

The Role of Poetry in Learners' EFL Reading Comprehension: Mekdela Preparatory and Secondary School in Focus

Dr. Yosef BecoDubi (yosefbeco@gmail.com, Corresponding Author),

Getachew Baye Kebede and Leulseged Dawd, Kotebe Metropolitan University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Kefelegn Tefera Yifru, The Ethiopian Civil Service University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of poetry in improving students' reading comprehension. The study employed pre-test and post-test quasi-experimental design, based on a non-equivalent control group. The study was conducted on 100 grade 12 students in Mekdela Preparatory and Secondary School. From the total of 360 grade 12 students enrolled in 2018/19 academic year, only two sections, i.e. section A(n=48) and section B(n=52) were considered as experimental and control group respectively as one of the researchers was assigned to teach the two classes. Due this convenient sampling technique was used to select the study groups, and lottery method was employed to determine the experimental and control group. The data collection instruments used in this study were tests and questionnaire. To check the two sections pre-intervention reading comprehension level, two equivalent pre -tests were administered, and to measure the two groups' 'post intervention reading comprehension improvement, two equivalent post -tests were given. The findings from the post -tests revealed that the experimental group showed significant reading comprehension improvement over that of control group in which significant pre-to post reading achievement test scores improvement was not seen. The result from the one sample t test data analysis showed that the study was acceptable and effective. To this end, EFL teachers are strongly advised to incorporate efficient and sufficient literary texts in the language teaching program. Also, EFL curriculum developers ought to include literary materials when preparing any English text books.

Keywords: Poetry, Learners, EFL, Reading, Comprehension

Introduction

Literature in English language teaching and learning has significant place in various international contexts. To Tomlinson (2003), one way of humanizing language curriculum is to use literary texts to meet learners' perception diversity. Teaching literary texts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is believed to integrate the psychological and sociological realities into classroom.

The view of integrating literary texts in the language class has its own long back history which had many phases. However, it was following the third phase that the advantages of integrating literary texts in the EFL class were proposed by many scholars though it passed through different controversial issues. In recent years, interest in literature in language education has redeveloped and it has brought into focus the issues regarding language learning and teaching in EFL contexts with its arguments, Sage (1987). However, many material writers haven't given much attention to the inclusion of literary texts in the English text books and many EFL teachers were, and still are hesitant to use these literary texts while teaching English.

As Slater (1990) stated, if EFL teachers use literary texts in their EFL classroom, they can foster their language teaching and learning practice, language proficiency and possible aesthetic appreciation. The use of English as a Foreign Language in Ethiopian education system became dominant beginning from primary schools. English has been given as a compulsory subject and used as a medium of instruction commencing from first primary grade (Daniel, 1998). As it is indicated in grade 12 English syllabus (2010), English language has a significant role in Ethiopia both to its economic development and to

students' future educational and life careers. These could imply that fluency in English has become an agent of social differentiation which has, in turn, led to increase the demand for quality English Education.

Especially, poetry as one kind of literary texts is highly helpful to motivate language learners to learn the language and improve their language proficiency. According to Mittal (2014) poetry always awakens our senses, and promotes literary. It helps students to draw a sketch or image of everything in their mind which they can feel, explain and talk about. Poetry is musical and rhythmic, so it catches everyone's attention. It is universal and global so it connects people. It is a vehicle for expression on a wider horizon. Therefore, in order to improve the EFL learners' English language learning, integrating literary texts in EFL class in general, can be advantageous since they motivate students to learn the language more and develop their capacity in creating the mental representation.

Since there are such debates about the benefit of integrating poetries in the language teaching program, conducting a research in the area and identifying the truth is one way which is expected from language professionals and practitioners.

Hence, one basic issue that initiates the researchers to conduct this study is driven from the theory of "integrating language and literature." As we have observed through our English language teaching experience, the students' English language lower performance is one prominent problem in Ethiopian context. The other important issue that triggers the researchers to carry out the study emanated from their professional experience that literary genres could motivate students to exert efforts in their English language learning. It is due to these situations that we would like to conduct this study by considering poetry as one means to promote the students' EFL learning. Therefore, the intension of this study was to examine the role of poetry in learners' EFL learning.

The main variables of the study are integration of poetry (independent variable) and improvement of students' reading performance (dependent variable). To investigate the relationship between these variables, the role of integrating poetry on the improvement of students' reading performance was studied by using the independent variable only in the experimental group.

In line with the above points, the following research questions are posed:

1. Is there a significant reading achievement mean score difference between the two groups at the base line before the intervention is given?
2. Is there a significant post test reading achievement mean scores difference between the experimental group to which poetry is used as a resource and the control group which these resources are not given?
3. Do the students in the experimental group show significant pre to post reading mean score difference after the intervention?
4. Do the students in the control group show significant pre to post reading mean score difference after the intervention?

A Rationale for the Use of Poetry in EFL

Poetry can contribute to the learning and teaching of basic language skills. (Charlesworth, 1978). Without poetry, in fact; perhaps knowledge about language would be diminished. Poetry has served to codify language, to record it in a form that preserves for future reference for the use of language as it is at a given time, and thus provides a stable basis for rereading, refining, and changing it (Mcconochie, 1979).

Researchers who argue for the use of literary texts to teach EFL mention several benefits of poetry. Among these, reinforcing of the skills, motivational, literary, cultural and higher order thinking are some which get emphasis in this study.

Poetry enables EFL teachers to teach the four macro skills to all level of language proficiency. Researchers in the field recommended that if EFL teachers use Poetry in their language class, they can create variety of language skill activities that help the students develop their language proficiency.

English language learners need to be exposed to a variety of genres in the language classroom (Vardell, Hadaway& Young, 2006). When considering poetry for students, many teachers may assume that students learning English are not ready for it because of its metaphorical language and often culturally-specific content. However, as a genre, poetry offers many benefits for English language learners. For example, because of the rhyming patterns, the repetition, the rhythm, and the manageable chunks of text, poetry is an ideal genre for teaching how to read.

Poetry based activities seem to be effective to use in EFL learners' performance (Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010; Hanauer, 2001; Widdowson, 1984) for several reasons: (1) the use of poetry is motivational in that they raise certain dilemmas and, therefore, emotional responses; (2) it expands learners' language awareness (Ramsaran, 1983); (3) it develops learners' interpretive abilities; (4) its brevity and comprehensiveness give learners enriched data for discussion in classrooms .

Poetries can be studied in several ways: from linguistic features (when phonological, lexical, and syntactic features of the poems are discussed), semantic features (when different metaphors are discussed), stylistic features (whether the poetic expressions are colloquial or archaic), and thematic features (Maley , 2001).

This flexibility of poetic genre provides EFL teachers with opportunity to involve learners recalling and recounting personal experiences, to develop in their learners mental images while processing or producing language, to help learners develop an L2 inner voice while producing and comprehending language, to engage learners in Kinesthetic activities, and to help learners to develop an idiosyncratic version of a text.

Kellem (2009) stated the following pedagogical approaches to teaching poems:

There are two main pedagogical approaches to teaching poems: stylistic and reader-response. Stylistic approach refers to analyzing poem atomistically in terms of lexicon, syntax, and the number of turns occurring between possible interlocutors in the discourse. On the other hand, reader- response approach to teaching poetry holds the idea that poetry should be studied from the readers' perspective instead of the authors' materials. He furthers that “the approach treats the creation of meaning as inseparable from the act of reading (p. 13).

Kellem (2009) integrates these two approaches into one as “for meaning” response approach claiming that in approaching poems one cannot separate from meaning (p. 12).

Controversial Issues about the Role of Using poetry in EFL Class

Should poetry be part of an EFL curriculum? The long-standing debate on whether poetry can be employed to enhance language efficiency is quite well-known. Indeed, is there any rationale for including poetry in the curriculum? Several views have been expressed about the reason why literature is seen distant to EFL and ESL contexts. Linguists such as Topping (1968) plead for literature exclusion from ESL classroom; he argues that "literature should be excluded from the ESL curriculum because of

its structural complexity, lack of conformity to standard grammatical rules and remote cultural perspectives". Cook (1986) makes a similar point when he states that the study of English literature "has little relevance to the learners' aim of understanding and producing more functional forms of the language". Fortunately, thanks to recent research efforts, there has been increasing interest in acquiring language proficiency by integrating literature into the language curriculum. However, although literature has occupied a place in some EFL courses, poetry which could help the students more effectively to improve their knowledge of English language, has remained largely neglected (Denman, 1988). There are various factors why poetry has not been considered as proper material for EFL classrooms. Let's first of all examine the most common arguments against employing poetry in EFL classroom. To a lot of EFL students, however, reading a poem had proven to be in the end a frustrating and disappointing experience. No doubt, poetic language is different from prosaic language. Compared with prose, poetry depends less on the linguistic units of sentences and paragraphs, and more on units of organization that are purely poetic such as line, couplet, and stanza.

So at the beginning it may create tension in the class. But the most critical objections brought against poetry seem to be due to its highly complex, metaphorical language. The specific features of poetry have made it one of the most sophisticated forms of literary genres. Brindley (1980), one of the proponents of this view argues that "Poems often deal with geographical or social settings alien to the students' experience. Perhaps the greatest barrier to understanding poetry, however, is its elliptical, metaphorical, and highly allusive language. Poetry, from this perspective (i.e. as a high-level, individual reading activity), has little to offer the EFL classroom..." (Brindley, 1980). According to Hirvela and Boyle, (1988), their studies that aimed at investigating the students' attitudes toward studying English literature have shown that 70 to 80% of the students preferred to read short stories and novel rather than poetry. Their findings revealed that students generally feel that comparing with other literary genres poetry contributes very little to their language skills development. Nawawi (1994), in using English poetry with Malaysian students, found that their "students have misleading perceptions of poetry and its difficulty. Students seem to think the reading and understanding of poetry require a special kind of knowledge reserved for scholars of literature.

We have to challenge these misconceptions. The other common argument against using poetry is that poetry, due to its "structural complexity and its unique use of language", does little to help EFL teachers to achieve one of their main goals, that is to teach grammar (McKay, 1982). The other typical objection of using poetry in language classes is that poetry cannot help our students "to communicate in contemporary colloquial English" or the study of poetry will contribute nothing to helping the teachers" to increase the communicative competence" of the students (Tomlinson, 1986). Zelenkova (2004) supports the same idea arguing that due to its "linguistic abstruseness and cultural vagueness" the study of English literature is often unsuited to the needs of foreign students. Maybe one of the reasons that poetry's role as an ally of language is frequently disputed is due to an "absence of concrete methodological instruction" (Stulajterova S, 2010). Indeed, there has been a lot of debate on the content of English language curriculum. However, it seems that more research studies, experimental results and critical analysis are necessary to justify the inclusion of poetry as an essential part of a rich language curriculum. Still, fortunately for us EFL teachers some well-known language experts and scholars proposed the use of poetry as a great teaching tool for language classroom: (Widowson, 1984; Hess, 2003; Finch, 2003) and many other scholars and researchers. Some of them have pointed out positive results of using poetry in ESL/EFL classrooms and others have provided reasons to support the use of poetry such as "valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement" (Collie and Slater, 1987).

Methodology

Design of the Study

The research design of this study is quasi-experimental. It is a design in which randomized sampling technique is not be employed. One clear difference between the true experimental and quasi-experimental design is that no randomization is used to select subjects in quasi, where as it is one unique characteristic for true experimental design, Donald (2010). To put plainly, the research design the researchers use in this study is non-equivalent control group pre-test post-test quasi experimental design. This design was selected because of the following reasons: One is that the students in grade 12 learn in both the morning and afternoon shifts.

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Using randomization and creating one randomly selected group for the experiment is impractical since it needs additional periods and classes. In addition, the students in the selected group might not be willing for the treatment since they were busy for their national exam. The second one is the possibility of the temporal precedence of the independent variable (using poetry during reading lesson) to the dependent variable (improvement of reading performance achievement was established because of the pre and post-tests, and this helped the researchers to infer that the result in the dependent variable can be caused due to the effect of the independent variable. Third, the use of pre-tests enabled the researchers to measure the differences of the two groups (experimental and control) before exposure to the treatment. This in turn could help to minimize the threat of selection bias.

The Setting and the Population

This research was conducted in Mekdela Preparatory and General Secondary School of grade 12 students. In this grade level, there were seven sections (A_G) with a total number of 360 students. From these sections, two sections (A&B) were used for the study for one of the researchers was assigned to teach only these sections. The researchers were limited to conduct the study on the two sections because it is not practical to undertake such type of experimental research on other classes or grade levels in which the researchers cannot control extraneous variables which can obscure the success of the study.

The Subjects and Sampling Techniques

The subjects of this study were grade 12, sections 'A' and 'B' students. These sections were selected because one of the researchers was assigned to teach only the two classes. Among the 360 grade 12 students enrolled in 2011/2012 and grouped in seven sections (A-G), the researchers used section 'A' (n=48) and section 'B' (n=52) students. Since one of the researchers took his two classes as they were in their natural setting, the sampling technique employed for this study was convenient sampling. To determine the experimental and control groups, lots were cast. As a result, section 'A' students became experimental group and section 'B' students were assigned as a control or comparison group.

Data gathering Instruments

In this study, the data gathering instruments can be seen in two ways. One was the treatment materials used to the experimental group and the others were tests to measure the students' reading comprehension achievement before and after the intervention and structured questionnaire used to measure the rating of students' appraisal about the intervention given to the experimental group. The data through the questionnaire was collected after the intervention was given.

Designing the Materials

Poetry by which the students' reading comprehension considered to be improved was used as a major means. The other materials used alongside the poetries are non-literary texts taken from the text book.

The non-literary texts are common to both the experimental and control groups. Therefore, the materials which are composed of literary and non-literary reading texts are used only for the treatment of the experimental group.

To collect data from the intervention program, six poems taken from different materials were integrated with other six extracts of non-literary texts taken from the new English text book for grade 12A teaching manual which holds these integrated texts with various reading comprehension activities and exercises were prepared for the treatment given to the experimental group (12A) students. The purpose of using this poetry alongside other non-literary extracts as the only independent variable is to see if the students reading comprehension can be improved due to the effect of these texts.

These texts have been integrated with the selected non-literary texts sequentially and implemented only to the experimental group. The setting was in the normal class with the formal allotted time (42') for one session. The non-literary reading texts are commonly used for both groups. Since the purpose of the study was to investigate the role of poetry on students' reading comprehension achievement, these materials were used as the only independent variable applied to the experimental group to determine that the result gained was purely the effect of the independent variable. Extraneous variables which were assumed to have negative impact on the study were controlled as much as possible.

Measurement of Instruments

Two measurement instruments were employed in this study. Tests were used as the major measuring instruments before and after the intervention to see whether there is no significant difference of reading comprehension level between the two group at the base line (pre-tests) and to see if a change is observed after the treatment was given to the experimental group (post tests).

In addition, questionnaire was used as supplementary measuring instruments to measure the students' appraisal rate about the treatment given so far (post-intervention questionnaire).

Questionnaire

To triangulate the data collected through the comprehension tests, a questionnaire with 5-point scale were employed in this study. Ten questions were prepared by the researchers based on Babbile (1995) questionnaire construction guide lines and the comments received from colleagues after critiques. The questionnaire was administered to the 24 sample students selected from the total 48 students in the experimental group. This questionnaire was used after the intervention to measure the responses of the experimental students' appraisal towards the treatment given in the intervention program. In other words, this measurement was used to get feedback about the importance of 'poetry' as textual content validity to promote students' reading comprehension.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques used in this study were based on descriptive and inferential statistics. Using these techniques, the collected and tabulated data of the two groups' scores in the pre and post- tests were analyzed. The recorded scores in the two pre-tests and the other post-tests were separately calculated to get the students' average score in both the pre and post-tests. Independent sample t test was computed to compare the tests scores of the experimental and control groups at the pre and post- tests. Then, the changes of the experimental group in both the pre and post-tests were judged against the control group. To determine pretest and posttest inter-group means score difference for both groups, paired sample t test was used.

The data collected through the content validity questionnaire from the sample students, were analyzed using one-sample t test for each of the five categorized factors (effect, satisfaction, importance, feasibility and interest). The results of each factor summarized in separate tables, and the analysis and interpretations were given under each table.

Results and Discussion

The data gathered from the pre and post-tests of the experimental and control groups, and those gathered from the questionnaire administered to the sample experimental students were analyzed and interpreted in this chapter. This chapter has two sub sections. In the first section, results of each measure were presented, and in the second section, discussions were made based on some previous experimental research findings. It is worth reminding that the purpose of the study is to investigate the role of poetry in EFL students' reading on the improvement of students' reading comprehension. Therefore, to check the effectiveness of the independent variable and to give amenable response to the research questions posed so far, the results drawn from each of the collected data were discussed and analyzed.

Results of the Study

In this study, the main data collecting instruments were the pre and post-tests. To substantiate these major data gathering means, questionnaire was used to get the experimental students' feedback about the intervention program. Hence, the major findings of this study were drawn from the students' pre and post-reading test scores, and supplementary findings were taken from the data collected from the questionnaire. Following this, findings of various measurements are presented in the next sections.

Reading Comprehension Test Results

The mean scores of the pre and post-tests were compared using t tests. The two pre-tests scores and the two post-tests scores of both the experimental and control group students were computed by independent sample t tests first. Then, the averages of the two pre-tests scores as well as the two post-tests scores average for each group were compared using paired samples t test to see the changes after the intervention was made. These pairs of pre and post-tests were compared at the pre and post intervention phases to find out any statistically significant differences. The results of each pre and post test scores of the two groups are presented in the tables below.

Table 1: Independent samples t test for pre-test 1

t test for equality of means

Groups	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
EG	48	4.833	1.492	-.108	98	.482	-.032
CG	52	4.865	1.469				

As it can be seen from the table, the pre-test 1 scores of the experimental group (M=4.833, SD =1.492) was a bit less than the control group mean score (M=4.865, SD =1.469). Nevertheless, as the independent samples t test results showed, there is no statistically significant difference between the score of EG and CG because $P = .482$, $P > 0.05$.

Table 2: Independent samples t tests for pre-test 2

t test for equality of means

Groups	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference
1. EG	48	5	1.487	.065	98	.948	.02
2. CG	52	4.980	1.448				

Table 2 shows that the pre-test 2 scores of the EG group (M =5, SD =1.487) is slightly greater than the CG (M =4.980, SD =1,448). However, the independent samples t test revealed no significant difference between the score of EG and CG P =.948, P > 0.05.

The reason for the slight variation of the mean score of the two groups in the pre-test 1 and pre-test 2 is expected since there is personal difference even if the magnitude is less.

The main purpose of the pre-test phase was to check both the experimental and control group reading comprehension performance level before exposing to the treatment. To determine this, independent samples t test were used for both pre-test 1 and pre-test 2 scores. The results drawn from the two test scores confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. Hence, the pre-intervention reading comprehension level of the EG and CG students was almost similar.

Table3: Independent samples t tests for post-test 1

t test for equality of means

Groups	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference
1. EG	48	6.625	1.314	5.929	98	.000	1.586
2. CG	52	5.038	1.357				

In this first post test, the experimental group score is higher than the comparison group. The subjects in the experimental group scored, (M =6.625, SD=1.314). This is significantly greater than the control group that scored, (M=5.038, SD=1.357). From this, it is possible to state that the mean of the EG score exceeds that of the CG. As it is shown in the table, the independent samples t test result, P =0.000, P< 0.05 indicates that the EG post-test 1 result is significantly different from the CG.

Table 4: Independent samples t test for post-test 2

t test for equality of means

Groups	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean difference
1. EG	48	6.729	1.180	5.648	96	.000	1.729
2. CG	50	5	1.284				

As it is shown in table 4, the EG mean score (M=6.729, SD=1.180) is greater than the control group mean score (M=5.320, SD=1.284). When compared using t test, the computed t test result drawn from the two groups mean scores, P =0.000, P< 0.05 proves that there is significant difference between the EG and CG. Generally, the EG test results of both post test 1 and post-test 2 are by far greater than the two post test results of the control group. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that after the intervention was made the tests scores of the EG students showed significant improvement over that of the CG students to whom the independent variable was not implemented.

Table 5: Paired samples t test results of the experimental group

Paired Differences

EG	N	mean	SD	M	SD	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
Pre test	48	4.916	1.415					
Post-test	48	6.677	1.164	-1.760	1.07	-11.2	47	.000

The paired-sample t-test analysis in table 5 shows that the mean score of the experimental group on the post-test (M= 6.677) is greater than the mean score on the pretest (M= 4.916). The mean score of the observed mean difference, which is approximately 1.760, implies that the reading performance of the experimental group showed improvement. The paired t-test result P = 0.000, $p < 0.05$ proves that the change appealed on the post test was significant. This indicates that using poetry in the EFL class has helped the experimental group to improve their reading comprehension.

Table 6: Paired samples t test results of the control group

Paired Differences

CG	N	mean	SD	M	SD	t	df	sig (2-tailed)
Pre-test	52	4.923	1.369					
Post-test	52	5.153	1.277	-0.230	1.011	-1.644	51	.106

As it is shown in table 6, the mean score of the control group on the post-test (M=5.153) is slightly different from the mean score of the pre-test (M= 4.923), with the mean difference 0.2307. However, the paired sample t-test computed from this group scores P = 0.106, $p > 0.05$ shows that there was no significant difference between the pre and post test results of the control group. This implies that the reading comprehension performance of the students in the control group didn't show improvement as compared to the experimental group. This indirectly proves that poetry is effective to promote reading comprehension.

Results of the content validity questionnaire

The one sample t-test statics and results for each of the five categorized factors from the evaluation of the sample students' appraisal rate about the intervention program have been presented and analyzed from table 7 to 13 below.

Importance of the intervention program

Group	N	mean	SD	t	df	sig (2-tailed)	Test value =3	mean difference
EG	24	4.166	0.524	10.892	23	0.000	1.16	

Table 7: Results of one sample t test regarding importance of the intervention program

In Items 1 and 4 of the questionnaire, the sample students were asked if the integration of poetry in the intervention program was useful. From this category, the mean score of the 24 students (4.166) is higher than the expected mean value which is 3.

Therefore, as it was summarized in table 7 above, the sample students rate the treatment as useful because P = 0.000, $p < .05$. That means there is a significant difference between the observed and expected t value. So, it is understandable from the above table that, using poetry to teach reading comprehension is very useful.

The effectiveness of the intervention program

Group	N	mean	SD	Test value =3			mean difference
				t	df	sig (2-tailed)	
EG	24	4.37	0.51	13.113	23	.000	1.375

Table 8: Results of one sample t test about the effectiveness of the intervention program

The sample students were questioned in items 2 and 9 about the role of poetry on their reading comprehension performance. These items were designed to get feedback about the perceived effectiveness of the treatment program to bring better and long lasting reading comprehension improvement. As shown in table 8, the observed mean score of the respondents for this category (4.37) is greater than the expected t value (3). Inferentially, $P = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$ indicates that there is a significant difference between the observed and expected mean.

In other words, the responses of the sample students on average show that poetry is highly effective to promote reading comprehension, hence, it is possible to say that poetry is effective in teaching reading.

Students' satisfaction on the program

Group	N	Mean	SD	Test value =3			mean difference
				t	df	sig (2-tailed)	
EG	24	4.291	.440	14.373	23	.000	1.291

Table 9: Results of one sample t test regarding students' satisfaction on the program

To get feedback about the students' satisfaction regarding the intervention program, an item was included in the questionnaire (item 3). From this category, the observed mean (4.291) exceeds the expected mean (3), and the inferential statistics result, $p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$ indicates there is a statistically significant difference between the observed and expected t value. This implies that the students in the experimental group were highly satisfied by the intervention program, and it is possible to infer that students get satisfied when they learn poetry.

The feasibility of the program

Test value =3

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	sig (2-tailed)	mean difference
EG	24	4.35	0.56	5.91	23	0.000	1.35

Table 10: Results of one sample t test about the feasibility of the program

Regarding the feasibility of the intervention program, the observed mean (4.35) is quite different from the expected test value (3). The inferential statistics $p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$, also shows significant difference between the two means. These statistical evidences reveal that the intervention program was highly feasible.

Students' interest in continuing with the program

Test value =3

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	sig (2-tailed)	M/ difference
EG	24	4.29	.907	6.9	23	0.000	1.29

Table 11: Results of one sample t test about students' interest in continuing with the program

In item 6, the sample students were asked to give response about their interest in or willingness to continuing reading poetry after the program. As the result in table 11 indicates the observed mean (4.29) exceeds the expected mean by 1.29, and $P = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$ shows statistically significant different between the two comparable means. This means, after the intervention the experimental group show **high interest** in continuing reading poetry.

The comfortableness of the program

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	Test value =3		mean difference
					df	sig (2-tailed)	
EG	24	4.291	.440	14.373	23	.000	1.291

Table 12: Results of one sample t test about the comfortableness of program

To get feedback about the students' comfortableness regarding the intervention program, an item was included in the questionnaire (item 8). From this category, the observed mean (4.291) exceeds the expected mean (3), and the inferential statistics result, $p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$ indicates there is statistically significant difference between the observed and expected t value. This implies that the students in the experimental group were highly comfortable with the intervention program.

The motivation of the program

Group	N	mean	SD	t	Test value =3		mean difference
					df	sig (2-tailed)	
EG	24	4.37	0.51	13.113	23	.000	1.375

Table 13: Result of one sample t test about the motivation of the program

In item 10, the sample students were asked whether reading poetry motivates them on their reading comprehension. This item was designed to get feedback about the perceived motivational impact of the treatment program. As shown in table 13, the observed mean score of the respondents for this category (4.37) is greater than the expected t value (3). Inferentially, $P = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$ indicates that there is a significant difference between the observed and expected mean. In other words, the responses on average show that poetry motivates the students to read a lot in language learning.

Findings

Effect of the poetry on the Students' Reading Comprehension

Before the treatment was given, two pre-tests had been given to determine the base line of sections 'A' and 'B' students' reading comprehension performance. The result was computed using independent-samples t-test and no significant difference was found between the EG and CG test scores. That means the two groups experienced almost the same level of reading comprehension before the intervention.

After the intervention, two posttests almost from similar reading comprehension passages were given within a week interval. The results of these tests from the independent sample t test statistical analyses showed significant difference between the experimental and control groups. As it was tested in the repeated post-tests, the experimental group test score outperformed the control group's test scores.

To determine the group pre to post test mean score difference, the two pre-tests average for each group and the two-post tests average in a similar way were compared based on the paired samples t-test results.

The result proves that significant pre to post reading achievement score was seen in the experimental group, but no significant difference was observed between the pre and post test scores in the control group. Except the inclusion of the poetry in the intervention program, the other situations are almost equal to both groups. Therefore, the better achievement of the experimental group can be attributed only to the effect of the poetry used for the treatment.

Acceptability of the Intervention

The data collected from the content validity questionnaire were grouped under five categories. For each category, the actual mean score was calculated and expected mean for each item was assumed to be. This was found by dividing the sum of the highest score (5) and the lowest (1). Then, the t observed was calculated using one sample t test. After that the observed mean was compared to the expected mean for each category. The result of each category ascertains that the experimental group accepted the intervention as literary valid and effective to promote their reading comprehension.

Getting the participants' feedback can prove the validity of the program at three levels: the goal of the intervention, the literal value of the material added and feasibility of the procedures employed (Wolf, 1979).

The finding of this study is consistent with Daniel's (2016) experimental study. In his study entitled: "Role of Using Poetry on Students' Writing Skill," which was conducted in Mekdela Preparatory School of grade 11 students found that the experimental group of his study which used poetry as the only independent variable showed better achievement.

As cited in Erkaya (2005) in her article "Benefits of Poetry in the EFL context" Lao and Krashen (2000) presented the result of the experimental group reading comprehension test in which poems were used interactively with non-literary texts at a university in Hong Kong was greater than from the control group students result that used only-non-literary texts during the reading sessions.

The research findings from Hamdoun and Hussain(2011) that was resulted after conducting a research on two comparison groups to see the effectiveness of literary texts in improving EFL learning ascertain that the EG which was treated with literary texts outperformed the CG which didn't pass through the treatment. After the treatment, the post test mean score for the EG (33.3) and the CG mean score (20.4) show greater variation between the two groups. As the two groups had been at the same level of reading comprehension before the treatment with 13.8(for EG) and 14.2(for CG) pre-test mean score, the researchers affirmed that the observed change was attributed only to the effect of literary texts. The research findings discussed so far are consistent with the result of the present study because similar results were found from similar designs and procedures.

Therefore, even though these research findings were conducted outside our context, the researchers used them for comparison because similar to our country's context, English is given as a foreign or second language in these countries, too. That means it is similar with our context in terms of using English as a foreign language. Hence, the result of the present study is consistent with those previous studies.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the role of poetry on students' reading comprehension. To address this goal, consideration was given to the hypothesis which presupposed the prevalence of significant pre-to-post reading comprehension test scores difference between the EG to whom poetry was used as the only independent variable during the treatment and the CG who was not treated with the integration of poetry.

Four reading comprehension tests were prepared and administered to both groups. Before the intervention, two pretests within a week interval were given to measure the two group students reading

comprehension level. After the intervention, two post-tests almost similar to the pre-tests were given in a similar situation but for different purpose. The purpose of the post tests was to see whether the hypothesized difference appeared between the experimental and control groups due to the effect of the independent variable. The scores collected from the tests were computed using t-test. To compare the two pre-tests and the two post-tests result differences between the experimental and control groups, independent sample t- test, and for inter group comparison paired samples t test were used. The findings of the study proved that the significant difference found between the EG and CG was not by chance, rather it was due to the effect of poetry texts added to the treatment given to the EG.

The statistical analysis of the post-test result proved that the experimental group got greater mean score because of the effectiveness of poetry which was used in the experimental group as the only independent variable. This result implies that the reading standard of the experimental group has improved remarkably in the acquisition of the language skill given in the intervention. In other words, the result of the post-test indicates that there are significant gains to be achieved.

Among factors which may cause reading comprehension problem, failing to expose students to read literary texts regularly is considered to be one major factor. Hence, creating text variety by integrating literary text alongside nonliterary texts supposed to be an effective way to promote students' reading comprehension. Therefore, by identifying the drawbacks of the existing non-literary texts and based on the new integration approaches using poetry alongside non-literary texts in the EFL class would be useful to alleviate the problem and improve the students' reading comprehension performance.

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