TEACHING PERSIAN NARRATIVE TEXTS

Efficacy of a Combined Strategy to Understand Kalileh o Demneh

Amirreza Vakilifard

Introduction

Persian literature is one of the world’s most ancient literatures, including scripts like Avesta’s short hymns going back as far as 1000 years BC (de Bruijn, 2015). It covers various areas such as narrations, epics, religion, mysticism, philosophy, morality, love, history, and Iranian and non-Iranian myths. Goethe considers it one of four main bodies of world literature (Levinson & Christensen, 2002: 480), which has influenced literary works in several cultures (Mark, 2020).

From this perspective, Persian literature has always been attractive to speakers of other languages. The comprehension of Persian literary texts is considerably more difficult than other text types in Persian language. This is because Persian literary texts are characterized by literary devices such as metaphor, poetic interpretations, complicated structure, uncommon syntactic structure, and alliteration not found in the common language. Understanding Persian literature is also difficult since this literature is usually realized in different forms of language. This could be of further difficulty for those who learn Persian as a foreign or second language. Therefore, this group of students needs to learn the required skills for understanding literary texts in the Persian language.

Besides the difficulties in understanding a literary text, learning to read in L1 is a developmental, and hence a difficult, process for students. This is probably the main reason some students are not able to pass basic levels of reading assessments in some countries. For example, in 2017, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) revealed 65 percent of eighth-grade students scored “below proficient” in the United States. (Minicozzi & Dardzinski, 2020: 21). It is also argued that some second language (L2) learners are not frequently exposed to literary texts, even in their L1; therefore, their reading skills in literary texts don’t develop sufficiently (Béguelin-Argimón, 2016: 2).

One of the main challenges in teaching Persian literature is that most instructors prefer to give lectures about Persian prose or poetry. They still follow a teacher-centered approach and use traditional practices in explaining words, literary terms, literary styles, authors, biographies, and so on. This teaching style has not experienced any improvement during the past decades.
Teaching Persian literary reading deals not only with vocabulary instruction and text comprehension but also equipping students with necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes that allow learners to transfer what they have learned to other texts and thus develop their autonomy in reading literary texts in Persian language (Vakilifard et al., 2020: 77). Research shows that reading strategies could make the reader both sensitive to the structure of the text and critical in reading a text. By the same token, Persian language learners could develop their skills in reading Persian literature through the accusation of particular reading strategies.

There are various types of literary texts (or genres). One of these texts is the narrative text, which is mainly constructed to stimulate the reader's interest and attract his/her attention. One may ask which strategies Persian language learners should use to develop their skills in comprehending the narrative texts of Persian literature. Research indicates that the story map technique improves reading comprehension ability among readers reading narrative texts in their L. However, the scientific evidence concerning the function of the story map strategy in developing competency in reading narrative texts by L2 learners is still in its infancy.

The relevant literature documents that teachers need to help readers be skillful in choosing the strategies useful in their reading process. This chapter investigates the effects of two reading strategies, dramatic structure pyramid (DSP) and story mapping, on the development of non-Iranian Persian learners' ability in reading the narrative stories retrieved from an ancient Persian narrative masterpiece, *Kalileh o Demneh* (KL), translated by Nasrallah Monshi. The following research questions lead this study:

1. Does the use of a “combined strategy using story mapping and dramatic structure pyramid” promote the comprehension of non-Iranian Persian language learners in reading Persian narrative texts in the context of a second or foreign language?
2. Does the use of a “combined strategy using story mapping and dramatic structure pyramid” by learners promote the transfer of skills of narrative comprehension to other situations?

This study attempts to create a novel organizational framework with an intervention package for understanding the basic structure of narrative stories. The findings show that teachers could take measures in the instruction of reading comprehension skills, particularly in ancient literary texts, to help Persian learners play a more active role in the learning process and be able to connect ideas in fictional texts more efficiently. The findings of this study call for an effective approach in developing the reading comprehension ability of Persian learners in reading narrative texts in Persian literature.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension integrates several skills, strategies, processes, and factors interacting in a non-linear manner (Chun & Plass, 1997). Mental activities intervene simultaneously to successfully construct the meaning of the text. To this end, the reader must determine the relationships between successive sentences and those connecting different parts of the text.

**Narrative Texts**

Petersen et al. (2008) consider “narration as a story about real or imaginary events that combines scenes, situations, characters, actions, motives, emotions and outputs” (p. 117). Narrative
text follows a general structural pattern called story grammar. Story grammar has rules that show the structure of the narrative text and is used to describe coherent features in the narrative text. These rules describe parts of the story and how they relate to each other, while they seem conceptually separate. These passages are usually inferred by the reader.

Basic Elements of a Story

Five rudimentary elements can be found in every story: settings, characters, conflicts, plot, and theme. These components form the story grammar, help the story move forward, and let the reader follow the logical stream of unfolding action. Each element significantly motivates the reader to understand and enjoy the story.

**Setting:** It determines the place and time in which the narrative action takes place and plays an important role in introducing characters, events, and the atmosphere of the story to the reader. It covers region, neighborhood, buildings, interiors, climate, weather, topography, flora, fauna, time of day, season of year (Tapply, 2011: 83), and social context in which the story happens and the characters act.

**Plot:** Plot is the sequential series of events interconnected in a causal association and arranged in a pattern. The plot is closely related to elements such as “character” and “conflict.” Progressive plots have a climax followed by a conclusion. Episodic plots have one incident linked to another by a unifying theme. Generally, fictional plots begin with an exposition followed by a series of complications that leads to a crisis. Finally, the complications end in the resolution or dénouement.

**Character:** The characters are the personages the story is about. Dynamic characters are round characters fully explained by the writer and changed in the course of the story concerning the story theme. Static characters can be round or flat and are not changed during the story.

**Conflict:** It arises when two characters or two forces are in conflict with each other. Conflicts are often barriers that prevent characters from achieving their desires and aspirations and can be internal or external. Writers create conflict through interactions between the character against self, other people, society, and so on. The plot is aligned with the conflict and how characters try to solve the problem.

**Theme:** The latest understanding of theme is that it is a central idea in a story. The main theme associates the situations of the story. Explicit theme is stated clearly, but implicit themes are implied in the story.

Advanced Elements of a Story

After becoming experienced in recognizing basic elements in a story, foreign language learners can move on to more advanced elements and see how words are used. These advanced elements are challenging for students. These elements are discussed in the following:

**Point of view:** Simply put, point of view refers to the position that the narrator takes toward the story. Major narrative points of view include: first person (a character tells story from his/her perspective), third person (someone outside the incidents tells what happens), and third person omniscient (the narrator takes the reader inside the characters’ thoughts and feelings).

**Tone:** It reflects the writer’s approach to the subject matter and audience (Arp & Johnson, 2009: 800). It deals with all the elements of style, that is, the language of words, syntax, semantics, and music, and the author uses them to create the tone of the story (Mirsadeghi, 2015: 675). Tone can be serious, humorous, sad, serious, sinister, solemn, somber, and threatening.
Style: Style refers to the manner of expression that the author uses to write the text and describes events, objects, and ideas. The choice of vocabulary, grammatical structure, figurative language, allegory, sentence arrangement, and other phonetic patterns is effective in creating the style (Mirsadeghi, 2015: 655).

Mood: Mood is the atmosphere of the story that is conveyed to the reader through description, setting, attitude, characterization, and other elements of the story (Younesi, 2005: 161). Mood is supposed to affect the reader’s emotions and to add a feeling to the story.

It is worth mentioning that the discussed elements interact with one another in the stream of a story. Each element affects the others, and any change can impact the story; for example, the presence of a character can change the conflict of the story, and as the conflict is changed, the theme is also changed.

Difficulties in Narrative Text

It is maintained that the language skills required to understand narrative texts are somehow unique (Brownell et al., 2010). Meaning construction is a complicated process in narrative stories. In an allegory, meaning is abstract, and the literal events are not sensible. In realistic stories, characters and events correspond to real life. In symbolic stories, meaning is neither totally allegorical nor realistic but somewhere in between. Language learners usually are unable to properly use the required referents for interpretation or to recognize the text structure.

Given these issues, this chapter investigates an effective approach for developing the skills required for reading Persian narrative text instruction among adult L2 learners. The relevant literature reports that the use of graphic organizers is an influential strategy in this perspective. The idea of using graphic organizers such story map is supported by several theories, such as cognitive load theory and dual-coding theory (Vakilifard & Armand, 2011).

Story Map: A Narrative Elements Modeling Tool

A story map (Figure 24.1) is a graphic organizer to organize elements such as setting, characters, and conflict in a narrative text. It helps the students easily find the story elements (Fore et al., 2007) and comprehend the text efficiently (Boon et al., 2015). This technique not only stimulates the reader’s background knowledge prior to the reading task but also shows important information during the reading activity.

Dramatic Structure Pyramid: A Mapping Plot Structure Tool

A dramatic structure pyramid is a graphic organizer allowing readers to visualize the key features of stories. The dramatic structure pyramid is called also Freytag’s pyramid, developed by Gustav Freytag (2008), a German novelist and playwright. For the purposes of this research, the modified Freytag pyramid (Harun et al., 2013) has been used. It helps students comprehend meaning and the ways the elements contribute to the writer’s aim (Jago, 2004). It also defines three important dramatic moments: the inciting moment occurs at the end of the exposition, the moment of reversal is the culmination of the climax, and the falling action concludes with the moment of final suspense (Rolfe et al., 2010). The premise of the DSP’s analysis is that story structure can be divided into five parts (acts): exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (Figure 24.2).

Exposition: In exposition, the setting, main character, and primary complication are introduced, and it shows how the characters are related to each other, to their goals, motivations,
Figure 24.1 A visual representation of the story map

Figure 24.2 A dramatic structure pyramid
Teaching Persian Narrative Texts

and moral characters. Exposition is conveyed through dialogues, flashbacks, characters’ asides, background details, in-universe media, or a narrator who is telling a back-story.

Rising action: Fictional action is a series of real or imagined events and situations that form the subject of the story, and an internal logic connects them to other parts. Rising action is created during the story and reaches a culmination at the end of it. It is the most important parts of the story, and the plot depends on it in reaching the climax.

Climax: It marks a turning point in the story and reveals the way the story goes forward. It is the turning point of the conflict and permits us to understand the action result. It is here that the main character makes a critical decision and determines the outcome of the story. In a tragedy, the protagonist makes a poor decision that reveals their tragic flaw. In a comedy, however, the protagonist faces his obstacles, and there is a great chance that things will turn out well.

Falling action: The falling action is the phase in which the problem is resolved. It is the result of the choices made in the conflict. It can present a final suspense. The conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist is beginning to resolve. There are unexpected incidents which make the final outcome suspenseful. The falling action shows that the climax is over and the story is moving toward an end. It gives the impression of being a separate scene.

Resolution: The resolution (denouement) is the way the action is resolved. It reestablishes a state of normality, and it is the action or incident occurring after the climax. It is the end result of a series of events or complexities in the story, and the result is the unraveling of mysteries and the elimination of misunderstandings (Tapply, 2011), which usually determine the fate of the hero or characters.

Literature Review

The relevant literature documents studies on the use of specific strategies (e.g., story mapping) in teaching reading skills to language students. For example, in an experimental study, Vakilifard and Hosseini (2018) investigated the effects of story mapping on comprehension of non-native Persian learners in reading Persian classic narrative texts retrieved from Kalileh o Demneh (Monshi, 2011). The results showed that the mean post-test scores in the experimental group were significantly higher than the post-test score of the control group. The authors concluded that this strategy improved participants’ comprehension in reading classic Persian narrative texts.

Kurniawan (2013) examined the effects of plot on reading comprehension of twelve English learners in Indonesia as they read narrative texts in English. The researcher used achievement tests, observations, and notes as data collection tools. The results confirmed the positive effects of a story mapping strategy in developing the students’ comprehension ability in a way that the students could identify the main elements of the story, including setting, conflict, goals, reaction, and outcome.

Anjani (2010) followed an experimental approach in studying the effect of fiction mapping on development of reading comprehension among thirty sophomores. The results showed that there was a significant difference between scores before and after teaching reading skills by story mapping. The study concluded that the use of story mapping in teaching English reading comprehension is a good way to replace other methods.

Derefinko et al. (2014) studied the effects of an eight-week story mapping intervention on narrative comprehension improvement in adolescents with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The findings illustrated that consistent practice and feedback with story mapping could contribute to important recall gains. In contrast, the inclusion of goal-based events and the rated coherence of created stories did not improve, suggesting that more explicit instruction is required to employ story mapping in a story.
It seems that few studies have focused on the development of complex narrative comprehension skills (Oakhill et al., 2003). The relevant literature documents that Anjani (2010) and Kurniawan (2013) examined the impacts of the story mapping technique on the improvement of narrative comprehension skills among students suffering from ADHD. The literature illustrates an investigation (i.e., Vakilifard & Hosseini, 2018) examining the effect of this technique on reading skills development in non-Iranian Persian language learners.

This study is significant since it investigates the effects of story map and dramatic structure pyramid strategies in a combined approach on the development of reading comprehension of Persian language learners in reading *Kalileh o Demneh* classical texts. This study is also important since it seeks the long-term effect of this hybrid strategy on reading comprehension development, not investigated in the literature. Generally, this study is unique in the literature from three perspectives. First, this study could deepen knowledge relating to the effects of a combined strategy using story mapping and dramatic structure pyramid to be completed by students in Persian as a second language. Second, this study observes the effects of employing a specific sequence of story cards during and after reading task. Third, the objective of this study was to test the effect of the story mapping on the type of comprehension of informative texts with and without delay. The choice to use a post-test as an instrument to measure understanding made it possible to observe the effects of the strategy on the transfer of the acquired knowledge achieved during the experiment.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The participants were twenty-eight non-Iranian Persian language learners participating in supplementary courses held at Persian Language Learning Center, International University, Qazvin, Iran. These volunteers were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. Both groups were exposed to a pre-test. The text was a summary of a story entitled “The Lion and the Cows,” followed by questions checking the students’ comprehension skills in understanding the Persian classical text.

The main objective of this phase of the study was to ensure the homogeneity of the participants divided into the control and experimental groups. Both groups read the text “A Couple Pigeons,” then answered to eight questions to judge their understanding ability. The results of the pre-test were used: (1) to homogenize control and experimental groups and exclude the outliers from the sample and (2) to determine the level of their understanding and consider in the statistical analyses. The experimental group was permitted to follow a combined strategy approach and employ story mapping and a dramatic structure pyramid, whereas the control group followed a traditional approach (explanation of new words and expressions, discussion of key concepts).

**Persian Narrative Texts**

The literary texts were retrieved from *Kalileh o Demneh* (KD). The researcher used this ancient literary book since it included didactic content and no study has investigated the narrative elements in the old stories contextualized in Persian classical textbooks. Texts were simplified based on the level of learners. It was attempted to produce a modern version of the story while the content was kept intact and the key themes were not changed.

Concerning the readability of texts, two Persian language teachers were requested to assess the difficulty level of the texts. The necessary modifications were applied based on their comments.
A group of seven non-Iranian Persian language students were asked to respond the questions, and the items were edited according to their opinions.

**Measurement and Evaluation Instruments**

A pre-post-test approach was used to measure the effects of the employed teaching strategies. In simple words, this approach helped the researcher to observe whether the comprehension level of the experimental group in reading narrative stories was higher than that of the control group after the use of a combined strategy using story map and dramatic pyramid structure for texts 2 and 3. It also motivated the researcher to determine whether the implementation of the combined strategy promoted the transfer of skills in understanding narrative texts.

After each intervention, the students were given an eight-item questionnaire checking the events, characters, plot, and so on of the narrative stories. Students were allowed to answer the questionnaire in thirty minutes.

**Content of the Intervention**

**Experimental Group**

First, the students in both groups participated in a pre-test. It took thirty minutes. Then the experimental group was trained concerning comprehension skills in two sessions. In fact, the researcher taught the students how to use reading strategies to improve their comprehension in reading narrative texts in Persian. However, the control group did not receive any treatment.

In the first treatment session, which lasted for 120 minutes, the learners were acquainted with the combined strategy of story mapping and dramatic structure pyramid (Figure 24.4). It is maintained that students can make the language of literature useful by using academic vocabulary in ways that deepen their understanding of how stories work (Jago, 2004: 51). Summarization is also effective since the use of summarization structures helps them think critically, and the teacher can ask students to complete graphic organizers as they read the narrative stories.

Moreover, effective comprehension strategy instruction can be accomplished provided students work together to understand texts. Teachers provide samples of the comprehension strategies (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). The teacher also shows the students how to create and use a graphic organizer. Using a smart board, the teacher draws a narrative mapping (Figure 24.1) and dramatic structure pyramid (Figure 24.2), and systematically explains the elements of the story, the actions of the story, the plot, and the relationship between them and their importance in understanding the text. Students perform their narrative mapping by identifying and separating significant elements of the story and important plot.

In the first session, the learners were be introduced to the book *Kalileh o Demneh* (Annex 1: Introduction); then they were asked to practice the combined strategy of narrative mapping (Annex 2: Figure 24.7) and dramatic structure pyramid (Annex 2: Figure 24.8) in a short narrative text retrieved from this book, *A Dove Couple*. Teachers screened for narrative text structure knowledge by reading a text aloud and asking students to complete a written story map. The teacher provided each student with a blank story map organizer and modeled how to fill it out. Students identified the story components after reading the text and, accordingly, completed the map. Then they discussed the discovered elements (e.g., characters, setting, plot, and theme or
beginning, middle, end). After training, they answered questions about the text experimentally. The instructor corrected the answers in class and gave immediate feedback on the spot.

In the second session, the first and sub-sections of the King and the Brahmins story (text 2 in the annex) were taught to the participants in experimental group. The instructor divided the participants into four groups of three. Each group completed the narrative mapping (annex 1: Figure 24.3) and the narrative structural pyramid (annex 1: Figure 24.4). At the end of the 120-minute class, each participant went to his/her place and individually participated in the formal test after reading the text for 30 minutes. Students were not permitted to use the story map when answering comprehension questions or when retelling the story.

In the third session, the second part of the King and the Brahmins story (text 3 in the annex 1), the narrative map (Figure 24.5), and the narrative structural pyramid (Figure 24.6) were covered, and at the end, the third test was taken.

**Control Group**

In the control group, the course content and training sessions were similar to the experimental group. The participants were exposed to the same texts that were used in the experimental group but without any strategies for instruction. The teacher instructed the volunteers on the structures, words, terms, grammatical points, and some key components in the retrieved texts. At the end of the 120 minutes of class, each participant took the formal test after reading the text.

In the fourth session, all participants from both groups were invited to participate in a thirty-minute reading comprehension post-test. The reading passage for the test was the same text used in the pre-test without previous knowledge about it.

**Research Hypotheses**

The research hypotheses were as follows:

**H1:** The reading comprehension level of participants in experimental group will be higher than that of the control group after using the story map and dramatic structure pyramid strategies in texts 2 and 3.

**H2:** The overall reading comprehension observed in the post-test (text 1) of the experimental group will be higher than that obtained in the pre-test (text 1).

---

**Table 24.1 The intervention procedure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session and duration</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Pretest 30 min</td>
<td>Text (1) – pretest</td>
<td>Combined approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training 120 min</td>
<td>Traditional approach</td>
<td>Text: Two Doves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Intervention (1) 120 + 30 min</td>
<td>Text (2) – test (1)</td>
<td>King and Brahmins introductory story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Intervention (2) 120 + 30 min</td>
<td>Text (3) – test (2)</td>
<td>King and Brahmins secondary story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Post-test 30 min</td>
<td>Text (1) – post-test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
Presentation and Interpretation of Results

The analysis of covariance was used in tests 1 and 2 of the experimental and control groups, and repeated measures analysis of variance was used to evaluate the effects of treatment in the post-test. To compare the mean scores of the pre-test in the control and experimental groups, the independent \( t \)-test was used to see the homogeneity of the two groups before the intervention.

It should be mentioned that the internal consistency of questionnaire items was obtained by Cronbach’s alpha prior to the test treatment effect. The results of Cronbach’s alpha were respectively 0.67, 0.78, 0.81, and 0.64 for the question items in text 1 (pretest), texts 2 and 3, and text 1 (post-test). These values were considered adequate for this type of measuring instrument.

Comparing the Mean Pre-Test Scores of Narrative Comprehension of the Two Groups

Table 24.2 shows the independent \( t \)-test used to examine the homogeneity of the groups before the intervention. The results do not indicate any significant relationship between the pre-test scores observed in both groups (sig < 0.05). It is inferred that participants in both groups were at the same level concerning their narrative text comprehension before the treatments.

Comparison of the Effectiveness of the Combined Strategy in Tests 1 and 2

The analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to compare the effectiveness of the combined strategy on the students’ narrative text comprehension skills. The use of ANCOVA requires some assumptions that must be met with respect to the related variables.

Checking the Distribution Normality of Post-Test Scores

Table 24.3 illustrates the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which was used to check the normal distribution of post-test scores.

Table 24.3 shows that the significance level of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is more than 0.05 for post-test scores. Accordingly, the distribution is normal for post-test scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group statistics</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Independent ( t )-test result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>12/890</td>
<td>3.560</td>
<td>sig= 0/892 0/140 = ( t )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>13/080</td>
<td>4/010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24.2 Comparison of the means of the scores between the control and experimental groups obtained in the pre-test (text 1a)

Table 24.3 Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th>Test statistics</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>Test result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative comprehension in L2</td>
<td>124/0</td>
<td>117/0</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Testing the Linearity of the Correlation Between the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Table 24.4 indicates the linear correlation between pre- and post-tests scores. As shown in this table, the $F$ values are significant for pre-test scores at the level of 0.05, implying that there is a presupposed correlation between pre-test and post-test scores.

Variance Homogeneity Test

Levene’s test was used to examine the homogeneity of variance of the pre- and post-test scores. The null hypothesis of this test is homogeneity of score variance, and the opposite hypothesis is non-homogeneity of score variance.

Table 24.5 shows the results of Levene’s test for comprehension of the narrative text. It is observed that the significance level of Levene’s test is more than 0.05, so the null hypothesis of the test is supported, and the scores have a homogeneous variance. Due to the establishment of the assumptions, the analysis of covariance was used to test the hypothesis as follows.

Table 24.6 shows the results of the ANCOVA test for the narrative text comprehension variable. Table 24.6 illustrates that the group effect is significant on the score ($763/8 = f$, sig001/0 $< 0/05$), meaning that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in increasing the narrative text comprehension. Therefore, the combined strategy has a significant effect on increasing the narrative text comprehension variable, and the first hypothesis is confirmed.

### Table 24.4 Test results for linear correlation of pre-test and post-test scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Test statistics ($F$)</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative comprehension in L2</td>
<td>125/11</td>
<td>0/001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 24.5 Results of homogeneity test of pre- and post-test scores of second language narrative comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Test statistics</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative comprehension in L2</td>
<td>386/0</td>
<td>543/0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 24.6 Summary of the results of covariance analysis of the variable narrative text comprehension in the experimental and control groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of changes</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean of squares</th>
<th>Test statistics ($F$)</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
<th>Effect size ($\eta^2$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed effect</td>
<td>053/98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>053/98</td>
<td>465/75</td>
<td>001/0</td>
<td>390/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test effect</td>
<td>451/14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>451/14</td>
<td>125/11</td>
<td>001/0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group effect (intervention)</td>
<td>383/11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>383/11</td>
<td>763/8</td>
<td>001/0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error effect</td>
<td>073/35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>299/1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison of the Results of the Two Groups on the Comprehension Post-Test

The experimental group score is slightly lower than that of the control group at the pre-test (text 1a), but the mean of this experimental group is higher at the post-test (text 1b). The control group is slightly increased, but for the experimental group, there is a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test.

As mentioned, Table 24.7 illustrates the results of the repeated ANCOVA test for in-group comparisons.

Table 24.7 shows that the effect of combined strategy is significant \( (f = 6.595, \text{sig} = 0.004 < 0.05) \), meaning that the intervention (combined strategy) had a significant effect on changing the narrative text comprehension variable during the treatment session. It is observed that there is a significant increase in post-test and pre-test scores, and the hypothesis of persistence of the effect of the intervention is confirmed.

In summary, the results show a significant difference between the scores of the control and experimental groups. Significant differences in the experimental group’s post-test scores indicate that the training sessions using the teaching of story mapping will affect the reading skill and understanding the concepts of the *Kalileh o Demneh* stories. Persian language learners were able to analyze the story elements appropriately, and they also understood the cause-and-effect relationships between the elements of the story meaningfully.

In the control group, the lack of significant differences between the pre- and post-tests is mainly due to the questions related to understanding the meanings of ancient Persian narrative texts and the cause-and-effect relationship of the author’s stories, purposes, and thoughts were answered less than the experimental group. It was observed that the students in the control group were able to answer the vocabulary questions more appropriately than questions probing their general or main ideas about the narrative texts. Based on the findings, one may conclude that the use of the combined strategy improved the comprehension level of participants in reading Persian classical narrative texts.

The use of the combined strategy makes the students sensitive to elements in a narrative text. In simple words, these reading strategies deliver a visual–spatial display for key information in a narrative story. The presentation of information in clearly separated and identified segments could encourage students to perform constructive activities such as reasoning and inference. The interest of teaching the principle of contiguity and double coding for the visual reconstruction of the concepts of a text were put forward here, the results of the experimental group, helped by the use of the combined strategy, being higher than those of the control group. The simultaneous presentation of texts and cards facilitated the construction of knowledge by referring to two different modalities and sensory codes.

This study sought to answer whether the combined strategy of story mapping and a structural pyramid affected the comprehension level of non-Iranian Persian learners while reading classical literary texts. The findings showed that the use of this combined strategy significantly increased

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of changes</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>Degree of freedom</th>
<th>Mean of squares</th>
<th>Test statistics (F)</th>
<th>Significance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combined strategy effect</td>
<td>722/9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>861/4</td>
<td>595/6</td>
<td>004/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error effect</td>
<td>910/19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>737/0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total effect</td>
<td>632/29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the reading comprehension skills of students. These results are consistent with the findings of previous works such as Anjani\(^\text{34}\) (2010), Kurniawan\(^\text{35}\) (2013), and Vakilifard and Hosseini\(^\text{36}\) (2018). The findings showed that the implementation of this combined approach in the use of strategies improved the comprehension skills of non-Iranian Persian language learners in reading Persian classical narrative texts.

It was also seen that the participants in the experimental group favored the combined strategy; in other words, the use of maps engaged them to selectively mobilize the appropriate elements existing in their cognitive structure. Moreover, these strategies provided the participants with an optimal anchorage for reading the material offered. The students were thus able to appropriately find the information stored in their memory, which made it possible to think that their knowledge was better organized and its retrieval was easier.

In contrast, although almost all of the new words were taught through vocabulary activities, it may be thought that students in the control group sometimes focused excessively on the less relevant words or the less interesting information rather than on what was important. Students in the experimental group focused more on the relevant information. Persian learners could pay due attention to the structure of the narrative text and actively engage with the content of the story. These strategies could help them not only to identify and organize the story elements but also attach the new material to their previous knowledge, which in turn will lead to meaningful learning.

The second research hypothesis was that the implementation of the combined strategy should promote the transfer of comprehension skill of narrative texts. We detected a statistically significant difference between the means obtained during the pre-test and the post-test for the experimental group at the level of comprehension and not for the control group. Several explanations are likely to help in the interpretation of these results.

Successively completing maps allowed the experimental group to become more efficient in the tasks aimed at retrieving information and developing a structured set of information, although that it is not sufficient for some items, especially the advanced items. These items resulted in an improvement in the level of comprehension of other texts at the post-test. In addition, the maps encouraged the students to be sensitive to the organization of the information in a narrative story. In simple words, students in the experimental group learned to recognize and reconstruct the connections between key elements of a narrative text. This process required sophisticated thinking and, therefore, eventually led them to better integration, conservation, and retrieval of story elements and, in short, to better respond, in another situation, to different questions.

**Limitations of the Research**

Regarding the duration of strategy training in a combined strategy using story mapping and a dramatic structure pyramid, it seems that, in general, students take time to become familiar with a new mode of knowledge representation; some even seem to be resistant to it. Through our research, we observed that in order to be able to help students to transfer the strategies of graphic mapping, especially in L2, we must put this strategy into practice for longer time, create a time gap between these practices appropriately, and repeat the operations as needed. However, it was impossible for us due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, the sample size was twenty-eight non-Iranian Persian language students. This sample size allowed for careful control and internal validity. However, it also limited the generalizability of the findings as well as the degrees of freedom available for conducting hypothesis testing. Employing more control groups and larger numbers of students in future research would increase the external validity and the degrees of freedom for hypothesis testing.
Research Conclusion

Educational Implications

In literature courses, teaching of strategies aimed at understanding complex relationships between characters, setting, events, problem, and resolution is often neglected in favor of presenting words and rhetorical figures in the form of definitions or descriptions isolated, even sometimes detached from the context. However, the results of this research prove that the use of the combined approach using two visual strategies promotes in-depth mental processing of story grammars in narrative texts. It is therefore necessary for teachers of literary texts to integrate a graphic representation strategy into their practices if they are to increase the comprehension skills of their students. In a pedagogy based on the development of reasoning skills, the ability to use environments rich in graphical representations can be justified, provided, once again, the conditions of these graphical representations are functional and not just decorative.

The results of our research show that understanding teaching based on student collaboration is more effective in a multilingual context. A dramatic structure pyramid and story map as a combined strategy was, therefore, considered a collective project or an exercise of cooperation and partnership that should lead to common progress. The students had to learn to improve their understanding level while working together in a community of learning and practice. Everyone’s cognitive development takes place through social interaction between all members of the groups. The establishment of a group dialogue and the collaboration of the students possibly facilitate the completion of the story maps and, thus, the comprehension of the texts, requiring collaboration, communication, and group work to be able to complete a common task.

Furthermore, Persian literature curriculum designers need to be aware of the strategies underlying classroom practices. They can benefit the findings of such studies in order to design curricula in which literature courses dedicate much more attention to the underlining strategies. The writers of literature textbooks can also help their readers master these strategies by incorporating them into the student and workbook textbooks.

Direction for Future Research

Although the combined use of a dramatic structure pyramid and story map has here shown to be effective in teaching narrative texts and its application can overcome several problems, this use remains largely ignored in courses of Persian literature, including Persian as a second language. It therefore seems that more research is warranted to add more knowledge on the specifics and limitations of a combined strategy using a dramatic structure pyramid and story map in the field of comprehension education and also to find the best format of the dramatic structure pyramid and story map structure concerning the levels and needs of the students and to incorporate it systematically into teaching.

Here, too, more research needs to be done to determine the ability of the combined strategy using a dramatic structure pyramid and story map to represent the different structures of narrative texts and to be able to compare the effects of the various types of map and pyramid configurations, given that awareness of the structure of texts has a significant influence on the amount and type of information recalled after reading a narrative passage and since L2 students generally do not demonstrate a particular ability to detect the organization of a text and to use it as a frame of reference for understanding and memorizing its content.
Overall Conclusion

In literature classes, teachers mainly favor written treatment of unfamiliar words, literary concepts, and sentences; they may not explain, model, or demonstrate how to understand a literary text. The approach developed here is based on the idea that it is possible to teach comprehension of literary texts, as well as decoding them, through explicit teaching of strategies. The use of graphic organizers as metacognitive strategies is one of the means recommended by educators to achieve such ends (Forte, 2003).

A majority of the difficulties of comprehension and memorization come from an inadequate or insufficient interpretation of the organization of a literary text, the relations between the events, and the statements it contains. This problem is accentuated in second language comprehension, when reading passes through word-by-word comprehension, linear and fragmentary, while short-term memory becomes overloaded and no longer succeeds in making connections.

A graphic organizer such as the story map, in addition to conveying relationships, presents structures or specifics that are not observable in linear arrangements of text. Language learners must be proficient in recognizing elements of a story to be able to comprehend and enjoy it. Organizing and logically structuring the elements of a given story, as well as exposing the relationships between elements, allows readers to become more attentive to textual structures and to give them a mental representation. Understanding the structure of a story is necessary for students to fully comprehend the story. If the organization of elements in a literary text is made explicit, it becomes easier to understand them deeply. Understanding the structure of the story helps students to recall and memorize the events. This familiarity also motivates learners in their own note taking and writing.

Some researchers, such as Anjani (2010), Derefinko et al. (2014), Kurniawan (2013), and Vakilifard and Hosseini (2018), have employed graphic strategies with the intention of improving reading comprehension that have in fact produced positive results. In this research, by combining the visual strategy of a story map with dramatic structure pyramid of narrative structure, a combined approach was developed for teaching Persian literary narrative texts. This study shows that students can be taught to use a set of comprehension strategies effectively.

Readers in the experimental group scored higher than those in the control group. The graphic representation gave the possibility to the subjects of the experimental group to get a big picture of the narrative structure which incorporates storyline and plotline. Furthermore, this visual representation helped them through a top-down process to begin with the most general information of the text and to move towards the most specific ones.

Regarding the design modalities of the combined strategy using a story map and dramatic structure pyramid – individual versus collective – the latter offers a very interesting option, especially in an L2 context. It promotes discussion, confrontation of points of view, and consultation on the elements of the story map and their relationships.

Overall, the post-test results show an improvement in performance in comprehension when the fill-in story map strategy is used after short-term training. With this type of story map, the readers remain active, more easily develop their comprehension strategies, and are better able to transfer them to another text, given that the results show that the effects of the intervention remained after the treatment.

In summary, the results of this research dealing with the use of a dramatic structure pyramid and story map as a combined strategy confirm the usefulness of a visual representation of story elements. This strategy provides the reader with a mode of mental scaffolding to help them understand a text more critically and creatively. It also offers the teacher a flexible and informal structure. The graphical display allows him or her to direct readers more effectively and thus
encourage them to manipulate text under various entries. As the text is represented in new and diverse ways, students have the opportunity to come to a deeper understanding of its content (Crandall et al., 2001). Finally, the introduction of the story map, pyramid of dramatic structure and other graphic organizers in teaching is a step in the right direction, that of ensuring the presence of good readers of Persian literature in coming years.

The bottom line is language education has renewed its methods and approaches for teaching languages to speakers of other languages. In the same way, literature education is forced to aim at bringing education “out of the box” in response to the changes in society and based on new trends that are emerging in other scientific disciplines. In fact, it has to involve a holistic and integrated approach to literature education taking advantage of different instruments and various strategies. This is the path on which second language education has made great strides in recent decades. Without a doubt, the younger generation’s future needs and the actual changing global village require a further professionalization of Persian literature teaching.
Annex 1

CONTENT OF THE INTERVENTION

Introduction

In the first session, the learners were introduced to the book *Kalileh o Demneh* (KD), a collection of anecdotes on ethics and statecraft.

The stories of KD were translated from Sanskrit into Pahlavi (Middle Persian) by Borzuya, a Persian physician in the late Sassanid dynasty. Pre-Islamic Iranian writers added further stories to KD. KD is classified as a book representing political thought and statecraft. It elaborates on governance rules, the infiltration of enemies into state apparatuses and the ways of identifying them, the kings’ relations with courtiers, and wazirs’ insights.

In KD’s anecdotes, Brahmin and Ray are the main narrators, and Ray asks Brahmin to tell a story relevant to the circumstances. Brahmin presents a narrative which usually leads to one or multiple hypodiegetic levels. When Brahmin leaves the hypodiegetic and returns to the metadiegetic level of the narration, the anecdote comes to an end, and Ray formulates the whole dialogue at the end (Yaghoobi Janbesaraei & Panah Fateh, 2012: 73). Apart from emphasizing the relationship between state and religion, the main goal of these interactions is to legitimize Ray’s activities (ibid., 98) and to improve his shattered political image.

According to Azarang (2015), the Middle Persian translation of KD is not a straightforward translation but a rewriting of the literary work based on cultural closeness rooted in the Indo-Iranian political culture and belief in the caste system. In this regard, Yaghoobi Janbesaraei (2017) argues that the hidden ideological voices indirectly represent a hierarchical order in all social relations grounded on the historical circumstances in which the anecdotes were formulated and composed. KD is a mixture of Indian caste ideologies and Iranshahri political doctrine. A discourse of predetermined order is produced and disseminated which sets rigid demarcations in the shape of a reward-punishment system. In this system, maintaining order and observing the borderlines is rewarded by survival and redemption, while violation of these limits or changing the existing order is punished and leads to death or loss for the characters (p. 80).

It is difficult to categorize KD as a typical literary genre. KD is not merely a combination of stories, myths, or apologues but, probably, a collection of these genres. It borrows the characteristics of each genre:

Like fables, the stories are short and include animals with human traits. The purpose of these anecdotes is to teach ethics, motivating the reader to reflect on an issue. In fables, there are no
human characters, but in some KD stories, such as The King and Brahmins, which is the subject of this chapter, there are human characters. The audience for this long anecdote is not children. Concerning these characteristics, this story resembles the tales.

KD resembles an apologue as well. An apologue is a tale of a series of imaginary events which is usually narrated by an animal or a bird. The main purpose of an apologue is to give wisdom or moral advice in an engaging narrative context. It could be a symbolic of a person who holds a particular social or political rank. Sometimes, an apologue exaggerates or provides a detailed explanation of the events. However, this is not the case in KD’s stories.

Allegory, as a literary device, is widely used in KD. Allegory is the presentation of a character, thought, or event in a way which represents itself as well as something else. In other words, an allegory has an explicit literal meaning and one or more implicit meanings. In allegorical myths, there is always a tendency to prove and teach something (Mirsadeghi, 2015: 147). Allegory is a story with a second meaning. This meaning is usually implied through the presentation of characters, objects, or events reflecting symbolic significance. The whole story is symbolic. Often a pattern connects each real item to a principle or an abstract idea. Although the story might have an explicit surface meaning, the author’s main interest is in the implicit sense (Arp & Johnson, 2009: 734). The protagonists of these stories are those animals representing different social statuses. The author uses these characters as an effective tool to express his thoughts indirectly and depict the rulers (Mohammadzadeh & Mahmoudi, 2017: 509).

KD is also a frame story which has a main story; this core story has one or more sub-stories. An episode is an independent event occurring in a long narrative context. Sometimes this independent incident is related to but sometimes irrelevant to the plot of the story. These episodic events are meaningfully connected with the main content of the story. One can often find an undeniable similarity between the characters of the main story and the episodic event (Dad, 2011: 111).

One may claim that KD is an educational masterpiece in Persian literature, adequately informative concerning the political, social, economic, psychological, and cultural affairs of that time. The main purpose of anecdotes is not just to tell stories but to provide ethical lessons useful both for the kings and the public.

The distinctive feature of KD is that its literary style is not attributed to the author but to the book itself. Skillful writers can elevate their writing performance in such a manner to create a writing style. In this situation, the authors’ names determine the style of the writer. As an instance, Beyhaqi style in writing derives from the author reputation (i.e., Beyhaghi). However, in the case of Nasrallah Monshi, the name of the book determined the style of the writing, not the author’s name. KD’s style has been influential since its inception (Mirsadeghi, 2015: 655). Its ideas, style, and structure have contributed to the works of famous writers including Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Jean de La Fontaine. The core of KD has transcended the boundaries of time and culture and has been able to adapt to new contexts, languages, and cultures (van Ruymbeke, 2020: 1).

**King and Brahmins Story**

The King and Brahmins anecdote deals with civil politics and statecraft strategies. The story teaches the nations various policies to achieve goals and confront enemies. It also introduces appropriate ways to establish effective communication with other courtiers. As mentioned, the stories of KD usually begin with an introduction, in which Brahmin asks Ray questions concerning moral or social issues, and ends with a conclusion. This conclusion is presented in the introduction of the next chapter. The main reason is probably to review the contextualized key
issues in the previous chapter. This style provides the readers with background information to be sufficiently prepared for the theme of the next story. This storytelling technique is specific to KD (Sabetghadam, 2009: 20).53

In the King and the Brahmins anecdote, Ray first asks Brahmin to describe kings from his perspective using terms such as courage, generosity, and tolerance. Brahmin believes that kings should be tolerant and asks Ray to develop his character based on forbearance. Then Ray narrates the main story. The king and the Brahmins story is a “story within a story.” This story has an introductory narrative, and it prepares the reader for the secondary (main) narrative. Therefore, the plot of the king and the Brahmins story is episodic: it includes one introductory episode linked to a secondary episode by common characters, and the last one has a very short episode within, the “A Dove Couple” sub-story.

First Intervention

In the next section, we provide the the king and the Brahmins story for Persian literature students (here in an approximately 900-word text).

3.1. Summary of the Introductory Story of the King and the Brahmins

Legends have it that in India, once there was a king which was called Heblar (Monshi, 2011: 302).54 One night, seven horrible dreams woke him up seven times. Worried and distraught, he called the Brahmins to interpret the dreams. The Brahmins stated that it was a terrible dream and asked for some time to interpret it. The king accepted their request. They were granted some time to interpret the dreams. See the rest in the sample section.

Basic Elements of the Introductory Story

In this section, we illustrate how Nasrullah Monshi tackled the story elements of “The king and Brahmins story.”

Setting: The time of the story is not known, but it occurs in India, which has a structural connection with the story. Most of the scenes are in the luxurious court, depicting King Heblar in full luxury. In the story, reference is made to the king’s elephants, Bactrian camel, and sharpened sword. These are the elements of the king’s might that the Brahmins seek to undermine and thus weaken the king. In addition, other kings send many presents to Heblar. This symbolizes the glory and hegemony of the king.

Similar to writers of ancient stories, the author of KD does not provide a detailed description of the setting. Two scenes are appealing to readers; the first is where Irandokht approaches the king with a crown on her head and a plate of rice in her hand; the second is the situation in which the queen kisses the court floor when she expresses her gratitude to the king.

Characters: The characters are human beings, including King Heblar, Balar the Wazir, Irandokht, Brahmins, Karidun the Sage, the king’s second wife, Jobar, and Kak the Dabir (Secretor). The development of these characters is mostly dramatic or indirect. The reader can become familiar with the characters through their actions and statements. In addition, the narrator directly describes their physical characteristics.

The dialogues between the characters reflect the thoughts and circumstances of these characters. In fact, these dialogues, along with descriptions, completely introduce the characters to the readers. The characters are mostly described through the king’s statements and are grounded in his inner conflict with himself. All of them are static (except for Heblar the king), typical, and
simple (except for Balar the Wazir) characters who do not change from the beginning to the end of the story (Sabetghadam, 2009: 181).56

King Heblar: The king is the main character of the story. The story revolves around his decisions, motivations, and words. He has a typical, simple, and dynamic character. At the beginning of the story, the king is a ruler devoid of rationality and foresight, and in the middle of the story, he is hasty, but at the end, he realizes and changes his past mistakes. The motives and reasons for his actions are relatively logical. However, killing his wife because of a mistake that she made might be seen very cruel and irrational based on modern society's standards. More specifically, the king's characterization is not strong, and the reader may not be able to visualize a comprehensive image of the king in his/her mind.

Balar the wazir: The sub-characters of the story include Balar the wazir, along with Irandokht and Karidun the sage. Because of his competence and deep insight, Balar the wazir plays an important role in the king's political and private life. Thus, when the Brahmins encouraged the king to kill him, the king knew that the absence of such a person in a political system would lead to a decline in authority and instability of the kingdom. Balar the wazir is always conservative and cautious in his treatment of the king, and even when he learns of a change in the king's circumstances, he himself does not step forward to inquire about the king's circumstances and sends Irandokht to the king's presence. Unlike other characters, who are simple and one-dimensional, Balar the wazir has a multidimensional character and amazes the readers with his actions. In one part of the story, he disobeys the king's command, and in another, he speaks angrily to the king. Balar the wazir’s most prominent characteristic is his shrewdness and wisdom.

Irandokht: She has a one-dimensional and simple character, which is typical and static. She has beauty and can influence the king. Her beauty is such that after ordering her death and the wazir’s supposed execution of the order, the king speaks with regret about her beauty. Other qualities such as kindness, skillfulness, and prudence enable her to exert, compared to the king's other wives, more influence on the king and the courtiers. The narrator has created, in the minds of the readers of the story, a powerful image of a female agent who is a resourceful guide and knows the interests of the country very well. However, in the case of the king’s other wife, she sometimes shows feminine jealousy (anger motive) and expresses her anger without fear of the consequences.

Brahmins: This group was considered scholars and religious leaders. To avenge the king’s slaying of their fellows due to religious differences, they begin to plot and conspire against him. Hence, they decided to take revenge on the king and attempt to overthrow the king and ruin the kingdom through dream misinterpretation. The Brahmins are opposite in character to Irandokht. They have typical, one-dimensional, and static characters. Throughout the story, no change occurs in their character. They enter the story in the first plot and are punished at the end of the second plot. In the story, a brief account of their character is expressed in Irandokht’s words, providing the reader with information concerning their characteristics. Although they are proficient in dream interpretation, they never deserved to be consulted with or trusted.

Karidun the Sage: He has a one-dimensional, typical, and static character.

The king’s second wife: She appears in only one scene, arouses Irandokht’s jealousy, and creates a conflict in the second story. The narrator does not give the reader much information about her.

Jobar, Kak Dabir (secretary), and King’s son: As walk-on characters, Kak Dabir, Jobar, and the king’s son have no role in the story and, in just a few sentences, the narrator states that the presence of the king’s son and Kak Dabir guarantees the stability of the kingdom and wards off harms from him and his kingdom. The narrator does not offer more details about these characters.
In short, it seems that since the author has been more concerned with presenting much content in a short story, he has not had enough time to address the characters and to describe their appearance.

Figure 24.3 Map of King and Brahmins’ introductory story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Static</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story Map</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>King Belar, Brahmins, Karaidun, Irandokht, her Rival wife, Brahmins, Jobar, Kak.</td>
<td>King Heblar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Problem**

Towards off the evil of his nightmares, the king had to order his relatives be killed with his own sword.

**Important Event**

1. In one night, the king had seven nightmares.
2. He shared his dreams with the Brahmins in order to guide and advise him with the right interpretation.
3. They misinterpreted dreams.
4. Realizing the King’s concerns, Minister Belar informed Irandokht.
5. Irandokht, who becomes aware of the intentions of the Brahmins, shared the dream of her husband with the sage Karaidun.
6. He gave an accurate interpretation of the king’s dreams.
7. The king rejoiced and rewarded those around him.

**Outcomes**

Brahmin interpreters cannot use their trick to suppress the king.

**Theme**

Counseling with hypocrites has unpleasant consequences and counseling with honest and prudent people brings victory and success.

**View point**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Omniscient</th>
<th>Limit. Omni.</th>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Mood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
<td>Solemen and admonishing</td>
<td>Technical prose (original story).</td>
<td>Verisimilitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24.3 Map of King and Brahmins’ introductory story
Content of the intervention

Conflict: In the story of the king and the Brahmins, an introduction makes the reader interested in reading the story. The Brahmins ask the king to give them some time to interpret his dream. They inform the king the interpretation of his dream. To ward off the evil of his nightmares, the king must kill his relatives by his own sword. It is here that the first conflict of the story takes place. But the king gets sad, and the next conflict occurs inside the king’s mind, which doubles the charm of the story with beautiful descriptions of his relatives. Details presented in these descriptions demonstrate that the king could not separate himself from them, and this factor motivates the narrator to develop and continue the story.

After Balar the wazir’s dialogue with Irandokht, another conflict arises between the king and Irandokht, and the story achieves suspense. By Irandokht’s suggestion for the reinterpretation of the dream by Karidun the sage, this suspense is continued and the story reaches its climax with the correct dream interpretation. With the interpretation of the dreams, the conflict of the story is resolved.

Theme: As the title suggests, the theme of the story involves the relationship between the king and the Brahmins. The desire for revenge directs the Brahmins toward dishonesty, leading to their demise at the end of the story. Meanwhile, one of the desirable attributes of the king is that he consults with the wise. “For his majesty shall be feared and honored, and the army and
the people shall be pleased and thankful” (Monshi, 2011: 299). If a king does not consult with the wise, he will end up suffering and regretting. This shows the great significance of consultation for kings and rulers. Perhaps, in this manner, Nasrullah Monshi wants to remind kings and courtiers of the importance of consulting with compassionate and benevolent sages.

**Plot:** The story begins with the king’s fear. The cause of his fear is obvious (disturbing and scary dreams), and it is explicitly stated. Through a detailed account of the king’s horrible dreams, the author motivates the reader to read the story. Unlike other stories that have animal characters and in which the verisimilitude of the text is very low, this story enjoys better verisimilitude because of its use of human characters, and for this reason, it has a stronger plot.

**Advanced Elements of a Story**

**Viewpoint:** In this story, the narrator’s point of view is in line with human psychology. In a scary situation, every human being would be scared, even the king, whose fear has an objective manifestation. Every human being might get angry. But the king can also regret the consequences of his anger and express it. It is as if the narrator of these stories is observing the characters of his stories closely and is following their reactions to their environment (Khodaei & Mobasheri, 2018: 140). The story’s point of view is an omniscient intervening narrator who narrates the story in the third person. Through his intended advice expressed by the characters, the narrator has attempted to give himself opportunities to express his opinions. In addition, in the end, by preferring forbearance to other characteristics of the kings and restating that this story is for the readers’ education, he enters the story and strengthens his presence.

**Tone:** Considering the message presented at the end of the story, the tone of the story is solemn and admonishing, like the tone of preachers who make use of stories to confirm their moral lessons and advice. The tone of the characters is different in diverse situations. The king’s tone at the beginning of the story is sad and, against Balar the wazir, a little harsh and aggressive. The wazir’s tone towards the king is also harsh and disrespectful. The tone of the whole story is full of advice and wisdom. Dialogues efficiently demonstrate the characters’ inner selves and thoughts.

**Style:** In the original version of “The king and Brahmins story,” the writing style is technical prose. Adaptation of Quranic verses and hadiths; use of many rhymes, similes, proverbs, Arabic words, and Arabic and Persian poems throughout the story; the descriptiveness of many sentences; and the use of many literary devices such as rhyming prose and leonine verse have created a complicated text. In addition to the verbosity resulting from technical prose, the frame story style also complicates the text and makes it more difficult to understand. Therefore, the text should be simplified and adapted to the proficiency level of non-Iranian learners of Persian language and literature.

The style of this story shows the effects of archetypes, some of which are universal symbols. Some of these common archetypes, such as woman, water, old sage, and numbers, display contrasts and contradictions. For instance, numbers represent secret knowledge and could be found in all cultures and at all times. Each number has its own imaginative forces and specific characteristics. These beliefs have not disappeared altogether yet and are hidden in a corner of the subconscious and often occur in literary and artistic dreams and creations (Cirlot, 2010: 143).

Among the mysterious numbers is the number seven, which is mentioned in many stories including the king and the Brahmins, where the king has seven nightmares in a night or where, seven days after the interpretation of the dreams, gifts arrive at the court. Elsewhere, in interpreting the king’s dreams, the Brahmins state that the king should kill his loved ones, pour their blood into a tub, and sit in it for an hour. Killing loved ones is a way of sacrificing to the gods and casting out evil spirits, and the king’s sitting in a pool of blood is reminiscent of the state of the fetus in the womb, which reminds one of the concept of rebirth, holy water, and baptism.
They seek to reconstruct a scene for the rebirth of the king (Jahangard & Golestani Hatkani, 2013: 28–29).

**Mood:** In the end, in terms of verisimilitude the introductory story seems to accord with reality. However, there is an incident which violates verisimilitude. In the scene of Balar pointing to Irandokht with his eyes to choose the costume and the king’s noticing his pointing, Balar keeps one eye closed so that the king does not realize that he has pointed with his eyes. He continues this move for 40 years and keeps one eye closed every time he goes to the court. It is somewhat difficult to believe this event. This question remained unanswered that how the king had not seen Balar’s eyes before that and after this incident, he should keep one eye closed for forty years. Perhaps the author had another purpose in creating this event.

Overall, there are causal relationships among the events of this story. The only instance of violating a causal relationship is where the narrator does not mention why the king ordered the killing of so many Brahmins, which in turn made other Brahmins resent him.

**Second Intervention**

**Summary of the Secondary Story of the King and the Brahmins**

This story passed and one night Heblar was with Irandokht and another night with his other wife. One night, when he went to Irandokht’s room, Irandokht wearing a crown on her head and holding a golden plate of rice in her hand came to the king. The king ate from the rice and was happy to meet and talk to her. Meanwhile, her maid, dressed in red, passed in front of their eyes. When the king saw the maid, he was astonished with her beauty and stopped eating. The power of lust took possession of him (Monshi, 2011: 317). He praised the maid and told Irandokht that she made a mistake in choosing the crown. When Irandokht saw the king’s astonishment in the maid’s beauty, she became jealous and got very angry and poured the plate of rice on Heblar’s head and face. Therefore, the sage’s interpretation for the seventh dream was fulfilled. The king got angry and ordered Balar to take Irandokht and behead her.

Balar the wise wazir took Irandokht out of the court. He thought to himself that the king was very fond of Irandokht and that carrying out an order which was decreed in a state of anger could not be expedient. So he took her home and told the servants and maids to take care of her with respect. He himself went to the king with a bloody sword and told the king that he had executed the king’s order. But Heblar, whose anger had subsided, became very sad. When the wazir saw signs of regret in the king’s face, he said “the king should not be upset since the past could not be rolled back and the thing which has perished could not be restored. Sadness and thoughtfulness could weaken the body” (Moshi, 2011: 318). The wazir asked the king that if he would allow, he could tell a story appropriate to the situation at hand. The king allowed and the wazir started to narrate:

Legends have that a pair of doves gathered seeds to fill their nest. The male said: It is summer and there is plenty of grass in the plains. Let’s keep these seeds for the winter so that we can survive the winter when nothing could be found in the plains. The female also happened to agree. Thus, the male dove went somewhere else for a while. When the seeds were being stored in the nest, they were damp. So they filled the nest. When summer came and the heat affected the seeds, the seeds dried up and the heap of the stored seeds declined. The male was absent and when he came back and saw the reduced heap of seeds, he said: This was our winter supply. Why did you eat it? However much the female insisted that she had not eaten the seeds was useless. The male beat the female dove until she died.

In the winter, when the rains were frequent, the seeds were damp and the nest was filled again as before. The male realized what had caused the reduction in seeds and began to moan.
and weep. He said to himself: “It is all the more difficult that regret will not help.” The wazir continued: “The wise man should not rush into punishment so that he, like the dove of the story, would not lose his loved ones” (Monshi, 2011: 319).

The king shouted “I gave an order in a state of angst, why did you carry out the order and take the life of a unique person.” At this time, a long conversation transpired between the king and the wazir. Whatever the king uttered, the wazir boldly divided it into parts and explained it to the king in ironic terms. When Balar saw the signs of regret and remorse in the king’s face and realized that he had pardoned Irandokht as a result of his words, he finally informed the king that Irandokht was alive. The king was happy with the news and asked the wazir to bring Irandokht to him and gave precious presents to Irandokht and Balar. The king ordered the traitorous Brahmins to be punished and some to be hanged, and through precious grants made Karidun the sage a wealthy man. And he said to Balar “I must return and give myself some comfort by the company of my wife” (Monshi, 2011: 332).

4.2 Basic Elements of the Secondary Story

Setting: The setting is the same as the one in the introductory story.

Characters: The characters of the King and the Brahmins’ secondary story include King Heblar, Balar the wazir, Irandokht, Brahmins, Karidun the sage, and the king’s second wife. The king gets angry at the wazir’s evident protests; however, he does not overreact. Since he has hastily ordered the killing of the queen and is now regretting that decision, he acts with more restraint. The wazir, on the other hand, feels fully secure and thus speaks boldly and frankly. He is aware of his own deeds and knows that, after this frank exchange of words, he wants to deliver good news to the king. Thus, this feeling of security is manifested in his words and compels him to freely express his opinions before the king. The wazir prudently turns the king’s anger into remorse and then announces that the queen is alive. The king needs the tact and experience of his subordinates to overcome feelings of anger and fear. In two situations, the wazir himself also experiences feelings of fear: fear of the Brahmins’ conspiracy and the king being trapped by them and fear of the king and the execution of his decree. In both situations, he displays thoughtful reactions, and, in the role of a wazir, he handles both situations well and safely (Khodaei & Mobasheri, 2018: 140).

Conflict: In this story, action triggered by anger is observed in the king’s and queen’s behaviors towards each other (reciprocal behavior). The queen expresses her anger at the king’s behavior with a violent and physical reaction (pouring food on the king’s head and face), and in return the king reacts angrily (ordering to kill the queen). Based on the narrative sentence in the story, this reciprocal exchange of anger had taken place between them several times before. By the king’s order to behead the queen, the conflict of the story begins and the reader is drawn into a state of excitement. But with Balar’s internal conflict, the story achieves suspense. The result of this conflict is that Balar does not kill Irandokht; instead, he hides her somewhere so that if the king changes his mind, he will not be harmed. He then informs the king that he killed her. But the king regrets his hasty decision, and a long challenging argument ensues between him and Balar. The king gets angry with the wazir too, but his anger does not lead to any harsh reaction, and this time he is able to control his anger.

After this argument, Balar realizes that the king is eager to meet Irandokht. He informs the king that she is alive and makes the king happy, and the story reaches its climax. By Irandokht’s return to the king and the king’s apology to her, the conflict of the story is resolved. At the end of this plot, the Brahmins who misinterpreted the king’s dreams are punished for their ill intentions.
### Content of the Intervention

#### Story Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Static</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Irandokht - her Rival wife - Belar - Karaidun</td>
<td>King Heblar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Title

King and Brahmin’s secondary story.

### Important Event

1. One night, Irandokht came to the king with a crown on her head and a golden plate full of rice in her hand.
2. Her rival (the king’s other wife) put on the beautiful dress that the king had given her as gift and passed by the two.
3. The king reproached Irandokht for choosing the wreath over the costume.
4. Angry with this criticism, Irandokht poured rice over the king’s head and face.
5. The king ordered Balar to take away Irandokht and behead her.
6. Balar did not kill Irandokht and hide her somewhere.
7. He informed the king that he had killed her.
8. The king regretted his own hasty decision.
9. A heated debate took place between the king and Balar.
10. Balar realised that the king eagerly wished to meet Irandokht.
11. The king heard from Balar that she was alive and became happy.
12. The king wanted to convey his desire to Irandokht with wishes and apologies and invited her to his court.
13. Irandokht returned to the king and thanked the king.
14. The king gave her, Balar, and Karidun precious gifts.

### Outcomes

The king becomes aware of the intentions of the Brahmins and punishes them all.

### Theme

Forbearance is very useful for kings and senior officials to be themselves honored, and for the army and the people to be happy and grateful.

### Viewpoint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Omniscient</th>
<th>Limit. Omni.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☑️</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tone

Solemn and admonishing

### Style

Technical prose (original story).

### Mood

Verisimilitude
Theme: Forbearance is the primary theme of this story. The theme is presented explicitly since the author wants to ensure that the readers understand it. Unlike modern stories, in which the theme of the story is indirectly stated, in most of the anecdotes of KD, the theme of the story is explicitly stated at the beginning or the end of the story, and thus the narrator does not allow the reader to think about the themes and deduce them from the stories. This is the case with this story and the dove couple short story. But there is a hidden theme in this second story which involves jealousy. Irandokht is jealous of the king’s second wife, and this jealousy takes her almost to her death.

Plot: The interpretation of the seventh dream prepares the ground for the conflict of the second plot. The first plot ends here, and the Brahmin interpreters could not execute their plot to suppress the king. In terms of verisimilitude, the next plot, which is the main one, is relatively plausible. The story begins with an introduction which depicts the position of the king’s wives. As Irandokht’s rival (the king’s second wife) passes by the two, the king is astonished at her beauty. This arouses the queen’s jealousy and she drops the plate of rice on the king’s head. Thus, the sage’s interpretation of the seventh dream is also fulfilled. The main plot also enjoys enough coherence. The causes of the accidents are stated and developed well.

Figure 24.6 Dramatic structure pyramid for King and Brahmins secondary story
Content of the intervention

Advanced Elements of a Story

Viewpoint: The viewpoint of the story is the same as the one in the introductory story.

Tone: The tone of the story is the same as the one in the introductory story.

Style: In general, the frame story lengthens the anecdotes. In addition, this story is the longest story of KD. All of this sometimes distracts the reader from the main course of the story. In addition, in this second story, there is a weak point, which begins with the king regretting his hasty decision and engaging in an argument with Balar. This lengthy dispute is one of the weaknesses of the story and has nothing to do with Irandokht’s incident. This argument indeed includes the narrator’s advice presented in the form of a dialogue between the two. This lengthy dispute reduces the dramatic effect of the story and tires the reader. However, the ancient audience of this work was familiar with this style of writing (Kooshki & Zirak, 2019). Thus, it is tiring for the modern readers of KD who are used to the modern lifestyle.

Mood: The mood of the story is the same as the one in the introductory story.

Although we stated that, in the ancient stories, the story elements are weak and the causal relationships of events and actions may be weak, in this story we can observe the story elements and the plot have been implemented properly. The plot of the whole story is also strong and coherent, and no spontaneous incident occurs in it. This is one of the strengths of the story. In line with Sabetghadam (2009), we believe that the author has been able to distribute the events throughout the story and develop them properly. Descriptions and dialogues abound in this story and, based on them, the story develops and continues. The structural elements of the plot are also in order and complete. There is a reaction to every action. In the story, there is no unexpected ending which would stick to the end of the story like an awkward patch. Proper introduction, timely presentation of twists, natural suspense, conflict, climax, and logical resolution of twists are some of the factors which attract readers and encourage them to read the story to the end. The ultimate goal of the narrator of the story is to express the conclusion, and there is a logical and close connection between the story and its end.
Annex 2

TRAINING SESSION OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

A Dove Couple Sub-Story
The summary of this sub-story is nested within the secondary story.

Basic Elements of “A Dove Couple” Story
The previous anecdote is a story that has not been fully developed and just depicts an episode of the characters’ lives. The previous text is a plot been used to develop another anecdote and is not a complete story in itself.

Setting: The story revolves around the relationship between spouses. The setting of the story has not been clearly stated.

Characters: In the dove couple story, the main character of the story is a male dove, and the theme of the story revolves around his character. He has a typical, simple, negative, and symbolic character. However, at the same time, his character is dynamic, since it changes from the beginning to the end of the story. He is typical of hasty people making decisions without contemplation. His antagonist is a female dove. The dove couple story has a narrative flaw which involves poor characterization of the characters. The characters have not been developed properly.

Conflict: When the male dove returns from a long journey, he observes that their winter supply has diminished.

Theme: The theme of the story is explicitly stated at the end of the story: prejudice and hasty decisions could contribute into destructive consequences. The whole anecdote is narrated to confirm that a wise person should not rush into punishment in order not to suffer the consequences of his/her hasty decision.

Plot: The events of the story have not been connected through cause-and-effect relationships. As Barahani (1983: 46) has pointed out, the killing which occurs in the anecdote is a murder without the slightest reflection. It seems to be an imposition from outside which overshadows the life cycle of the dove couple. For this reason, the verisimilitude of the story has declined. Life effervescence is not observed in this story, and instead of expanding upon the dove couple’s life story, the narrator uses it for the development of characters and illustration and description purposes.
The male dove walked away for a while and the volume of the moist grains declined.

Important Event
1. Two-doves collected grains for the winter.
2. The moist grains filled the container.
3. The male dove walked away for a while.
4. With the onset of the hot season and summer, the volume of the moist grains declined.
5. The male dove returned and noticed what had happened.
6. The male dove became suspicious of his mate.
7. Her female dove pleaded not guilty, but the male dove did not accept it.
8. The female dove died from being beaten by male dove.
9. With the onset of winter, the container seemed filled up as before.
10. The male dove became aware of the cause of the decline in grains.

Outcomes
The male dove regrets being suspicious of his wife and hastening to punish her.

Theme
The sage should not rush into decisions and judgements.

View point | Tone | Style | Mood
---|---|---|---
Omniscient | Solemien and admonishing | Technical prose (original story) | Verisimilitude

The last point is that, as mentioned earlier, elements such as characterization, setting, conflicts, plot, and viewpoint are very important in the structure of modern fiction genre. Generally, in stories and anecdotes developed in ancient societies, the story elements are not properly addressed in the debates and the conversations between animals and inanimate objects, respectively. Writers such as Haji Aqababayi (2016) believe that the educational nature of KD made...
Two doves collected grains for the winter and the moist grains filled the container.

The male dove walked away for a while.

The hot season and summer came.

The volume of the moist grains declined.

The male dove returned.

The male dove became suspicious of his mate.

He noticed what had happened.

The male dove became aware of the cause of the decline in grains.

The male dove became suspicious of his mate.

Her female dove pleaded not guilty, but the male dove did not accept it.

The female dove died from being beaten by the male dove.

The container seemed filled up as before.

The winter came.

The male dove regretted being suspicious about his wife and his haste in taking action.

Figure 24.8 Dramatic structure pyramid for “A Dove Couple” story

the narrators pay attention to their intended meaning, not to the literary structure of the anecdote. Despite this statement, we believe that, in this story, the elements have been properly addressed and implemented.

Furthermore, at the time of writing KD, creation of internal conflicts within the characters was not unusual. In this book, there are internal conflicts within the main characters of some stories, including “A Dove Couple,” which show the author’s skill in characterization. In KD, the characters are mainly introduced explicitly. By describing the physical appearance or personality of the characters, the narrator introduces the characters to the audience.

Notes


12. Ibid.


45 Yaghoobi Janbehsaraei, P. (2017). The Implied Author’s Position in the Tales of Kalileh and Damneh from the Perspective of the Semiotics of Spatial Distribution. *Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2(1), 53–84. [In Persian]
50 In this case, the “style of Golestan” and the “style of Tarikh-e Wassaf” can be mentioned.
55 Another one whose location is structurally related to the story is “The Lion and the Jackal.”


SAMPLE LITERATURE FOR
CHAPTER 24

Summary of the Introductory Story
of The King and the Brahmins

Legends have it that in India, once there was a king which was called Heblar (Monshi, 2011: 302). One night, seven horrible dreams woke him up seven times. Worried and distraught, he called the Brahmins to interpret the dreams. The Brahmins stated that it was a terrible dream and asked for some time to interpret it. The king accepted their request. They were granted some time to interpret the dreams.

In the past, Heblar had killed 12,000 Brahmins. Therefore, the Brahmins took the opportunity to make the king to reveal his secrets concerning this massacre. Therefore, Brahmins decided to benefit the secrets and provide the king with a biased interpretation to weaken his power and destroy his dynasty. Therefore, the Brahmins conspired to frighten the king and tell him that he must atone for his sin and repel the evil of the blood that stained his body in his dream. The Brahmins informed the king that he could do it by using his sword and killing his son (Jobar), his wife (Irandokht), Balar (wazir), Kak the Dabir, (the white elephant, as his special carriage, and two other elephants), and Bactrian camel, and breaking the sword at the end of massacre. The Brahmins, then, requested the king to pour the blood into a tub in which the king would sit for an hour. They confided that they could tell the king that, when he comes out, four of us would come in from the four directions and cast a spell and blow on him and rub some of the blood on his left shoulder, then wash his body and take him safely to the royal assembly. The evil of this dream should be repelled in this way, and if not, the king should wait for a great calamity, the decline of the kingdom and his death.

Brahmins visited the king and shared their interpretation. The king shocked and saddened deeply. He mused how he could live without his loved ones. Wazir noticed the king's depression and sadness. He approached the queen, Irandokht, and said that the king usually disclose his intention and he had not done anything without his consultation. But now, without his knowledge, he has summoned the Brahmins twice, and since then has been sitting in solitude, thinking and suffering. Those traitors might incite the king to do something wrong. He asked her to find out the truth of the matter so that he could make a plan. At first, Irandokht excused that she was annoyed with the king and apologized. But Balar insisted and reminded her of the king's love for her and sent her to the king.

Irandokht went to the king and asked him why he was sad. At the insistence of the queen, Heblar was forced to recount his dream and the interpretation of the Brahmins. Being shrewd, Irandokht did not flounder (Without losing her composure, she said that the lives of the servants
should be sacrificed for the king's interests). But she reminded that the Brahmins do not like him although they are highly knowledgeable, they are not deserved to be consulted. Irandokht suggested that the king share his dreams with Karidun, the sage who was a very skillful dream-<br>
interpreter. She assured that all would surrender to the king's command if Karidun confirmed<br>
the Brahmins interpretation as well.

Karidun offered his dream interpretations as nicely as possible. Accordingly, the two red fish<br>that the king saw standing upright on their tails stood for a messenger from King Homayoun<br>who would bring two elephants with a load of four hundred cups of rubies to the king; the fish<br>who got up from behind the king and landed before him represented two horses which would<br>be gifted by King Belejar; the snake that ran on the king's leg interpreted as a sword which<br>would be presented by King Hemjin; and the blood, which stained the king's body, represented<br>as an ornamented gown which would be gifted by the king of Kaserun to the garment house;<br>the white camel on which the king sat was the white elephant which would be brought by the<br>king of Kadion's messenger; the thing which shined like fire on the king's blessed head stood for<br>a crown which would be sent by king Jad; however, the chicken that pecked at the king's head<br>represented an abominable illusion and you (the king) would renounce one of your loved ones.<br>The interpretation of your seven dreams was that the messengers would come with gifts to the<br>king's court seven times.

Events happened as Karidun had predicted. The neighboring kings offered very expensive<br>gifts. Heblar's sage happily distributed the gifts to the king's loved ones, and when it was Iran-<br>dokht's turn, the king ordered that they present the crown and costume to Irandokht to choose<br>one. Irandokht looked at Balar to pick the one which he would agree with. He pointed to the<br>clothes. The king noticed the exchange between the two. Irandokht chose the crown so that the<br>king would not know that they had consulted, and Balar kept one eye closed so that the king<br>would not realize that he had pointed with his eye. For the next 40 years, each time he visited<br>the king he would keep his eyes in the same way.