Making Connections from Language Learning to Life Experiences Through Literature-Based EFL Instruction

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The study aims at implementing a literature-based approach in an EFL course for university students. The students in this study read the text outside of the class and met regularly to do reading related activities throughout the semester. Data collection consisted of audio-recordings of classroom conversations and interviews, both the students’ and the instructor’s journals, and pre- and post-class surveys. Research questions were set up to explore the dynamic aspects of foreign language learning. Data analysis revealed the following results: The first finding was that students could refine their language skills based on communicative language use by improving English production skills while as learning how to use text structures in developing language skills. The second finding was that students changed their perceptions of language learning. Students started to take ownership toward their learning and thus they could grow as language learners by showing their voluntary work in learning the new language. The third finding was that students in this study could extend experiences through dynamic reading transaction by identifying themselves with the characters from the texts and nurturing reflective responses. Based on the results, the implications of the findings and suggestions for follow-up studies were provided.

**Key words:** literature-based instruction, literature discussion, transactional theory of reading, language learning, life experience

**I. INTRODUCTION**

When the demand for oral language ability was increased, foreign language instruction through grammar translation utilizing literature was blamed and expelled as the major cause for the failure of language learning due to its focus on written language. However, with the growing recognition of communicative language teaching (CLT) in
which learner ability to communicate in the target language in contexts is emphasized as the goal of language teaching, literature came back in language classrooms. This time, literature was regarded as “proper” material for facilitating classroom conversation, and thus scholars, educators and teachers started to support the theoretical position of literature in language teaching by experimenting with diverse genres of literature with a variety of language learners.

Scholars of L1 development have started to realize that first language learners developed their oral language better when they were already accustomed to reading and responding to literature compared to others who had no such experience. Therefore, literature circles, book clubs and others which encouraged readers’ response were introduced in the L1 language arts classes, and then in the second language classrooms. As literature-based, reader-oriented teaching gained attention in second language teaching, ESL teachers faced the challenge of using literature in a communicative context. In language classrooms, learning to communicate does not mean accumulating sets of context-free, structurally based linguistic units and vocabulary lists in the target language, but instead it involves developing an understanding of and an ability to use resources associated with meaningful communicative activities in the target language (Hall, 1999). Accordingly, studies which adopt the reader response approach in second language classrooms have been carried out (Ali, 1993/1994; Clifford, 1979; Elliot, 1990; McElvain, 2010; Samway & Whang, 1996). In this approach, readers actively react to text and generate their own discourse in order to contribute toward constructing the meaning of the text.

Recently, studies utilizing literature in foreign language classrooms have been carried out in different situations (Carlisle, 2000; H. Kim, 2003a, 2003b, 2004; H. Kim & E. Kim, 2010; H. Kim & S. Kweon, 2006; H. Kim & Nicoll, 2005; Y. Kim, 2010; Liaw, 2001). However, few attempts have been made to explore the depth of responses from unique groups of language learners; previous studies focused more on aspects related to students’ age and language levels or applicable grades in order to examine the usefulness of literature. For example, language learners who are in pre-service teacher training might react differently when they respond to literature. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the research gap by investigating the implementation of a literature-based approach in an EFL setting which is detailed later. Therefore, specific research questions formulated from the transactional theory of reading and reader response (Rosenblatt, 1994, 1995) were:

- How does a literature-based reading class impact the language progress of Korean EFL university students?
- How do university students in pre-service teacher training perceive a
language class utilizing children’s literature?
• How do literature-based responses extend life experiences of language learners in pre-service teacher training?

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Literature in Language Teaching

When literary works were introduced in the traditional grammar classroom, they served as supplementary materials of grammar practice, vocabulary learning, translation, and mechanistic writing exercises (Liaw, 2001). Reading and writing were emphasized as major focuses, and therefore speaking and listening received little or no attention. In addition, canonical literature selected for supporting grammar teaching was mostly beyond language learners’ level of proficiency and it caused frequent failure for learners in understanding the meaning of the text (Al-Arish, 1990). Therefore, literature was regarded as irrelevant or positively harmful (Maley, 2001). Because of the negative experience with literature, there are many ESL/EFL teachers who think of literature only as works of art rather than practical material for language teaching (Bassnett & Grundy, 1993). Teachers who adopt literature in EFL instruction tend to use literature as a filler-type activity without using literature on a regular basis or as an integral part of their instruction (Wasanasomsithi, 1998).

Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) indicate that the pedagogy of literature faces a new phase by abandoning translation as a means of comprehending texts. Therefore, studies which characterize the relationship between language and literature have flourished (Barnitz, Gipe, & Richards, 1999; Collie & Slater, 1987; Ghosn, 2002; Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002; Hall, 2005; Hill, Johnson, & Noe, 1995; Lazar, 1996; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000; Povey, 1967; Pugh, 1989; Spack, 1985). These studies report that literature is beneficial to and has been utilized in language classrooms as a means of extending learners’ linguistic knowledge and enhancing language development. For example, Povey (1967) and Pugh (1989) indicate that literature is a rich source of meaningful input, while Parkinson and Thomas (2000) focus on the relationship of language and literature in the classroom context, and Hall (2005) details the uses of literature in language education.

Benefits of using literature other than for facilitating language learning are also indicated because literature enables language learners to interpret and shape their experience as humans. Oster (1989) reports that in the process of constructing meaning by reading literature, students develop higher-level thinking skills, promote
understanding of the target cultures, and expand imaginative and creative abilities in writing. Learning the culture of a language is as crucial as the mastery of different speech patterns, and literature can provide insights into the target language culture (Galda & Beach, 2001; Kooy & Chiu, 1998; McKay, 1982; Pugh, 1989). Interpretive, imaginative and creative abilities are important factors for a successful communicative classroom which can be developed by using literature (Candlin, 1996; Lazar, 1996; McRae, 1991). Akyel and Yalcin (1990), who surveyed EFL teachers, found that literature was a tool for language learners to identify and understand the operations of language to enhance their communicative competence. Overall, literature brings academic, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic benefits to the language learners.

In response to the practical application in language classrooms, studies provide practical ideas of using literature in language instruction. In their endeavor to lay a foundation to account the relationship between literature and language teaching, Brumfit and Carter (1986) provide theoretical and practical issues and problems in adopting literature in language classrooms. Collie and Slater (1987) provide a practical guide for teachers of English and offers teachers a rationale and a variety of imaginative techniques for integrating literature work for language teaching. Other studies present a practical guide to how the teaching of language and literature can be used as mutually supportive resources within the classroom (Carter & McRae, 1996; Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002; Hall, 2005; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000; Young & Hadaway, 2006).

2. Transactional Theory of Reading

The term “reader response” was proposed in Rosenblatt’s foundational works (1938, 1978) which described reading as a transactional process between the reader and the text. This approach proposes that a literary work is created in the reciprocal relationship between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt (1994) emphasizes the importance of the reader and the text in the dynamic reading transaction in which the relationship between the reader and the text is recognized as a specific situation at a particular time and place. In other words, reading is a transactional process that occurs between a particular reader and a particular text at a particular time, and under particular circumstances (Rosenblatt, 1985, 1986). Therefore, transaction is a means of establishing the active role of both the reader and the text in interpretation. In transaction, any interpretation is an event occurring at a particular time in a particular social or cultural context (Rosenblatt, 1990). As Connell (1996) states, in the process of constructing meaning, the transactional theory of reading stresses the interconnection of the reader and the text.

Rosenblatt’s theory of reading and reader response highlights the individual reader’s experience with a text based on the reader’s own background and experiences, and how
these experiences contribute to the reader’s construction of meaning. By encouraging learners to take an active role in meaning-formation, the theory suggests that learners’ experiences with a text bring new opportunities for formulating new meanings. In the long run, by locating meaning in the transactional relationships between the reader and the text, transactional theory enriches the meaning generated by the reader-text relationship. More importantly, as Willinsky (1990) has stated, Rosenblatt has established literary transaction as an educational ideal.

With increased concern for learners in the 1980s, language teachers have been attempting reader-oriented reading in the use of literature in language instruction (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000). They adopted Rosenblatt’s transactional view to literature circles in which peer-led discussion groups come together regularly to share interpretations of what they have read (Shelton-Strong, 2011). Studies (Daniels, 2002; Gilmore & Day, 2006; Hill, Johnson, & Noe, 1995) offer practical and concrete suggestions for using literature circles. Faust (2000) also adopted Rosenblatt’s transactional view as a way to conceptualize literature instruction that would parallel the learner-centered approach to writing instruction. When teachers employ the transactional theory of reading, “literature becomes a mode of personal life experience that involves a potentially powerful combination of intellect and emotions” (Connell, 2000, p. 27).

As literature-based teaching gained attention in ESL/EFL settings, language teachers faced the challenge of using literature in communicative context in which readers actively react to text while reading, and then generate their own discourse in order to contribute in constructing the meaning of the text (Hirvela, 1996). Accordingly, studies in teaching literature which adopt reader response approach in ESL (Ali, 1993/1994; Clifford, 1979; Elliot, 1990; S. Kim, 2008; McElvain, 2009; Samway & Whang, 1995), and EFL (Carlisle, 2000; Liaw, 2001) environments have been carried out. S. Kim (2008) explored a student-led literature discussion of 4th and 5th graders in an ESL setting and emphasized the value of reading comprehension strategy instruction in a literature discussion. Liaw (2001) used American short stories in an undergraduate English reading course in a Taiwanese university without considering the group’s special interests and the development of oral language production skills.

In Korean EFL context, many studies related to literature have been done by H. Kim (2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2006) in which the benefits of using literature in grades 6-8 have been explored, and additional studies were done by H. Kim and her colleagues (H. Kim & E. Kim, 2010; H. Kim & Y. Kim, 2010; H. Kim & E. Park, 2011; H. Kim & S. Kweon, 2006; H. Kim & Nicoll, 2005). The study done by H. Kim and S. Kweon (2006) experimented with the possibility of integrating 4 language skills in a university reading class without considering special interests of the target group such as the students’ major or future jobs. H. Kim’s other studies with her colleagues attempted to implement
children's literature in primary school classrooms. For example, the study of H. Kim and Y. Kim (2010) investigated how primary school students developed reading strategies while reading children's literature and other studies (H. Kim & E. Kim, 2010; H. Kim & E. Park) utilized different types of literary texts to explore different aspects of language learning and students' responses according to the texts. Y. Kim (2010) investigated the benefits of using literature in high school classrooms and reported students' perception of literature-based language instruction only using questionnaire and interviews from participants.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

Participants of this study were thirty students (6 males, 24 females) enrolled in Practical English, one of the English courses for freshmen at a university for training future elementary school teachers in Korea. In other words, they were in the first year of pre-service teachers. Before the study, participants' experience of reading literature was very limited. For example, twenty out of the thirty students did not have any experience of reading English chapter books1 with about 200 pages. Only ten students had experience of reading chapter books, but they had only read one or two books. Students' English levels2 were rather high, but they were not confident in their production skills such as speaking and writing3.

2. Procedure

The study was planned from 2010 by setting up research questions and reviewing relevant literature. The experiment was conducted during the spring semester of 2011 which lasted from March, 2011 to June, 2011. Students met once a week for a two-hour period which is equivalent to 100 minutes. Each 100-minute class consisted of a quiz, a question and answer activity, small group discussion and presentation, and journal writing. However, there were a few exceptions with the schedule of each class: An introduction of the course on the first week, watching a movie after finishing reading

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1 A chapter book is literature for children or adolescents intended for intermediate readers, generally grade 3-8.
2 According to some of the students' standard test scores, TOEIC ranged from 750 to 900, TEPS from 614 to 876.
3 Refer to Table 1.
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Holes, students’ presentation about optional reading, and performing reader’s theater using the contents of The city of Ember at the end of the course.

Each regular class started with a quiz in which the instructor prepared 10 questions based on the reading of the week. The purpose of giving a quiz to students was to check whether the students read the assigned chapters before the class. Then, the class did a question and answer activity with the whole class. For this activity, the instructor provided questions to initiate class conversation, and students either answered each question or listened to other students’ responses. Next, students worked in small groups to do a group discussion. Each group consisted of five students for the first book, Holes, and four students for the second book, The city of Ember. The group discussion took a frame of literature circle in which every student had an opportunity to speak and be heard when students discussed a book they had all read (Daniels, 2002; Shelton-Strong, 2011). During group discussions, students in each group took a role such as a discussion leader, a secretary, or a member. They all took these roles in turn. After the group discussion, each group came to the front of the class to present what was discussed during their group work. For the group presentation, each member contributed by reporting the result of the discussion. Finally, students wrote a response journal for approximately 10~15 minutes by reflecting on their reading at home and activities done during the class.

3. Text Selection

Texts selected for the study were chapter books written for children or adolescents because these books are stylistically less complicated, and it contains easily understood linguistic and cultural components for language learners (Nilsen & Donelson, 2008). Students read two chapter books, Holes by Louis Sachar and The city of Ember by Jeanne DuPrau, which were required for the class activities. Studies in mainstream and ESL (Daniels, 2002; Shelton-Strong, 2011) suggests that one of the elements of a successful literature circle is for students to choose their own reading materials. For this study, however, the instructor selected two required texts for all students because participants in this study were taking a course for credits and thus the instructor should set up tasks and activities for grading. In fact, Furr (2004) suggested that in EFL classrooms, the decision of choosing the text hand back to the instructor because it is important for the instructor to choose texts which promote reading fluency for use in discussions and allow students to participate in meaningful discussions about the texts that they have read. Students in the study also read one book of their choice for writing a book review, and then presented about the book. In this case, the instructor provided a list of possible titles with short introductions of each text for the students to choose from.
4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through video tape recordings of the classroom conversation, pre- and post-class surveys\(^4\), interviews\(^5\), and students’ response journals, written reports about group discussions and the instructor’s journal. To analyze the data, video files were transcribed, and written data were compiled and organized according to dates and individual students. Then the data was coded and categorized for qualitative analysis (Holliday, 2002; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Students wrote their answers to the survey both in Korean and English, and the part written in Korean was translated into English and placed within the marking “{ }.” In presenting the findings, qualitative techniques were employed to illustrate dynamic aspects of the context. However, simple statistics also was used to show students’ self-diagnosis of the four language skills before and after the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study presents three findings in which the data answered the research questions. The major findings were categorized in terms of “refining language skills based on communicative language use,” “changing perceptions of language learning,” and “extending experiences through dynamic reading transaction.” Each finding again was divided into two subcategories.

1. Refining Language Skills Based on Communicative Language Use

1) Improving production skills

Participants in this study came to the class with the expectation of developing English production skills. Most students expressed that they wanted to improve their English ability through this course on the survey conducted at the beginning of the course. Among them, speaking and writing were the most frequently mentioned skills with the following reasons:

{I want to improve English conversation and writing ability.} (Survey,

\(^4\) Pre- and post-class survey questions were provided in the APPENDIX.

\(^5\) For this study, only 6 students were interviewed because the researcher did not want to force students with activities which were not related to their class work. These students volunteered to be interviewed when asked by the researcher at the end of the study.
Joon, Mar. 7)

{I'd like to try hard to improve speaking and writing abilities which I am not good at.} (Survey, Songha, Mar. 7)

Like Joon and Songha, most students wanted to improve their speaking and writing skills. Songha mentioned that she was not good at speaking and writing English, and it was not easy to improve these skills. However, students did not consider that reading or reading literary texts is helpful in improving speaking and writing skills illustrated in the examples below:

{I think that it is hard to improve listening and speaking skills although we are good at reading.} (Survey, Jina, Mar. 7)

{Reading might be helpful in writing, but it is not helpful in speaking. Language from literature is different from practical language which we use in our daily life.} (Survey, Injoo, Mar. 7)

The examples above show the students’ view of reading, and its relationship with other language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. For example, both Jina and Injoo could not relate written language and spoken language by mentioning reading cannot improve speaking and writing skills. In other words, they did not consider that the four language skills could be integrated based on reading oriented activities. It means that these students did not have any experiences of learning a foreign language with integrated methods.

Although students indicated that reading is helpful in improving English language ability, they had traditional views of reading. The following examples show students’ diverse views of reading in learning English:

{To be honest, it (reading) seems a way of improving English ability. So far, I have never enjoyed reading.} (Survey, Yeonji, Mar. 7)

Reading is translating English into Korean. (Survey, Hyunchul, Mar. 7)

\(^6\) All students’ names are pseudonyms.

\(^7\) To preserve the authenticity of the data, the errors in the students’ responses written in English have not been corrected in this study.
Because through English reading I can get ability of vocabulary and grammar. (Survey, Daeun, Mar. 7).

Students knew that reading is one of the methods in learning English. However, Yeonji mentioned that she never enjoyed reading, and to other students, reading was “translating English into Korean,” or learning vocabulary and grammar. These students did not consider reading as a valuable resource of learning the target language in communicative contexts.

In order to break away from the fixed ideas about reading, students were given opportunities to use the target language in communicative contexts such as classroom talk, group discussion and presentation, and journal writing. However, when the instructor tried to lead the first class conversation in which she asked class members to share their thoughts about the assigned reading, she was only met by many blank stares. The example below illustrates how the instructor could initiate classroom conversation when her students did not have any experience of such a class.

T: Did you enjoy reading? How was it?
S1: Interesting.
T: Anything else? What else do you want to talk about?
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T: Then let’s talk about characters from the story. Who is the main character?
Ss: (loudly) Stanley.
T: That’s right. What did he do?
S2: He didn’t steal shoes.
S3: He went to boys’ camp.
S4: He met Zero. (Class Conversation, Mar. 14)

The classroom dialog above showed that students did not actively respond when they were given open questions first. However, when more specific questions were provided, the blank stares have been replaced by students eagerly talking about characters from the story. Using one of the literary elements such as character description became the starting point of class discussion. Later, students could experiment with the target language when they discussed the topic related to the reading in a small group activity.

When language learners read literary texts and respond to them through journal writing, they can have an authentic purpose of writing. Students indicated that they could have confidence in writing and learn to connect reading and writing through reading literature.
{Through this course, the fear of writing in English disappeared…} (Survey, Injoo, June 20)

{Reading and writing skills are improved by reading books as homework and writing journals, and listening and speaking skills are improved through presentation.} (Survey, Yeonji, June 20)

The survey conducted before and after the study shows students’ self-diagnosis of four language skills. Before the study, students marked one of the five scales from 1 through 5 (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree) according to their current language ability. After the study, they were again asked to mark on one of the five scales about the four language skills. This time, they indicated how much they developed each language skill. Students’ perception of their language skills before and after the study is summarized in Table 1.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Listening $M$ ($SD$)</th>
<th>Speaking $M$ ($SD$)</th>
<th>Reading $M$ ($SD$)</th>
<th>Writing $M$ ($SD$)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-test ($N = 30$)</strong></td>
<td>3.40 (0.81)</td>
<td>1.87 (0.78)</td>
<td>3.53 (0.68)</td>
<td>2.33 (0.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-test ($N = 30$)</strong></td>
<td>3.60 (0.72)</td>
<td>3.13 (0.97)</td>
<td>3.97 (0.61)</td>
<td>3.60 (0.77)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before the study, students thought their listening (3.40) and reading skills (3.53) were much better than speaking (1.87) and writing (2.33) by indicating that their speaking skill is the lowest. At the end of the course, however, students felt that their speaking (from 1.87 to 3.13) and writing (from 2.33 to 3.60) skills improved significantly which was quite contrary to their expectations at the beginning of the study. Nevertheless, one student mentioned that she did not get any benefits from this course because she “{did not work hard}” (Survey, Jiwon, June 20) and she regretted her negligence.

Like most EFL learners, students in this study were more familiar with the receptive language skills, listening and reading, and therefore, they wanted to improve production skills, speaking and writing, from their class. Although students did not know that they could learn all of the four language skills together by reading literature with related activities, they all confirmed that their production skills had improved at the end of the study.
2) Using text structures in developing language skills

When literature was used as a learning resource in a language classroom, language learners could utilize unique structures of the text in developing their language skills. For example, when reading *Holes*, students realized the connection between past and present, and frequently wrote about them in their journal. The following examples show how students got used to the structure from the instructor’s journal, and then how they used it to understand the text better and facilitated their writing from a student’s two journal entries:

During the class, some students mentioned that it was not easy to understand chapter 7 (of *Holes*) because of the mix of the past and the present. So I gave a mini-lesson about how the past-present structure works. After the class, I looked at students’ journal entries and found that they could promote their understanding of the text by using the unique structure of the story.

(Instructor’s journal, Mar. 14)

I think that two structures (present and past) are good because I understand better about the story. And I understand better about the family’s history.

(Journal, Sunny, Mar. 14)

I could understand that Zero’s real name (Hector Zeroni!) is related to Madame Zeroni. And Madame Zeroni is related to Stanley's great-great-grandfather named Yelnats. So Zero and Stanley is related to each other even before they were born!! (Journal, Sunny, Apr. 4)

Most students in this study became familiarized with the unique structure of the text - the narrative shifts from present to distant past, back to present, then to recent past. From the examples above, Sunny indicated that this structure was helpful in understanding the story better (March, 14). Later in her next journal (Apr. 4), she could expand her language use because she used the information about the family relationship as a resource of her writing. The structure of the class also made active discussion in small groups possible as is indicated by Heyji’s journal and the summary of her group’s discussion report.

Our group discussed how many clues are connected. .... Zero confessed he stole Clyde Livingstone's shoes and Stanley's father is inventing things related with shoes. I think it's not just a coincidence. (Journal, Heyji, Apr. 4)
Because of Green Lake curse, Lake was dry. So Kate Barlow could bury treasures. Linda Miller wanted them and the Warden wanted, too. So the Warden made children dug holes. (Group discussion report by Group Zero, summarized by Woosung, Apr. 4)

In order to find out how some clues in *Holes* were connected, Heyji’s group members discussed and then drew conclusions on what happened because of the curse on the Green Lake. For their report, Woosung, who was the secretary of the group, briefly summarized why the boys were told to dig holes by the Warden.

Once students were familiar with the connections in the story, they started to apply what they had learned to other texts and the world outside of the text. Students already learned how to use the connection between times, episodes, and characters. Now they tried to look for connections between the text and other worlds, and therefore, they could have more resources to use for their writing which made their writing richer and longer. The following examples from three students show how the text could be connected with other texts and worlds:

And when I read chapter 20, I reminded Movie, Matrix. Although there were no machines in the Ember, It was little like Sion. Sion was last city for human in movie Matrix. (Journal, Yoonha, May 30)

After I read whole story of “The City of Ember” I wonder the next story very much. As I compare the story with “Holes,” the most interesting part is ending. “Holes” ended with the scene that Stanley goes out the Green lake camp with treasure boxs. The story ends with definite ending. But, “The City of Ember” has openness ending. We can imagine how the story will develop. (Journal, Joori, May 30)

The system of City of Ember is a lot different from ours. It was kind of shocking and interesting....I have curiosity about the unknown region. I wonder what is in that region....Ember is not that much different from our world now with scarce of resources like water, energy... (Journal, Hyeji, May 30)

Students learned that they could compare the structure of their reading with other

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8 Students picked one of the characters’ names as the name of their group on the first week of reading *Holes*. 
types of texts or one story with another. For example, Yoonha compared the city of Ember and *Matrix* because she could see the differences and similarities between the text and the movie, and Joori made connections between the two texts, *Holes* and *The city of Ember*. However, Heyji tried to be more realistic by comparing the world we are living in now with that of the city of Ember. In addition, the difference between the two worlds gave her the curiosity to explore the world from the text which was new and different from world she knew.

In short, the unique structure of the literary texts was not only helpful in students’ reading comprehension, but also in developing writing skills. Students could experiment with the new language by contrasting the past and the present, connecting between characters, and comparing the text and other worlds.

2. Changing Perceptions of Language Learning

1) Taking ownership toward learning

Literature has performed the magic of motivating students to read in and outside of class and to write in order to respond to the text. It also gives students more ownership of their own growth and allows them to get some real reading into their lives. For example, “something glisten” from *Holes*, and unique aspects of the city of Ember attracted students’ attention.

Chapter 11 through 20, it was more interesting than 1 through 10. Because it includes the deeper stories, proper conflicts, something that raises curiosity and so on. On chapter 13, Stanley found something glisten. It made me think what that is, and willing to read more quickly. (Journal, Minseung, Mar. 21)

And I wondered “the Unknown Regions”. My curiosity grows more and more while I read the book. Why anyone couldn’t go to the Unknown Regions? So I imagine the later story. (Journal, Bora, Apr. 25)

The first thing that I felt when I finished the book was curiosity about the next story. How did the citizens escape from the city?....Later when I am free at vacation I want to read the next book. (Interview, Injoo, May 30)

When the text was interesting to students, they had more motivation to read the text. From the quoted data above, students became curious about the different world when they knew about the city of Ember. This curiosity made them think about the world and
extended their imagination. Especially “Bora’s curiosity about what will happen after citizens of Ember escaped the city gave her motivation to read the sequel of *The city of Ember*. It enabled her to use the sequel as her book for individual presentation (Instructor’s journal, June 13).”

One of the benefits of reading literature is that readers can make predictions by using the information from the events that already happened. That way, students can better understand the next part of the text. At the same time, making predictions helped students go on with the reading and provided resources to journal writing. In writing his journal, Jaehoon could make his response richer by adopting prediction strategies.

I am interested in Doon’s curiosity and Lina’s imagination. I guess Lina will adventure the unknown regions. And Doon helps her adventure by inventing electricity movable bulbs. Doon found and saw the generator. He would study the electricity and find the way to make electricity. (Journal, Jaehoon, Apr. 25)

I guess that Lina will find some information while she find her grandmother’s object. That will be big help to find the way to save the city. They will explore the tunnel every night. They will find no important thing. Then they find real content of the instruction. The instructions lead them to the other secret tunnel. Through the secret tunnel, they will enter the secret room. (Journal, Jaehoon, May 2)

Jaehoon enjoyed not only reading the text, but also writing response journals because he used prediction strategies. He struggled when he read the first chapter book, *Holes*, and he could not write a lot for his journal until the class had finished the first book. However, when he started to use a prediction strategy by using what had already happened in the second book, *The city of Ember*, and the characteristics of the two main characters, Lina and Doon, he could take ownership of his own learning. In other words, he was motivated to write response journals and the instructor “could also observe him participate in the group discussion actively and enjoy it (Instructor’s journal, May 2).”

Students took ownership through small group activities, too. For example, during group work, students could participate in the work voluntarily and actively by preparing a presentation which could lead to a more active participation in the group work.

{Group discussion improved speaking ability a lot. It was good because I could talk as much as I wanted during group work. I also actively participated in the group discussion because I have to present what we
discussed after the group discussion.} (Interview, Injoo, June 27)

Movie performance is most useful. {It was good because we could work cooperatively and wrote the script by ourselves.} (Survey, Jisu, June 20)

Students were talking more when they were in their own peer group because they all have responsibilities and ownership toward learning at the same time. Therefore, they tried to contribute to find answers to the discussion topics provided by the instructor and by preparing for the group presentation. In addition, as Jisu indicated, they enjoyed writing the script for the performance when they finished reading and discussing the second book, The city of Ember.

2) Growth As Language Learners

Although students in this study enjoyed reading literature and actively participated in the group activities, it was not easy for them at all times. Students’ feedback at the end of the course revealed what the students’ problems were and how they eventually felt at the end of the course.

I had never read the English book, so it’s hard to read Holes at first. (Interview, Jaehoon, June 27)

I think that this class was like real course of university. During class, I had many trouble, but in the end I felt just precious memories. (Survey, Hyoeun, June 20)

I think this course is little burden to most of the students. But I learned a lot of things for this course. So I would do similar course to my future students. (Survey, Sojin, June 20)

For some students, reading chapter books were not easy because they did not have any experiences of reading them before. For example, reading a chapter book is new to Jaehoon and thus when he read his first chapter book, Holes, it was not easy for him to understand the text. Hyoeun also had trouble at the starting point, but later she could have “precious memories.” Although Sojin recognized that her classmates had difficult time with the class, she discovered the value of literature in language learning and emphasized that she learned a lot from this course. In addition, this literature-based course would impact her future profession because she voluntarily suggested using
literature in similar ways when she becomes a teacher. To future teachers, learning English through literature was not just for them. It would have a ripple effect because their future students would get benefits from these pre-service teachers’ experience.

Once students were familiar with reading and related activities, they started to enjoy the class. Now they were more willing to study English by themselves.

If we act one more time later, we would prepare much than this time. Anyway, this time is the most impressive time among English class. (Survey, Yoonha, June 20)

I think that the achievement from this course is different according to students’ work or endeavor. So a big achievement is expected if we study hard during the class. (Survey, Joon, June 20)

Yoonha enjoyed performing in front of the class using the script which her group members wrote together. She also realized that other groups did a wonderful job with their acting. So she wanted to work more if she has another opportunity to do the activity. Joon indicated that the unique aspect of this course was that the achievement from this course depends on the students. He also mentioned that “a big achievement is expected” because he saw the potential of this course in developing communicative ability in EFL contexts.

Throughout the course, the instructor could observe that students were developing reading strategies. With the start of the second book, The city of Ember, students applied what they have learned from the reading of the first book.

M:\ The secret is related...
J: Lina is related to the hidden box.
M: Lina is very curious about things. So she will find something.
Y: I wonder what she want to do.

(Discussion from group Caveman, Apr. 25)

Finally they will save the city and reveals the secret of mayor. (Journal, Injoo, Apr. 25)

Mikyung and her group members tried to find out the relationship between Lina and the box which is helpful in understanding the situation of the city of Ember, and the

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9 M: Mikyung, J: Jihoon, Y: Yoonha
things that Lina had to do. Injoo learned the prediction strategy and applied it when she guessed the next part of the text.

When students had ownership toward their learning, they not only voluntarily worked, but they also started to have more confidence in general and in English. The following examples from the survey at the end of this course show how students felt throughout the course:

{I could have confidence in writing and speaking English.} (Survey, Hyunchul, June 20)

{The negative feelings held for English has decreased.} (Survey, Joon, June 20)

It’s not too difficult with a little effort. I can read English books. (Survey, Jaehoon, June 20)

Thank you for give us confidence. I have confidence when I speak in front of the class. (Survey, Mikyung, June 20)

The students’ responses above revealed that they were not only learning the new language, but also becoming more confident in speaking and writing English. They also could get over the negative attitude toward learning English. Especially Mikyung appreciated having confidence through this course because she was able to get over her problem - being afraid of speaking in front of others.

In short, after participating in this study, students grew as matured language learners. First, they could get over the difficulties of reading and responding to chapter books. Next, they started to enjoy reading and to study voluntarily by using prediction strategies. Finally, some students showed their appreciation toward the course and others wanted to use literature for their future students because they realized that literature was helpful in learning the target language.

3. Extending Experiences Through Dynamic Reading Transaction

1) Identifying with the characters

Literature not only facilitates language learning, but also enables language learners to interpret and shape their experience as humans. In the process of constructing meaning by reading literature, students could improve interpretive ability, and use imaginative
and creative abilities in writing by identifying with the characters. For example, when students had an opportunity to read and respond to literature, they transacted with the text by constructing meaning from it.

I feel friendship is good. If I were Zero, could I be alive? Could I meet friend like Stanley? Through this time, I look back my life. (Journal, Seyoung, Apr. 4)

If I were Stanley, I wouldn’t be sure about Zero’s survivor and I wouldn’t decide to run away. Stanley is really brave and good person, I think....And Zero confessed his stealing to Stanley. He stole the Clyde Livingston’s shoes that Stanley was misunderstood to steal! If I were Stanley, at first I would be angry at him, but finally I would forgive him. I think forgiveness is good for all people. (Journal, Kyungeun, Apr. 4)

If I were Lina, I’ll act same with Lina’s. Because in Ember, there is no hope and no new things. All of things in Ember is old and broken. While I read The city of Ember I feel I’m in Lina’s shoes. (Journal, Mikyung, May 30)

By identifying with the characters from the story, students could relate to and expand upon their experiences. For example, Seyoung could think about the hard times Zero faced, and sensed that friendship was really important in his life. Kyungeun thought about the relationship between Stanley and Zero by focusing on Stanley’s situation caused by Zero’s behavior. It was a moment to think about what we as human beings should do when others have caused us harm. Also as Mikyung suggests, by identifying with the character, we can experience other situations or places which are quite different from ours. It is possible through experiencing diverse characters from literature.

Compared to others, participants of the study who were aiming to be teachers also gained another experience as well. Through response journals, most pre-service teachers indicated the importance of the role of teachers and the attitude toward teaching, teaching method, and dealing with problems in school. The following examples are related to these issues:

If I’m Stanley, I’m willing to teach how to read and write to Zero, whether I have a passion to teach someone or not. Zero’s enthusiasm to study letter is so strong that it is visible. Especially, when Stanley write the letter to his mom, Zero stared at that in the longing eye. If I saw that eyes, I can’t help teaching to Zero. (Journal, Kyungmin, Mar. 21)
If I were Stanley, I would teach Zero because I love teaching. First, I’ll write down capital A to Z. Then I’ll make him listen and repeat. After he can read alphabet, then I’ll make him practice writing. And then, as the same way I’ll teach small a to z. (Journal, Jina, Mar. 21)

If I were Stanley’s teacher, I would like to solve the problem with class students. I think the reason of the bullying is not only the two people’s fault, but also class’s atmosphere. So, I’ll use group counseling with students. (Journal, Yoonji, Mar. 14)

Throughout *Holes*, Stanley’s school life and Zero’s motivation to learn to read were illustrated. Whenever students met these situations, they showed strong interest in both school life and learning because they started their academic life as pre-service teachers. From the examples quoted above, Kyungmin showed her attitude toward teaching as a future teacher. To her, students’ need is more important than her personal intention. When Jina identified herself with Stanley, however, she suggested teaching early reading by detailing the process of teaching the English alphabet. Finally, Yoonji indicated the issue of bullying in school and suggested a solution.

When students who want to be teachers in the near future experienced good literature, its impact was not only for the students, but also for their future primary school children. Through the interview, Joon indicated he wanted to use this book for his future students with the following reason.

I thought that this story is the good story for elementary students because this story show real friendship between Zero and Stanley. (Interview, Joon, June 27)

While reading *Holes*, students either identify themselves with Stanley who is the main character, or Zero who became Stanley’s best friend. Whether they identify themselves with Zero or Stanley, vicarious experiences with the characters could promote learning and extend experiences. Identifying themselves with others can also help EFL students to understand themselves and others better; they were influenced a lot by these characters and their friendship. Therefore, literature-based instruction in EFL environment can provide the needed literary experiences which can be related to the learners’ own life and language learning experiences.
2) Nurturing reflective responses

Reading and responding to high quality literature seem to have the potential to provide valuable experiences that will promote emotional intelligence through reflective responses. During group discussions, students could deepen and expand their thought by eagerly pointing to topics or episodes within the text to support their arguments and by questioning each other in order to figure out what the text really meant. The following examples show how students responded to the situations:

Today, our group talked about darkness, so I decided to think deeply about the topic. I think all humans have the darkness in their mind. (Journal, Yoonji, May 9)

I didn't know that my friends have such a creative thinking. It was an interesting experience and I wish that next time, I'll do more well. (Journal, Jiyoung, June 7)

Today our group discussed the function of onions and Sam's death. We had the same opinions. The onions have saved many lifes and Sam's death was linked to Zero's survive in terms of the boat and jarred peaches. I think other groups also thought that. The onions saved people's life curing illness and Stanley found that so Stanley and Zero ate to survive. And the jarred peaches at the boat helped Zero save his life, although that also made him sick. In this way, Sam's death was linked to Zero's life. (Journal, Minseung, Apr. 4)

By talking about the book they had read, students could understand themselves and each other better. It also helped students to learn about other people's ideas and understand the other world better. From the examples above, students benefited from group discussion. According to Yoonji, she could think about the topic more deeply and seriously because she had an opportunity to think about the darkness in humans through the group discussion. Jiyoung could get some creative ideas from classmates and Minseung could understand the complicated relationship from the story through group discussion.

Students expressed their own ideas and opinions by responding to the text. The following examples show how students revealed their thought through response journals by transacting with the text:
I really agree with Doon’s father who said the anger becomes the master of ourselves when we are angry. And I always try not to be angry and think positively. There’s proper time when anger should be shown to other people like the situation when the Mayor Cole tried to deceive people. But we should not show anger over trifle things. It is not good for both me and other people. So when I’m angry with unjustifiable reason, I try to say nothing and think about how serious am I being angry at such a little things… (Journal, Heyji, May 2)

I think express the anger is better. Because enduring the anger, the anger is exploded in later very big and seriously. But some people argue that enduring anger is better because when people is angry, they can face the solution logically. (Journal, Sunhwa, May 2)

Clary says “Everyone has some darkness in their mind.” I agree this partly. I think Darkness in mind is not nature. It is from the circumstance which is lack and poor. (Journal, Kyungmin, May 9)

One of the wonders of reading literature is that students put themselves into a story by agreeing or disagreeing with the characters. For example, Heyji agreed with Doon’s father, one of the characters from The city of Ember, when he gave an advice to Doon about “anger,” while Sunhwa sought an alternative way to deal with anger. Kyungmin pointed out the “darkness in people’s mind” by quoting Clary, who is also one of the characters from The city of Ember. She partly agreed with Clary, but expressed her opinion which also contradicted Clary’s.

To EFL students who did not have experiences of multi-racism or cultural pluralism, reflective responses through literature were a valuable tool for learning about other people and extending life experiences. For example, students realized social issues related to racial bias when they respond to the text, Holes, by writing response journals:

Racial discrimination should be not exist. We’re colored people also, maybe white people tease yellowed-people. I think we’re all same people. Nowadays world become smaller and connected more easily. So we’re live in same country I think. Discrimination is old regulation. In love, face color is not important. It two are loved each other, that’s all. (Journal, Mikyung, Mar. 28)
I also learned about society 110 years ago....And there was law which discriminated Negro. So I could learn not only story, but also real society. And now on, I'll read books thinking about other factors like society, authors, etc. Then I will get more information through books. (Journal, Yoonha, Mar. 28)

To many students, the tragic love between Sam and Kathryn was a shock even though they learned about racial bias through history. By recognizing the issue through the story of two people in love, Mikyung was more emotional when she responded to the issue. At the same time, she indicated the current situation in Korea as it is becoming multi-racial and multi-cultural, and many issues surrounding racial bias were raised. The episode also served to help Yoonha learn the history of the time and know how to read books in the future.

In an increasingly global world, emotional intelligence as well as language skills are high priorities in our endeavor to create a more just and peaceful world. Literature can provide a medium through which these needs can be addressed in the EFL class.

V. CONCLUSION

This study looked at how literature can be implemented in a regular university course for both learning English and extend experiences. Additionally, the study challenged the way of using literature in language teaching and learning by encouraging students' responses to the texts. Therefore, the course set up a program in which university students could read and respond to literature through communicative activities such as group discussions and writing response journals. The experiment was conducted in an EFL context with thirty university students and found three results.

The first finding was that students could refine language skills based on communicative language use. In other words, they could improve English production skills such as speaking and writing and learned how to use text structures in developing language skills. The second finding was that students changed their perceptions of language learning. For example, students started to take ownership toward their learning and thus they could grow as language learners by willing to voluntarily work in learning the new language. Finally, the last finding was that students in this study could extend experiences through dynamic reading transaction. The transaction with the text revealed that students could have alternative experiences by identifying themselves with the characters from the story, and that reading and literature discussions provided students the opportunity to nurture reflective responses.
Overall, the study found that the intentional integration of input through reading and productive output through speaking and writing have led to an increased language learning and sharing experiences of EFL learners. As is already indicated by Swain (2000), students in this study did not consider that language input alone is not sufficient for language learning before taking part in the study. To these students, meaningful literacy events, in which the four language skills were integrated and extended life experiences, were also important parts of language learning. Thus this study proved that using literature in communicative context had potential to structure an EFL course for language learners around carefully selected texts and appropriate follow-up activities.

Notwithstanding, there are considerations such as managing a literature-based instruction as a university language course and building of a library in order to encourage students to read extensively. First, this study used a quiz each class to check on the students’ reading which was assigned to them as homework. However, most students addressed that they did not like the quiz at the beginning of the class because they could not fully enjoy their reading. Second, in literature-based instruction, students need to have opportunities to choose their own books. In this study, students only read the two required books and one book of their choice because an appropriate English library was not built yet.

Nevertheless, the implications of this study for foreign language teaching are significant as the study showed the possibility of changing the conventions of English teaching and learning in a foreign language environment. First, when the students were exposed to literature, they could develop production language skills needed in real communicative situations requiring the target language. The diverse collaborative activities showed the promise of restructuring the language classroom. The students were actively engaged in their learning through small group discussion and writing journals related to the topics from the literature. By putting themselves in the center of learning, the students were no longer passive consumers of the instructor’s knowledge; they were active participants who were responsible for their own learning. Next, this study challenged traditional ideas regarding language learners and their responses. Literature was thought to be an integral part of developing reading comprehension skills, but not useful for personal growth or extending experiences because the students’ linguistic abilities were not sufficiently advanced. However, the students in this study showed that literary texts could be used for life experiences and personal growth as well as resources for language development.

Although the study was conducted in the classroom environment of a university and revealed the potential of using literature in classroom instruction, the researcher would also suggest further studies be done in different types of settings, in different sizes of classrooms, and with different ages of students.
REFERENCES


of Reading, 320-329.


## APPENDIX

### 1. Pre-Class Survey

**Before Taking “Practical English”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-diagnosis of English language skills before taking the course (Questions 1–4):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Have you read any English books over 200 pages? ⇒ (Yes, No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ If yes, how many books have you read so far? ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Do you think you can improve English language skills through reading? ⇒ (Yes, No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Why? Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What kind of language skills do you expect to improve through reading?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening ( ), Speaking ( ), Reading ( ), Writing ( ), Other ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please provide reasons for your answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What are your opinions about reading literature to learn English language skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What do you expect from this course?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Post-Class Survey

**After Taking “Practical English”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-diagnosis of English language skills after taking the course (Questions 1–4):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you think you improved English language skills through this course? ⇒ (Yes, No)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Why? Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What kind of language skills did you improve through this course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening ( ), Speaking ( ), Reading ( ), Writing ( ), Other ( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please provide reasons for your answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What are your opinions about reading literature in this course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What are the positive or the negative sides of this course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Which activity was most useful and least useful in this course (reading, quiz, group discussion, group presentation, performance (movie or readers’ theater), movie watch, individual presentation, other________) and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ What is your overall impression of this course, including your suggestions for future students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applicable levels: secondary and tertiary

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