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On the Impact of Literature Reading on Iranian Upper-intermediate Male and Female EFL Learners' Creative Writing Ability

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Abstract

Since learners' motivation and engagement have a considerable impact on learning a foreign language, the importance of humanizing the materials in today's world of materials development is gaining much more attention. This study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of literature reading as one of the most important elements of humanizing the materials on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' creative writing ability. In so doing, 60 learners studying at Zehtaban English Institute in Rasht, with the age range of 19 to 23, were selected from among 160 participants based on their performance on a sample copy of QPT. The study employed a true-experimental design in which the participants were randomly assigned to two experimental groups and two control groups. First, a pretest of creative writing was administered. Then, the experimental groups received an eight-session treatment that was the instruction through literature reading. Meanwhile, the control groups received an eight-session placebo. A posttest of creative writing was then administered to all the participants. The use of two-way ANOVA revealed that the experimental groups with the treatment of instruction through literature reading outperformed the control groups in creative writing test scores. Based on the findings of the present study, all stakeholders, particularly materials developers and teachers are proposed to include literary texts in language teaching and learning materials so that remarkable opportunity for improving creative writing ability among learners would be provided.

Keywords: creative writing, creativity, humanizing, literature reading, writing ability

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, a great deal of communication occurs in written forms. Hence, having the knowledge of how to write effectively is one of the vital abilities which language learners need to improve in order to communicate information and express their ideas vividly. Rao (2007) claims that English as foreign language writing is usable in two major aspects: first, it proliferates learners' thinking, supports to organize ideas and improves their ability to analyze, criticize and summarize. Second, it reinforces learners' perception of the language, reflection on it and their thinking process. Supposedly, each of the learners has better or poorer potentiality to write. But when it comes to creative writing, it has to be taught, as it is one of the expert writing skills to achieve.

Writing beneficially contributes to the improvement of other language skills and also becomes a means to express one's attitudes, feelings, and information in order to communicate well and reach to multiple goals in language learning process (Aghayani & Janfeshan, 2020; Khodashenas & Rakhshi, 2017; Movahedi & Aghajanzadeh Kiasi, 2021; Tavanapour & Chalak, 2021). By the help of creative writing, learners can utilize their linguistic ability and go quite further than what they cannot do in oral expression. In addition, involving EFL learners in the process of reading and writing would benefit them in the development of these skills. Moreover, reading literary texts would supply learners with a variety of vocabulary, grammar, text structures, and different kinds of writing styles and genres which enhance their language proficiency and critical thinking awareness in expression of their opinions and determination of their perspectives (McKay, 2001).

In recent times, the role of literature as an essential component of the language curriculum has been gaining attention, because of its capability to present an authentic model of the language use. In relation to this issue, Tomlinson (2013) emphasizes on the importance of materials development, developed by teachers who need just a little training, experience and support to become successful materials writers who are able to produce imaginative materials which are authentic, flexible, learner-centered, provocative, relevant, and useful for their users. Furthermore, there should be much focus on personalization, localization and modernization of materials, multidimensional approaches to language learning, interaction between readers, language and the texts and also cognitive and affective engagement of the learners. Besides, Tomlinson (1994) states, using literature, literary texts in particular that are linguistically simple yet cognitively and emotionally complex, would be encouraging for learners' personal engagement and response.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In recent years, multiple difficulties in creative writing ability of both native and non-native English speakers have been witnessed. According to Demir (2013), creativity and writing skill are in a perfect congruence together or in other words they are identical. Writing, creative in particular, has been recognized as the most complicated and challenging skill compared to other skills of language for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It has also received very little attention and learners seldom have the opportunity to produce creative or literary text by their own. Much of the writing tasks and activities that learners are asked to do in classrooms are in a form of short answers or fill-in-the-blank which are not quite challenging and demand no creativity.

In searching of its cause, on the one hand, there is learners' limited knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, background reading, and unfamiliarity with genres, styles, and other related factors with respect to their language ability. On the other hand, there are insufficient controversial and provocative materials in our teaching or learning environment. Furthermore, the lack of motivation, interest, and self-confidence, as a result of which, the lack of originality are other salient issues, which keep the learners from expressing their thoughts and ideas freely.

Writing includes creative thinking and makes a connection between new information and the prior knowledge in a way which the new information makes sense. As a result, the learners' lack of reading engagement and limited background reading knowledge lead to their incapability of expressing themselves in a clear, comprehensible, and self-sustaining manner in writing. Besides, they would be afraid of taking risks and be adventurous with the language. In relation to literature reading, most of the research has been dedicated to the development of learners' reading skill. Unfortunately, there has always been an inattentive attitude toward the writing skill of the learners particularly in the Iranian context. As a result, there would be much difficulties and weaknesses for the learners in the area of writing. Therefore, it is necessary to detect a proper solution for this prominent problem. To this end, this study aimed to fill this gap and find a probable effect of literature reading on Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' creative writing ability.

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1.2 Research Questions

To fulfill the aims of the present study, the following questions were proposed:

RQ1: Does literature reading have any statistically significant effect on the development of creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners?

RQ2: Do literature reading and gender, on account of their mutual interaction, produce a statistically significant effect on the development of creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

Based on the aforementioned issues and to fulfill the aims of the present study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

$H_0$1: Literature reading does not have any statistically significant effect on the development of creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners.

$H_0$2: Literature reading and gender, on account of their mutual interaction, do not produce a statistically significant effect on the development of creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners.

2. Review of the Literature

The notion of success in creative writing is incorporated with self-expression, the flow of ideas, growing confidence, and enjoyment of academic writing. Good writing comprises the ability to express ideas clearly, coherently, and confidently (Bastrukmen & Lewis, 2002; Behyar & Nabilou, 2019; Bolourchi & Soleimani, 2021; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Zarearsanjani & Fakhraee Faruji, 2021). Furthermore, creative writing enables the learners to express themselves more efficiently and with great confidence. According to Firdaus and Mariyat (2017), education has a significant role to guarantee the development of cognitive intelligence and affective engagement. Education aims to improve human ability to create a good personality. Berman (1999) believes that "affect" is the most significant feature in learning.

Many publications highlight the need to develop affectively engaging materials which consider all learning styles preferences (Tomlinson, 2003, 2008). Tomlinson (2010) believes that humanistic coursebooks engage learners' affect by providing imaging, inner voice, and kinesthetic activities. Accordingly, he maintains that most instructors can humanize their textbooks by diminishing the book's inhumane features and increasing and appending it to those parts that make learners think, feel, and do it for learning. Tomlinson (2003) defined a humanistic coursebook as "one which respects it users as human beings and helps them to exploit their capacity for learning through meaningful experiences" (p. 163). He also suggested to humanize coursebooks by "adding activities which help to make the language learning process a more affective experience and finding ways of helping the learners to connect what is in their mind" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 163).

According to Tomlinson (2013), there are a number of ways of developing coursebooks that are more humanistic. Writing in large and varied teams is one way of humanizing the coursebooks which includes new and experienced teachers, new and experienced materials writers, a poet, an artist, an applied linguist, a musician, an examiner, and a cartoonist, gathering all of their resources and stimulating each other in order to provide a flexible unit framework. Another way is using a text-driven approach that focuses on potentially attractive texts in which the authors keep the students in mind, rather than concentrating on an element or language proficiency. Using a multidimensional approach is the next way of humanizing the materials which is based on the use of effects, the mental, the image and inner voice, and what we do throughout the use of effective language and durable learning. Varying the unit focus can also help to humanize the textbooks in a way that the units have only one central focus. Therefore, there would be a better chance of dealing with more meaningful engagement with language in use. Talking to the learners with the use of informal discourse, the active voice, concreteness, inclusiveness, and sharing personal experiences and opinions would also be beneficial in humanizing the materials. Connecting to the learners' attitudes, feelings, and opinions, providing text-free generalizable activities, including awareness activities, providing alternatives, and localizing coursebooks are other profitable ways in humanizing the materials.

Notably, the main focus of this study is on another salient way of humanizing the materials which is using literature. Tomlinson (2013) declares that using literature is one of the best ways to achieve the goals of developing humanistic coursebooks. He, moreover, considers literature as a means to stimulate multidimensional mental activity during

language learning (Tomlinson, 2001). This is the only act if learners are interested in experiencing the literature, rather than studying it. He has found that the greatest way to do this is to create a linguistic library that is linguistically simple yet cognitively and emotionally complex, and then they are used as a basis of human activity that encourages personal appointment and responds (Tomlinson, 1994).

Reading literature from different periods enlighten human beings and profit their perspectives, understandings, and experiences. Teaching and reading various literary genres can contribute in enhancing students' creative writing. In this regard, literature is considered to be the core of language learning. Many language teachers tend to admit the potentiality of literary texts in terms of the development of different aspects of a foreign language. It is discussed that literature promotes students' L2 vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of lexical phrases and fixes expressions (Frantzen, 2002; Mackenzie, 2000), grammatical knowledge (Tayebipoor, 2009), language awareness (Carroli, 2008), and sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence (Mckay, 2001). Accordingly, literature can be beneficial for EFL learners in terms of authenticity, motivation, cultural/intercultural awareness, intensive/extensive reading practice, sociolinguistic/pragmatic knowledge, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, the four language skills including writing, reading, speaking, and listening, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. Additionally, the aesthetic aspects of literature contribute to the progress of learners' cognitive involvement and affective engagement. Taking all these issues into consideration, it can be concluded that literature may improve all language skills, and, moreover, it likely has the potential to significantly affect the development of creative writing ability.

According to Stern (2001), literature is a prolific source of inspiration for writing in EFL/English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms either as a subject matter or as a model. Readers of literature are motivated to imitate the original writing, its theme, content, and style, and simultaneously they show original thinking and great creativity when they analyze and interpret texts. Various contents, themes, styles, and organizations of literary works help generate original thinking and creativity among learners which they tend to write (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

Literary texts are valuable sources of figurative language, stunning sentences, idiomatic expressions, interesting proverbs, and qualified vocabulary items enriched with connotative meanings. Additionally, range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and style of writing woven into a gripping narration motivates the readers. As Custodio and Sutton (1998) assert, literature provides motivation among learners to ask, explore, and criticize. Vandrick (2003) claims that learners have the opportunity to be exposed to different language patterns to see how sentences and paragraphs can be put together. As a result, literature in capable of supporting learners improves their language skills, and more importantly motivating them in promoting their creative writing ability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Sixty learners of English as a foreign language in the 19-23 age range were selected among 160 EFL learners by administration of a sample copy of Oxford Quick Placement Test (QPT). The participants were male and female upper-intermediate EFL learners and were selected from Zehtaban English Institute located in Rasht, Guilan, Iran. After being homogenized by QPT, the participants were randomly assigned into four sample groups consisting of experimental female participants, experimental male participants, control female participants, and control male participants. In the present study, literature reading was the independent variable, learners' gender was the moderator variable, and creative writing ability was the dependent variable.

3.2 Research Design

The present study employed a true-experimental design which uses randomized selection strategies and yields the highest degree of control possible (Hashemi, 2014). In this regard, the present research followed a factorial design which is a subcategory of true-experimental design for the sake of greater internal validity. Selecting the participants of the study was based on random sampling. In this way, the selection was based absolutely on probability and chance; hence minimizing the effects of any extrinsic or idiosyncratic factors (Dörnyei, 2007).

3.3 Instruments

The data required for the present study was collected quantitatively. Furthermore, the main data collection instruments in this study were paper and pencil tests. A pretest was administered before the treatment to perceive the primary differences among the experimental and control groups in relation to their creative writing ability. Then a posttest was administered to the participants of both experimental and control groups to measure participants' progress after they

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received the treatment and the placebo. The tests required the participants to write on the given topics, using 150 words and in a 45-minute period. The researchers assessed the participants' pretest and posttest with the help of two English Language Teaching (ELT) experts (one MA holder & one Ph.D. holder). At the end of the scoring process, to verify the consistency of raters' judgments, the researchers estimated the inter-rater reliability, and the average of the scores given by the two raters was considered as the final score of each participant.

3.4 Rubric

In order to assess the pretest and posttest of the participants and for systemizing the process, the researchers used a rubric for creative writing as Figure 1 shows it.

	Beginning 1(D)	Developing 2(C)	Accomplished 3(B)	Exemplary 4(A)
Ideas and content	* Focus on topic is not clearly defined. * Limited, or disconnected details show virtually no understanding of the subject. * Approach is common.	*Focus on topic is somewhat defined. * Underdeveloped details show little knowledge and are too general to create a picture. * fresh approach attempted, but lacks supporting details.	*Focus on topic is clear. *Sufficient detail creates a picture showing some knowledge and insight *Fresh approach adds something to reader's understanding.	*Focus on the topic is clear and well defined. *Rich sense of detail creates a vivid, authentic picture of both environment and action, showing knowledge and insight. *Fresh approach holds reader's attention.
Organization	*Introduction /conclusion may be absent or lack focus. * Sequencing of details is not clear. * Transitions are not evident	*Introduction and conclusion attempt to establish focus. * Sequencing of details is limited. *Transitions are limited..	*Effective introduction and conclusion are clearly linked (may be explicit or implicit connection) and establish focus. *Sequencing of details is logical. *Transitions attempt to tie the ideas of the paper together..	*Memorable introduction and conclusion are clearly linked (may be explicit or implicit connection) and establish focus. * Sequencing of details is effective and logical. *Transitions effectively tie the ideas of the paper together.
Voice	*Writer's personality is not evident. *Commitment to topic is lacking. *Connection to audience and purpose is lacking. *Writing evokes minimal emotion in the reader.	*Writer's personality pokes through; confidence and feeling fade in and out. *A commitment to the topic is apparent. *Connection to audience and purpose is appropriate. * The writing evokes some emotion in the reader.	*Writer's personality is undefined; writing is cautious. *Commitment to topic is limited. *Connection to audience and purpose is limited. *Writing evokes limited emotion in the reader.	* The writer's personality is expressed; confidence and feeling are apparent. * Individual, powerful commitment to the topic is obvious. * Connection to audience and purpose is excellent. *Writing evokes strong emotion
Word Choice	*Limited vocabulary *Verb and noun choice is weak. *Adjectives and phrases lack definition. *Language choice and phrasing is inappropriate, repetitive or lacks meaning. * Dialogue, if used, is limited.	*Ordinary word choice attempts to create a picture in the reader's mind. *Verbs, nouns, adjectives, and phrases are adequate. * Language choice and phrasing lack inspiration. * Dialogue, if used, sounds forced.	*Correct, adequate word choice creates a clear picture in the reader's mind. * Lively verbs, specific nouns, and appropriate adjectives and phrases add to the meaning. *Some colorful language and unusual phrasing encourage reflection. * Dialogue, if used, sounds appropriate.	*Precise, vivid, natural language creates a clear and complete picture in the reader's mind. *Powerful verbs, precise nouns, appropriate adjectives and phrases enhance meaning. *Original phrasing and memorable language prompt reflective thoughts and insights. *Dialogue, if used, sounds natural.
Sentence Fluency	*Sentences contain unnecessary words that detract from the meaning. * Sentences offer little or no variety in beginnings, length, and structure. * Sentences lack rhythm or pattern when read aloud.	* Sentences contain some unnecessary words; however, meaning is fairly clear. *Sentences offer some variety in beginnings, length and structure. * Sentences follow a predictable pattern and rhythm when read aloud.	*Sentences contain words that are necessary for the meaning to be clear. *Sentences vary in beginnings, length, and structure. * Most sentences sound smooth and rhythmic when read aloud.	*Sentences contain words that are relevant so the meaning is enhanced. *Sentences vary in beginnings, length and structure. *Sentences sound smooth and rhythmic when read aloud; they invite expressive reading.

Figure 1. Rubric for creative writing assignment: Against the odds

3.5 Data Collection

The participants in the present study were homogenized through QPT. Among the 160 learners who sat for the test, 60 learners got the score between the ranges of 40-47 and were considered for being in the upper-intermediate level and were selected as the participants of this study. The participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Next, to find out the possible initial differences among the experimental and control groups regarding their creative writing ability, a writing pretest was administered before the treatment. The participants attended a class met for 60 minutes twice a week. The treatment lasted for four weeks. Each session the teacher introduced a short

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story or a poem to the participants in the experimental groups in order to read and comments on them in written forms. The participants came up with their thoughts and ideas and also shared their comments with each other. Conversely, in the control groups there were not any literature reading tasks to be used. The participants in this group worked on tasks which are usually performed in reading classes without touching literature and literary works. Eventually, a writing posttest was conducted to the participants of both experimental and control groups to investigate the participants' progress after receiving the treatment and the placebo.

3.6 Data Analysis

The participants' writing pretest and posttest performances were rated by two ELT experts based on the rubric for creative writing. Each writing sample was scored by two raters for the sake of greater reliability, and the average of the scores given by the two raters was contemplated as the final score. Estimating the inter-rater reliability, the researchers recorded the assembled data. The present study aimed to investigate the effect of literature reading on creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate male and female EFL learners; therefore, there was one dependent variable (creative writing ability) and two independent variables including literature reading and gender. Also, the researchers aimed to detect if the treatment of literature reading interacts significantly with gender. As a result, a two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used as the statistical test of this research. This test helped the researchers assess the direct effects of the independent variables of this study (i.e. literature reading & gender) on the dependent variable, that is, creative writing ability. The interactive effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable was assessed, as well.

4. Results and Discussion

A two-way ANOVA was run to the results of the pretest for the control and the experimental groups. It was run to see if there were any statistically significant differences among the groups in terms of their writing before introducing the specific treatment. The findings of the Univariate test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Tests of between-subjects effects for the pretest scores of creative writing

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.525[a]	3	.175	.514	.675	.027
Gender	.004	1	.004	.012	.912	.000
Groups	.017	1	.017	.049	.826	.001
Gender * Groups	.504	1	.504	1.479	.229	.026

a. R Squared = .027 (Adjusted R Squared = -.025)

The significance values of the F test in the Univariate Table were greater than (.05) for the pretest of writing for male and female participants in the control and the experimental groups suggesting that there were not any statistically significant differences among the groups at the beginning of the study in terms of their creative writing. The Univariate procedure of two-way ANOVA was also run to the results of the posttest to model the values of the writing test based on their relationships to the categorical predictors (i.e., gender and types of treatment). Comparisons were made between the control groups who received placebo and the experimental groups who received instruction through literature reading. The results are given in Table 2.

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Table 2. Univariate test results for the creative writing test (Main effect)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	204.479[a]	3	68.160	158.599	.000	.895
Intercept	15568.704	1	15568.704	36226.348	.000	.998
Gender	.938	1	.938	2.181	.145	.037
Groups	203.504	1	203.504	473.528	.000	.894
Gender * Groups	.038	1	.038	.087	.769	.002

a. R Squared = .895 (Adjusted R Squared = .889)

Given that the main effects of types of instruction (with and without literature reading) were statistically significant for the groups, the main effects were also examined in pairwise comparisons (Table 2). In other words, significant differences were found on the dependent variable that was creative writing scores for the control and the experimental group ($F_{\text{study groups}} = 473.528$; $p = .000 < .05$). Partial eta squared for "types of instruction" was high ($r = .894$).

The next step was to make comparisons among male and female EFL learners in the control groups who received placebo and the experimental groups who worked through literature reading. It was run to monitor the possible effects of using literature reading upon female and male language learners. As it was shown in Table 2, although the main effects of types of instruction (with and without using literature reading) was statistically significant for the control and experimental groups, no significant difference was reported regarding the creative writing scores for the experimental groups across gender ($F_{\text{gender}} = 2.181$; $p = .145 > .05$). Partial eta squared for "gender" was very small ($r = .037$). Additionally, no statistically significant difference was reported for the interaction effect of gender and types of treatment for the EFL learners who experienced literature reading and those who received placebo in terms of their creative writing at the end of the study ($F_{\text{gender* groups}} = .087$; $P = .769 > .05$).

Pairwise comparisons were also made for the creative writing test scores for the students who were treated traditionally and those who received instruction through using literature reading. The results of the comparisons are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3. Pairwise comparisons for the creative writing test scores

Gender			Paired Differences				t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Mean	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Female (Ex.)	Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-3.98	.49	-4.25	-3.70	-31.15	14	.00**
Male (Ex.)	Pair 2	Pretest - Posttest	-3.51	.85	-3.98	-3.04	-15.97	14	.00**
Female (Co.)	Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-.10	.33	-.28	.08	-1.14	14	.27
Male (Co.)	Pair 2	Pretest - Posttest	-.10	.33	-.28	.08	-1.14	14	.27

a. Based on estimated marginal means

**. The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.

The comparison between the pretest and the posttest revealed that, both female and male participants in the experimental groups improved with respect to their creative writing ability from pretest to posttest; as the level of significance was lower than .05. But regarding female and male participants in the control groups, there were no progress from pretest to posttest in terms of creative writing. Besides, there were not any statistically significant differences between female and male participants' creative writing ability and based on the tables it can be indicated that using literature reading as the treatment of the study had been beneficial for developing the creative writing ability of the learners. As a result, the first null hypothesis was rejected implying that literature reading has a statistically significant effect on the development of creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners. Also the second and the third null hypotheses were supported indicating that there is not any statistically significant difference between Iranian upper-intermediate male and female EFL learners' creative writing ability and literature reading and gender, on account of their mutual interaction, do not produce a statistically significant effect on the development of creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners.

This study aimed to elucidate the possible effect of literature reading on Iranian upper-intermediate male and female EFL learners' creative writing ability. As evidenced before, the development within groups from the pretest to the posttest for the control groups that received traditional instruction was not statistically significant. The experimental groups that received instruction through literature reading, however, made a salient progress from the pretest to the posttest. This fact indicated that using literature reading instruction within the materials was considerably effective in improving EFL learners' creative writing ability. Although the performances of female and male learners in both control and experimental groups were approximately the same at the beginning of the study, there was a remarkable difference between the groups' performance on the posttest. In fact, the experimental groups outperformed their counterparts in the control groups. It can be considered that there is a significant difference between the effects of instruction through literature reading and traditional instruction on the learners.

The declaration of the present study is in line with the discussion that Tomlinson (2013) raised about humanizing the coursebooks. Without a doubt, literature is qualified to function as a means of stimulating multidimensional mental activity through language learning. This is only applicable if the learners are helped and motivated to experience the literature which relates to their lives. In this regard, there is a need for such texts which are linguistically simple yet cognitively and emotionally challenging and complex, and later to use them as a basis for humanistic activities that encourage and increase personal engagement and response. Moreover, by accompanying literature in the course book, effective and durable learning can be observed; since the nature of literature gives this opportunity to the learners to bring their experience of life, interests and enthusiasms, attitudes and feelings, and above all their capacity to make

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meaningful connections in their minds. Accordingly, with consideration of the learners' psychological and sociological state, literature empowers them to be involved aesthetically, emotionally, and intellectually through the process of learning.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Bartan (2017) who inquired the effects of reading short stories in improving foreign language writing skills through "Read for Writing" model. This study also revealed some common points with Yoshimura's (2009) study who worked on a quasi-experiment investigation on the effects of connecting reading and writing and a checklist to guide the reading process on EFL learners' learning about writing. The findings of the aforementioned study is somehow in line with the present study in relation to the idea of the existence of a substantial correlation between reading and writing ability. Reading texts, particularly authentic literary texts helps learners to improve their critical thinking awareness and therefore creative writing ability.

The finding that the learners who received instruction through literature reading improved in creative writing ability is somehow in line with what was found in Elhabiri's (2013) study in which the researcher tried to help learners develop their writing performances through the medium of English literary texts. The results obtained in the study revealed that there was a close relationship between writing and reading literary texts and the students' posttest writings improved in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics. Therefore, a proper selection of the literary texts later will help the learners to become familiar with different linguistic forms, syntax, and the varied ways of connecting and organizing ideas. Consequently, it can be claimed that literary texts could function effectively in providing an opportunity to develop learners' language proficiency, literary understanding, originality, and creativity in writing.

5. Conclusion

The present study ascertained the positive effects of literature reading on creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate male and female EFL learners. The findings of this study suggested that the learners who received instruction through literature reading during the course significantly improved with respect to their creative writing ability. It is worth mentioning that humanizing the coursebooks provides an opportunity for the learners to utilize literature during the process of learning. In other words, involving learners in reading literary texts supplies them with a variety of perspectives, structures, vocabulary, and grammar that enhance their language proficiency and creativity in thinking and writing. The studying and teaching of literature improves the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and also adds to human experiences, values, and understandings. Consequently, it would be a beneficial choice in improving the creative writing ability. This study recommends language teachers and learners, materials developers, curriculum and syllabus designers, and other stakeholders in the field of language teaching and learning to use literature as an advantageous and precious source in the process of language teaching.

5.1 Implications of This Study

The current study perceived the positive effects of literature reading on creative writing ability of Iranian upper-intermediate male and female EFL learners. The findings of the present study revealed that by humanizing the materials along with minimizing the non-humanistic items of the course books and by proliferating and adding to those elements particularly literature reading tasks which encourage learners to think, feel, and do; the learners performed better and their creative writing abilities improved well. Based on the results of this research, literature reading tasks such as short stories and poems can be incorporated into the advancement of an English writing curriculum, as it was confirmed that these tasks could qualify the learners to improve their creative writing abilities to their true potential.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can be beneficial for all stakeholders in the field of language teaching and learning. Especially, language teachers and learners, materials developers, curriculum and syllabus designers who can use the findings of this study to improve the state and quality of language teaching and learning in the context of Iran. In particular, the findings of the present study can be advantageous for those material developers and teachers who treat the learners as intelligent human beings with thoughts, feelings, and experience. Those who motivate the learners and provide opportunities for them in order to maximize their cognitive, affective, and personal engagement with the text during the process of learning. As a result, remarkable and considerable development on the learners' creative writing ability can be witnessed.

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5.2 Limitations of This Study

Certain limitations were involved in the present study. One limitation was the number of participants involving a sample of 60 upper-intermediate EFL learners from Zehtaban English Institute in Rasht, Guilan, which may confine the findings of the study and limits the generalization of it. Another limitation of the present study was the age of the participants that ranged from 19 to 23. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other learners with other range of ages. Furthermore, the study concentrated on the writing ability among the four language skills. For the sake of developing the creative writing ability of the participants, the study restricted itself only to the literature reading while other factors which motive humanizing the materials could be used. Focusing on the upper-intermediate level EFL learners also restricted the results of the study, because the results cannot be generalized to other proficiency levels.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Taken the limitations of the present study into consideration, the following points are suggested for further research:

• The present study was administered with a limited sample within a short period of time. In order to achieve more precise and reliable results, it will be beneficial that future research consider a larger sample over a longer period of time.

• The current study exclusively examined the upper-intermediate level EFL learners' creative writing ability. Further research can investigate other proficiency levels including beginner, intermediate, or advanced level learners' creative writing ability development as a consequence of literature reading.

• The data were gathered from learners aged 19-23. Further research can examine varied age groups.

• Further research can investigate other language skills, including listening, reading, and speaking.

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