

وجهة نظر المتعلمين حول فاعلية كتابة وإلقاء الشعر في تحسين دوافعهم ومهاراتهم اللغوية

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لطالما كان الأدب جزءاً لا يتجزأ من اللغة ولطالما رجحت الأبحاث الأكاديمية في مجالي تعليم اللغة والتربية أهمية استخدام الأدب في كل من تعليم اللغة واكتسابها وتطويرها، حيث يمكن استخدام أي نوع من الأدب لتطوير مختلف المهارات اللغوية سواء كانت منقوية (كالقراءة والسمع) أو إخراجية (كالكتابة والتحدث). تجسد ذلك تاريخياً بالعديد من طرائق تعليم اللغة سواء كان استعمال المواد الأدبية كنواة للعملية التدريسية أم كمواد إثرائية. تم استحداث ورشة عمل للشعر عام 2014 في قسم الأدب الإنكليزي في كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية بجامعة دمشق حيث يقوم المشاركون في هذه الورشة بكتابة و أشعارهم الخاصة و إلقائها. سيناقت هذا البحث أثر الورشة المذكورة على قدرات المتعلمين لغوياً إضافة الى أثرها على دوافعهم بتعلم اللغة. استخدمت ثلاث أدوات في هذا البحث ابتداء من استبيان لثلاثين متعلم من أصل 43 ، وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج SPSS إضافة الى مقابلة شبه منظمة مع أحد مؤسسي الورشة و مشرفيها، كما تم تسجيل ملاحظات الباحث بعد مراقبة عدد من جلسات الورشة. يخلص البحث إلى أنّ عملية كتابة الشعر إلقائه ساهمت بشكل إيجابي بتحفيز المتعلمين لتعلم اللغة وكانت ذات تأثير على مهاراتهم اللغوية سواء كانت القراءة أو الكتابة أو السمع أو التحدث إضافة للتأثير على قدرة الطلاب في التعامل مع المفردات والقواعد في اللغة الإنكليزية.

Learners' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Writing and Reciting Poetry on their Language Skills and Motivation

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The relationship between language and literature has always been inseparable. Research in language learning and pedagogy examines the impact that literature might have in the process of language learning, acquisition and development. Any form of literature could be used for the sake of developing different set of linguistic skills whether they are productive or receptive. In 2014, a poetry workshop has been launched in the English Department at Damascus University where students have to be exposed to the process of both writing and reciting poetry. This paper investigates the linguistic impact that the aforementioned workshop had on some of the participants. The research tools that were used are a questionnaire for 30 participants out of 43 who volunteered to take the questionnaire; the results of which were analyzed using SPSS, alongside a semi-structured interview with one of the workshop's supervisors and the observation of the researcher. The results suggest that the process of writing and reciting poetry positively contributed in boosting learners' motivation to learn English, boosted their confidence, and positively influenced both their receptive and productive skills alongside with their grammar and vocabulary.

1. Introduction and Literature Review:

Language teaching throughout the ages boomed in various directions bringing methods, material, and new disciplines into play in order to try and achieve the most coherent way of teaching language. Literature has been recognized as a valuable source of language to be used in teaching either as a supplement or even the nucleus of a method just like the Grammar-Translation method. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), when using the Grammar-Translation method, students were expected to appreciate the literature of the target language and it was expected that the analysis of the grammar rules in the given literature would result into learning. According to Lazar (1993), literature itself could motivate, offer good exposure to cultural background, encourage language acquisition, contribute in raising learners' awareness, and build interoperative skills of learners which also contribute in educating the person as a whole; yet it can pose a serious challenge to both the instructor and the learner. Lazar (1996) also highlights that poetry could be highly engaging and draws on learners' personal experiences, which will be a catalyst for higher involvement in the process of learning. Iidia (2016) suggests that writing poetry allows students to develop their "expressive abilities in L2" and that using poetry writing overcomes the narrowness in L2 pedagogy and elevates L2 writers. Kirkgoz (2008) suggested that poetry writing in language classrooms could be a way to improve learners' vocabulary, grammar and even pronunciation. Hess (2003) believes that dealing with a poem under the right guidelines would invite a type of experiences that no other text would offer. The researcher also highlights the belief that when dealing with poetry, language skills and perception expand while dealing with "larger human reality." Utami (2012) reported that the inclusive nature of poetry will contribute to the motivation, vocabulary, pronunciation and even grammar alongside with highlighting that poetry could be used with various age groups at different proficiency levels. Kuru Gönen (2018) reports that language teachers find value in using poetry as a teaching material in language classrooms despite the difficulties that will be encountered when it comes to design and material selection. Lee (2003) suggests in his MA thesis that poetry has a role in developing speaking competence of learners. Faver (2008) in a study conducted on young learners in the second grade suggests that repeated readings can enhance learners' reading fluency. Wiseman (2011) suggests that engaging students with poetry writing would highly encourage them to contribute to the learning process and develop other critical and linguistic competences – a study done in the means of a poetry workshop with eighth-grade students in the U.S.

Based on the aforementioned literature review, poetry found its way into language classes tapping on various skills and working its way throughout various methods with different age groups and learners' backgrounds. When it comes to motivation, the first relevant reference would be Noels et al. (2000) which classifies motivation into intrinsic (internal) / extrinsic (external) motivation. This study would highly relate to the former. Ellis and Shintani (2014) suggest that motivation is a "complex contrast" that catalyzes the process of learning L2. Another construct of motivation and how it works is the one suggested by Crookes and Schmidt (1991) a three-staged model where the first stage aims to raise interest, the second aims at sustaining learners' engagement and the third deals with unconditional encouragement; helping students to participate without a premeditated reward in mind. The poetry workshop in

Damascus university Department of English Language and Literature was founded in 2014. In this workshop, students would voluntarily participate to write, share and engage in poetic analysis within a group of colleagues under guided supervision. In the time span of six years, around fifty learners joined the workshop for different intervals, the workshop was usually held twice a week for as many hours as it took everyone to share what they wrote; an hour to two on average, get constructive feedback and get in touch with a small community of poetry enthusiasts. The sessions were also varied between topical, thematic and sometimes it was about free writing or on-point improvisation allowing everyone to find a theme that raises their interest in the workshop. The sessions went with a pre-meditated sequence of introducing the topic and sharing general ideas and feelings of the participants, reciting poems in turn, followed by direct feedback by both colleagues and the supervisors, which can strike familiarity with Crooke's and Schmidt's model. The aim of this study is to track down learners' perspectives about the effectiveness of poetry in developing various aspects of their language skills and motivation.

2. Research Questions:

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1- How does poetry affect the motivation of students in relation to language learning?
- 2- Does poetry affect learners' receptive and productive skills?
- 3- How is poetry viewed by the learners?

3. The Importance and Limitations of this Study:

- This study derives its importance mainly from the geographical location, since the idea of workshops is still scarce in the context of this study, and thus it would be of great value to try and evaluate how effective such methods would be to the process of language learning and how would they be a valuable resource for the future.
- It also will be one of the few studies that discuss the importance of using poetry in teaching language for adult EFL learners in Damascus- Syria.
- It may contribute in enriching the research-led learning process in Damascus university.
- One of the limitations may be the scope of the study since it only examines one workshop in one department concerned with one type of material only. Thus, there is a wide range of variables that could be changed and examined in future research.

4. Research Methodology and Results:

The study followed a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches, using a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview and the researcher's observation to answer the research questions.

1- The Questionnaire:

A Likert scale questionnaire was piloted then administered; thirty participants voluntarily took the questionnaire out of 43 current students in the workshop. SPSS was used for making

a descriptive statistical analysis of the frequencies alongside Cornbach's alpha which scored $0.844 > 0.6$ check (Appendix 1)

2- The semi-structured interview:

The interview items were based on the questionnaire's data to verify the perspective of learners from a professional's point of view.

3- Researcher's observation after years of observing the workshop.

4.1 Questionnaire Results:

This section will highlight the highest value of frequencies whereas detailed tables of the questionnaire items are listed in the appendices 2 to 13 for each of the items respectively. Starting from years of participation 80.7% of the participants who took the questionnaire have attended the poetry workshop for 3 years at least (six academic semesters) see (Appendix 2), the number of participants from both genders was identical, 15 males and 15 females by mere coincidence and without a premeditated plan check (Appendix 3). 23 of the participants were undergraduates whereas 7 of them were graduates, check (Appendix 4). When it comes to learners' belief in relation to the importance of poetry as a motive for learning English: 18 participants (60%) agreed that writing and reciting poetry had a positive effect on their motive for learning, see (Appendix 5). When it comes to the effect of writing and reciting poetry in boosting learners' confidence when talking in front of others: 23 participants (76.6%) agreed with the fact that it boosted their confidence, see (Appendix 6). The next item in question was writing and reciting poetry and how it helped participants explore their character more: 22 participants (73.3%) supported the statement, check (Appendix 7). The other items were supposed to examine the effect of writing and reciting poetry on developing receptive and productive skills: speaking , writing , reading , listening respectively alongside vocabulary and grammar: 21 participants (70%) had a belief that writing and reciting poetry had an impact on their speaking skills see (Appendix 8), 23 participants (76.7%) thought that poetry left an impact on their writing skills see (Appendix 9), 19 participants (63.3%) believed that there was a positive effect on their reading skills check (Appendix 10), 19 participants (63.3%) thought that there was a positive impact on their listening skills, check (Appendix 11), 26 participants (86.7%) believed that writing and reciting poetry helped them improve their vocabulary check (Appendix 12), and finally 15 participants (50%) thought that there was an impact on their grammar, see (Appendix 13).

4.2 Semi-structured Interview Results:

When it comes to the semi-structured interview, the aim of it is to get academic professional feedback from one of the supervisors of the workshop, the name of the interviewee is concealed for the sake of academic confidentiality. The questions will be displayed and extracts from the interview will be quoted verbatim.

1- Do you think writing and reciting poetry motivated the participants to learn English? If yes, in what way? If no, why?

“Definitely. Writing and reciting helped them learn English and improve their English for many reasons. They were exposed to different levels of English within the group itself and that helped them be exposed to different words, sentence structures, and writing styles. Being together as a group helped each student want to improve their writing and recitation skills. It pushed them to read more and do their own research since many of the poetry sessions were also based on selected themes.”

2- Do you think writing and reciting poetry boosted participants confidence? If yes, in what way? If no, why?

“Of course, it did! Being in a small group of 10-12 students was/is a challenge at the beginning for most students. Some poets were reluctant at first to read and recite their poetry aloud, but over time they were able to communicate freely with their colleagues. Session after session, they were encouraged by [the supervisors] and by their colleagues to speak up. They were advised to improve their recitation by rehearsing at home, to a friend or by reciting to oneself before a mirror. All this helped them gain more confidence to share their poems and express their opinions in the group.”

3- Do you think that writing and reciting poetry had an effect on participants’ language skills (writing, reading, speaking, listening)? How did it impact each of the skills and which of the skills do you believe were more affected?

“Writing and reciting poetry has helped students improve their writing, reading, speaking, and listening. All these skills are very important to the making and reciting of poetry.”

4- What would you like to add?

“As a poet, I have gained so much knowledge dealing with different talents and personality types. I have also taught students that poetry is fun and it is to be lived and experienced. I have also taught myself to experiment with variety of techniques and methods, and that poetry is interdependent with many other forms of art.”

4.3 Researcher’s Observation:

After multiple observations, it could be noted that the workshop offered a low-risk atmosphere which contributed to intrinsically motivating learners to participate. It also followed an approach which is highly similar to Crooke’s and Schmidt’s model. Another central concept noted is the focus on formative assessment which, according to Brown (2008), focuses on assessing learners’ development while learning is taking place without passing judgements or marks. Thus, decreasing learners’ stress. When it comes to language skills, the task of creative writing would intrinsically motivate learners to reflect the way they feel/think about a specific topic, thus forming a catalyst for learners to search for the right words, correct forms and explore new ways to represent themselves as accurately as possible. Peer-checking is also a technique that would decrease learners’ anxiety. Eye contact, feedback, and attention are equally

distributed among learners in the sense that they all have all the time they need to express, discuss, and get feedback alongside catering for those with special needs.

5. Summary and Conclusion:

This study aimed to showcase learners' perspective towards the effectiveness of writing and reciting poetry as a way to increase learners' motivation and language skills. The study took place in a poetry workshop at Damascus University, the research aimed to investigate three research questions and used various tools in order to answer them, including; a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview and observations. The results suggest that writing and reciting poetry in a workshop could be valuable source to increase learners' motivation and language skills. According to the data collected it seems that poetry has an effect on learners' motivation to learn language, their confidence as well as improving their language skills. Most of the learners believed that writing and reciting poetry helped them improve their receptive and productive language skills and their vocabulary yet only half of the learners believe that writing and reciting poetry influence their grammar. The observations of the researcher confirm that the workshop offered a low-risk atmosphere and it contribute in making the learning environment suitable for the learners' development. The semi-structured interview offered a professional insight to the topic, the opinions of the interviewee highly suggest that poetry can be a great tool in enhancing learners' character and language. In terms of practical implications, it would be suggested to administer more workshops that would incorporate the use of other types of materials and another range of skills.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Cronbach's alpha's table.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.844	10

Appendix 2 Students' years of participation in the workshop.

Years

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Year	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	2 Years	1	3.3	3.3	20.0
	3 Years	13	43.3	43.3	63.3
	4 Years	3	10.0	10.0	73.3
	5 Years	2	6.7	6.7	80.0
	6 Years	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 3: Participants' gender

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	15	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 4: Participants' academic status

Academic_status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduate	7	23.3	23.3	23.3
	undergraduate	23	76.7	76.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 5: writing and reciting poetry motivated me to learn English.

Learn_Eng

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	18	60.0	60.0	60.0
	neutral	10	33.3	33.3	93.3
	disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 6: writing and reciting poetry helped boost my confidence when talking in front of others.

Talking_infront_of_people

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	23	76.7	76.7	76.7
	neutral	5	16.7	16.7	93.3
	disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 7: writing and reciting poetry helped me explore my character more

Explore_character

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	22	73.3	73.3	73.3
	neutral	4	13.3	13.3	86.7
	disagree	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 8: writing and reciting poetry helped me feel more motivated

Motivation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	20	66.7	66.7	66.7
	neutral	9	30.0	30.0	96.7
	disagree	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 9: writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my speaking skills

Speaking

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	21	70.0	70.0	70.0
	neutral	6	20.0	20.0	90.0
	disagree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 10: writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my writing skills

Writing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	23	76.7	76.7	76.7
	neutral	5	16.7	16.7	93.3
	disagree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 11: writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my reading skills

Reading

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	19	63.3	63.3	63.3
	neutral	4	13.3	13.3	76.7
	disagree	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 12: writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my listening skills

Listening

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	19	63.3	63.3	63.3
	neutral	6	20.0	20.0	83.3
	disagree	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 13: writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my vocabulary

Vocabulary

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	26	86.7	86.7	86.7
	neutral	3	10.0	10.0	96.7
	disagree	1	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 14: writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my grammar

		Grammar			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
	neutral	11	36.7	36.7	86.7
	disagree	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Appendix 15: The questionnaire.

The information submitted below will not be revealed to any third party and is totally confidential

1-for how many years have you been an active member of the poetry workshop?

1 2 3 4 5 6

2-I am a

Male female

3-what's your educational status?

Graduated Under-graduate

In the upcoming items answer using 1 to 3- 1: you agree with the statement, 2: you are neutral, 3: you disagree.

4-writing and reciting poetry motivated me to learn English.

1 2 3

5-writing and reciting poetry helped me boost my confidence when talking in front of others.

1 2 3

5-writing and reciting poetry helped me explore my character more

1 2 3

6-writing and reciting poetry helped me feel more motivated

1 2 3

7-writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my speaking skills

1 2 3

8-writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my writing skills

1 2 3

9-writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my reading skills

1 2 3

10-writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my listening skills

1 2 3

11-writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my vocabulary

1 2 3

12-writing and reciting poetry helped me develop my grammar

1 2 3