The Impact of Literature Teaching Techniques on the Learners' Performance on Academic Reading Course Tests

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ABSTRACT

Literature and its genres have always been impressive in the process of teaching and learning alongside the natural function of literature and literary research. Although second or foreign language teaching has received great attention by applied linguists, recently there has been a growing concern for the development of literature teaching methods too. This paper basing its approach on posttest only control group design has dealt with the introduction of Carter and Long's (1991) literature teaching approaches in a teacher training college in Iran to one hundred to-be-teacher students, aged between 18-24, divided into four experimental groups, to examine the effectiveness of these literature teaching approaches on the students' performance on academic reading course test. The statistical analysis of the results revealed that the performance of the three experimental groups was significantly higher than the control group. The results further revealed that the performance of Personal Growth Model was significantly higher than the other two models. The difference between the performance of the Culture Model group with that of the Language Model was not that much significant. The incorporation of literature teaching approaches in the skill-based academic courses is highly suggested. Among the many approaches and models developed, the Personal Growth Model by Carter and Long (1991) which proved to be working well with the academic students and their performance on reading skill course and may work well with other language skills too is suggested for the deployment in the process of teaching elsewhere and with other learners.

Keywords: Literature teaching approaches; Reading courses; to-be-teacher students; Test performance.

1. Introduction

The field of language teaching and learning has witnessed the changes and trends of different types in the last century or so. The role of literature as the prime teaching material was crucial at the beginning of 20th century with the same degree of importance in the ancient times. It was driven to the corner by communicative approaches' proponents for a few decades. Recently, this genuine and authentic source of information and knowledge has got a profound status as the real and powerful materials for teaching in the classrooms with different individuals and across different proficiency levels. These paved the way for the development of the literature-based teaching of reading courses which is novel and whose implications can be applied to many areas of language teaching and learning. This experience was applied to the first year to-be-teacher students of Farhangian University in Ilam, Iran.

The administration of literature-based and literary genre-based materials was, for the first time, which was tried out with these subjects knowing the fact that regular normal texts developed for this purpose exist which adds to this research's novelty too. The real practice and introduction of literary texts in such academic centers and on the courses of this type prove novel which is worthy of research and appraisal on the line of finding novel ways for more efficient teaching and learning processes. This research based its major variable on the literature teaching approaches advocated by Carter and Long (1991) in the process of language teaching and learning. There have been different kinds of approaches which best serve the needs of EFL teachers who are willing to use literary works in their syllabi as well as academic instructors who have a better chance of maneuvering over the selection of materials. The courage to take such a creative use of materials would lead to promising results and practical implications. What has been the clarifying variables for this research are Carter and Long's (1991) three main approaches to teaching literature in the EFL classrooms presented as follows by Oktan and Kaymakamoğlu (2017):

1. The Cultural Model: This model serves the traditional approach in using literary texts in EFL classrooms. It encourages students to discover and analyze the social, literary and historical elements of the text. With the help of this model, teacher aims to reveal the specific thoughts and perspectives so the students can be more familiar with various cultures and ideologies. This approach to a great extent deals with the nature of the abstract elements and ideas whose achievement is the ultimate aim of many education systems and instructors.

2. The Language Model: This is one of the most popular approaches which were named as "language-based approach" by Carter and Long (1991). This approach helps students to examine the text in a more systematic and methodical way. Linguistic elements such as direct and indirect speech are aimed to be taught in this model. Cloze procedure, exercises, jumbled sentences, summarizing the texts, creative writing and role plays are the main activities used by the EFL teachers for teaching linguistic structures. Therefore, literary goals are minimized in this kind of teaching method. The learner is less engaged to the lesson. It is more teacher-centered. It means that literature is underestimated and linguistic practice is more important in this model. When it comes to the question of the real and sheer language and its components, the idea of language model would work well. This is highly prioritized when the idea of literature with a linguistic framework in intended.

3. The Personal Growth Model: This model is a kind of bridge between the cultural model and the language model. It concentrates on the use of language in the literary texts within its cultural context. Students are more tend to express their ideas and feelings about their personal experiences and cultural knowledge in relation to the specific literary text. Various themes and topics are perfect resources to develop themselves. The implementations of this approach in practice show the fact that it would incorporate the elements of the two previous approaches. The way it has got to be managed and deployed in the class makes the difference visible and understandable for the instructors and the learners respectively. Moreover, the coverage of the components and the learning orientations prove promising in this approach. For sure, it would call for greater competencies on the part of the learner and the greater command on the part of the instructor.

The real application of these models and their sub disciplines would pave the way for the better crystallization of theoretical findings and the real practices in the class. Hence, this research has been an attempt on this line.

2. Review of the Related Literature

The application of literature to language teaching has recently received a great attention and consideration in the field of applied linguistics. "The issue of teaching language through literature first came out at the King's College conference on education held in Cambridge in 1963.

The importance of literary texts as useful tools in the language teaching / learning process was highlighted in this conference while the traditional approach was called into question for its incapacity to develop language skills and communicative abilities" (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 249).

2.1. Literature status in TEFL methodology

The curriculum objectives in any society aim at training the learners for special purposes. In the majority of EFL settings, less care has been given to the role of literature in intellectual practices and activities which is to a large extent the outcome of the reaction to the exclusion of literature and literary texts and exercises in the past which were in close and widespread practice. With the advent of new methods and teaching techniques, different aspects of human being mind and personality were incorporated in the theoretical foundations and considerations of language teaching and learning. Many proponents of these methods assigned literature and literary materials either a peripheral or no role at all, a procedure elapsed for a few decades or so which roughly started in 1930 and ended in 1960. With the emergence of communicative approaches in language teaching and language learning, new required sources called for authentic and communicative materials; therefore, concern and attention was redirected towards literature and its genres. The role of literature in EFL situations received a focal and pivotal attention and consideration. In the past, in the field of language teaching, when GTM and Audiolingualism were in less common practice, no attention was paid to language learning from mental and affective power view point. Rather, literature and its genres occupied and served as the major at hand materials for work in the classes, as these materials from Gestalt psychology view point best served the aim theoretically. As the psychological trends changed, much attention was paid to the role of mind and materials which challenged different intelligences of the mind. From this era onwards, literature and literary materials again received interest and attention for learning but this time via the framework of literature characteristics and its applications not just as muscle challenging materials like those deployed by GTM proponents. Meanwhile, critical thinking regained newer perspectives and was defined as the ability to use, interpret, analyze, and assess learning and learning procedures which received profound fortune among applied linguists. Literature proved its role as one of the powerful materials and sources of educational endeavor on the line of critical thinking and critical evaluation of the phenomena and activities. This motivated many researchers dealt with the introduction of literature teaching approaches and literary materials and their incorporation into the ESL/EFL teaching methodology. For sure, the achievement of the command of reading ability called for dynamic critical thinking strategies whose achievement would sound impossible without the introduction of the igniting and enticing approaches like Carter and long's models.

Many researchers have tried and worked on literature and literary genre-based materials and approaches. Just like what Frederking, et al. (2016, p. 11) have done one the "effects of two types of task instructions on text comprehension, motivation, and emotional involvement". This paper has tried to detect the impact of different literature approaches to language teaching in the classroom. Some researchers have directly made the use of literature a necessity not just a suggestion. "Literary works such as poetries, novels, stories, or plays should be used in foreign language teaching because these works include all the features needed to teach a foreign language" (Erdem, 2016, p. 158). Moreover, Daskalovska and Dimova (2017) have enumerated the advantages of using literature including its referential versus representational materials, its creativity as an omnipresent phenomenon, authenticity and motivation, active involvement of learners, the good choice of deploying literary materials for the purpose of extensive reading. On can simply infer why literature is finding its way so rapidly and drastically and is proceeding into the 21st so vigorously and motivates and allures many intellectuals to write about the impact of literature on children's reading ability. One of these writes is Wooten, et al. (2018) who have asserted that "a major theme in these books is the power of literacy, both to open realms of knowledge and imagination for readers, but also to be used by others as weapon to humiliate those who lack it". This phenomenon has been tried out with different variables. For example, Krsteva and ukubajska (2014) conducted a research on literary and language interactive reinforcement at the University Goce Delchev

Stip, School of Philology and came up with this idea that at advanced levels foreign learners gain great imagination through literature which results in the accomplishment of speaking capabilities that resemble the fluency of near native-like speakers. In their paper, Tonne and Pihl analyzed "a literature based literacy program in the language of instruction and results in terms of reading engagement in three classes where the vast majority were multilingual students". The insertion of literature and its powerful impact in a research done by Stan (2015, p. 455) has stabilized the role of literature in the curriculum as he has asserted that "students use literary texts not only for information, they interpret them, decode their meaning"; thus, literature becomes an effective means of teaching language. Literature provides a language model for those who hear and read it because by using literary texts, students learn new words, syntax, and discourse functions and they learn correct sentence patterns, standard story structures; consequently, they develop their writing skills. To this end, the dichotomy of language-literature has been institutionalized in our curricula for the primary school. Butler (2006, as cited in Bobkina and Dominguez, 2014, p. 257) has provided "an example of an attempt to incorporate literature into language classes in a South African context. The English course he describes, implemented in the context of the University of North West, included four components: Introduction to English Studies, Introduction to Textual Analysis, Introduction to Literary Genres and Grammar Awareness". Two other great advocates of using literature and teaching it at EFL settings, Duff and Maley (2007), have highlighted the merits of literature in language learning in its linguistic value, cultural value, and affective value. Aydinoğlu (2013) has tried to reveal to "what extent and how literature has been integrated into course books specially prepared for language teaching" (2013, p. 36). Collie and Slater (1987) have put forwarded the question, "should we be teaching literature in the foreign language classroom at a pre-university level or not? This is a question which is certainly in the forefront of debate today, yet it remains controversial and the attitude of many teachers' ambivalent" (p. 1). More pertinent to this research topic, they have asserted that simplified texts "stimulate interest in literature as well as contributing to language improvement" (ibid., p. 11). Tevdovska (2016) has dealt with a roughly similar academic setting, like this research setting, and has tried to detect the "study and implementation of literary texts in the context of language and literature courses offered at South East European University at Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communications and the Language Center" (p. 162). As for the language skill at hand in this research, literature teaching and "genre-based pedagogies offer a valuable resource for assisting students' ability to both comprehend and produce texts" (Almacıoğlu & Okan, 2018, p. 72). The significance of the impact of literature on the whole process of language learning and teaching has gone as far that literature has stabilized itself in the syllabus in ELT settings whose best example can be seen in Sivapalan's research revealing that "with the revival of a literature enhanced curriculum in the 80s, there has been much discussion on the significance of teaching literature as part of the English language syllabus. Like many countries in which English is used as a second or foreign language, Malaysia relies on the use of literary materials in ELT. In the year 2000, literature was officially initiated in the Malaysian ELT syllabus, further acknowledging the function of literature in Malaysian ELT" (pp. 27-28).

Regarding the real impact of literature on language and language skills, reading has been confirmed by many other researchers who have, for example, asserted that "emphasis on reading, particularly the reading of culturally authentic texts, has become one of the central claims for curriculum reform in EFL teaching (Arens & Swaffar, 2000 ; Swaffar, 1999; Dupuy, 2000 as cited in Bobkina & Dominguez, 2013: p. 248). This paves the way for many intellectuals including teachers, researchers, and curriculum developers to confirm that the "inclusion of literature in the English language classroom for some plausible reasons e.g. Literature is useful in developing the students' linguistic knowledge both on a usage and use level; it may increase their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately, increase their reading proficiency" (Burhanuddn, 2018, p. 25). To Collie and Slater (1987), different reading pieces can be given out, such as poetry, essays or stories as a reading assignment. The similarities or differences of plots, characters or types can be discussed in class. The use of novel, for example, as a "teaching tool introduces an exclusive method of teaching reading skill. It further motivates the students to become lifelong readers" (Ganesan, 2016, p. 3). Teaching reading in such academic centers has focused mainly on the artificial reading passages which are of different orientations and create themes serving solely the purpose

of teaching reading comprehension and vocabulary. The final learning has been defined as the ability of the learners to read original texts for their researches and learning purposes which upon research, has been approved that it has its own disadvantages and demerits. One great shortage with this regard has been the fact that the educational views have not been pacing the changes in the theoretical foundations of teaching and learning language skills. The insertion of literature and literary materials in the course of reading instruction in such settings, with these subjects, in the researcher's best recollection, has been an attempt to capture the discourse competence defined by modern applied linguists like Canale, et al. (1978), Canale and Swain (1980), and many other modern intellectuals involved in the field of applied linguistics. To come up with a vivid impact of the introduction of literature in TEFL and its impact on language skills the following design and questions emerged.

3. Method

As this study was concerned with the detection of the impact of three literature teaching approaches and their implementation in the academic classes, posttest only control group design was deployed to determine the possible impact of these approaches on the learners' performance on academic reading courses. For this purpose, the following hypotheses were formulated:

> 1.The deployment of literature teaching courses does not affect the performance of to-be-teacher students on academic reading course tests.
>
> 2. There is no significant difference between the impacts of the three literature teaching approaches with regard to the learners' performance on academic reading course test.
>
> 3. There is no significant difference between the three models of teaching literature regarding the learners' performance on reading course tests.

3.2. Participants

In this study, a total number of 100 to-be-teacher students in Ilam Farhangian University, Iran, aged 18-25 were selected and divided into three experimental groups and one control group based on random sampling selection procedure. Their initial proficiency and academic knowledge were checked out through their ranks and grades in their entrance examination reports. They are the first groups who receive treatment on these constructs that upon success their future performance would be highly motivating for further research. The point to be taken into account regarding the subjects is the fact that they were not aware of the real nature of the research in action and their involvement in the course of the research as it was totally natural and intermingled with the natural trend of their academic endeavor.

3.3. Materials and Procedures

A week before starting to use a literary text, the researcher as the instructor checked out their depth and degree of familiarity with literature, literature studies and manifestations, their prior familiarity with the literature-based instruction on language four skills as well their individual familiarity, if any. Thereafter, they were immerged into the regular reading courses without being informed of the fact that research was going on in the classes.

The three experimental and the control groups all were administered literature-based and literary genre-based materials as their academic texts to be covered during the term. The first experimental class was run by the administration of the *Culture Model* activities including the analysis of the social, literary, and historical elements of the text and the materials; the second experimental group class was managed by the administration of the activities of *Language Model* including cloze procedure, exercises, jumbled sentences, summarizing the texts, creative writing and role plays as the model's main activities; the third experimental group were taught using the elements of *the Personal Growth Model* including the use of language in the literary texts within its

cultural context in which the students tended more to express their ideas and feelings about their personal experiences and cultural knowledge in relation to the literary texts at hand in the class. This group having been based on the premise of the incorporation of the elements of the other two approaches as the model's real nature and function indicated by Carter and Long (1991), enjoyed this greater scope of maneuver in the activities. As the teacher was the researcher, great care and concern was taken to illustrate the exact techniques and principles in each group. The control group class was handled by the regular reading class procedure which was confined to the text reading, translation if necessary, and question completion as the final step in class management.

The reading classes were carried out every Monday and Wednesday for 90 minutes during 16 weeks with the four groups. In this process, the teacher as a researcher presented each portion of the materials and touched upon the selected activities for each group.

4. Results

Table 1 shows the output of the ANOVA analysis and reveals whether there is a statistically significant difference between group means or not.

Table 1. *ANOVA analysis*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	40.00	3	13.33	3.71	.01
Within Groups	319.23	89	3.58		
Total	359.24	92			

As shown, the significance value is 0.014 (i.e., $p = .014$), which is below 0.05; therefore, it indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean type of treatments taken. Yet, it is not known which of the specific groups differed. This is identified in the Multiple Comparisons table which contains the results of the Dunnett T3 test.

Table 2. *Multiple comparisons*

(I) Student ID	(J) Student ID	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Dunnett T3	Cultural Model	Language Model	.545	.566	.910	-1.02	2.11
		Personal Growth Model	-.087	.524	1.000	-1.53	1.36
		Control group	1.542*	.493	.018	.19	2.89
	Language Model	Cultural Model	-.545	.566	.910	-2.11	1.02
		Personal Growth Model	-.632	.620	.886	-2.34	1.08
		Control group	.996	.594	.459	-.64	2.63
	Personal Growth Model	Cultural Model	.087	.524	1.000	-1.36	1.53
		Language Model	.632	.620	.886	-1.08	2.34
		Control group	1.629*	.554	.031	.11	3.15
	Control group	Cultural Model	-1.542*	.493	.018	-2.89	-.19
		Language Model	-.996	.594	.459	-2.63	.64
		Personal Growth Model	-1.629*	.554	.031	-3.15	-.11
Dunnett t (<control)b	Cultural Model	Control group	1.542	.547	1.000		2.69
	Language Model	Control group	.996	.559	.997		2.17
	Personal Growth Model	Control group	1.629	.553	1.000		2.79

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Dunnett t takes one group as the control group and measures other groups against it. In this way, the groups' statistical differences will be identified. In this case, all the four groups were bigger than .05 and therefore all differed regarding their performance.

Table 3. *Chi-square Tests*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.014a	24	.184
Likelihood Ratio	33.238	24	.099
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.999	1	.025
N of Valid Cases	93		

As shown in the table, the significance level in all three columns is larger than .05 indicating the rejection of null hypotheses. On the other hand, the *p* values are also > .05 (i.e. the significance level) which reject any significant association among the variables.

The two assumed null hypotheses, on the two research questions, are rejected revealing that the deployment of literature teaching courses affects the performance of to-be-teacher students on academic reading course tests as well as the existence of the significant difference between the impact of the three literature teaching approaches with regard to the learners' performance on academic reading course test which are confirmed by the statistical reports at hand.

Table 4. *Descriptive statistics regarding student ID*

Data	M	N	SD	Variance
11	2.00	1	.	.
12	4.00	3	.00	.00
13	2.79	14	1.12	1.25
14	2.86	14	1.23	1.51
15	2.50	14	1.16	1.34
16	2.24	17	1.09	1.19
17	2.25	12	1.28	1.65
18	1.92	12	.90	.81
19	2.83	6	.73	.56
Total	2.51	93	1.13	1.29

As this table indicates, the total mean score is 2.51 and the squared average of the SD is 1.296 subtracted from the mean score, the result is 1.214 which reveals the distance from the mean around which the scores are distributed. This could mean that the treatments might bear different results. What can be inferred is the fact, proved by statistics, that the personal growth group has outperformed all other groups showing its efficacy in its deployment for the real practice in the classes.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As shown through the analysis in the results sections, the three research hypotheses were rejected. It was revealed that the deployment of literature teaching courses do affect the students' reading course tests. The three teaching methods in their respective groups worked well with the students' performance on reading tests in comparative with the control group. This result confirms the many characteristics put forwarded by practitioners of the use of literature and literary genres in the classrooms. Authenticity, creativity, feasibility, culture-boundedness, and many more characteristics and advantages of using literature in the classroom appraise the use of this rich source of materials in the academic settings. Among the three approaches for teaching literature in the classroom namely, cultural model, language model, and personal growth model, the last one proved to work well the performance of students on summative achievements tests. Based on the recent trends of literary criticism, the reader response model has been highly welcomed by the researchers and practitioners in the field occurring to the researcher's mind the idea to conclude that the superiority of personal growth model may be due to accompanying the same characteristics of reader response approach to reading and interpreting literature. The instantiation of the exercises and procedures of the other two approaches to teaching literature, in a simpler and more compete manner, in the personal growth model stabilizes its superiority over the other two approaches as was confirmed by the research.

Many techniques and materials have been deployed for the better reading and teaching of languages. The application of different literature teaching methods in the EFL classes has recently found profound consideration and reappraisal. This paper dealt with the introduction of Carter and Long's (1991) literature teaching approaches in a teacher training college to survey the

effectiveness of these literature teaching approaches namely *Personal Growth Model*, *Culture Model*, and *Language Model* on the students' performance on academic reading course test. The results revealed that the performance of the group who were exposed to the personal growth model was significantly higher than the other two models. This is, to a great extent, because this model sounds more authentic in materials selection and presentation, more personal and cultural loaded, and above all more novel in practice and implementation. The results revealed that the EFL instructors, curriculum designers, and EFL learners can maneuver over the implementation and deployment of *the Personal Growth Model* of the English literature teaching method as it would lead to better learning of the English language skills and more specifically it has worked well with the reading skill as the prime intended skill incorporated in the ministry of higher education curriculum development objectives. It further strengths the insertion of literature teaching methods in the EFL teaching and learning settings. It can be inferred that the deployment of such a technique proves to be a necessity for the to-be-English-teacher students as it would enable them to be more initiative in their teaching and handling the concepts and learners' educational needs.

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