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Persian prose and poetry literature: in search of teaching models for Speakers of Other Languages

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Abstract

Teaching literature to international students can be challenging. The teaching of literature has remained traditional. Studies reveal that most of the language lecturers and teachers teach literature based on their personal experience. This study attempts to provide answer to this question “what is the most efficient model for the instruction of Persian literature to non-Iranian Persian language learners?” In this investigation, after reviewing the relevant literature, the researcher developed and piloted a questionnaire. The questionnaire was randomly distributed among 52 Persian language teachers and experts to probe their perceptions concerning the most productive model for teaching Persian literature. The data analysis showed that the participants considered the integrated approach, personal growth, cultural, and linguistic models as the first, second, third, and forth models, respectively, appropriate in the teaching of both Persian poetry and prose despite with statistically significant difference. The results further indicated that the teachers did not show significant difference concerning the application of models in teaching Persian poetry and prose. The findings of this investigation might be used to upgrade the

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quality of teaching Persian literature to non-Iranian Persian language learners. The results could be promising in the design and development of useful educational materials in the teaching of Persian literature.

Keywords: *Teaching Persian Literature , Persian Language Learner, Language-Based Model , Cultural Model, Personal Growth Model , Integrated Model.*

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The selection of a effective model is considered as the first step in the teaching of literature. Research shows that there is not a well-known methods for Teaching of Persian poetry and prose to speakers of other languages to non-Iranian Persian language learners both in and outside Iran. The literature education is confined to providing examples of literary works and their interpretation, and often, its education does not take place based on science and scientific theories. Identifying an efficient model based on the academic methods is the first step for the academic education of literature in general and Persian literature in particular. Research studies show that not only is there a dearth of perception and information based on the knowledge of literature education to effectively teach Persian literature to non-Iranian students in universities within the country and abroad, but also does the diversity of theories and models in the field of teaching and evaluating literature make it difficult to obtain a universal method for this imperative matter. The main problem in the field of teaching Persian literature is that there is very little academic knowledge about which scientific method and model should be used to teach Persian prose and verse literature. Basically, how should literature be taught to non-Persian speaking students and enthusiasts? It should be taken into consideration that teaching literature to non-Persian speakers with cookie-cutter teaching approaches deployed for teaching literature to Persian speakers has resulted in a severe drop in motivation and countless failures in the education process of non-Iranian students in the field of Persian language and literature, and thus far, no efficient framework and models have been proposed for teaching Persian literature. Consequently, the main goal of this research study is thinking about and putting forward models to achieve the academic instruction of literature.

Incontrovertibly, the researchers in this study are looking for ways to look at literature, not as a tool for teaching language, but as the goal of education. The review of the conducted research also indicates that a field research has not been conducted in the domain of Persian literature education to investigate the effective models of Persian literature education, and the present study is considered the first research in the field of investigating the effective models of teaching prose and poetry in literature. It is meant to answer the burning question of the most efficient model for teaching Persian literature, including poetry and prose, to non-Persian speakers for the first time.

Research Question(s)

Two questions, depending on the introduction that was raised, are considered for this research:

1. From the perspective of Persian language and literature teachers, which model of teaching Persian literature is the appropriate model for teaching verse literature to speakers of other languages?
2. From the perspective of Persian language and literature teachers, which model of teaching Persian literature is the appropriate model for teaching prose literature to speakers of other languages?

2. Theoritical Framework

It is worth mentioning that among the numerous models available in the field of literature education, four more prominent and practical models are: The Language-Based Model, The Cultural Model, The Personal Growth Model and eventually, The Integrated Model was selected.

2.1. The Language-Based Model

The main focus of the language-based model in teaching literature is the analysis of the language of the literary text (i.e. literary analysis) and the inextricable integration of literature and language. Learning the language and broadening the linguistic competence are regarded as tools to achieve the literary competence in this model. It scrutinizes specific linguistic features such as grammatical and lexical structures and as a consequence, increases students' general awareness and perception of the language they are learning. Grammatical, lexical or discourse competence acquired by learners enables them to use the knowledge of the target language as a prerequisite for reading literary texts, thereby facilitating their transition towards understanding literary texts in an indirect way.

In fact, the activities help the students analyze the literary text meticulously, make meaningful interpretations or conscious

evaluations of the text, and they are inspired to use their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and discourse for critical and aesthetic thinking evaluations of literary texts (Lazar, 2009, p. 23). The model adopted is mostly stylistic analysis, which relies upon the study of the linguistic features of the text to comprehend how the meaning of the text is conveyed. In general, expanding the lexical reservoir, increasing the fluency, and improving interpretation and inference skills are some of the benefits of this model (Bibi & McElroy, 2013, p. 19).

2.2. The Cultural Model

It emphasizes on text interpretation and description of social, historical, political and literary content) Literature is abundant with cultural concepts, and when reading literary texts, cultural issues may give rise to some problems for language learners. Not only does the cultural model focus on language, but it also takes understanding the culture and ideologies of the target language into consideration (Padurean, 2015, p. 196). The emphasis of this model is on the text and on its interpretation, and description of the social, historical, political and literary content.

Readers read the text using the conceptual basis of their first language and comprehend what it makes sense to them. In a similar vein, in reading second language literary texts, readers use their basic knowledge (Bernhardt, 2003, p. 198). That is, second language readers are able to comprehend second language reading texts by using the cultural commonalities existing between their mother tongue and the second language, or the so-called cultural background knowledge. Thus, literary texts act as a tool for sharing and clarifying intercultural differences (McKay, 2014, p. 498).

2.3. The Personal Growth Model

This model emphasis on the connection of the literary text to personal experience and the application of personal experiences, insights and feelings in the interpretation of the literary text. The personal growth model is an attempt to establish a link between the linguistic pattern and the cultural pattern. In this way, its focus is on the use of language, but it is utilized in a specific cultural context. The model of personal growth emphasizes that the learner understands the target society and culture by reading literary texts (Chowdry, 2016, p. 3). Literature learners are encouraged to express their feelings, opinions and perspectives and to make connections between their own experiences and the text and critical thinking (Carter & Long, 1991, pp. 3-4).

Therefore, the selection of lesson content is based on the degree to which it matches the views and interests of the learners and involves

them in learning activities. This model leads to the application of the experiences, opinions and personal feelings of the learners in the interpretation of the literary text. In fact, this model plays a pivotal role in language learning by disambiguating the literary text and connecting it to individual experience.

The researchers and teachers in the field of language learning support activating the background knowledge and making literature accessible to learners so that they can better anticipate and decipher the language and themes of literary texts (Chowdry, 2016, p. 3).

2.4. The Integrated Model

This model is the result of blending the previous three models with an emphasis on the integrated curriculum and the integration of language, cultural and communication education. The goal of the integrated model is to explore literary texts from the perspective of style and its relationship with content and structure. Linguistic considerations are regarded as a prerequisite for literary discussion. Linguistic analysis of the text should take cultural considerations into account as it helps the learners. In the same way, communicative considerations provide the conditions for the essential part of learning which includes the active interpretation of the meaning of the text (Divsar & Tahriri, 2009: 256).

Considering the omnipresent gap between the language and the content of the curriculum, an integrated curriculum is emphasized for curbing this issue. Supplementary to this, culture, language and literature are considered as an integrated entity and education is provided accordingly. As a strategy for implementing an integrated model in curriculum design, this model is also applicable through enhancing the basic knowledge of learners in the fields of history, education, culture and literature of the target language, as well as analysis of the narratives of the target language, thereby creating the translingual and transcultural competence (Barrette, Paesani & Vinall, 2010: 216-217).

3. Literature Review

Timucin (2001) conducted a case study to get the views of Turkish master's degree students about using different literature teaching models. He advocates for using an integrated approach consisting of a language-based model and stylistics in an educational framework and its positive effect on students' motivation, making them engaged and comprehension of literary texts. He challenges the traditional approaches of teaching literature; since, based on his view, such models make the students tremendously reliant on teachers, books or a guide

for exams, the result of which is memorizing the texts and the meanings of their difficult words.

Al-Mahrooqi (2012), seeks to understand students' perspectives about these language-based, cultural, personal growth and integrated models in academic literature classes. A semi-structured interview and a study of the way teachers instruct are the data collection tools in this research. The sample in this research consists of 23 Omani female students in the fields of English Arts and English Education. Analysis of the collected data reveals that from the point of view of students, an integrated model has the best performance and that students are most interested in it.

4. Methodology

In this research, after reviewing the existing models of teaching literature to foreigners, a researcher-made questionnaire that has been validated, with a continuous index from 'I disagree' with a score of (1) to 'I agree' with a score of (5), is used to evaluate the efficient model for teaching Persian literature Non-Persian speakers from the point of view of teachers and experts in this field, addressing two individual sections, poetry and prose.. In this field research, 52 questionnaires were distributed among the participants of this research by simple random sampling method and, the statistical sample began to select and evaluate four current models in literature teaching.

Results

The results of the data analysis of the questionnaires of 52 participants with a significant difference show that both in the case of poetical literature and prose literature, an integrated model that takes advantage of the strengths of other models can lead to the creation of interlinguistic and intercultural competence, thereby achieving the first rank. Due to its distinctive characteristics, this model is considered an effective approach in teaching Persian poetry and prose literature to non-Persian speakers. Subsequent to this model, the individual growth pattern is ranked second, the culture-oriented pattern is ranked third, and the language-oriented pattern is ranked fourth in terms of significance.

The findings of the research also indicate that from the point of view of teachers of Persian language and literature, there is no difference between the teaching models of poetry literature and those of prose literature to non-Persian speakers. The results of this research overlap with the research results of Timochin (2001) and Al-Mahrooqi (2012).

However, unlike this research, the aforementioned studies did not pay attention to the importance and ranking of other models of teaching literature.

Additionally, according to the differences of the three models of language-oriented, cultural and personal development, which are reflected in their level of concentration, language teachers can decide on the use of a specific method in different situations. Since with a practical scrutiny of the results of this research, it is clear that the use of a single model in teaching literature may not be absolutely efficient.

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