

## **Difficulties encountered by students in reading German literature**

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This paper focuses on the difficulties encountered by the second year students of German studies at the University of Kelaniya in learning German literature. Literary study which involves reading, understanding and analyzing the work of authors such as poems, dramas, novels, short stories and essays is a core curriculum in any foreign language where the student is expected to examine the lifestyle, norms and traditions, feelings and emotions and the life experiences of people living in the target language country. The students of German of the Department of Modern Languages of the University of Kelaniya, are introduced to German literature in their second year consisting of three poems and two dramas written by famous German authors and poets. The students who have studied grammatical, syntactical and phonetic structures of the language in their first year find it challenging to learn German literature from second year onwards. The objective of this research is to examine the difficulties encountered by the students, what steps could be taken to overcome these difficulties and what suggestions could be given to teaching literature with a more friendly and student oriented approach. This research is based upon the data collected by the distribution of a questionnaire followed by a semi-structured interview with the students, classroom observations, year-end examination evaluation results and interviews with the lecturers teaching German literature to identify the common errors made by students in learning German literature and their experiences about students' difficulties in learning literature. According to the findings of the research, it was evident that students have difficulties in language proficiency, identifying different themes, genres, characteristics and literary techniques. Therefore, it was suggested to familiarize students with the background of the texts and their historical significance using visual materials such as films, paintings and videos which also assist them in improving their imagination and creativity and also to train them to express their viewpoint about certain social issues and to relate them to their day today lives.

**Keywords:** Reading literature in the foreign language classroom, Difficulties encountered in reading German literature, Literary study