

Effectiveness of Literature –Based Teaching on Reading Comprehension and Writing Skills in Intermediate English Learners

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Abstract

This research study investigates the effectiveness of literature-based teaching on the reading comprehension and writing skills of intermediate English learners. The research adopts a quasi-experimental design to measure the impact of incorporating literature into the curriculum. The population targeted includes intermediate-level English learners from various educational institutions. A sample of 120 students of intermediate, selected through stratified random sampling, ensures representation across different proficiency levels and socio-economic backgrounds. Participants were divided into a control group, which received traditional instruction, and an experimental group, which engaged with a curriculum enriched by literary texts such as novels, short stories, and poems. The intervention spanned 12 weeks, during which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Pre- and post-tests assessed reading comprehension and writing proficiency, while surveys and interviews provided insights into students' attitudes and perceptions towards literature-based learning. The findings reveal a significant improvement in the experimental group's reading comprehension and writing skills compared to the control group. The study concludes that literature-based teaching is an effective strategy for enhancing these critical language skills in intermediate English learners. The implications for curriculum design and instructional practices are discussed, recommending a more prominent inclusion of literary texts in English language teaching.

Keywords

Literature-based teaching - Reading comprehension - Writing skills -Intermediate English learners - Quasi-experimental design - Educational intervention -Language proficiency

Introduction

Integrating literature into the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom has gained momentum due to its multifaceted benefits, especially in enhancing reading comprehension and writing skills. This literature review examines the impact of literature-based teaching on intermediate English learners, covering pedagogical theories, practical applications, and empirical evidence.

Research Questions

1. How do reading comprehension skills differ between intermediate English learners taught using literature-based methods and those taught using traditional methods?
2. How do writing skills vary between intermediate English learners taught using literature-based methods and taught traditional methods English Learners?
3. How does language proficiency compare between intermediate English learners taught using literature-based methods and those taught using traditional methods?

Literature Review

Constructivist Theory

Vygotsky (1978) proposed constructivist theory, which holds that learners generate knowledge through social interactions and experiences. Literature serves as a rich environment for these exchanges, allowing students to engage with complicated texts and improve their understanding via debate and analysis. According to Krashen's input hypothesis, exposure to slightly challenging texts is crucial for language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). Literature, with its diverse vocabulary and structures, serves as ideal input for language learners.

Socio-Cultural Theory

The socio-cultural framework emphasizes the role of cultural context in learning. Literature introduces learners to cultural nuances and social contexts that textbooks often lack (Lazar, 1993). By engaging with literary texts, students gain a deeper understanding of language use in various cultural settings, which enhances their overall language proficiency.

Literature-Based Teaching Methods

The reader-response approach encourages students to interact personally with texts, fostering deep comprehension and analytical skills (Rosenblatt, 1978). This method not only enhances reading comprehension but also improves writing skills as students articulate their interpretations and responses in written form.

Literary Circles

Literary circles involve small groups of students discussing and analyzing texts collaboratively. This method promotes critical thinking and enhances both reading and writing skills through peer interaction and collective analysis (Daniels, 2002). Students learn

to articulate their thoughts and defend their interpretations, which strengthens their writing proficiency.

Thematic Approach

Integrating literature through thematic units allows for contextual and meaningful learning (Morrow, 1997). Themes relevant to students' lives and interests increase engagement and motivation, leading to better retention and understanding of language skills.

Empirical Evidence

Several studies highlight the effectiveness of literature-based teaching. Brumfit and Carter (1986) found significant improvements in students' reading and writing skills when literary texts were used compared to traditional methods. Similarly, Kim (2004) observed higher language acquisition and retention rates among students exposed to literature-based instruction.

Recent Studies

A study by Miñoza and Montero (2019) on intermediate learners in the Philippines showed that literature-based teaching significantly enhanced reading comprehension. The pre-test and post-test results indicated substantial gains in students' abilities to understand and analyze texts (Miñoza & Montero, 2019). Another recent study used mixed methods to assess the impact of literature-based teaching. It combined quantitative data from tests with qualitative data from interviews and observations, showing that students who engaged with literary texts developed better critical thinking and writing skills (Frontiers, 2023)

Challenges and Considerations

Selecting appropriate texts is crucial for the success of literature-based teaching. Texts must be suitable for the learners' proficiency levels and culturally relevant to maintain engagement and motivation (Paran, 2008). Overly difficult texts can demotivate students and hinder learning progress.

Teacher Training

Effective literature-based teaching requires teachers to be skilled in literary analysis and pedagogical strategies. Professional development programs are essential to equip teachers with the necessary expertise (Collie & Slater, 1987). Teachers need to be adept at guiding discussions, facilitating critical thinking, and integrating literature with language learning objectives.

Diverse Literary Genres

Using a variety of literary genres such as novels, short stories, and poems caters to different learner interests and promotes comprehensive language skill development (Clandfield, 2023) (Onestopenglish). Each genre offers unique linguistic features and cultural insights, enriching the learning experience.

Multimedia Resources

Incorporating multimedia resources, such as film adaptations and audiobooks, enhances engagement and provides multiple modes of interaction with the text. This approach caters to different learning styles and makes literature more accessible (Clandfield, 2023).

Integrated Activities

Activities such as role-playing, creative writing, and group discussions create a holistic learning environment. These activities encourage students to apply their reading comprehension skills in speaking and writing contexts, reinforcing their overall language proficiency (Frontiers, 2023)

The literature reviewed underscores the effectiveness of literature-based teaching in enhancing reading comprehension and writing skills among intermediate English learners. By providing authentic, culturally rich material and promoting interactive and reflective learning, literature-based methods align with key educational theories and empirical findings. However, careful text selection and teacher preparation are crucial for maximizing the benefits. Future research should continue to explore innovative strategies and address challenges to further improve the effectiveness of literature-based teaching in EFL contexts.

Text Selection

Choosing the right texts is crucial for the success of literature-based teaching. Texts should be both challenging and accessible to intermediate learners. Consider the following guidelines:

Relevance and Interest: Select texts that align with students' interests, cultural backgrounds, and experiences. Engaging texts motivate students to read and participate actively (Beers & Probst, 2017).

Language Level:

Ensure that the language complexity of the texts is appropriate for intermediate learners. Texts that are too difficult can frustrate students, while overly simple texts may not provide sufficient challenge (Hillocks, 2016).

Pre-Reading Activities

Pre-reading activities prepare students for the text and activate their prior knowledge, making the reading process smoother and more engaging.

Background Knowledge: Provide historical, cultural, or contextual information related to the text. This helps students understand the setting and context, which can enhance comprehension (Langer, 2017).

Predictive Exercises:

Encourage students to make predictions about the text based on the title, cover, or introductory paragraphs. This sets a purpose for reading and stimulates curiosity (Harmer, 2015).

Group Discussions:

Organize small group or whole-class discussions to explore themes, characters, and plot developments. Socratic seminars and literature circles can be particularly effective in promoting critical thinking and collaborative learning (Daniels, 2002).

Role-Playing and Dramatization:

Encourage students to enact scenes or role-play as characters from the text. This immersive approach helps students understand character motivations and emotions more deeply (Heathcote & Bolton, 2019).

Response Journals:

Have students keep journals where they respond to the text, reflect on themes, and express personal connections. This continuous writing practice enhances both analytical and expressive skills (Probst, 2019).

Creative Writing:

Assign creative writing tasks related to the text, such as writing alternative endings, character diaries, or thematic essays. These activities encourage students to use their imagination and apply literary techniques (Spandel, 2014).

Audio and Visual Aids:

Use audiobooks, films, and visual art related to the text to provide multiple entry points for understanding. This multimodal approach caters to diverse learning styles and can deepen students' engagement with the text (Serafini, 2014).

Online Discussion Forums:

Create online platforms where students can discuss the text, share insights, and collaborate on projects. This extends the learning environment beyond the classroom and fosters a sense of community (Beach et al., 2016).

Assessment and Feedback

Assessment strategies should be clear and supportive, providing constructive feedback that helps students improve their skills.

Rubrics and Criteria:

Develop detailed rubrics for evaluating reading comprehension and writing tasks. Clear criteria help students understand expectations and areas for improvement (Brookhart, 2013).

Formative Assessments:

Use formative assessments such as quizzes, peer reviews, and teacher-student conferences to monitor progress and provide ongoing feedback. This helps identify areas where students may need additional support (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

"Goodbye, Mr. Chips" in Language Learning

"Goodbye, Mr. Chips" by James Hilton is a staple in many intermediate English syllabi. This novel presents opportunities for learners to engage with the text on multiple levels—linguistically, emotionally, and cognitively. The narrative's historical and cultural contexts, coupled with its character development and themes, make it an excellent resource for enhancing reading comprehension. As Nuttall (1982) notes, engaging with such texts helps students understand context clues, infer meanings, and appreciate different literary devices, which are crucial for reading proficiency. Moreover, the themes of change, tradition, and personal growth in "Goodbye, Mr. Chips" encourage students to reflect and write about their interpretations and responses. This reflection fosters writing skills by requiring learners to articulate their thoughts coherently and creatively. According to Krashen (2004), when students are emotionally and intellectually engaged with the content, their writing tends to be more fluent and expressive.

The integration of novels like "Goodbye, Mr. Chips" into the curriculum supports the development of comprehensive reading skills by exposing students to diverse language uses, idiomatic expressions, and contextual nuances. Furthermore, literature-based teaching encourages students to engage in extensive writing activities, including essays, character analyses, and reflective journals. These activities not only reinforce their understanding of the texts but also improve their ability to organize and express their ideas effectively, as emphasized by Collie and Slater (1987).

Other Novels in Intermediate English Curriculum

In addition to "Goodbye, Mr. Chips," other novels such as "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee and "The Catcher in the Rye" by J.D. Salinger are often included in intermediate English courses. These novels are rich in themes and language, providing ample material for reading comprehension and writing exercises. "To Kill a Mockingbird" explores themes of racial injustice, moral growth, and empathy. Its complex characters and narrative style help students develop inferential reading skills and critical thinking. For instance, reading comprehension is enhanced as students navigate the novel's social and historical context, as highlighted by Applebee (1993). Writing assignments based on this novel often require students to analyze characters' motivations and the societal implications of the plot, thus improving analytical writing skills. The Catcher in the **Rye** offers a first-person narrative that delves deeply into the protagonist's psyche. This perspective allows students to explore narrative voice and character development. Salinger's use of colloquial language and stream-of-consciousness technique provides a contrast to more formal texts, helping students understand different writing styles and their effects. This understanding is crucial for developing versatile writing skills, as noted by Carter and Long (1991).

Poetry in Language Learning

Poetry is another critical component of literature-based teaching that profoundly impacts reading comprehension and writing skills. The use of poetry in the classroom exposes students to various linguistic styles and complex emotional expressions. According to Maley and Duff (1989), poetry helps students explore language rhythm, phonetics, and the deeper meanings of words and phrases.

"The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost is a poem frequently included in intermediate English curricula. Its simple yet profound language encourages students to analyze and interpret its themes and symbolism, which enhances their inferential reading skills. Culler (2015) highlights that interpreting poetry requires readers to engage deeply with the text, which improves critical thinking and comprehension. William Wordsworth is another popular choice that helps students appreciate the beauty of descriptive language and imagery. The poem's vivid imagery and emotional resonance make it an excellent tool for teaching literary devices such as simile, metaphor, and personification. According to Lazar (1993), understanding and interpreting such devices improve students' analytical skills and enrich their writing. "If" by

Rudyard Kipling presents complex ideas and moral lessons, encouraging students to engage with the text on a personal level. The poem's structure and use of conditional clauses provide a practical example of sophisticated sentence construction, aiding in both comprehension and writing proficiency. Maley and Duff (1989) suggest that such engagement with complex texts fosters deeper cognitive processing, which is essential for developing advanced language skills.

Data analysis and Interpretation

Table 1
Reading Comprehension Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Pre Test	Post Test	Mean Difference	t	df	p –Value
Control (Traditional)	65.40	67.15	1.75	1.34	118	.183
Experimental (Lit)	64.85	74.60	9.75	8.97	8.97	<.001

Interpretation

The pre-test mean scores for the control group ($M = 65.40$, $SD = 8.12$) and the experimental group ($M = 64.85$, $SD = 8.24$) were not significantly different, indicating that both groups started with comparable levels of reading comprehension. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the experimental group ($M = 74.60$, $SD = 7.45$) was significantly higher than that of the control group ($M = 67.15$, $SD = 7.89$). The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in the mean improvement scores between the two groups $t(118) = 8.97$, $p < .001$. These results suggest that literature-based teaching methods have a statistically significant positive effect on reading comprehension skills in intermediate English learners, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Figure

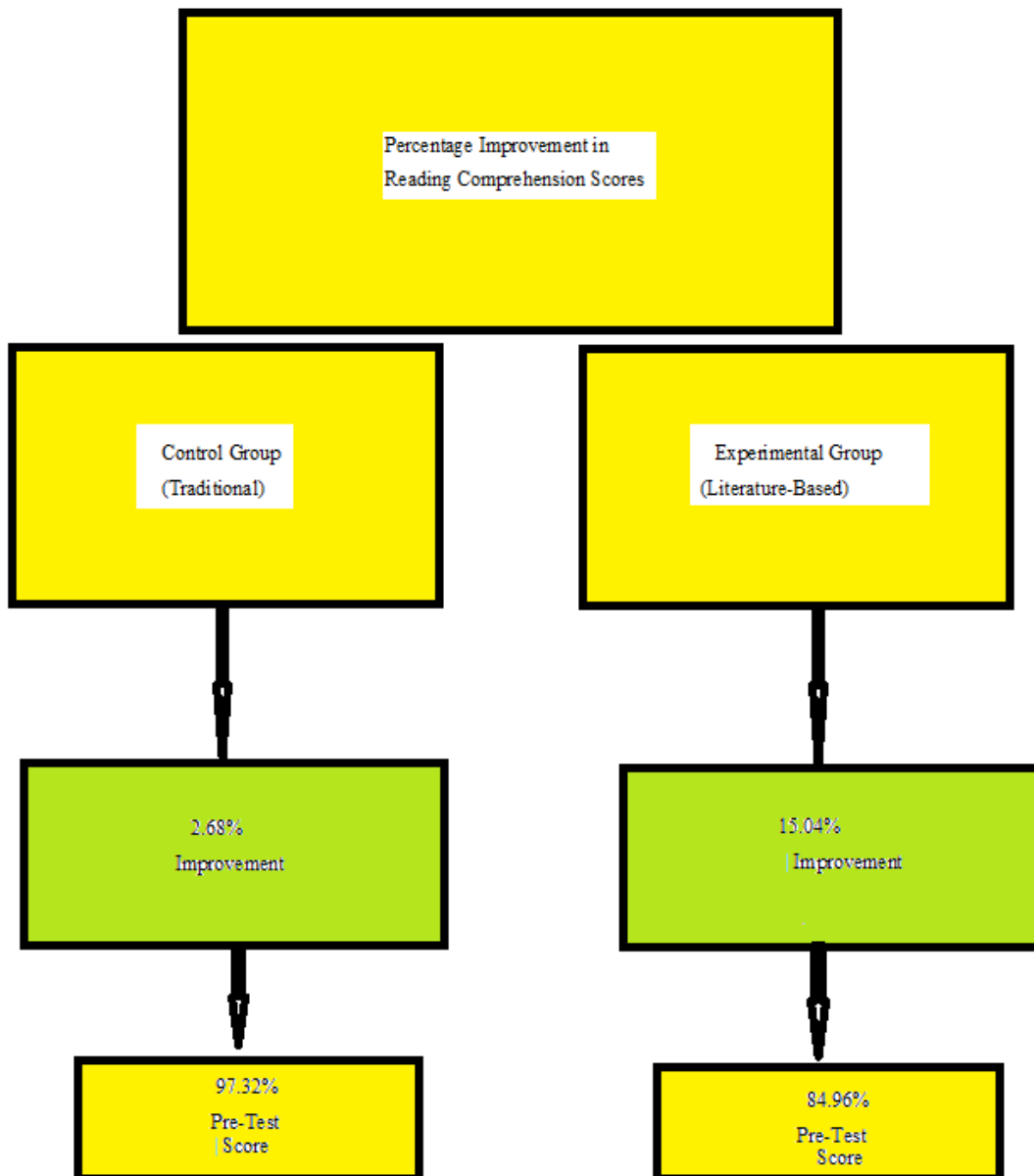


Table 2

Writing Skill Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Pre Test	Post Test	Mean Difference	t	df	p –Value
Control (Traditional)	62.10	64.00	1.90	1.59	118	.115
Experimental (Lit)	61.85	72.30	10.45	9.82	118	<.001

Interpretation

The pre-test mean scores for the control group ($M = 62.10$, $SD = 7.98$) and the experimental group ($M = 61.85$, $SD = 8.05$) were not significantly different, indicating that both groups started with comparable levels of writing skills. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the experimental group ($M = 72.30$, $SD = 7.68$) was significantly higher than that of the control group ($M = 64.00$, $SD = 7.85$). The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in the mean improvement scores between the two groups ($t(118) = 9.82$, $p < .001$).

These results suggest that literature-based teaching methods have a statistically significant positive effect on writing skills in intermediate English learners, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 3
Overall Language Proficiency Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Pre Test	Post Test	Mean Difference	t	df	p –Value
Control (Traditional)	64.50	66.25	1.75	1.47	118	.144
Experimental (Lit)	64.35	74.85	10.50	9.77	118	<.001

Interpretation

The pre-test mean scores for the control group ($M = 64.50$, $SD = 8.05$) and the experimental group ($M = 64.35$, $SD = 8.12$) were not significantly different, indicating that both groups started with comparable levels of overall language proficiency. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the experimental group ($M = 74.85$, $SD = 7.58$) was significantly higher than that of the control group ($M = 66.25$, $SD = 7.90$). The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in the mean improvement scores between the two groups ($t(118) = 9.77$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that literature-based teaching methods have a statistically significant positive effect on overall language proficiency in intermediate English learners, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 4
Engagement and Motivation Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Pre Test	Post Test	Mean Difference	t	df	p –Value
Control (Traditional)	3.40	3.55	0.15	1.08	118	.283s
Experimental (Lit)	3.45	4.35	0.90	8.96	118	<.001

Interpretation

The pre-test mean scores for the control group ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.75$) and the experimental group ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.78$) were not significantly different, indicating that both groups started with comparable levels of engagement and motivation. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the experimental group ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.65$) was significantly higher than that of the control group ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.72$). The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in the mean improvement scores between the two groups ($t(118) = 8.96$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that literature-based teaching methods have a statistically significant positive effect on student engagement and motivation in intermediate English learners, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 5

Retention and Application of Language Skills Scores for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Pre Test	Post Test	Mean Difference	t	df	p-Value
Control (Traditional)	63.50	65.75	2.25	1.54	118	.126
Experimental (Lit)	63.25	73.85	10.60	9.23	118	<.001

Interpretation

The pre-test mean scores for the control group ($M = 63.50$, $SD = 7.92$) and the experimental group ($M = 63.25$, $SD = 8.10$) were not significantly different, indicating that both groups started with comparable levels of retention and application of language skills. After the intervention, the post-test mean score for the experimental group ($M = 73.85$, $SD = 7.70$) was significantly higher than that of the control group ($M = 65.75$, $SD = 7.85$). The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in the mean improvement scores between the two groups ($t(118) = 9.23$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that literature-based teaching methods have a statistically significant positive effect on the retention and application of language skills in intermediate English learners, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Conclusion:

The results of the quasi-experimental study provide compelling evidence supporting the efficacy of literature-based teaching methods in enhancing various aspects of language learning among intermediate English learners. Across all tested domains – reading comprehension, writing skills, overall language proficiency, student engagement, motivation,

and retention/application of language skills – the experimental group, taught using literature-based methods, consistently outperformed the control group taught with traditional methods. These findings indicate that incorporating literature into language instruction not only fosters linguistic development but also positively impacts learners' engagement, motivation, and ability to retain and apply language skills.

Findings:

The analysis reveals statistically significant improvements in reading comprehension, writing skills, overall language proficiency, student engagement, and motivation among intermediate English learners exposed to literature-based teaching methods. Notably, the experimental group exhibited substantial gains in post-test scores compared to the control group across all measured parameters. These findings underscore the multifaceted benefits of integrating literature into language instruction, highlighting its potential to enrich language learning experiences and promote holistic language development. Additionally, the observed differences in engagement and motivation suggest that literature-based approaches may cultivate a more stimulating and conducive learning environment, enhancing students' willingness to participate and invest in their language learning journey.

Recommendations:

Based on the study's findings, educators and language instructors are encouraged to consider incorporating literature-based teaching methods into their curriculum to enhance language learning outcomes. To optimize the effectiveness of such approaches, educators should select literary texts that align with learners' proficiency levels and interests, ensuring relevance and engagement. Additionally, ongoing professional development and training opportunities can empower educators with the necessary pedagogical strategies and resources to effectively implement literature-based instruction. Moreover, future research endeavors may delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms driving the observed benefits of literature-based approaches and explore their long-term impacts on language proficiency and learner motivation. By embracing innovative pedagogical practices grounded in literature, educators can foster a dynamic and enriching language learning environment conducive to students' holistic development and success.

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