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EFFECT OF STYLISTICS APPROACH ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ARABIC POETRY IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The teaching of poetry should have essential aspects to be observed, that is, the techniques used in the classroom should help the students to increase their power of appreciation of beauty and add to their joy when reading that piece of literature. This study investigated the effect of stylistic approach on secondary school students' performance in Arabic poetry in Ilorin West, Kwara State, Nigeria. A quasi-experimental design in forms of the null-equivalent pre-test and post-test control group design was adopted for the study. Two secondary schools were sampled, a schools constituted the experimental group, while the other served as the control group of which hundred students participated in the study. Fifty students each were both in the experimental and control groups respectively. The Arabic Literature Performance Test (ALPT) was used for data collection. Both groups were exposed to pre-test to determine their previous knowledge and post-test after being taught for five weeks. Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that Arabic students taught with stylistics approach perform better than their counterpart taught with conventional method. The study recommended that teachers of Arabic literature should employ the use of stylistics approach alongside other effective approaches while teaching poetry, National Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS) should inculcate the culture of organising workshops for literature teachers to appraise and equip them with the use of stylistic approach and other teaching approaches.

Keywords: Stylistics Approach, Secondary School Students, Academic Performance, Arabic Poetry, Ilorin Metropolis

Introduction

Literature offers tremendous benefit to both teachers and students in particular. According to Ayanniyi (2009), studying literature has the following benefits: it broadens and enlightens the mind, cleanses it of preconceptions, and makes it free and active. Students learn the humane method of investigating mind and action via the study of literature. Aluko (1989), opines that the study of literature enhances the development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of an individual. It plays an important role in the achievement of the goals of education; it aims at completing the development of the individual. It is the potential for growth in knowledge and wisdom; the acquisition of a keen understanding of human nature and of human relationship, the freedom of choice to enter each character's heart.

Arabic literature unlike other literatures has four broad aspects artistically known as genres. These include: Prose (*An Nathru*), Poetry (*As Sh'iru*), Drama (*Al Masrahiyyatu*) and Proverbs (*Al Amthaalu*).

Unlike the other genres of literature, poetry gives room for the economisation of words to express deep thoughts spiced by passion and emotion. Poetry is written in verses and stanzas embellished by rhythm, rhyme and other features of sound (Coleridge, 1987). In other words, poetry simply means a work of literature expressed in metrical form (Wikipedia). The use of symbolism, imagery and figures of speech is higher in poetry than the other two genres of literature. Poetry, in particular has a lot to do with feelings and the senses. It appeals to the feelings and by so doing develops the emotional and imaginative aspects of man. The language of poetry, according to Nnolim (1990), is a subtle, not explicit, connotative; rather than denotative, allusive rather than direct, metaphorical; rather than literal, and symbolic rather than clear, all of which are not typically expected from the language of novels or any other prose story. Smith (2010) concur with the definition of poetry given by an 18th century romantic poet, William Wordsworth, that poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling or thinking recollected in tranquility or an exposition of one's inner feeling when the mind is at rest.

Literature Review

The Concept of Poetry: Poetry is a type of writing that is sparked by emotion and conveys a strong emotion that may be very challenging to describe in literary form. It is the act of uniting pleasure with truth by the help of imagination and reasoning. It is also the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions and feelings. However, poetry is an act of writing and collection of poems. The diction deployed in poetry is deeper and richer than those treated in prose and drama. In view of all these, A poet is theoretically free to use language however he pleases. Poetic license describes the freedom a poet can exercise (Ibitola, 2009). Thus, it can be inferred that poetry is concerned with the aesthetic and ornamental application of a language's regular laws in a unique piece of writing or speech to accomplish a particular impact. This license in summary allows a poet to create new words, disobey rules of grammar, create inversions and use archaic diction.

Poetry can also help students develop a strong sense of word choice, syntactical formulation, and the rhetorical and aesthetic beauty of language. It forces students to master lovely metaphors, similes, and paradoxes that depict the poet's individual thoughts and feelings. Students can thus enjoy the inherent beauty of poetic words, their sound, their meanings, and their profound poetic effect by reading poetry. They not only pick up on the poem's literary and symbolic vocabulary, but they are also motivated to employ it in their own work.

Poetry explores the possibilities of language and uses it to control and clarify emotion, spiritual and sense experience. The familiarity with the concept of metre and rhythm can improve students' own writing and they will be able to appreciate and apply these ideas (Smith 2010). Brosna (1998) highlights the features of poetry: the language of poetry is concise and condensed. The words in poetry are carefully chosen in a way to make them sound musical and meaningful. Poetry is written in verse and can only be best realized when it is recited or sung. This is because every good poem is first and foremost meant to be sung. Poetry is not easily understood when reading, findings from Ayanniyi (2009) has shown that among the three genres of literature, poetry seems the most difficult. This is because of its ambiguity, obscurity, unfamiliarity of words and its elliptical nature. It is believed to be the oldest of the literary genres.

Over the ages, traditional approach had been used in the teaching of poetry. Because it is primarily teacher-centered, the traditional approach is the teaching method that Vincent (1979), referenced in

Iyabode (2013), identifies as a literate and impressionistic approach. The poem's title and the author's name are written on the chalkboard by the teacher to start the class. His knowledge of the sociology of the poetry astounds the uninformed students. He might ask a student to read the poem aloud in front of the class. He describes the rhetorical devices. He tells his students to look for figures of speech before the lecture is over. Naturally, education professionals do not favour this manner of instruction. They oppose on the grounds that students shouldn't take a passive role in their education. He may read the poem to the class or gets a student to do so. Expectedly, this method of teaching has not found favour with experts in education on the ground that students must not be passive in the learning process. According to Ehindero (1986), referenced by Inyang (2009), teaching the students particular, rigorous, and fragmented proper responses is insufficient for the instructor who wants to honestly and professionally execute curriculum content. As a result, notes made in the type of classroom environment described above will be little more than cram papers.

Other approaches include Information Based Approach (IBA), which tries to expose students to information about a target nation, culture, and even the author of the literary texts through the use of various teaching methodologies. Most of this strategy is centered on the teacher. They sought to instruct and focus on "areas such as history and characteristics of literary movements; the social and historical background to a text; the author's biography and its relevance to his or her writings; literary genres and rhetorical devices, etc." (Lazar, 1993).

Another student-centered approach is the Personal Response Based Approach (PRBA), which concentrates on eliciting individual responses to a text (in terms of experience, feelings, and opinions). They make great group activity stimulus and can encourage students to "become actively involved both intellectually and emotionally" (Carter & McCarthy, 1994). The stylistics approach uses the apparatus of linguistic description, such as specific stylistic choices and patterns as well as metalinguistic items to analyze how meanings in a text are communicated, in contrast to the Language Based Approach (LBA), which promotes techniques that are learner-centered, activity-based, and give particular attention to how language is manipulated. This includes the unconventional structure of the poetic work, where language often is used in a non-grammatical and loose manner (Han & Omar, 2009).

Shibu (2006) claims that stylistics is the study of how a linguistic code's resources might be applied to the creation of the real communications. With this perspective, literature is largely viewed as communicative speech. It also discusses how linguistic patterns are used to produce a type of communication that transmits a text's specific messages. And according to Niazir (2010), stylistics offers a means of combining the disciplines of English language and English-language literature. It aids in a deeper comprehension of the subject matter and is a systemic approach to teaching literature. This is to suggest that teachers should incorporate Arabic language elements into their lessons on poetry.

Stylistics Approach and Poetry: Stylistics has been trying to bridge the gap between the two disciplines; linguistics and literature. Simply speaking, stylistics is the linguistic study of style. In its broadest meaning, Wales (1989) and Chapman (1973) defined style as the manner of written or spoken expression used as a means of communications within a group or certain situation. However, literature is not a normal type and it should be studied in different way; evaluative connotations that deals with the judging of things as good or bad and special devices, which heighten the effect of

linguistics acts through patterning. These shows that the meaning of literature is based on the sentence level and literary works need to be studied beyond the sentential level. The Stylistics based approach presents to the students close reading of the poem without any biographical and sociological details about the poet. The poem itself is the main focus, with discussions of important terms and an appreciation of the poem's structure before reading. Students will become more aware of the odd and intriguing lexical and syntactical elements of poetic language as a result of Cleanth Brooks' in-depth textual analysis, which will provide a new perspective on novel concepts and language. In fact, using a stylistic method to teach poetry will motivate students to understand and master the syntactic, semantic, rhythmic, and lexical elements of poetry.

Diachronically, Widdowson (1975), Collie and Slater (1986), Carter and McCarthy (1994), Carter and Long (1987), Short (1983), and Lazar (1993) all contributed to the development of stylistics and the teaching of literature; however, as noted by Simpson (2004), stylistics is still very much in use in the early twenty-first century. When discussing the investigation of texts (whether literary or not) using stylistics, Simpson (2004) notes that "this method of inquiry has an important reflexive capacity insofar as it can shed light on the very language system it derives from; it tells us about the 'rules' of language because it frequently explores texts where these rules are bent, distended, or stretched to the breaking point.

According to Leech and Short (1981), the stylistics approach "uses the apparatus of linguistic description" to examine how meanings in poems are conveyed, such as unique stylistic choices and patterns as well as metalinguistic elements. Widdowson (1975) argues that literary discourse comparisons with examples of conventional writing are the most effective way to alert learners to Standard English aberrations. Aside from that, Bock (1993) promotes the advantages of pointing out the stylistic decisions and feature patterning in the text and then encouraging students to investigate how these decisions affect the meaning. Carter (1994) ascertains that Stylistics approach is a "process of literary text analysis which starts from a basic assumption that the primary interpretative procedures used in the reading of a literary text are linguistic procedures".

Practical stylistics analysis focuses on gaining knowledge of language, how language functions in literature, and building confidence to approach literary text interpretations methodically. With such a focus, practical stylistics offers itself as an appropriate initial mode of analysis among all other methods to literature study. He continues to make an argument for the usefulness of stylistics in literature (including poetry) teaching, claiming that stylistics analysis aids in the development of interpretive abilities and promotes reading between the lines.

Carter (1994) furthers on the benefits of stylistics, saying that it "gives students a method of scrutinizing texts, 'a way in,' opening up starting points for more thorough interpretation." The approach is explicit and thorough; it demonstrates how you arrive at or start to arrive at an interpretation. From a pedagogical perspective, students learn to open a text actively and consciously in addition to by osmosis. A stylistic approach that is pedagogically attentive might boost pupils' confidence in their ability to read and interpret. By using this method, teachers will find teaching more gratifying and students will be able to comprehend and love poetry. Here are some pointers for applying stylistics technique.

- i. reading the poems that are to be taught in the classroom with care

- ii. selecting the linguistic elements such as sound, diction, imagery and sentence pattern that serve as key element in the poems and that can be difficult for students to understand.
- iii. teaching these linguistic elements in the classroom in the same way that similar elements of ordinary language usage are taught.
- iv. teaching the selected poems with questions that lead students to independent interpretation and analysis of the poems.
- v. use of dictionary game, drawing and drama should be encouraged to reinforce what students have learnt in the poetry lesson. (Inyang, 2009).

Inyang (2009) worked on *Linguistic-Stylistics Technique and the Effective Teaching and Learning of Poetry in Nigerian Senior Secondary Schools* in Itu Local Government Area of Akwa-Ibom State. Her findings revealed that linguistic-stylistics Technique is more effective than the traditional method of teaching in enhancing students' achievement and retention in poetry. David and Temitayo (2013) conducted research on improving poetic literature instruction for senior secondary school students in Akure, Ondo State, using stylistics and thematic approaches. They came to the conclusion that since stylistic and thematic approaches are more efficient in teaching and learning poetry than the traditional teaching technique, studying poetry might be made less mysterious. Jameel (2014) studied the stylistics-based approach to teaching poetry to Saudi ESL students. According to the study's findings, both professors and students at Saudi institutions found great value in the stylistics approach to teaching poetry, which was founded on a wide range of linguistic activities. Aderibigbe (2018) investigated the effect of a stylistic approach on the instruction of English literature to secondary school pupils. Aderibigbe (2018) worked on effect of stylistic approach on the teaching of Literature-in-English among secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Kwara State. To the best knowledge of the present researchers, no study was carried out Arabic literature except that of Jameel and it was conducted in Saudi Arabia, others studies were carried out in Literature-in-English and not in Kwara State. This therefore create research vacuum part of which the study fill.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at determines the following:

- a. If there will be difference in the general performance of poetry students taught with stylistics approach and those taught with the conventional method;
- b. If there will be difference in the performance of male and female poetry students taught with the stylistics approach and conventional method; and
- c. If there will be difference in the performance of poetry students in private schools taught with stylistics approach and the students in public school taught with the conventional approach.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

- H₀₁: There will be no difference in the performance of students taught poetry with the stylistics approach and those taught with the conventional approach.
- H₀₂: There will be no difference in the performance of male and female students taught poetry with the stylistics approach and those taught with the conventional approach.

H₀₃: There will be no difference in the performance between poetry students taught with stylistics approach in public and private schools.

Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design in form of the null-equivalent control group. The design involves the pre-test, post-test control group null equivalent design, only that the non-equivalent control group design does not involve random assignment of subjects to groups.

Table 1: Research Layout

Group	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experimental	O ₁	X	O ₂
Control	O ₃		O ₄

Key:

- O₁ = represent pre-test of the experimental group
O₂ = represent post-test of the Experimental group
X = represent treatment for experimental group
O₃ = represent pre-test of control group
O₄ = represent post-test of control group
No treatment for control group

Table 1 shows both the experimental and the control group. Students in the groups are pre-tested through the Arabic Literature Performance Test (ALPT) that was prepared based on the SS-II Arabic literature syllabus by the researcher. The experimental group was taught with the stylistics approach while the control group was taught with the conventional method after the first weeks both the groups were post-tested employing the same questions. The researcher used the Arabic Literature Performance Test to determine the effect of Stylistics approach method on the performance of Arabic students in poetry. (ALPT) is a structured multiple-choice form of test that comprises of 50 items each for both the pre-test and post-test with options A-D each.

Teaching package includes lesson plan for the topics taught with stylistics approach in the experimental group while conventional method was used to teach the same topics in the control group. The researcher guides the teacher teaching the experimental group on how to use the approach. The teacher in control group was not guided but taught the topics as in normal class.

The (ALPT) for both pre-test and post-test were validated by both the Arabic educators and experts in Measurement and Evaluation unit of the Department of Social Science Education Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained through test re-test method using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient 0.72 as obtained.

The study sample comprised of 100 senior secondary school Arabic students drawn from two senior secondary schools (SSS) in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria participated in the study. The researchers employed purposive sampling technique to select senior secondary schools and students where Arabic Language is offered at the (SSS) level because not all schools offered Arabic at SSS level.

The pre-test items were personally administered by the researcher on the students in the sampled schools, after the treatment on experimental group, post-test items were administered on both the experimental and control groups.

Results and Discussion

Demographical Characteristics of the Respondents

This section describes personal information of the participants (secondary school students) using the percentage. Results are as shown below:

Table 2: Group and Gender Distribution of the Students

Variables	Characteristics	No of Pupils	Percentage
Groups	Experimental	50	50%
	Control	50	50%
	Total	100	100%
Gender	Male	40	40%
	Female	60	60%
	Total	100	100%

Table 2, shows that out of the 100 students that participated in this study, 50 (50%) of the students who participated in the study were in experimental group and 50 (50%) of the said number of the students were in the control group. In addition, out of the 100 students, 60 (60%) were males while 40 (40%) were females,

Hypotheses Testing

Three hypotheses were postulated and tested. Scores of the Arabic students in both the experimental and control groups in Arabic Literature Performance Test (ALPT) were collated and subjected to the Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) at 0.05 alpha level.

H₀₁: There will be no difference in the performance of Arabic students taught poetry with stylistics approach and those taught with conventional method.

Table 3: ANCOVA Analysis Showing the Performance of Students in Arabic Literature

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Calculate F Value	Sig
Corrected model	1542.1768 ^a	2	7710.884	592.786	0
Intercept	668.2262	1	682.262	513.708	0
Pre-test	8.434	1	8.434	.648	.571
Groups	12703.966	1	12703.966	9766.636	.000
Error	741.450	97	13.0008		
Total	46454.000	100			
Corrected Total	8452.333	99			

a. Squared = .912 (Adjusted R Squared = 909) P less than 0.05

Table 3, shows that the calculated F-value is 9766.636 (99) = (0.000) computed at critical P-value 0.05, hypothesis 1 is rejected. This implies that a significant difference exists in the performance of students taught Arabic poetry with stylistics approach and their counterparts taught with the conventional method.

H₀₂: There will is no difference between the performance of male and female Arabic students taught Arabic poetry with stylistics approach and their counterparts taught with conventional method.

In order to test this hypothesis, the responses of the participants (Male and female) in the Arabic Literature Performance Test (ALPT) were collated and subjected to Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA). The output is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: ANCOVA Analysis showing the Significant Difference in the Performance of Male and Female Students in Arabic Poetry

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Calculated F value	Sig
Corrected model	3028.788 ^a	1	1514.394	12.442	.008
Intercept	1728.318	1	1728.318	14.200	.020
Pre-test	1669.912	1	1669.912	13.720	.022
Gender	310.986	1	310.986	2.554	.526
Error	1387.5878	97	243.436		
Total	92908.000	100			
Corrected Total	16904.666	99			

R Square = .179 (Adjusted R Squared = .150)

Table 4 reveals that the calculated F value 2.554 (1:59) = (5.26) computed at the critical P value of 0.05. Since the calculated value is greater than 0.05, hypothesis 2 is accepted. This implies that significant effect of gender in the performance of male and female students taught Arabic poetry with stylistics approach and their counterparts taught with the conventional approach.

H₀₂: There is no difference between the academic performance of private and public students who learnt Arabic Literature with stylistics approach and their counterparts taught with the conventional method.

In order to test this hypothesis, the responses of the participants from (private and public) in the Arabic Literature Performance Test (ALPT) were collated and subjected to Analysis of Co-variance. The output is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: ANCOVA Analysis showing the Significant Difference in the Performance of Private and Public Students in Arabic Poetry

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	Calculated F value	Sig
Corrected model	3028.788 ^a	1	1514.394	12.442	.008
Intercept	1728.318	1	1728.318	14.200	.020
Pre-test	1669.912	1	1669.912	13.720	.022
Gender	310.986	1	310.986	2.554	.526
Error	1387.5878	97	243.436		
Total	92908.000	100			
Corrected Total	16904.666	99			

a. R Square = .179 (Adjusted R Squared = .150)

Table 5 reveals that the calculated F-value 488.318 (1:117) = (.000) at computed the critical P-value of 0.05. Since the calculated P-value is greater than 0.05, hypothesis 3 is rejected. This implies that there is significant effect of school type on the academic performance of private and public schools' Arabic students in Poetry.

The study investigated the effect of stylistics approach on secondary school students' performance in Arabic poetry in Ilorin West, Kwara State, Nigeria. The first finding from the study revealed that

a significant difference exists in the academic performance of senior secondary students taught poetry with stylistics approach and those taught the conventional approach. This is in line with Ogunba (2013), who found that "teaching approaches are approaches, which a teacher utilizes in the course of presenting a lesson in order to make the content of the lesson understandable to the learners". The finding is also in consonance with Aderibigbe (2018) who found that stylistics approach is the best approach English-literature teachers could employ while teaching poetry at the secondary school level. The stylistics method, she continued, offers pupils a fresh perspective on novel concepts and language while also introducing them to the distinctive and fascinating lexical and syntactical elements of poetry language. Students will be encouraged to acquire and master the syntactic, semantic, rhythmic, and lexical elements of poetry if the stylistics approach to teaching poetry is used. The second finding revealed that there is no significant effect of gender in the performance of male and female students taught poetry with stylistic approach and their counterparts taught without the approach. The finding corroborates Aderibigbe (2018) who found that significant difference does not exist in the performance of male and female students taught poetry with the stylistics approach and their counterparts taught with the conventional approach.

The finding also aligns with findings of Musa and Abdullahi (2018) who found that significant difference does not exist in the Arabic syllable patterns that constitute pronunciation problems for male and female Upper Basic Hausa-speaking students in Kano State. This finding also agrees with Eagly (1987) who opines that male and female students learn the appropriate behaviours and attitude from the family and overall culture they grow up with which may either affect or influence their performances generally. The finding is in contrary to Abdullahi (2016) who found that there was a significant difference between the academic performance of male and female students of Arabic language taught with visual resources and their counterparts taught without the use of visual resource. The implication of the study is that both male and female students can perform excellently or otherwise depending on their background and level of exposure.

The third finding showed that there is a substantial difference between private and public-school students' academic performance in poetry depending on the type of school, favoring private schools. This supported the assertion made by Akporobaro (2008), that "poor academic performance of students in Nigeria has been linked to poor teachers' performance in terms of accomplishing the teaching task, negative attitude toward work, and poor teaching habits which have been attributed to poor motivation which characterizes public schools." The finding is contrary to the finding of Musa and Abdullahi (2018) who reported that there is no significant difference in the Arabic Syllable Patterns that constitute pronunciation problems for Upper Basic Hausa – speaking students of Arabic in Public and Private Basic Schools in Kano State.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, teaching and studying Arabic poetry in senior secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria, benefits from a stylistics approach. According to the study's findings, there are substantial differences between senior secondary school pupils who are taught Arabic poetry using a stylistics approach and their counterparts who are taught using a traditional

approach depending on the type of school (public vs. private). The performance of senior secondary school male and female students who were taught poetry using the stylistics approach and their counterparts who were taught using the conventional approach did not differ significantly.



This study has contributed to knowledge in the area of approaches to be employed while teaching Arabic poetry. Stylistics approach of teaching poetry if employed in the teaching and learning, students will be inspired to study and master poetry's syntactic, semantic, rhythmic, and lexical elements through reading poetry.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the study recommended that: Government should provide adequate funding to schools to be able to get required teaching resources. This will go a long way in motivating the teachers to put in their best whenever they find themselves in the classroom. Teachers of Arabic literature should employ the use of required and appropriate approaches in teaching the subject. This could motivate as well arouse the learners' interest towards the learning of the subject. It will also aid the good atmosphere for effective teaching and learning. Students should not trivialize the presence of adequate teaching approaches but rather see its provision as an added advantage. Parents should also encourage their children at home to study as well revise what they taught in the school likewise support them.

National Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies (NATAIS) and Association of Arabic Language and Literature in Nigeria (ASALLIN) should organise seminars/workshops for teachers teaching Arabic Literature to appraise them with the use of stylistic approach and other relevant approaches methods and techniques that could use to the teaching and learning of Arabic literature more interesting.

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