

The Role of Emotions in Reading Literary Texts: Fact or Fiction?

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Abstract: Considering the role of emotions while reading literary texts, the current research was designed to investigate first whether or not the participants' emotional involvement can improve their comprehension of short stories and second, if emotional involvement while reading short stories assist students in recognizing literary elements, such as irony, symbol, theme and foreshadowing. To this end, 79 Persian speakers (30 males and 49 females) selected from the population of sophomores in one of Iranian Universities participated in the study. A questionnaire based on Miall and Kuiken's (2002) categorization of feelings was designed to assist the students in involving their emotions while reading literary texts. There were two experimental groups and a control group. Initially, a pretest was assigned to these groups to ensure that they are homogeneous. The designed questionnaire was employed in teaching literary texts in experimental groups. At the end of the semester, a posttest was assigned to all participants. An ANOVA test indicated statistically significant difference across control and experimental groups in comprehending short stories. The Tukey HSD test was also applied to investigate where those differences lie. To address the second research question, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used; however, MANOVA test did not show any statistically significant difference across control and experimental groups in recognizing literary elements.

Keywords: Teaching literature, Emotions, Literary elements

1. Introduction

A multitude number of EFL learners suffer from not being able to read literary texts independently. As a result, they are deprived of enjoying the numerous values associated with literary reading. These values include the use of imagination, the readers' appreciation of stylistic features, and the appropriateness of literature for the individuality of reader, and its value for coping with problems, as well as for relaxation and entertainment (Miall and Kuiken, 2002). This inadequacy may stem from the circumstance that the majority of the models of text comprehension focus on the cognitive aspects of reading process to the exclusion of the emotional factors involved while reading texts (Kneepkens and Zwaan, 1994). However, as Zembylas (2005, p. 466) points out "emotion is the least investigated aspect of research on teaching, yet it is probably the aspect most often mentioned as being important and deserving more attention". Essentially, they are not considered the by products of learning, but an indispensable ingredient of learning process. In other words, emotions play an important role in creating meaning (Hirsh, 2009, Mar, et al., 2010).

As for literary studies, with the emergence of reader-response theory, proposed by Purves and Beach (1972), Bleich (1978) and Rosenblatt (1978), the object of the text researches has shifted from the writer or the text to the reader or the interaction between the reader and the

text (Miall & Kuiken, 1998). After all reading narrative fiction has been considered a profoundly emotional experience (Mar, et al., 2010).

The consequence has been that, traditional hermeneutic research methods of literary reading gave their place to empirical methods grounded in cognitive psychology and sociology (Schooten & de Glopper, 2003). Furthermore, literary education has begun investigating the response of students while reading literary texts and the goal of modern literary education has accordingly been to enhance the response of the students to the text. In this respect, feeling, as a constituent of human being, has been put in the spotlight in the empirical studies of literature by a number of researchers like Oatley (1994), Kneepkens and Zwaan (1994), Miall and Kuiken (2002) and Schooten and de Glopper (2003).

The field of teaching English as a Second Language has also adopted the role of affect and emotions in learning since the late 1970s and 1980s (Brown & White, 2010). Despite the emergence of Reader-response theory which stresses the active role of reader, literature teachers ignore the role of reader's emotions and organize classes in such a way as to arrive at an accepted meaning of the studied texts. In other words, there is an incongruency between the "democratic pedagogy" stimulated by reader-response theories and the present lecturer-centered literature classes in which teacher's literary, cultural and pedagogical knowledge still plays the dominant role (Poyas, 2004; p.80). Furthermore, literary work is viewed as a "separate, free-standing object, offering the same perspective to each reader" (Poyas, 2004; p.64). Therefore, literary education has failed keeping abreast with pedagogical theories, while Reader-response theory can be applied to help students read and write more efficiently (Harkin, 2005).

It is worth pointing out that there are certain ways in which emotional experience can influence cognitive processing. In this respect, one of the functions of feelings is their "selective role" which causes the reader focus his/her attention on certain types of information. Kneepkens and Zwaan (1994, p. 129) has also proposed that emotions can "back up" cognitive processes when these processes are inadequate in creating coherent mental representation of the text and the situation described by the text. In this case, the emotional impression enters the scene and helps the readers to decide which information is relevant and must be activated. On the basis of their view, the metaphor Zoro has been used in the title of the present article. However, the back-up role of emotions while reading the texts has scarcely been validated empirically (Kneepkens & Zwaan, 1994, p.129). Furthermore, although as Dijkstra et al. (1994) assert, one of the most crucial characteristics of literature, compared to other types of discourse, is the emotional impact it can leave on the reader, the experiments investigating the role of emotions in processing literary texts has been quite scarce in literature (Harkins, 2005; Schooten & Glopper, 2003). On the authority of Miall (2008, p.379), "a complaint that Jane P. Tompkins made in 1977, that critics were ignoring personal feelings during reading, is still largely valid".

Considering the paucity of research in the realm of the role of emotions while reading literary texts, the current study has been designed to address the following questions: 1) To what

extent can participants' emotional involvement while reading improve their comprehending of short stories? 2) To what extent does emotional involvement while reading short stories assist students in recognizing literary elements, such as irony, symbol, theme and foreshadowing? Accordingly, the following null hypotheses were formulated: 1) There is not any difference between control and experimental groups in comprehending short stories, and 2) Emotional involvement while reading short stories does not assist students in recognizing literary elements. At this point, it is noteworthy to mention that in this study, the definition of emotions as defined by Brown and White (2010, p. 333) has been adopted. They define emotions as "valenced responses to external stimuli and/or internal mental representations."

2. Background

Generally speaking, emotions play three important roles in cognitive development: first, they help building academic constructs in the brain and pave the ground for symbolic thought processes. Second, emotions are involved in making sense and meaning from the symbols constructed in the child's environment. Third, emotional development is shaped in the socio-cultural environment of the young child (Hirsh, 2009). Therefore, the cognitive processing of a situation determines the emotional experience on the one hand, and it may influence cognitive processing on the other (Kneepkens and Zwaan, 1994).

Regarding literary texts, emotions play two important roles: their first function is their selective role which precedes cognitive processes by focusing the readers' attention on specific types of information to the exclusion of other types of information that are more relevant to the reader's original goal. There seems to be a relation between the amount of attention and interest. As a result, attention given to interesting information requires fewer resources than attention given to uninteresting information (Kneepkens & Zwaan, 1994).

In this sense, some researchers (e. g. Roseman, 1991) have found out that the attention given to interesting texts requires fewer cognitive resources than the one given to uninteresting information. Wade et al. (1994) also observed that subjects spend much time and effort on reading the important but uninteresting information. By contrast, attention given to the unimportant, interesting information was given without effort (Kneepkens & Zwaan, 1994).

Likewise, Ainley, Hillman & Hidi (2002), using interactive computer techniques, investigated the role of interest in reading literary texts. They found that gender was the factor most closely associated with topic interest and text titles played important roles in triggering students' interest. Furthermore, it was revealed that there was not any relationship between topic interest and individual interest in literature. In this regard, Mar, et al. (2010, p.1) also believe that affect and mood can affect the book that people choose and while reading the narrative itself, it arouses and changes emotions either through the events and characters depicted in the narrative or through triggering the "emotionally valenced memories". The second function of emotions while reading literary texts is that emotions experienced while reading may play important role in cognitive processes through "the

making of inferences, invoking the readers' memory, or relating empathically to a character" (Miall, 2011, p.323).

More to the point, the readers' mood can be a determining factor in understanding a text. It has been argued that people are always in a certain mood. Hence, this causes people remember events of the story that are consistent with their mood while reading (Bower, et al. 1998). For instance, happy readers remember more happy events while sad readers remember more sad events (Kneepkens & Zwaan, 1994).

Generally speaking, three particular aspects of literary reading have been subject to the work of feeling the first of which is the response to foregrounding. In this relation, as Miall & Kuiken (1994) showed in a range of studies with short stories, foregrounding arouses more feelings in readers. The second aspect of literary reading which has been studied is the experience of being transported during reading which refers to the ability of a literary text to attract and hold one's attention. In this respect, Laszlo (1999) asked participants to underline all the adjectives in a literary text, but they did not manage to do so since once they started reading the text, the text attracted all their attention. The third investigated aspect of literary reading is the participants' empathic response to characters in fiction. In this relation, Miall (2008, p.388) states that

To empathize, in the terms of Prinz's (2004) levels of emotion, includes both the bodily and experiential aspects of the character's feelings together with those prototypical aspects that situate the feeling for us as the product and outcome of natural and cultural laws. To empathize in this sense is both to simulate the experience of the character at that moment and to realize her as an example of the laws of feeling

To sum up, as the review of literature indicates, the majority of the studies have made their attempts to account for changes in feelings while reading literary texts; furthermore, these studies merely emphasize the important role that feelings play in cognitive processing. Nevertheless, they have never proposed practical techniques that teachers can employ in their classes in order to involve the students' feelings. Consequently, the current research has firstly been set up to devise a way to help the participants to involve their emotions while reading literary texts and secondly to investigate the effect of involving their feelings firstly on their comprehension and secondly on their ability to recognise literary elements such as irony, symbol, theme and foreshadowing. To this end, Miall & Kuiken's (2002, p.223) outline of different types of feeling that are, according to empirical research, involved during literary reading has been employed. This selection has stemmed from the circumstance that a literary text is considered as a "complex dialogic action game whereby manifold relations hold between dialogic purposes and communicative means, and multiple-layered texture of participants with different communicative worlds is brought into play" (Weizman, 2004, p.242), and this model has been an appropriate reflection of this multilayered emotional involvement of reading. They categorize such feelings into four domains: 1) "evaluative

feelings toward the text, such as the overall enjoyment, pleasure, or satisfaction of reading a short story"; 2) "narrative feelings toward specific aspects of the fictional event sequence, such as empathy with a character or resonance with the mood of a setting"; 3) "aesthetic feelings in response to the formal (generic, narrative, or stylistic) components of a text, such as being struck by an apt metaphor"; 4) "self-modifying feelings that restructure the reader's understanding of the textual narrative and, simultaneously, the reader's sense of self". Based on this categorization of feeling, the experimenter designed a questionnaire to stimulate the students to involve their feelings and examine the effect of this emotional involvement on their reading comprehension, as well as, their ability to recognise literary elements.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A total of seventy-nine Persian speakers' students (30 males and 49 females) selected from the population of sophomores majoring in English literature, Translation studies and TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language) studying at one of Iranian universities participated in the current study. Twenty-eight of these participants were assigned to control group thirty of them were recruited to the first experimental group and twenty-one of them served as second experimental group. The reason for this imbalance stemmed from the fact that participating in this study was voluntarily; therefore, in each group the above mentioned number of students participated in the study. It is noteworthy that despite their differences in their majors, the participants in both experimental and control groups had similar background in exposure to literature. The students in all of the groups had passed *An Introduction to Literature I* (in which they study short stories and become familiar with short story elements) & *An Introduction to literature II* (in which the elements of poetry are taught), and, at the time of the experiment, they had enrolled for a two-credit hour course *Reading Simple Prose Texts* whose objective is to expose the students to literary essays and expand their knowledge about literary elements. Nevertheless, to ensure the homogeneity of the groups, a pre-test measuring the participants' literary comprehension was assigned to all three groups. The result of this pre-test has been reported in the data analysis section.

3.2. Materials

Throughout the semester twelve chapters of *Currents in Literature: British Volume* were taught to the students in both experimental and control groups. Furthermore, four short stories written by well-known authors were used in order to test and compare the reading abilities of the participants in experimental and control groups. The stories were selected to be representative of horror, romance, humour and detective genres. Other factors which make these stories good candidates for the present research include cultural factor, difficulty and discourse structure of these stories. For example, *Bontsha the Silent* is a story which may cause cultural misinterpretation. Furthermore, the care was taken to include stories with various levels of difficulty.

One of the stories *The Butcher's Wife* by Tony Birch belongs to the detective genre and another one *Bontsha the Silent* by I.L. Peretz belongs to humorous genre. *The Monkey's Paw* by W.W. Jacobs and *The Jilting of Granny Weatherall* by Katherine Anne Porter served as the representative of horror and romance genres consecutively.

The rationale behind selection of these stories stemmed from the circumstance that all of these stories were replete with literary elements as well as suspense; therefore, they could be good cases for examining the effect of emotional involvement on comprehending literary texts.

3.3. Instruments

A multiple-choice pre-test containing forty items was used in order to examine whether or not the control and experimental groups are homogeneous. This test majorly tested the students' ability to understand literary texts and to recognise literary elements.

Another instrument used in this study was a questionnaire which was designed on the basis of Miall & Kuiken's (2002) classification of different types of feelings. The first part of this questionnaire inquired about the participants' narrative feelings while reading the literary texts and contained three questions as follows: 1) For which character of the story do you feel sympathy? Why? ; 2) For which character of the story do you feel empathy? (You have had similar experiences) and 3) At each stage of the story if there are parts which reminds you of something or arise your feelings(e.g. fear, disgust, surprise, enjoyment, anxiety, interest,...), please write them down and explain why this part has arisen your feelings. Please highlight these parts in the story. Item four of the questionnaire asked about the aesthetic feelings of the participants by asking the following question : (4) Underline the parts of the story which mostly arouses feelings in you and explain why. Is it the form (generic, narrative, stylistic) of the sentence which is appealing to you or some other aspects? Items five, six, seven, eight and nine focused on evaluative feelings of the respondents as follows: 5) how does the title sound to you? (Interesting or uninteresting?); 6) what does the title remind you of? Describe your feelings; 7) after reading the story, how did you feel about the story? (Enjoyment, pleasure or satisfaction). State your reasons; 8) Was the ending of the story fair? If yes, why? If no, why? 9) how do you feel about the characters? How do you feel about the events? And finally the last question was related to the participants' self-modifying feelings: 10) Did the story create any change about your attitude towards real-life situation? (Meaning you had some ideas about particular aspects of life, and reading this story has caused them change.

Four post-tests containing 20 items each testing the participants' short stories comprehension constituted the other instruments employed in the current study. These tests were to measure the participants' comprehension ability, as well as their ability to make inferences and recognise literary elements.

3.4. Procedures

At the very beginning of the 14- week semester a pre-test was assigned to the participants in all groups to make sure that they are homogeneous. The questions of this test were literary

ones which contained comprehension questions as well as questions regarding literary devices.

A questionnaire was designed on the basis of Miall & Kuiken's (2002) categorization of feelings. The participants in the experimental group were asked to respond to this questionnaire before coming to the class and while reading the texts of *Currents in Literature: British volume*, which was the major textbook of the course, at home. As pointed out before, the questionnaire contained ten questions asking participants about their narrative feelings, aesthetic feelings, evaluative feelings and self-modifying feelings. This was due to the fact that, as Miall & Kuiken (2002) state, these four types of feelings are involved in the interpretive processes of literary reading. The respondents were asked to read the stories and write about their feelings before coming to the class and talk about their feelings in the classroom. In this way, they were taught to involve their emotions while reading literary texts. However, the participants in the control group just read the texts without involving their emotions. Finally, at the end of the semester, the participants in both experimental and control groups were asked to read the four short stories (*The Monkey's Paw*, *Bontsha the silent*, *The Butcher's Wife* and *The jilting of Granny Weatherall*) independently. Subsequently, a post-test, measuring their comprehension was assigned to both control and experimental groups and using ANOVA test their means were compared to each other.

To investigate whether or not emotional involvement while reading short stories assist students in recognizing literary elements, initially, the items testing literary elements (irony, symbol, theme and foreshadowing) were selected and marked for all of the students in both control and experimental groups. Then, a MANOVA test was run to examine the likely difference across groups.

4. Data analysis

As mentioned above, before embarking on the experiment, in order to make sure that the control and experimental groups are homogeneous a pre-test, testing participants' ability to comprehend literary texts, was assigned to them, and their means were computed. Table 1 displays the mean and standard deviation of the scores of the participants.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Pre-test Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control group	28	12.00	18.50	15.8036	1.81092
Experimental 1	30	11.00	18.50	15.5167	1.93196
Experimental 2	22	13.00	18.00	15.1364	1.30185
Valid N (listwise)	22				

As the means indicate, the three participating groups are rather homogeneous.

Next, in order to test the first hypothesis, i.e. there is not any difference between the scores in the control and experimental groups, a one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of emotional questionnaire on the literary comprehension of experimental groups, as measured by a multiple choice test designed to assess their comprehension. The following table indicates the descriptive statistics of the post- test scores of the participants in control and experimental groups.

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Post-test Scores

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Bontsha experimental	30	9.0667	3.33149	.60824	7.8227	10.3107	4.00	16.00
Bontsha control	28	6.7500	2.93920	.55546	5.6103	7.8897	2.00	13.00
Butcher' wife experimental	30	12.7241	2.68457	.49851	11.7030	13.7453	8.00	18.00
Butcher' wife control	28	9.0000	2.68594	.49877	7.9783	10.0217	2.00	13.00
Jilting experimental	21	11.5714	2.13475	.46584	10.5997	12.5432	7.00	16.00
Jilting control	28	8.2143	2.46992	.46677	7.2565	9.1720	4.00	13.00
Monkey's experimental	21	12.6500	2.05900	.46041	11.6864	13.6136	10.00	18.00
Monkey's control	28	8.5000	2.64197	.51813	7.4329	9.5671	2.00	12.00
Total	214	9.6588	3.34624	.23036	9.2046	10.1129	2.00	18.00

Table 3. The Results of ANOVA Test

grades					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	881.614	7	125.945	17.395	.000
Within Groups	1469.817	203	7.240		
Total	2351.431	210			

As Table 3 indicates, there is a statistically significant difference at the $p \leq 0.05$ level in comprehension scores of control and experimental groups. However, ANOVA test does not show where exactly these differences lie. To specify the exact differences, a Tukey HSD post-hoc test was applied. The following table displays the results of Tukey HSD post-hoc test.

Table 4. The Results of Tukey HSD Post-hoc Test

Groups	Mean difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Bontsha's experimental and control	2.31667	.70706	.027
Butcher's experimental and control	3.72414	.70664	.000
Jilting's experimental and control	3.35714	.77677	.001
Monkey's experimental and control	4.15000	.80031	.000

The Tukey HSD test revealed that the mean score for Bontsha experimental ($M = 9.0667$, $SD = 3.33149$) is not statistically different from Bontsha control. However, in other cases the tukey HSD showed statistically significant difference across experimental and control groups. The effect size calculated, using eta squared, is 0.37 which in Cohen's (1988, pp.284-7) terms would be considered a large effect size.

To address the second research question, i.e. the effect of the designed emotional questionnaire on the recognition of literary elements, such as irony, symbol, theme and foreshadowing a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), which is an extension of analysis of variance for use when we have more than one dependent variable, was used. In this case our experimental and control groups were considered as our independent variables and literary elements (irony, symbol, theme and foreshadowing) were considered as our dependent variables. MANOVA compares the groups and tells us whether the mean differences between the groups on the combination of dependent variables are likely to have occurred by chance. In this relation, preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance, covariance matrices, and multi collinearity, with no serious violations noted. Table 5 indicates the results of MANOVA.

Table 5. The Results of MANOVA Test

Wilks' Lambda	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Bontsha and Butcher's elements	.978	.411	3.000	54.000	.745
Jilting and Monkey's elements	.977	.359	3.000	46.000	.783

As Table 5 indicates, there is not a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups on the combined dependent variables (i.e. the mean scores of irony, symbol, theme and foreshadowing). Thus, emotional involvement has not had any impact on the participants' ability to recognize literary elements.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As it was demonstrated, the findings of the current study indicate that emotional involvement of the participants can help them improve their literary comprehension. These findings are consistent with the findings of Kneepkens & Zwaan (1994) who found out that emotions may help improving cognitive processes by directing the attention of readers and helping them to determine the relevance of an information to the situation. Therefore, Kneepkens and Zwaan call for helping students to activate their emotions while reading literary texts. By the same token, Dijkstra et al's (1994) accounts for this finding by asserting that emotions can help the reader to capture the events that are more crucial for the characters in the stories. Furthermore, the findings are in line with the assumptions of the structure affect theory (Brewer and Lichtenstein, 1988) that assumes a systematic relation between story structure and affective reactions.

On the other hand, the findings of the current research indicate that emotional involvement of the participants do not help them in recognizing literary devices. This finding is again consistent with Dijkstra et al's assertion (1994, p.144) denoting the fact that "literary devices may suppress the diegetic effect experienced by the reader because they are oriented towards the literary text itself rather than the events and their possible consequences for the characters involved". He goes on to say that, for example, an author willing to create suspense in a story should avoid implementing literary devices, such as metaphors and unusual syntax.

The analysis of the questionnaire responded by participants may shed some light on the ways that these questions could have assisted the participants in improving their comprehension. In this respect, the holistic perspective proposed by Patton (2002) was used in order to analyse the qualitative data. Seen in this perspective, the whole phenomenon under study is considered as a complex system which is more than the sum of its parts (Patton, 2002).

As for the first question (For which character of the story do you feel sympathy? Why?), in *Monkey's paw* 40% of the respondents have felt sympathy with Herbert, 10% with the White family, 15% with Mr White and 30% with Mrs White. However, in *The jilting of Granny Weatherall*, 98% have felt sympathy with granny and 2% with Cornelia. In this connection, in the *Butcher's wife*, 82.5% of the participants have felt sympathy with the Butcher's wife and 17.5% with the children. Moreover, in *Bontsha the silent*, 97% of the participants have felt sympathy with Bontsha. On accounting for the reasons for which they have felt sympathy, all of the respondents have narrated a similar story or event that has happened to them. Answering to this question could have contributed to their comprehension since, as Miall (2011, p.33) asserts, one emotional factor that plays an important role in directing cognitive activities is "self-reference" which lays the foundation of the immediate response to an emotional experience through making a link to autobiographical memory. In this relation, Seilman and Larsen (1989, p.184) suggest that being an active participant in an event play an important role in its relevance; in other words, literary reading "seems to connect particularly with knowledge that is personal in the sense that one is an agent, a responsible subject

interacting with one's environment". Thus, that may explain the reason that directing the attention of the students to feel sympathy with the characters could have facilitated their cognitive understanding.

At this juncture, the striking point is that in *Bontsha the silent*, 97% of respondents have felt sympathy with Bontsha and, as the data analysis indicates, emotional involvement of the participants did not show any effect on improving their comprehension. Nevertheless, Pretz, the author of this story intends to criticize and condemn Bontsha's silence; however, the students have not only failed grasping this point, but also ironically have felt sympathy with Bontsha. The participants' sympathy with Bontsha in *Bontsha the silent* may be due to the fact that, as Weigand (2004) asserts, emotions are affected by education and cultural circumstances. Furthermore, they can be changed or transferred by societal traditions. For instance, members of different cultures learn to be afraid or enjoy different things (Bazanella, 2004). In this case, the respondents' feeling sympathy with Bontsha may have its roots in the respondents' culture. Since in Persian culture silence is a token of politeness, the respondents in this experiment have ironically attributed Bontsha's silence to his politeness rather than foolishness.

The reasons that questions 2,3,5,6,7,8,9 asking about feeling empathy, types of emotion, interest, reminding and ending of the stories consecutively may have caused improving story comprehension may be that, as Larsen and Seilman (1988) on the authority of Miall (2011,p.332) assert, literary reading goes beyond a purely 'schema- or knowledge-based approach' since they can arouse personal resonance in the reader and this is what Spiro (1982, p.417) refers to as "long-term evaluative understanding" or interpretation on the basis of feelings that helps constructing the self. Thinking about these questions, may promote understanding due to the role that emotions play in anticipating the events. As Miall (2011, p.336) states, "feeling is interposed between perception and action, it gives us time to judge".

Analysing question number 4 asking about the parts that arouse the participants' emotions, it was observed that the descriptive passages and foregrounded parts arouse their emotions more than dialogues and narrative sections. Miall (2011, p.333) accounts for this fact by stating that

Descriptive passages (compared with accounts of action or dialogue) may present a degree of uncertainty, challenging the reader to locate a meaning for them through the feelings they evoke. Descriptions of the environment, whether natural or man-made, often appear to connote a significance for the human actors (the forest was gloomy; the sunlight flooded the bedroom), one that is left implicit. Such uncertainty is more likely to evoke readers' feelings, which readily cross the boundary between

Another crucial factor playing an important role in arousing one's emotion while reading descriptive parts, according to Miall (2011), is foregrounding. This is because foregrounding

is defamiliarizing, hence causes higher degrees of uncertainty, and it seems likely that ambiguous literary texts usually arouse readers' emotions.

The responses to the 10th question asking about self-modifying feelings show that the majority of the respondents have stated that reading the stories have modified their attitudes toward real-life situation. In this relation, Ellis's (2005) concept of "integrative capacity of feelings" may shed some light on the reason. On the authority of Miall (2011, p.339), Ellis (2005) considers "integrative capacity of feeling" as one that plays important roles in literary reading. Ellis enumerates three ways to consider integration, i.e., evocations, boundary crossings and modification. By evocation Ellis means "the positioning of emotions within personal history". This factor explains why empathy with characters can facilitate comprehending literary texts.

The third integrative process, i.e., modification, refers to "the capacity of feeling to modify or reconfigure other significant feelings in a process that may serve to reconceptualise a recognized situation" (Miall, 2011, p.341). He cites the example of the modification that causes catharsis.

To sum up, emotional involvement in this experiment indicate improvement in literary comprehension of the participants in this experiment since as Danes (2004, p.25) asserts, "cognition evokes emotion (it is 'emotiogenic'), and emotion affects cognition". What this finding brings us to is that emotions, as one of the most elementary human abilities, cannot be abstracted from our personal and social lives. However, "they should not be left growing as wild plants. They need to be pruned and cultivated as beneficial flowers" (Danes, 2004, p.31). Therefore, the questionnaire designed in this experiment could have been considered as a way of pruning and cultivating the emotional abilities of the participants. Future researchers can devise innovative ways to arouse readers' emotions while reading poems, dramas and other literary genres and subgenres.

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