Spring 2016

Integrating Writing Activities in the English Department Literature Courses at an Afghan University

Mir Abdullah Miri

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INTEGRATING WRITING ACTIVITIES IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
LITERATURE COURSES AT AN AFGHAN UNIVERSITY

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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May 2016
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This qualitative study aimed to investigate the reported experiences five Afghan English language teachers regarding the integration of writing activities in literature courses at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University (pseudonym). The researcher employed Kumaravadivelu’s (2001) three pedagogic parameters—particularity, practicality and possibility—as the theoretical lens to analyze the study data. The participants reported that integrating writing activities in literature courses develops students’ creativity and critical thinking. They also noted that some of their students wrote poetry to express their voice. The results showed that there is a conspicuous lack of locally relevant materials in literature courses. They also demonstrated that interdepartmental collaboration plays a pivotal role in overcoming the challenges of workload, large classes and students’ attitudes towards writing, resulting in providing students with more opportunities to write. Overall, the results showed that literature courses can facilitate students’ writing skill.
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I dedicate this research to my beloved parents, Mir Sarajoddin Miri and Safia Habibi. Thank you so much for your love, encouragement, support, and prayers throughout my life. You have always been my role models. I love you so much!
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Three decades of dispute and war have had a devastating impact on the Afghan education system. Afghans have experienced various regimes with different curriculums and education systems. As the country has been experiencing the nationwide rebuilding process since 2002, the Afghan education system is improving. However, there is still a conspicuous lack of language and literacy skills at the English departments in the Afghan school settings. In addition, Afghan language teacher-scholars have been underrepresented in the field of English language studies.

My experience as an English language writing instructor working in an Afghan university setting has taught me that Afghan English language learners need more opportunities to write. I also realized that teachers have been mostly utilizing the Grammar Translation Method in their teaching instructions, and they rarely ask their students to write. English language as a required subject is offered from grade four to twelve at schools in Afghanistan. After completing high school, in order for Afghan students to get admission at universities, they need to take the national university entrance exam known as Kankor. Although students take English as a required subject from fourth grade, when they take the Kankor exam, their English language skills will not be assessed because the English subject is not included in the national university entrance exam. By the same token, the majority of students do not get sufficient preparation for the English language prior to their Kankor exam, resulting in having difficulty during their undergraduate programs.
Writing opportunities for Afghan students, particularly at the English departments, are conspicuously lacking during undergraduate programs. The issues of workload and large classes usually prevent writing instructors from assigning a large number of writing activities in their courses. In addition, there are very few available campus resources offering writing services for students in Afghan university settings. This gap in students’ writing usually becomes an attack by other instructors for not assisting students with their writing. In addition, my teaching experience in an Afghan university setting taught me that many students believe that their writing instructors do not provide them with a lot of writing opportunities and feedback. With the famous Afghan proverb, “One flower does not bring spring,” in my view, one writing instructor cannot provide enough writing opportunities for the students in the context of Afghanistan. In addition to the writing teachers, other instructors at the English departments need to integrate writing activities in their courses. A few of the instructors perform some writing activities in their courses; however, there is a need to incorporate more writing activities. Teachers at the English departments in Afghanistan usually have the experience of teaching various courses. For example, those who teach literature courses might have the experience of teaching language courses as well, but in this study, I only investigate the reported experiences of five Afghan English language instructors with the integration of writing in literature courses at the English Department, Faculty of letters and Humanities, Afghan University (pseudonym).

There is a rich body of literature celebrating the fact that students need frequent opportunities to write and receive feedback in order to develop their proficiency in writing (see, for example, Ferris, Liu, Sinha, & Senna, 2013; Omar, 2014). In this study, I
utilize the meaning of activity defined by Lantolf and Thorne (2006). According to them, “[an activity] describes what individuals and groups actually do while engaged in some communicative process. The term ‘activity’, then, brings together cognitive/communicative performance as it relates to, and in part produces, its social-institutional context” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 234). That is to say, writing activity is also a negotiated act which can be shifted based on the interaction.

There is little or no published research in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics about English language learning and teaching in the context of Afghanistan. The current study is an endeavor to investigate the reported experiences of five Afghan English language instructors in regards to the integration of writing activities in literature courses at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University (pseudonym). Ultimately, my aims are to address the need for more writing opportunities for the Afghan students and to represent the Afghan English language teacher-scholars in the field as they have always been underrepresented.

**Contextualizing Hybrid Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a landlocked country situated in South Central Asia. Located in the heart of Asia, Afghanistan has a very strategic location. It is bounded on the north by Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, on the extreme northeast by China, on the east and south by Pakistan, and on the west by Iran. Afghanistan’s locality, undoubtedly, has been crucial to its political, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, which makes it a hybrid country. Ewans (2005) asserted that Afghanistan’s geographical location has made it a geopolitical place in Central Asia.
Compared to many of its neighbors, Afghanistan has never been colonized; however, “it has suffered repeatedly at the hands of imperialist powers” (Ewans, 2005, p. 171). In December 1979, the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan and supported communist government to expand its influence in the region. The U.S. viewed this move as an extinction of the cold war, and tried to support Afghan resistance. The Soviet army, in 1989, completely withdrew Afghanistan as Mujahideen pushed to overthrow Najibullah. For a period of time (1992-1996) the country experienced civil wars (see Ewans, 2005; Saikal, 2004; Vogelsang, 2002; Wahab & Youngerman, 2007). The Taliban, who had strict rules, specifically towards women, seized control of the country in 1997. Wahab and Youngerman (2007) provided a list of onerous laws imposed by Taliban; some of them are the following:

- prohibition of women leaving their home without a male family member
- a ban on most education for girls (even in private homes)
- a near total ban on women working outside the home
- prohibiton of male doctors treating women, or vice-versa
- separation of the sexes on public transport
- a ban on playing or listening to music (p. 218)

After the 9/11 attacks, the United States launched a military intervention in Afghanistan in late 2001. NATO, the United Nations, the neighboring countries, and many other global organizations declared their support for the development of the country (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007). Later in 2004, Hamed Karzai became the first democratically elected president of Afghanistan and served as the president of the country until September 2014. At the present, the country is governed by a unity
government, Ashraf Ghani as the president and Abdullah Abdullah as the Chief Executive Officer.

According to the Library of Congress_Federal Research Division (2008), the estimated population of Afghanistan in 2008 was 32.7 million. More than 30 languages are spoken in this country, and two of them, Dari and Pashto, are the official languages. Many Afghans speak more than one language. Afghanistan is considered an example of multiethnic society. In 2004, the Afghan constitution recognized 14 ethnic groups (see Central Intelligence Agency, 2015).

This brief background helps contextualize Afghanistan’s diverse background and history. I referred to Afghanistan as a hybrid context, meaning that it is composed of various/mixed locals. That indicates that local can be decontextualized. Undoubtedly, the thirty years of conflict and war have had a devastating effect on Afghanistan, specifically on its education system. This short background about hybrid Afghanistan teaches us two major things related to pedagogy in Afghanistan: (a) Afghanistan is unique in its EFL context in terms of cultural, social, and political issues; (b) there are various contexts with specific features within the country. In order to discuss the status of English language in Afghanistan, I shall first discuss the spread of English as a global language. In the following section, I review the literature and shed some light on the connection of language and globalization as well as the rationale for learning English language in Afghanistan.

**The Spread of English as a Global Language: Afghan Context**

English has gained global prominence in all facets of individual life. There is a rich body of literature addressing the role of English as a global language. Rumnaz Imam
(2005) asserted that both the east and the west are promoting the English language because it is considered as a global language. According to Crystal (2003), a language does not become global for its linguistic features; it is the power of its people that gives the language a global status. In addition, Rumnaz Imam (2005) noted that “it is the time for the non-English speaking developing countries to think seriously about who is being most benefited in this language promotion” (p. 471).

Pan and Block (2011), in an attempt to study some Chinese teachers’ and students’ perspectives about the global English in China, found that “English is regarded as useful to China’s internationalization and globalization” (p. 400). The results of his study also yielded that “English is regarded as having an instrumental value, a linguistic capital that could be beneficial to employment of individuals” (p. 400). Similarly, Block (2008) asserted that in addition to the signs of national identities, languages are considered as commodities. This indicates that knowing a language, especially a global language, is considered a valuable skill in the job market. In the same vein, Phillipson (2003) pointed out:

> English has acquired a narcotic power in many parts of the world, an addition that has long-term consequences that are far from clear. As with the drugs trade, in its legal and illegal branches, there are major commercial interests involved in the global English language industry. (p. 16)

Nunan (2003) asserted that English language in many countries has become the language of communication in specific disciplines. It is considered the language of science and technology. On the other hand, Warschauer (2000) claimed, “to declare that English language is unequivocally harmful or bad is to deny the human agency that
shapes how English is used in different circumstances” (p. 515). He noted that considering English as a neutral tool is a naïve idea. Warschauer (2000) also argued that the spread of English language results in privileging some people and marginalizing others.

As the above literature indicates, English language has gained a global status in the world. This global phenomenon has also reached Afghanistan. Although the English language is being taught from the fourth grade in Afghan school settings, there is very little published research about the status of English language in the context of Afghanistan. In 2011, the Afghan Ministry of Education designed new curriculum and new textbooks. At the beginning of the new developed textbooks, particularly the English language textbooks, the Afghan minister of education’s message which addresses the importance of literacy and the features of the new curriculum is provided. In addition to the Afghan minister’s message, The English language textbooks, in the introduction of the books, the rationale of teaching English in Afghan context is presented. For instance, in the English for Afghanistan Student’s Book: Grade Seven (2011), it is indicated that English is essential for the people of Afghanistan for the following reasons:

- It can enable learners to communicate with other people and acquire needed information.
- It can help students and scholars to get knowledge about the daily life, culture, religion, politics, science and the technologies developed in English language, and use the knowledge in the development of their country.
• It can help the students and scholars to learn about the contributions of great writers, thinkers, scientists, poets, inventors, and statesmen in the progress of the people of this language.

• It can help our statesmen understand international law and culture and consequently, improve international relations of Afghanistan with the nations of the world.

• It can help our people to promote their business and strengthen the economy of the country.

• It can help our religious scholars to communicate with the people of the world, comprehend their culture and the way of life, and accordingly preach them the precious Islamic teachings and values. Consequently, promote mutual understanding and conviction. (p. f)

The above-presented statements clearly demonstrate the fact that Afghan education authorities consider learning English as a way to develop the country.

In addition to Afghan public and private schools, the British Council and the U.S. Embassy are the two major sources of providing the Afghan learners with resources related to the English language. They have been promoting English language in Afghanistan since the first presidency of the country. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul has various English language programs, such as English Access Microscholarship Program (Access), English Language Specialist, and E-Teacher Scholarship Program. According to the Kabul U.S. Embassy, the Access program aims to provide the Afghan students, aged 14 to 18 years old, with the foundation of English language skills through different afterschool classes and summer programs. Besides providing teachers with different
pedagogical tools and improving students’ language skills, their programs attempt to promote the U.S. culture and ideology. For instance, students who study at the English language learning centers funded by the U.S. government are expected to “gain an appreciation for American culture and democratic values, increase their ability to participate successfully in the socioeconomic development of their countries, and gain the ability to compete for and participate in future U.S. exchange and study programs” (“English Language Programs,” n.d., para. 3).

The U.S. Embassy used to provide a number of major Afghan universities (e.g., Kabul University, Herat University) with one or two American English Language Fellows (ELFs). These language fellows were expected to help Afghan English language teachers with their teaching practices, especially designing lesson plans and course syllabi. Currently, the U.S. Embassy recruits some English language specialists who offer academic and professional services to the English language instructors in Afghanistan. These language specialists usually implement teacher trainings, design and develop curriculum and textbooks, and sometimes arrange digital video conferences or webinars. In addition, the Kabul U.S. Embassy provides the Afghan EL teachers with two-week online courses related to EL teaching pedagogies.

Similar to the U.S. Embassy, the British Council in Kabul has focused on the English language support in Afghanistan. They provide support with “curriculum development for the education sector and to improve the English skills of senior government officials” (“British Council Afghanistan,” n.d., para. 4). They also run programs for academic purposes, legal prosecutors, professional teams, public sectors as well as private business sectors. According to birtishconcil.af, their English language
programs help the employees in Afghan organizations to learn English language with the international standards.

Some may argue that in order to understand the status and role of English language in Afghanistan, it is reasonable to review the role of English in Afghanistan’s neighboring countries since the context of Afghanistan is under-studied in the field of English language studies. However, as Miri (2016) in a recent book review on the deductive and inductive method of teaching pragmatics in EFL contexts noted, “English spoken in Afghanistan has its own specific pragmatic conditions, which could be different from other contexts” (p. 249). Moreover, unlike its neighboring countries, Afghanistan has experienced a few decades of war and is still suffering from insecurity. English language may have different roles and status in those countries. It is therefore not justice to generalize the findings of studies which have been conducted in other countries to the context of Afghanistan. Although the U.S. Embassy and the British Council have been promoting English language in Afghanistan and have been supporting the Afghan EL teachers, the Afghan EL learners and teachers are still underrepresented in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics. In the next section, I review literature on writing instruction in foreign language contexts as well as the perceived experiences of EL teachers with teaching writing.

**Context of the Study**

Afghan University (AU) is one of the largest public universities in the western part of Afghanistan. It was established in 1988, and there are currently more than 13,000 students enrolled at this school. It has fourteen faculties (the equivalent term for college) with the total of forty-five departments. I am utilizing the word faculty to address college
because this term is more common in the context of Afghanistan. As one of the oldest English departments in Afghanistan, the English Department housed in Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University has a relatively long and rich history.

This department was established in 1997, but the first cohort of students started their program in 1998. The English department among other foreign language departments at this faculty was the first department offering a foreign language program. Today, they dare to declare that their program is among one of the best English departments with an updated curriculum in Afghanistan. Currently, the department has almost 220 male and female students, who pursue their undergraduate degrees in English language and literature.

The department’s main mission is to train students in various sub-disciplines within the English Studies: English language skills, linguistics, literature, research and translation. The courses offered at this department are categorized based on the following three major categories: (a) literature; (b) language learning and linguistics; (c) social, physiological, theological and computer studies. Afghan University does not offer separate degrees for English literature, linguistics, translation or language teaching. Thus, the curriculum at this department has its own specific features.

The term literature courses, in this context, includes the following courses: Introduction to Literature I (Short Fiction), Introduction to Literature II (Poetry), British Literature, Drama, World Literature, Novel, American Literature, and Literary Theory and Criticism. The first two years of the program aim to improve students’ language skills; however, the last two years of the program aim to help students build the knowledge of linguistics, literature, research and translation. The instructors who teach
literature at this department use chapters from various textbooks designed and developed in English speaking countries, particularly in the United States. These instructional materials for literature courses are mostly designed for students whose first language is English because the textbooks do not include exercises for language skills. Below is a sample of courses offered (See Appendix F):

- Language Skills (e.g., Listening & Speaking)
- Literature: (e.g., American Literature, World Literature)
- Translation
- Linguistics
- Research
- Computer studies
- Required language courses (e.g., Pashto)
- Elective (e.g., Arabic)

The B.A. degree at this department is awarded to those students who complete at least a total of 136 credits in a minimum of four years. These 136 credits include the required, recommended and elective courses per semester (17–21 credits per semester). Each course has one to three credits except the monograph, which has eleven credits.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the reported experiences as well as the recommendations of five Afghan English language instructors with the integration of writing in literature courses at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University. In other words, this research attempts to emphasize the importance of listening to Afghan English language instructors’ voices as a way to
understand the integration of composition and literature. It is significant to listen to these instructors’ voices due to the fact that they are underrepresented in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics.

In this study, I aimed to focus on literature courses as a way to facilitate writing. There were two main reasons behind studying literature courses for thesis project. First, my experience of working in an Afghan university setting has taught me that most of the literature instructors only ask their students to write reading response; they then facilitate in-class discussions in regards to the readings and students’ responses. Second, there were more instructors with the experience of teaching literature courses available to choose from for this study.

**Research Questions**

The research questions guiding the current study are as follows:

1. What are the five Afghan University English Department instructors’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in their literature courses?
2. What are the recommendations of five Afghan University English Department instructors for integrating writing activities in their literature courses?

The research approach used for this study is qualitative inquiry. I have utilized semi-structured interview to investigate the reported experiences of five Afghan University English language instructors with integrating writing activities in literature courses. After receiving the signed informed consent forms, I interviewed my participants through Skype. Afterwards, I transcribed all the recordings verbatim, and used thematic analysis for analyzing the data.
Significance of the Study

The first research question in this study seeks to find out the extent my participants have integrated writing activities in their literature courses. It also seeks to address the research problem—the need for more writing opportunities at Afghan University in general and in literature courses in particular. In addition, it explores the participants’ views towards integrating writing and literature as a way to improve students’ writing skills.

The second research question seeks to investigate the Afghan University English Department instructors’ recommendations for incorporating more writing activities into literature courses. Hence, both research questions tend to support the integration of writing and literature and the need for providing more writing opportunities for Afghan students at university levels. Since Afghan English language teachers have always been underrepresented in the field, studying their beliefs and perceptions about teaching and learning would not only address the challenges of teaching and learning in the context of Afghanistan but also would add knowledge to the body of literature in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics.

Overview of the Upcoming Chapters

This thesis consists of five chapters. Following this section, Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework used for this study, and it explores the literature that is relevant to the connection of composition and literature. In Chapter Three, the methodological approach adapted for the current study is presented. It also details the participants of the study, research design, and data analysis method. Chapter Four
presents the results obtained from the interviews. Finally, the discussion, limitations as well as the implications of the study are presented in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current study examines the reported experiences of five Afghan English language instructors with the integration of writing in literature courses in an Afghan university setting. It specifically studies the participants’ perspectives on the integration of writing and literature. There are two main research questions guiding this study:

1. What are the five Afghan University English Department instructors’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in their literature courses?

2. What are the recommendations of five Afghan University English Department instructors for integrating writing activities in their literature courses?

As the research questions represent, the purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to explore the participants’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in their literature courses, and (b) to investigate the participants’ recommendations with the integration of writing activities in their literature courses. In this chapter, I first discuss the locality of pedagogy which I have used as the theoretical framework for this study. Next, I review some published research on writing in foreign language contexts as well as perceived experiences of some writing teachers in foreign language contexts; this section proceeds to the integration of language skills. The chapter then ends with some published research on the connection of reading and writing, as well as the connection of writing and literature.

Locally Situated Pedagogy—Theoretical Framework

People in different contexts have different perspectives towards life. If the beliefs, norms and perspectives of people from various contexts travel to a new region, they are
expected to meet the expectations of the people in the new local context. In this study, the term local is mostly used as opposed to global as well as national. Since within a country like hybrid Afghanistan there are various contexts with specific features, I use the term local as opposed to national. As Pennycook (2010) argued, locality is not limited to merely time and space; “it is also about the perspectives, the language ideologies, the local ways of knowing, through which language is viewed” (p. 129). When English as a global language is viewed as a ticket to a better world (see, for example, Crystal, 2003; Pan and Block, 2011), it is significant to be taught according to the norms and perspectives of learners in the particular context.

One of the first questions writing teachers might raise and ask about the development theory of writing would be the reason for such a theory. “Most researchers and practicing teachers are reasonably comfortable with their own senses of what writing is, how [it is] used, how it is developed in given contexts and settings and how it can be best taught” (Grabe, 2001, p. 39). In the same vein, Kumaravadivelu (2003) problematized the concept of method. He argued that “methods are based on idealized concepts geared toward idealized contexts” (p. 28). According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), having only one specific method for teaching language limits the creativity of teaching and ignores certain aspects of learning and teaching.

Similarly, Kumaravadivelu (2016) noted that methods which are developed in English speaking countries are connected to native speakers: “That is, they promote the native speaker’s presumed language competence, learning styles, communication patterns, conversational maxims, cultural beliefs, and even accent as the norm to be learned and taught” (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p. 73). Moreover, Pennycook (1989)
claimed that instead of improving our knowledge of language teaching, method has diminished our views. Similarly, Kumaravadivelu (2001) noted that method “has had a magical hold on us” (p. 557). Also, Kumaravadivelu (2006) indicated that “the term method is used indiscriminately to refer to what theorists propose and to what teachers practice” (p. 60). He added that similar to theorizing and practicing, method analysis and teaching analysis are two disparate terms for the former is related to the review of relevant literature, and the latter is about teaching practices.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) defined pedagogy as a broad term that includes issues not only pertaining to teaching materials, techniques, and assessments in a classroom setting but also political, historical, and sociocultural issues that influence the learning and teaching process. Therefore, he has introduced a three-dimensional system including three pedagogic parameters—the parameter of particularity, the parameter of practicality, and the parameter of possibility. Kumaravadivelu’s (2001) parameter of particularity yields that any language pedagogy, to be relevant, must address the particular goals for particular learners in particular contexts. His parameter of practicality addresses the relationship between theory and practice, that is, theory and practice should both mutually constitute a dialectical praxis because a theory which is not practical is useless (p. 540). His parameter of possibility emphasizes that a method should meet the social, cultural and political norms of a society.

By the same token, Kumaravadivelu (2003) proposed some macrostrategies for the English language teachers to develop their own specific teaching techniques or microstrategies. His proposed macrostrategies include:
maximizing the learning opportunities, minimizing perceptual mismatches, facilitating negotiated integration, promoting learner autonomy, fostering language awareness, activating intuitive heuristics, contextualizing linguistic input, integrating language skills, ensuring social relevance, and rising cultural consciousness. (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, pp. 39-40)

He also introduced the postmethod conditions—alternate method, teacher autonomy, and pragmatism. He argued that postmethod pedagogy gives us the freedom to overcome the problems created by method-based pedagogy. “[Kumaravadivelu’s macrostrategic] framework seeks to provide possible mechanism for classroom teachers to begin to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 43).

Similar to many “language teachers [who] have the inside view of their world in that they live in each day and know up close what issues are most important for them and their students” (Farrell & Jacobs, 2010, p. 117), Afghan English language teachers know the things that work better in their context. In other words, they would be the right people to theorize the appropriate ways of teaching for their students based on their perceived teaching experiences. They can then practice their proposed theories in their own teaching contexts. In this study, I therefore have employed Kumaravadivelu’s (2001) three pedagogic parameters—particularity, practicality, and possibility—as the theoretical lens to study the reported experiences as well as the recommendations of five Afghan English language instructors with the integration of writing activities in their literature courses. That is to say, I analyzed my study data through the lens of locally situated pedagogy, and constructed my themes.
Teaching Writing in Foreign Language Context

Writing plays an important role in learning a language. The perceived prominent status of learning English has motivated many students to learn different language skills, particularly writing in various foreign language contexts (Reichelt, 2009). Writing in foreign language contexts has attracted a great amount of research attention in the last two decades; however, this growth in research of writing has not applied equally into second language and foreign language writing (Manchón & Haan, 2008).

Manchón and Haan (2008) asserted that comparing to second language writing, the research on foreign language writing has focused less on theoretical and pedagogical discussions. Recently, a few researchers and practicing teachers have investigated various approaches on teaching writing in foreign language contexts. (Haneda, 2005; Iida, 2008; Manchón & Haan, 2008; Reichelt, 2005, 2009; Renandya, 2013; Tran, 2007). For example, Reichelt (2005) explored the English-writing instruction at primary and secondary levels, private language institute, and the university level, in Łódź, Poland. She specifically investigated the factors that have limited and at the same time have increased the English-writing instruction among Polish English language learners. After interviewing and observing 13 participants from a university English department, two secondary schools, and the largest private language institute of the city, Reichelt (2005) found that the English-writing instruction at all the three levels was concerned with preparing students for different English language exams. This pressure of preparing students for their English language exams, the national trend of teaching to the test in English as additional language contexts (see Park, 2012), has caused frustrations among teachers and students, particularly at the university level. Reichelt’s (2005) findings also
showed that the primary investment of students for learning English language was related to employment; they also looked at the English language as a way to communicate with people in other countries, especially European countries.

In another context, Haneda (2005) examined the various modes of engagement of two Japanese Canadian students, with the same Japanese proficiency in speech and writing, in writing in Japanese through interpretive case studies. Haneda adopted Lave and Wenger’s (1991) work—community of practice and the notion of legitimate peripheral participation—as the theoretical framework for her study. She also drew on the work of Norton (2000) and Wenger (1998) to address how people negotiate their entry into communities and how they develop their identity in that community. The major findings of Haneda’s (2005) study indicated that factors like: students’ attitudes towards learning Japanese, their Japanese learning experiences, their strength and weaknesses in Japanese, their perception of self as an individual and a writer, and the various kinds of community membership both in Canada and Japan, have shaped their investment in writing in Japanese. Although Haneda (2005) investigated writing in Japanese, there is much that could be learned from these types of investigations about writing in English. For instance, in utilizing different writing activities in writing courses in Afghan university settings, Afghan educators can consider students’ identity construction and their investments in different tasks. In other words, it is important for all writing instructors to ask themselves the possible connections between the writing tasks they assign and their students’ lives.

Additionally, Lee (2013) investigated the identity development of four EFL writing teachers before and after their participations in writing teacher education (WTE).
She utilized classroom research data and semi-structured interview as the research tools to collect her study data. According to Lee (2013), although identity is an important issue in teacher’s professional development, there is very little research on the identity formation of writing teachers. After participating in WTE, her participants developed more passion for teaching writing. Lee’s (2013) findings revealed that her teacher participants have discursively constructed their identities in the following ways: from testing to teaching; from teaching language to teaching writing, from teacher dominated approach to sharing responsibility with students, and from a traditional teacher to a teacher who uses new pedagogical tasks in the writing classroom and attempts to become an agent of change.

Unlike many contexts where English is viewed as a foreign language, Afghanistan is an understudied context in the field of English language studies. That is to say, there is very little or no published research related to English language instruction in Afghanistan, let alone teaching writing. Over the last 10 years in Afghanistan, after almost three decades of war, many Afghans have attended schools and many of them have pursued their higher education. The Afghan Ministry of Education in 2011 designed and developed new curriculum and textbooks for the Afghan schools. The new curriculum requires students to take English as a disciplinary subject from the fourth grade at schools. In the higher education levels students take English courses for at least four semesters in the first two years of their program. Similar to English language education system in Germany, Poland and many foreign language contexts, many students in Afghanistan attempt to learn various English language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, etc. However, there is no published research investigating the
English writing instruction in Afghanistan, or the Afghan English language learners’ perceptions toward English language skills, particularly writing.

There is very little or no writing support centers or student success centers to help students with their writings in Afghan schools. Afghan students do not receive writing services in Dari or Pashto—the official languages of Afghanistan—let alone in English. That is to say, students do not have access to extra writing services at their school campus. In some of the major universities in Afghanistan, there is an English Language and Computer Learning Center (ELCLC), where students can take language and computer courses. The concept of writing center and writing lab is new in the context of Afghanistan. In 2013, I started the first writing lab at Herat University, a university in western part of Afghanistan. Currently, The American University of Afghanistan, an English medium school, has a writing center where students receive support with their writing skill. However, still students in majority of the Afghan school settings do not receive enough opportunities to write and receive feedback.

To provide a sound review of literature on teaching writing, in the following section, I present some published research on English language writing teachers’ perceived experiences with teaching writing, as well as the challenges they faced in their English writing instructions in foreign language contexts.

**EFL Writing Teachers’ Perceived Experiences with Teaching Writing**

At present, little has been written about the English language-writing teachers’ perceived experiences with teaching writing in foreign language contexts. There is also very limited empirical research investigating how second language teachers teach writing, how they learn to teach writing, why they use a particular approach to teach
writing, and how they overcome the challenges they face in their writing courses (Lee, 2013).

Lee (2013) for example explored how four EFL teachers identified themselves as writing teachers after participating in a writing teacher education (WTE) program at one of the universities in Hong Kong. As the course instructor who designed and taught the course, Lee covered various topics, such as writing process, assessment in writing, the role of first language and second language in writing, as well as the nature of writing. She collected her study data through conducting interviews and classroom reports—semi-structured interviews for investigating the participants’ reported experiences of teaching writing, and classroom research reports for exploring how the participants self-reflect on considering themselves as writing teachers.

After completing their writing teacher education program, Lee’s (2013) participants noted that they were not teaching writing in the past. They were just assigning their students to write on a particular topic, and they were marking or grading the students’ assignments. For instance, Iris, one of the participants, asserted that she is no longer a robot. After the training, she considered herself a writing teacher because she started teaching her students how to think and be creative. Similar to this participant, Betty considered herself as someone who had always focused on correcting her students’ language errors, their grammar and vocabulary. In the same vein, Alice and Cindy after taking the WTE course, perceived the advantages of integrating reading in writing courses, and they started incorporating reading texts into their writing instructions.

Lee’s (2013) empirical findings are critical for a number of reasons. First, she has investigated a topic—writing teachers’ identity construction—which has not received
sufficient attention. Second, she highlighted the importance of teacher development programs in shaping teachers’ pedagogies, particularly the novice English language teachers. Third, Lee’s (2013) study teaches us about the importance of reflecting upon our learning and teaching experiences as a way to improve our teaching practices. Similar to Lee (2013), the current study explores the reported experiences of five Afghan English language instructors with integrating writing activities in their literature courses.

You’s (2004) observational report on the English curriculum for non-majors in a Chinese college is another significant study that investigated the writing teachers’ perceived experiences with teaching writing. You illustrated that some teachers at this program were reluctant to teach writing, or they did not check their students’ papers regularly. The teachers did not have time for professional development because their socioeconomic status pressured them to work extra hours in their free time. Moreover, You (2004) noted that a typical college English curriculum in China works under the guidance of College English Syllabus, a required English language course for all non-majors in Chinese colleges and universities which is mandated by the Chinese Ministry of Education. Chinese teachers are mostly concerned that their students learn the correct forms and perform better in tests (for another example, see the case with Xia in Park, 2012). It is difficult to discuss a context without the presence of empirical data, particularly when the context is understudied in the field. Although You’s (2004) study is not conducted in the context of Afghanistan, it can teach us about some general challenges, namely workload, large classes, socioeconomically status, writing teachers in many foreign language contexts share.
In an attempt to seek effective approaches to teaching large EFL classes in the Ivory Coast, Bamba (2012) conducted a study on five teacher participants who were teaching large classes in various places in Ivory Coast. Her findings indicated that although the participants had received their teacher training in the same university, they had different approaches in overcoming the challenges of teaching large classes. Some of their approaches included: asking students to work in small groups, guiding students on how to learn independently, integrating technology into classroom teaching, minimizing environmental effects to increase the learning environment, and assess students’ progress (p. 97). Bamba’s (2012) findings are context specific. It is significant to note that Bamba’s participants in different parts of the Ivory Coast had different approaches in overcoming the challenge of teaching large classes. That is to say, if one teaching large classes strategy works in one part of the Ivory Coast, it does not necessarily mean it will work in another part of Ivory Coast. This speaks to diversity within the same context given the same curriculum, which directly correlates with Kumaravadivelu (2001) three pedagogic parameters—particularly, practicality and possibility. Bamba’s (2012) findings speak volumes about teachers’ creativity and the ways in which teachers use different areas to enhance their student learning. Similar to Bamba’s study context, Afghanistan is a hybrid context, that is, there are different contexts with different features in this country. If for example a researcher aims to investigate how to overcome teaching heterogeneous and large classes in Afghan context, the researcher may need to rely on collecting data from particular Afghan university English language instructors or studies which have done so. By the same token, the findings of the current thesis project would be specific to its own study context.
Integration of Language Skills

Language skills have been taught separately in many schools around the world, particularly in Afghanistan. For example, in the majority of university curricula in Afghanistan, there is a specific course for each language skill (e.g., a course for listening, speaking, grammar). Kumaravadivelu (2003) argued that the history of separation goes back to the audiolingualism: “During the 1950s and ‘60s, before the advent of communicative approaches, proponents of audiolingual method believed that language is basically aural-oral” (p. 226). Larsen-Freeman (2000) also stated that according to the audio-lingual method, the underlying foundation of a language is everyday speech. Adding to this, Kumaravadivelu (2003) noted that for audiolingualists the grammatical usage was more important than the communicative usage of a language. He asserted that audiolingualists not only brought separation into language skills but also introduced a sequence for them: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. That is to say, “they believed [English language] learners should not be allowed to attempt to speak before they listen, or to write before they learn to read” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 226).

Writing in comparison with other language skills—reading, listening and speaking—has been ignored. Hirano (2010) asserted that the superiority of speaking over writing could be traced back to Plato’s time. “In Phaedrus, Plato (trans. 1990) explains that speaking is superior to writing because speaking allows one to grasp the Truth” (Hirano, 2010, p. 31). That is, Plato argued that speaking is more important than writing. Plato’s view about speaking and writing is not the focal point of this research; however, it is significant to note that, in the absence of any empirical support, the superiority of speaking over writing is still practiced among language teachers.
Ramies (1983), an advocator of integration of language skills, stated, “If we want our language learning classes to come as close as possible to real-life communicative situations, then we have to organize activities that let students use all of the language skills” (p. 68). In the same vein, Kumaravadivelu (2003) asserted that when we integrate language skills, we provide an opportunity for the language learners to engage in meaningful classroom activities. He also argued that “language skills are being taught in isolation more for logistical than for logical reasons; that is, it is done more out of administrative convenience and availability of time and resources than out of any sound theoretical or experiential knowledge” (p. 228). He recommended the English language teachers not to limit themselves by using the commercially available textbooks, which support the separation of language skills. Therefore, in the light of integrating language skills, English language programs can go beyond teaching only one language skill. In the following section, in an attempt to integrate writing, which is considered to be the last skill by the audiolingualists, I address the integration of writing with other language skills.

**The Connection of Reading and Writing**

It is highly noted that reading and writing are intertwined. The more we read, the better we write (see DuBrowa, 2011; Farahzad & Emam, 2010; Hirvela, 2004; Jenkins, Johnson & Hileman, 2004; Olson, 2011; Shanahan, 2006; Yoshimura, 2009). DuBrowa (2011) pointed out, “reading and writing are just two sides of the same coin” (p. 32). In order to show the mutual relationship between reading and writing, some scholars have empirically studied the relationship of these two skills. DuBrowa (2011) for example examined the possibility of integrating reading and writing courses. She illustrated one
unified reading and writing course at Berkeley College for those students whose critical
thinking/reading and writing scores were low on their entrance exam. She taught the class
through her developed activity, which integrated reading, writing and discussion,
resulting in developing students’ language proficiency. The findings of her study showed
that English language teachers would be more creative once they free themselves from
the limitation of the curriculum.

Similarly, Hirvela (2004) argued that reading and writing are interchangeably
related; reading contributes to writing and vice versa. He also asserted,

Instead of following the traditional practice of treating reading as passive activity
that operates separately from writing, we must view readings as an integral part of
the writing process and establish a window through which to more closely
observe the joint composing processes underlying our students’ reading and
writing. (p. 44)

The perspective that reading and writing are intertwined adds to the above quotation, and
acknowledges that we can incorporate writing activities into reading based courses. As
Scott Paris (1985) noted, “Knowing about reading strategies will not insure that students
use them while they read. Teaching is more than telling; the information must be
supplemented with a rationale for using strategies” (p. 135). Hirvela (2004) elaborated on
this by stating that when our students perform poorly in their writing assignments, the
problem is not only because of their writing skills; it is because of poor reading. He
emphasized that we need to seek how to write through reading. For example, learning
about common rhetorical patterns, linguistic features of writing, and examining lexical
and stylistic characteristics would help the language learners to gain knowledge about
writing. “We need to understand the students’ problems or limitations in reading, because
the act of writing about the texts began with the readings of them” (Hirvela, 2004, p. 45).
This indicates that not only reading and writing skills but also reading and writing
courses are correlated. If English language teachers are either teaching reading or writing,
they need to incorporate the other skill.

Additionally, Zhang (2013) attempted to explore how synthesis writing in an
American intensive English language program can positively help the international
students improve their writing. Through a classroom-based research, she selected
participants from two ESL classes—one experimental group and one control group. All
the participants were international students with intermediate language level. Zhang had
been the reading and writing instructor in both courses, and in order to avoid teacher’s
bias, she had utilized teaching journal that recorded her teaching activities and students’
participation. In the experimental class, Zhang utilized synthesis-writing instruction.
After finishing a textbook unit, NorthStar textbook, she provided her students with two
reading texts (with the same language level) related to the unit theme guided as
homework. The next session she asked students to analyze the text by focusing on the
textual structure, details, and the main ideas. However, in the control group, she did not
apply synthesis writing. The findings of Zhang’s classroom-based research suggested that
the students in the experimental group obtained higher scores in the posttests although
they had the same scores as students in the controlled group. Similar to DuBrowa (2011),
Zhang (2013) noted that English language teachers should not limit themselves to the
curriculum implemented in their programs. Her study findings demonstrated the
possibility and the positive effects of including synthesis writing in language courses without changing the curriculum.

Attempts to emphasize the integration of reading and writing pose a challenge to the English language teachers who limit themselves to the “commercially available textbooks” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 238), which are designed to support the separation of language skills. It is therefore necessary to seek out the relationship between writing and other language skills, particularly reading. In the following section, I review the literature on the relationship of writing with literature.

The Connection of Writing and Literature

Similar to language skills, particularly reading and writing, a separation between writing and literature has existed in the field of English language studies. In this section, in order to explore the relationship between writing and literature, I first review some published research on the purpose of teaching literature. I then address the connection of writing and literature.

Literature at certain points depicts the image of a society. Showalter (2003) pointed out, “all of us who teach literature believe that it is important not only in education but in life” (p. 24). In the same vein, Oslon (2011) argued that “literature is meant not just to be understood but to be experienced, not just to teach us but to move us, not just to be accepted but to be reflected on and sometimes even resisted” (p. 145). Besides, Moffett (1990) noted that we are not expected to merely understand literature; we should undergo literature. That is, different genres of literature are existed to offer us something about life. Similarly, Langer (1995) maintained,
All—literature the stories we read as well as those we tell—provides us with a way to imagine human potential. In its best sense, literature is intellectually provocative as well as humanizing, allowing us various angles of vision to examine thoughts, beliefs, and actions. (p. 5)

Andrasick (1990) encouraged the combination of critical and creative endeavors. She noted that when students experiment different sentence structures and literary forms in their writing, they “develop thinking patterns useful for critical inquiry and conscious control of their own powers of linguistic manipulation” (pp. 106–107). In her book “Opening Texts: Using Writing to Teach Literature”, she also argued,

When students are not given time to experience a text, to develop a personal sense of it, and are pushed into analytical activities before they are ready, their analyses are predictably shallow. Their teachers wail, ‘These kids can’t think!’ They are right. But, given the setting, nobody could—they do not have a firmly established foundation on which to build. (p. 185)

In order to attain the above views about literature, instructors should go beyond assigning students to only read literature. If students are supposed to merely read literature, their agencies are hindered. Scholes (1998) identified this pedagogical error as “the quotation of coverage with knowledge” (p. 148). If literature instructors want their students to look at literature as something fully rewarding, and not perceive it as a routine task imposed by the teacher, they should encourage their students to develop their own process of meaning construction (Oslon, 2011). How would this process of meaning construction happen? Oslon (2011) elaborated, “This will involve providing students with the strategies to move from reading (what the text says) to forming their own
interpretations (what the text means)” (p.173). She further pointed out that students in literature classrooms should realize that meaning resides not solely in reader and text, but it resides in the context as well. In the same vein, Showalter (2003) in regards to teaching poetry noted, “Lecturers can present, explain, and demonstrate the subject matter of poetic analysis and interpretation, but telling the students about it is not the same as involving them in it” (p. 68).

Andrasick (1990) argued that writing in literature courses could provide an opportunity for the students to perceive the reading materials more deeply, and greatly connect to literature. In order for her students to respond critically to literature, she implemented writing dialogue journals, process logs, reading responses as well as imaginative texts. In Andrasick’s (1990) view, imaginative writing helps students to improve their reading comprehension. She believed “that the writing normally relegated to the creative writing class, when coupled with literary study, works to improve students’ expository writing” (p. 133). Similar to Andrasick, McCormick (1994) noted, “the importance of the reader-response movement in democratizing the teaching of literature cannot be underestimated” (p. 38).

Rosenblatt (1978) pointed out that in order for the readers to comprehend a text, the negotiation between the readers and the text should occur since the readers draw on their “past experiences with life and language as the raw materials out of which to shape the new experience symbolized on the page” (p. 26). That is, readers can have their own interpretation of a text; providing students with opportunities to produce texts like reader response would allow them to express their about a written work. As Sterponi (2010) noted, “both adults and children, experts and novices, are engaged in teaching and
learning practices as active agents” (p. 249). They are unique individuals; when it comes to writing a reader response, there is no ideal reading (Oslon, 2011). Since learners have different backgrounds and learning experiences, they can embark upon their own experiences and connect with the text differently, requiring the teachers “to foster fruitful interactions or, more precisely, transactions” (Rosenblatt, 1976, p. 26) that allow students to reflect upon their own journeys through the texts. In sum, writing and literature are intertwined. As Showalter (2003) indicated,

Overall, our objectives in teaching literature [should be] to train our students to think, read, analyze, and write like literary scholars, to approach literary problems as trained specialist in the field do, to learn a literary methodology, in short to ‘do’ literature as scientists ‘do’ science. (p. 25)

This indicates that teaching literature is not merely about presenting a body of knowledge to our students; they should receive opportunities to reflect upon their own experiences with the texts. Thus, as it is mentioned earlier in this section, incorporating writing activities into literature courses would allow students to understand the world around them, and apply the newly required skills in their daily life.

**Summary of the Chapter**

The current study investigates the reported experiences as well as the recommendations of five Afghan English language instructors with the integration of writing in literature courses at Afghan University. Employing locally situated pedagogy as the theoretical framework for this study, I drew on Kumaravadivelu’s (2001, 2003) three pedagogic parameters—particularity, practicality and possibility. I discussed the notion of writing in foreign language contexts, specifically presenting some empirical
studies on writing teachers’ perceived experiences with teaching writing. Proceeding the presentation of writing teachers’ perceived experiences with teaching writing, I reviewed literature on the integration of language skills, especially reading and writing. I concluded the chapter with a review of literature on the connection of writing and literature.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

The current study aimed to investigate the reported experiences of five Afghan English language instructors with the integration of writing in literature courses at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University (pseudonym). This chapter is devoted to the methodological setup of the study. The research questions are presented in detail, followed by the description of the participants chosen for this study. This chapter also outlines the research design as well as the theoretical and epistemological discussions for justifying my methodological decisions.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been guiding the current study:

1. What are the five Afghan University English Department instructors’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in their literature courses?
2. What are the recommendations of five Afghan University English Department instructors for integrating writing activities in their literature courses?

Since the literature yielded very little or no information about the integration of writing within literature courses, particularly in Afghan university settings, the first research question explores the participants’ reported experiences with integrating writing in the literature courses they taught. However, the second research question investigates the participants’ beliefs and perceptions towards integrating writing in the literature courses they teach. It specifically attempts to find out the participants’ recommendations for integrating writing in their literature courses.
Study Design

The current study is a qualitative inquiry, and I have used an elicitation technique to collect data through Skype interviewing with my participants. Merriam (2009) asserted that qualitative researchers are mostly interested in investigating the ways people interpret their lived experiences, and the ways they give meanings to their worlds. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research is typically a form of interpretive research. Interpretive research assumes that reality is context bounded; that is, there is no single reality. In the same vein, Phakiti (2014) pointed out that “qualitative researchers take the position that human behavior, such as learning and thinking, is bound to the context in which it occurs” (p. 8). This indicates that the data obtained from this study is specific to the participants’ contexts. The findings of the current research would be applicable to the instructors who teach literature courses at the English Department of Afghan University, and may not be relevant to the other Afghan university settings, let alone other foreign language contexts.

There are a couple of reasons for choosing and conducting a qualitative approach for this study. First, due to the nature of the current study’s research questions, a qualitative inquiry is most suitable to collect data and eventually present the results. Second, since my review of the literature yielded very little/no information about the integration of writing in literature courses, specifically in an Afghan context, I “need to learn more from participants [related to this topic] through exploration” (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). Third, “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Thus, in order to get in-depth information about my
participants’ reported experiences with integrating writing in their literature courses, I decided to conduct a qualitative research.

**Participants and Sampling Criteria**

The participants of the current study are five Afghan English language instructors at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University (AU). In order to satisfy the criteria for this study, the participants had to: (a) be current EL instructors in the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, at AU; (b) have the experience of teaching at least one of the literature courses for at least one semester since one of my research questions addresses my participants’ reported experience with integrating writing activities in literature courses; (c) have the desire to participate in this research study. In the following table, I describe my participants in detail with regard to their background variables such as gender, years of experience, etc. All the names used below are pseudonyms, and they were chosen/suggested by the participants.

Table 1

**Participant’s Demographic Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of teaching at AU</th>
<th>Experience of teaching literature courses</th>
<th>The literature courses taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2 semesters</td>
<td>Amer. Lit., British Lit., World Lit., and Intro. to Novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahar</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>3 semesters</td>
<td>Amer. Lit., British Lit., and World Lit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>2 semesters</td>
<td>World Lit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadiah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3 semesters</td>
<td>Amer. Lit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aziz</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Intro. to Lit. I (Fiction), Amer. Lit., British Lit., Literary Criticism, World Lit., Drama, and Poetry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection and Procedures

For this study, interviews are the main sources of data collection. Interviews could be used to collect data both in qualitative and quantitative inquiries (Creswell, 2012; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Phakiti, 2014). An interview is “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (deMarrais, 2004, p. 55). According to the amount of structure, interviews are organized into three categories—highly structured/standardized, semi-structured, and unstructured/informal/open-ended (Merriam, 2009; Phakiti, 2014). In this study, I have utilized semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D for the Individual Interview Protocol) through Skype to obtain the data.

In semi-structured interviews, the questions are less structured; that is, the interviewer approaches the session with a list of more flexibly worded questions, and “neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Adding to this, Phakiti (2014) noted that in this type of interview, the interviewers are allowed to ask follow-up questions (e.g., when the participants say something unexpected). “Regardless of the open nature of follow-up questions, interviewers still have to ask all the prepared interview questions so that the data collection is complete and organized chronologically” (p. 150).

Since the participants of this study were not in the same setting as/with the researcher, the interview was conducted through Skype. There is an emerging body of literature examining the use of online communication software, particularly Skype, for conducting an interview (see, for example, Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Hanna, 2012). There were three main reasons behind my choice of using Skype software for this study:
(a) the participants had Skype account, and were willing to be interviewed through Skype; (b) it is available online to download for free; (c) it is an online communication software which has an international recognition, and “often stands out within the literature” (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013, p. 606). Although I didn’t have the chance to observe the participants’ body language (i.e., gesture, eye contact, etc.), I could easily build rapport, resulting in getting in-depth data from the participants. Deakin and Wakefield (2013) and Hanna (2012) celebrated the fact that Skype interview is time and space effective. That is, it allows both the researcher and participants flexibility in terms of deciding the time and place of the interview.

Upon the approval of Individual Review Board (IRB) form (see Appendix B), I emailed the informed consent form to eight Afghan English language instructors at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University. The informed consent form clearly stated the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participation, and the way confidentiality and privacy would be managed. In addition to the mentioned information, the participants were given the option to accept or refuse their participation in the study. Five participants out of eight, as targeted, accepted to participate in the study. All the five participants signed the informed consent form and sent its scanned copy to the researcher.

The Skype interviews were conducted during May–June 2015 upon the receipt of scanned copy of the signed informed consent forms. The time and place of the interviews were chosen based on the participants’ preferences, resulting in a more relaxed and pleasant interview conversation. The participants were asked about their preferences with the language of the interview. They all decided to be interviewed in English. Each
interview lasted approximately twenty-five to thirty-five minutes, and the interviews were recorded upon the participants’ approval. Since I used my personal laptop, MacBook, I could record the interviews through QuickTime Player. After each interview, the data were saved in a secure, password-protected folder.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is mostly described as the process of making sense of the information a researcher collects (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Merriam, 2009). After conducting the interviews, I transcribed all the recordings verbatim and analyzed them through content analysis with both research questions and theoretical framework—locally situated pedagogy—in mind (see Appendix E for a snapshot of the data analysis procedure). As Berg (2007) noted, content analysis is “a careful, detailed systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings” (pp. 303–304). Therefore, content analysis could be used to examine data obtained from individual interviews (Phakiti, 2014).

According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), content analysis includes coding, categorizing, comparing, and drawing conclusions. Merriam (2009) defines coding as “nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspect of [the researcher’s] data so that [the researcher] can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data” (p. 173). Thus, coding helps the researcher to identify the categories, patterns, or themes emerging from the data (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; Phakiti, 2014). In this current research, I followed the exploratory/content-driven approach to analyze my data. In an exploratory/content-driven approach, the codes are not predetermined, and they are derived from the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).
That is to say, I did not have my codes and categories predetermined for this study; they all emerged from the data. I have followed the following steps for analyzing my data: (a) I transcribed the audio recordings verbatim; (b) I read the transcriptions several times, and coded them with the research questions and the theoretical framework in mind; (c) I categorized the codes into six major topics to guide my participants’ descriptions of integrating writing and literature in Chapter Four; (d) I constructed five themes from my data that I believed were necessary to be introduced to the larger conversation.

After interviewing all my participants, I transcribed the recordings verbatim using my personal laptop. Since I used MPlayerX software (mplayerx.org), I had the opportunity to reduce the conversation speed, resulting in hearing all the information clearly and not missing anything. Once I finished transcribing all the recordings verbatim, I listened to the recordings and checked my transcriptions to see if I missed anything.

I read the transcriptions for at least three times to analyze my data. Next, I made a table in which I put the responses of each participant to the questions I asked during the interview. I then analyzed the data with the research questions in mind. The analysis consisted of highlighting, noting, or coding the data while reading. Once I reviewed my data, I categorized my codes into six major topics. Below are the topics I constructed from my highlights, notes or codes:

1. Incorporated writing activities into literature courses
2. Approaches towards the use of writing in literature courses
3. Perceived advantages of writing in literature courses
4. Challenges with integrating writing in literature courses
5. Attitudes towards the integration of writing in literature courses
6. Recommendations for the integration of writing in literature courses

I have used the above categories for analyzing and presenting the data for each participant. In chapter four, I have made a table for each participant in which I provided the major responses to each table.

**Summary of the Chapter**

This qualitative inquiry aims to investigate the reported experiences as well as the recommendations of five Afghan English language instructors with integrating writing in their literature courses. In this chapter, I presented the outline of my study design. I described my participants’ profiles and data collected procedures. Next, I discussed the main source of my study data—semi-structured interviews through Skype. Following the interviews, I presented my data analysis procedures: transcribing the audio recordings verbatim, coding the transcriptions through content analysis with the research questions in mind. Afterwards, I discussed how the codes were combined and compared to generate the themes. In the next chapter, I present the results of the current study.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter is devoted to the presentation of the results from five Afghan English language instructors regarding the integration of writing in literature courses at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University. I have interviewed my participants through Skype, and then transcribed the audio recordings verbatim. After the transcription process, I analyzed the data through content analysis with the research questions in mind.

The following two research questions have guided this study:

1. What are the five Afghan University English Department instructors’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in their literature courses?
2. What are the recommendations of five Afghan University English Department instructors for integrating writing activities in their literature courses?

The data analysis included coding or noting, resulting in categorizing the codes into six major topics to guide each participant’s description of integrating writing and literature. In the first section of this chapter, I present my participants’ descriptions of integrating writing and literature. At the beginning of each description, I provide a table containing the participants’ summary of the responses. I also present a summary of each description prior to moving to a new section. In the second part of this chapter, I present a cross-description analysis of the findings followed by summary of the chapter.
Aziz’s Description of Integrating Writing and Literature

Table 2

Aziz’s Reported Experience with Integrating Writing in Literature Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary of the response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Incorporated writing activities into literature courses | • Formal and informal papers, short essays  
• Reading responses  
• Writing poems |
| 2. Approach towards the use of writing in literature courses | • Writing in the form of assignment  
• Rare in-class writing |
| 3. Perceived advantages of integrating writing in literature courses | • Improving students’ language skills  
• Connecting students to the text  
• Boosting students’ creativity |
| 4. Challenges with integrating writing in literature courses | • Syllabus/time constraints  
• Students’ misconception about literature course  
• Inappropriate teaching materials for the courses |
| 5. Attitudes towards the integration of writing in literature courses | • Supporting the integration of writing and literature  
• Desire to learn more about ways to integrate writing activities in literature course |
| 6. Recommendations for the integration of writing in literature courses | • Coordination between writing and literature courses  
• Adapting materials to the Afghan context |

Aziz, the most experienced instructor among the other participants, has taught various literature courses at Afghan University since 2004, the first year he got recruited. He has done his BA in English language and literature, and currently holds an MA in English language and Literature from an American university. One of the features that makes Aziz unique among the other participants is his experience of teaching different literature courses. He has taught almost all the literature courses offered at his school except the Novel course. For Aziz, there are various objectives for teaching literature courses; however, “the main goal for having literature courses at the department was to
introduce students to different elements of fiction, poetry, drama, and also help them to develop their language skills, especially reading and writing” (Interview, May 17, 2015).

Since one of the objectives of the literature courses, according to Aziz, is to improve students’ language skills, particularly reading and writing, Aziz has integrated some writing activities in the literature courses he has taught. He indicated that he has integrated formal and informal papers, response papers, and some short essays in his literature courses. He also pointed out that most of his writing activities were assignments, and he had in-class writing activities very rarely. Of those few in-classroom writing activities, Aziz mentioned poetry writing and writing a letter to one of the characters in a text. He specifically gave the example of Haiku.

For example, in Poetry class when we were working on haiku, uh, so, after talking and looking at some examples, I asked students to think about an image, two metaphors, and then I guided them to write a short Haiku, but they were very few. (Interview, May 17, 2015)

While being asked if he believes that the students enjoyed writing haiku and met his expectation, Aziz asserted that his students really enjoyed writing haiku since it was something creative for them. Although Aziz did not teach his students the structure of haiku, he noted that students met his expectation. “They did something themselves, and, uh, that’s poetry; they produced something themselves in the class” (Aziz, interview, May 17, 2015).

Reading response is considered as the main assignment for Aziz’s literature courses. He pointed out that he was not sure if his students enjoyed the reading responses he had incorporated into his courses. However, he stated that teachers’ instructions play
an important role in students’ writing performance. “If I gave them a certain, let’s say, clear questions, they responded better. … I think that was more enjoyable; uh, they responded better” (Aziz, interview, May 17, 2015).

Aziz noted that there were several advantages to integrating writing in literature courses. He mentioned that when we integrate writing activities in literature courses, we provide students with a chance to improve their language skills, to be creative, and better connect to a text. He specifically stated that when writing is integrated in literature courses, “[students] can easily connect with the reading, and it is fresh in their mind, so, I think that, uh, when they read, and then they write, that sticks into their mind better” (Interview, May 17, 2015).

Although Aziz has perceived many advantages of integrating writing in literature courses, he cannot implement as many writing activities as he wants in his literature courses. He noted that if he could implement more writing activities in his literature courses, his students could have learned better. He then addressed some of the challenges of integrating writing activity in literature courses. He asserted that time constraint prevents him from doing more integration. For instance, he pointed out,

I think it would be much better if we have time, uh, in the class to some writing activities so that would be more integrated; they read and then they write. They may use the same techniques, structure or vocabulary in their writing, and, uh, because it is in the class, everyone has to do that, but if it is an assignment, usually some students skip it, and don’t do the assignment. (Interview, May 17, 2015)
Aziz’s main concern for not implementing a lot of writing activities in his literature courses has been completing his course syllabus. He stated that he had to cover a lot of reading materials for the course, and they needed to discuss them inside the class. Considering that each classroom meeting lasts fifty minutes, Aziz pointed out,

For example, in The Introduction to Literature I, we study twelve or fourteen short stories, so we spend most of the time in the class to discuss the elements, and uh, to read and understand, comprehend the text. So, we don’t have a lot of time to spend on the writing. So, that’s the, we have to assign the writing activities as homework. That is again question of time and we can say, uh, syllabuses of the literature courses. (Interview, May 17, 2015)

When I asked Aziz if the syllabi for their literature courses are pre-determined, he answered that the course materials were both chosen by the instructors and were fixed or pre-determined by the department. He specifically mentioned,

For example, for American Literature course or British Literature course, we have to survey have a survey of British Literature from beginning to present day literature. So, there is a lot to cover, and usually we pick up several periods and writers, major writers, and focus on them, but sill we need more time. (Interview, May 17, 2015)

In addition to Aziz’s concern about completing his course syllabi for the semester, he pointed out that some of his students did not show positive attitudes towards being assigned to do a lot of writing activities in literature courses. Reflecting on his experience of assigning his students to write persuasive essay in one of his literature courses, Aziz reported,
When I asked students to write, I think, a persuasive essay in the American Literature course, they told me that they have their own writing, Academic writing course. So, they think that in literature courses they should study literature, that’s it; again, an attitude problem. (Interview, May 17, 2015)

Students’ misconception of literature and writing courses, according to Aziz, makes the integration of writing in literature courses challenging because some students may not receive it well. Aziz has proposed a solution to this challenge, which I present in the following paragraphs.

The third major challenge that has prevented Aziz from integrating writing activities in his literature courses is the way the course materials are designed. He asserted that the instructors used materials which were designed by people in other countries, particularly in the US. He pointed out,

The textbook we have or the chapters that we use, chapters which are collected from different books are not let’s say, made for EFL or ESL students, so the kinds of activities that we have in these books need to be, let’s say, adapted to our situation. (Interview, May 17, 2015)

As the current instructional materials that the Afghan instructors use in their literature courses are mostly geared towards introducing the literature content and not the language skills, Aziz stated that Afghan instructors need to adapt instructional materials that are “culturally and linguistically” appropriate for students in literature courses (Interview, May 17, 2015). He pointed out that the materials should meet the expectations of the Afghan learners. This could indicate that because the instructional materials designed for
their courses do not include/contain activities related to language skills, the instructors rarely utilize activities that aim to improve their students’ language skills.

Considering Aziz’s perceived advantages as well as his perceived challenges of integrating writing in literature courses, he proposed some recommendations for other instructors who are teaching or might be teaching literature courses in his department. In order to overcome the challenge of students’ attitudes towards literature courses, as previously indicated, Aziz suggested a need for coordination between writing and literature courses. He expressed,

I think if we can coordinate between writing courses and literature courses; that can be one way to include writing activities in literature courses. For example, if we do the reading in the literature courses and assign the writing activities to be done in the writing course; that probably can be helpful. (Interview, May 17, 2015)

He also added that when the writing and literature instructors coordinate between their courses, they would have a better curriculum. In so doing, they can “prevent the overlap between academic writing course and literature courses” (Interview, May 17, 2015).

In addition to the coordination between writing and literature courses, Aziz recommends Afghan instructors who teach literature courses to adapt their materials to the context of Afghanistan. He indicated that the instructional materials that they use in their department are compiled from books published in other countries, particularly in the US, resulting in not meeting the students’ needs and expectations. He added,

I think it’s more about activities that need to be adapted to be more appropriate to our context. It means culturally and linguistically speaking because the textbooks
Aziz has a positive perception about the integration of writing in their literature courses. This subject matter has interested him. He pointed out, “I like to learn more about different writing activities that can be included especially in literature courses” (Interview, May 17, 2015).

**Summary of Aziz’s Responses**

Aziz has asserted that writing could be integrated in the literature courses offered at their department despite the fact that there are some obstacles in this regard. He personally has included various writing activities in the literature courses he has taught. For instance, he has mentioned formal and informal writing papers, reading response, short essays, and poetry writing as the sample writing activities he had implemented in his literature courses. He emphasized that he rarely had in-classroom writing activities in his literature courses. That is, students were required to write a reader response, a short essay, or a letter to one of the characters in the text.

The three major advantages of integrating writing in literature courses, according to Aziz, are improving students’ language skills, particularly writing skill, providing a chance for the students to better connect to the readings, and boosting students’ creativity. In addition, Aziz addressed that time constraints, students’ misconception of literature courses, and the inappropriate instructional materials are the major obstacles preventing them from incorporation of many writing activities into literature courses.
Aziz is passionate about learning ways to integrate various writing activities in his literature courses. He encourages those who teach literature courses in his context to have coordination between writing and literature courses so that the assignments do not overlap. Besides, he recommends Afghan university instructors who teach literature courses to design and develop materials that meet the expectation of Afghan students and context.

**Mohammad’s Description of Integrating Writing and Literature**

**Table 3**

*Mohammad’s Reported Experience With Integrating Writing in Literature Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary of the response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Incorporated writing activities into literature courses</td>
<td>• Reading responses&lt;br&gt;• Paraphrasing the main idea of the text&lt;br&gt;• Summarizing a literary work like short story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Approach towards the use of writing in literature courses</td>
<td>• Writing is mostly assigned as the course assignment&lt;br&gt;• Rare in-class writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perceived advantages of integrating writing in literature courses</td>
<td>• Improving students’ language skills&lt;br&gt;• Connecting to the text and understanding the text better&lt;br&gt;• Boosting students’ creativity and critical thinking&lt;br&gt;• Increasing students’ participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Challenges with integrating writing in literature courses</td>
<td>• Syllabus/time constraints&lt;br&gt;• Students’ attitude towards writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Attitudes towards the integration of writing in literature courses</td>
<td>• Supporting the integration of writing and literature&lt;br&gt;• Desire to learn more about ways to integrate writing activities in literature course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Recommendations for the integration of writing in literature courses</td>
<td>• Looking for materials which require less time&lt;br&gt;• Designing in-class writing activities&lt;br&gt;• Using group-work for assigning writing activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mohammad has been teaching for almost two years at Afghan University. He has only taught World Literature, and he has taught this course for two semesters. In comparison to the rest of my participants, Mohammad has less experience teaching at
Afghan University. When asked about the purpose of the literature course Mohammad had taught, he stated that he has used various activities in his World Literature course, and the activities were mostly designed to check students’ comprehension of a text.

Since the focus of this study is investigating the participants’ reported experiences with integration of writing in literature courses, and their recommendations for this integration, I asked Mohammad if he had used writing in his World Literature course. He noted that he had used summary writing, paraphrasing, and reading response as the writing activities in his course. According to Mohammad, he sometimes asked his students to summarize a text “if the literary work was, for example, a short story” (Interview, May 15, 2015). In regards to paraphrasing, he noted,

If the text was something important related to the daily life of the students, I asked them to paraphrase it and give their ideas about that text, so the students somehow had to find the main idea of the text and share it with the whole class. (Interview, May 15, 2015)

Mohammad has also assigned reader responses or personal response papers in his World Literature courses. He indicated that his main rationale for including reader responses in his literature courses was to understand students’ response to a text. According to Mohammad, he did not want his students to write the summary of a reading as their reader response; he wanted them to take a position and share their thoughts about the reading. With this objective, he had provided his students with some questions and prompts at the beginning of his course so that students only answer those particular questions in their personal response papers. He noted that his instruction on how to write personal response papers helped majority of his students to write what he wanted. “I can
say that almost seventy percent of the papers I received were what I wanted them to write” (Interview, May 15, 2015). Those remaining students who could not meet Mohammad’s expectation in writing response papers, according to Mohammad, had included mostly the summary of the text. “So, I somehow rejected them, and I said that you do not need to summarize the text in your personal response” (Interview, May 15, 2015).

He indicated that integrating writing in literature courses can benefit students in various ways. For example, he has realized that assigning reader responses in his literature courses helped his students connect to the course readings. According to him, he wanted “to find how students can connect the message of the text to their own experience in the real life” (Interview, May 15, 2015). Moreover, he stated that it is unfortunate when some Afghan English language teachers just rely on reading and speaking in their literature courses. He pointed out, “For example, if it is reading, then just the students read or maybe they talk about the text, so here we have only two skills” (Interview, May 15, 2015). According to Mohammad, all the main four skills of a language, particularly writing, should be more integrated in literature courses. Therefore, he emphasized, “if we add writing activities to literature courses, we will somehow help the students understand the text better” (Interview, May 15, 2015).

According to Mohammad, writing develops students’ critical thinking. When students write about the text they read, they analyze the text more critically, resulting in coming up with thoughtful ideas related to their readings. He also mentioned that implementation of writing activities in his courses caused his students improve their writing skill. He prioritized writing over other language skills and mentioned,
I think writing among other skills, helps students to, for example, develop their critical thinking, and then use those things that they have in their minds by using special words and then special sentences in order to help other students understand their opinions, so I think that’s the positive point for writing skill.

(Interview, May 15, 2015)

Writing as a way to engage students in a lesson is considered as another advantage of writing in literature courses for Mohammad. He pointed out that there were some students who needed to be pushed to participate in the class. He added, when instructors require students to talk and share their immediate feedback about part of a text they read, some students might not decide to participate in the class-discussions.

According to Mohammad, students who participate in the class-discussions are active students. He pointed out that one way to encourage students to share their thoughts in the class and participate more is asking them to write. He specifically mentioned,

You know, because some students just come to class and they are not very active, so if we try to use such kind of writing activities to push students to participate in activities, that would be more helpful in the course. (Interview, May 15, 2015)

This indicates that writing makes all the students to share their thoughts.

Mohammad not only had perceived the advantages of writing in literature courses but also experienced and noticed some of the challenges with integrating writing in literature courses in their educational context. He pointed out that some of the Afghan English language learners do not prefer to write; they mostly prefer speaking to writing. He asserted, “There are some students who don’t like writing in general” (Interview, May 15, 2015). Adding to this, Mohammad shared one specific comment he had received from
some of his students about writing reader responses. According to Mohammad, some students asserted, “writing is somehow very private” (Interview, May 15, 2015). He added that one student indicated, “… if I write something on a paper and I hand it, so I cannot understand what my classmate said about the same topic” (Interview, May 15, 2015). That is to say, Mohammad’s students wanted to discuss their responses in the class, and they did not want to write something only for the sake of assignment.

Additionally, Mohammad mentioned time constraints as another challenge with integration of writing in literature courses at their department. He asserted that writing requires time. If students want to follow the writing process for in-class writing activities, this would take a lot of time. He added, "We have long texts and have to actually cover them inside that semester and that syllabus” (Interview, May 15, 2015). That is to say, Mohammad used summary writing and paraphrasing as the in-class writing activities and personal reader responses as the students’ assignment because he had been concerned with finishing his course syllabus. According to Mohammad,

Most of the teachers complain about the time. When I, for example, talked to them, they said that “No, we do not have time to use writing activities”. I think if we try to use some activities that need less time, would be great. (Interview, May 15, 2015)

Mohammad has also advised those Afghan English language instructors who are either teaching literature courses or want to teach literature courses in his educational context to integrate writing activities in their literature courses. First, he pointed out that other Afghan English language instructors can think of using in-class writing activities that require less time. He elaborated his recommendation with the example of group work
“in which students write a paragraph, or make a list of ideas that they have about the text” (Interview, May 15, 2015).

Mohammad stated that if teachers assign in-class writing activities through assigning students to groups, they would provide all students with the opportunity to share their thoughts. In other words, when students are asked to write individually, only a few of them get a chance to share their responses. However, when they work together as a group, they come up with something representing almost all of them. Moreover, he mentioned that the incorporation of in-class writing activities should be increased. The teachers need to find ways to overcome the challenge of time. Another strategy for dealing with time constraints, according to Mohammad, is having in-class writing every other session instead of having it every session. Besides, when teachers want to implement in-class writing, they can assign it as a group activity. In so doing, “instead of listening to thirty papers, I just listen to five. Why? Because I divide the class into five groups, so that way the activity actually takes less time” (Interview, May 15, 2015).

Mohammad is passionate about learning new approaches and techniques on how to integrate writing in literature courses. He mentioned, “I am in favor of learning new methods that I can use them in the class” (Interview, May 15, 2015). Since he has perceived the advantages of in-class writing, particularly through pair work and group work, he stated, “If we find any new activity that needs less time, and we can use in literature course, I will be very glad to use them in my courses” (Interview, May 15, 2015).
Summary of Mohammad’s Responses

Mohammad has taught World Literature course for two semesters at their department. He has mentioned paraphrasing, summary writing and reader response as the writing activities he had used in his World Literature course. According to Mohammad, providing students with an opportunity to write about what they read in their literature course would help students to improve their critical thinking as well as their language skills, particularly writing. In addition, he noted that when students write about the things they read, they could boost their creativity since they receive a chance to reflect upon their experience, resulting in connecting and interacting with the text. Including writing in literature course, as Mohammad mentioned, could also increase students’ participation. If we consider reader response as an example, all the students need to read the text so that they write their responses, resulting in preparing for the course and participating more actively in the class.

Mohammad is passionate about integrating writing and literature in their department. He noted that writing can be integrated in the literature courses at their department; however, there are some students who do not enjoy writing; they prefer to talk about a text they read rather than writing about it. In addition to students’ attitudes toward writing, Mohammad mentioned the challenge of time as the major obstacle in implementing writing in their literature courses. He asserted that there are a lot of readings to be covered in their courses syllabi, particularly literature courses, and if teachers integrate writing, they might not be able to cover their syllabi.

Mohammad recommends the use of in-class writing, specifically writing activities that require less time. He mentioned the use of group work as a way to implement in-
class writing. Considering their context and the challenges they are going through, he is interested in learning more strategies and techniques to integrate writing activities in literature courses.

Ramin’s Description of Integrating Writing and Literature

Table 4

Ramin’s Reported Experience With Integrating Writing in Literature Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary of the response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Incorporated writing activities into literature courses | • Reading responses  
• Comparative essay  
• Gallery viewing  
• Debate  
• Poetry writing |
| 2. Approach towards the use of writing in literature courses | • Writing is mostly assigned as the course assignment  
• Rare in-class writing |
| 3. Perceived advantages of integrating writing in literature courses | • Improving students’ language skills  
• Connecting to the text and understanding the text better  
• Developing students’ creativity  
• Developing students’ interest in literature |
| 4. Challenges with integrating writing in literature courses | • Time constraints  
• Large classes  
• Workload |
| 5. Attitudes towards the integration of writing in literature courses | • Support the integration of writing and literature  
• Desire to learn more about use of creative writing in literature courses |
| 6. Recommendations for the integration of writing in literature courses | • Response paper  
• Poetry writing  
• Integration of writing in literature courses  
• Debate: outline of students’ speech |

Ramin has taught at Afghan University for approximately three years. He has the experience of teaching various literature courses, namely World Literature, American Literature, British Literature, and Introduction to Novel for only one semester. After Aziz, he is the second participant with experience of teaching more number of literature courses.
In teaching American Literature, British Literature and World Literature, Ramin has used a similar strategy of teaching. He noted, “I was normally asking the students to read the text first, and we would have a comprehensive discussion in the class, and later, they will have to write a response to the text that they would read” (Interview, May 12, 2015). According to Ramin, students were required to have five reader responses for the entire semester. He asserted, “I would allow them to choose/to pick any topic they feel interested in, or they feel easy in writing the response for them” (Interview, May 12, 2015). Ramin also added that he had taught the students how to structure different types of writing responses. Students were then asked to write their response papers following the same essay format they had been taught. Ramin stated,

I still remember that … in British Literature, I asked them to compare the poem by Christopher Marlowe and reply the Shepherd poem… but I asked them to use the comparative view and how they can compare these two information and write their response to it. (Interview, May 12, 2015)

In his Introduction to Novel course, Ramin has used merely discussion in the class. He specifically stated, “I would not ask them to write, normally, I would normally focus on discussion, interpretation and how they understand the idea of what is going on in the novel” (Interview, May 12, 2015). According to Ramin, he had rarely used in-class writing activities. He reported that had mostly used writing as homework assignment, and those assignments were in the form of reader responses.

Ramin pointed out that his students found the reader responses as both learning and fun. This made some of his students to start writing poetry. He specifically noted, “the result show of those classes I was teaching that around fifteen to twenty or more than
twenty percent of the students started writing poetry in English” (Interview, May 12, 2015). Ramin asserted that in one of his teaching sessions, a student pointed out to his classmate saying that this student has a poem, “I asked [the student who had written a poem] to come in front of the class and read that for all of us.” Ramin really likes the poem, and asks the class if other students ever write poetry. According to Ramin,

Some people raised their hands, and said that they write poetry, but they write in Persian. And then I said, okay. What do you think if you start writing in English? So, they said, ‘we can give it a try; give it a shot.’ I said, okay, let’s hear next week. (Interview, May 12, 2015)

The next week, to Ramin’s surprise, about twenty out of forty of his students wrote poem as their response to their readings. Ramin noted that his decision on asking students to try poetry writing as their reader response had sparked his students’ interest, to the extent that “every day before the class or at the end of the class, a couple of students raised their hands, and really wanted to come in front of the class and recite their poems” (Interview, May 12, 2015).

Ramin’s students wrote poetry although their teacher had not taught them how to exactly write poetry. Ramin stated that he had asked them to follow different written poems as sample and compose their own poems. For instances,

If you want to write an ode, you have to consider John Keats’s *Ode to the West Wind*. If you want to write a lyric, you have to consider Marlowe, and if you want to write a sonnet, then consider the structure of Shakespeare’s sonnets. So, I just told them these comparative views, but not formally teaching how to write poetry. (Interview, May 12, 2015)
Besides, Ramin asserted that he had not been so strict on the structures his students used in their poems. For instance, he had not restricted them with the number of lines in writing sonnet. According to him, “what I cared the most [was] whether they are able to convey what the text actually stated” (Interview, May 12, 2015).

Ramin argued that the use of poetry as a reader response, asking students come to the front of class and recite their poems, had made his course both fun and learning. He pointed out that normally in literature courses students are the treated as text recipients, so his students found this shift appealing because they were writing and sharing their poems. According to Ramin, “in our culture… students are not much interested in reading because they are not much asked for reading in their previous studies as in schools or others” (Interview, May 12, 2015). Writing poetry was only a coincidence in Ramin’s literature courses. He had not known that students would write poetry or they could write poetry.

In addition to reader responses, students in Ramin’s literature courses had gallery viewing and debate, in which some writing activities were included. Ramin pointed out that in his literature courses he had also required his students to make poster presentations and present a topic. He noted, “I still remember, it was about Native Americans, … I divided the tribes, the Native American tribes on different groups and asked every group to make a poster presented and they presented” (Interview, May 12, 2015). On the day of presentation, students had gallery viewing in a way that they posted their poster on the walls. “They were leaving comments [on each other’s posters], not on writing actually, but they were leaving comments on the way [their classmates] presented the information” (Ramin, interview, May 12, 2015).
Writing had also been integrated in debate in the literature courses Ramin had taught. He had divided the class into two different groups in which students had to work together and write an outline for their speech. According to Ramin, outline is an important step in writing something. Thus, he had required his students to write an outline and address the following questions: “How will you start your speech, your discussion? What important points you will include? How will you end your speech?... How will you counter argue with your counterparts who will probably ask you a very difficult question?” (Interview, May 12, 2015). He had asked his students to write their outlines and submit them prior to debate.

Ramin has perceived the advantages of integrating writing in literature courses. He pointed out that when we integrate writing in literature, we move away from the traditional teaching of literature, which mostly focuses on reading literature. He added, the integration of writing in literature also provides students with an opportunity to connect to the text by expressing their feelings, resulting in improving their language skills and comprehending the meaning of the text. He specifically mentioned that when there is reading in literature courses and then a discussion about the reading, the discussion may not last long and students might not provide detailed information in their answers.

But if I ask [students] to share their personal views through writing about something like ‘how much money would a person need?’ or ‘how much land would a person need?’ with a very moral ending, so since… we all know that based on our religious beliefs, culture and social protocols, we all consider morality and moral values very strictly. So if [students] are allowed to write about
it, they share their feelings, and that writing can help them both in understand the topic very well, working on the grammar and structure, and at the same time they can eventually become better writers. (Interview, May 12, 2015)

According to Ramin, when there is no writing in a literature course, students may feel bored, resulting in not connecting the lesson to their personal lives and quickly forgetting the things they learn. Ramin’s philosophy of teaching literature courses had been “to let [students] learn things not only the structures and the elements of literature but [also] the moral lessons that [they] can learn from those literary pieces.” According to him, therefore, “it is very necessary for the students to be able to apply those things into their own real lives, and to see if that [literary piece they read] is true or a fake imagination of an author or a writer” (Interview, May 12, 2015).

Although Ramin has perceived the advantages of writing and literature, he noted there had been some factors preventing him from implementing many writing activities in his literature courses. He stated that there were some “sort of area specific problems or geographically setting problems or social problems… like the number of students… [which] are fifty, sixty or seventy students [in one classroom]” (Interview, May 12, 2015). He also added that when teachers provide students with various writing assignments, they would become very busy checking students’ papers. That is to say, teaching several courses, particularly teaching large classes, would be one of the reasons for not assigning many writing activities. However, according to him, assigning in-class writing activities would be more feasible and practical for the teachers.

Ramin supports the integration of writing and literature since he has perceived the advantages of this integration. He pointed out that if he gets another chance to teach
literature courses, he would certainly implement the same writing activities that he had implemented since he had received good results. He noted, “I guess if I get good results, I need to keep those activities.” Besides, he would probably add some more in-class writing activities in his literature courses.

The poems Ramin’s students had written as the form of reader response have sparked Ramin’s interest to learn more about writing in literature courses. He specifically mentioned his interest in teaching how to write poetry because he had asked his students to look at sample of poems and write their reader responses in a poetic language if they want. That is, he had not taught his students how to write a poem since he had no background in this regard. He indicated,

If I want to ask my students to reply through a poem, then I would really need to know how a poem is structured, how a poem is used... I would really need to know how a creative writing is, and how it is done, and how we can write creative writing pieces. This allows me to understand and help students better. (Interview, May 12, 2015)

Ramin recommends those Afghan English language teachers who would teach literature courses at their department to include writing in their literature courses. He specifically pointed out, “I would really encourage them to integrate writing, add [reading] responses, and uh, there are normally students, based on my experience, who like to write poems; they can integrate [writing as the form of response]” (Interview, May 12, 2015). He added, those teachers could think of integrating debate in which students write the outlines for their discussions.
**Summary of Ramin’s Responses**

Ramin has the experience of teaching literature for only one semester; however, during that one semester he has taught four literature courses, namely American Literature, British Literature, World Literature, and Introduction to Novel. He asserted that in a literature course in addition to learning the structure and the elements of literature, students should learn the moral of a literary text, and later apply that lesson to their lives. With this perception in mind, he has integrated various writing activities in his courses. He noted, “I tested the activities that I used in my classes like response writing, like poetry writing as response, like debate outline writing, so I saw the very huge success” (Interview, May 12, 2015). He has also used gallery viewing in which students were required to give written comments on the content of their classmates’ poster presentations.

Ramin has perceived several advantages of the integration of writing in literature courses. He specifically mentioned that when we implement writing activities in literature courses, we provide an opportunity for the students to connect the lesson to their personal lives, improve their language skills, do something creative like writing poems, and enjoy the learning process. Although Ramin has perceived the advantages of writing in literature courses, there had been some factors preventing him from integrating many writing activities in his literature courses. Of those many challenges, he asserted the number of teaching hours, teaching large classes, and the constraints of time to check students’ assignments and give feedback.

He supports the integration of writing in literature courses, and is interested in learning more ways to integrate in-class writing activities in his literature courses.
Besides, since Ramin has realized that some of his students enjoyed writing their response papers in poetic language, he is interested in learning how to teach poetry writing to students. He advises those English language teachers who would teach literature in their department to integrate writing in literature courses, particularly poetry writing, reader response, outlining and gallery viewing.

**Sahar’s Description of Integrating Writing and Literature**

Table 5

*Sahar’s Reported Experience With Integrating Writing in Literature Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary of the response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Incorporated writing activities into literature courses | • Reading responses  
• Writing endings for a story  
• Letter to the author or characters in a text |
| 2. Approach towards the use of writing in literature courses | • Writing is mostly assigned as the course assignment  
• No in-class writing |
| 3. Perceived advantages of integrating writing in literature courses | • Improving students’ language skills  
• Connecting to the text and understanding the text better  
• Making the learning process fun  
• Improving students’ critical thinking |
| 4. Challenges with integrating writing in literature courses | • Writing is difficult  
• Students’ attitudes towards writing  
• Writing is time consuming |
| 5. Attitudes towards the integration of writing in literature courses | • Supports the integration of writing in literature courses  
• Desire to learn how to use creative writing in literature courses |
| 6. Recommendations for the integration of writing in literature courses | • Using various writing activities  
• Integrating writing activities in literature courses  
• Focusing on the content of a writing than its structure |

Sahar has the experience of teaching at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University for almost four years. She has taught various courses at her department. Of those courses, she has taught American Literature, British
Literature and World Literature for three semesters. According to Sahar, the literature courses they teach mostly focus on the readings of literary pieces. Since they do not “rely too much on the schools of thoughts about philosophy, about the eras, [they are not] actually literature courses” (Interview, May 15, 2015). In Sahar’s literature courses, students were required to do the readings at home, and had discussions about the readings in the class. Sahar noted that in those discussions, “we asked about comprehension of those texts, and a little bit, uh, trying to know about the school of thoughts or about which era they depend” (Interview, May 15, 2015).

Sahar has integrated writing in her literature courses as well. According to her, in her courses she focused on four language skills of the language. “For writing, students [had] responses about the pieces they read, and they [had] to submit a response paper for whatever they like[d]” (Sahar, Interview, May 15, 2015). That is to say, students were not required to write a reader response for all their readings; they also had the option to choose the readings for their reader response. According to Sahar, students “had a choice. They had to write about ten responses throughout the semester with everything they liked, felt or the ideas they wanted to share about that piece” (Interview, May 15, 2015). Sahar has also asked her students to write a letter to the author of a text they read. She gave the example of Rappaccini’s Daughter short story, and pointed out that because it was an open-ended story, students “had to write what ending they would give to the story, or … if they have to change the ending of the story, what things they would put from their own minds” (Interview, May 15, 2015). She mentioned that similar to reader responses, students had the option to write a letter to one of the characters in the story; they could even change the ending of a story if they did not like it.
Sahar has assigned writing activities as the form of homework assignment of her literature courses. The writings incorporated into Sahar’s literature courses were all assignments. According to Sahar, they had no in-class writing since in the classroom, they “focused on discussion and comprehension of the passage or the stories [students] read” (Interview 15, May, 2015). Although Sahar had not included in-class writing activities in her literature courses, she noted that it is possible to incorporate in-class writing into their literature courses. She for example noted the use of group work as a way to facilitate in-class writing; “We can put [students] into groups, and have a writing assignment inside classroom” (Interview, May 15, 2015). She argued that students can work in groups and write one writing activity representing their group.

Sahar noted that integrating writing in literature courses is beneficial for students if teachers know how to incorporate writing into their teaching practices. According to her, when writing is integrated with literature, students can share their understanding of a text through writing. This allows teachers to understand whether their students comprehended a text or not. Moreover, she indicated that writing develops students’ critical thinking. When students write about what they read, they connect to the text because while writing, “in their mind, they think and analyze” (Interview, May 15, 2015). In addition to improving students’ critical thinking, Sahar argued that when student write about what they read, they improve their language skills. Apart from improving students’ language skills and critical thinking, Sahar mentioned that the integration of writing in literature courses allows the teacher to bring variety to the course and make the learning process more fun for the students.
In addition to the perceived advantages of integrating writing and literature, Sahar reported some of the challenges facing this integration. According to Sahar, “the first semester, when [students] started having literature courses, it was a little challenging for them [to write reader response] because they did not have that much writing experience” (Interview, May 15, 2015). She indicated, “Writing is difficult because you have to follow certain patterns, you have to focus, you have to be careful about your word choice, about your diction, so it is a bit difficult for [teachers] to make students write” (Interview, May 15, 2015). She also asserted that integrating writing activities in literature courses would be difficult for those students who “are not very much skillful in writing.” Moreover, according to Sahar, when teachers ask students to write, they actually require students to generate ideas, organize their thoughts and then write, therefore, writing is time-consuming. Therefore, Sahar’s students in literature courses mostly preferred speaking to writing, so she “could not implement [as] much writing assignments or writing activities as she wanted” (Sahar, Interview, May 15, 2015).

Sahar has perceived the advantages of integrating writing activities in literature courses as well as the challenges facing this integration. She supports the integration of writing in literature courses. She is interested in learning about how to incorporate writing activities into literature courses, particularly in-class writing. She pointed out that students in their department take various courses related to academic writing; however, they are not instructed how to write a creative writing piece. Sahar is interested in learning how to incorporate creative writing activities into her literature courses. She noted, “I would be more interested in knowing how to help my students to write their
own short stories, or to be creative in writing, maybe any kind of literature, literary pieces” (Interview, May 15, 2015).

Sahar recommended those instructors of literature courses in her department to integrate writing in their courses. However, according to Sahar, if teachers want to include writing in their literature courses, they should not assign a lot of writing activities; “if it’s every session, it would become boring”. Moreover, instead of mostly focusing on students’ linguistic structure, Sahar stated that teachers should focus on the content of a written text, especially students’ thoughts. Besides, Sahar recommended the use of various writing activities in literature courses in order to make the learning process more enjoyable for students.

**Summary of Sahar’s Responses**

Sahar has the experience of teaching three different literature courses, namely American Literature, World Literature and British Literature, for three semesters in her department. She has incorporated reader responses as well as letters to the author or a character in a story as part of the course assignments in her literature courses. She has not incorporated any in-class writing activity into her literature courses. Sahar argued that because in-class writing requires a lot of time, she had mostly facilitated in-class discussions about the course readings. Students in her literature courses were not limited to write a reader response for all of the readings. Since students were required to write particular number of reading responses throughout the semester, they had the option to choose the readings for their reader responses. According to Sahar, when writing is integrated in literature instruction, students connect to the text they read. This allows them to share their thoughts and critiques about the readings, resulting in making the
learning process fun. She also noted that incorporating writing into literature courses helps students improve their language skills.

Sahar asserted that some students do not like writing in general because writing is more difficult than speaking. She noted if students are not skilled in writing, it is difficult to incorporate writing activities into literature courses. Sahar supports the integration of writing in literature courses, although she herself has not integrated in-class writing activities. She recommended those English language teachers who aim to teach literature courses in the department to include writing in their course. She advised using various writing activities in literature courses. According to Sahar, the teachers should not incorporate a lot of writing activities into their literature courses because too much writing makes the course repetitive and boring for the students. Besides, she suggested that teachers should focus on the content in students’ writing rather than the linguistic structure when they assign writing in their literature courses. In sum, Sahar is interested in learning ways to incorporate writing activities into literature courses, particularly ways to include in-class writing. She is also interested in learning how to integrate creative writing activities in her literature courses.
### Wadiah’s Description of Integrating Writing and Literature

**Table 6**

**Wadiah’s Reported Experience With Integrating Writing in Literature Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary of the response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Incorporated writing activities into literature courses | - Reading responses  
- Poetry writing |
| 2. Approach towards the use of writing in literature courses | - Writing is mostly assigned as the course assignment  
- Rare in-class writing  
- Not providing instruction on how to write a reader response |
| 3. Perceived advantages of integrating writing in literature courses | - Improving students’ analytical capability  
- Developing students’ writing skill  
- Increasing students’ creativity |
| 4. Challenges with integrating writing in literature courses | - Heterogeneous classes  
- Students’ attitudes towards writing  
- Lack of writing exercise in the literature textbooks  
- Time constraints  
- Large classes |
| 5. Attitudes towards the integration of writing in literature courses | - Supporting the integration of writing and literature  
- Desire to learn more about ways to integrate in-class writing activities in literature courses |
| 6. Recommendations for the integration of writing in literature courses | - Designing in-class writing activities  
- Assigning group writing activities |

Wadiah has been a faculty member at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities of Afghan University since 2011. She has taught various English language related courses at her school. Of those various courses, she has taught American Literature for three semesters. Since this study aims to investigate the participants’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in literature courses, I asked Wadiah about the design of her American Literature courses, and if writing activities were integrated in her literature courses. According to Wadiah, she had required her students to read the reading materials prior to the class meeting since each session they
had in-class discussions about the readings. She asserted that she usually assigned her students to various groups, and provided them with some reading comprehension questions to discuss in their groups. Since the course readings or the instructional materials Wadiah used for her courses contained few discussion questions, she made her own questions as well. That is to say, Wadiah has mostly facilitated in class-discussion as a way to check her students’ comprehension of the readings.

Writing has also been included in Wadiah’s literature courses. According to Wadiah, writing in her literature courses had been implemented as the form of assignments. She noted, “I asked the students to write response papers on each lesson that we discuss in the class” (Interview, May 22, 2015). She had provided her students with feedback and grades for their reader responses. Unlike most of the other participants in this study, Wadiah has not used in-class writing activities in her American Literature courses. She asserted that she had not directly taught students how to write response papers because she knew that her students study essay writing in their Academic Writing courses. She noted, “… in literature courses, I myself do not give students instruction on how to write the response papers because I believe they know and they studied in the writing classes” (Interview, May 22, 2015).

When I asked Wadiah if she thinks her students could meet her expectation for the reading responses, she stated, “Actually I [did] not limit students because they [were] supposed to share their own ideas related to what they studied” (Interview, May 22, 2015). She added that she merely wanted her students to share their thoughts about the readings. This decision of Wadiah has caused some of her students not to rely on the traditional way of writing an essay as part of their reader responses and write poetry. She
asserted, “Even sometimes I noticed that if there is a poem we discuss in the class, then the students tried to respond, or tried to write their response papers in a poem” (Interview, May 22, 2015).

According to Wadiah, her students’ creativity in terms of writing poetry as their reader responses was appealing to her. She pointed out, “I really liked when I noticed, when I found papers, students write their response papers in a poetic language” (Interview, May 22, 2015). She added that only a few of her students wrote their reader responses in the format of poetry. According to Wadiah, when assigning reader responses in literature courses, teachers should not limit their students to follow a specific format or structure. She noted that in a reader response students’ thoughts and arguments matter not the format of the reading response. She indicated that she is not sure if other teacher-scholars support the way she utilized reader responses; “I do not know if I am right or not, but what I did till now, I just tried to focus on the ideas in students’ reader responses” (Interview, May 22, 2015).

According to Wadiah, including writing in literature courses has several advantages, namely improving students’ critical thinking, developing students’ writing skill, and increasing students’ creativity. Wadiah pointed out that when students write about the literature they read, they improve their critical thinking. She specifically used the term “analytical capability” to address this issue, and stated, “I believe we just help students to improve their analytical capability… some of us help [students] with their writing” (Interview, May 22, 2015).

Wadiah stated that some of her students showed interest in writing reader responses and performed very well. Since Wadiah had not require her students to follow
a specific format for writing their reader responses, her students performed better, resulting in being creative and writing their responses in the form of poetry. In addition to improving students’ analytical capability and creativity, Wadiah argued that integrating writing in literature courses improves students’ writing skill. According to her, once students receive an opportunity to express their ideas through writing, their writing skill improves.

When I asked if Wadiah believes her students met her expectation of the writing activities she performed, she pointed out, “We have multi-level students; you cannot expect all the students equally. They submit papers in different levels; then some of them are good, perfect, but I don’t have specific answer… that the students followed the instructions all equally” (Interview, May 22, 2015). That is, because of having heterogeneous classes, Wadiah could not state if her students met her expectations.

Although Wadiah has perceived the advantages of integrating writing in literature courses, there had been several factors preventing her from integrating writing activities in her American Literature courses. As earlier mentioned, Wadiah had heterogeneous groups of students in her courses. In addition to those multilevel students, Wadiah indicated, “There [were] some students who want[ed] to learn something… but there [were] some students who [tried] to escape, and they [did] not even want to be graded in the, or submit the response papers” (Interview, May 22, 2015). She also added that there were students who were interested in the course; however, they were students who just wrote the reader responses to pass the course; “in each class, there [were] students with different interests” (Interview, May 22, 2015).
Wadiah noted that integrating writing in literature courses does not have any drawback; however,

If the teacher wants to only rely on the textbook and the materials that the teacher selects in the literature courses, and somehow to focus both on to integrate writing with literature, it somehow takes the time of the class, you know, time consuming. (Interview, May 22, 2015)

Wadiah could not implement in-class writing activity in her literature courses because she had been concerned with completing her the course syllabus. In addition, the number of students, 35-50 students, in each of her courses made the incorporation of in-class writing activities difficult for her because she had to spend more time on the writing activity, resulting in not completing her course syllabus. She argued, “If I consider the time, the syllabus, and the textbook that I have to go through, then we hear, I have to skip the tasks and not to do them in the class” (Interview, May 22, 2015). When I asked if their course syllabi are predetermined, Wadiah stated, “the teachers themselves design the syllabi, but you should consider what the department expects you” (Interview, May, 2015). She pointed out that the concern of covering the entire syllabus makes the teachers skip some of the activities and tasks. This concern had prevented Wadiah from implementing in-class writing activities.

In addition to time and syllabus constraints, Wadiah indicated that the textbooks and instructional materials they use in their literature courses do not contain a lot of writing activities. She stated that the only writing exercise included in their literature textbooks and instructional materials is a reader response; “there are not any other types
of activities related to writing” (Interview, May 22, 2015). This indicates that textbooks could affect teachers’ decision-makings, particularly with teaching strategies.

Wadiah has perceived the advantages of the integrating writing in literature courses; she also has experienced some of the challenges facing this integration. She supports the integrating of writing activities in literature courses. She is also interested in learning more about how to facilitate students’ writing through literature courses. She specifically pointed out,

I believe it is a very interesting issue which I did not think before. Just asking students to write response papers, and just it was what I did and I am doing right now, but you know, your questions, your research somehow inspired me to apply more writing activities in my classes, and I will think of that. (Interview, May 22, 2015)

Wadiah recommends those Afghan English language teachers who teach at her school to include writing in all their courses, particularly in literature courses. If Wadiah gets another chance to teach literature courses in her department, she tends to add more writing activities in literature courses. In addition, she pointed out, “I don’t want to rely only on what the textbook asks the students, just writing the response papers” (Interview, May, 2015). Considering her mentioned-challenges facing the integration of writing activities in literature courses, Wadiah noted that one way to implement in-class writing activities is assigning students to different groups. She argued that utilizing group activities allows everyone to participate in the task because they negotiate as a group and write one group response. Once students write their responses, they can share their writings with the class at large and receive feedback.
Summary of Wadiah’s Responses

Wadiah has taught American Literature course for three semesters. The only writing activity that she has integrated in her literature courses is reader response. She reported that the main goal of utilizing reader responses was to check her students’ views and thoughts about the texts they read. She has not limited her students to follow specific structures for writing their reader responses. This openness in the format and structure of reader responses caused some of Wadiah’s students to write their reader responses in the format of poetry.

Wadiah has perceived the advantages of integrating writing activities in literature courses. According to her, when teachers integrate writing with literature, they help students improve their analytical capability and critical thinking, develop their writing skill, appreciate and at the same time increase their creativity. In addition to the advantages of writing and literature, she noted some of the challenges facing this integration. Of those challenges, she mentioned large classes, teachers’ concerns about the completion of their course syllabi, lack of locally relevant materials, teaching heterogeneous classes, and students’ attitudes towards writing and literature.

According Wadiah, participating in my study has inspired her to think more about integrating writing activities in literature courses. She desires to know more about how to integrate writing activities, particularly in-class writing, in literature courses. She recommends her colleagues to implement writing activities in their literature courses, particularly assigning group writing activities.
Cross-Description Analysis

In the first section of this chapter I presented the descriptions of five participants regarding the incorporation of writing into literature courses. Since the above descriptions addressed the reported experience of each individual, a cross-description analysis of the five participants is necessary in understanding the overlapping or diverged viewpoints of the participants. To achieve this objective, I first present a summary of my participants’ demographic information.

The five participants featured in this study are Aziz, Mohammad, Ramin, Sahar and Wadiah (pseudonyms chosen by the participants). Aziz, who has taught literature courses for eight years, has the most experience teaching literature courses among my participants. Wadiah and Sahar, the two female participants of this study, have the experience of teaching literature courses for three semesters. On the other hand, Mohammad and Ramin have taught literature courses for two semesters. It is also important to note that in this study I did not take the participants’ level of qualifications, gender and years of teaching experience into consideration when analyzing the data.

In the next sections, I present the cross-descriptions of my participants’ incorporated writing activities into their literature courses, their perceived advantages of integrating writing in their literature courses, the challenges they faced in this regard, and their recommendations for incorporating writing into literature courses. However, I excluded the topics of my participants’ approach towards integrating writing and literature, as well as their attitudes towards this integration because I conjoined them with the other topics. Guiding the following sections are the topics that I used for presenting each participant’s description of integrating writing and literature.
Incorporated Writing Activities in Literature Courses

Table 7

Participants’ Incorporated Writing Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Reader Response</th>
<th>Poetry</th>
<th>In-Class Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aziz</td>
<td>• Requiring students to address specific points in their reader responses</td>
<td>• Predetermined (haiku writing)</td>
<td>• Haiku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammad</td>
<td>• Requiring students to address specific points in their reader responses</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>• Paraphrasing • Summarizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramin</td>
<td>• Requiring essay format • Accepting poetry as a reader response</td>
<td>• Coincidence</td>
<td>• Outline writing • Leaving comments on students’ posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahar</td>
<td>• No genre or structure limitation for reader responses</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadiah</td>
<td>• No genre or structure limitation for reader responses</td>
<td>• Coincidence</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The reader responses were all utilized as the assignments for the courses.

A reader response is the only shared writing activity that all five participants incorporated into their literature courses. The participants generalized reader response as a reflective writing activity, written in an essay format, towards a specific text. They all assigned their students to write reader responses—not as in-class writing activity. The only difference that is seen among the participants in terms of assigning reader responses is the particular way they asked their students to write a reader response. For example, Ramin noted that prior to asking his students write a reader response, he had instructed them how to write various types of essays. In other words, Ramin had taught his students how to write a five-paragraph essay before requiring them write their reader responses in the format of an essay.
Mohammad and Aziz did not teach their students how to write a reader response—the students study how to write an essay in their Academic Writing courses. However, they had provided their students with a set of questions to consider when writing their reader responses. For example, Aziz asserted that discussing what specific things to include in a reader response (e.g., providing relevant textual examples, critiquing, reflecting) played a pivotal role in his students’ performance. According to Aziz, whenever his instructions for writing reader responses were clear, his students responded better. In the same vein, Mohammad noted that because he had not wanted his students write the summary of the readings as their reader responses, he provided them with a set of questions to answer when writing their reader responses. This according to Mohammad allowed his students to take a position and critique the text.

On the other hand, Sahar and Wadiah asserted that they did not limit their students to follow a specific format or genre for writing their reader responses. That is to say, these two participants just wanted to see the reflection and reaction of their students’ towards a text; students were required “to share their own ideas related to what they studied” (Wadiah, Interview, May, 2015). This openness of reader responses in terms of genre and structure caused some of Wadiah’s students to write their reader responses in the format of poetry.

Three of the participants reported that their students wrote poetry in their literature courses. Of those three, Aziz had included haiku as a predetermined writing activity for his literature courses. On the other hand, Ramin and Wadiah noted that poetry writing had been a coincidence in their courses (see Ramin and Wadiah’s descriptions for more detail). Unlike Aziz, who had instructed his students how to write haiku, Ramin and
Wadiah had not provided their students with clear instruction on how to write poetry. In other words, Ramin and Wadiah had not even required their students to write poetry let alone teaching them how to write a poem. Although Ramin had required his students to follow a five-paragraph essay format for their reader responses, once he realized that some of his students were interested in poetry writing, he gave them the permission to write their reader responses in the format of poetry. According to Ramin, he advised those students who wanted to write poetry to follow the structure of published poems, particularly the poems that they had discussed in their courses.

The participants in this study mostly utilized writing as an assignment for the course. They had in-class writing activity very rarely. For example, Sahar and Wadiah pointed out that they did not have in-class writing activities in their literature courses at all. Wadiah noted that she had assigned her students to write reader responses because it was something included in the textbook. According to Wadiah,

I believe [integrating writing in literature courses] is a very interesting issue which I did not think before. Just asking students to write response paper, it was just what I did and I am doing right now, but you know, your questions, your research somehow inspired me to apply more writing activities in my classes, and I will think of that. (Interview, May 22, 2015)

On the other hand, Aziz, Mohammad, and Ramin named a few in-class writing activities that they had performed in their classes very rarely. For example, Aziz had taught his students to write haiku, and they were required to write haiku in the class. Mohammad had implemented some paraphrasing and summarizing activities in his literature course. In the same vein, Ramin’s students were required to write the outline of their speech
when they had debate on a topic related to their readings. He also had organized poster sessions based on his students’ projects, and he had required his students to leave written comments on their classmates’ posters.

In this section, I presented the different types of writing activities my participants incorporated into their literature courses. In the following section, I provide the participants’ perceived advantages of integrating writing in literature courses.

**Perceived Advantages of Incorporating Writing in Literature Courses**

All the five participants in this study acknowledged that when writing is incorporated into literature courses, students benefit in various ways. There are two advantages that all the five participants mentioned in regards to the integration of writing in literature courses: (a) writing improves students’ language skills; (b) writing develops students’ creativity and critical thinking.

Wadiah among my participants indicated that assigning writing activities in literature courses improves students’ writing skill, while the other participants noted that this integration develops students’ language skills. Another advantage of integrating writing and literature, which is common among the participants of the current study, is the connection students make with their readings. Except Wadiah, all the participants mentioned that when students write, they connect to the text they read. According to Sahar, when students are for example required to write a reader response, they first need to think about the reading and then take a position to critique the text, resulting in connecting to the text. This is to say, writing makes students think critically about what they read and write.
Mohammad and Ramin noted that having writing in literature courses increases students’ participation and interest in the course. Mohammad specifically mentioned that writing allows teachers to hear everyone’s voice in the class. According to Mohammad, when a teacher asks students’ perspectives on a topic, a few students will be given the chance to share their thoughts. However, when the teacher asks students to write down their responses, all the students are equally invited to participate in this discussion and share their thoughts. In the same vein, Sahar asserted that writing brings variety to the teachers’ way of teaching and makes the learning process more fun for the students. That is to say, the integration of writing in literature courses provides students with an opportunity to move away from always receiving a text to producing their own texts.

In this study, I have attempted to consider different aspects of integrating writing in literature courses. Therefore, in the following section, I present the major reported challenges of my participants regarding the integration of writing and literature.

**Challenges of Integrating Writing in Literature Courses**

The participants of the current study in addition to the advantages of integrating writing activities in their literature courses have reported some of the challenges they faced in regards to this integration. In the following paragraphs, I present the following challenges my participants faced in integrating writing activities in their literature courses: students’ attitudes towards writing, time constraint, heterogeneous and large classes, as well as the lack of locally relevant materials in literature courses.

Except Ramin, all the participants noted that some of their students showed negative attitudes towards writing. For example, Aziz indicated that a few of his students had misconceptions about the purpose of literature courses. They showed resistance
towards writing a persuasive essay in their American Literature course. According to Aziz, “[some students] told me that they have their own writing, Academic Writing course, so they think that in literature they should study literature” (Interview, May 22, 2015). In the same vein, Mohammad pointed out that some of his students showed resistance to write. They preferred speaking to writing because of not receiving the opportunity to share their writings with the whole class. In other words, they perceived writing as a task that will be shared merely with the teacher, resulting in not knowing their classmates’ opinions about a text. In addition, Wadiah argued that some of her students did not want to learn; they wrote their reader response only to pass the course. Moreover, Sahar mentioned that those students who did not consider themselves as good writers did not enjoy writing. According to Sahar, since writing is a difficult skill and requires many steps, “it is a little bit difficult … to make students write” (Interview, May 15, 2015).

Similar to students’ attitudes, all the five participants mentioned time constraint as an obstacle preventing them from incorporating writing into literature courses. For example, Aziz mentioned that they only have fifty minutes for one classroom meeting, and throughout the semester, teachers have to cover many reading materials in their literature course. On the other hand, Ramin mentioned that the instructors deal with large classes, “50, 60 or 70 students”, and when they assign students with writing, they may not be able to check their papers to give feedback since instructors are required to teach at least 16 hours per week. Similarly, Wadiah noted that she could not include a lot of writing activities in her literature courses because she had heterogeneous classes— students with different English proficiency levels.
Aziz and Wadiah noted that lack of locally relevant materials in literature courses prevented them from integrating writing activities in their courses. According Wadiah, reader response has been the only writing activity presented in their textbooks and instructional materials. Similarly, Aziz pointed out that the instructional materials we use have not been meeting our students’ needs “because they textbook we are using now, they are American high school textbooks, so they are written for native speakers.”

In the previous sections, I presented my participants’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in their literature courses, namely the writing activities they used in their courses, the advantages of integrating writing and literature, and the challenges facing this integration. In the next section, I present my participants’ recommendations and suggestions for integrating writing in literature courses.

**Recommendations for Integrating Writing in Literature Courses**

All the participants in this study supported the integration of writing in literature courses. They recommend those teachers who are teaching or who might teach literature courses at their department to integrate writing in their literature courses. Unlike the previous sections of this cross-description analysis, the recommendations the participants offered are mostly different from one another.

Mohammad and Wadiah mostly shared the same recommendations. They both stated that teachers should integrate in-class writing activities, particularly group writing activities. Mohammad also added that teachers need to think of using writing activities which require less time. Since Ramin had incorporated writing outline, reader responses and poetry writing in his classes and had received positive feedback, he suggested that other teachers could incorporate them into their literature courses. Moreover, Sahar
recommended the use of various writing activities in literature course. She also suggested that when teachers incorporate writing activities into literature courses, they need to focus mostly on the content of students’ writing rather than the linguistic structure of their writing. Unlike the other participants, Aziz’s recommendations addressed the institutional levels. He suggested that Afghan English language teachers should adapt materials related to their own context so that they materials they utilize in their courses meet their students’ need and interest. In addition, he recommended the coordination between writing and literature courses as a way to provide students with more writing opportunities.

Summary of the Chapter

In the first half of this chapter, I presented the descriptions of five Afghan English language instructors in regards to their reported experiences with integrating writing activities in literature courses at Afghan University. Next, in the second half of the chapter, I provided a cross-description analysis of my participants’ reported experiences as well as their recommendations with integrating writing activities in their literature courses. In the next chapter, I will discuss the five major themes that I believe are needed to be introduced into the larger conversation regarding English language studies. These themes include: (a) writing develops creativity and critical thinking; (b) poetry is a way to express oneself; (c) teaching is a critically reflective and heuristic practice; (d) interdepartmental collaboration is crucial for improving students’ writing; (e) “They are written for native speakers”—A need for locally relevant materials. I will discuss these themes in detail, and I also connect them to the published related studies.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study aimed to investigate the reported experiences of five Afghan English language teachers regarding the integration of writing activity in literature courses. I interviewed my participants through Skype. After transcribing the audio recordings, I analyzed the data through content analysis with both my research questions and my theoretical framework in mind.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I discuss five important themes that I believe are needed to be introduced into the larger conversation about teaching writing in Afghanistan. The impetuses for these five themes have been the results of my study, my voice and my passion for making connections between the findings of my study and what they mean to the existing literature. In other words, I consider these themes as a way to generate new understandings of my results as they relate to larger issues and topics in the field of English language studies. Therefore, I constructed the following five themes by taking into account my research questions, a critical analysis of my findings, and my theoretical framework:

1. Writing develops creativity and critical thinking.
2. Poetry is a way to express oneself.
3. Teaching is a critically reflective and heuristic practice.
4. Interdepartmental collaboration is crucial for improving students’ writing.
5. “They are written for native speakers”—A need for locally relevant materials.

In this chapter, I also present the limitations of this study, suggestions for future research, the merits and implications of the current study, as well as concluding remarks.
Writing Develops Creativity and Critical Thinking

The most common theme among the participants of the current study is the development of students’ creativity and critical thinking through incorporating writing in literature courses. This theme is mostly related to my first research question. There is a rich body of literature exploring whether writing improves creativity or critical thinking (see Golpour, 2014; Marashi & Dadari, 2012; Mehta & Al-Mahrouqi, 2014; Tin, 2011).

According to the participants of this study, when they asked their students to write about a reading, their students showed more creativity than when they were asked to share their responses orally. It specifically showed that when my participants did not limit their students to follow specific structure for writing their reader responses, students wrote poetry—a writing genre that these students had often read but never written.

Ramin for example compared writing with speaking and pointed out that when teachers have in-class discussion about the readings, the discussion might not last long. However, when students are required to write their responses, they spend more time thinking about their arguments and use novel approaches to produce and generate their ideas. This coincides with Wade’s (1995) claim that in class-discussions, students usually state or defend what they already believe, but with written tasks, teachers can boost the development of dialectic reasoning by asking students to consider various aspects of an issue in their arguments. Ramin’s example of Leo Tolstoy’s short story “How much land does a man need?” could add weight to this argument. According to Ramin (Interview, May 12, 2015), “if I ask [students] to share their personal views through writing, …with a moral ending” for the story, they not only understand the story but also think deeply to produce their own ending for the story. That is, writing as Estrem (2015) has noted is a
thinking act in itself; once we identify the knowledge-making feature of writing, we engage with creativity.

Similarly, on the use of haiku in literature course, Aziz mentioned that his students showed creativity. They enjoyed writing haiku; “…that was I think creative, they did something themselves, and that’s poetry; they produced something themselves in the class” (Interview, May 17, 2015). In the same vein, Ramin and Wadiah’s students wrote poetry as their reader responses. Since Wadiah had not required her students to follow specific structure or genre for their reader responses, some of her students did not limit themselves to the traditional five-paragraph essay, and wrote poetry.

In addition, three of my participants highlighted the importance of developing students’ critical thinking through writing. For instance, Mohammed used the term critical thinking in response to the advantages of integrating writing activities in literature instruction. He noted that when teachers ask students to write a reading reflection, students analyze the text and share their own experiences. Along the same lines, Wadiah indicated that when students write reader responses, they critique a text, resulting in thinking critically and improving their analytical capability. This correlates with Paul and Elder’s (2006) argument about the connection of writing and critical reading, “The reflective mind improves its thinking by thinking (reflectively) about it. Likewise, it improves its writing by thinking (reflectively) about writing. It moves back and forth between writing and thinking about how it is writing” (p. 5).

Mohammad prioritized writing over other language skills in terms of improving critical thinking. Besides, Sahar noted that her use of writing story endings in her literature courses helped her students think critically and make thoughtful decisions about
their endings of the story. It can be postulated that because writing is a process, it “allows time for reflection and a careful consideration of reasons for taking a position or making an assertion” (Wade, 1995, p. 24), resulting in developing writers’ critical thinking and creativity.

In sum, the findings of the current study showed that integrating writing activities in literature courses improves students’ creativity and critical thinking, two skills that will never go out of fashion. According to my participants, writing allowed their students to analyze and critique the readings, connect to the text, and utilize novel approaches to generate something different and new in their writing assignments. It is significant to note that we are all creative and critical thinkers in one way or another. With Sarsani (2005), I believe human beings are born with a strong capacity for creativity, and creativity could be developed “at all ages and in all fields of human endeavor” (p. 47). Moreover, research evidence supports that creativity occurs “whenever human intelligence is engaged” (Robinson, 2001, p. 7).

Considering my participants’ reported experiences, integrating writing activities in literature course can encourage and develop creativity and critical thinking among students. It is significant to highlight that it is not writing per se that improves students’ creativity and critical thinking but the particular ways writing activities are used. For instance, if those of my participants whose students wrote poetry had required their students to follow only one specific structure or genre (e.g., five-paragraph essay) for their reader responses, their students would have not written poetry. In the next theme, I discuss how integrating writing provides students with an opportunity to express themselves.
Poetry Is a Way to Express Oneself

There are multiple evidences in the findings of the current study supporting that poetry writing provides students with an opportunity to express their voice. Three of the participants mentioned that students in their literature courses wrote poetry. Of those three, Aziz indicated that he had included haiku in his course syllabi. According to Aziz, when his students wrote haiku, they enjoyed the experience because they produced something themselves.

The concept of producing something yourself is similar to psychological ownership, which according to Pierce, Kostova and Dirks (2003) is a cognitive-affective “state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is ‘theirs’ (i.e., it is MINE!” (p. 86). This implies that the relationship between the ultimate goal of a text and an individual’s sense of self could be perceived as an extension of self (Dittmar, 1992). That is, when students write poetry, they mostly feel as if they express a part of themselves.

Ramin and Wadiah also mentioned that their students wrote poetry. However, what makes these participants’ experiences different is the motive/s behind their students’ poetry writing. Unlike Aziz’s students, these students themselves decided to write poetry. Their teachers had not required them to write it. For instance, Wadiah acknowledged that because she had not limited her students to follow specific structure or genre for their reader responses, a few of them wrote poetry. Similarly, in Ramin’s story, as presented in Chapter Four, students themselves decided to write their reading responses in the format of poetry; they were not required to write poetry. Once Ramin realizes that his students are interested in poetry writing, he encourages them to try their reader responses in the
format of poetry if they want. This, according to Ramin, “sparked [his students’] interest, and every day before the class or at the end of the class, a couple of the students raised their hands, and really wanted to come in front of the class and recite their poems” (Interview, May 2015).

This theme goes hand in hand with Hanauer’s (2012) meaningful literacy, which positions the learners at the center of the learning experience. It also supports Kramsch’s (2009) argument that “language learning experience is likely to engage learners cognitively, emotionally, morally and aesthetically” (p. 43). The attitudes of Ramin’s students in this particular example indicates that they no longer wrote because of their grades. They wrote poetry to express themselves, their emotions, and their voice. The students were not required to write a reader response every session, but some of them wanted to share their poems every day. I argue that Ramin’s encouragement gave his students permission to write poetry and express themselves. His approach fits into Iida’s (2010) expressive pedagogy, which aims “to develop the writer’s individual voice in a specific context” (p. 173). Therefore, Ramin’s pedagogy provided his students with an opportunity to express themselves, their voice, through poetry writing. This finding is significant in my participants’ educational context because they had not asked their students to express their feelings and emotions through writing. The students themselves volunteered to share their feelings through writing.

Looking at poetry writing through the lens of post-method pedagogy demonstrates that poetry writing can be used as a macrostrategy to give voice to students, particularly in literature courses. The approaches Ramin and Wadiah took in their literature courses encouraged their students to write poetry because their students were not required to
follow specific format for their reader responses. Since my participants, except Aziz, had not taught their students how to write poetry, the students produced poetry. That is to say, their students might have not followed the traditional definition of poetry. Future studies could investigate what happens when the teacher limits Afghan students to follow a specific format for their poetry writing. In the implications section of this chapter, I discuss possible research areas investigating improving students writing skill through poetry writing.

**Teaching Is a Critically Reflective and Heuristic Practice**

Teaching is a learning act in itself. It is rhetorical (Tate, Taggart, Schick, & Hessler, 2014). We experience something different in every single session. As we expect our students to be critically reflective (Kumaravadivelu, 2008), we should also attempt to detect patterns to draw on our teaching practices. If teachers reflect upon their teaching experiences and consider their students’ interests and needs, they will probably facilitate the learning process for their students more effectively, meaning that teachers’ reflections might result in providing better instruction for their students. Reflection can take various forms; however, in this theme, I only discuss the importance of self-reflection that some of my participants addressed.

When Ramin, one of the participants, as a coincidence realizes that a few of his students are interested in writing Persian poetry, he encourages them to try poetry writing in English. He not only allows his students to write poetry but also encourages them to follow their interests. Although Ramin does not teach his students how to write poetry, his attitude and encouragement play an important role in his students’ writing, resulting in some of the students sharing their written poems every session.
When teachers consider teaching as a learning practice, they leave room for learning and receiving feedback, as Ramin learns from his students, keeps his voice, and maintains his creativeness. This postulates that reflective teachers attempt to push against imitating their teaching decisions; they teach by intentionality. As in Ramin’s case, instead of ignoring students’ interest in poetry writing, he both allows and encourages his students to write poetry, particularly in English. Ramin’s example yields that there are some Afghan students who prefer to express themselves through writing, especially poetry. He recommends other Afghan English language teachers to include poetry writing in their courses, especially when they teach literature. Therefore, Afghan English language “instructors must choose a blend of pedagogies that they believe will meet the needs of their particular students within their particular contexts” (Tate, Taggart, Schick, & Hessler, 2014, p. 7).

Similar to Ramin, Wadiah’s students wrote poetry as their reader responses. Wadiah had not included poetry writing in her course syllabi. She had only asked her students to write reading responses because they were the only writing activities presented in their course readings (see the theme on locally relevant materials). However, Wadiah’s students wrote poetry because they were not restricted to follow one particular genre of format for their reader responses. According to Wadiah, if she gets another chance to teach one of the literature courses in her department, she will include poetry writing in her course syllabus. This correlates with Tate, Taggart, Schick and Hessler (2014) argument that pedagogy is a critically reflective practice. I therefore argue that teachers’ pedagogies are reflected in their teaching practices.
By the end of my interview, Wadiah noted that she had never thought deeply about integrating writing in literature courses. She noted, “[my] questions, [my] research somehow inspired [her] to apply more writing activities in [her] classes, and [she] will think of that” (Interview, May, 2015). This yields that reflection could happen when teachers share their experience with other people. That is to say, teachers can discuss their perceived experiences with their colleagues or other teacher-scholars so that they reflect upon their experiences and learn from each other. In Wadiah’s case, although some of her students showed interest in writing poetry, according to Wadiah, she had not thought deeply about incorporating more writing activities in her literature courses until she participated in my study.

There comes a time we only need someone to listen to us, resulting in critiquing our own work. I have personally experienced this issue several times while working at the IUP Writing Center on volunteer basis. When students visit writing centers to work with a tutor, while sharing and discussing their writings with the tutors, they sometimes critique their own work. This is similar to intuitive heuristics, which according to Kumaravadivelu (2003) is defined as “the process of self discovery on the part of the learner” (p. 176). Although, in educational contexts, the term intuitive heuristics has been mostly used with the learners, it could also be used with the teachers since pedagogy is a heuristic practice (Tate, Taggart, Schick, & Hessler, 2014). Although in my interview with Wadiah I did not state whether the integration of writing in literature courses is good or bad, Wadiah noted that writing should be integrated in their literature courses because Afghan English language learners need more opportunities to write.
Interdepartmental Collaboration Is Crucial for Improving Students’ Writing

As the findings of this study revealed, time constraint, workload and students’ attitudes towards writing and literature courses are some of the main challenges my participants reported to me. The participants noted that these challenges prevented them from incorporating a lot of writing activities in their literature courses. As I previously asserted, majority of the English language teachers in Afghanistan deal with large classrooms. Also, university instructors are often required to teach 16 hours per week. These obligations make the instructors in literature courses focus more on text reception than text production. That is to say, if they assign their students to write, they feel obligated to spend more time reading students’ papers and providing them with feedback.

One way to address these challenges and provide students with more writing opportunities, according to Aziz, is coordination between writing and other courses, especially literature courses. “It sometimes gives me the impression that the courses are separate and independent, while they should be interwoven into each other” (Aziz, Interview, May, 2015). Aziz noted that if the literature and writing instructors work together, they can provide their students with more writing opportunities. His suggestion is like killing two birds with one stone. It postulates that if literature and writing instructors coordinate, they would provide their students with opportunities for both text reception and text production.

In addition, Sahar and Aziz mentioned that some of their students think that in literature courses, they should only read literature. For instance, Aziz mentioned that in one of his literature courses, he had asked his students to write a persuasive essay; however, his students argued that they take Academic Writing course, and in that course
they write persuasive essays. “There is a lot of overlap at the moment. Better coordination will help to avoid redoing and repeating” (Aziz, Interview, May 17, 2015). Aziz’s suggestion of coordination and collaboration between courses could to some extent address this issue, although future studies should investigate the students’ perception of incorporating writing in literature courses (see the limitations and implications sections of this chapter).

Interdepartmental collaboration plays a pivotal role in improving Afghan English language learners’ writing skill. It crosses the borders and builds bridges between courses. There is currently a conspicuous lack of shared detailed objectives for the courses offered at the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Afghan University (Aziz, Interview, May 17, 2015). Meeting the needs of students in a department becomes very difficult if the instructors do not have shared objectives for their courses or if they do not consider their shared objectives (if available) when writing their course syllabi. However, if teachers have collaboration with their colleagues or share and discuss their course syllabi with each other, they would likely have more opportunities to improve their pedagogies and address their students’ needs. It is also significant to discuss interdepartmental collaboration in regards to the curriculum the participants of the current study implement in their department because “Collaboration among instructors does work, but if it is not consolidated and not fixed in the curriculum, it would be transient” (Interview, May 17, 2015). This suggests that the instructors spend more time reflecting and working collaboratively to review their curriculum. Considering their department’s mission, they need to discuss if they have clear objectives for each of their courses and in what ways their offered courses relate to each other.
“They Are Written for Native Speakers”—A Need for Locally Relevant Materials

One of the major challenges facing the incorporation of writing in literature courses at Afghan University, according to two of my participants, is the course materials the instructors use in their courses. Aziz, who has more teaching experience than the other participants, critiqued the instructional materials they use in their literature courses. He reported that the materials they use in their literature courses do not meet the Afghan English language learners’ needs—“the textbooks that we have or the chapters that we use, chapters, which are collected from different books are not, let’s say, made for EFL or ESL students” (Interview, May 17, 2015). According to Aziz, the instructional materials utilized in their literature courses are designed for American students because they are compiled from textbooks designed for American high school students. Therefore, those textbooks and instructional materials are not culturally and linguistically appropriate for the Afghan English language learners; “they are written for native speakers” (Aziz, Interview, May 17, 2015). This finding provides conclusive support for Kumaravadivelu’s (2016) argument about the concepts of power and hegemony in our field. According to Kumaravadivelu (2016), “The hegemonic forces in our field keep themselves ‘alive and kicking’ through various aspects of English language education: curricular plans, materials design, teaching methods, standardized tests, and teacher preparation” (pp. 72–73). That is, similar to the imposition of methods, the instructional materials that are published in English speaking countries are recommended and utilized in different parts of the world.

In addition, Wadia’s choice of reader response, which was the only type of writing activity in her literature courses, indicates that if her course materials had more
writing activities, she would have incorporated more writing activities into her literature courses. According to Wadiah, she had incorporated reader responses into her literature courses because the textbook and the instructional materials required the readers to write a reader response as the post reading activity. This therefore raises the question: what if the textbook had no writing activity? This demonstrates that textbooks limit the creativity of teachers (especially those teachers who follow one single textbook), let alone when a textbook is not appropriate to the teaching context.

Wadiah’s story may also show that locally relevant materials can result in culturally relevant pedagogy. Most of the English language textbooks and instructional materials in Afghanistan, like the ones my participants used in their courses, are not designed and developed for the context of Afghanistan. Therefore, there is an urgent need to design and develop textbooks which are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the Afghan students. Similar to Kumaravadivelu’s (2001, 2003) postmethod pedagogy, which urges the teachers to theorize from their own practices, the findings of this study showed that Afghan English language teachers need to design and develop their own textbooks based on their perceived teaching experiences so that they provide more writing opportunities for their students (see the implication section of this chapter).

Additionally, all my participants reported time-constraint as the major issue preventing them from integrating writing activities in their courses. They reported that they are required to cover so many reading materials in one semester. If they incorporate writing activities, particularly in-class writing activities, they are unlikely to finish their assigned course syllabi. Therefore, they generally focus on reading and discussing literature, and mostly prefer text reception to text production in their literature courses.
Intriguingly, according to Aziz and Wadiah, the instructors have a major role in choosing their instructional materials; they usually choose their course materials with the consultation of their department. If this is the case, when teachers realize that their assigned readings prevent them from incorporating various language learning activities (considering the fact that their students need to develop their language skills), they need to prioritize the quality of their instruction over quantity. They also need to reduce their course readings in cases where majority of their students need help with a particular lesson or aspect of the language.

Reflective teachers revise their course syllabi. They do not always duplicate their teaching materials. When teachers in Afghanistan design their course syllabi based on their students’ proficiency level, cultural and linguistic background, and when they leave some room for their students’ interest and desire, they will most likely facilitate the learning process for their students. A course syllabus which is taught in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, may not be appropriate to students in Kandahar, let alone when teachers copy course syllabi which are designed for students in other countries.

**Limitations of the Study**

The current study has addressed the core of its research questions; however, it has a number of limitations. First, due to the limited timeline for this research project, the participants’ years of teaching experience, their number of instructed literature courses and their educational qualifications have not been considered when discussing the study results. Additional research might provide unique insights into the connection of teachers’ qualification, knowledge and teaching experiences with the participants’ perceptions about incorporating writing activities into their teaching practice.
Second, this study has only investigated the reported experiences of the instructors; the students’ voices have not been considered. This means, the findings only present the instructors’ views of their students’ learning and success. The results of the current study could be further strengthened by investigating the students’ perceptions of integrating writing activities in literature courses because what constitutes success is tricky and problematic.

Finally, as a qualitative study does not tend to generalize to a population (Creswell, 2012), the findings of the current study are specific to its own study context, Afghan University. Caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to other groups of teachers. Therefore, the above-mentioned limitations should be taken into consideration while making applications of the study findings.

**Future Research Directions**

The findings of the current study suggest a number of new avenues for future research. As I previously stated, there is very little or no published research on English language studies in the context of Afghanistan. Afghan English language teachers have been underrepresented in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics. More studies should be conducted in regards to English language and educational research in Afghan higher education in general, and writing in particular.

The integration of writing and literature is a topic which has not received so much attention. It merits further investigation. Future studies can explore the same topic using various research designs. For example, through employing a quantitative design, they can recruit more participants and come up with generalizable results. In addition, the correlations among instructors’ responses, considering the instructors’ qualifications and
teaching experiences, could be further investigated to explore whether teachers’ backgrounds affect their choice of utilizing writing activities in their courses.

Moreover, the current study investigated the reported experiences of the participants regarding the incorporation of writing into literature courses. Future studies can explore the integration of writing in other English language-based courses offered at Afghan universities. They can also study the student’s perceptions towards writing, their past experiences with writing, and the current writing opportunities they receive. Finally, the themes of the current study provide a starting point for further examination. Other researchers, particularly Afghan English language teacher-scholars, can conduct different studies on each of the themes (i.e., poetry as a self-expressive practice among Afghan students; the importance of locally relevant materials in Afghan education systems, etc.).

**Implications for Teaching and Administrations in Higher Education**

The findings of this study showed that all the participants support integrating writing in their literature courses. Six themes have emerged from analyzing the study data, which offer a number of implications for teaching and administrations in higher education. In practical terms, Afghan English language instructors at this stage can integrate writing activities in their teaching practices so that they provide their students with more opportunities to write. This integration is not just limited to literature instructions; it can be applied to other language courses as well.

In the light of the results of this study, Afghan English language teachers can utilize self-expressive pedagogy to allow their students to voice their opinions in the class. As the findings revealed, there are some Afghan English language learners who want to write poetry. The teachers can begin their courses with some self-expressive
assignments or projects (e.g., literacy autobiography, poetic autoethnography) to know more about their students. This would allow the teachers to perhaps modify their course syllabi and meet their students’ background and needs. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Afghanistan is a hybrid context. In each course, teachers might encounter students with different literacy and socialization backgrounds. The teachers therefore should help their students to discover their aspirations and frustrations, and work hard to reach their dreams.

It is significant to note that writing integration should be done purposefully since it is not a writing activity per se that helps students develop their writing skill, but the particular way it is used. For example, as one of my participants noted, teachers should be mindful of the number of activities they incorporate into their literature courses. That is to say, instead of overdoing writing integration, they should emphasize the sheer joy of writing. Moreover, the results of this study showed that there is a conspicuous lack of in-class writing activities in the literature courses my participants had taught. On the other hand, teaching large classes and workload were the main reasons that had prevented my participants from this integration. In order to address these challenges, some of my participants recommended the use of group work activities. That is to say, teachers can assign their students to different groups, and ask them to work together and write a collaborative response. They can also ask their students to write individual responses once they did the group discussion. If giving feedback to each individual is not feasible for the teachers, they can encourage peer feedback in their classrooms. Students could function as one of the best resources in improving their friends’ writing skill.
In addition, there is an urgent need for writing support centers in Afghan university settings. Some may argue that this should come from the Afghan Ministry of Higher Education. However, considering Mother Theresa’s saying, “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples”, I believe at this stage teachers and department heads can start some writing clubs or writing centers in which they recruit some volunteer students and teachers to help students with their writing skill.

Higher education authorities should consider the needs of Afghan English language teachers and students and support them. The Afghan Ministry of Higher Education should not only emphasize the importance of writing and research but should also provide resources for both students and teachers in this regard. In addition to establishing writing centers at Afghan universities, they should equip universities with online library databases. One of the main reasons that Afghan English language teacher-scholars are underrepresented in the field of English language studies would be lack of access to online library databases in Afghan university settings. Once they have access to up-to-date online published research, they can conduct research and theorize from their practices. Finally, Afghan higher education authorities with the coordination the Afghan English language teacher-scholars should begin to develop their own locally relevant materials. This should take a bottom-up process. That is to say, more research should be conducted to investigate the reported experiences of teachers regarding their instructional materials.
The Beginning, Never the End: Teacher-Researcher Reflection

As one of the few investigations related to English language studies in the context of Afghanistan, the current study attempted to investigate the reported experiences of five Afghan English language instructors with the integration of writing activities in literature courses. The participants of the current study all supported the integration of writing activities in their literature courses. In order to make connection between the findings related to my study context and the context of the literature, I constructed the following five important themes: (1) Writing develops creativity and critical thinking, (2) Poetry is a way to express oneself, (3) Teaching is a critically reflective and heuristic practice, (4) Interdepartmental collaboration is crucial in improving students’ writing, and (5) “They are written for native speakers”: A need for locally relevant materials.

I have learned so many things during the course of conducting this thesis project. The most significant lesson that I learned was the complexity of a qualitative study. For example, when constructing my themes for Chapter Five, I experienced anxiety and had a sense of injustice towards my results because I was mostly introducing the topics that I believed were significant to the context of my study. That is to say, the impetuses for those themes were not only the results of my study but also my voice and passion for introducing them into a larger conversation. Later, I realized that constructing my own themes related to the findings of my study is a natural part of qualitative research; however, I need to state clearly the methodological steps I follow for my research.

I experienced the sheer joy of research when one of my participants indicated that participating in my study caused her to consider thinking more about integrating writing and literature. One of my rationales for conducting this study was to give voice to the
Afghan English language teachers, and I discovered that research is joining a conversation. Thus, I realized that we can use research as a powerful tool to give voice to those who are underrepresented in the field.

As a teacher-scholar in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics, my research interests include second language writing, language pedagogy, teacher education, and issues related to equity and access. Writing thesis is an option for the MA TESOL candidates at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). However, my ultimate goals for conducting this study were to give voice to the Afghan English language teachers in general and to promote more writing opportunities for the Afghan university English language learners in particular.

I have taught English language at Herat University, Afghanistan for three-plus years, and have perceived the need for more writing opportunities at Afghan schools. In early 2013, as a junior faculty, I participated in the Afghan Junior Faculty Development Program at Purdue University, where I had the chance to visit the Purdue Writing Lab. Visiting the writing lab at Purdue made me reflect upon my learning and teaching experiences with writing, resulting in voluntarily starting one of the first writing centers in Afghanistan, Herat Writing Lab. Working there as the director and tutor helped me learn a lot about Afghan English language learners’ writing skills and their needs in this regard. The experience made me aware of the importance of studying such a concept, which became an intriguing aspect of my thesis project.

My deep interest in writing and writing centers encouraged me to start tutoring at IUP’s Kathleen Jones White Writing Center on a volunteer basis. My experience has been valuable and formative; it has helped me grow both personally and professionally. I
have realized the importance of a safe space in working collaboratively with students, tutors and staff. My observations and tutoring experiences at the Jones White Writing Center have taught me innovative ways of working with students and tutors. Besides, my participations in the staff meetings as well as the professional meetings sponsored by the Jones White Writing Center have provided me with more ideas on what services to offer at Herat Writing Lab once I return to Afghanistan. In a nutshell, the experience has shaped the way I view myself as a writer, tutor and writing teacher in general, and the importance of providing students with writing opportunities in particular.

With Rumi, I believe “When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.” At this stage of my life, I feel that river in myself because I conducted this study from my soul. My country has suffered a lot. We, Afghans, should invest more on our education system because “Education is the most powerful weapon which [we] can use to change the world” (Nelson Mandela). Finally, as everything in this life, the current thesis project comes to an end. However, quoting Seneca, I believe “Every new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end.”
References


Dittmar, H. (1992). *The social psychology of material possessions: To have is to be*. Kernel Hempstead, United Kingdom: St Martin's Press.


Appendix A

IRB Approval

May 8, 2015

Miri Abdullah Miri
1302 Oakland Avenue
Indiana, PA 15701

Dear Mr. Miri:

Thank you for submitting your research site approval from Herat University for your proposed research project "Integrating Writing Activities within the English Department Literature Courses in an Afghan University Setting," (Log No. 15-119). On behalf of the IRB, I have approved your project for the period of May 6, 2015 to May 6, 2016. This approval does not supersede or obviate compliance with any other University requirements, including, but not limited to, enrollment, degree completion deadlines, topic approval, and conduct of university-affiliated activities.

You should read all of this letter, as it contains important information about conducting your study.

Now that your project has been approved by the IRB, there are elements of the Federal Regulations to which you must attend. IUP adheres to these regulations strictly:

1. You must conduct your study exactly as it was approved by the IRB.
2. Any additions or changes in procedures must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented.
3. You must notify the IRB promptly of any events that affect the safety or well-being of subjects.
4. You must notify the IRB promptly of any modifications of your study or other responses that are necessitated by any events reported in items 2 or 3.

Should you need to continue your research beyond May 6, 2016 you will need to file additional information for continuing review. Please contact the IRB office at irb-research@iup.edu or 724-357-7730 for further information.

The IRB may review or audit your project at random or for cause. In accordance with IUP Policy and Federal Regulation (45CFR46.113), the Board may suspend or terminate your project if your project has not been conducted as approved or if other difficulties are detected.

Although your human subjects review process is complete, the School of Graduate Studies and Research requires submission and approval of a Research Topic Approval Form (RTAF) before you can begin your research. If you have not
yet submitted your RTAF, the form can be found at http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=91683.

While not under the purview of the IRB, researchers are responsible for adhering to US copyright law when using existing scales, survey items, or other works in the conduct of research. Information regarding copyright law and compliance at IUP, including links to sample permission request letters, can be found at http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=165526.

I wish you success as you pursue this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jennifer Roberts, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Professor of Criminology

JLR:jeb

Cc:  Dr. Ben Rafoth, Thesis Advisor
     Dr. Gloria Park, Graduate Coordinator
     Ms. Brenda Boal, Secretary
June 25, 2015

Mir Abdullah Miri
1302 Oakland Avenue, Apt. 201
Indiana, PA 15701

Dear Mr. Miri:

Now that your research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, I have reviewed your Research Topic Approval Form and approved it.


Your RTAF indicates your anticipated graduation date as May 2016. This means that you must defend by **no later than April 1, 2016** and all necessary documents are due by this date. A description of the required documents can be accessed at http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?ID=116439. Your thesis or dissertation must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies & Research by April 15, 2016 if you desire to graduate by your anticipated date. You must apply for graduation by May 1, 2016. For deadlines for subsequent graduation dates, please access http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?ID=16883.

Finally, if you change your topic, the scope or methodology of your project, or your committee, a new Research Topic Approval Form must be completed.

I wish you well and hope you find this experience to be rewarding.

Sincerely,

Hillary E. Creely, J.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Dean for Research

HEC/bb

xc: Dr. Yaw Asamoah, Dean
Dr. Sharon Deckert, Graduate Coordinator
Dr. Bennett Rafter, Dissertation Chair
Ms. Julie Bassaro, Secretary
Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Title: Integrating Writing Activities within the English Department Literature Courses in an Afghan University Setting

Investigator: Mr. Mir Abdullah Miri (MA TESOL Candidate)
Faculty sponsor: Dr. Ben Rafoth, Distinguished University Professor, Department of English

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study which investigates the Afghan English language instructors’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in the literature courses at the English Department in an Afghan university setting. You are eligible to participate in this study since you are currently an Afghan English language instructor and have the experience of teaching at least one literature course for one semester. The research questions guiding this study are: a) what are the Afghan university English Department instructors’ reported experiences with integrating writing activities in their literature courses? b) In what ways can the Afghan University English Department instructors integrate more writing activities in their literature courses? The information gained from this study may help the Afghan English language instructors to better integrate writing within their literature courses, and help them in improving their students’ writing skill. It will also give voice to the Afghan English language instructors since they are underrepresented in the field of TESOL and Applied Linguistics.

Participation in this study will require answering interview questions through Skype. The interview will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes of your time. The Skype conversation will be recorded (upon the participant’s permission), and the interview will be transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. In all documents related to this study, a pseudonym will be used instead of your name. You will be asked during the interview to choose a pseudonym for your name. The data (recordings) obtained from the interview will be stored in a password-protected folder in the researcher’s personal computer. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the recordings. The data will be destroyed once the research study is completed.
The participation in this study is **voluntary**. You are free not to participate in this study at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the researcher or the school where you are currently employed. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the investigator. Upon your request to withdraw, all the information related to you will be destroyed. Although you will not receive any monetary incentives, you may receive a copy of this thesis research if you are interested. Should you have any questions please feel free to contact Mir Abdullah Miri, the researcher, or Dr. Ben Rafoth, the thesis advisor.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the informed consent below and send the scanned signed copy back to me. If you choose not to participate, please let me know.

Sincerely,

**Research Investigator:**
Mr. Mir Abdullah Miri  
MA TESOL Candidate  
Department of English  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
Phone: +1 (267) 432-4832  
Email: m.miri@iup.edu

**Thesis Advisor:**
Dr. Ben Rafoth  
Distinguished University Professor  
Director of the IUP Writing Center  
English Department, 421 North Walk Leonard Hall 110  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
Indiana, PA 15705 United States  
Telephone +1 (724) 357-3029  
Email: brafoth@iup.edu

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).
Voluntary Consent Form

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT): _________________________

Signature: _________________________

Date: _____________________________

Phone number you can be reached: _________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Best days and times to reach you:

________________________________________________________________________

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date: ________________  Investigator’s signature: _________________________
Appendix D

Individual Interview Protocols

The following questions are based on this study’s research questions. The questions are semi-structured in type, that is, some follow-up questions might be asked for clarification or elaboration. The questions are divided into three main sections: demographic questions, reported experience with integrating writing in literature courses, and the participants’ future recommendations on ways to incorporate writing in literature courses.

Section I: Background questions
Let me begin with some general background or demographic questions:

- What is your level of education?
- How long have you been teaching at this school?

Section II: Experiences with integrating writing activities in literature courses

- What kind of literature courses have you taught?
- Can you describe the different activities you implemented in your literature courses? I mean, what kind of activities have you implemented in your literature courses?
- Are writing activities integrated in your literature courses? How? What is their purpose?
- Please describe the students' writing. Do they follow your instructions? Do they meet your expectations, fall below them, or exceed them? Please explain.
- Do your students seem to enjoy the writing activities you assign?
- In your view, what are the differences between integrating writing in literature courses with not integrating writing in literature courses?
- When students write about the literature they read, what is the benefit? Are there any drawbacks? Please explain.

Section III: Recommendations with integrating writing in literature courses

- Are you able to implement writing in your courses as much as you wish? Would you prefer to implement more writing activities, fewer, or the same?
- Are you interested in learning more about teaching students to write? What would you like to know more about?
- If you get another chance to teach one of the literature courses, what kind of writing activities you might be able to integrate in your courses?
- What advice would you give to new instructors on integrating writing in literature courses at your school?

Do you have any other thoughts about the issues we discussed that you want to add?

Since I will use a pseudonym instead of your name, I wonder if you want to suggest a pseudonym instead of your name.
## Appendix E

**Snapshot: Data Analysis Procedure**

| 1. Please describe the students' writing. Do they follow your instructions? Do they meet your expectations, fall below them, or exceed them? Please explain. | Did they enjoy reader responses? aha, well, for the first semester, like when they started having literature courses, it was a little challenging for them because they did not have that much re...ah, writing experience. So it was kind of difficult for them, but as they moved on to the next semester, they really enjoyed writing response papers because at the same time they were not forced and there was not so much burden on them to write response for every piece they read. So whether they liked from the content that was discussed in the classroom, they would go and write the reflection or the response about what did they feel and submit that response paper.  
First → challenging
Next semester → they enjoyed writing response paper |
|---|---|
| 2. Do your students seem to enjoy the writing activities you assign? | First → challenging
Next semester → they enjoyed writing response paper |
| 3. In your view, what are the differences between integrating writing in literature courses with not integrating writing in literature courses? | Yes, we can integrate writing, and then, that could be very productive if you have, like you know how much you do that because overdoing anything would become tiresome and not interesting. So, knowing how to do that would be great.  
The amount of writing activity is important |
| 4. When students write about the literature they read, what is the benefit? Are there any drawbacks? Please explain. | Well, for some students because they are not very much skillful in writing, yes, that was challenging for them. They did not enjoy doing that. But I had, like, another activity for writing at the same time, uh, like, I can give you the example of one short story they read, like *Rappaccini's Daughter*. They had to... that was an open-ended story; they had to write what ending they would give to the story, or what would they, like, if they have to change the ending of the story, what things they would, like, put from their own minds. So, it was not only reader response papers; reflection papers; they had, like, this idea of writing a letter to one of the characters in the story, or stories that they would not like the ending, they would change the ending, and would write it in a different. So they had options, like, whatever they liked. Yeah, writing is difficult because you have to follow certain patterns, you have to, uh, focus, you have to, like, be careful about your word choice, about your diction, so it is a little bit difficult for them or to make students write. |
| 5. Writing is difficult because of the structure... | Yeah, writing is difficult because you have to follow certain patterns, you have to, uh, focus, you have to, like, be careful about your word choice, about your diction, so it is a little bit difficult for them or to make students write. |
| 6. Are you able to implement writing in your courses as much as you wish? Would you prefer to implement more? Not much. | Well, uh, no because it's very difficult to make students write. Writing is, uh, making someone to write is challenging, and it takes time for students, like, to sit to, like, generate ideas and then to come up with something written. For them it's easier to talk, to discuss and to take part in discussion session, so it was, yes, a little bit challenging. I did not get that |

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### Students' Feedback

<table>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<td>Are you interested in learning more about teaching students to write?</td>
<td>Obviously why not. Uh, we have a lot of writing courses here. We have like: Letter Writing, Essay Writing, and all that, but never thought about letting students to write their own short stories or advising them, or giving them comments on what they write, uh, creative rather than following like patterns... like, writing an essay you have the structure. Writing a letter, like a formal one, you have a structure, so they are more bounded into structures. So, because they could not like experience, like they could not be creative with their own writing. So, I would be more interested into, like, knowing how to help my students to write their own short stories or to be creative in writing, maybe any kind of literature, literary pieces. Like, if I am talking about checking students' comprehension through writing, I would not bound them with structure, uh, with diction, I would want them to put their thoughts into a paper. But, if it is more like, they want to publish, uh, if they want to, like maybe after they graduate from university to pursue or to become a writer, so that, uh, be creative or know how to write, or how to be, like, you have a writing skill in short story or maybe in literary piece, that would be great.</td>
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<td>If you get another chance to teach one of the literature courses, what kind of writing activities you might be able to integrate in your courses?</td>
<td>Uh, Well, we had some, uh, poetry in the classroom, like, other than short story. So, if, uh, like depending on the students' level, if I could ask them to put their thoughts in form of poetry of if I could ask them to write their own short stories, or, uh, maybe these things. If she gets another chance teaching literature: Short story - Poetry writing.</td>
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<td>What advice would you give to new instructors on integrating writing in literature courses at your school?</td>
<td>Every session, uh, because it will become boring and then, if you have the same repetitive activity for every session, that will also be boring. If you change your method and bring variety into the writing activities that could be like, uh, enjoyable. Bringing changes? Yes, my suggestion would be as, uh, a good idea to look at, or, to put writing or integrate writing into literature courses. That would be more creative or if you just find out variety, and if you just look for, uh, maybe it is not always focus on the structure and on the diction of writing. If you see what do they have in their mind, and what do they feel about the story, about, uh, the poetry, about that essay they read, so that would be a good idea to have writing in your literature course. No, no. I just mentioned few activities like: writing short stories, or putting their thoughts into form of poetry. So, I think that is a little bit difficult for intermediate and beginner students, so advanced students can do that, that's why I said it depends on the students' level, but again putting thoughts that could do, like, uh, anyone can do that without any restrictions.</td>
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**Which types of writing activities do Afghan ELLERS like?**
Appendix F

Courses Offered at the English Department, Afghan University

*First Year*

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### Fourth Year

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