On the Basis of Literature to Build a Highway of SLW

YAO Yuanfei[a]; PENG Lin[a]; TU Dongxu[a], *

[a]West China Normal University, Nanchong, Sichuan, China.
*Corresponding author.

Abstract

Literature appears in different media. Making full use of these media in teaching will help to improve the rate of second language acquisition. This paper focuses on a three-month experiment in two classes of an agricultural secondary vocational school in Bazhong, Sichuan Province. One class adopts traditional English teaching and the other class does English literature as the main teaching mode. Finally, through SPSS data analysis, the differences in English writing performance between the experimental class and the control class, the differences in the frequency of writing strategies used by the experimental class before and after the experiment, and the different effects of literature as the main teaching medium on the improvement of students' English writing performance are obtained, with a view to providing valuable information for the second language writing teaching and related research.

**Key words:** Literature; Second language writing; Second language acquisition rate

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with the globalization, the second foreign language education has set off a wave of upsurge. How to improve the rate of second language acquisition has become a variety of research topics in foreign language education, foreign language songs, film and television works for the application of second language assisted teaching are also common. In addition, the teaching of second language through classical literature seems to be out of date for the current education in the context of multimedia. However, in the specific teaching application, it has to return to the application teaching at the language level. The research on the application of classical literary works to the second language teaching mainly focuses on the shaping of humanistic quality. Many scholars agreed that reading a lot of classical literature can improve the output of the second language, but there has been a lack of systematic research.

When answering this question, we should first know clearly why literature can promote the rate of second language acquisition. Abrams' the mirror and the lamp (Abrams, 1971) explains the relationship between literature and the world as follows:

Universe

↓

Literature

Author   Reader
(Abrams, 1953, p.6)
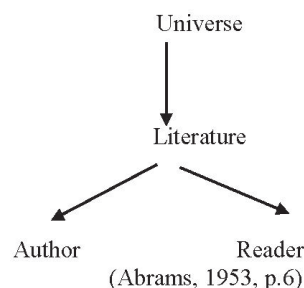
According to Abrams, the literary works created by the author are not only the epitome of society and culture, but also the interpretation of the readers, and they react with each other. As a second language learner, he should be in the position of reader. Second language acquisition is the expression and thinking of this language; as the carrier of culture, when readers read, their reading behavior and thinking will also be imperceptibly affected. Therefore,

classical literature is the most appropriate medium for second language acquisition, and it is not out of date. Then the research of readers' reflection will be closely related to second language acquisition.

In the 1980s, the ideas reflected by readers were used in language teaching, such as M. Benton, R. protherough, etc. There is a general feature of this teaching method: it is student-oriented and focuses on analyzing and recording the reflection of reading acceptance. Then Benton put forward "Introspective recall method" (Benot, 1988), that is, to ask students to reflect on reading, to arouse memories through their reflection, and to improve students' literary appreciation ability and aesthetic taste. Another way is to help students to shape the humanistic quality, but also for language learning. Some scholars think this is a good strategy of "one stone, two birds" (Lu, 1997). In this way, scholars ignore that this teaching method is used in the teaching environment of mother tongue, just like explaining Tang poetry and Song lyrics to students in Chinese, so as to improve the aesthetic ability of literature. The language barrier of literary works written by the second language has become the first stumbling block in shaping the students' humanistic quality. Whether such literary works fail in second language teaching is not so.

Current students can learn about the culture of the country through film, music and other ways and indirectly contact with the language of the country. This means that teachers can make full use of the current background of the times, combined with multimedia teaching, and then return to the book reading. Structuralist narratology holds that "narrative" means "narrative + Event" (Shen and Wang, 2007) as the name suggests. What is narration? It is to narrate the same thing in different ways. For example, when classical literature is put on the screen, it is to tell the same story to the audience in the form of film. Therefore, teachers can make full use of multimedia teaching, set suspense for students, and guide students to return to the text reading. The text uses language as the medium to tell the same story. To return to the literary works with characters as the medium, it is necessary for students to break through their own language barriers. In the traditional second language teaching, students are taught vocabulary first, and then returned to the application of reading. Such a drawback is that it will lead to a mechanical way of learning. Students can only recognize these words, not use them in writing. A popular teaching method is genre context teaching, which requires students to learn vocabulary in a specific context.

Based on this, this paper will select a rural secondary vocational school in Bazhong to carry out an experimental study for three months. Adopt the research method of test analysis. In the first year, subjects from two classes with similar scores were named experimental class and control class respectively. Among them, 43 students applied formative assessment and 34 students applied summative assessment. Before the experiment, the writing task was used to test the use of writing strategies and the writing performance of the subjects, while the control class used the same writing task to test the writing performance of the subjects. The experimental process is a process of improving students' writing ability and strategy through the language teaching with literature medium. In the three-month, viz 12 weeks, experiment, the author arranged eight compositions. After the experiment, the same questionnaire survey was conducted again in the experimental class, and the writing test was conducted in the experimental class and the control class. Finally, through SPSS data analysis, the differences in English writing performance between the experimental class and the control class, the differences in the frequency of writing strategies used by the experimental class before and after the experiment, and the different influences on students' English writing performance through literature based teaching methods are obtained, with a view to bringing enlightenment to the teaching and research of second language writing.

2. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE WRITING TESTS

To investigate the change of students' writing ability after applying the literature, the results of pre-test and post-test conducted in both "CC and EC"[1] were made a comparison in this study. The students in both two classes participated in the pre-test conducted at the beginning of the experiment and the post-test conducted at the end of the research to check whether applying the teaching method based on literature would make significant difference on the writing achievements, and which method has better effect. The writing test topic and requirements for the two classes were the same. The full score of each writing test were 20 points. To make sure the validity of the results, two experienced teachers were invited to grade the students' works, with the average scores as the final result.

2.1 Analysis of Pre-test between EC and CC

The purpose of the comparative analysis is to make sure whether the initial writing performance between EC and CC were of the same level. A descriptive statistic of the pre-test is presented in Table 1 and an Independent Sample T-test results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Group statistics for the pre-test between EC and CC

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean
CC pre-test	37	8.27	2.05	.33
EC pre-test	42	8.23	1.81	.28

From Table 1 the mean scores of CC and EC are 8.27 and 8.23, which indicates there is only a slight difference.

[1] Note. CC = Control Class, EC = Experimental Class.

Furthermore, it's not much different between CC and EC on Std. Deviation. Thus, the conclusion is that the writing achievements between the two classes are not obviously different. Through the Independent Sample t-test, further data analysis is conducted, whose results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Comparison of post-test composition scores of students in different classes

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								Lower	Upper
Pretest equal variances assumed	.563	.455	-0.74	77	.941	.032	.43523	-83	.89
Equal variances not assumed			-0.73	72	.942	.32	.43857	-84	.90

*p > 0.05

According to (新段落没空格) the results in Table 6, the sig. of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is higher than 0.05 indicating the validity of the Equal variances assumed row, which makes it clear that there is no significant difference between students in EC and CC on pretest composition scores (t (77) = 0.073, p > 0.05).

2.2 Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test in CC

In order to check whether the traditional language teaching can effectively improve writing ability for the students in CC, the scores of their pre-test and post-test were adopted to conduct a comparative analysis. The descriptive statistics of the writing scores are analyzed by SPSS and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Comparison of CC students' pretest composition scores with their posttest composition scores (n=37)

	Pretest		Posttest		MD	t (36)
Composition Scores	M	SD	M	SD	-0.83	-4.367*
	8.27	2.05	9.10	1.95		

Note. CC = Control Class.
*p < 0.05

Based on the data in Table 3, the mean value of pre-test and post-test in CC is respectively 8.27 and 9.10, which reveals that there is difference between these two tests. And students' posttests composition scores were significantly different from their pretest composition scores in Control Class (t (36) = 4.367, p < 0.05). Inspections of the two tests means indicate that students' average composition score of posttests (9.10) was significantly higher than that of pretest (8.27). The difference between the means was 0.83 point on a 20-point scale. Thus it can be concluded that the traditional language teaching is still an effective method to improve student's writing ability.

2.3 Analysis of Pre-test and Post-test in EC

In order to check the effectiveness on improving writing ability after implementing the formative assessment in EC, Paired Sample T-test was conducted. And the results are presented in Table 8.

Table 4
Comparison of EC students' pretest composition scores with their posttest composition scores (n=42)

	Pretest		Posttest		MD	t (41)
Composition Scores	M	SD	M	SD	-2.14	-9.526*
	8.23	1.81	10.38	2.25		

Note. EC = Experimental Class.
*p < 0.05

Table 4 shows that students' posttest composition scores were significantly different from their pretest composition scores in Experimental Class (t (41) = 9.526, p < 0.05) . Inspections of the two tests means indicate that students' average composition score of posttests (10.38) was significantly higher than that of pretest (8.23). The difference between the means was 2.14 points on a 20-point scale. The data in the table can clearly prove the effectiveness of formative assessment on improving writing achievement.

2.4 Analysis of Post-Test Between EC and CC

The purpose of the comparison of the post-test between EC and CC is to check whether foreign language based on literature is a more effective method than traditional summative assessment on improving writing ability, on the basis of possessing no significant initial English writing level. The descriptive statistics of the writing scores are analyzed by SPSS and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Comparison of post-test composition scores of students in different classes

	CC (n = 37)		EC (n = 42)		MD	t (77)
Posttest Scores	M	SD	M	SD	-1.27	-2.665*
	9.10	1.95	10.38	2.25		

Note. CC = Control Class, EC = Experimental Class.
*p < 0.05

Table 5 presents that students in Experimental Class were significantly different from those in Control Class on post-test composition scores (t (77) = 2.665, p < 0.05) . Inspections of the two class means indicate that post-test composition scores in Experimental Class (10.38) was significantly higher than those in Control Class (9.10).

The difference between the means was 1.27 points on a 20-point scale. So it can be concluded that formative assessment is a more effective method than traditional summative assessment on improving writing ability.

After collecting and analyzing the data from the pre-test which was conducted at the beginning of the experiment through a group of descriptive statistics from an Independent Sample T-test, it was clear that there was no significant difference of writing level between EC and CC. The data of the post-tests was collected again at the end of the experiment, after implementing the language teaching with literature medium in EC and the traditional language teaching in CC for 3 months.

Then, both two classes adopted a Paired Sample T-test to analyze and compare the writing scores between the pre-test and post-test, which showed that the students in both classes got improvement on their writing ability.

At last, post-writing scores between EC and CC were compared using the Paired Sample t-test to test which teaching based on literature medium method is more effective in improving writing ability. The result showed that the students in EC made a significant advance than those in CC.

2.5 Analysis of One Case in Portfolios

To record the changes of students' writing strategies and writing ability in the experimental class, the author adopted the portfolio, whose pre-tasks were carried out before the starting of the experiment. The portfolio mainly consists of students' self-analysis, self-reflection of their compositions and teacher's feedback. And the author would take care of it until the end of the experiment. By the end of the experiment, it was returned to its owner. There are some advantages that portfolio possesses. First, it records the students' whole learning process and makes students experience success, feel progress and be inspired from it. Second, it provides students the opportunity to evaluate themselves, judge their learning quality and progress, make them become the main body of evaluation, and develop the ability to reflect on their learning activities in the evaluation, and become the real master of learning.

Firstly, the student recorded his original draft in which many mistakes were made, then he made a self-analysis on the original text, and kept a record. Secondly, the teacher gave feedback to the student in oral or written form, and the content of it was kept in the portfolio. Thirdly, the second draft which was also kept in the portfolio was formed in reference to self-analysis and teacher's instruction. Finally, on the last page, the teacher evaluated the progress of the students during this period and put forward hope.

The content of this case indicates that in the whole writing process, the student has been thinking about how to make his composition better. In order to get this goal, the student has been conducting self-analysis. Although there were many deficiencies and errors in the original form, the student could find out some of them himself by self-analyzing and make a correction based on the result of self-analysis, peer evaluation and teacher's instruction and feedback, and the final form was much better than the original one, and compared with the original form, it could be found out that the content of the article was more in line with the theme, the paragraphs and sentences were more closely linked, the use of vocabulary and phrases was more accurate, and the selection of punctuation was more standardized.

In a word, the portfolio clearly demonstrated the whole process of students' use of writing strategies and improvement on writing ability in the writing class in which the accumulation of literature was implemented.

CONCLUSION

Starting from the theory of reader reflection and the narrative form of literature, we can make full use of the different media of literature, which can effectively improve the rate of second language writing. From a macro point of view, it helps to think about the problems brought about by cross-cultural communication; secondly, it is more in line with the current modern foreign language teaching method with the teaching perspective of literary theory; finally, the reading of literature is more conducive to the cultivation of students' language use ability. After three months of the application, the experiment turned out to be successful. Both the experimental data and the results of students' interviews prove that language teaching on the basis of literature is feasible and significant in English writing class in the rural secondary vocational school. However, there were still some limitations in this experiment. Firstly, the experimental time was just three months, and the specimen of the experimental object was small, so the scientific nature of formative evaluation content and tools needs to be further verified. Secondly, the experiment did not involve the major differences, students' original English level differences and gender differences in secondary vocational schools. Many problems need to be further considered and solved. Thirdly, a large number of subjects did not cooperate well during interview or questionnaire, which caused the data not accurate enough.

REFERENCES

Abrams, M. H. (1971). *The mirror and the lamp: Romantic theory and the critical*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Benot, M., et al. (1988). *Yong Readers Responding to poems*. London, England: Routledge.

Lu, R. G. (1997). Reader response theory and English literature teaching. *Journal of Ningbo University*, (02), 33-39.

Scriven. (1967). *The methodology of evaluation*. Washington, DC: American Education Research Association.

Shen, D., & Wang, L. Y. (2007) . *Western narratology*. Peking, China: Peking University Press.