The Effect of Literary Text on the Pragmatic Competence and Fluency of ESL Learners

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Abstract
Literature has an inherent authenticity as an input for language teaching. Literary texts carry with them sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge which is pivotal for language learners to have their communicative competence increased. This study investigates the effect of the text of poetry on the pragmatic competence and fluency of ESL students. This is an experimental study consisting of a control group (CG) and an experimental group (EG). The respondents of the study are students of the 3rd semester, Education Faculty, University of Malakand, Pakistan. Before the commencement of the experiment, a speaking-type pretest was administered to students of both groups. Afterward, the control group was taught through traditional teaching materials whereas the experimental group was treated with poetry as teaching materials. At the end of the six-week-long experiment, a posttest like the pretest was again conducted. Moreover, a semi-structured interview was also conducted after the experiment. The scores of the students of both the groups on pretest and posttest were analyzed through statistical tests. The results of the tests indicated that the students of the experimental group performed significantly better than that of the control group in fluency whereas there was no significant difference in the mean scores of both the groups regarding pragmatic competence. However, the students of the experimental group registered significant improvement in pragmatic competence on posttest in intragroup comparison. The thematic analysis of the interview showed that the learners of the CG were reluctant to express themselves freely. They did not take interest in the group activities and did not actively participate in the presentation activity. On the contrary, the learners of EG were provided with a free-of-fear speaking environment due to the ambiguity and the subjective nature of poetry. Moreover, the text of the poetry was motivating and led to lengthy and intimate interaction among the students of the experimental group thereby improving their fluency. The study recommends that literary texts may be utilized in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: Fluency, Literary Text, Pragmatic Competence

Introduction
Literature has an inherent authenticity as an input for language teaching. Literature avoids triviality both in language and content and sticks to maturity and sublimity which are pivotal for language teaching. The authenticity of materials/language cannot be overemphasized, which, no doubt, does exist in literary texts. Novel, Drama, and Poetry all are deemed as authentic documents presenting descriptive writing, conversation, powerful expression of feelings, various functional phrases, and contextualized utterances which are appealing to the aesthetic and imaginative nature of man, thus empowering language to make an indelible impression on the mind of the learners (Ghosn, 2002; Shrestha, 2008; Khatib, 2011).

Poetry is one of the major genres of literature that does not have a weak claim for the ESL classroom. Poetry being rhythmic often rhymed and having authentic language, has a strong entitlement for the ESL classroom. One of the researchers still remembers some of the poems he was taught in his primary school. The same researcher also remembers the vocabulary, the emotions, and personal involvement in those poems. The emotions associated with certain poems can still be smelt by the researcher. This study therefore exploits poems for teaching ESL students pragmatic competence and fluency.

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Statement of the Problem

English language skills are taught through several language texts in the Pakistani university classroom. They include grammar and linguistic books. These texts have quite a reasonable claim to be utilized for teaching English language speaking skills. However, these texts are more often focused on teaching grammar rules and isolated sentences. Moreover, these texts often time do not have cultural, social, and personal elements and could hardly be associated with the learners' life outside the classroom. On the contrary, literary text has cultural and social elements. Additionally, it appeals to the feelings and emotions of the learners. Besides, the themes of the literary texts are common among almost all societies.

Hence, this study compares the effect of poetry and traditional language text on the pragmatic competence and fluency of ESL learners in one of the Pakistani universities.

This study has the following objectives and research questions.

Research Objectives

1.   To examine whether pragmatic competence and fluency are improved while using poetry in an ESL classroom
2.   To investigate the ways/mechanics through which poetry and traditional language texts affect pragmatic competence and fluency of the learners

Research Questions

1.   Is Poetry more effective than traditional teaching materials in the teaching of pragmatic competence and fluency to the ESL students?
2.   In what ways do poetry and traditional language texts affect the pragmatic competence and fluency of the learners?

Literature Review

Staying in negligence for a long time, the importance of literature in language teaching was once again revived by some writers in the 1980s (Duff & Maley, 1990). The appearance of many publications about the input of literature in language classes is a witness to the re-birth of literature in language teaching (Duff & Maley, 1990; Gower & Pearson, 1986; Lazar, 1993; Collie & Slater 2004). According to Bachelor and Hirvela (1996), the interest in applied linguistics further invigorated the revival of literature in language teaching. Shang (2006) enumerates the publications which gave a royal welcome to literature at its return. They include R. Carter and Burton (1982), Maley and Moulding (1985), Brumfit and Carter (1986), Collie and Slater (1987), Carter, Walker and Brumfit (1989), Carter and Long (1991) and Bassnett and Grundy (1993). These writers present various arguments in favor of literature as teaching materials in ESL classroom, which are put forward as below:

Literature has an inherent authenticity as an input for language teaching. Literature avoids triviality both in language and content and sticks to maturity and sublimity which are pivotal for language teaching. The authenticity of materials/language cannot be overemphasized, which, no doubt, does exist in literary texts. Novel, Drama, and Poetry all are deemed as authentic documents presenting descriptive writing, conversation, powerful expression of feelings, various functional phrases, and contextualized utterances which are appealing to the aesthetic and imaginative nature of man, thus empowering language to make an indelible impression on the mind of the learners (Ghosn, 2002; Shrestha, 2008; Khatib 2011).

There is no denying the fact, that motivation for language learning is much needed as there can be no learning without motivation. Regarding this, Ghosn (2002) and Van (2009) argue that authenticity and meaningfulness grant motivating power to literary texts as an input for the learners in the language classes. Due to its aesthetic appeal, literature can hardly stale into something uninteresting; rather, it always spurs learners to interact closely with the text. Reinforcing this argument Maley (1989a) puts forward that literature takes up as its subject, those aspects of human life and the universe, which naturally spark the interest of readers and learners.

Arguing about literature as a stimulus for intercultural consciousness and globalization, Van (2009) and Tayebipour (2009) state that literature is a great impetus for increasing intercultural awareness in today's arena of globalization. Globalization has shifted the focus from individual to society and has directed the world to collectivism instead of individualism. Connecting the role of literature to the above argument, Maley (1989a) claims that literature is focused on universality, presenting concepts and concerns which are true for all times and all cultures. The universal concepts

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such as love, hatred, jealousy, nature, death, and so on, which are common to all times and people, enhance the scope of literature to be exploited as an input in language classes. As such, the need to use literature as an input for language learners is felt all the more. Moreover, the differences between cultures and languages further enrich our knowledge about the understanding of the world (Maley, 1989a).

Arguing about literature as being good for both extensive and intensive reading, Shang (2006) contends that novel is good for extensive reading, which enhances the speed of reading of the learners whereas, poetry is to be read intensively delving into its hidden meanings shrouded in literary devices/figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, allegory and so on. This kind of reading opens up the analytical horizons of language learners, enabling them to make creative use of language.

Literary texts carry with them sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge which is pivotal for language learners to have their communicative competence increased. Hence, McCarthy and Carter (2001) assert that the communicative model owes its existence to the sociolinguistic and pragmatic elements of literature. The writer further argues that due to their authenticity, literary texts are loaded with sociolinguistic and pragmatic information. These two components of language are associated with its (language) appropriateness and contextualization which are the hallmark of literary texts.

Literature augments the stock of vocabulary knowledge and enhances the understanding of grammar. Maley (1989b), in this regard, speaks out that literature exploits a variety of language types, ranging from slang to formal, thereby dealing with numerous situations. Buttressing the above statement, Arthur (1968) asserts that literary texts grow the knowledge of syntax and increase the stock of vocabulary. The author further puts forward that poetry which has an intricate structure, can also be used for the understanding of grammar. The example can be a drill asking the students to change the complex structure of a poem into the standard structure. Van (2009) adds that literature often manipulates the language of metaphor, simile, allegory and uses inversions, subjunctives, and other floppy structures which can be a major source of vocabulary enrichment when unfolded into direct language. Short stories and novels can also be a good source of vocabulary improvement, says the writer.

According to Tomlinson (2011), literary texts are replete with numerous authentic materials, which can be manipulated in the development of language skills (Bachelor & Hirvela, 2000; Nasr, 2001; Takahashi, 2015). The writers elaborate on how literature can be used for language skills. For writing skills, the students may be asked to write a poem by themselves or complete an incomplete story or develop a story from the point of view of another character in a short story or novel. As of speaking, association can be developed between a poem and short story and the learners' own experience in real life. This practice can be utilized for hot discussion in the language teaching classroom. Letting the students unbridled to express their feelings freely about a particular topic is enormously conducive for the development of speaking proficiency. The musicality in poetry allows learners to model their speaking patterns on the native ones by following the rules of rhyme, intonation, and rhythm. The audio recordings of poems, short stories, and novels could very well be utilized for the development of listening skills.

Literature according to Aristotle deals with ought to be or might be. It is a reflection of life and a lifelike presentation. It is placed in the category of useful art like painting, dancing, music, and sculpture as per the classification of Aristotle. It aims to provide aesthetic pleasure alongside developing an insight into human life, culture, and society through the medium of words/language. Literature has further been sub-divided into different genres like drama, novels, short stories, poetry, and so on (Fowler, 1979).

Poetry is one of the major genres of literature that does not have a weak claim for the ESL classroom. Poetry being rhythmic often rhymed and having authentic language, has a strong entitlement for the ESL classroom. The researcher still remembers some of the poems he was taught in his primary school. The researcher also remembers the vocabulary, the emotions, and personal involvement in those poems. The emotions associated with certain poems can still be smelt by the researcher. This study therefore exploits poems for teaching ESL students pragmatic competence and fluency.

Poetry has an inherent difficult text, yet it is vital to life. Poetry is known to man since he was put to sleep as a baby through a lullaby song. Maley and Duff (1989) assert: "From our earliest childhood, we are exposed to the rhyme and cadence of poetic language. And the primitive power of

such language continues to flow as a deep undercurrent through the rest of our lives. Without being aware of it, we respond (p. 6)".

Poetry has words in the best order and discharges emotions in rhythm which makes it the voice of souls and hearts. Collie and Slater (1987) point out "poems offer a rich variety of repertoire and are a source of much enjoyment for teachers and learners alike" (p. 226). Poetry has authentic language materials and personal relevance to a learner's life. Besides, it is motivating and allows the learners to express their feelings with autonomy. Hence, this study manipulates poetry for developing the learners' speaking skills. Maley and Duff (1989) and Carter and Long (1991) enumerate many merits/characteristics of poetry for an ESL classroom which are presented as follows.

The themes of poetry are universal, related to all cultures and all societies. These themes are not, culture, time and nationality bound. They apply and true to all people and ages. For example; love, hatred, jealousy, ambition, beauty, greed, and so on. Due to the universality of poetry, students find their meanings, stories, and reflections in a poem; hence, they do not develop the feeling of being strangers in the classroom. Poetry deals with those aspects of human life which are almost common among all human beings. This makes poetry a genre of literature universally accepted. Humans from different cultures and societies can find their reflections in its text.

Interaction in a language classroom is of vital importance for language learning. When there is interaction among the students and teacher and students, learners take an interest in the language learning process (Chang, 2003). Ambiguity in the text of poetry causes interaction among the learners. Different interpretations by learners of the same poem or verses trigger conversation among them which could help the learners develop their fluency. Furthermore, poetry's appeal to the emotions of the learners gets them personally engaged with the text.

Poetry has the characteristic of personal relevance. Poetry makes an appeal to the emotions of the learners rather than their minds. It arouses a strong emotional response in them which helps students talk about their emotions and feelings freely and confidently (Ni, 2012). This also increases the emotional intelligence of the students. Poetry provides the learners with hands-on experience which enables the students to explore the meanings on their own. Besides, they are encouraged to make figurative use of language and to unfold the poetic devices on their own for interpretations. Moreover, encouraging students to write and present their poems increase their involvement in the language learning process. Hence this study utilizes the text of poetry in ESL classrooms and compares its effect with that of traditional teaching materials on pragmatic competence and fluency of the learners.

Pragmatic Competence: This sub-skill of the speaking skills has further been divided into two sub-competencies: Functional and sociolinguistic competencies (Pohl, 2004).

Functional competence: means the ability to achieve communicative functions and goals. It also means that to manage a language function, an appropriate form of language is needed (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; Rose, 1994). According to Rose (1994) and Derakhshan and Eslami (2015) following are the major functions of spoken language.

Social functions consist of salutations, introducing people, complaining, thanks-giving, and asking apology.

Information includes functions like inquiring for actual information, imparting personal information, giving descriptions, and narrating tales or events.

Giving an opinion contains functions such as seeking an opinion, sharing an opinion, making an agreement, disagreement with others, and predicting future events.

Requesting comprises expressions of making requests, asking for favors, and accepting or declining a request.

Directing refers to the tasks of reassuring, coaxing, suggesting, recommending, instructing, and intimidating.

Sociolinguistic competence: It deals with the knowledge and skills of the speaker as to how to speak in different social situations and with different people. It is the ability of a speaker where and whom to be formal and informal with. Here, the speaker has to adopt strategies of addressing people politely depending on the nature of the relationship. The more distant a person is, the politer the speaker should be and vice versa (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Yoshida, 2003).

Fluency: This is not considered as an integral component of speaking skills, both in the communicative competence model and conversational models, but Torky (2006) has used it as a vital

part of speaking skills. The present study will also consider fluency as an important part of speaking skills. Fluency means speaking at an acceptable and normal rate, without making unnatural and unnecessary pauses. It depends on the ability of a speaker how to use facilitation skills such as gap-fillers, elliptical structures, and compensation skills such as repetition, correction, re-speaking (Segalowitz, 2000; Widdowson, 1998).

Thus, this study explores the effect of the conventional language text and poetry on the pragmatic competence and fluency of ESL learners.

Methodology

The study is experimental in design comprising a control group (CG) and an experimental group (EG). The number of students was 36 in each group, hence, the total respondents of the study were 72. A speaking type pretest was administered to both the groups followed by a six-week-long experiment. The control group taught through traditional teaching materials including the text of *"High School Grammar and Composition"* and *"Grammar in Use"* whereas the experimental group was treated with poems as teaching materials. A posttest like the pretest was conducted after the experiment. A semi-structured interview was also conducted after the treatment to find out the perceptions of the students towards both kinds of teaching texts. The scores of students of both the groups on the pretest and posttest were subjected to an independent sample t-test whereas the interview was put to thematic analysis.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

The scores of the students of both the groups on the pretest were put to independent samples t-test. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 1 T-tests Results of the Pre-test Comparing the CG and EG in Pragmatic Competence and Fluency

PC & F	Groups	N	M	SD	ST.Error. M	T-Value	P-Value
	CG	36	2.2105	.32114	.05210		
PC	EG	36	2.0385	.31171	.04991	4.032	.000
	CG	36	2.8684	.50248	.08151		
F	EG	36	2.4231	.46649	.07470	2.386	.020

Note. 1: PC: pragmatic competence and F: fluency

Note. 2: p-value$\leq$ 0.05=significant, p-value>.05=not significant

The table above indicates that the p-value regarding both pragmatic competence and fluency is significant in favor of CG.

The students were subjected to a posttest after the experiment and their scores on the test were analyzed through independent samples t-test. The table below presents the results of the students' performance.

Table 2. T-tests Results of the Post-test Comparing the CG and EG in Pragmatic Competence and Fluency

PC & F	Groups	N	M	SD	ST.Error. M	T-Value	P-Value
	EG	36	3.8333	.77233	.12367		
	CG	36	2.6316	.69442	.11265		
PC	EG	36	3.0128	.75644	.12113	-1.357	.179
	CG	36	2.0395	.58566	.09501		
F	EG	36	2.4359	.58691	.09398	-2.966	.004

Note.1: PC: pragmatic competence and F: fluency

Note. 2: p-value$\leq$ 0.05=significant, p-value>0.05=not significant

The table above shows that the difference between the students of CG and EG was significant in favor of EG regarding fluency, however, the difference was not significant between the two groups regarding pragmatic competence. However, when the scores of the students of EG were compared on pretest and posttest through paired samples t-test, it was found that there was a significant difference in the performance of the students regarding both pragmatic competence and fluency in favor of the posttest as shown in the table below.

Table 3. T-test Results of EG Comparing Pragmatic Competence and Fluency on Pre-test & Post-test

PC & F	Experimental Group	N	M	SD	ST.Error. M	T-Value	P-value
	Pre-test	39	2.4231	.46649	.07470		
PC	Post-test	39	2.8077	.72198	.11561	-3.567	.001

	Pre-test	39	2.0385	.31171	.04991		
F	Post-test	39	2.4359	.58691	.09398	-4.229	.000

Note. 1: PC: pragmatic competence and F: fluency

Note. 2: p-value$\leq$ 0.05=significant, p-value>0.05=not significant

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

This study also exploited semi-structured interviews for the data collection. The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to determine the factors through which the traditional language teaching materials and the text of poetry affected the language learning process. Besides, it was also aimed at verifying the results of the other tools of data collection. The interview was conducted with twelve students, six each from the CG and EG. The interview items were based on the experiences of the students regarding the traditional language teaching materials and the poems. After going over the responses of the students, different themes were explored, which were further interpreted and explained in the light of the responses of the students and existing previous literature. Finally, the findings were triangulated with the results arrived at in the light of the other tools of data collection in this study. The major themes deduced from the responses of the students of both CG and EG are as follows.

Table 4.   Themes from the Semi-structured Interview

S.No	Groups		Major Themes
		1.	Lack of freedom of expression
		2.	Demotivating/Less Motivating
		3.	Irrelevance to practical life
		4.	Lack of cultural elements
		5.	Irrelevance to personal life
		6.	Unsuitable for group activities
		7.	Increasing diffidence/hesitation
1	CG	8.	Lack of discussion
		1	Confidence building
		2	Motivating
		3	Freedom of expression
		4	Open to discussion
		5	Relevance to real life
		6	Relevance to personal life
		7	Target language culture
2	EG	8	Suitable for group activities

The themes shown in the table above indicate that language texts taught in CG could hardly be related to practical life and did not engage the students in the learning process. Moreover, the texts could not be exploited for group activities. The text of poetry, on the contrary, was engaging and involved the students in the learning activities. Besides, it was motivating due to personal and sociocultural elements in it.

Discussion of the Quantitative Results

The results of the independent samples t-test concerning the mean scores on pragmatic competence and fluency of the control and experimental group on the post-test indicated a significant difference in favor of the students in the experimental group regarding fluency with t-value -2.966 and p-value 004. However, regarding pragmatic competence, the difference was not significant with a t-value -1.357 and p-value .179. According to Alemi (2011) and Birjandi and Bagherkazemi (2010), spoken language is used mainly for two purposes; transactional and interactional. Transactional language is mainly used for delivering information. Hence, it is more meaning-directed than listener-directed (Nunan, 1989). This kind of language demands coherence and clarity in communication and also an assurance that the listener has understood the message. Examples of transactional language are instructions, news, commentaries, panel discussions, narrations, and descriptions (Richards, 2006). This type of English language needs long speaking turns and requires beforehand planning for the organization of both the content and linguistic structure of language to ensure smooth delivery of information. Moreover, here, the language is used for different functions in real life and how to speak in different social situations (Basturkmen, 2002).

The second type of spoken language is called interactional, which is exploited for personal and social relationships (Yule & Powers, 1994). It is important for developing coherence and harmony in a society. Here, the language is listener-centered as against to message-centered and the

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speaking turns are short (Yule & Powers 1994). However, many a time, these two types overlap each other, the interactional preceding the transactional, which cuts both ways; maintaining social harmony and assuring the delivery of message (Brazil, 1995).

Taking into account the above two types of speaking; this study was mainly focused on the interactional aspect of speaking. Many aspects of transactional speaking could not be covered due to not being exactly in real-life situations. Secondly, the nature of poetry did not fully support the transactional aspect of the speaking skill. It was because of this reason that the learners of the EG did not show a significant improvement in the pragmatic competence. Nevertheless, taking into account the mean scores of the aforementioned speaking sub-skill (pronunciation and pragmatic competencies), it can be discerned that it has improved. The difference between the control and the experimental group on the pre-test was significant regarding pragmatic competence with the p-value of .000, which is highly significant at 0.05 in favor of the control group (see Table 1). But on the post-test, the value is not significant (.179 see Table 2) at 0.05, which shows enough development and improvement in pragmatic competence on the post-test in favor of the experimental group. Moreover, the difference in the performance of the students of EG was significant in favor of posttest during intragroup comparison (see Table 3 above). The improvement in the pragmatic competence could be attributed to the fact that the students discussed a poem in the light of their social and cultural contexts, which required them to talk about different activities of their own social and cultural environment enhancing their ability how to talk and communicate about different situations and activities. This practice gave the learners some sense of using different expressions in different situations. Further, they interpreted the poem in the light of their personal experiences, which also involved describing different situations. This practice also developed their pragmatic competence. The students linked the text of poetry to their personal stories and social issues. They openly discussed their failures and achievements which made speak in different context. Finally, during arguing with the teacher, they discussed various social and cultural norms and values in contrast to that of the poet. This exercise further enhanced their capability of handling different situations during speaking.

The results of both the inter-group and intra-group comparison show a significant improvement in the fluency of the students in the experimental group. The effect could be attributed to the text of poetry due to factors that the students conversed with one another during group activities. Because poetry had the potential to keep them involved in the discussion for a long. They asked questions from the presenter, argued with them, and at times disagreed as almost everyone had their idea about the poem. This practice increased their confidence in speaking the English language. Besides, they discussed the poem freely and openly with the teacher at the end of the class. They arrived at different themes in the light of their social and personal experiences. All this was possible because of the elements of ambiguity, personal relevance, and universality in the text of the poetry. This practice could not be executed with the control group through the traditional teaching materials. The above practice enabled the students of the EG to speak naturally and without any hesitation.

Discussion of the Qualitative Results

The succeeding section attempts to answer the second research question of this study. The research question reads as under.

In what ways do poetry and traditional language texts affect the speaking skills of the learners?

This study exploited an adapted semi-structured interview as a tool of data collection. The learners of both CG and EG were interviewed. The questions of the interview (adapted from Salama, 2007) were adjusted to the text of the poems and the traditional teaching materials. The responses of the learners were recorded, which were later transcribed. The transcribed responses of the learners were then subjected to thematic analysis. The responses were first put to open coding followed by axial coding and finally selective coding phase was applied to the responses. The researcher also engaged one of his colleagues, who was doing his PhD in short fiction and writing skills from Language Academy, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The themes inferred from the responses of the learners by the researcher and his colleague were almost similar. The final themes, arrived at from the responses of the EG learners through a selective coding phase, were eight, which included confidence building, motivating, freedom of expression, openness to discussion, relevance to real-life relevance to personal life, presence of the target language culture and suitability for group activities. Similarly, the final themes deduced from the responses of the CG learners were lack of freedom of expression, demotivating/less motivating, irrelevance to practical life, lack of cultural elements, irrelevance to

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personal life, unsuitability for group activities, increasing diffidence/hesitation, and lack of discussion. According to the themes of the CG, the learners of the CG were reluctant to express themselves freely. They had the fear of being wrong because of the objective nature of the traditional teaching materials. Besides, CG learners did not take interest in the group activities. They did not actively participate in the presentation activity. Moreover, they did not help each other during group activities. They mostly relied on their memory while sharing their ideas with fellow learners. Due to the nature of the traditional teaching materials, the CG learners could not interact frequently with each other. Thus, the learners of the CG felt demotivated and developed a high level of anxiety. Also, they could not relate the topics to their personal life because of the lack of emotional content in the traditional teaching materials.

The traditional teaching materials did not appeal to their feelings and emotions of the CG learners consequently, they were left less interested in the language learning process. Furthermore, the learners of the CG were unable to relate the topics discussed during class to their practical life. The materials were only good for the examination. Hence, the learners memorized the topics for the sake of achieving good grades in the examination. Moreover, the CG learners were rarely found making interactions with each other. The nature of the traditional teaching materials did not allow them to discuss and interact frequently with each other. They were worried about being wrong while expressing their ideas on the topics, which made them diffident and increased their anxiety. Besides, the traditional teaching materials did not have any cultural elements of the target language

On the contrary, the themes derived from the responses of the EG learners indicated that the learners expressed their ideas and opinions freely without any hesitation. The ambiguity in the text of the poetry provided them with an opportunity to interpret a poem in the light of their social and cultural knowledge. They were not afraid of being wrong because they knew that any interpretation they made would be acceptable due to the nature of poetry (Khatib, 2011; Lazar, 1993; Mittal, 2016). Also, the EG learners related the text of the poetry to their personal life. Due to the emotional content of poetry, the learners expressed their personal feelings and experiences. They shared their stories of love, successes, and failures with the fellow learners. Moreover, the EG learners related the content of the poems to their practical life (Khansir, 2012; Khatib, 2011; Maley & Duff, 1989; Maley & Moulding, 1985). The universality in the text of the PGS enabled them to see their own culture and society in the poems. The presence of the cultural elements of the target language in the text of poetry enabled the learners to understand the cultural context of certain language expressions. Moreover, the learners compare their own culture with that of the target language, which gave them a deeper insight into the nature and structure of the target language. Furthermore, the learners of the experimental group actively participated in the group activities. They scaffolded each other during group activities. They eagerly presented the topics in front of the whole class. They made frequent interaction in the target language with each other. This was possible due to the subjective nature of the text of poetry. As the EG learners were not afraid of being wrong and they freely shared their ideas with their fellow learners, hence, they felt motivated and confident with a low level of anxiety.

Thus, the analysis of the semi-structured interview indicates that the traditional teaching materials were not effective for teaching speaking skills. Students of the CG could not have a free-of-fear speaking environment, which decreased their level of confidence. Besides, the traditional teaching materials could not be appropriately exploited for group activities, hence little interaction and discussion among the students. On the contrary, the text of the poetry was motivating and led to lengthy and intimate interaction among the students. Moreover, the learners were provided a free-of-fear speaking environment due to the ambiguity and the subjective nature of poetry, which increased the confidence of the EG students. Students were able to relate the themes and meanings of the poems to their real and personal life, which increased their interest in the language learning process. The cultural elements in the text of the poetry further improved the knowledge of the EG learners of the target (English) language.

Hence, the responses of the learners during the interview indicated the factors and dimensions, which made the EG classroom distinct from the traditional classroom. The factors which made the EG classroom different from the traditional language classroom and which facilitated the whole language learning process included high motivation, greater level of confidence, much interaction, greater personal involvement, low level of anxiety, and a greater willingness for group activities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This was an experimental study that attempted to compare the effect of two teaching materials; poetry and traditional language texts on the pragmatic competence and fluency of the ESL students. The students belonged to the faculty of education, University of Malakand, Pakistan. Pretest, posttest, and semi-structured interviews were utilized as tools of data collection. The analyses were carried out through statistical tests and thematic analysis. The results of the study showed that there was a significant improvement in the performance of the students of EG regarding pragmatic competence and fluency whereas, the students of Cg did show any significant improvement in the aforementioned skills. The analysis of the semi-structured interview indicated that the students of EG diligently participated in the learning process. They shared their freely their personal feelings stories with their classmates. Besides, they made intensive and long interactions. On the contrary, the students of CG were reluctant to participate in group activities, could not share their feelings with their classmates due to the objective nature of the teaching materials. Hence, the study recommends that literature in general and poetry in particular should be utilized in language classrooms. Moreover, teachers should be properly trained in teaching language through literary text in general and poetry in particular.

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