Developing The Literary Imagination and Symbolism Skills for Second Year English Language Majors at Faculties of Education In Light of Literary Analysis Approach

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Abstract

The present study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of literary analysis approach in developing the literary imagination and symbolism skills of a sample of English Language Majors at Women's College, Ain Shams University. The quasi- experimental design was used for conducting the experiment of this research. The participants of the study consisted of 60 second year students. They were assigned into two groups, experimental and control. The instrument of the study was the literary imagination and symbolism pre-post test. Reliability and validity of the instrument was verified. Findings of the study revealed that the proposed program proved to be effective in developing the target skills. Based on the findings, a set of recommendations and suggestions for further research were highlighted.

Key Words: literary analysis approach, literary imagination, symbolism.

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Introduction

The current trend of education is to humanize and appreciate the learners' desires and interests without tension or stress. For this purpose, literature is seen as a natural way to promote humanistic values, and to provide readers with an important way of learning about the world.

A large number of specialists advocate the idea that literature plays an essential role in promoting language skills.Literature improves the four skills of language; listening, speaking, reading and writing that enable learners to communicate well, in addition to, exemplifying the grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary. Literature can help learners to develop their understanding of other cultures, awareness of 'difference' and to develop tolerance and understanding (Razi, 2011; Edmond, 2012; Elaine; Scott, 2013).

Reading literature allows EFL students to reflect on their lives, learning, and language. It can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. It takes people beyond their limited experience of life to show them the lives of other people at other times and places. It can help students develop familiarity with a particular literary style and later unknowingly promote their literary development to guarantee successful analysis (Steve, 2010; Miceli, 2012; Elaine, 2013).

Literary analysis approach has been cited as a useful method for students to deepen their understanding of literary works and to broaden their own range of potential interpretation. Research indicates that literary analysis approach is considered as an effective instruction for teaching literature. It enables students to reflect their personal feelings and imagination to literary texts. It improves the quality of student talk; it is conducive to a

positive learning atmosphere (Razi, 2011; Cham; Elaine; Scott ,2013).

With respect to the literature teaching methodologies, most of the techniques and strategies employed for teaching literature in EFL contexts are traditional and teacher – centered. The majority of literature teachers apply ineffective methodologies for analyzing literary works. Subsequently, many students rely heavily on the teacher – made critical notes and some relevant simplified handouts instead of reading the authentic literary text and discussing its literary elements. The following studies support the idea that teaching / learning English literature in Egyptian universities does not fulfill its purpose and requirements.

The studies of (Khater, 2002; Al –Alami, 2003; Badawi, 2004; Soltan, 2010) found that most of university professors provide their students with an overall understanding of the literary work through lecturing. Accordingly, many students rely heavily on the teacher – made critical notes instead of reading the authentic literary text. As a result, a literature course that should have been interesting becomes very dull.

Unfortunately, based on the researcher 's observation, most of second - year English language majors at Women's' College, Ain Shams University apply ineffective strategies in analyzing their original literary texts. Most students depend on their teacher- made critical notes, and there is no chance to improve students' imagination. Students have nothing to do with the text but outlining their teachers' words.

Statement of the problem

Based on literature, and the related studies, the problem of the study was stated as follows:

Second year English language majors at Wonen's College, Ain Shams University seem to face difficulty in

literary imagination and sybolism skills. Subsequently, there is a need for a literary analysis –based program to improve their literary imagination and sybolism skills.

Questions of the study:

The study attempts to answer the following main question:

What is the effectivness of literary analysis approach in developing second year English language majors' literary imagination and sybolism skills ?

The following sub - questions are derived from the previous main questions:

1- To what extent do second year English language majors at Women 's College, Ain Shams university master the literary imagination and sybolism skills ?.

2- What are the features of the program based on literary analysis approach to develop the literary imagination and sybolism of EFL majors ?.

3- What is the effectivness of using the program based on literary analysis approach in developing the literary imagination and sybolism skills for second year English language majors ?.

Hypotheses of the study :

The following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on the post-test in the literary imagination and sybolism skills in favor of the experimental group.

2. There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the posttest of the literary imagination and sybolism skills in favor of the post – test.

Review of literature:

Reading literarture requires specific skills that differ from reading comprehension texts. Among these skills are; literary imagination and sybolism. Literary imagination makes use of particular words that create visual representation in EFL students 'minds. Imagery is associated with mental pictures(Scott, 2013). However, imagery turns out to be more complex than just a picture. It is in what way might a specific image be analyzed?.

The term, symbol, when used in literature is often a figure of speech in which a person, object, or situation represent something in addition to its literal meaning (Hawesn, 2011). A symbol presents itself in the form of a word, a figure of speech, an event, the total action, or a character. Symbolism is an object or reference used to provide meaning to the writing beyond what is essentially being described. An author may repetitively use the same object to communicate a deeper meaning or might use distinctions of the same object to produce an overarching mood or feeling (Wart, 2009; Pella, 2010; Hawen ,2011; Hawor, 2012; Cade, 2013).

Recent studies advocate that literary analysis approach is considered one of the most common methods to discover students' imagination and visualization.It is derived from the new literary criticism theory which allows readers to interact with a literary text interpreting it and giving logical evidence. In this context, "criticism" means a close reading and interpretation of a literary text, such as a poem, a short story, a play, a novel, or even a movie (Steve, 2010; Razi; Hawsen, 2011; Edmond, 2012; Scott; Kumar, 2013).

Methods:

Design of the study:

The quasi- experimental design was used for conducting the experiment of this research. Two intact

sections were randomly selected to represent the experimental and the control group.

Participants:

The subjects of the study included 60 students randomly selected from second year English and Education Department in Women's College, Ain Shams University. The 60 students were randomly assigned into two groups, control (30) and experimental (30). All subjects were graduated of regular governmental school aging between 18-19. The experimental group studied their literary course through the proposed program while the control group received regular instruction for the same course by their professor.

To prove homogeneity between the two groups, the literary imagination and symbolism test was used as a pre-test and it was administered to the two groups of the study (control and experimental). T – value was used to determine the difference in the mean scores between the two groups. The results of the pre-administration were presented in table (1).

Table (1)

Results of the pre –administration test

Test	Group	N.	Total	M.	SD.	DF.	T-value	Sig	Effect size
Pre	Exp.	30	134	4.46	0.07	58	-.65-	.000	.51
	Cont.	30	137	4.56	0.05				Not sig

Results in table (1) indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental and the control groups on the pre-test in literary imagination and symbolism skills. This means that the two groups were approximately at the same level at the beginning of the experiment.

Instrument of the study:

A pre / post test of literary imagination and symbolism skills prepared by the researcher was used as a research instrument. The test covered the literary imagination and symbolism in terms of their procedural definitions. To measure the test content validity, it was given to TEFL and literature experts to evaluate the appropriateness of each item of the test. The jury suggested modifying some words and phrases because they were hard for students to understand.

Reliability of the test was calculated using person correlation coefficient. After statistical calculation, it was r =(0.94), which means that the test was highly reliable.

The Literary Analysis –Based Program:

The program considered the following principles and characteristics:

1- The literary text possesses no fixed and final meaning or value; there is no one "correct" analysis.The text acts on the reader and the reader interacts with the text; therefore, this analytical method is often referred to as transactional analysis.

2- According to literary analysis approach, students take ownership of their learning. They participate in reflective literary classes. Students are given opportunities to interpret the literary narrative.

3- A text is re-created every time.The text is a stimulus that elicits analysis from past experiences, previous readings, thoughts, and feelings.

Learning objectives of the program:

The general objectives of the proposed program were:

1. Analyzing the different actions, thoughts and feelings.
2. Identifying images from the text.
3. Converting the verbal text into pictures.

4. Eliciting symbols from the text.

Media of the program:

Power point presentation, Poster presentation, students' original short stories ,video film of " Cinderella " and " the old man and the sea"**.**

Content of the program

The program consisted of two units, each unit had its own objectives, materials, time, and procedures. 1. Unit one : analyzing symbolism through the original short story " Louise " by W. Somertset Maugham. 2- Unit two : analyzing literary imagination through the original short story " The lament " by Anton Chekhov.

The program consisted of three main stages: pre – analysis, during -analysis, and post - analysis stage.

Pre - Analysis stage*:* Before students read their stories. *Ice – Breaking process* **:** This was the stage where students get prepared for stimulating their perception about the learning topic. It consisted of the following steps :

1. Activating the students' prior knowledge about the target skill through some activities such as : brainstorming, poster presentation and statement prediction.
2. Displaying pictures and visual cards to examine the students' reaction toward the text.

During – Analysis stage*:* This was the stage where students read the text closely several times, focusing on the skills that were being tested.

***Analysis and Extending process*:** Students were asked to read their original short story at home before meeting; they should come to class with general knowledge of events, a basic sense of what the work of art was about.

Identification: The instructor asked the students to read the whole story silently, then students were asked to reread small paragraphs carefully.This was to present explicitly the target skill to the students. Then, introducing

and defining the target skill.The instructor selected one or two skills that the author utilized in the story to examine / explore (imagery, symbolism, objects, colors and nature). Then, the instructor asked some questions such as; What is the significance of using colors ?.

Depiction: The instructor generated descriptions for items. Students described characters, places, and events in a story and connected them to home life and personal concerns.

Literary navigation: The students were paused meanwhile to respond to some factual in -class activities related to the selected skill while reading the story. For example; write around, round table, and focused listing. The students highlighted important passages and potential ideas in the text and responded to story maps and graphs.The students identified and marked sets of sentences that present their defended evidence and response towards the examined skill. Then, they interpreted the skills by their own and make a list of justifications that support their analyses.

Post – Analysis stage:

This was the stage where students evaluated their own performance.

Visualization: The students converted the text into pictures and connected the drawing to their own ideas about the reading.

Appreciation process *:*The instructor guided the students to practice certain literary activities of analysis to reinforce and check the students' literary imagination they had experienced. Finally, students responded to literary response journal format.

The training program was designed to be taught within 28 – in – class teaching hours and lasted for nearly

three months during the first semester of the academic year
2013 -2014.

Results & Discussion :

In order to test the research hypotheses, the Statistical
Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to calculate
the t – value for testing the difference between the mean
scores of the experimental group and the control group on
the pre- post literary imagination and symbolism test. The
value of Eta square (η^2) was also calculated to determine
the effect size of the independent variable of the study (the
proposed program) on the dependant variable (the literary
imagination and symbolism skills).

Results indicated that there was a statistically
significant difference between the mean scores of the
experimental group and the control group on the post-test in
the literary imagination and symbolism skills in favor of the
experimental group, see table (2).

Table (2) : The " t" value of the experimental group and the
control group on the post – test of literary imagination and
symbolism skills.

Skills	Group	Total	N.	M.	SD.	DF.	T-value	Sig.	Effect size
1.Literary imagery	Exp.	109	30	3.63	0.65	58	2.25	010	0.08
	Cont.	92		3.07	1.26				Medium
2.Symbolism	Exp.	104	30	3.47	0.90		4.95	000	0.30
	Cont.	62		2.07	1.26				Large

Statistics in table (2) indicated that the experimental
students' mean scores of each skill in the post test were
increased. Results in this table were classified into two
groups. The first group included one skill which the effect
size values was large ,this skills was symbolism. The
second group included one skill which the effect size value
was medium. This skill was literary imagination. According
to these results, it was noted that the proposed program

achieved a notable success and had a positive effect in developing the experimental group students' literary imagination and symbolism skills and this gave support for hypothesis one.Results also revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pretest and the posttest of the literary imagination and sybolism skills in favor of the post – test, see table (3)

Table (3) : The " t" value of the experimental group in the pre-and post – test of literary imagination and symbolism skills.

Skills	Test	N.	Total	M.	SD.	DF.	T-value	Sig.	Effect size
1. Literary imagination	Pre	30	75	2.50	0.78	29	-7.99	.000	0.69 Large
	Post		109	3.63	0.56				
2.Symbolism	Pre	30	59	1.97	1.07	29	-5.83		0.54 Large
	Post		104	3.47	0.90				

Data in table (3) indicated that the students' mean score of literary imagination and symbolism skills in the post test application was increased. It was also clear that all the effect size values for the target skills were large. Procedurally, these results seem to be true and consistent, since the experimental group students had enough opportunities to experience and practice these skills, and they got the chance to discuss and analyze each in detail. Accordingly, they recognized the importance of these skills well.

To conclude, testing the two hypotheses of the study revealed that they were supported by the results. Statistical analyses of data illustrated that the experimental group performed much better on the post –test related to the literary imagination and symbolism skills than in the pre - test. Subsequently, the proposed literary analysis program achieved an observable effect in developing the

experimental group students' literary imagination and symbolism skills. This was reflected in the high scores which the students obtained after being exposed to the proposed program.

Interpretation

The program was a student –centred methodology, and the content addressed the target skills and students. Students were trained to analyze their original stories through organized units that based on the principles of literary analysis approach.

The teaching program encouraged the students to analyze and appreciate their stories at the three learning stages : ice – breaking, analysis and extending, and appreciation. At – the ice breaking process, students' prior knowledge were activated and stimulated before discussing the main idea of the studied story or to comment on its title. Poster presentation was used for this phase, it was very interesting activity in developing symbolism skill. It depicted different objects and colors inherent in the story .

At- the analysis process, students responded to factual in –class activities. Among the major factors that affected students' imagination at the three process was using literary activities such as; roundtable, write around, focused listening, visualization drama, story maps and graphs, gap-filling exercises, that led to debating issues, revealed students' different analysis and interpretations. Empirically, this result goes in line with the results reported by (Max; Steve, 2010; Johnson, 2011; Miceli, 2012) who confirmed that literary activities are meaningful and powerful to improve students' ability to analyze and appreciate literature.

With respect to the statistical analysis revealed that there were statistically differences in favor of the experimental group in literary imagination and symbolism

skills. This might be due to the graphic activities such as : story structures, graphs, and webs that had a positive effect on improving students ' literary imagination and symbolism skills. This result is consistent with the results by (Khan ,2010; Scott, 2013) who confirmed that developing students' visual images of the story improved their creativity. Besides, story comparison map added much motivation among students as they were asked to compare and contrast between two of their original short stories that had similarities and differences.

At – the appreciation process, students' awareness towards the literary imagination and symbolism skills were improved. This was due to the students ' involvement in deep analysis questions that required more literary evaluation.

Watching the literary films of "Cinderella " and " the old man and the sea " was important factor for success. These films aroused students' motivation, and encouraged them to visualize their original stories properly. Moreover, these films enhanced students' imagination as they were asked to draw a fairytale character or unreal place. This findings supports that of (Smith, 2010) who indicated that teachers can take advantage of the visual experience which altering the actual text to accommodate for different levels of literary imagination.

Visualization activities were used to assess students 'mental images. Students also were allowed to convert the text into pictures and that improved their imagination (Steve; Max, 2010; Hawen, 2011; Hawor, 2012; Cade; Scot, 2013).Some students found obstacles while responding to these activities, because they had not enough literary vocabulary to convert the text into pictures. The teacher handled this problem by translating difficult words for those students.

Conclusion

Based on the above findings and the theoretical background of literature related to the study, the following conclusion can be drawn :

1. Visualization and depiction proved to be valuable training techniques that enhance students' literary imagination and symbolism skills, as it connected enjoyment to learning

2. Literary activities such as roundtable, write around, visual drama, prediction activities, gap-filling exercises, and oral presentation were effective in developing second year English majors' literary imagination and symbolism skills.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were formed :

1. The use of literary analysis is recommended as a successful program that urged students to work cooperatively and motivate them to present creative analyses.

2. Literature teachers have to expect, respect, and accept the different interpretations of a literary work as long as students could provide evidence and logical justifications.

3. The proposed program can be adopted for teaching other literary reading skills at different stages.

Suggestions for further research

Further research is needed to :

1. explore the effectiveness of literary analysis approach in developing literary appreciation skills.

2. design a program based on literary analysis approach in developing the critical reading and writing skills at different levels of education.

3. replicate this study with non narrative subjects like poetry, criticism at the university level.

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