

Teaching English Literature through Graphics

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Abstract: The paper postulates that English literature teaching can be made an enriching and worthwhile experience for children through the use of graphic organizers introduced through visual literacy programs. The concept assumes that the study of literature is an experience that needs to be scaffolded step-by –step, and through the manipulation of all senses, in order to be internalized. It should be a felt and an absorbing experience. The paper presents the results generated through experimental method (Randomized Pretest/Posttest Control Group Design). Two groups of vii graders, who constitute the sample of the study, were exposed to a treatment of three days. The paper concludes that the use of graphic organizers can enhance higher order thinking skills and develop aesthetic sense. The paper recommends that the study may be used as an operative model in English literature and language settings. Curriculum goals that promote child-centered inquiry learning in science classrooms can only be met if teachers believe both in the pedagogy promoted and in the perspectives on science represented in that curriculum. Apart from those issues, an inquiry-focused curriculum requires teachers to engage their students in activities (such as inquiry investigations) that they themselves may not

Preamble

English literature is not a new phenomenon. It has been in creation for many hundreds of years and has played an important role in people's lives and in society as a whole. English literature, the literature of England, is one of the highest achievements of the great nation. It should not, however be read simply as a national expression. It is a body of significant statement about the abiding concerns of man everywhere and in all times. No doubt it has a universal appeal.

In basic forms literature is a fascinating manipulation of language that can be written in different forms (i.e. prose, verse) and provides people with an insight into different societies and cultures, past and present and for many can offer a welcomed

escape from reality. But unlike normal everyday communication, literature uses the language in a more artistic way. Each differing form of literature has aesthetic attributes such as rhyme, form, repetition etc, and each form can offer a 'sensual experience' that brings special joy to people who read it.

Furthermore, the author to have a special meaning embedded within the plot composes certain types of literature, such as novel and plays. Some authors like to portray their feelings on a particular matter discussed in the text. The author can do this by either basing his or her text solely on the matter in hand, or by subtly placing these messages within it.

This then offers the readers a chance to reflect on the text and make their own opinions on the views expressed in the piece. This can be quite powerful and can make the readers wake up and realize things they otherwise would not have noticed or cared about. There is no doubt that literature is morally important for a society—to get messages and opinions across and to broaden intellectual horizon.

Teaching and learning of literature, thus, should be an engaging experience, which is far from the case in our schools. A dismal picture awaits as one enters into literature classroom. Children are seen memorizing and cramming specific facts rather than arguing, reflecting, and synergizing. They are generally kept confined to the cages of conformity and are not generally equipped with the wings to experience different times, societies and cultures. Resultantly, we produce an influx from schools, good in concepts may be, but most certainly lacking in subtleties which not only shape up a person's personality but strengthen his beliefs and character; and enamor him with a canvas full of sociological imagination and cultivated living. In fact, literature furnishes human mind with an art of cultivated living, and this sense of purpose and integrity is missing in our youth. The study of a liberal science, and from which literature derives its roots from, should liberate minds. It should be a conjoint experience rather than an isolated memory.

Thus, realizing the need of penetration in the area, the researcher has undertaken an enquiry to evaluate the possibility of using multiple modalities in English literature teaching, in order to make it an enriching experience, on one hand, on the other hand to integrate scaffolding devices within the literature teaching in order to make it

palatable for children. The researcher proposes a number of generic forms of graphic organizers that can be used in multiple settings. The experiment shows how a good graphic organizer can show at a glance the key parts of the whole and their relations, thereby allowing a holistic understanding and appreciation that listening alone cannot develop.

Justification

The study intends to justify that as an instructional tool, graphic organizers can be highly effective in contemporary English literature classrooms.

Objectives

The aim of this research crystallizes from the need to create better environment in English literature classrooms. More specifically the study aims :

- To equip English literature teachers with a toolkit to enhance creativity and aesthetic sense among the students.
- To provide teachers with a toolkit to transform concepts into visual/spatial displays with accompanying descriptors and phrases.
- To help teachers acquire scaffolding devices in order to adopt a step- by- step analysis mechanism.

Hypothesis

The study is based on the assumption that graphic organizers enhance understanding and achievement in English literature teaching.

Procedure

The researcher, having rich experience of teaching in various settings, personally conducted the research. This ensured a good response and helped in minimizing threats to internal and external validity. All instruments, (The Pretest /Posttest tool and the three Graphic Organizers) were pilot tested and each tool was revised afterwards in consultation with the experts. This procedure ensured content and construct validity and reliability.

Methodology

The study adopts quantitative paradigm. The experimental method has been used as the mode of enquiry. The randomized Pretest/Posttest Control Group Design has been used for experimentation. In this design, two groups of subjects are used, with both groups being measured or observed twice. The first measurement serves as the pretest, the second as the posttest. Random assignment is used to form the groups. Both groups are exposed to different treatments. The measurements or observations are collected at the same time for both the groups. A diagram of this design follows:

Table 1

The Randomized Pretest –Posttest Control Group Design

	R	O	X	O
10 VII graders were randomly selected from two sections	Random assignment of 5 students to experimental group	Pretest Achievement test on “Daffodils”	Treatment Problem-based Learning, using graphic organizers.	Posttest Achievement test on “Daffodils”
	R	O	X	O
	Random assignment of 5 students to control group	Pretest Achievement test on “Daffodils”	No treatment Traditional lecture	Posttest Achievement test on “Daffodils”

Threats to Internal Validity

The randomized pretest posttest control group design provides good control of the threats to internal validity. This is shown in table 3.3.

Table 2
Control of Threats to Internal Validity

Design	Subject Characteristics	Mortality	Location	Instrument Decay	Data Collector characteristic	Testing	History	Maturation	Regression
R randomized Pretest- Posttest Control group		+	+		+	+		+	+

Key (++) = Strong control, threat likely to occur; (+) = some control, threat may possibly occur; (–) weak control, threat likely to occur, (?) = can’t determine; (NA) = threat does not apply.

Subject Characteristics:

Two subject characteristics have been identified here:

Critical Thinking Ability:

Posttest and Pretest is the same, same thinking skills have been measured.

Gender:

If groups differ in gender, threats exist. This threat exists here as random selection of students has been made. Seven boys and three girls are the total population, selected from two sections. There is automatic division of two girls and three boys in group one and one girl and four boys in group two.

Mortality:

In order to control this threat, three-day short treatment was organized, thus ensuring presence of students.

Location:

Venue, class size, resources have been kept constant for both the groups. They do not differ in any way.

Instrumentation:

Same Pretest, Posttest Instrument has been used for both the groups. Data has also been collected personally by the researcher.

Testing:

Pretest has been administered to both the groups, thus ensuring the same results for both the groups.

History:

Events like TV programs, discussions, similar workshop attended in the past is likely to have a minor effect, but these events would likely affect both groups equally and hence are not likely to cause a major threat.

Maturation:

Duration of the workshop comprises of one week, and therefore it is unlikely that maturation will have any effect.

Regression:

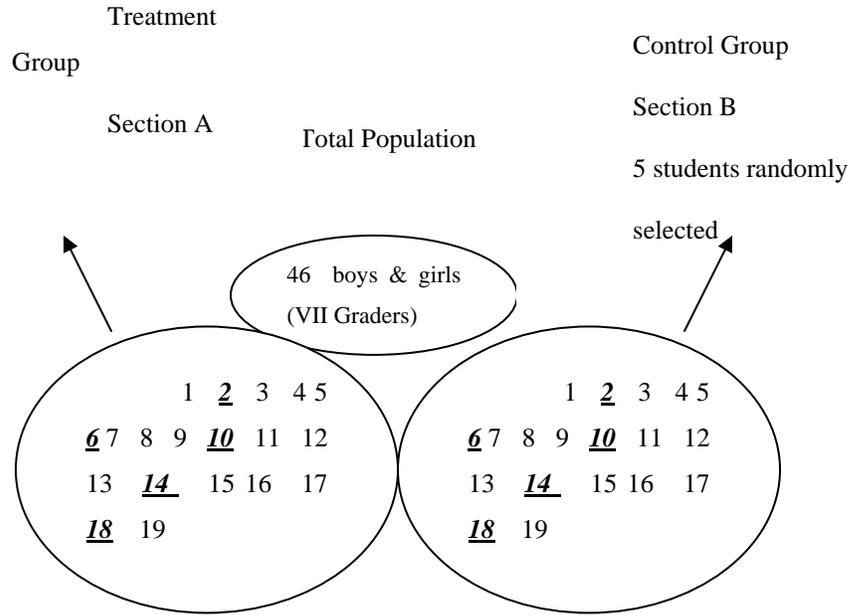
This threat has been controlled through the random selection of subjects.

Population and Sampling

Population consists of all those teachers who are associated with English literature or language teaching. Sample for the study consists of ten (10) VII graders randomly selected from two sections. Five (5) students were randomly selected for treatment group,

The other five (5) were sampled for control group. The diagram of this design follows:

Figure1
Stratified Random Sampling Design



Treatment

All ten (10) ,VII graders were pretested on the poem. Five (5) students from the treatment group were taught Wordsworth’s “Daffodils” ,using the following graphic organizers while five (5)students from control group were taught through traditional lecture method. Both groups spent six (6) hours (divided over three days) in the experiment; and both were pretested and post tested. Their achievement scores were compared and analyzed in terms of “t” test. The treatment through organizers is as follows:

GO 1 provided students’ with the opportunity to experience poetry first hand. They were shown the idea map, asked to close their eyes and visualize the flowers for a minute and then asked to record the feelings these flowers evoked in them. It was easy for them to do so as many of these flowers are part of their own environment. Notice that

the organizer makes special use of alliteration (a poetic tool Wordsworth has made a liberal use of in all his poems). After having established the aura, the researcher explained the poem thoroughly.

This exercise was followed by GO 2, which scaffolded students to the step-by-step analysis of the poem. Students gradually moved through the five steps, beginning with silent and loud reading, moving on to paraphrasing, answering five Ws, identifying the themes and highlighting figurative techniques. The procedure and exercise helped the students to internalize the poem. The GO, as a powerful idea map, generated sparks to make ideas begin to flow. Using fast, five-minute exercises in word and idea association, this idea map connected key words, symbols, colors and graphics to form non-linear networks, potential ideas and thoughts related to the poem “Daffodils’.

In the end, students were exposed to GO 3, a powerful concept map that helped the students to graphically illustrate relationship between information. They identified figures of speech (simile, metaphor, alliteration, hyperbole, allusion, imagery, description, personification and comparison), used as central metaphors in lines and tried to unravel the hidden messages in the simple everyday language.

After this exposure of three days, both the groups(treatment & control) were post tested. Notice that the control group was taught through traditional lecture method, where students were mere passive listeners. The three graphic organizers are shown below:

Delimitation

The study limits itself to one school only as it makes use of experimental design, but the results can be generalized over any population of teachers involved in teaching English as a foreign language.

Data Analysis

The data yielded through pretest/posttest scores was analyzed in terms of “t” test. The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the achievement level of treatment and control group. Therefore the null hypothesis has been rejected and it has been concluded that that graphic organizers highly contribute to the effective teaching of English literature. The results for ‘t’ test follow:

Hypothesis

Graphic organizers are significantly helpful in enhancing understanding and achievement in English literature teaching.

Table 3

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Treatment Pretest	6.80	5	.837	.374
	Treatment Posttest	14.80	5	1.924	.860
Pair 2	Control Pretest	4.80	5	1.924	.860
	Control Posttest	6.80	5	1.924	.860

Table 4
Paired Samples Correlations

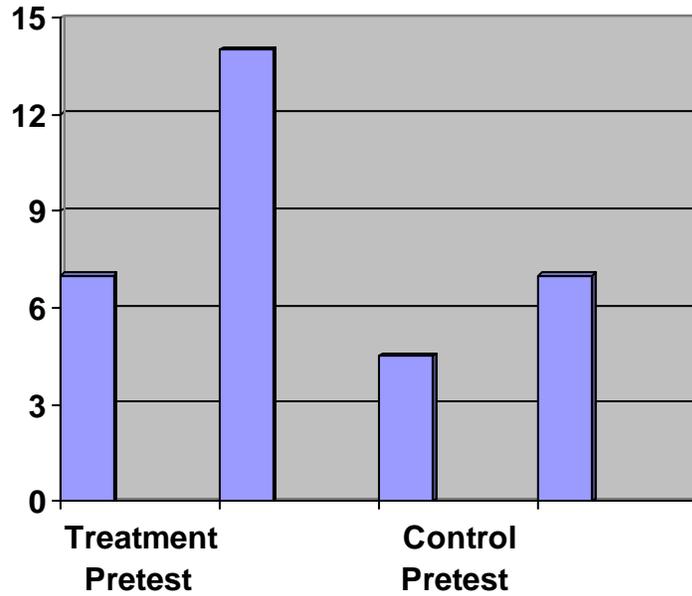
		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pretest & Posttest	Pair 1 Treatment	5	-.652	.233
	Pair 1 Control	5	.730	.162

Table 5
Paired Samples Test

Pair	Treatment	mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper		
Pretest - 1	Treatment	8.000	.550	1.140	11.166	4.834	7.016	.002
Pretest & 2	Control	2.000	.414	.630	3.756	.244	3.162	.034

Figure 2

Graphical Representation of Achievement of the Treatment and Control Group



Analysis

Figure 2 shows that there is a significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores of the treatment and control group. Mean difference is -3.600 , and $t = -10.392$. The figure also shows that there is a significant difference in the pretest / posttest scores of the treatment and control group. $t = .002$ for the treatment group and $.034$ for the control group. Since t shows a significant difference in the achievement level of paired sample, the null hypothesis has been rejected and it is concluded that graphic organizers have been found significantly helpful in enhancing achievement and appreciation.

Recommendations

As a consequence, the study recommends the use of various types of GOs as a teaching tool for facilitating understanding, appreciation, creativity and aesthetic sense in English literature teaching. The researcher also recommends further research on the impact of GOs with learners of English as a second language, specifically in the areas of four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), grammar, vocabulary and speech drills. The study concludes that the experiment shows that GOs make a significant impact in English literature and language teaching.

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