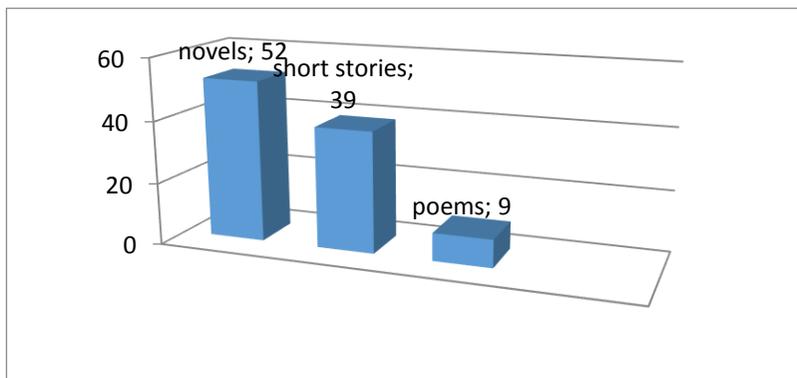


Figure 3. Students' preferences of literary texts

The last section is intended for deducing students' attitudes towards reading English literary texts and reading motivation. In the ninth question, as illustrated in figure 4, students are requested if they like reading English literary texts or not. Answers revealed that (30%) of the participants said "yes" and (70%) replied "no" mainly because:

- They do not understand the literary texts
- They are not bookish

The tenth question is dedicated to providing learners’ opinions about the usefulness of reading literary texts in developing EFL Proficiency.

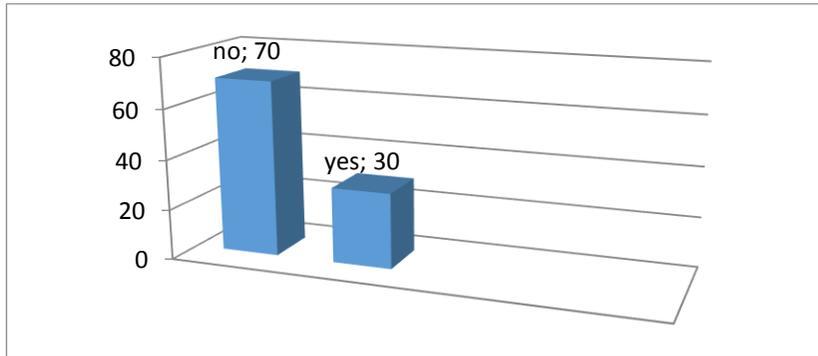


Figure 4. Students’ attitudes towards reading English literary texts

As shown on figure 4, only (35%) of the respondents agreed, (55 %) disagreed and (10 %) were neutral. Moreover, Figure 5 illustrated responses for the next question which sought to present the learners’ attitudes towards reading English literary texts, only 25 % of them found it interesting while 60 % found it boring and 15 % very boring. Most justifications turned around:

- Literary texts are difficult to understand.
- The language is beyond the students’ linguistic competence.
- Reading in English is not their cup of tea.

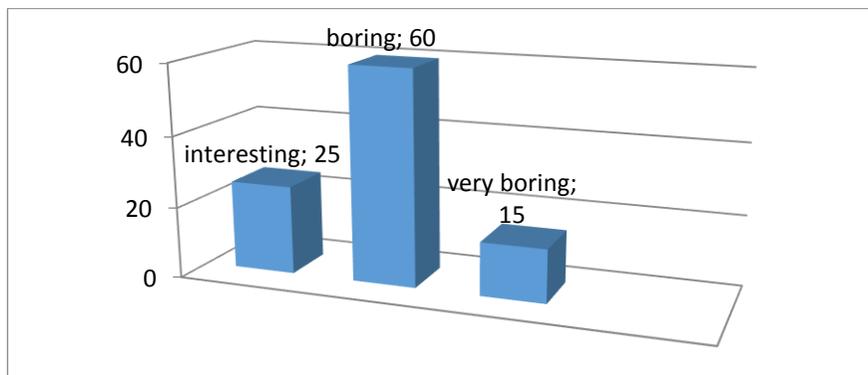


Figure 5. Students’ attitudes towards reading English literary texts

In addition, the learners’ opinions about the presented reading literary texts were that (75%) of the students found it difficult, only (15%) good and (10%) easy. In a similar vein, the thirteenth question gave a more explicit view of problems faced by learners when reading literary texts (illustrated in figure 6). The majority of the participants (75%) chose the complexity of language and (25%) of them related the problem to the length of the text.

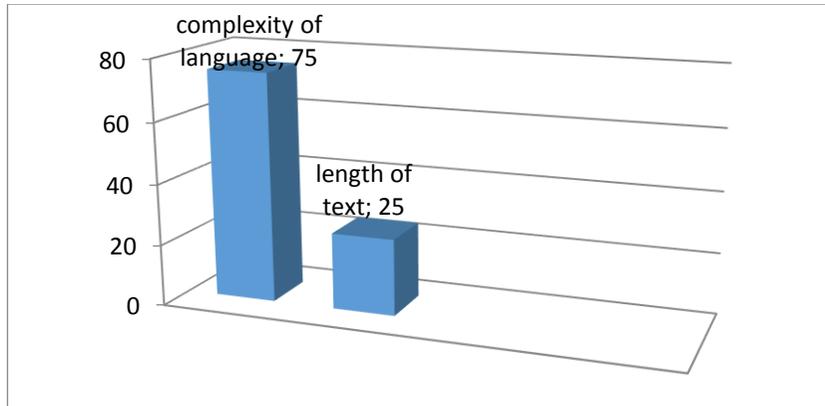


Figure 6. Students' difficulties faced by learners when reading literary texts

The fourteenth question is about the impact of the English class on the learners' willingness to read more. The rate was important since 80% of the respondents said "no". The next question opted for the learners' opinions about their satisfaction with the English literary texts reading being taught in classes about which (70 %) said not at all and (10 %) for very much and (20%) for little. Also, students were asked to comment on the statement: "their feelings towards English reading literary texts control their reading interest and motivation" (See Figure7). The results are also revealing since (90 %) of the students replied by "very much" and 10% said "little" justifying that they are not interested in reading literary texts which certainly do not push them to read at all.

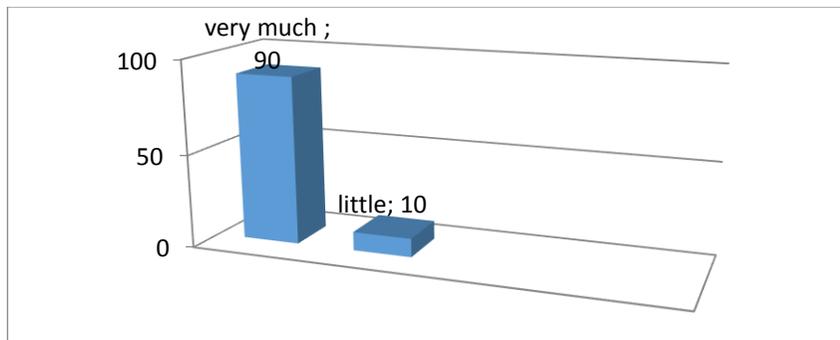


Figure 7. Students' opinions about relation between their attitudes and reading motivation.

In the next question, the learners' low motivation, if it is the case, is justified by them due to the literary text itself (20%), lesson content (35%), lack in language ability (20%). The other majority answered that it is due to their lack of interest in reading itself. The last question was an empty space for learners' suggestions and comments. The participants' answers are summed up in:

- Teachers need to take into account the learners' language proficiency and level while choosing literary texts.
- More motivating tools are needed to be implemented to grasp the learners' interest in reading.

5. Discussion

This research aimed principally at eliciting EFL students' attitudes towards reading English literary texts and its impact on their reading motivation. The findings disclosed that, in an effort to explore the case in EFL settings, the present study found that learning the English language posed no problem for the vast majority of the students. Also, English literature is not as easy as it may seem for many students due to various reasons such as language complexity, cultural misunderstanding along with the lack of interest and motivation towards it (Arabi, 2012). Actually, one of the key domains which merits further research is reading motivation in foreign language context where research is scant in the literature (e.g. Erten et al., 2010; Yamashita, 2004).

Accordingly, different factors enter into play regarding the learners' lack of motivation towards reading literary texts. The most important is their negative attitudes towards reading. In other words, the participants generally disagreed that being able to read in English is important for their success in it, which can be considered as a negative contribution to their attitudes. Furthermore, every reader has a purpose to achieve but the most important thing is when reading a text, he/she are supposed to link between the information introduced in the text and make sense of that information (cited in Grabe, 2009).

In this respect, the students are not interested in reading in English as they are not able to fully comprehend English texts. They find it unnecessary to read in English which clearly makes them develop negative attitudes to reading. In fact, the overriding drive of the presented research is to check whether the lack of motivation of the Algerian university learners in reading literary texts is primary due to holding negative attitudes towards it. All things considered, it can be safely concluded that the majority of the students bear negative attitudes towards reading. Accordingly, the research hypothesis is confirmed. By digging deeper into the presented findings, the first conclusion to be drawn from this research is that EFL learners hold negative attitudes towards reading English literary texts in the classroom, it has already been declared in Q10 and Q11, as (70%) of them disregard the usefulness of reading literary texts in developing their EFL Proficiency and find it uninteresting (75%).

Another central conclusion to deduce from the research results is that (75%) and (25%) of the Algerian students blame the complexity of the language and the length of the text respectively as the main factors to control their attitudes towards reading and hereby their motivation. Similarly, important, EFL students were asked to comment on the statement saying that their feelings towards English reading literary texts control their reading interest and motivation (Q16). (90%) of them agree confirming that their dislike towards reading English texts drives their motivation towards it. By a way of a summary, the findings of this study confirmed the aforementioned assumption and find responses to the research questions which left the door widely opened to make recommendation and suggestions for further research.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

As such, some practical recommendations are due. In the Algerian university setting, all language skills are included in the programme of teaching as dependent modules

namely; Oral Expression which includes Speaking and Listening, and Written Expression, except for reading. In fact, the importance of reading is clearly marked for all people in different fields and ages as it enriches their vocabulary and knowledge. Accordingly, it is high time for the educational institution to include reading as a module for first-year EFL students as it is one of the four basic skills that they need to improve their reading and develop their lexical reservoir.

Teaching reading from first year facilitates the students' building of their background knowledge and teaches them how to deal with texts in English as a foreign language, which is different from texts in Arabic (their native language) or the French language (second language). This is also to overcome any difficulty that may elicit students' negative attitudes. Furthermore, the hours that the students receive per week should be sufficient to develop the students' reading competencies instead of being mainly devoted to teaching literature (3 hours per week).

Ultimately, it is of paramount importance to include some sessions for practising reading in language labs in first-year students' syllabus. In this respect, Alfaleh (2015) asserts that "using reading software at the English lab once a week, as it is assigned, is not enough for developing students' reading skills." It is also recommended to better select interesting topics and texts. The characteristics of the text highly influence the students' reading motivation and attitudes. When selecting a text for literature and language courses in the context of second or foreign language context, different points need to be considered in order to meet the readers' requirements.

The chosen texts should be only one level beyond the students' linguistic competence. In other words, the learners should be able to comprehend the whole meaning of the literary text. Thus, using complex texts that cause serious linguistic difficulties is to be avoided in order not to affect negatively the reader's attitudes towards the literary texts, hence, their reading motivation as Hay states: "The problem is that a characteristic of many students with reading difficulties is that they typically become passive and unmotivated readers" (1995). However, the potential linguistic difficulties should not be neglected but rather dealt with via different language approaches (Literary texts and language practice). In addition, it is not recommended to present a literary text which is overburdened with cultural and historical concepts and references which may hinder the learners' understanding rather they should introduce interesting and relevant ideas and topics for the students which lead to a successful discussion. Moreover, with the fulgurous development of technology and the need to keep pace with the globalization era, it becomes a necessity for Algerian English language teachers to think about innovative ways deemed to meet the demands of nowadays English learning classes in general (Seddiki, 2016) and reading ones in particular (Hoadjili & Mehiri, 2015). They should overcome the traditional way of introducing literary texts for reading (printed version), which McDonough and Shaw (2003) describe as "inadequate" since it does not provide learners with helpful texts, nor offers them the opportunity to improve their reading skills.

Contemporary EFL students are more into computers and internet which furnish easy access to different electronic references and billions of books at click of a button which saves time and efforts. Also, they can comprehend, paraphrase, summarize, and explain even the lengthiest texts relying on different applications such as electronic dictionaries which allow students to acquire wide range of vocabulary in addition to the

right pronunciation of the known or unknown words and therefore reduces the students' stress and anxiety of failure to read a literary text. Lubliner (2005) states that: "using multimedia applications can improve the vocabulary development of English language learners". Furthermore, teachers should rely on up-to-date materials and methods for example using multimedia in introducing different literary texts namely film adaptations. This kind of materials has a positive impact on students reading experience and maintains their satisfaction and contentment. In fact, Film viewing has been hailed an effective activity on the grounds that literature-based movies can make corresponding literary works easier to read (Rushing, 1996), offering insights into the literary texts that might be denied to the readers (Hill, 1986) and, in turn, improving students' motivation (Carter & Long, 1991).

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**Appendix (1) :
Students’ Questionnaire**

Dear Students,

Your willingness to answer sincerely and frankly the following questions behind which we aim at getting some information about your attitudes as learners of English as a foreign language, about reading literary texts, will furnish us with the necessary data to bring this research into end; your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence whereby they will be used merely for the purpose of research. Please, put a tick in the appropriate box, or give a full answer whenever necessary.

Section One: General Information about English Language Learning

1. How many years have you been studying English?.....

2. What is your opinion about your experience of learning English?

- a. Positive
- b. Hard
- c. Negative

3. Your failure in achieving a given task is due to:

- a. Problem in your language learning ability?
- b. Task’s difficulty?
- c. Lack of interest?

4. What is your purpose behind opting for English as a major?.....

Section Two: Attitudes towards the English Literature and Literary texts

5. Are you interested in literature and literary texts?

Very much Sometimes Rarely Never

6. English literary texts are enjoyable

a. Strongly agree

b. Agree

c. Neutral

d. Disagree

f. Strongly disagree

7. How do you find English literature and literary texts taught in classes?

a. Easy

b. Good

c. Difficult

d. Very difficult

Please, justify your

answer.....
.....

8. What kind of literary text do you prefer?

a. Novels

b. Short Stories

c. Poems

d. Others.....

Section Three: Attitudes towards Reading English Literary Texts and Reading Motivation

9. Do you like reading English literary texts?

a. Yes b. No

If no, why?.....

10. Do you think that reading literary texts is useful for developing EFL proficiency?

a. Strongly agree

b. Agree

c. Neutral

- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

11. How do you find reading English literary texts?

- a. Interesting
- b. Good
- c. Boring
- d. Very boring

Please, justify your answer.....

12. Do you think that reading literary texts is?

- a. Difficult
- b. Good
- c. Easy

13. What kind of difficulties you face when reading literary texts?

- a. The complexity of language used in the text.
- b. The length of the literary texts
- c. The lack of time to read literary texts
- d. The lack of interest to read literary texts

14. Have English literature classes inspired you in any way to read more in your free time?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. Are you pleased with the English literary texts reading being designed for reading in your classes?

- a. Very much
- b. Little
- c. Not at all

16. My feelings towards reading English literary texts control my reading interest and motivation.

- a. Very much
-

b. Little

c. Not at all

Please, justify your answer.....

17. If you feel as not motivated to read English literary texts, is it because of:

a. The literary text itself?

b. Lesson content?

c. Lack in language ability

Others.....

18. Further suggestions or comments

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