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TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

A comparison of form-focused, content-based and mixed approaches to literature-based instruction to develop learners' speaking skills

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Abstract: It is rare for learners to reach high level of communicative ability from engaging in entirely language form either implicitly or explicitly. Likewise, focusing primarily on content may be a hindrance to embrace target language features. The integration of form-focused instruction in content-based classrooms has been effective because such an integrative pedagogy benefits learners' practice of target forms within communicative contents. It is noteworthy that conducting literature discussions has boundless possibilities of encouraging substantive talk and developing oral language. When language learners develop a critical stance towards discussions of literature, an interactive setting to construct interpretations is created. The creation of space for voices of learners invites readers to argue for the use of language to articulate perceptions, verbalize points of view and transmit thoughts. Form-focused and content-based approaches are two pedagogical frameworks that facilitate form-meaning connections in the field of second language acquisition; for that reason, this study is premised on the belief that holding classroom discussions of literature which draws attention of learners to form–meaning

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Cagri Tugrul Mart is a language instructor at Ishik University in Iraq. He holds a doctorate degree in Educational Sciences (Language Teaching). His research interests include language acquisition and instructional strategies. The present study has been an attempt to reveal whether holding literature-based classroom discussions by integrating form-focused and content-based approaches provides an ideal context for learners to make form-meaning relationships that encourages them for more accurate and fluent use of the target language features.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Considering the preeminent role of literature in the language classroom, the present study suggests the incorporation of literature in language curriculum at all levels of instruction to provide a basis for language proficiency development. The primary focus of this study is to build an ethos of involvement in classroom discussions of literature for the acquisition of grammatical features in the target language and use them as a springboard for production of meaningful discourse by integrating form-focused and literature-based approaches. In addition, the present study sets out to trace an optimal condition for language learning in which learners use the target language as a medium of communication by integrating content-based and literature-based approaches. The findings indicate that collaborating form-focused and content-based approaches within classroom discussions of literature created occasions for language learners to negotiate form and meaning that provided the strongest rationales for attending to linguistic accuracy and fluency simultaneously to involve in effective communication.

relationship provides some of the strongest rationales for the production of meaningful discourse. The study demonstrated that creating a classroom environment that placed literature discussions at the heart of language learning by combining form and content brought in the essential knowledge and skills necessary for communication development.

Subjects: Language & Linguistics; Language Teaching & Learning; Literature

Keywords: Language; literature; form; meaning; integration; speaking skills

1. Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed an ample amount of research on teaching English to speakers of other languages. A large number of studies evolved around the effects of formal instruction on second-language acquisition because there was a growing consensus that high levels of linguistic competence were considered as a strong potential foundation for language learning (Millard, 2000). However, the center of attention has shifted from the structural properties of language to the comprehension and expression of meaning in recent years. Put another way, the effective integration of formal instruction and communicative language teaching has become a major concern in most of the recent foreign and second language instructional methods (Lyster, 2015).

It is rare for language learners to reach high levels of communicative competence from engaging in entirely form-focused instruction. Likewise, communicative syllabus which neglects grammar instruction is inadequate in EFL pedagogy. In line with this perspective, combining communicative language use with grammar instruction provides clear advantages for learners to recognize language patterns in context and utilize them for meaningful communication. It has been surmised that if learners attend to form within communicative practice, they obtain information concerning language form by means of form-meaning connection and use it for expressing messages. In this regard, the integration of form-focused instruction and content-based instruction within literature-based classroom discussions creates some of the strongest rationales for grammatical accuracy development and productive use of the target language in which learners engage in more interaction and provide more language output in meaningful communicative contexts. This instructional strategy can enhance speaking accuracy and fluency of language learners. These two components in a complementary manner help learners exhibit progress in developing speaking proficiency. While speaking accuracy is the ability to produce error-free speech (Housen & Kuiken, 2009), speaking fluency is the ability to produce speech in a rapid and smooth way (Brand & Götz, 1981).

Literature has the potential to endorse learners to become cognizant of patterns and linguistic features of the language because it creates an environment where the applications of the language can function (Lasagabaster, 1999). Language is irrefutably put to its highest use in literature with the greatest possible skills, besides literature signifies a wide range of accurate use of the language features that paves the way for learning the target language (Mart, 2018). Holding classroom discussions of literature offers learners an avenue to put their energy into talk and knowledge-building (Mart, 2019). The creation of space for voices of learners stimulates dialogic talk and initiates language learning. The instructional potential of literature discussions in the language classroom dedicates itself to form and meaning balance for effective communication. Integrating language and content learning embedded in classroom discussions of literature is a favorable condition for language learning owing to its advantages to offer a large amount of language input that engages learners into more interaction and pushes them for more language output that results in language development (Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, 1997).

The primary focus of this study is to build an ethos of involvement in classroom discussions of literature for the acquisition of grammatical features in the target language and use them as a springboard for production of meaningful discourse by integrating form-focused and literature-based approaches. In addition, the present study has set out to trace an optimal condition for language learning in which learners use the target language as a medium of communication by integrating content-based and literature-based approaches. Finally, the study provides an avenue for the inclusion of form-focused instruction in a content-enriched language instruction through using literary works owing to its discernible advantages for the production of meaningful discourse. The study has explored which method of studying is more effective for the development of speaking skills.

2. Integrating form-focused and literature-based instructions

In broad terms, form-focused instruction (henceforth FFI) is defined as drawing attention of learners to certain features in the target language (Elgün-Gündüz, Akcan, & Bayyurt, 2012). In foreign language methodology, the role of grammar teaching has been emphasized in the communicative classroom (Celce-Murcia, 1985; Lee & Valdman, 2000). Paesani (2005) persuasively argued that grammar instruction raises consciousness of learners to differences between first language and the target language, and for successful acquisition, grammar instruction should be provided with contextualized and meaningful comprehensible input. Ellis (1992) claimed that consciousness-raising assists learners' acquisition of grammatical knowledge essential for communication. The acquisition of grammatical forms in comprehensible input leads to efficient intake (VanPatten, 1993). Communication activities make linguistic features a strong potential foundation for language learning. It has been surmised that language learning within communicative activities demonstrates significant gains over learning it independently (Wesche & Skehan, 2002). Once learners attend to language patterns in context and recognize them, meaningful communication can be achieved.

It is important that reading and grammar teaching should be implemented simultaneously (Barnett, 1989). Similarly, Shook (1994) saw an important need for using reading as comprehensible input in foreign language methodology because increased exposure to input-rich context he argued offers learners with an opportunity to process the input. A great deal of research (Knutson, 1997; Kramsch, 1985; Schultz, 1995) is in favor of introducing literature to the curriculum early as literary texts are a valuable source of comprehensible input. In the light of evidence based on the recent literature, literature-based instruction, which is defined as "an instructional approach for language teaching that uses authentic materials" (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002, p.viii), provides for learners with continuous exposure to grammatical input, thus serves as the basis for effective use of language. Literary texts serve as the basis of introducing new grammatical forms and a springboard for production of meaningful discourse. Once learners have ascertained the language forms in the text, they will be able to produce the targeted grammatical structures competently.

Literary texts purvey the presentation of target structures. The acquisition of these forms for communicative purposes is necessary in foreign language classrooms. However, a notable development in communicative ability cannot be achieved simply through exposure to rich language input which aims at raising grammatical accuracy. A solution that has proven effective is the presentation of target grammatical forms in meaning-based tasks. Therefore, the integration of form-focused instruction into literary texts which can be used as meaning-based input is a useful pedagogical effort that can raise learners' awareness of target forms either explicitly or implicitly. The presentation of target grammar points in contextualized manner aids learners to retrieve in similar contexts. This study aimed at finding constructive ways to transmit knowledge from a sender to a receiver in classroom discussions of literature. In focusing on the knowledge and the sender, it endeavors to establish a suitable climate for the quality of classroom discourse in which learners can interpret messages and sustain discussions of literature. The study will employ the term FFI as it accommodates a broader meaning and a broader operation of instruction which includes explicit and implicit teaching of grammar.

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3. The flow of the language classes in the FFI classroom

Corrective feedback is a reactive type of FFI and benefits learners' acquisition of grammatical features. It has proven effective in stimulating noticing; thereby, has been considered conducive to language learning (Sheen, 2007; Yang & Lyster, 2010). Feedback is differentiated in respect of its explicit or implicit nature. Researchers argue that implicit feedback occurs as recasts (Long & Robinson, 1998). However, for some researchers, recasts can be explicit (Sheen, 2006). On account of their transparent illocutionary force as corrections in many cases, recasts are viewed as explicit as well (Ellis & Sheen, 2006). Ammar and Spada (2006) define a recast as a corrective feedback technique that reformulates the erroneous utterance of learners. Recasts are believed to be beneficial as they incite learners to notice the difference between correct and incorrect utterances (Doughty, 2001). When learners are aware of their utterances, they endeavor to produce accurate target language.

A well-formed reformulation of learners' ungrammatical utterance ignites them to make a cognitive comparison and offers learners an opportunity to detect the discrepancy between target-like and nontarget-like utterances. The effectiveness of recasts stems from their drawing learners' attention to the form of utterance by increasing learners' awareness between nonnative-like utterance and target-like reformulation (Ammar & Spada, 2006). Lyster (2004) argued that recasts are embedded in meaning-focused negotiation, thus learners are at an advantage in receiving complex subject matter. A considerable amount of laboratory studies demonstrated the effectiveness of recasts on language development (Ishida, 2004; Leeman, 2003; Mackey & Philp, 1998). Despite their advantages, recasts also constitute some concerns. Although they have been considered to be the ideal corrective feedback technique for providing a correct model while focusing on meaning (Doughty & Varela, 1998), some concerns have been raised about recasts' potential negative effects on learners' flow of communication (Truscott, 1999).

Prompts are alternative type of feedback that prompts learners to self-repair through signals (Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009). It has been argued that recasts provide positive evidence (Nicholas Lightbown, & Spada, 2001) which may enable learners to create new knowledge. Similarly, Long (1996) argued that recasts have the potential to promote foreign language learning development because they provide learners with negative evidence. Leeman (2003) and Braidi (2002) suggested that recasts constitute a source of positive evidence. Ellis and Sheen (2006) recently argued that whether recasts serve as exemplars of negative evidence or positive evidence cannot be stated with certainty "as this will depend on to the learner's orientation to the interaction" (p.596). It is important to stress that recasts are more appropriate for communicative classroom discourse because they incite learners' attention focused on meaning and keep communication flowing. Prompts, in contrast, afford learners with negative evidence as they indicate that utterance by the learners is problematic.

Recast condition:

In the recast condition, the teacher responds to ill-formed utterances of learners' by using recasts which reformulates the errors. The teacher does not provide any metalinguistic information, or intonational changes to enable the learners reformulate their utterances, and opportunities to repeat the recast as in (1), (2), (3), and (4).

(1) Student: Violence has been used by some of the older boys to give them a sense of superiority.
Teacher: To give themselves a sense of superiority. Over whom?
Student: Over the smaller boys on the island.

(Classroom Conversation, Oct. 19)

(2) Student: Jack has became increasingly preoccupied with hunting.
Teacher: Why has he become preoccupied with hunting?

Student: Because he has experienced the instinct of savagery that exists within him.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 10)

(3) Student: The boys didn't know what is waiting for them on a deserted island?
  Teacher: What was waiting for them? Let's continue.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 24)

(4) Student: Gatsby has always longed to wealth.
  Teacher: He has always longed for wealth. What is the main reason for acquiring his
    fortune?

(Classroom Conversation, Dec. 7)

Needless to say, grammatical rules are of particular importance for the development of oral and written language. The examples above violate a grammatical rule and the recast by the teacher help learners correct their errors.

Prompt condition:

Alternatively, prompt condition includes four types of teacher response (Lyster, 2004; Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009):

a) *Clarification requests* entail phrases such as "pardon me" and "I don't understand" to indicate that the utterance of the learner is ill formed, and a reformulation is required.

(5) Student: Although he was saved from the island, he loses his innocence.
  Teacher: Pardon?
  Student: He lost his innocence.

(Classroom Conversation, Oct. 5)

(6) Student: His pursuit of happiness has leaded him to perform criminal activities.
  Teacher: I don't understand
  Student: His pursuit of happiness has led him to perform criminal activities.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 17)

b) *Repetitions* replicate the learner's error through adding intonational stress to emphasize the learner's erroneous utterance.

(7) Student: Jack is obsessed at hunting to satisfy his primal instincts.
  Teacher: Obsessed at?
  Student: Jack is obsessed with hunting to satisfy his primal instincts.

(Classroom Conversation, Oct. 26)

(8) Student: The novel has describe the difference between social classes.
  Teacher: has describe?
  Student: The novel has described the difference between social classes.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 3)

c) *Metalinguistic clues* provide learners information or comments pertaining well-formedness of their utterances but correct form is not explicitly provided.

(9) Student: Gatsby was famous around New York because he throws parties very often at his
    mansion.
  Teacher: Use past tense consistently

Student: Gatsby was famous around New York because he threw parties very often at his mansion.

(Classroom Conversation, Oct. 12)

(10) Student: Gatsby knowed it was necessary to gain social class to win Daisy.
Teacher: Do we say 'knowed' in English?
Student: Gatsby knew it was necessary to gain social class to win Daisy.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 3)

d) *Elicitation* includes direct questions that are designed to lead learners to complete the teacher's utterance.

(11) Student: If Ralph had joined Jack, his life won't be in danger.
Teacher: his life … ?
Student: His life wouldn't be in danger.

(Classroom Conversation, Dec. 14)

(12) Student: Gatsby is not accepted into the American aristocracy although he was fabulously wealthy.
Teacher: Try again?
Student: Gatsby is not accepted into the American aristocracy although he is fabulously wealthy.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 24)

If a second prompt is needed, the teacher highlights the error of the learner with rising intonation.

(13) Student: Piggy's glasses represents the power of science.
Teacher: Pardon me?
Student: His glasses represents the power of science.
Teacher: Represents?
Student: His glasses represent the power of science.
Teacher: Let's continue

(Classroom Conversation, Dec 28)

(14) Student: One of the major topics in the novel are the quest for wealth.
Teacher: I don't understand.
Student: One of the major topics in the novel are the quest for wealth.
Teacher: are?
Student: One of the major topics in the novel is the quest for wealth.
Teacher: That's right. Let's continue.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 24)

These prompts incite learners to self-repair by modifying their responses. In contrast, recasts do not propel learners to modify their nontarget responses; on the contrary, correct target forms are provided for learners along with signs of approval. Lyster (2004) argued that prompts assist learners to put declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge. In a recent classroom study by Ammar (2003) it was found that prompts were beneficial for lower proficiency learners but both prompts and recasts revealed similar effects for learners with high levels of proficiency. Studies conducted by Lin and Hedgcock (1996) and Netten (1991) also suggested that learners with a low level of proficiency have limited ability, hence recasts prove to be less effective. Trofimovich, Ammar, and Gatbonton (2007) found that recasts benefit higher proficiency learners more than lower proficiency learners. Developmentally ready learners benefit from recasts more than

unready learners (Mackey & Philp, 1998). Recasts work better for those learners who use target forms more accurately (Ammar & Spada, 2006).

Though Doughty (2001) claimed that recasts are ideal types of feedback because learners store the reformulated utterances in memory so that they can compare between input and output, De Bot (2000) objects to this idea claiming that "there is never a direct comparison between input and output because the input information is immediately processed and not stored in memory in that form" (p. 228). Despite the considerable amount of attention recasts have received, Ellis and Sheen (2006) argued that there is no clear evidence for the potential of recasts regarding language acquisition. They suggested that the acquisitional potential of prompts is more effective. It is noteworthy to mention that FFI is more effective when it is used with feedback in the form of prompts because prompts display a significant advantage for output practice. Additionally, prompts are more likely to draw attention of learners to feedback compared with recasts, thus learners benefit more from them in terms of conscious awareness.

This study does not investigate whether prompts or recasts work better for language acquisition but uses them both to signal self-repair in form-focused classrooms. Recasts and prompts have been seamlessly integrated into classroom interaction to enable language learners to experience difficulties. Particularly the effectiveness of recasts and prompts with morphological and syntactic errors drive foreign language development forward. Drawing learners' attention to on-the-spot reformulations and pushing them to elicit self-repair associates with high level of accuracy in language acquisition. The provision of a deeper level of processing through recasts and prompts allows learners to repair their errors and produce modified output. It is important to stress that prompts and recasts create conditions for language learners for conscious awareness and predispose them toward more output practice that is more likely to effect change in language development.

4. Integrating content-based and literature-based instructions

One type of CLT that has become omnipresent is content-based instruction (henceforth CBI) in which learners use the new language with the intention of learning subject matter that is of value and interest to them (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). The integration of language and content has proved challenging but has prevailed in language classrooms (Lyster, 2015). It is argued that depriving learners of pedagogy based upon language and content integration may be a hindrance to focus on specific language features at the time when they are highly motivated to learn (Lightbown, 2014). However, the implementation of CBI in the EFL context is a worthwhile endeavor. The combination of formal accuracy and content teaching works together to meet communication needs of learners as both form and meaning are important features of language learning. Through incorporating content into the lessons, learners negotiate form and meaning and extend their knowledge. Content-based classrooms engage learners in private speech, provide learners occasions to sort out input and interact with more knowledgeable peers to promote their knowledge at increasing levels of complexity (Grabe & Stoller, 1997).

All functions of language are interrelated; thereby language is learned from the whole to the part (Goodman, 1986). Foreign language learning from the whole to the part is open to multiple interpretations, and knowledge interpretation. Moreover, it develops a context-based learning in support of mastery of connections among language components to experience identification of linguistic elements. The supplement of CBI with literature can bring in the essential skills and knowledge required for successful language acquisition as learners grow aware of operation of language in literary texts. Literature does not qualitatively differ from any other linguistic performance (Littlewood, 1986), and it is an inviting context for foreign language learning (Langer, 1997).

Combining accessible literature with CBI is considered a very effective curriculum to help learners acquire academic vocabulary, expand domain knowledge and develop critical thinking. Despite the promise of CBI, quite a few learners have difficulty becoming active participants in CBI activities on the grounds that they lack vocabulary, demonstrate poor reading skills, and have

insufficient background knowledge. August (2004) argues that content-based language teaching has many advantages because language is the medium for content, while content is the tool for linguistic development. That is, language transmits content and content provides the raw material for learning language (Stoller & Grabe, 1997). The incorporation of CBI into the language curriculum makes it possible to competently read and understand the materials, improve language skills to actively participate in language activities, and develop a high level of communicative interaction (August, 2004).

During the act of reading literature related to the theme of the CBI unit, learners experience certain essential vocabulary items in multiple contexts. The reoccurrence of these vocabulary items enables learners to accumulate relevant vocabulary; in addition, the acquisition of domain knowledge which is embedded in the plots of literary texts facilitates vocabulary acquisition (August, 2004). Instances of language structures in literary texts form the basis for practicing language skills. To be more specific, in the process of accumulating domain knowledge to supplement a CBI unit, learners can reinforce the accurate use of linguistic structures and make noticeable gains in the improvement of their language abilities. The story of a novel, the storyline of a drama, and the plot of a poem are described in literature to express the superficial subject matter. The confrontation of the theme of study from a range of literary sources inspires learners to use their analysis, synthesis and interpretation skills (Stoller & Grabe, 1997). Learners develop these skills to understand and respond to literature in which they communicate their ideas and feelings in classroom discussions.

5. The flow of the language classes in the CBI classroom

The impetus of CBI to impact verbal interaction of learners in the language classroom motivates learners to initiate foreign language learning. The combination of language with a focus on learners' needs has spawned successful outcomes and benefits. Target language in authentic use in CBI classes is a driving force to sustain wearisome learning process as learners are cognitively motivated through the implementation of instructional materials and learning activities.

(1) Teacher: What is the central concern of Lord of the Flies? Can anyone elaborate on this?
    Student: I can
    Teacher: So fast! Lana
    Student: Order and chaos
    Teacher: Good job! Can you express it in another way?
    Student: Good and evil
    Teacher: Good!
    Student: Oh, civilization and savagery
    Teacher: Excellent! Civilization is against savagery. Can you explain that a bit more Lana?
    Student: Boys who act peacefully face conflict with boys who act violently.
    Teacher: Wow! Boys who live by rules experience unexplainable opposition against those who live by brutality.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 3)

In the first example, the recast version of the teacher is thematically relevant to the version of the learner, although thematic items differ: *order/good/civilization* and *chaos/evil/savagery. Act peacefully/live by rules* and *act violently/live by brutality* create the same semantic relations and the same semantic pattern. Equivalent words are constructed within the thematic pattern which is called local equivalence (Lemke, 1990). In the course of interactions, the lecturer's responses go hand in hand with the learner's responses in terms of grammatical construction. Exploration of these mode shifts operates as a linguistic knowledge on the construct of comprehensible input (Gibbons, 2003). In addition as in example (5), the teacher recasts a more literature way to help learners how to express the meaning precisely. It is noteworthy that recasts not only correct the

errors of the learners but also edit discourse. Recasts in the following examples have been shown to be effective for repairing conversational breakdowns.

(2) Teacher: How does Gatsby's dream of Daisy change his life? Sara, do you want to talk about it?
 Student: It has become …
 Teacher: become what?
 Student: It has become the dominant force in Gatsby's life?
 Teacher: I see.
 Student: He is constantly in pursuit of wealth and …
 Teacher: wealth and what?
 Student: wealth and status
 Teacher: Great! Sara, do you think his dream of happiness with Daisy motivates him to do them all?
 Student: Yes. He has dedicated himself …
 Teacher: dedicated himself to what?
 Student: He has dedicated himself to win Daisy.
 Teacher: Very good! Sara.

(Classroom Conversation, Dec. 7)

(3) Teacher: Hedi, Can you explain what ruins Gatsby's dream of loving Daisy?
 Student: The difference between their groups.
 Teacher: Can you explain that again?
 Student: They belong to different social classes.

(Classroom Conversation, Oct. 26)

(4) Teacher: Why is the conch shell important?
 Student: Because it is used to summon the boys together.
 Teacher: Very good! Vian, what else? How does the conch shell influence their lives?
 Student: The conch shell has power.
 Teacher: Wait a minute. Can you explain that a bit more?
 Student: The conch shell is the symbol of power. In the meetings the boy who holds the conch shell has the right to speak.

(Classroom Conversation, Dec. 14)

(5) Teacher: What is the role of Piggy's glasses?
 Student: It shows cleverness.
 Teacher: Now let start using literary language Alan.
 Student: It represents intellectual …
 Teacher: It represents intellectual endeavor in …
 Student: It represents intellectual endeavor in society.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 17)

Learners talk about literature comes to the fore in content-based language classrooms. Discussion is not associated with simple transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner. Conversely, it is a process in which knowledge is constructed and negotiated by the discourse contexts of interaction. The transmission of knowledge from a sender to passive receiver reduces efficiency to interpreting messages in a constructive way. Learners are left to their own devices unless they are treated as thinkers and expected to make sense of a message. Therefore, attention of learners should be switched from learning about toward participating in. Classroom discussions provide learners a clear understanding of the topic being discussed, espouse a focus on critical thinking and moral reasoning, teach discussion skills (Larson & Parker, 1996), foster learning of human sensitivity, and nurture the depth of interpretation. Moreover, holding literature discussions nurture appreciation of alternative perspectives of others, accommodate a wide range of different views, and seek constructive ways to communicate (Knoeller, 1998).

In line with this perspective, CBI is premised on the belief that focusing primarily on content is considered as an effective classroom instruction with the assumption that learning of form will follow meaning and balance of form and meaning will evolve to stimulate learners to communicate meanings in an effective way. Concurring with this belief, Krashen (1982) supports language acquisition by focusing on meaning, an approach which situates comprehensible input at the core of language acquisition. The view of meaningful input as the cornerstone of language acquisition elevates the role of CBI. Language is a system that relates content and expression (Mohan, 1986). Classroom discussions of literature have been adopted as a means of creating communicative need in the language classroom. In this framework, learners become better at inferring meaning and solving problems using the language by means of these discussions (Prabhu, 1987) with reference to the idea that "meaning-focused activity ensures that any attention to form is (1) contingent to dealing with form and (2) self-initiated" (p.76).

6. A comparison of mixed approaches to literature-based instruction

Research in language classrooms has shown that exclusive exposure to rich language input falls short of error-free production (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Yang & Lyster, 2010). To put it another way, communicatively oriented classrooms may not result in the development of high levels of communicative ability (Harley & Swain, 1984). In the same vein, Swain (1988) observed that good content teaching does not lead to effective language teaching. In this regard, the integration of FFI in content-based classrooms has proven effective in grammatical accuracy improvement (Day & Shapson, 2001). Such an integrative pedagogy, the introduction of language forms in communicative interaction, benefits learners' practice of target forms within communicative contents.

Language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982). In line with this, the focus of instruction in CBI classes is on the subject matter rather than the form which conforms to Krashen's (1984) view of "what is being said rather than how" (p.62). In addition to comprehensible input, development of communicative competence entails productive use of the target language (Swain, 1985). CBI constantly insists learners on generating comprehensible and coherent output in terms of both language and content. These premises are in conjunction with the appropriateness of grammar exploitation in CBI. Brinton and Holten (2001), concerning the pertinence of grammar instruction within CBI, point out that grammar should be integrated into the CBI syllabus.

Research has revealed that learners demonstrated more effectiveness in comprehension of the target language than the ability to produce it because the infusion of meaningful content is aligned with the advancement of receptive skills (Valeo, 2013). Content-reduced situations do not substantially focus on development of productive skills. However, FFI is based on the premise that language acquisition requires attention to language form (Schmidt, 1990). Comprehensive discussions of form–meaning relationship appear in, e.g., Doughty & Williams (1998); Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, (1997) who irrefutably state that rather than exclusive focus on meaning, attention to both form and meaning proves more benefits and provides some of the strongest rationales for language acquisition.

A concern of attention to form does not detract from effective communication; on the contrary frequent presence of focus on form offer a different insight into content-based language classroom. Some language forms are developmentally difficult and hinder learners' access to input. The functional roles of these complex forms cannot be noticed sufficiently, and thereby learners tend to develop incorrect representation in their interlanguage development (Pica, 2002). Nevertheless, drawing attention of learners to their errors and provide feedback is a good data source and support learning about form and meaning. Awareness of linguistic forms implies a movement from the provision of corrective feedback to accuracy in language forms.

The virtue of semantically rich input lies in its power over encouraging depth of processing that gives learners grounds for recall of learning (Anderson & Reder, 1979). And the incentive to

reinforce an associative network is often driven by an interesting content (Tobias, 1994). Learning evolves from social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978) that originate as dialogues between individuals. It is often the case that the establishment of communication calls for learning about the structure of language. Savignon (2005) acknowledges the gravity for attention to form and argues that "the absence of structure, or grammar, a set of shared assumptions about how language works, along with a willingness of participants to cooperate in the negotiation of meaning" (p. 640) is a pitfall that undermines the role of form and meaning balance for effective communication.

Literature offers learners with opportunities for authentic use of language. Authentic texts reflecting real language use make literature suitable for foreign language instruction. The nature of literature makes reading it more demanding because of its potential for the development of content knowledge, language proficiency and analytical skills (Barrette, Paesani, & Vinall, 2010). Spiraling of language and content using literary texts can bridge the gap between form–meaning relationships. In effect, literary texts serve as an excellent source to progress foreign language competencies and learn subject matter content. With this focus in mind, the implementation of FFI and CBI using literary texts reveal benefits for learners in language proficiency and content knowledge. This instructional approach introduces learners to new grammar and vocabulary knowledge, expands critical thinking, raises their awareness of functional use of language, and encourages meaningful communication. In the mixed approach model, in which FFI and CBI are integrated in conjunction with literature-based approach, learners perceive language patterns involved in a meaningful context, enhance content learning, and spark production of meaningful discourse. In an integrated curriculum in which literature and language are taught as a continuous whole in proficiency and content-oriented courses, learners raise their consciousness about the language and become more well rounded.

7. The flow of the language classes in the mixed approach classroom

Form-meaning connections in the field of second language acquisition can be facilitated within two pedagogical frameworks: FFI and CBI (Valeo, 2013). The advancement of grammatical accuracy needed for communication in content-based language teaching and learning using literary texts unveils improvements in language performance. Learners make appropriate use of language units and develop accuracy and fluency through the infusion of meaningful context. The inclusion of FFI in a content-enriched language instruction using literary sources offers discernible advantages for learners. Krashen (1982) argued that content-rich meaningful input suffices for the occurrence of language learning. Dalton-Puffer (2011) argued in a manner similar to Krashen and stated that content-rich curriculum indices incidental language learning. These arguments would be consistent with the findings of some studies which characterize grammar teaching as unplanned and incidental (Burger, Wesche, & Migneron, 1997). In an incidental learning, which is typical of content-oriented foreign language courses, learners make progress in their language abilities (Rodgers, 2015). An approach that integrates content and language using literary texts is sufficient for a greater number of learners to meet their needs to maximize the potential for more language development.

Dialogue is an easy mode of interpretation (Eeds & Wells, 1989). Eeds and Peterson (2007) assert that for effective dialogue to occur teachers and learners need to respect interpretations and they need to avoid initiating a dialogue with an agenda in mind. Seeking to make sense of a literary work for the construction of a dialogic space entails teachers' binding perceptions of the subject matter, awareness of learners' understandings and potential misunderstandings of the subject matter, and knowledge of materials and curriculum (Grossman, 1990). In the meaning-constructing process teachers attempt to shape literary envisionments of learners and enrich the discussion through questions, comments, and elaborations.

(1) Teacher: What does Ralph represent in the novel?
    Student: He represents civilization.

Teacher: He represents the instinct of civilization. What does he attempt to do to make it happen?

Student: He endeavors to coordinate the boys because he wanted to build civilization on the island.

Teacher: Please use simple present tense continuously

Student: He endeavors to coordinate the boys because he wants to build civilization on the island.

Teacher: That's interesting! What about Jack?

Student: He represents cruelty.

Teacher: That's right. He represents the instinct of savagery. How does violence within him provoke Jack?

Student: He uses the boys on the island and controls them.

Teacher: Let's use more appropriate language to express it. He manipulates the boys on the island to gain …

Student: He manipulates the boys on the island to gain control.

Teacher: to gain control over whom?

Student: to gain control over them.

Teacher: And, where does Simon stand between civilization and savagery?

Student: Simon is born with innate moral.

Teacher: Great! He is innately moral.

Student: Yes, he is innately moral and he behaves kind.

Teacher: He behaves kindly.

Student: Yes, he behaves kindly towards other boys on the island.

(Classroom Conversation, Nov. 10)

(2) Teacher: What does Gatsby represent in the novel?

Student: He represents dismorality.

Teacher: Pardon? He represents …

Student: He represents immorality.

Teacher: Yes, he represents moral corruption. And why do you think he lies to Daisy about his background?

Student: Because of his love for her.

Teacher: That's a point we need to consider.

Student: Gatsby loves Daisy so he tries to convince her that he is good enough for her.

Teacher: Very good! How does the author portray Gatsby and Daisy in the novel?

Student: Gatsby becomes rich late.

Teacher: He is newly rich.

Student: Yes, Gatsby is newly rich and Daisy comes from a wealthy family.

Teacher: Yes, she is sophisticated and she is a representative of the old aristocracy.

Student: Daisy comes from an aristocratic family so their level in the society is different.

Teacher: They represent different social classes.

Student: Yes, they represent different social classes.

Teacher: Very good! Who does Daisy marry?

Student: She marries with Tom.

Teacher: She marries to Tom.

Student: She marries to Tom. He comes from an aristocratic family too.

Teacher: She finds her match. What does Gatsby do to win Daisy's heart?

Student: He earns too much money.

Teacher: He builds an enormous fortune.

Student: Yes, he organizes expensive parties to impress Daisy.

Teacher: Great!

(Classroom Conversation, Dec. 14)

In these examples, linguistic development of learners is sustained within subject matter content under study using literature. Form-focused intervention occurs by the use of corrective feedback to build an ethos for learners to shape their structures and repair conversational breakdowns. Literature works in an integrated approach which focuses on both language form and content

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meaning appear to be efficient in terms of development of grammatical accuracy and communicative competence.

Research Questions
(1) Which approach to literature-based teaching is the most adequate for promoting speaking skills: form-focused approach, content-based approach or a mixed approach?
(2) How can form-focused and content-based approaches be integrated into literature-based approach for the development of speaking skills?

8. Method

8.1. Participants
The study was conducted in an ELT undergraduate program in which students met 3 h a week. Each 50-min class aimed at analysis of literary texts with a focus on oral communication. Each class had 20 students (Class 1, n = 20; Class 2, n = 20; and Class 3, n = 20) who were assigned by the researcher to their class groups randomly and a total of 60 students (39 females, 21 males) in three groups, an optimal class size for classroom discussions, participated in the study. There were totally 60 senior-year students enrolled at the university in ELT department, and they all took part in the study. The students volunteered to participate in the study. All participants, whose ages ranged from 19 to 29, were in their fourth year of university and majoring in ELT. In terms of nationality, 12 students were from Turkey and 48 students were from Iraq. All participants were of native language backgrounds other than English. Based on the placement test they had before the study, the students fell into the upper-intermediate level.

Participants' age range was 19 to 27 (average 23) and the ratio of female students to males was 12 to 8 in the first group. The age range was 19 to 28 (average 24) and the ratio of female students to males was 13 to 7 in the second group. Finally, in the third group, the age range was 19 to 29 (average 23, 5) and the ratio of female students to males was 14 to 6. There was a similar distribution of averages of students in the first 3 years across the three classes (2.65, 2.81, and 2.73, respectively) (see Table 1 for group profiles). All the groups were taught by the same instructor throughout the study (the researcher) who had multiple years of experience in language teaching. The literature classes were scheduled on the same day of the week covering the same materials but different treatment types.

8.2. Materials
The correspondence of the books to the students' language level and the familiarity of their themes make them interesting to the students. Materials included two novels; one by Scott Fitzgerald and the other by William Golding. *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald (1990) is a modernist and Jazz novel that sets in the 1920s. The major themes in the novel are the differences between social classes, the spirit of the 1920s and the decline of the American Dream. *Lord of the Flies* by Golding (2003) is an allegory that takes place in a deserted tropical island (see Table 2 for the characteristics of the experimental books). Major themes in this adventure story are civilization and savagery. The selection of literary texts is essential; therefore, the language and contents of literary works which are accessible to students should be integrated into the lessons. Westhoff (1991a, 1991b) argues that an appropriate text should give students frequent opportunities to hypothesize about the meaning of the elements it contains. Taking the wishes of the students into account, these two novels were chosen for this study because they both use accessible language and themes that are familiar to most people in the world.

Over a period of 12 weeks, the students read and discussed *The Great Gatsby* and *Lord of the Flies* which they stated in discussions that they found interesting on account of their substantive

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Table 1. Group profiles						
Group	Total of Students	Gender	Age-range	Mean Age (years)	Grade level (Educational Stage)	(Mean) Average over the past three years
Group 1	20	F = 12	19–25	22	4	2.65 (out of 4)
		M = 8	19–27	24	4	
Group 2	20	F = 13	19–26	23	4	2.81 (out of 4)
		M = 7	19–28	25	4	
Group 3	20	F = 14	19–25	23	4	2.73 (out of 4)
		M = 6	19–29	24	4	

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Table 2. Characteristics of experimental books		
	Lord of the Flies	**The Great Gatsby**
Length (in pages)	208	172
Number of Episodes/Chapters	12	9

plot. Their clear sequential development and appropriate length which made them easy to control facilitated reading them at a considerable speed. Due to the genre, style and literary devices they contained, these two novels allowed students to have literature discussions. The flow of ideas had the potential to provide students a certain amount of freedom of expression.

8.3. Treatment

After the approval for the present research was granted from the university where the study was carried out, the researcher organized the classes to conduct the study. The study lasted for 12 weeks and included 26 days of treatment instruction (26 h) and 12 days of non-treatment instruction (12 h). During the 12-week period of the instructional treatment Group 1, the first control group, received the instruction that included form-focused and literature-based components. Group 2, the second control group, received content-based plus literature-based instructions and Group 3, the experimental group, received the instruction that included mixed-methods (form-focused, content-based and literature-based methods). Figure 1 illustrates the treatment types the groups underwent in the study.

Literary texts were studied through a four-level sequence of work developed by Gajdusek (1988):

(1) Pre-reading activities: Students are engaged in a process of discovery and collect essential background information to identify what the text is about. Moreover, they learn the meanings of unfamiliar words to help them understand the text better.

Figure 1. Literature integrated language teaching for the improvement of speaking skills.
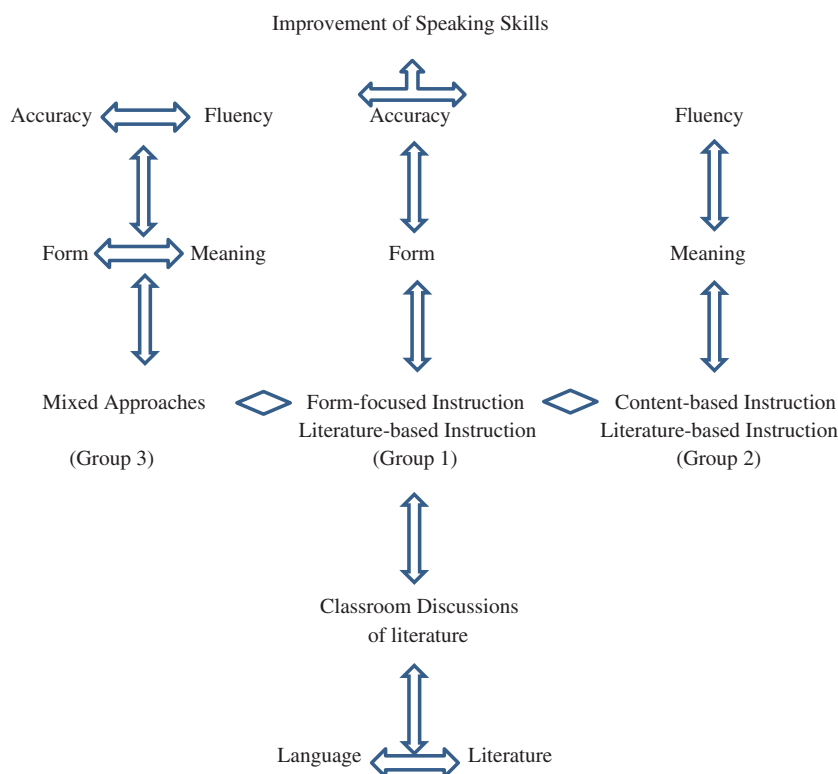
(2) Factual in-class work: Seeking for answers to who, when, what, where, and why questions. Factual in-class work includes learning about action, character, setting and students' point of view.

(3) Analysis: Aspects of style and theme

(4) Extending activities: Generating purposeful questions in-class activities, encouraging the students to talk and extend their ideas. The students interacted with their teacher during question-and-answer activities.

8.4. Classroom discussions

Whole-class literature discussions in non-treatment sessions were audio-taped and transcribed. A total of 12 classes were audiotaped in 3 months. All recording process went smoothly throughout the study. The university in which the study was conducted is on the semester system and the academic year is divided into two terms. The audio recordings spread out over the entire semester to monitor the progress of students. The recordings occurred every week. In this study, the researcher was interested in discussions that revolved around literary texts with senior-year EFL students majoring in ELT. The literature discussions were conducted to ascertain which of the treatment instructions used in this study provided more opportunities for the learners with advanced-level speaking skills. The researcher opted for examining literary discussions for their potential to provide occasions for narrating, describing, expressing opinions, sharing arguments, using extended discourse and hypothesizing. Although the researcher set out to design an experiment and manipulated variables to promote speaking skills, he did not respond to errors of students in any way in non-treatment sessions. Rather, naturally occurring data were sought in these sessions to analyze discussions closely. To find out which method of studying is more effective for the development of speaking skills, audio-taped literary discussions were analyzed for three features: 1) participation in discussions, 2) quantity of utterances and 3) accuracy in utterances. In addition, percentages of each major activity in classroom discussions, question types in oral production, and the use of grammatical structures in utterances were also analyzed.

The literature discussions were analyzed according to their levels to depict the effects of instructions employed in this study on the quantity of language utterances: phrase level, sentence level, and discourse level.

8.5. Data analysis

Quantitative research was driven in this study to quantify data. The study was interested in the quantity and accuracy of the responses that the students generated. Audio-taped classroom discussions were analyzed immediately following taping. The quantity of utterances, participation, and accurate utterances were counted and classified according to their levels: phrase, sentence, and discourse. The literature discussions were analyzed according to their levels to depict the effects of instructions employed in this study on the quantity of language utterances. One problem was that the state of engagement was not easy to delve into. Nystrand and Gamoron (1991) argued that student engagement is a cognitive phenomenon and states of mental functioning cannot be accessed through direct methods. For this, the quantity of participation in classroom discussions was focused on. The collected data were thoroughly reviewed to determine internal consistency. Further, the method of reliability of scoring was used to conduct a valid study. With this method, the researcher asked one of his colleagues to categorize the data and then compared his categorization with his own. His colleague worked closely with the researcher to analyze, synthesize and categorize the data to enhance the richness of the information. Finally throughout the study, member checks were conducted continuously for comments and verification.

8.6. Classroom discussion results

This study explored how classroom discussions of literature worked to generate quality talk in the context of language instruction. For this, the most important part of the data came from literature

discussions that were conducted over a three-month period. The audio-taped discussions allowed gaining an understanding of the students' experiences with language learning.

Advanced speaking competence may not be enacted in large group discussions. Small group discussions were used in this study to create the students more time for talk, thus each group involved 20 students. Classroom discussions of literature offered the students the potential to express arguments, opinions, and counterarguments. The students are stimulated to produce extended commentary on the issues under discussion. Table 3 shows the dates of the discussions held in the classroom for all groups. Table 4 illustrates the number of the students in each group who participated in literary discussions across 12 days. By means of the discussion participation, the individual English proficiency level of the students was investigated. Literature discussions are useful to gauge the level of involvement with the text and express responses. This study was not only interested in the number of responses of students to the text alone but also how those responses promote language development. In all groups, the students participated actively in the discussions and made significant contributions. The data revealed that the students in Group 3 participated in discussions more than the students in other groups.

Students were inspired to make judgments about the plot, style, setting, symbols, motifs, literary movements and character development of the works under study by means of evaluating the text critically. Table 5 demonstrates that most utterances were produced during theme analysis activities. Theme analysis involves careful examination of thought, opinion, concept, and belief the author crafts in literary pieces. Implications about these tools embedded in the novels stimulated students to communicate their own thinking meaningfully. The second most frequent activity was character analysis and the third most frequent activity was motifs and symbols. As shown in Table 5, students in all groups totally produced 5536 utterances during all these activities in classroom discussions.

Table 6 shows that the total number of utterances at all levels is 5536. However, 4382 of them were accurate. The majority of the accurate utterances were produced at sentence level (67%). The percentage of accurate utterances at discourse level was 20%, and at phrase level was 12%. The table illustrates that in total Group 1 produced 1572 utterances, Group 2 produced 1852 utterances and Group 3 produced 2112 utterances. In other words, 28% of the utterances were produced by Group 1, 33% of the utterances were produced by Group 2 and 38% of the utterances were produced by Group 3.

Table 6 as a whole demonstrates that students found classroom discussions useful to develop their speaking skills. The great majority of the accurate utterances were clustered at sentence level. In a social context, the use of spoken language which is longer than a single sentence is preferable. However, the number of the accurate utterances at discourse level is not even half of the accurate utterances at sentence level. It is noteworthy that except for phrase level, the students in Group 3 produced the highest number of accurate utterances at all levels. Group 2 produced more accurate utterances at phrase level and outperformed the other groups. The number of accurate sentences in total was the highest in Group 3. When the number of accurate utterances is examined, it is evident that the best accuracy was obtained by the students in Group 3. The accuracy ratios obtained by the students in Groups 1 and 2 are quite close. Although the number of the utterances in total and the number of accurate utterances produced by Group 2 is more than those produced by Group 1, accuracy of Group 1 is higher.

The averages of the students' speaking scores before and after the experiment in all three groups are shown in Table 7. Third-year oral communication scores of the students (before the experiment) were compared with their speaking scores which they got after the experiment. The speaking scores were given by another lecturer based on effective use of grammar and vocabulary,

Table 3. Schedule of classroom discussions across 3 months of instruction

Months	Recording (non-treatment instruction)						Non-recording (treatment instruction)				
October	10/5	10/12	10/19	10/26	10/4	10/6	10/11	10/13	10/18	10/20
					10/25	10/27				
November	11/3	11/10	11/17	11/24	11/1	11/2	11/8	11/9	11/15	11/16
					11/22	11/23	11/29	11/30		
December	12/7	12/14	12/21	12/28	12/1	12/6	12/8	12/13	12/15	12/20
					12/22	12/27				
Total	12 days						26 days				

Table 4. Participation in classroom discussions across 3 months of instruction

	Months													
		October				November				December				
	Date												Total	%
	10/5	10/12	10/19	10/26	11/3	11/10	11/17	11/24	12/7	12/14	12/21	12/28		
Group 1	10	12	9	11	11	12	10	11	13	12	13	11	135	.29
Group 2	9	11	13	11	10	13	14	11	14	13	11	14	144	.31
Group 3	13	15	14	16	15	17	13	16	17	15	18	16	184	.40

For all groups n = 20.

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Table 5. Percentages of each major activity in classroom discussions		
Activities	**Utterances**	**%**
Setting Analysis	625	.11
Theme Analysis	1491	.27
Character Analysis	1387	.25
Literary Movements	453	.08
Motifs and Symbols	1168	.21
Real-life Examples	412	.07
Total	5536	

Table 6. Percentages of student utterances across 3 months of classroom discussions						
	Utterances in total		**Accurate Utterances**		**Total**	**%**
		Phrase Level	**Sentence Level**	**Discourse Level**	**Achievement**	
Group 1	1572	147	875	247	1269	.80
Group 2	1852	193	765	326	1284	.69
Group 3	2112	174	1308	347	1829	.87
Total	5536	514	2948	920	4382	

Table 7. A comparison of students' speaking scores before and after the experiment				
	Group 1	**Group 2**	**Group 3**	**P-Value**
	FFI	**CBI**	**Mixed-Approach**	
Before the experiment	65	66	68	.000*
After the experiment	80	76	89	.000*
Achievement (%)	23	15	31	

n = 20 for each group.

Significant at P < .05.

pronunciation, speech clearance, exhibition of automaticity, clearness of ideas and fulfillment of task demands. The average of speaking scores for Group 1 before the experiment was 65 and it rose by 23% after the experiment. The average of speaking scores for Group 2 before the experiment was 66 and it rose by 15%. Finally, the average for Group 3 before the experiment was 68 and it rose by 31%. The averages of speaking scores for all groups after the experiment were respectively 80, 76 and 89. It is worthy to mention that the highest achievement is witnessed in Group 3. Group 1 made better progress than Group 2. A paired samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between speaking scores before and after the experiment.

9. Discussion

9.1. Form-focused group

The findings of this study indicated that the provision of corrective feedback in Group 1 negatively influenced flow of communication. Corrective feedback is believed to be beneficial to reformulate the erroneous utterances of learners (Ammar & Spada, 2006). In the light of the findings obtained in this study, the flow of communication was intruded with corrective feedback. Although 80% of the utterances produced by the students in Group 1 were accurate, the number of their utterances was less than those of other groups. Attending to form within communicative practice raises

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awareness of form-meaning connection and helps students express more accurate and more effective messages (Lyster, 1998). Successful acquisition of target language features is facilitated by meaningful comprehensible input (Paesani, 2005). However, a notable improvement in communicative ability cannot be achieved through exposure to language forms. Students' fluency can be improved by restricting the amount of attention to form; however, by regularly focusing on form, students run the risk of inhibiting their fluency though they build their linguistic competence (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2002). The research also showed that the use of both recasts and prompts demonstrated effectiveness on their language development but the students were unable to produce large number of utterances. In other words, on-the-spot reformulations and pushing the students to elicit self-repair did not encourage them for substantive talk. It is important to stress that, the integration of literature-based and form-focused instructions created conditions for the students to attain high level of accuracy in language acquisition; however, the incorporation of these approaches did not play a significant advantage for practice of language within communicative contexts.

9.2. Content-based group

This study shows that the implementation of CBI in language learning was a worthwhile context because the number of utterances produced by the students in Group 2 was more than those of in Group 1 whose instructional treatment included form-focused and literature-based components. The use of CBI was a favorable condition for the students for its advantages to encourage more language output. The impetus of CBI impacted the students to engage in more verbal interaction. However, compared with Group 1, the accuracy rate was lower as the students attached priority to meaning rather than form. Based on Krashen's (1982) theory of second language acquisition, which is grounded on the principle that language learners should be exposed to meaningful use of the target language, CBI disregards grammar teaching and it is based on the fact that language development is promoted by learning of subject matter. CBI is premised on the belief that comprehensible input should be at the core of language acquisition. Content-based instruction involved the teacher and the students to use the target language to discuss content rather than form.

The findings indicate that attention of learners to meaning came to the fore in content-based classrooms. The use of CBI in the language classroom provided the students occasions to interact with more knowledgeable peers for the development of expressive abilities. To put it another way, language usage practice was reinforced to push students for more language output which resulted in acquisition of substantial language. In the light of evidence this study found, the students switched their attention from language learning toward participating in classroom discussions to communicate. This study also found that the integration of CBI in the language classroom prompted the students to participate in classroom discussions of literature and indorsed them for self-confidence and motivation development towards language learning; additionally, they used the target language with less anxiety than the students in Group 1.

9.3. Mixed approaches

The findings of this study indicate that attention to both form and meaning simultaneously in the language classroom provided an ideal context for language acquisition. On all measures, the experimental group that was exposed to the integrative pedagogy excelled through showing significant gains. Additionally, in oral production, the experimental group outperformed the other groups. Once students make form-meaning connections, they produced the target grammatical structures competently. The highest number of utterances was produced under this approach. In a similar vein, the highest accuracy rate was also achieved under this approach.

A solution that proved effective to promote communicative competence was the provision of language forms in meaning-based tasks. Integrating language and content demonstrated impressive results in language learning. This integrative pedagogy enabled students to practice language forms within communicative contents. The use of FFI in content-based classrooms was an optimal path for grammatical accuracy development (Day & Shapson, 2001). Productive

use of the target language relies on the incorporation of grammar into the CBI syllabus (Brinton & Holten, 2001). The core premise of attention to both form and meaning is that students attend to language forms within communicative practice. Both form and meaning are important features and complement each other in language learning. During communicative activities in the study attention to both form and content did not disrupt the communication flow. On the contrary, the students improved their confidence in using the target language and engaged in collaborative dialogue which resulted in making the classroom discussions flow more smoothly. Literary texts are valuable sources of comprehensible input and they provide strong rationales to acquire language forms for the production of meaningful discourse. And the acquisition of language forms through exposure to communicatively based practice was conducive to language learning.

It is worth considering that attention to both form and meaning in literature discussions built an ethos for students to explore language functions to perceive the connection between language and communication. Integrating language and content brought about taking cognizance of target language features through noticing. This approach was an effective inviting way for students to discover language forms and practice talking. Literature study and language learning can work in tandem for the purposes of language proficiency development and the findings of this study clearly indicate that combining attention to form as well as to meaning in classroom discussions of literature led to real gains in achieving the desired outcomes for the development of oral language.

10. Implications of the study

The results of the study indicated that the students demonstrated learner investment in communication in the target language through listening to each other's utterances and showing engagement with the conversation. It was observed that students exhibited an ambivalent desire to further communication in the target language during classroom interactions. It appears that literature-based language instruction was effective in EFL programs for the mastery of the target language. With this in mind, this study suggests that learner investment is not relevant only to ESL contexts where learners interact with native speakers of the target language and expose themselves to the target culture. Many studies on learner investment emphasize the direct contact of students with native speakers or target cultures (Norton & Kamal, 2003; Potowski, 2004; Russell & Yoo, 2001).

The integration of FFI and CBI enhanced the learning experience and helped students to take advantage of all aspects of language to the fullest extent possible in classroom discussions of literature. Teachers should be aware of the discourse in the learning setting since language and content learning as Gibbons (2006) argues relies on the nature of the dialogue between the teacher and students. The discussions supported students to self-assess the growth of their skills and provided them opportunities to raise language awareness about their utterances and reformulate their ill-formed utterances through corrective feedback. The students benefited from whole-class discussions of literature and used them as a springboard for learner investment in target language communication. In addition, these communicative activities drew students' attention to practice the target language in EFL classrooms and helped them to become fluent English speakers. It was a worthwhile effort to give students a way to interact with their peers and the teacher. Classroom discussions of literature created learning opportunities in the language classroom and helped students to reach their target goals.

The importance of literary texts in the foreign language learning has been confirmed in this study. The results supported that the needs of the students can be accommodated by the incorporation of literature in the language classroom. Further, the content syllabus of a foreign language could be based on literature (Brumfit, 1985). Sage (1987) claims that knowledge of all past and present disciplines is intrinsically accessible by means of literature. Therefore, through literature, learners avail themselves of all learning in addition to language learning (Sage, 1987).

For a successful integration of language and literature, the selection of literature is worthy of consideration. For that reason, it is of utmost importance to acquaint students with appropriate literary texts that appeal to their interests. The literary background, linguistic proficiency, and cultural background of students are essential elements to consider before selecting the literary pieces. In the same vein that teachers are equipped with appropriate teaching methods, background experience in literature and the ability to raise questions about characteristics of literary texts result in language learning.

Lastly, it is of teachers' concern to develop motivation in students since it is one of the affective variables that determine language learning outcomes. Teachers should embrace the needs of infrequent participants, reduce anxieties of speaking during discussions and seek ways to motivate students to actively engage in literature discussions and encourage them to find their voices in this setting. Teachers can come up with entertaining literature-based activities to encourage students to enthusiastically engage in the learning process. Teachers should realize their own part of the responsibility to ensure that students like, know and use English. Learning becomes more purposeful if teachers enhance students' active engagement in discussions.

11. Conclusion

The present study investigated the role of literature under different treatments in speaking skills development. The students in Group 1 received instruction that included form-focused and literature-based components. The students in Group 2 received instruction that included content-based and literature-based components. Finally, the students in Group 3 received instruction that included mixed-methods. The findings illustrated that the students in the experimental group produced more language output than the other groups. Besides, they engaged in the classroom discussions more and achieved more accuracy. When the accurate utterances of all groups are compared, it is clearly seen that the highest achievement was performed by the students in Group 3.

The study found that classroom discussions of literature were essential grounding for producing output in meaningful communicative contexts. Classroom discussions offered a continuum for dialogic talk that stimulated learners to construct and argue for their interpretations and build knowledge. The combination of grammar instruction by means of FFI with communicative language through literature discussions helped learners express more accurate messages although a notable improvement in the quantity of the utterances could not be achieved. Similarly, the study showed that the implementation of CBI in literature discussions encouraged learners to engage in more verbal interaction. Although more language output was produced in this approach, a noteworthy development of accuracy was not accomplished. However, collaborating FFI and CBI within classroom discussions of literature created learners occasions to negotiate form and meaning that provided the strongest rationales for attending to linguistic accuracy and fluency simultaneously to involve in effective communication.

Overall, this study revealed the potential of using literature in language instruction. In particular, it unveiled that the improvement of communication skills through holding classroom discussions of literature was not negatively affected by the inclusion of language and content. By contrast, the study demonstrated that creating a classroom environment that placed literature discussions at the heart of language learning by combining form and meaning brought in the essential knowledge and skills necessary for successful language acquisition. The provision of language forms in meaning-based tasks is an optimal path for language learners to attend to language forms within the communicative practice. Literature discussions built an ethos for language learners to achieve the desired outcomes for oral language development through enabling them to perceive the connections between language and communication.

12. Limitations of the study

Throughout the classroom discussions of literature, some capable students joined in classroom talk and contributed to the classroom discourse more than the others. These students were

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knowledgeable and reflective as a result they were more verbal thus supported their investment in the target language communication; however, a small number of students needed opportunities to articulate their ideas in this study. Therefore, this study calls for further investigation on speech production in which learners are encouraged to use the target language with more engagement and greater investment through utilizing discursive practices.

Small number of participants, limited period of time, small sample of materials and working with single intact classes are limitations of the present study. It is recommended that future research for further investigation be administered to a broader sample of participants from wider contexts with teachers who teach in different settings and levels to discover the roles of literature discussions in the development of speaking skills. Put another way, a more comprehensive analysis with an increased number of classes would provide more robust results and better insights into the effectiveness of classroom discussions of literature to measure gains of students in oral language development. It would be also interesting to carry out studies that deal with the integration of literature into language instruction from different literary genres. Studies of genre-based language teaching would reveal insights regarding their potency in language acquisition.

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