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The impact of supplementary materials on students' english language learning and cultural conceptualization

El impacto de los materiales complementarios en el aprendizaje del idioma inglés y la conceptualización cultural de los estudiantes

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Resumen

El presente artículo ha tratado de detectar el impacto de los textos complementarios históricos, noticiosos y literarios en el aprendizaje de las habilidades del idioma inglés de los estudiantes y su conceptualización cultural. Esta investigación es verdaderamente experimental. Los datos obtenidos mediante el análisis de cuestionarios y preguntas abiertas, así como la comparación cruzada de las medias de las puntuaciones de los grupos, se analizaron utilizando SPSS y Max QDA. Además, el artículo reveló las ventajas que puede tener culturalmente, a saber, participación, interacción social, cooperación grupal y conceptualización cultural con respecto a las afirmaciones de estos grupos sobre materiales complementarios orientados al género. También reveló la eficacia de los materiales complementarios en el aprendizaje de idiomas de los estudiantes y su conceptualización cultural. Mostró claramente la superioridad de los materiales literarios sobre los demás. Finalmente, reveló el mejor desempeño de las niñas en las pruebas finales en comparación con los niños. En general, los materiales complementarios tuvieron un impacto positivo en el aprendizaje de idiomas y la conceptualización cultural de los alumnos. Ayudan a los alumnos a comprender el aspecto cargado de cultura del aprendizaje de idiomas y los materiales lingüísticos. Por ello, se recomienda encarecidamente el despliegue de materiales complementarios y sobre todo literarios.

Palabras clave: Materiales auténticos, conceptualización cultural, aprendizaje de idiomas, estudiantes de secundaria

Abstract

The paper has tried to detect the impact of historical, news, and literary supplementary texts on students' English language skills' learning and their cultural conceptualization. This research is a true experimental one. Data obtained through questionnaire and openended questions' analyses as well as cross comparison of the means of the groups' scores

^aCorrespondencia al autor: E-mail: sdrahimipour@yahoo.com were analyzed using SPSS and Max QDA. Also, the paper revealed the advantages it may have culturally, namely participation, social interaction, group cooperation, and cultural conceptualization regarding these groups' assertions on genre-orientated supplementary materials. It also revealed the effectiveness of the supplementary materials on the students' language learning and their cultural conceptualization. It clearly showed the superiority of literary materials over the others. Finally, it revealed the better performance of girls on final tests in comparison with the boys. Generally, supplementary materials had a positive impact on the learners' language learning and cultural conceptualization. They help the learners to understand the culture loaded aspect of language learning and language materials. Hence, the deployment of supplementary materials and above all literary ones is strongly recommended.

Key Words: Authentic Materials, Cultural Conceptualization, Language Learning, High School Students

Introduction

The application of literature and literary genres has recently stabilized itself in the realm of applied linguistics greatly. It has been missing in the TEFL setting for a long period. As many types of texts and tasks were tried out and they proved to be insufficient regarding the fulfillment of the expectations of the applied linguists, care and attention was paid to the literature and its powerful and rich genres. What have proved to be a major concern of these materials are the impacts they may have upon the nature of learning and teaching. Kusuma (2020) states that it is difficult for the students "to understand the material by using only exercise book". Shumin (2002) has indicated that speaking a language involves more than knowing the linguistic components. This can be seen in the research of Madamsetti (2020) who has used "Bakhtin's theory of dialogism to examine how two pre service teachers of Color conceptualized and implemented culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy (CR/SP) during their practicum" (p. 352). Many experts believe that the insertion of texts of different types would lead to better understanding and teaching of foreign language teaching and learning. A little more culture-oriented study is what Uzum et. al., (2021) have come up with. They deal with nation-state ideologies and tourism discourse and show how "the textbooks imagine language learners and communities, and they fail to represent the complex identities and cultures of language users and learners".

Among the many strategies and techniques, we can have a reference to reading comprehension exercises, dramatization, content analysis, reproduction of the meaning of the reading passages and many other techniques as influential activities for enabling the learners to learn the foreign language skills as well as other linguistic skills which per se arise the learners' interest in learning the language alongside enhancing the colloquial and implicational concepts of the target language. Similarly, Bajrami (2020) highlighted literature and revealed how its implementation in the classroom is very important.

Theoretical background and literature review

Many studies have been carried out in Iran as an EFL context. For example, the study carried out by Rezaee, Kouhpaeenejad, and Mohammadi (2012) under the title: Iranian EFL learners' perspective on New Interchange series and Top-Notch series was centered on finding the EFL learners' perspective on New Interchange series. Brumfit and Carter (1986, p. 1) have delicately emphasized the role of literature as "an ally of language". These changes assigned a new orientation on the literary texts not just as sheer works of art. The very beginning changing orientation of literature could be detected in the practice of second or foreign language teaching approaches around 1980s when methodologists highlighted authentic materials as powerful communicative tools and their sudden turn to literature as a rich source of authentic linguistic materials. In the past, literary works' analysis was the focal activity in Grammar Translation Method. Different literary works and pieces were analyzed, translated, and "used as examples of good writing and illustrations of the grammatical rules" (Duff & Maley, 1990, p. 3). GTM's major focus was on form, structural rules, and vocabulary of the passages. Not that much attention was paid to the meaning and learners' need and zest for the passages.

According to Duff and Maley (1990, p.3), in the "last decade or so, the interest in literature as one of the most valuable language teaching resources available has revived remarkably". Communicative approaches to language teaching revived the role of communicative materials. Literature, literary works, literary genres, and other types of passages including historical as well as commonly deployed modes of linguistic presentations were reappraised for their new functions and purposes they did by applied linguists. They proved to be of great applicability to enable learners to communicate in the second language and account for real, authentic, and communicative situations (Sanz & Fernández, 1997).

Umirova (2020) regarding authentic materials asserts that they "play a crucial role in 21st century education in EFL and ESL classroom" (p. 129). Hismanoglu (2005) enriches these factors and adds the following features including *universality*, *nontriviality*, *personal relevance*, *variety*, *interest*, *economy and suggestive power and ambiguity* which require the use of literature as a powerful resource and relevant culture loaded materials in the classroom. He also highlights these subtitles including *cultural enrichment, language enrichment, and personal involvement* as the building blocks of the rationale behind using literature in the classroom which, to the researcher's best surmise, justifies the use of literature and works well with the topic of this research. This encourages teachers to realize that they "may also simultaneously use other materials available on the market if these fall within the curricular requirements" (Michel, 2018, p.260).

Texts of different types are replete with special information. News materials, for example, cover and target a host of current areas with which people are in close contact. Any of the genres of literature can be of great help in providing appropriate input for practice in the class. Hence, the four major literature genres can be easily deployed for teaching and learning the English major skills and subs kills respectively. This has already been investigated by Zengin ET. Al. (2019) who have mentioned "many benefits of using literature in language classes for various reasons and for different ages and levels" (p. 156). This procedure can be tried out with historical passages or news passages.

If we make it a concern for the teachers, then we can expect better educational results because as Gilakjani and Sabori (2017) have asserted "teachers' beliefs have a greater effect than the teacher' knowledge on planning their lessons, on the types of decisions they adopt, and on classroom practice" (p.78). The historical passages can be deliberately touched upon due to the nature of implicational meaning embedded in those passages which would sound alluring and fascinating for both learners and teachers. The news passages have got a more common and current use and applicability which possess ease of access and implementation in the educational settings. The passages can be used as tasks which can be deploy in the class. Peng and Pyper (2019) showed that the possible effects leading Chinese teachers to embody TBLT in the classrooms proved to be a success. These all become attractions for the learners to find out more about these linguistically information-coated materials deployed by the instructors in the classes the prominent of which are literary ones as Azizur (2019) has asserted that English language teaching material can be developed using a literary text. What proves to be of great care and significance on the line of successful implementation would be the idea of the selection of appropriate passage with the highest level of use and influence in the class.

Adaptation Procedures for Selection of Tailored Texts in EFL Settings

For sure, if we want to prescribe something applicable and useful in our classes, we cannot pick up any book or material at random for the implementation in the class. When selecting the literary texts for the implementation in our language classes, the language teacher should take into account needs, motivation, interests, cultural background, and language level of the students. Hence, as Malley (2011) asserts it will bridge the gap between the materials learners' needs.

Cultural Implications and Horizons

Most materials are culture loaded revealing the fact that it would be of great significance to consider this aspect of language learning and to introduce it as a way of facilitating the process of learning. What the people in charge of publication centers like text books and other task based materials have in common is the scientific obsession with the control of the culture bound themes and topics related to what exist in our culture and setting. However, others like (Brown, 2007) take side with the other camp and view language and culture of mutual impact on each other.

If we want to teach language natively, cultural elements have got to be embedded in the process of teaching and learning. This will enable the learners "to actively interpret and critically reflect on cultural meanings and representations from a variety of perspectives" (McConachy, 2018, p.77). These concerns all reflect the importance and the incorporation of culture loaded materials in the stream of language learning and teaching.

Benefits of using other books in TEFL

Many intellectuals have highlighted the impact of these materials on language skills and sub skills, but whether they would leave any impression on culture learning and culture awareness is something which is supposed to be fully searched. According to Sivasubramaniam (2006), those who have learned a language through exposure to its literature have proved to be better speakers and readers.

In recent years, many scholars and educators have acknowledged the academic, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic benefits of the study of supplementary text books. This highlights the idea that "both literature and language involve the development of a feeling for language" (Brumfit and Carter, 1986, p.42). Amjad et al. (2020) confirms that "Learners who have literary competence have an implied understanding of certain

conventions" reveal that a "pedagogically sensitive stylistics can brush up the confidence of students in reading and interpretation" (p. 2078).

As for the communicative purpose of the language which is the focal function of language, it is revealed that "incorporating authentic materials helps students acquire an effective communicative competence in the target language" (Guariento and Morley, 2001 cited in Abdul Hussein, 2014, p. 331). Academically, it is believed that materials which have not had an educational orientation in their creation including news reports, poems, different types of newspapers, and magazine may "contain more realistic and natural examples of language use than those found in textbooks and other specially developed teaching materials" (Richards and Schmidt, 2010, p. 43).

According to Mishan (2005 cited in Liu, 2016), it is much more possible for language teachers to use authentic materials in the classroom currently than it was twenty years ago, primarily because of the increased availability of the authentic materials via various means of technology especially the Internet. Liu (2016) believes that in the last few years, with the development of various technologies, the pedagogical world has witnessed a big change, offering more opportunities for language teachers to apply authentic materials in language classrooms.

For the other hand, Ianiro (2007) has confirmed this idea by asserting that "a key way to help learners reach their goals is to use authentic, goal-directed materials" (p. 3).Students are forced to negotiate meaning through authentic texts, are involved in real coding and decoding of the texts, and are exposed to what really goes on during the real use of language in real settings. Materials' impact on listening comprehension has been detected revealing that these materials affect listening comprehension (Tomlinson, 2011), reading comprehension and listening comprehension (Khodareza and Delvand, 2016). This study has tried to determine the effectiveness of three different types of passages and their possible impact on students' English language learning and cultural conceptualization.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Iran, Ilam province High schools in the years 2018-2019. The participants included students of 8 classes, 4 male and 4 female classes including three experimental groups and one controlled group for each gender; each group included 15 students. Following the guidelines introduced by Hatch and Farhady (2011), in order to impede the probable effects of other variables, all classes of male and female

students were high school 2nd graders. The only difference was the type of texts distributed among the groups, including 15 historical texts, 15 literary texts, and 15 news texts, each type distributed to each experimental group and no text for controlled groups. Vision Book Two (2019) was used as the main text and the selected and tailored literary, historical, and news passages were collected and administered as the supplementary materials by the researcher.

The randomly chosen clustered students of each experimental group were supposed to study 15 texts of the same type given to them one by one to study at home each week. At the end of the term, not only the final scores of each group were compared with the other groups, the students were also asked to write their ideas about 10 given words and phrases including cultural and daily expressions to identify any differences in their cultural conceptualization based on the type of texts they had studied and had been exposed to. Their responses and scores were analyzed using SPSS and MAXQDA programs.

Results

			Treat						
			Historical	Literary	News	Null	Total		
Gender	Male	Count	15	15	15	15	60		
		% of Total	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	50.0%		
	Female	Count	15	15	15	15	60		
		% of Total	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	50.0%		
Total		Count	30	30	30	30	120		
		% of Total	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%		

Table 1Gender * Treat Cross tabulation

Table 2

Score

Gender	Treat	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	Historical	17.5000	15	2.15473
	Literary	13.7667	15	2.20281
	News	14.5333	15	2.38647
	Null	13.4333	15	2.20281
	Total	14.8083	60	2.71545
Female	Historical	17.9667	15	2.24775
	Literary	14.4333	15	2.12020
	News	15.1667	15	2.16025
	Null	13.8000	15	2.44073
	Total	15.3417	60	2.71295
Total	Historical	17.7333	30	2.17641
	Literary	14.1000	30	2.15118
	News	14.8500	30	2.25965
	Null	13.6167	30	2.29198
	Total	15.0750	120	2.71600

Table 3

Score

Treat	Gender	Mean	Ν	Std. Deviation
Historical	Male	17.5000	15	2.15473
	Female	17.9667	15	2.24775
	Total	17.7333	30	2.17641
Literary	Male	13.7667	15	2.20281
	Female	14.4333	15	2.12020
	Total	14.1000	30	2.15118
News	Male	14.5333	15	2.38647
	Female	15.1667	15	2.16025
	Total	14.8500	30	2.25965
Null	Male	13.4333	15	2.20281
	Female	13.8000	15	2.44073
	Total	13.6167	30	2.29198
Total	Male	14.8083	60	2.71545
	Female	15.3417	60	2.71295
	Total	15.0750	120	2.71600

Table 4

Literary vs. Null Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances t-test for Equality of Means							
		Sig. (2- Mean Std. Erro						
	F	Sig.	Т	df	tailed)	Difference	e Difference	
Score Equal variances	.163	.688	.842	58	.403	.48333	.57390	
assumed								
Equal variances			.842	57.768	.403	.48333	.57390	
not assumed								

Table 5

News vs. Null Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances t-test for Equality of Means							
					Sig. (2-	Mean	Std. Error	
	F	Sig.	Т	Df	tailed)	Difference	e Difference	
Score Equal variances assumed	.023	.879	2.099	58	.040	1.23333	.58763	
Equal variances not assumed			2.099	57.988	.040	1.23333	.58763	

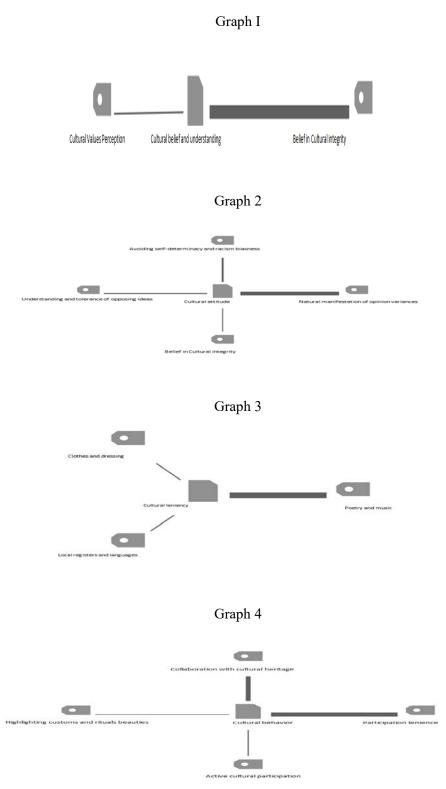
Table 6

Historical vs. Null Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances t-test for Equality of Means						
	Sig. (2- Mean Std. E						Std. Error	
	F	Sig.	Т	Df	tailed)	Difference	Difference	
Score Equal variances assumed	.043	.836	7.134	58	.000	4.11667	.57706	
Equal variances not assumed			7.134	57.845	.000	4.11667	.57706	

The above tables indicate the rejection of the first four Null hypotheses. They show the impact of the supplementary texts on the improvement of the students' performance on summative achievement tests. They also indicate the superiority of the impact of literary supplementary texts on the performance of the students on the final tests. The educational impact of the variables on English language learning is highly confirmed by the results. The groups using literary genres outperformed over the other groups. The results also show the better performance of girls on the final tests that may be attributed to their delicate attention to the literary texts.

Qualitative Analysis (Max QDA) Results



Codes	Code	Percent	Category	Category Percent
10	Understanding cultural values	41.67	Cultural	21.24
14	Belief in Cultural Integrity	58.33	belief and opinion	
24	Sum	100.00		
6	Avoiding selfishness, biasness and discrimination	23.08	cultural attitude	23.01
9	natural manifestation of opposing opinions	34.62		
6	intercultural connections	23.08		
5	opposing ideas tolerance	19.23		
26	Sum	100.00		
10	dressing and clothes	30.30	Cultural	29.20
10	local registers and dialects	30.30	leniency	
13	poetry and music	39.39		
33	Sum	100.00		
6	highlighting the beauties of rituals and customs	20.00	Cultural behavior	26.55
6	active cultural participation	20.00		
10	participation degree	33.33		
8	cooperation of cultural inheritance	26.67		
30	Sum	100.00		100
113	Total			

Codification of concepts

The above graphs and the codification of concepts indicate the rejection of hypotheses 5 to 9 letting the researcher come up with the idea that these supplementary texts give rise to the creation of cultural conceptualization in general and the highlighted concepts in particular; the prominent of which are *participation*, *poetry and music*, *natural manifestation of opinion variances*, and above all belief in *cultural integrity* in conversation as a key code in culture interchange on the line of cultural conceptualization.

Discussion

The qualitative and quantitative statistics revealed the rejection of the hypotheses. It highlights the drastic impact of supplementary materials on the learners' language learning. It highlights the significance of supplementary as good sources for enriching the normal textbooks administered in high schools. This, additionally, paves the way for the teachers to draw the learners' attention to the cultural elements which exist in the supplementary materials. Knowing the fact that the formal English text books are culturally censored and controlled based on the high education policies, the implementation of supplementary materials which have been delicately selected and tailored can make up for the culturally poor thematic content of the text books.

This study revealed that utilization of supplementary materials proved to be successful experience. The cross comparison of the scores revealed the roughly better performance of girls in this research which suggests that teachers and curriculum designers can courageously take the opportunity of using these materials in both girls and boys into account. The students' consciousness awareness regarding the cultural elements existing in the language materials can enable the learners to both learn culture as the fifth language skill and experience native-like language learning. It shows that teacher have got to dare to instruct language more from a cultural perspective for the better internalized language teaching practice and turn to supplementary materials as education and culturecoated sources accompanying their formal text books. Uzum (2021) picked up nationstate ideologies and tourism discourse; the current research picked up news, literary, and historical ones and revealed their feasibility for class use. The deployment of the introduced supplementary materials in this research proved to be authentic, interesting, and challenging for the students. The authenticity of literary materials has already been confirmed by Sanz and Fernandes in 1997; the authentic nature of supplementary materials for class utilization was reconfirmed by Umirova (2020).

This research revealed the authenticity of not only literary but also news and historical materials at high school classes alongside the nationally developed English text book namely *Vision Series*. The findings reconfirmed the results of the study done by Bejrami (2020) regarding the deployment of literature in classroom. Additionally, the findings of this research contradicted Muthmainnah, et al. (2020) in that in this study setting there was no negative assumption about English Language; indeed, the learners were highly interested in English language. It also contradicted with their second assumption about the poor deployment of language teaching methods which are interactive and cooperative in nature. In this research setting, the deployment of interactive and cooperative language teaching proved to be necessary. The introduction of the treatment including the use of supplementary materials facilitated the task of cooperative learning and teaching of the English language.

Also, this research supported their third assumption regarding the poor content of nation-wide developed English text books. Hence, the accomplishment of this research and its findings about the enhancement of language learning and cultural awareness encouraged the researcher to recommend the use of supplementary materials to the teachers, learners, material developers, and curriculum designers with the special orientation of literary supplementary materials. The early searches done on the supplementary materials mainly were concerned with short story and some reading materials. This research initiates the introduction of new genres of supplementary materials in TEFL classes. It implicates this fact that supplementary materials gradually stabilize themselves as the necessary component of materials for teaching English in formal educational settings.

Conclusion

The insertion of appropriate supplementary text books has been a central concern for applied linguists. The effectiveness of appropriate supplementary texts on different groups of language learners in different settings has been called into question by academic research from different angles. This research has incorporated the elements of cultural conceptualization in its approach and analysis detecting the educational and cultural effects accompanying the treatment. Cultural awareness can positively affect students` linguistic success; therefore, alongside language teaching, great care should be taken to provide learners with cultural knowledge. Deployment of culture-based activities is the best way to increase students` cultural awareness and language competence.

For the other hand, cultural schemata associated with a language cannot be learned in a few lessons because culture is a broader concept linked to many of the linguistic concepts taught in language classes which can be directly incorporated in the curriculum. The introduction of authentic supplementary materials which are culturally rich in content would help the learners to have a vast view of language learning and achieve a comprehensive linguistic proficiency. We should consider the teaching of cultural skills and knowledge alongside listening, speaking, reading and writing as the major language skills to make our students learn language in a native-like manner.

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