

An Investigation of Teaching Approaches in EFL Literature Classes in Chinese Universities

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Abstract: To make the wireless sensor network used for intelligent workshop products tracking system, firstly, the moving target tracking technology of wireless sensor networks was introduced and the target positioning technique based on ranging was emphatically analysed, which laid the technical foundation for the construction of moving target tracking system of wireless sensor network. Then, the extended Kalman filter algorithm with less calculation and high tracking accuracy and implementation steps of untraced Kalman algorithm were analysed and summarized. C++ programming language was used to transform untraced Kalman filtering algorithm into intelligent workshop product practical tracking algorithm module. Moreover, the two algorithms were used in the workshop product tracking system based on wireless sensor network. The result showed that the system could realize the tracking effect of high precision and low power consumption. To sum up, the comparison of many groups of experiments also proves the performance difference of these two algorithms in the practical application.

1. Introduction

English literature is an important carrier of the English language. Learning a language through literature is a general instrument of foreign language learning, at the same time, it can help students have a more profound and comprehensive understanding of language and culture as well as materials related to English-speaking countries.[8] In today's English teaching, the addition of literary works is very beneficial to English language learning, which is also an important step to make English education comprehensive. [7]

Although there is an international consensus on the place of literature in the foreign language curriculum, this general consensus has not yet entered most classes. [12] The past 20 years have been a difficult time for English literature teachers in Chinese universities. English departments are under increasing pressure to align their teaching with the 'real' needs of society and when foreign language courses became more utilitarian, literature changed from "welcome guest" to "unwelcome ghost". [11] Literature used to be a considerable proportion in intensive reading classes, however, in addition to the compulsory English extensive reading course, there are at least three courses related

to literature in Chinese high education, such as an Overview of English-speaking Countries, Selected Readings of British and American literary works, History of British and American Literature, Literary theory and so on. But this does not seem to reflect the status of foreign language literature in Chinese higher education. As John Bowie said, “Literature provides the most diverse and most meaningful words and sentence patterns. It provides the most effective, subtle, and associative examples of language use”, therefore, in the traditional literature teaching, many teachers are more inclined to the language function of literature. [10]

The latest theoretical developments of the teaching approaches in ESL literature classes are involved in the comprehensive approach of L2 literature teaching, [2] which consists of the text, context, reader and language approach. Based on this theory, this study aims to investigate the four literature teaching approaches and identify which approach is the most frequently used in Chinese universities. Then, investigate the age and experience of teachers to see whether the average reported incidence of the four approaches is significantly related to them. It is hoped that the investigation will promote the research on the teaching of English literature in ESL classes.

2. Literature Review

English literature teaching approaches have gone through several stages. The characteristic of traditional literature teaching approach is to reflect the highest level of language achievement, so that classic and authoritative works are commonly used for their linguistic and literary value. [12] In the 1990s, the popularity of communicative language teaching approaches led to greater recognition of literature in ESL classroom and the promotion of it as authentic and imaginative use of language. During this period, the text approach replaced literature’s original language approach. [4] In addition to language-based and text approaches, the use of literature to promote personal growth and enrichment was another pedagogy orientation for second language pedagogy.[5] Then, the reader approach began to gain popularity. It means reading literary texts not only emphasizes a special focus on the reader as an independent creator of meaning, but also encourages foreign language majors to step out of their comfort zones and try to look critically at unknown situations. [1] Another factor considered important when asking students to understand literary works is context. [5] In the contextual approach, literature is seen as a vehicle that reflects the rich diversity of culture, history and society. This diversity, contextualized in literature, often represents a foreign world to language learners, covering issues of identity, political power, race and religion. [6]

Recent theoretical developments in this field are embodied in the Comprehensive Approach Model for second Language Literature Teaching, [3] which incorporates four elements of previous frameworks for second language literature teaching. Integrated approaches include text approach which focus on literary discourse, genre, and related terms and knowledge; context approaches which view literature as an embodiment or reflection of cultural and historical context; reader approach which emphasize the reader’s independent interpretation and critical thinking of the text; and language approach which focus on the language itself as the authentic text. Based on this theory, the purpose of this study is to answer the following three questions

- 1) Which approach is the most frequently used in the ESL literature classes in Chinese universities ?
- 2) Whether teachers’ experience and age are significantly related to the occurrence of the four approaches ?
- 3) How teachers view students’ attitudes toward literature ?

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling and Participants

The sample will aim to include 60 English teachers from three universities in the Jilin province of China, all of them have taught literature in the ESL literature contexts. Teachers are mainly aged 25-65, furthermore, all of them have between 3 and 25 years of English teaching experience at the university.

The Sampling method of the study is Non-probability sampling, it is snowball sampling due to the researcher's ease of getting in touch with only some of participants. The researcher will first contact 18 colleagues who are English teachers at the researcher's university. Then with the help of those teachers, the link of the questionnaire will be sent to the other two universities.

4. Instruments and procedure

The survey instruments consist of a self-administered questionnaire (Appendix A) and semi-structured interview of 5 questions (Appendix B). 60 teachers received a link to the questionnaire via an online instrument named Questionnaire Star and they were invited to complete the questionnaire within 7 days. In the questionnaire, participants were asked how often the 20 elements occurred in their literature lessons: Items 1 to 6 represent the text teaching approach, item 7 to 13 represent context approach, item 14 to 17 represent reader approach and item 18 to 20 represent language approach. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants listed their age and teaching experience.

In the second part, six participants in the interview are the teachers selected from this study who have between 5 and 15 years of English literature teaching experience in these three universities and the interviews were one-on-one online meetings.

IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0 was used to ascertain reliability, mean, standard deviation and correlation. There are two steps which were used to analyze the data: Firstly, collecting and analyzing the results of literature teaching approaches Questionnaire. And then use Spearman's correlation analysis to access the correlation among the four approaches, and investigated the age and experience of teachers to investigate if they are significantly related with the average reported incidence of the four approaches.

5. Results

5.1 Data analysis of the Questionnaire

For the first research question, table 1 shows the survey occurrences of the four approaches. Descriptive statistical analysis indicates that the mean scores for the four components of literature teaching approaches range from 3.06 to 4.15. The highest score is that of reader approach ($M=4.15$, $SD=0.64$) and the lowest score is that of language approach ($M=3.04$, $SD=1.1$). Scores for the rest of 2 components are: text approach ($M=3.06$, $SD=0.81$), context approach ($M=3.24$, $SD=0.72$).

These results suggest that, on average, each of the four approaches appears in ESL literature classes, but the reader approach was the most frequently used in this study.

The K-S test results were displayed in Table 2 are used to measure the normal distribution of scores. P value of text, context, reader and language are all lower than 0.05. Thus the normality of the data was further probed using skewness and kurtosis statistics and their ratios over the standard errors. As displayed in table 1, the absolute values of the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their

standard errors were lower than 3.00. It can be concluded that the data does not deviate from the normal distribution.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Approaches	N	Minimum	Maximum	Std.		Skewness	Kurtosis		
				Mean	Deviation		Std. Error	Std. Error	
Text	60	1.33	5.50	3.0611	.81185	.406	.309	.270	.608
Context	60	1.43	4.71	3.2357	.72023	-.358	.309	-.244	.608
Reader	60	3.00	6.00	4.1542	.64946	.204	.309	.340	.608
Language	60	1.33	6.00	3.0389	1.10995	.066	.309	-.725	.608
Valid N (listwise)	60								

Table 2: Tests of Normality

Approaches	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Text	.080	60	.200	.982	60	.503
Context	.088	60	.200	.982	60	.513
Reader	.156	60	<.001	.957	60	.033
Language	.147	60	.002	.939	60	.005

From Table 3, in text approaches (item 1-6), the storyline (M=3.38, SD=1.24) shows highest frequency of use. In terms of context approach (item 7-13), the cultural aspects of a literary work (M=3.43, SD=1.21) shows highest frequency of use. Followed by, in terms of reader approach (item 14-17), student's personal reaction (M=4.35, SD=0.97) reported the highest mean and lowest standard deviation. Lastly, language approach, the vocabulary (M=3.1, SD=1.35) reported the highest frequency of use.

Table 3: Comprehensive Approaches Analysis

Comprehensive approach	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.Literary terminology	60	1.00	6.00	2.8667	1.19981
2. Recognizing text types	60	1.00	6.00	2.8167	1.14228
3.Distinguishing text types	60	1.00	6.00	3.0500	1.19922
4.Storyline	60	1.00	6.00	3.3833	1.23634
5.Character development	60	1.00	6.00	3.1167	1.34154
6.Who, what and where	60	1.00	6.00	3.1333	1.52345
7.Literary periods	60	1.00	5.00	2.9667	1.13446
8.Overview of literary history	60	1.00	6.00	3.1833	1.09686
9.Historical aspects	60	1.00	6.00	3.0500	1.06445
10.Cultural aspects	60	1.00	6.00	3.4333	1.21246
11.Social and societal aspects	60	1.00	5.00	3.3167	.96536
12.Author information	60	1.00	6.00	3.4167	1.31860
13.Biographical aspects	60	1.00	6.00	3.2833	1.22255
14.Reading pleasure	60	2.00	6.00	4.2500	1.32288
15. Student's personal reaction	60	2.00	6.00	4.3500	.97120
16. Critically report	60	2.00	6.00	4.2833	1.02662
17. Critical thinking skills	60	1.00	6.00	3.7333	1.20545
18. English linguistic aspects	60	1.00	6.00	2.9667	1.17843
19. Making reading miles	60	1.00	6.00	3.0500	1.33309
20. English vocabulary	60	1.00	6.00	3.1000	1.34920
Valid N (listwise)	60				

The participants are in the age group of 25-65, table 4 shows that there are 25 teachers between the ages of 25 and 35, 26 teachers between the ages of 36 and 45, 8 teachers between the ages of 46 and 55 and one teachers between the ages of 56 and 65. Furthermore, all of them have between 3 and 30 years of English teaching experience at the university. Table 5 shows that there are 11 teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience, 30 teachers have been teaching for between 11 and 20 years, 17 teachers have been teaching for between 21 and 30 years and two teachers have been teaching for more than 30 years.

Table 4: Age Group Statistics

	Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	25-35	25	41.7	41.7	41.7
	36-45	26	43.3	43.3	85.0
	46-55	8	13.3	13.3	98.3
	56-65	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total		60	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Teach Experience Statistics

	Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0-10	11	18.3	18.3	18.3
	11-20	30	50.0	50.0	68.3
	21-30	17	28.3	28.3	96.7
	Over 30	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total		60	100.0	100.0	

In order to answer the second research question, this study investigated whether teachers' age and experience are significantly related to the average reported occurrence of the four approaches.

The results of a Spearman's correlation analysis of the variables age and years of teaching experience are presented in Table 6. It shows that there had significant weak correlation between age and the text approach ($r = .31, p < 0.01$), it means older teachers tend to spend slightly more time on text approach than younger teachers. In a word, age and teaching experience had no significant correlation with the four approaches. As proposed by Bloemert, the four approaches function play a role as a unified whole, and there is a relationship among text, context, readers and language approach. This study also assessed the correlation among the four approaches. There was significant correlation between text, context, reader and language. And text had highest correlation with context ($r = .78, p < 0.01$).

Table 6: Correlations Analysis

		Age	TE	Text	Context	Reader	Language
Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.00	-.049	.131	.031	.067	.021
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.706	.310	.810	.604	.869
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
TE	Correlation Coefficient	-.049	1.00	-.040	-.158	-.129	-.105
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.706	.	.756	.220	.317	.416
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
Text	Correlation Coefficient	.131	-.040	1.000	.779**	.607**	.688**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.310	.756	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
Context	Correlation Coefficient	.031	-.158	.779**	1.000	.710**	.766**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.810	.220	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
Reader	Correlation Coefficient	.067	-.129	.607**	.710**	1.000	.715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.604	.317	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60
Language	Correlation Coefficient	.021	-.105	.688**	.766**	.715**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.869	.416	.000	.000	.000	.
	N	60	60	60	60	60	60

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

6. Analysis of the Interview

To get further information about literature teaching approaches of the participants, data collected through a semi-structured interview was also analyzed.

When talking about the factors that influence literature teaching, all the six teachers gave very detailed answers. Five teachers thought that the most important factor in the ESL literature classes is students' attitude, student's reaction towards the curriculum triggers teacher adjusts its pace and direction. They also said that teachers could not rely on implanting the content into students, it is not acceptable to see students walking away from what they like because of the wrong path,

especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only one interviewer said the curriculum and evaluation system for teaching quality are quite important factors in the process of English literature teaching, but the ultimate purpose of the factors is actively stimulate students' learning motivation.

All the six teachers responded negatively on the question of students' attitudes towards to literature classes. They all agreed that now English literature is not taken seriously enough by the students. As for the reason, first of all, the teaching effect of online course was not as good as that of face to face at this particular moment. In addition, there was a lack of close reading of literary texts, which leads to the failure of literary value. What's more, the course was influenced by students' fear of difficulties and the idea of quick success.

All six teachers approved of the four approaches in the study, each of the four approaches occurs in the ESL literature classes. Five teachers prefer to use reader approach for teaching, while only one teacher tended to use context and text approaches, which may be caused by changes in teaching modes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Four teachers have made some changes or innovations in their teaching approaches. Although these teaching techniques are not reflected in the questionnaire, they are still part of the comprehensive approach.

Finally, all teachers mentioned the impact of COVID-19 on teaching approaches, which was consistent with the results of the questionnaire data, that is, most teachers gave the initiative to the students in front of the computer to ensure that they could really participate in the class.

7. Discussion

The research in the field of foreign language literature education is developing towards the direction of empirical research in the context of higher education, [12] this 20 elements in the questionnaire enabled us to research how Chinese ESL teachers teach literature in their classes. On average, each of the four approaches occurs in the ESL literature classes, but the reader approach was the most frequently used in this study. Combined with the interview results, we can see that teachers are really fond of the reader method at present. Teachers gave the main reason for this phenomenon as the influence of COVID-19, which indirectly proves the uncertainty and instability of literature teaching approaches.

With regard to the demographic factors of different teachers, the correlation analysis provides more details on the relationship between the reported occurrence of the four approaches. As can be seen from the data, there is no prominent relationship between teachers' gender, years of teaching experience and the way of FL literature in the classroom. The phenomenon of "curricular heritage" can explain this situation: the teacher starts work in a new school, and the existing curriculum is "inherited" by him/her. These factors include tradition, respect for colleagues, lack of financial means or experience, etc, which lead new teachers to adopt existing curriculum and teach accordingly. Another explanation may be the design method of literature curriculum; with joint effort, this may lead to consensus on curriculum decisions.

Although it is not obvious, the study did find that there is a slight correlation between the age of teachers and the time spent on text teaching approach. One reason may be their personal experience; The focus of foreign language literature courses in their secondary or college is text teaching. [9][13]

The sampling method of snowball sampling is not inclusive and objective to cover the expected group. Moreover, the semi-structured interview is conducted on line, thus making it less effective than the regular face-to-face form. When summarizing the survey results, I found that the questions in the interview are not set properly. It is one-sided to explore students' attitude towards literature only from the mouth of six teachers, so the data provided by the interview is not objective enough.

8. Conclusion

The English literature component in Chinese higher education is not so much an “unwelcome ghost”. [11] Under the background of the emphasis on the benefits of expository text comprehension, this comprehensive approach is applied to illustrate that the benefits that foreign language literature can provide to the students. It may be a good way to reverse the declining position of foreign language literature learning. The findings of this study indicate differences between Chinese universities teachers choosing the four approaches. In addition, we can conclude that selection strategies for English literature are independent of teacher demographics.

Although the survey results show that most teachers prefer the reader approach at this particular moment, the balance of the four approaches in the ESL literature classes is very important. As Bloemert suggested that implementing the Comprehensive Approach to English literature can make the course of English major more comprehensive development as well as increase English major students’ understanding of contemporary literary text. And it’s not just teachers, we also need to make sure that students also have a very clear understanding of the various approaches. Therefore, future research to verify these practical elements with students will make the research results more objective. [2]

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Appendix

Appendix A

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How much lesson time did you spend on the following elements:

1 = **never**, 2 = **rarely**, 3 = **sometimes**, 4 = **regularly**, 5 = **often**, 6 = **always**

1. Literary terminology	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Recognizing text types	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Distinguishing text types	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Storyline	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Character development	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Who, what and where	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Literary periods	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Overview of literary history	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Historical aspects of a literary work	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Cultural aspects of a literary work	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Social and societal aspects of a literary work	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Information about the author	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Biographical aspects of a literary work	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Reading pleasure	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Student' s personal reaction	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Critically report of reading experiences	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. English linguistic aspects in a literary text	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Making reading miles to improve language skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. English vocabulary in a literary text	1	2	3	4	5	6

Personal information:

Age:

Years of teaching experience:

Gender:

Education:

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What factors usually affect your English literature teaching?
2. Which method do you think attracts students most?
3. What is the general attitude of the students and have you noticed the students' different attitudes towards this subject?
4. What might be the reason for their attitude/opinion?
5. In addition to the approaches listed in the questionnaire (text,context,reader and language), have you ever used approaches that are not listed? If so, what are they?