

Teachers' View on Using Literary Texts with Cultural Features to Teach Persian to Non-Persian Language Learners

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1. Introduction

Since the early eighties of the 20th century and following the criticism of the empty place of culture in language teaching methods and approaches, emphasis was placed on the necessity of using culture as a basic pillar in language teaching; because the critics evaluated the awareness of the cultural themes governing the target language society as very important, and considered mastering a foreign language to be much more than a simple combination of words, sounds and sentences (Roche, 2001; quoted from Firoozabadi & Amiri, 2010). Therefore, selecting sources that effectively reflect societal cultural issues is crucial for incorporating culture into second/foreign language teaching. This is where literary texts stand as one of the worthiest representatives of cultures of nations in this field. This research was aimed to determine the importance of the indicators of literary instances with cultural characteristics in teaching Persian to non-Persian speakers through literary texts at both intermediate and advanced levels. The questions that this research seeks to answer are as follows:

1. What is the importance of using indicators of literary instances with cultural characteristics for teaching Persian language to non-Persian speakers at the intermediate and advanced levels, according to experienced teachers?
2. What is the best order of using literary contents with cultural characteristics based on their importance in teaching Persian language to non-Persian speakers at both intermediate and advanced levels from the perspective of experienced teachers in this field?

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed the survey method, which was administered in universities and Persian language teaching centers across the country. A researcher-made

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questionnaire containing 9 items related to the components of literary instances with cultural characteristics was prepared at two language levels. Two methods -face validity and structure validity- were used to check the validity of the questionnaire. Subsequently, a non-randomly accessible and targeted questionnaire was distributed to the statistical population of the research, which included Iranian teachers with experience in teaching Persian to non-Persian speakers. These teachers were also familiar with categories of Persian literature and have taught Persian language in teaching centers both inside and outside the country, as well as privately. Moreover, to check its reliability, a preliminary sample of the completed questionnaire was studied in the form of a pre-test.

3. Results and Discussion

The one-way chi-square test was used to address the first research question and to investigate the importance of the indicators of the literary instances with cultural characteristics regarding the research sample population. Table 1 indicates the summary of the results of the chi-square tests that assesses the importance of these indicators from teachers' perspective.

Table 1

Investigating the importance of the indicators of literary instances with cultural characteristics at two levels from the perspective of the sample population

	Item	Language skill	The result of chi-square tests			
			Statistics	Significance level	Degrees of freedom	Test result
1	Using contents that contain a moral, social, and humane message	Intermediate	39.830	0.001	4	Important
		Advanced	50.787	0.001	4	Important
2	Using instances and contents that contain background information (historical, social facts, work space, part of the biography of a poet or author, etc.) regarding an instance or other literary content (for example, a poem or story)	Intermediate	46.000	0.001	4	Important
		Advanced	49.511	0.001	4	Important
3	Using literary texts in special occasions or situations or in accordance with the objectives of the textbooks (for example, a poem describing Nowruz in the days close to Nowruz, or a poem with the title of Persian Gulf in a lesson with the same title)	Intermediate	38.447	0.001	4	Important
		Advanced	49.085	0.001	4	Important

4	Using instances that include customs, traditions, celebrations, mourning, beliefs, values, taboos, and social behaviors of Iranians.	Intermediate	23.191	0.001	3	Important
		Advanced	41.234	0.001	3	Important
5	Using instances that depict the mythological, historical, political, social, economic, and cultural background of Iran.	Intermediate	35.362	0.001	4	Important
		Advanced	64.298	0.001	4	Important
6	Using literary contents related to Iranian ethnic groups	Intermediate	30.468	0.001	4	Unimportant
		Advanced	18.872	0.001	4	Important
7	Using literary content related to other nations or languages (translated into Persian), including the translation of poems, stories, novels, etc.	Intermediate	26.638	0.001	4	Unimportant
		Advanced	28.234	0.001	4	Important
8	Using literary contents that are equivalent to them or have a theme close to them in the literature of the source language.	Intermediate	14.000	0.003	4	Important
		Advanced	46.319	0.001	4	Important
9	Using instances and contents that require explanation and interpretation (due to having information from other sciences such as philosophy, theology, etc.)	Intermediate	50.255	0.001	4	Unimportant
		Advanced	17.170	0.001	4	Unimportant

The Friedman test was used to answer the second research question and to determine the rank or significance of each item of the components of literary instances with cultural characteristics from the perspective of the research sample population. Table 2 indicates the ranking of these items according to the Friedman test at two intermediate and advanced levels from the teachers' point of view.

Table 2

Ranking of the indicators of literary instances with cultural characteristics at two intermediate and advanced levels.

	Item	Language Skill Level	
		Intermediate	Advanced
1	Using the contents that contain a moral, social, and humane message	(5) 5.66	(4) 5.47
2	Using instances and contents that contain background information (historical, social facts, work space, part of the biography of a poet or author, etc.) regarding an instance or other literary content (for example, a poem or story)	(7) 4.43	(6) 4.69

3	Using literary texts in special occasions or situations or in accordance with the objectives of the textbooks (for example, a poem describing Nowruz in the days close to Nowruz, or a poem with the title of Persian Gulf in a lesson with the same title)	(2) 6.08	(3) 5.74
4	Using instances that include customs, traditions, celebrations, mourning, beliefs, values, taboos, and social behaviors of Iranians.	(1)6.47	(1)6.40
5	Using instances that depict the mythological, historical, political, social, economic, and cultural background of Iran.	(3) 5.89	(2) 6.17
6	Using literary contents related to Iranian peoples	(8) 4.10	(8) 4.18
7	Using literary contents related to other nations or languages (translated into Persian), including the translation of poems, stories, novels, etc.	(6) 4.45	(7) 4.36
8	Using literary contents that are equivalent to them or have a theme close to them in the literature of the source language.	(4) 5.77	(5) 5.34
9	Using instances and contents that require explanation and interpretation (due to having information from other sciences such as philosophy, theology, etc.)	(9) 2.14	(9) 2.64
The result of Friedman's test		$^2X=265.776$	$^2x=221.387$

4. Conclusion

The results showed that the sample population places greater importance on criteria such as the appropriateness of selected texts in relation to the general objectives of teaching Persian language to non-Persian language speakers, lack of representation of cultural polyphony, lack of context-dependence or dependence on social, intellectual, philosophical, mystical, theological context, a stronger dependence on examples of public culture than what is called glorious culture, the ability to adapt items to the level of language proficiency, methods, approaches and strategies for teaching language skills, and universality -the capacity to be understood by all and to activate the prior knowledge of Persian language learners.

Keywords: literary texts, culture, teaching the Persian language to non-Persian language