LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

DISCUSSION BASED APPROACH IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEBANESE CLASSES

By
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Discussion based approach in second language Lebanese classes

Tamara Alkhishen

Abstract

The 21st century has presented many new technological advances that distract students and make the role of the teacher more complicated. It has become very difficult for the teacher to keep his or her students motivated and to keep them involved, especially during the literature session.

Scholars in the field of education have introduced a lot of approaches that enhance students’ learning. One of these approaches is the discussion-based approach. This study seeks to ascertain whether or not students in one of the Lebanese schools comprehend literature texts better and are more involved in the literature classroom. Through examination of students’ responses to performance assessment questions, questionnaires from students, checklists filled by the participant observer, and rubrics from students, findings indicate that the discussion based approach motivates students, increases their involvement in the classroom, and improves their understanding. Since the method is action research, amendments for teaching using the discussion based approach have been made.

Keywords: Discussion, Motivation, Involvement, Understanding
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 - Introduction

Instruction plays a significant role in the literature classroom because the texts are usually long and students get easily distracted and disengaged. The English language curriculum has always been designed to develop a knowledgeable and cultured population that thinks deeply (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003). However, students cannot think deeply about a certain text unless they comprehend it. Thus, comprehension is an essential component in the learning process. Moreover, Applebee et al. (2003) indicate in their study that the type of instruction that the teacher uses affects students’ understanding of the text. They refer to the discussion-based approach as the type of instruction that enhances comprehension. According to Lee (2001), students should voice their understanding in order to be able to improve them through substantive discussion with others. In other words, students should share with the class what they know about the text in order to change any misunderstanding. Thus, comprehension is attained through discussion. Applebee et al. (2003) clarify this statement by stating that students enhance their understanding through discussion-based approach because they are asked to predict, summarize, relate texts, ask and respond to text-related questions, improve understanding, and gather related evidence to support an analysis they provided. Serafini (2008) adds to what Applebee et. al. (2003) state about the role of students during discussion by saying that students determine the main points that will be discussed in the classroom. Students are responsible for sharing their interpretations and thoughts with their classmates. They should be active learners who listen carefully to what is being said by other students in order to strengthen their understanding of the text under discussion.
1.2- Research context

The purpose behind conducting this study is to indicate the effect of the discussion-based approach on students’ motivation, involvement, and understanding. The chosen research method to conduct the research was action research. This research method is widely used by school personnel. It is a cycle that leads to the desired results. I chose a private Lebanese school located in the suburbs of Beirut to conduct this research. The study was implemented within two months. The implementation started at the beginning of the school year (October 2011) and ended by the end of the first semester (December 2011). Within this period, I started by teaching the students using the traditional method in which students were not completely involved in the classroom; they were more passive participants. At the end of the literature session in which students were studying the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, I would give students the rubric to evaluate the session, use a checklist to assess the session and give students a performance assessment question to measure their understanding of the selection under discussion. Based on the results, I altered the way of instruction to meet students’ needs and improve their motivation and understanding.

1.3 - Participants

Since I am the researcher and I teach at the chosen school, I chose one of my grade 10 classes to participate in the study. The class had 24 students. The students learned English as their second language. They are also native speakers of Arabic.

1.4 - Research questions

In this study, I will attempt to answer the following two questions:
1. To what extent does the discussion-based approach affect students’, motivation involvement, and comprehension?

2. What are the amendments that should be implemented to improve discussion instruction?

1.5 - Definition of terms

1.5.1 - Discussion based approach

Discussion based approach is when students are invited to predict, sum up, relate texts with their own background knowledge, create text-related questions, and support an interpretation. According to Nystrand and Gamoran (1993), “discussion is the thoughtful and sustained examination of a given topic over a period of time involving substantial contributions and reflection” (p. 99). In general, there is an emphasis on cognitive strategies in the discussion-based approach. This approach also shares an emphasis on group discussion and problem solving in which multiple perspectives are proffered and examined, requiring evidence-based argument in support of individual points of view (Applebee et al., 2003).

1.5.2 - Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is a process of concurrently constructing meaning through the interaction with written language (Snow, 2002). Juzwik, Nystrand, Kelly, and Sherry (2008) provide a more specific meaning for reading comprehension in which they indicate that it is the ability to understand literal meanings from the text, interpret the text with regard to story elements, and compare ideas across texts. Nystrand (2006) provides a definition of reading comprehension in cognitive terms. He defines it as the processing of textual information by relating new information to established schemata, i.e., mental organizational structures that aid comprehension by helping students to integrate background knowledge with new knowledge.
Thus, he emphasizes the importance of background knowledge in the process of reading comprehension.

1.5.3 - Motivation

Motivation is one of the major characteristics that the learner should possess. It determines the rate and the success of second language learning. It is the aspect that helps the learner to embark upon learning. Motivation is considered a concept that has qualitative and a quantitative dimension. The qualitative dimension relates to the aim of learning while the other is concerned with the intensity of the effort invested. Thus, as stated by Dornyei (in press), the motivation to learn a foreign language involves the aim of learning and the effort exerted to attain this aim.

1.6 – Thesis Division

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic, the research context, participants, research questions and the key terms used in this study. Chapter two includes what scholars and other researchers have said about the discussion based approach and its relationship with students’ understanding and motivation. Chapter three explores action research as a research method and indicates the benefits and importance of using such method. Besides, it compares action research with other traditional researches. The fourth chapter is concerned with the methodology adopted in this study, highlighting the instruments, their advantages and disadvantages, and the validity, reliability and ethical considerations of the study. The fifth chapter presents the results of the study divided according to the instruments used. Chapter six comments on the results displayed in chapter five with reference to literature review.
The last chapter includes the conclusion, recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further research.

1.7 – Conclusion

After I had identified the topic, the research context, the participants, the research questions the definition of the key terms, and the division of the thesis, the following chapter will present what scholars like Applebee, Nystrand, and others say about the significance of the discussion based approach. Besides, it includes the elements of discussion, its relationship with motivation and understanding, and the role of the teacher and that of the students during the discussion.
Chapter Two
Literature review

2.1 - Introduction

This literature review includes what scholars said about discussion and the significance of using it in the classroom. During the implementation of the discussion based approach, the class becomes student-centered. This literature review elaborates on this idea by indicating the type of questions used and the role of each of the teachers and students. Moreover, when discussion based approach is discussed, it should be contrasted with the traditional method. Furthermore, this literature review reveals the relationship between discussion and students’ understanding, motivation and participation in the language classroom.

2.2 - Discussion in the English classroom

Applebee et al. (2003) in their one-year study that they conducted on 974 students in 64 middle- and high-school English classrooms in 19 schools in five state that discussion usually starts when students respond to an open-ended question about which students disagree. Discussion ends when the teacher introduces a new activity. “Discussion is one of the best ways to nurture growth because it is premised on the idea that only through collaboration and cooperation with others can we be exposed to new points of view. This exposure increases our understanding” (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 4). Davis (2001) agrees with Brookfield and Preskill (2005) by stating that discussion gives students the chance to collaborate and to develop an understanding about the text under discussion. Ma (2009) adds to what Brookfield and Preskill (2005) said by stating that discussion about curricular content gives students the chance to exchange points of view that are based on their social contexts and background knowledge.
Thus, they enrich their own knowledge and comprehend the text under discussion better. Guthrie (2004) adds that an interactive way of approaching a text helps struggling readers in learning from proficient readers how to approach it. Moreover, it permits advanced students to engage in conversations by using their prior knowledge. This emphasizes the significance of background knowledge during the discussion.

Cazden (2001) and Stipek (2002) both agree that English-language learners should be provided with the opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts in the classroom in order to become skillful students who know how to comprehend the material written in the English language. Van den Branden (2000) claims that discussion enhances reading comprehension when literature passages are the focus of ongoing discussion. He concluded that discussion is useful when "the learners themselves are actively involved in signaling their problems and in trying to solve them ... It is exactly in bridging these gaps [between the learner's current level of language proficiency and the proficiency needed to comprehend the input with which the learner is confronted] that learning may come about" (p. 438). Applebee et al. (2003) assert that discussion-based instruction, in the context of high academic demands, significantly enhanced literature achievement and reading comprehension.

According to Granville (2001), discussion based approach helps in attaining different conclusions and interpretations of the text. Thus, students do not have to stick to what the author provides in the text. They can interpret the text in their own way. Questioning the text and the author is considered significant. She adds that any interpretation that is supported by the text is considered acceptable. She also states that this approach helps students in interacting with the text by using their background knowledge. Students have different background knowledge
regarding a specific topic. Thus, when they share this through discussion, comprehension will be promoted.

Omatseye (2007) affirms that the discussion approach encourages imaginative and conceptual thinking and strengthens logical reasoning among students. According to Lapp, Fisher, and Grant (2008), the discussion approach in teaching students reading is a constructivist approach in which students construct knowledge through interaction that occurs in the classroom based on the text. Vygotsky's theory of sociogenesis states that cognitive growth is "more likely when one is required to explain, elaborate, or defend one's position to others, as well as to oneself; striving for an explanation often makes a learner integrate and elaborate knowledge in new ways" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 158). Thus, when the teacher allows students to construct their own knowledge and to defend their own ideas, they get to understand better. Moreover, the teacher should give students the chance to argue and counter argue, so that they attain cognitive growth.

Pulido, Pulido, Serrano, and Tortajada (2003) in their study state that the discussion approach is considered as a process of reading and understanding texts, in which readers reinforce their reading comprehension, intensify their literary interpretation, and reflect on life. Therefore, they have the chance to transform their personal and social views or validate them through their interaction with their peers and their teachers.

Discussion is a teaching approach in which the teacher allows students to engage in face verbal interchange of ideas. The teacher interacting with the students achieves a variety of roles. First, the teacher is responsible to transmit knowledge, and in doing this he or she indicates the objectives of his or her lesson and scrutinizes the needs and background of the students for
relevance of the topic and its correctness. Moreover, when the teacher applies the discussion strategy to the teaching-learning process, he or she plays the role of a director, originator, mediator and a summarizer (Omatseye, 2007).

Nystrand (2006) states that when teachers have in mind the questions they are going to ask before they attend the class and the answers that they are going to accept, this is not considered an active discussion. Thus, teachers should know that engaging students in active discussion is "a little like building a fire: With enough kindling of the right sort, accompanied by patience, and along with the spark of student engagement, ignition is possible, though perhaps not on teachers' first or second try" (Nystrand et al., 2003, p. 190).

Smith and Connolly (2005) indicate that discussion can be done as a small group discussion or a whole class discussion. In their study, they assume that the students will benefit from the small group discussions to prepare for the whole class discussions. However, the results were different. The students summarized and reported what they discussed in the small group discussions. Therefore, they did not share any new ideas and thoughts during the whole class discussions. Moreover, the level of engagement that was observed in the small groups ceased in the whole class discussions.

According to Reznitskaya, Kuob, Clarkc, Millerd, Jadallahd, Andersond, and Nguyen-Jahield (2009), the imperfection of a dialogue, such as its complexity and inconsistency, shouldn’t stop us from using this method. The fact that it creates an authentic classroom that motivates students to participate and develop their critical thinking skills is enough to consider using this method. It is a demanding approach because the teacher should be prepared and informed about the topic under discussion.
2.3 - Comprehension questions used during discussions

According to Gladwin and Stepp-Greany (2008), teachers tend to use comprehension questions as a way to help students who are learning the language as a foreign one in comprehending a text. However, when the textbooks are examined, one realizes that most of them include questions that are limited to factual knowledge. Thus, most of the questions are literal ones that ask students to recall information presented in the text. This is not what we want because such questions do not trigger students’ critical thinking. Besides, when students are asked to answer questions that require higher level thinking, they find difficulty because they do not know how to think about such questions. One way of dealing with this problem is by giving students the chance to sit in groups and discuss the questions with their peers before sharing their answers through whole class discussions. This way students will feel comfortable, and they will have the chance to understand the text better.

Teaching reading through discussion is according to Pulido et al. (2003) based on a key aspect that is comprehension. Discussion about a shared text will trigger students’ responses. Thus, a common interpretation of the text will be attained by the students. This will be the result of the reflections of the students on that specific text. The interpretations are based on students’ opinions and background knowledge related to what they have read.

2.4- Elements of dialogic instruction

Nystrand et al. (2003) state that the main elements for dialogic instruction are authentic questions, uptakes and level of evaluation. They define an authentic question as one for which the asker does not have a definite answer. Examples include demands for information and open-ended questions with undetermined answers. An authentic question permits a range of answers different from more commonly occurring recitation questions, in which a teacher asks a question
with a determined answer in mind. This distinction is essential for our work because authentic questions asked by the teacher give students the impression that the teacher is engrossed in what they think and know, as opposed to whether they can participate in plain recitation by repeating material given in texts. Moreover, when the teacher allows an indeterminate number of satisfactory answers, authentic questions open the floor to students’ ideas. As such, they encourage students to add something new to the class communication. Cazden (2001) elaborates and explains this element of dialogic instruction by differentiating between display questions and exploratory queries. He said that display questions are the questions that have specific answers that the teacher has in mind ahead of time. On the other hand, the exploratory queries are questions that require students to express their own ideas and opinions. Moreover, these questions help students in comprehending the text based on the in-depth interaction between the students monitored by the teacher. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) add to what Cazden (2001) stated before them by indicating that there are different types of exploratory queries. They talk about queries that ask for evidence and clarification, hypothetical queries, and synthesis queries. Queries that ask for evidence and clarification ask students to give their opinion about something they have said. Hypothetical queries ask students to think about the change that different circumstances or situations might cause in a certain text. Finally, the synthesis queries ask students to identify the main ideas about a certain text. Mohr and Mohr (2007) emphasize the importance of exploratory queries by stating that it is the role of the teacher to ensure that the class is benefiting from the discussion that is taking place. To do that, the teacher should ask students to elaborate their answers and clarify them. Sometimes what may seem clear to the teacher might be vague to some students who might be reluctant to ask for further explanation. Moreover, the students who are giving a certain response might have misunderstood something.
Thus, when he or she explains and justifies his or her answer, the teacher will be able to ascertain whether he or she has comprehended the text or not. Nystrand et al. (2003) also defines uptakes as the questions that the teacher asks based on an answer that the student gave to a literal question. The uptake is an open-ended question. When the teacher considers uptakes, he or she is allowing students’ responses to affect the flow of the lesson. These uptakes will help students in learning that their answers should be supported. They also talk about the level of evaluation that has a vital role in the success of the discussion. They state that the simple evaluations done by the teacher do not motivate students to engage in the discussion. Therefore, this will hinder their comprehension. The use of uptakes will show that the teacher appreciated the student’s response and will encourage the other students to engage in the discussion. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) bolster what has been mentioned above by stating that one reason behind lack of participation in class discussions is that the teacher ignores or does not value students’ responses. According to Kelly (2007), students do not participate in discussions because they prefer to avoid taking the risk of giving the wrong answer. They fear that the teacher will embarrass them in front of their peers who will in turn label them as ‘poor students’. Thus, discourse plays a vital role during class discussion. According to Nystrand et. al (2003), teachers are inattentive to the language being used in the classroom. They focus on what students are learning and the information they are giving. They disregard the fact that discourse is vital aspect in the continuity of the discussion and its efficiency.

2.5 - Students’ role

Students contribute to the discussion by interpreting the text, responding to the text from their emotional point of view, linking the text to their personal experiences and with formerly
read texts, and conferring about ethical issues mentioned in the text (Chinn, Anderson, & Waggoner, 2001). Juzwik et al. (2008) later confirmed what Chinn et al., (2001) mentioned by stating that rather than being located in the text, meaning comes out through the experiences that the students acquired from their various social backgrounds and their interpretations of the text. Therefore, the discussion-based approach relies profoundly on the background knowledge of the students and the way they view the text. For the students to be able to perform all the above mentioned tasks, they should be attentive listeners. According to Brookfield and Preskill (2005), students become attentive listeners due to their differences. They explain that some students become frustrated when others use abstract terms in their responses. Therefore, they listen carefully to try to understand what their classmates are trying to prove. Another example might be those who use disconnected sentence fragments. These students are usually interrupted by other students who are task-oriented. They are usually keen to get to the point. All these differences that become apparent during discussions give students the opportunity to use others’ ideas and comments to build their own understanding.

According to Nystrand et al. (2003), the questions that students ask about the content reinforce the discussion in the classroom. Moreover, these questions enhance comprehension because students ask questions that require additional explanations and clarifications regarding the text. Besides, students sometimes ask follow-up questions that promote other students to explain. Thus, the teacher will allow time for discussion instead of returning to the lesson plan she or he prepared. In the study that Hadjioannou (2007) conducted, 4 students were interviewed to indicate the opinion of students towards discussion. Hadjioannou reported that the most common benefit of discussion that was reported by the interviewed students was that it helped them in comprehending the text better. Ma (2008) assures what has been said before by
indicating that a student participation in a discussion, whether he or she is answering or questioning, draws the attention of his or her classmates to specific details and information present in the text under discussion. Therefore, they will comprehend the text better. Serafini (2008) summarizes the role of the students during discussions. He stated that students should honor and respect each other’s responses. They should consider listening well as important as talking well. Besides, they should address other students, as well as the teacher, when sharing ideas. Furthermore, students should base their responses on what has been mentioned earlier by their peers and try to develop the incomplete ideas that their classmates stated. This entails that the students listen carefully to each others’ responses.

According to Reznitskaya and Anderson (2002), when students get used to argumentation, they develop an abstract knowledge system, an argument schema. This is when students learn that they should support their arguments with reasons and evidence, and they should ask others to support their positions regarding a controversial issue. The benefit of acquiring such a schema is that students learn how to question and evaluate answers given. Thus, students become life-long and independent learners who are able to question whatever they learn without passively accepting it.

2.6 - Teachers’ role

Cazden (2001) and Stipek (2002) state that teachers who motivate their students to participate in classroom discussions are proficient ones. Serafini (2008) specifies that the role of the teacher when the discussion is taking place becomes facilitative. Lapp et al. (2008) elaborate on the role of the teacher by stating that when students are dealing with texts that are challenging for them, the teacher should provide commentary and conversational support for comprehension,
word study, and engagement by noting where students might need explanation, elaboration, or connection.

Billings and Fitzgerald (2002) mention that the teacher’s purpose behind initiating a discussion should be to enhance students’ understanding. Thus, according to Nystrand et al. (2003), proficient teachers help students by allowing their students to actively inquire. Students should be given the chance to raise questions about the information presented in the text and that shared by their classmates and teachers. This is not the case in a typical teaching environment where teachers promote memorization and recitation of materials. In such classes, teachers cannot dedicate time for students to inquire. They have to pass the necessary information that the students should learn without any interruptions on the behalf of the students.

Applebee et al. (2003) state that maintaining the discussion is the most difficult task that the teacher should perform. According to Brookfield and Preskill (2005), the teacher should not be frustrated when silence fills the room. This is something common. Students need time to reflect. Moreover, the teacher should not expect the discussion to be perfect. Some students might respond in a discourteous way. Others might not be listening. Enthusiastic students might blurt out answers at the same time without waiting for their turns. This happens all the time because students need a lot of time to learn the proper way to engage in a discussion. However, there are ways to minimize these imperfections. The teacher should share with his or her students what is expected from them. They should know what they should do and what they should avoid. Role modeling can be a good solution. Besides, praising a student for following his or her instructions while participating in discussions is another way to motivate others to avoid imperfections.
Ma (2008) indicates that the teacher’s role is to lead a constructivist classroom in which she or he gives equal opportunities to all students and makes sure that understanding is constructed and agreed upon through discussion. Chinn et al. (2001) point out that the teacher should not say much in a discussion. This does not mean that the teacher steps aside during the discussion. The teacher should interfere in order to encourage students to clarify their ideas and provide clear arguments that are supported by evidence and reason. Davis (2001) corroborates with them and states that the teacher should know when and how to intervene in the discussion. The teacher primary goal behind this is to ensure the understanding of all students. The teacher can achieve this when he or she is able to understand students’ previous learning experiences. When this is achieved, the teacher can help students in making the connection between what they previously know and what they are supposed to learn. Billings and Fitzgerald (2002) note another instance in which the teacher should interfere. They assert that the teacher should interfere when he or she wants to keep the discussion going about the most important points that foster students’ understanding of the text under discussion.

Nystrand (2006) states that the teacher should keep in mind that the results of the discussion-based approach cannot be detected immediately. Therefore, its results are indirect. Teachers can use different forms of assessment to indicate the level of understanding of the students. Wells (2001) agrees with Nystrand and indicates that standardized assessment does not help in evaluating students learning. Authentic assessment in this case should be used by teachers. For example, they should test students’ knowledge on how they solve certain problems and how they think about them.

Billings and Fitzgerald (2002) found in their study that the teacher was not able to control the discussion. She tended to refer to the traditional method that they called ‘teacher-fronted’ in
which the teacher does not ask open-ended questions, and she talks most of the time during the literature session. Thus, they concluded that teachers assume that they are using the discussion approach to help students understand the text, but in fact they are not. They fear discussions because they do not know how to properly control them. When they sense that things are no longer controlled by them, the resort to traditional method in which the classroom becomes teacher-centered.

Furthermore, Billings and Fitzgerald (2002), stress the importance of the construction of understanding by the students. Thus, the teacher should not provide students with the information he or she thinks will help them understand the text. Wells (2001) elaborates on the construction of meaning by stating that the students construct meaning by assimilating the new information that is compatible with their previous knowledge, and they reject the one that is in conflict with their previously acquired knowledge. Sometimes, students might amend what they already know depending on the presented information.

Evans (2002) indicates something important about teacher’s role that none of the scholars talked about. To Evans, students need to read books that they like in order to be able to participate in group discussions. Therefore, teachers need to identify what their students like and use texts that they like. If the student does not like the topic under discussion, he or she will never participate in the discussion because he or she does not know much about it.

2.7 - Discussion vs. Traditional method

Wells (2001) states that when the teacher uses the traditional method, he or she turns his or her classroom to a monologic one. Within this classroom, the teacher or the textbook plays the role of transmitting knowledge to the students. Therefore, knowledge is transmitted and never
constructed. The teacher usually wants to make sure that students know the material presented in
the textbook.

According to Gladwin and Stepp-Greany (2008), traditional strategies for teaching
reading are based on bottom-up views in which the teacher helps students in building
vocabulary, analyzing words and sentences, reading repetitively, and answering comprehension
questions. In other words, it is teacher-directed approach. Omatseye (2007) adds to Gladwin and
Stepp-Greany (2008) by saying that when the traditional method is used in the classroom, the
students are silent participants who receive information from the teacher. Thus, the classroom is
teacher centered and the students are passive learners in which they receive knowledge without
constructing it. Besides, Alexander (2006), states that when the teacher uses the traditional
method, he or she decides on what to discuss, which student will participate and for how long,
and interrupts the students’ responses to ensure that students do not exceed the time that he or
she is allotted for the discussion and did not divert from the topics that he or she wants to
discuss. Serafini (2008) supports what Alexander says by stating that when the teacher uses
traditional method, the focus is on the transmission of facts and concepts that the teacher decided
on ahead of time. Therefore, there will be no place for intellectual complexity.

Kahn (2007) indicated that it is worthy to distinguish between discussion and question
and answer recitation. The classroom discourse should involve an open exchange of ideas among
students and authentic questions for it to be considered a discussion. If the questions were test
like questions in which the teacher has predetermined answers for, the classroom discourse
wouldn’t be considered a discussion. Chinn et al. (2001) agree with Kahn and add that during
this classroom discourse that they called recitation, the teacher maintains control of the topic.
Thus, he or she chooses what he or she wants the students to talk about. Kahn (2007) also states
that according to the observations done by most scholars, it is discussion that enhances comprehension in the literature classroom. Hadjioannou (2007) confirms what Kahn (2007) said about discussions by stating that authentic discussions have no one predictable conclusion to be attained. Instead, such discussions keep flowing as the students propose new ideas. The sole objective of these discussions is to achieve sophisticated understanding of the text which is usually attained when students express their opinion, reflect, provide information and clarifications and make connections with experience. According to Boscolo and Mason (2003), literature texts do not provide all of the information that the reader needs in order to be able to comprehend it. Thus, the discussion based approach plays an important role in facilitating the comprehension of the text because students’ background knowledge is being shared. Therefore, new ideas that are related to the text are introduced.

Applebee et al. (2003) elaborate on the question and answer recitation that Kahn (2007) talked about by saying that this kind of instruction is usually accompanied by seat work in which students are asked to solve exercises in the workbook individually. Some students feel hesitant when it comes to asking the teacher to clarify an idea or concept about the text. The absence of discussion will eliminate the chance of comprehending the text better for such students. Besides, no new ideas will be explored to strengthen and deepen the understanding of the students. Organized instruction involves fewer teacher questions and more conversational turns than recitation, as teachers and students alike contribute their ideas to a discussion in which their understandings evolve during classroom interactions” (Nystrand, 2006, p.399).

2.8 - Ways that lead to an efficient discussion
Adler, Rougle, Kaiser, and Caughlan (2003) state that despite the fact that teachers know the impact of discussion on students’ comprehension, they do not use discussion. They propose that there must be something wrong that makes teachers avoid discussions. Teachers in the study conducted by Adler et al. (2003) stated that they need more guidance to be able to apply the discussion-based approach in their classroom. The concept becomes clearer when teachers are told how to initiate, handle, and conclude a discussion.

According to Kahn (2007), students engage in the discussion when the teacher brings forth a controversial issue. This is when students will try to defend what they have to say by referring to the details presented in the piece of literature. By doing so, the students will improve their reading comprehension. Hadjioannou (2007) adds that the classroom environment plays a vital role in nurturing discussion in the English classroom. Raider-Roth (2005) specifies the necessary elements that should be present in the classroom to trigger a successful discussion. First, reliable teaching-learning relationships depend on the teacher’s capability to form a strong relation with the students. The students should trust the teacher and know that she or he is there to help them improve and not to humiliate or hurt them. Second, the teacher should be interested in developing students’ own ideas. Thus, the teacher should take students ideas into consideration. He or she should not ignore students’ ideas even if they are irrelevant or redundant. Instead, the teacher should guide the student to the possible answer. The student has the right to know what is wrong so that he or she is able to amend and change his or her misconceptions. Third, there should be joint study on the part of student and teacher. The ideas of the teacher and the students are both important. They both should participate in analyzing the text. The teacher should not disregard the students suggested ideas and stick to what he or she has in mind. Fourth, there must be a prevalent trustworthy environment. Thus, students must be
sure that the classroom environment is conducive to learning in which they feel free to express their thoughts and ideas. Mohr and Mohr (2007) concur with this by stating that teachers can help students especially the less proficient or reserved ones to participate when they ensure them a welcoming environment. VanDeWeghe (2005) mentions those components and adds to them that the teacher should emphasize on the use of authentic questions rather than known-answer questions. Students like to be asked about their opinions regarding a certain topic. Besides, they like to share their experiences and background knowledge with their classmates. Moreover, the teacher should see all students as capable to add value to the learning process. Thus, the teacher should not regard one student as more important than the other. All students deserve a chance to participate in the discussion.

Mohr and Mohr (2007) state in their article that another reason why teachers avoid discussions is that sometimes students do not understand their questions. Thus, they do not get any response from the students and the discussion is usually disrupted. They suggest that the teacher should rephrase the question or guide the student to find the answer. Student should not be left alone when they do not have an answer to a question because this is a clear indication that the student did not comprehend the text under discussion or at least part of it.

Serafini (2008) indicates certain tensions that hinder the achievement of an efficient discussion. First, the teacher may not allocate enough time for students to consider or investigate new interpretations. When the teacher chooses discussion as the method of instruction, he or she should take into consideration that it requires time. Second, some teachers privilege one interpretation to the omission of other students’ voices. This comes to elaborate what VanDeWeghe (2005) mentioned. The discrimination between students will hinder other students from sharing their responses. In his study, Serafini (2008) states certain instructional
recommendations that teachers should follow in order to enhance discussions in their classrooms. First, the teacher should make sure that the topic being discussed is worth talking about. Second, the teacher should have extensive knowledge of literature so that he or she would be able to assist students and help them enrich their interpretive repertoires.

Mohr and Mohr (2007) state that the factors that affect the quality of discussion are: clarity, wait time, higher order thinking, and higher expectations. Clarity is required because it is essential to make sure that students understand and are able to be part of the discussion. Wait time is also a crucial component because students need time to think about a good response. If they feel that the teacher is in a hurry, they will be confused and the whole point behind the discussion based approach will be lost. Moreover, asking questions that require higher level thinking is the only way that helps students in presenting their acquired knowledge and adding value to the discussion. All students are able to answer literal questions that do not require analysis or interpretation. However, not all students are able to respond to higher level thinking questions. Thus, students will benefit from these responses to widen their thinking and understanding. The teacher should have high expectations when he or she engages his or her students in a discussion. The teacher should keep in mind that the students are capable and they can present ideas that he or she has never thought of.

Mohr and Mohr (2007) indicate something crucial that most teachers tend to do. They say that the teacher should not correct the grammatical mistakes that students do while they are responding to a question because this will divert the attention of the class from the content to the form. The point behind the discussion is to foster students’ comprehension and not teach them grammar. The teacher can model the correct use of the language without stopping the class and diverting students’ attention to something other than the content of the text under discussion.
**2.9 - Feedback to trigger motivation**

Giving feedback on students’ responses is an important factor that leads to a successful discussion. According to Brookfield and Preskill (2005), students will not participate in a discussion when they know that this is not a graded activity. They prefer to put the effort on a graded task. In order to trigger students’ motivation and participation, the teacher should use feedback as a form of reward. Mohr and Mohr (2007) specify what kind of feedback she or he should give for different responses from students.

- If the response is correct the teacher should praise the student.
- If the response is for an easy question that doesn’t require higher level thinking, the teacher should ask for elaboration.
- If the response is partially correct, the teacher should praise the student for the correct part and then identify what is wrong with the second part. This way the student will add new learning to his or her schemata.
- If students who are not native speakers of the target language tend to answer in their native language, Mohr and Mohr (2007) say that the teacher should not be frustrated when the students do not use the target language. They should think about it as a positive indication because it tells the teacher that the student is on task.
- If students ask questions instead of responding to the teacher’s question. Teachers should consider these questions as opportunities for clarification. Therefore, the teacher should respond to these questions and praise the student who asked them.
• If students ask questions that are erroneous, the first thing the teacher must avoid in such case is blaming the student. Instead, she or he should take this as an opportunity to clarify misunderstanding. It is better to identify the gaps that students have during the lesson than after it ends.

• If students tend to remain silent and claim that they do not have an answer. The teacher should not ignore the student in this case. Instead, she or he should show that student that his or her participation is highly recommended. The teacher can achieve this by rephrasing the question to the student in which it becomes more direct. If the student did not give an answer, move to another student but inform him or her that you will get back to him or her to listen to his or her response.

2.10 - Oral narratives and Discussion

Juzwik et. al. (2008) states that narrating stories during discussions is one of the ways that keep a discussion going. Henning (2005) before him stated that narratives can be used to start a discussion. For example, the teacher can share a story with the students to motivate them to tell about their own experiences or to share their own opinion. Students refer to past experiences to take part in the discussion. Besides, through narratives students can express their point of view towards the piece of literature being discussed. Furthermore, students can use narratives to confirm what has been said by the teacher or another classmate. Oral narratives can be also used by the teacher to establish schemata. This is an essential step in the discussion process that leads to understanding. Maloch (2002) discussed the results of her study and indicated that the teacher’s role is to make sure that the students have shared knowledge about the topic before they start the discussion.
Ketchum (2006) states that teachers can use challenging texts to students, if they help students by developing their schemata.

2.11 - Motivation and Discussion

According to Dornyei (2007), motivating second language classrooms inspire students to become interested in the study of the language not only on the short term but also on the long term. Guilloteaux and Dornyei (2008), add that curricula and good teaching are not enough to guarantee students’ success. Motivation is a necessary component to achieve this success.

Dornyei and Tseng (2009) affirm that student’s response during the discussion will be highly dependent on the student’s motivation. Therefore, if motivation is not present, the student will not participate in the discussion. There are specific motivational aspects that affect performance during interactional activities. Those aspects include: students’ perception of the importance of the task, the expectation of achievement in the task, background information, and action schemata (Dornyei & Kormos, 2000).

Brookfield and Preskill (2005) aver that when the ideas that are presented in a text are used as material to start a discussion, students will be motivated to learn more about them. Those abstract ideas become appealing to students when spoken by a classmate.

2.12 - Participation and Discussion

According to Kelly (2007), low achievers do not participate in question-answer discussions because they fear giving wrong answers. When teachers use discussion-based approach that emphasizes students’ ideas, low and high achievers tend to participate. Kelly (2007) adds that teachers are the ones who determine the increased participation of students.
Teachers should intervene purposefully to keep the discussion flowing. Kelly (2007), in his study that he conducted in 120 classrooms located in 23 schools, indicate that students tend to exert more effort to participate and be active members in the classroom when the teacher used authentic questions and uptakes and encouraged creative thinking. On the other hand, students do not participate when they are given the chance to engage in autonomous tasks. In this case, students may not know what is precisely asked from them and they will not participate. Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, and Shernoff (2003) also mention that students disengage when they face lack of meaning. Thus, teachers should make sure before assigning a task that the students have the necessary skills to cope with it.

Dornyei and Kormos (2000) recognize the effect of group dynamics on students’ participation in discussion. As a group, students in a certain class develop their own norms, status hierarchy and inter-member relations which indicate whether certain students will participate in the discussions or not. When the group is cohesive, the participation will increase because students will feel comfortable to participate. Students know that they will not be criticized by their more competent peers. In the research that they conducted on 46 Hungarian students to study the role of the individual and social variables in oral task performance, they indicated that learners who wanted to achieve and learners who enjoyed a comfortable social position in class are the ones who participated in the discussion.

2.13 - Aspects that affect students’ engagement and motivation

Marks (2000) points out that students’ engagement is a key facet of the learning process because of its direct relationship to students understanding and achievement. She adds that verbal interactions affect students’ engagement. During verbal interactions, students are asked to
employ their intellectual ability. The verbal interactions that students are involved in should be based on authentic academic work. They should be asked to solve problems that are relevant to the world they live in, the world that exists beyond the classroom. Shernoff et al. (2003) corroborate with Marks by stating that students will be motivated to engage in classroom tasks when the teacher asks authentic questions and gives students the opportunity to construct their own learning. They also add that the teacher should help students in to think beyond the classroom. Moreover, in their findings, they state that students should not be expected to be motivated to participate in the classroom and be active learners if they are not constantly invited to take part in discussions and other interactive activities. According to Dornyei (2003), the task that the students are asked to engage in during the language session is the one that determines students’ motivation level. The teacher should recognize the importance of the task in triggering students’ interest and enthusiasm. Moreover, the teacher should be aware of the importance of the presentation and administration of the task.

Dornyei (2002) reveals that when a student is asked to participate in a certain task, he or she will be motivated by two factors: generalized, task-dependent and situation-specific, task dependent ones. The generalized, task-dependent one relies on the overall interest in the subject matter. The situation-specific task-dependent one relies on the nature of the task. He also indicated three stages of the motivational process. The first is the pre-actional stage in which the motivation is generated. This is when the generated motivation leads to the identification of the goal and task which the individual will follow. The second is the actional stage in which the generated motivation should be enthusiastically maintained and protected until the task or action is over. This motivational stage is usually referred to as the executive motivation. This stage is mostly pertinent to learning in classroom settings. In such settings, students are exposed to a
great number of distracters, such as irrelevant thoughts, extraneous distractions from others, apprehension about the tasks, or physical conditions that make it intricate to complete the task. The third stage is the postactional stage. This stage is concerned with what occurs after the completion of the task. Within this stage, the learner evaluates how things went during the activity or task. This evaluation will indicate whether they will be motivated to pursue similar tasks in the future or not.

In brief, this literature review indicates the significance of discussion based approach in enhancing students’ understanding, motivation and participation. Moreover, it reveals the fact that using discussion in the classroom is not as easy as some teachers might think. For the discussion to be fruitful, the teacher should be knowledgeable about the different elements of discussion. The next chapter discusses action research as a research method and compares it to the traditional approach. Besides, scholars such as Applebee et al. (2003), Nystrand et al. (2003), Brookfield and Preskill (2005), Mohr and Mohr (2007), Pulido et al. (2003) and many others indicate the positive attitude that the discussion based approach leaves on students and teachers.
Chapter three

Action research

3.1 - Introduction

Action research has been endorsed by Kurt Lewin, a German social psychologist who, working in the USA in the 1930s and 1940s, wanted to find a research methodology that is based on people's real-world experience (Lewin 1946). The purpose of using this approach is to bring social change. According to Koshy (2005), the purpose of using action research is to learn from the actions that the researcher is implementing. This will result in professional development. Koshy adds that action research is a productive process in which the researcher develops his or her knowledge of the practice being studied. This is done through planning, acting, evaluating, modifying, and learning from the outcomes. These steps are what action research is all about.

3.2 – Action Research

De Zeeuw (2003) states that action research helps in bringing academic research and day-to-day applications together because researchers can do research to solve the problems that they face daily in their classrooms. Once a researcher decides to adopt the action research, he or she should consider the action enquiry. According to McNiff and Whitehead (2006), the action enquiry starts by the identification of a concern, the implementation of a different way to do things, the reflection on what is happening, and then the identification of a new way to improve things. This research serves as an example for the steps McNiff and Whitehead (2006) talk about. The concern was that students do not enjoy the literature classroom and they do not understand the literature texts. The different way of teaching was the use of the discussion based approach. The reflection on the results of the various intervals helped in improving instruction till students’ motivation and understanding improved.
Mills (2003) points out that researchers in the field of education use action research as a method of research for the purpose of gathering data about how their schools operate, how they teach, and how students learn. Therefore, it increases the teacher/researcher’s understanding of the learning process and brings about change. Action research encourages school personnel to systematically develop a question, gather data, and then analyze this data to improve their practice (Gilles, Wilson, & Elias, 2010). They add that action research is done through the realization of a certain unusual or worrying situation that he or she thinks should be dealt with and the administration of a series of actions that will repair or improve the situation. The researcher should keep on modifying and implementing actions until he or she reaches the desired results. These actions should be based on previous research that has been done on the educational concern that the researcher is dealing with.

According to Pennycook (2001), teachers and students use action research to solve their concerns. They bring “the outside world into the classroom and take the classroom into the outside world” (p. 161). This is done in an attempt to improve the conditions in the classroom by making use of what they have around. In other words, teachers use theories and the results of other researches in order to improve the situation in their classrooms.

Action research is viewed as a practical yet methodical research method that enables teachers and researchers to inspect their own teaching and their students' learning (Nolen & Putten, 2007). It is considered practical because the researcher is a participant in the context that is being studied. It is also considered practical because the researcher can get the results of the study and analyze them immediately without having to wait for the study to be over. Lacorte and Krastel (2002) elaborate on the practical part by mentioning that an action research conducted by a teacher can help him or her to comprehend and even solve the concerns at an instructional
level. Thus, he or she can link action research and practice directly. However, the researcher should follow certain steps to complete his or her research. McNiff and Whitehead (2009) indicate that action research elaborate on the methodical part that Nolen & Putten, (2007) talk about. It includes taking action, doing research, and sharing the findings.

Taking action

They explain that the teacher/researcher should take an action in order to improve practice. When the teacher/researcher realizes that there is a problem in the learning process, he or she should start thinking of various actions that must be taken to resolve or overcome this obstacle. For example, the teacher/researcher might realize that students are bullying each other, and he or she starts thinking about implementing one of the intervention programs to deal with this concern.

Doing research

In order to be able to indicate whether this or these actions are useful or not, McNiff and Whitehead (2009) assert that the teacher/researcher is supposed to do action research in which he or she describes the situation as it is, explains the reasons for taking action and the results that were not known before, and analyzes the importance of the research for new learning.

Sharing the findings

McNiff and Whitehead (2009) emphasize the fact that when the researcher wants to share his or her findings, he or she has to state what has been achieved, explain how it has been achieved, and ask for critical feedback to test the validity of the theory. For instance, in the case of the identification of a bullying problem, the teacher/researcher should indicate the steps that
he or she followed in order to improve the effects of the intervention program, and the reasons behind choosing to implement these steps.

3.3 - What does action research offer?

Action research can provide the researcher with in-depth perspectives about the topic because the researcher is implementing his or her actions that he or she thinks may improve the situation, and he or she is studying the results of each action separately to decide whether the problem is solved or not. According to Burnaford (2001), teachers enjoy the advantage of continuous involvement in their work. When the teacher takes time to think about the weak points in his or her instruction, he or she will be able to assess his or her practice and think of possible ways to improve it. This is what Koshy (2005) calls reflection in action research. She emphasizes its significance because it fosters the teacher’s understanding of the learning process.

Noffke and Somekh (2009) support what have been mentioned earlier by stating that the self of the participant researcher cannot be detached from the research process because it adds value to it. The participant researcher adds value by knowing what is going in the classroom and controlling it. This situation is not available to traditional researchers. Herr and Anderson (2005) corroborate what Somekh says by stating that action research disturbs those who support the traditional approach because action research entails that participant observer participates in the activities that take place during his or her observation to be part of the group and understand how they interact.

Somekh (2006) also states that action research helps the researcher in achieving social justice that all educators should be catering for. When the researcher decides to adopt action
research, he or she should have a problem in mind that he or she wants to solve. By implementing change, they are improving instruction and giving students better chances.

Noffke and Somekh (2009) add to the unique feature that Somekh (2006) mentions by saying that the question that triggers the action research is not like any other research question in the sense that it arises from two things: practice and theory. This is possible when the researcher critically analyzes both of them. When using a different research method, the researcher uses theory only to come up with research questions.

3.4 - The difference between action research and traditional research

McNiff and Whitehead (2009) assert that action research differs from traditional research in its immediacy. The researcher studies the results of the instruments he or she used immediately and based on these results, he or she decides what should be amended to improve practice.

3.5 – Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of action research, its advantages, and its difference from other types of traditional research. It also shows its applicability to the topic that I am researching in which I identified a concern and I chose the discussion based approach to deal with this concern. Over a period of eight weeks, I amended certain aspects in my instruction until I reached the desired result. The next chapter includes the methodology that was used to conduct this study.
Chapter Four
Methodology

4.1 – Introduction

Since the literature review includes information about the use of the discussion based approach in countries other than Lebanon, conducting this study was inevitable to answer the research questions. The study explores the positive effects of the discussion-based approach on students’ motivation, involvement and comprehension in the classroom.

4.2 - Research design

This study that is intended to reveal the impact of discussion-based approach on students’ understanding, motivation and involvement was conducted using action research. Action research encourages school personnel to systematically develop a question, gather data, and then analyze that data to improve their practice (Gilles, Wilson, & Elias, 2010). They add that action research is done through the realization of something and the administration of certain actions to repair or improve the situation. It is a cycle that eventually leads to the desired results. The study was implemented within two months. The implementation started at the beginning of the school year (October 2011) and ended by the end of the first semester (December 2011). Within this period, I started by teaching the students using the traditional method in which the classroom was teacher centered. Then I gave students the rubric to evaluate the session, used a checklist to assess the session and gave students a performance assessment question to measure their understanding of the selection under discussion. Based on the results, I changed the instruction to meet students’ needs. Every time the discussion-based approach was implemented, I decided on things that should be modified to reach the desired result.
4.2.1 - Pilot Study

The instruments were piloted before being used. I chose another grade 10 section in the same school and asked the students to answer the questions in the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Then students were asked to read the rubric that was going to be distributed to students participating in the study to evaluate the session and raise questions about things they did not find clear. No changes were made.

4.3 - Instrumentation

The main point behind using methods or instruments is to "gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 44). In this study, four instruments were used: pre-questionnaire questions, participant observation checklist, a rubric for students to assess each class session, and performance assessment questions. Merriam (2009) points out that other than conducting observations, the researcher sometimes needs to develop his or her own documents in order to gain more knowledge about the topic being studied. Therefore, in this study I developed my own documents.

4.3.1 - Questionnaire

The first instrument is the questionnaire which is a quantitative research instrument. The questionnaire was administered before the implementation of the study to collect data about students’ perspective towards the instruction during the literature class. It gave me an idea whether students are familiar with discussion-based approach or not. Moreover, it indicated whether students had participated in effective discussions or not. The questionnaire consists of
open ended questions and questions that are based on Likert scale. These were attitude scales that target students’ attitude towards literature sessions.

There are drawbacks to using a Likert scale approach in collecting data because the researcher cannot identify whether the participants are telling the truth or not. Moreover, the researcher cannot indicate whether the participant fully understood the meaning of the sentence used in the questionnaire or not (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Furthermore, the participant might want to add comments to the statement used, but the Likert scale does not give him or her the chance to do so. I limited these drawbacks by adding subjective questions that ask students to elaborate and explain their points of view (see Appendix 1).

The questionnaires were administered before I started implementing the discussion based approach. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of five statements to which students must tick the suitable choice based on the experiences in the literature classroom [Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Never]. The second part consisted of open-ended questions that target students’ familiarity with the discussion-based approach. The questions ask students to cite examples and give reasons.

4.3.2 - Checklist

I filled the checklist because I was a participant observer (see Appendix 2, checklist). The checklist allowed me as the participant observer to assess the effectiveness of the discussion-based approach in improving students’ understanding. The only difference I found as a participant observer was that I had the chance to note the instances that I felt were worth noting. This is something that the teacher usually recognizes while teaching but does not record them or reflect on them
These checklists are structured. Structured checklists allow the researcher to indicate whether a behavior fits an indicated category or not. According to Culham and Wheeler (2003), checklists are easy ways for teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of any task students are working on. They make data collection less time consuming because they direct the observer to whether the incidents observed are either present in the checklist or should be simply ignored. The disadvantage of the checklist is that it does not allow the researcher to reflect on the incidents that he or she observed. In order to avoid this drawback, I added my own comments about the points that I thought required elaboration.

4.3.2.1 - Participant observer

According to Litchman (2010), a participant observer is part of the setting. He or she should keep record of the observations after leaving the setting. Merriam (2009) proposes that a participant observer examines things first hand and uses his or her expertise and knowledge in analyzing what has been observed. Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) give the participant observer another name, complete-member researcher. They indicate that this researcher is a member of the setting. In this study, I filled out the checklist after each session. The checklist helped me in retrieving the important incidents that serve the purpose of my research. Litchman (2010) also talks about the advantage that the participant observer enjoys in which he or she can identify the relationship between verbal and non-verbal cues. Therefore, the participant observer can provide more accurate information about the incidents that take place during the study. On the other hand, there are certain disadvantages to the researcher being a participant observer. The participant observer might be biased and lose objectivity when reporting what happened during the implementation of the study. I dealt with this drawback through triangulation. The three other instruments verified the reported incidents.
Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) propose that observations are known to be unsystematic. In an attempt to make them systematic, the observer should choose different approaches. One of the approaches that were used in this research is the focused observation. They explain that this approach is used when the researcher considers certain things irrelevant to the research and therefore ignores them. Merriam (2009) points out an essential point regarding observation. She states that an observer cannot observe everything. Therefore, he or she should select the elements that are important. These elements were the points that I included in my checklist. Merriam (2009) lists the following elements: the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors (nonverbal communication, things ought to have happened), and the observer’s own behavior. These elements were all selected in this study because they give the researcher a greater insight about students’ interaction with the discussion-based approach.

4.3.3 - Rubric

According to Stevens and Levi (2005), rubrics provide detailed description of what constitutes satisfactory and unsatisfactory levels of performance. The rubric that was used in this study was filled by the students to get feedback about the discussion-based approach and its impact on their understanding. The rubric is divided into three major parts: discussion as a method of instruction, students’ understanding of the text being discussed and students’ involvement in the discussion. Flutter and Ruddock (2004) emphasize the importance of pupil consultation. They affirm when the researcher asks students for their opinion about the learning process, he or she will be able to improve his or her practice, identify problems that hamper students’ progress, and develop new ideas to enhance teaching and learning. Therefore, pupils’ perspective can be informative and influential despite the possibility that students do not always
give reliable and credible assessment of the approach being used. I circumvented this disadvantage by using the assessment performance questions that gave a clear indication whether students understood the text under discussion or not.

4.3.4 - Performance assessment questions

Performance assessment questions are open ended question that are used after each session to assess students’ understanding (see Appendix 4). The questions are related to the text being discussed every time the discussion-based approach was implemented. In grade 10, students study both American and British literature texts. The play, *Romeo and Juliet* that is written by Shakespeare,

was used as a text to be discussed. Therefore, all the open-ended questions were related to this play. These questions were assessed through a rubric. The rubric is divided in two parts: the level of abstraction and elaboration of students’ responses. This type of questions allows the participants to reflect on the topic being studied and to highlight the important aspects that attracted their attention. Open-ended questions give the researcher the chance to see how the participants orient to the research topic. The disadvantage of using such an instrument is that not all students put enough effort to answer the questions because they know it was not going to be graded. To evade such a problem, I moved around while students were writing to make sure that they are writing.

4.4 - Population and sample

Since I am the researcher and I teach at the chosen school, I chose at random one of my grade 10 classes to participate in the study. The class had 24 students. The students learn English as their second language.
4.5 – Data Analysis

I used Microsoft Excel to enter all of the data and calculate the percentages of students’ responses across the eight weeks. This helped me in constructing bar graphs that also helped in comparing the results and coming to conclusions. As for the subjective part in the questionnaire, I divided them into themes.

4.6 - Validity, Reliability and Ethics

4.6.1 - Validity

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of the action research, the researcher should conduct the research in an ethical manner. Merriam (2009) indicates that internal validity is concerned with whether the findings match reality or not. The significance lies in the applicability of the results.

Merriam (2009) emphasizes the importance of triangulation in indicating the validity of the research. In this study, triangulation of instruments is used. There are 4 instruments used. Those include: questionnaire, rubric, checklist, and performance assessment.

External validity as explained by Merriam (2009) is the extent to which finding of a specific study can be applied to other situations. In other words, it is how much the results are generalizable. It is also argued that in qualitative research, the generalizability of the results is not always applicable because the research is concerned with the participants of the study rather than that of the other non-participating individuals. The most banal understanding of the generalizability of the results is that it highly depends on the reader of the research. It is up to him or her to decide whether the results apply to his or her particular situation. Of course, this
study is part of a cumulative and continuous group of studies that have similar results. Some of these studies include the study conducted by Applebee et al. (2003), Nystrand et al. (2003), and Hadjioannou (2007) in which they all agree about the importance of the discussion based approach in bringing positive change to the literature classroom.

4.6.2 - Reliability

Reliability is defined as the extent to which the findings of the research can be reproduced. Besides, for the research to be considered reliable, it should yield the same results when replicated. This makes this study reliable due to the existing body of research that yielded consistent results. Wolcott (2001) explains that for the researcher to achieve reliability in qualitative research, he or she has to control conditions to make replica feasible. Nevertheless, researchers should keep in mind that repetition can never be exact. Merriam (2009) agrees with Wolcott (2001) and adds that the main concern to assess reliability is to find out that the results are consistent with the data collected.

4.6.3 - Ethics

As mentioned earlier, the ethics of the researcher affect the validity and reliability of the study. The researcher’s own values affect the extent of how much he or she will conduct the research in an ethical way. Ethical considerations include: “the protection of the subjects from harm, the right to privacy, the notion of informed consent” (Merriam, 2009, pp. 230). In this study, ethical considerations were applied. The academic and general directors of the school signed a consent form. Moreover, the name of the school and the students does not appear in the research or on the instruments used. Participants knew about the purpose of the study and
participated in it willingly. Furthermore, the instruments used do not affect or harm the participants in anyway.

**4.7- Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the methodology used. It also indicates the instruments used in the study supported by what scholars said about each. Furthermore, it discusses the aspects of validity, reliability and ethical considerations of the study. In the following chapter, I will present the results of each instrument used in the study. Moreover, I will include figures that facilitate the understanding of the results.
Chapter Five

Findings

5.1 – Introduction

The results of this study are based on the instruments used. However, each instrument is divided into different sections and subsections. Thus, the results of each one is presented separately. Furthermore, the results of each instrument are dependent on the weeks because I implemented different actions during each week. During week 1, I used the traditional method. During week 2, I used the discussion based approach. Based on the results of week 2, I realized that only high achievers participated in the discussion so I intended to involve more students during week 3. During weeks 4 and 5, I used uptakes in order encourage students to elaborate on their responses and add value to the discussion. Based on the results of week 5, I noticed that there was no student-to-student interaction, so I asked students to comment on their peers’ responses. During the last two weeks, I asked students to sit in small groups and discuss a question that I pose before they share their responses with the class. The interrelatedness of the instruments will be discussed in chapter six.

5.2 - Questionnaire results

5.2.1 – Objective part

Based on the five statements of the questionnaire, students ranked their involvement in the literature session on a four point scale: always; sometimes; rarely; never. Each student circled his or her first choice to the statement. Table 4.1 refers to the first part of the questionnaire results of students’ practices and behaviors in the literature classroom.

Table 5.2: Behaviors and Practices in the Literature Classroom
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: I enjoy literature classes.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: I don’t understand the reading text.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: I like discussion time.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: I participate in discussions.</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: I share my knowledge and experiences on the topic with my classmates.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the first and the third statement complement each other. They indicate that students enjoy the literature class when the discussion based approach is used. The second statement discloses students’ understanding during the literature session in which half the class rarely understands the text. The fourth statement targets students’ participation. The majority of the answers lied between always and sometimes. The fifth statement is concerned with the sharing of experiences and knowledge. Half of the class tends to sometimes share their experiences and knowledge during the discussion.

5.2.2 Subjective part

The first question is concerned with the reasons why students might find the literature classroom enjoyable or not. The majority wrote that they like it for two main reasons: enjoying reading and learning new things from literature. The second question targets students’ perspective towards the importance of discussion. There was a general consensus about the importance of discussion. However, students’ reasons for its importance varied as follows: sharing new ideas, understanding the text better, correcting misconceptions, and relating the text to personal experiences. The third question asks whether the student like a teacher centered classroom or a student centered one and why. The majority of the class stated that they do not
like it when the class is teacher centered because the class becomes boring, they do not understand the text well, they lose concentration, and they won’t have the chance to express their thoughts. The fourth question asks students to indicate the questions that they find difficult to answer. The common questions that they identified were: summarizing the text and the identification of the theme, tone, author’s perspective and character traits.

5.3 – Rubric results

The rubric consisted of three major parts: understanding, discussion, and involvement. Each is divided into subsections that ask students to evaluate the literature session. The scale is from 1 to 4, 1 stands for beginning and 4 exemplary. The first subsection (U1) asks if students understood the text under discussion. The results across the eight weeks for the first subsection were as follows:

**Figure 5.3: Understanding 1**

![Understanding 1 (Exemplary)](chart)

The lowest percentage was 38% during the first week when the traditional method was used and the highest 77% during the fourth week. The percentage varied from week 2 till week 8...
despite the implementation of the discussion based approach due to the changes in instruction that I conducted to reach the desired results in terms of students’ understanding, motivation, and involvement. During weeks 3 and 6 the percentages were lower than the other weeks. However, this contradicts with the results of the performance assessment questions in which the highest percentages were recorded during these weeks. This is explained by what Flutter and Ruddock (2004) talk about. They assert that students’ feedback cannot be always credible and reliable because they might be subjective sometimes.

The second subsection targets the question asked during the literature lesson. Students are supposed to indicate whether the questions helped them in understanding the text or not. The results across the eight weeks were as follows:

**Figure 5.3.1: Understanding 2**

![Understanding 2 (Exemplary)](image)

The lowest was 39% during week 2 and the highest 70% during week 7.
Discussion 1 is to indicate whether the discussion was student or teacher centered.

The results for this subsection were as follows:

**Figure 5.3.2: Discussion 1:**

![Discussion 1 (Accomplished) bar graph]

The lowest was 43% during week 1 while the highest is 83% during week 8 when the discussion based approach was used. During week 8 students sat in groups and after discussing questions in groups, they participated in class discussion. The second subsection stresses the focus of the discussion on the main topic of the discussion rather than its deviation from it to other topics. During week 2 13% indicated that the discussion focused on the main topic. However, during week 8 70% pointed out that the discussion didn’t deviate from the main topic.

The following bar graph illustrates the results:

**Figure 5.3.3: Discussion 2**
The third section is concerned with students’ involvement in the discussion. The first subsection reveals students’ participation in the discussion. Weeks 5 and 8 recorded the highest participation 83%. The lowest was recorded during week 1 (24%). The second subsection asks whether the class was boring or enjoyable. 92% of students indicated that the class was enjoyable during week 5 while the lowest was during week one in which 38% only indicated that the class was enjoyable. The third subsection of the rubric is reveals the teacher’s feedback to students’ responses during the discussion. During week 8 a total of 87% indicated that the teacher praised them when they gave correct answers and guided them when they gave wrong answers. The following table illustrates the results:

**Figure 5.3.4: Involvement**
The above bar graph shows the participation of students in the discussion. All the percentages are above 60 except during weeks 1 and 6. During week 1, students did not participate because the traditional method was used. During week 6 students were asked to comment on their peers’ responses, but they were hesitant to do so. This is why the percentage of participation dropped to 48%.

5.4 – Performance Assessment Questions Results

The questions are based on *Romeo and Juliet* which was used as the text for the discussion. The questions were scored based on a rubric. The rubric is divided into two sections: level of abstraction and level of elaboration. The scale is from 1 to 4. For first section 1 is given to responses that include the events as they are present in the text while 4 is given to responses that include clear and logical argumentation. As for the second section 1 is given to answers that have the barest of information while 4 is for answers that are tightly organized and include all the required information. The best answers were given during weeks 3, 6 and 8 while the poorest answers were given during week 1. This variation in the percentages over the 8 weeks depended
on the type of instruction used. Moreover, it depends on the difficulty of the text and the question asked. However, this does not mean that students did not show understanding because from week 2 on, more than 40% of the students gave answers that varied between accomplished and exemplary. The following bar graphs illustrate the exemplary and accomplished results:

**Figure 5.4.1: Performance assessment questions**

![Exemplary performance assessment](image1)

**Figure 5.4.2: Performance assessment questions**

![Accomplished performance assessment](image2)
5.5 – Checklist results

The checklist was constructed to facilitate the observation that I did as a participant observer. The first statement is about students’ enthusiasm during the session. Over the eight weeks students expressed enthusiasm and interest in the literature classroom except for week 1 because I used the traditional method. The second statement asks if high achievers are the only ones who participated in the discussion. During week 1 this statement was not applicable. Over the other weeks low, average and high achievers participated except for week 2 in which only high achievers participated. The third, sixth, and seventh statements refer to the ability of students to answer authentic questions, give elaborate responses and respond to uptakes respectively. The results for these two statements were similar. During week 1 students were not able to do any of the above actions while during the other weeks most of them were able to do so.

Statement 4 denotes whether students shared their background knowledge about the topic or not. This statement is not applicable for week 1, but during the rest of the weeks, most of the students were able to share their background knowledge. Statement 5 is about students shifting to a new topic during the discussion. Throughout the eight weeks, students didn’t shift to a new topic.

Statement 8 refers to student-to-student interaction. During the first three weeks no interaction occurred between students. During weeks 4 and 5 few students interacted with each other. This interaction became more prevalent during the last weeks.
Statement 9 represents students understanding of main concepts and ideas. During the first week few students showed understanding. However, during the rest of the weeks, students demonstrated their understanding.

Statement 11 is about group discussion. Students didn’t participate in group discussion until the last two weeks. Statement 12 is concerned with students’ participation in class discussion which students did throughout the 8 weeks except for week 1. The last statement reveals the reason behind the lack of participation. The first week students didn’t participate because they did not understand the text. However, during the other weeks the results changed in which a small percentage of students did not understand. These results were verified earlier in the rubric and the performance assessment questions results.

5.6 – Conclusion:

All the instruments serve to answer the research questions. They all helped in revealing students behavior and responses during the literature session. Students were generally interested in the approach that I implemented. They showed enthusiasm and engagement. The next section will include the detailed discussion of the above results.
Chapter Six

Discussion

6.1- Discussion

The questionnaire results show that students prefer the discussion based approach because the class becomes enjoyable, they understand the text well, they concentrate more, and they have the chance to express their thoughts. According to Granville (2001), the discussion based approach helps in attaining different conclusions and interpretations of the text. Thus, students do not have to stick to what the author provides in the text. They can interpret the text in their own way. Questioning the text and the author is considered significant. Lapp et al. (2008) elaborate more by stressing that the discussion approach is a constructivist one in which students construct knowledge through interaction that occurs in the classroom based on the text. Furthermore, Pulido et al. (2003) points out that the discussion approach is considered as a process of reading and understanding texts, in which readers reflect on life. The points stated by Lapp et al. (2008) and Pulido et al. (2003) explain why students find the session engaging when the discussion based approach is used.

The results also show that most students face difficulty in answering questions that require higher level thinking. Gladwin and Stepp-Greany (2008) present an explanation for this by stating that teachers tend to use comprehension questions as a way to help students who are learning the language as a foreign one in comprehending a text. However, when the textbooks are examined, one realizes that most of them include questions that are limited to factual knowledge. This is why students are not trained to answer questions that require higher level thinking. When Nystrand et al. (2003) list the main elements for dialogic instruction, they stress the importance of authentic questions that are questions that require higher level thinking. They
affirm that these questions permit a range of answers different from more commonly occurring recitation questions. When the teacher asks such questions, he or she gives students the impression that he or she is interested in what they think and know. This explains why students noted in the questionnaires that they enjoy the literature session and have the chance to express their ideas.

The first research question asks to what extent the discussion-based approach affects students’ motivation, involvement and comprehension. The results of the students’ rubric, the performance assessment questions and the checklist, all answer the first part of the question that is about students’ comprehension. Since the method followed in this research is action research, I started by applying the traditional method, collected data, analyzed it and came up with a suggestion to amend the collected results. During the first week, the traditional method was used. However, it proved ineffective because the percentage of students who indicated that they understood the text was 38% while this number rose to 70% during the second week when the discussion based approach was used. Wells (2001) compares the traditional and discussion based approach and argues that when the traditional method is used, the classroom become teacher-centered where knowledge is transmitted and never constructed. Moreover, the above results are also validated through the results of the performance assessment questions in which none of the students gave an exemplary answer during the first week while it became 17% during the next week. Besides, the results of the checklist validate the above results because all the statements in the checklist that reflects students’ understanding show that when the traditional method was used most students were not able to answer uptakes or give elaborate answers. On the contrary, during week 2, when the discussion based was used, most students were able to do so. Serafini (2008) states that when the teacher uses the traditional method there will be no place for
intellectual complexity. This in turn explains the results in which students were not able to answer a question that requires higher level thinking. Boscolo and Mason (2003) validate the above results by saying that literature texts do not provide all of the information that the student needs in order to be able to comprehend it. Kahn (2007) adds that even when the teacher explains the text, some students feel hesitant when it comes to asking the teacher to clarify an idea or concept about the text. Therefore, they do not understand the text.

Upon analyzing the results of the rubric and the performance assessment questions during week 2, I realized that a total of 61% of students revealed that they participated in the discussion, and 17% of students gave exemplary answers when they responded to the open ended questions administered after the discussion. Thus, I decided that I should involve more students in the discussion. When the teacher is directing the discussion, he or she tends to overlook certain students who might have the answer but are reluctant to share it. Furthermore, Omatseye (2007) points out that the teacher should know how to emphasize important ideas said by students to motivate others to share theirs. Students need to be continuously reminded of what has been said. Otherwise, students will lose track of the discussion and eventually lose interest. Ma (2008) highlights the role of the teacher during the discussion by saying that he or she should give equal opportunities to all students and make sure that understanding is constructed and agreed upon through discussion. The results of the third week improved in which 71% of students indicated that they participated in the discussion, and 33% gave exemplary answers to the open ended question. This corresponds to the first and the second research questions that ask about the amendments that should be done to improve discussion instruction. In reference to the results of the performance assessment question, Reznitskaya and Anderson (2002) support it because they state that the discussion based approach makes students get used to argumentation in which they
develop an abstract knowledge system, an argument schema. This is when students learn that they should support their arguments with reasons and evidence.

Based on the results of the checklist of the third week, it was clear students were participating in the discussion, but they were not adding value to it. Therefore, during weeks 4 and 5, I focused on uptakes. Kelly (2007) asserts that students tend to exert more effort to participate and be active members in the classroom when the teacher uses authentic questions and uptakes and encourages creative thinking. I asked students questions based on their answers. When the teacher considers uptakes, he or she is allowing students’ responses to affect the flow of the lesson. These uptakes will help students in learning that their answers should be supported (Nystrand et al., 2003). The results of the rubric revealed that 77% of students understood the text. However, the results of the performance assessment question did not show great difference. During week 5, 25% gave answers that were rated as accomplished ones (the response includes argumentation with few fallacies, and the response includes all the required information but not organized), and 13% gave exemplary ones. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) state that these uptakes enhance students’ involvement in the classroom. This is confirmed in the results of the rubric filled by the students who participated in the study in which 83% of students indicated that they were involved in the discussion. This is the highest percentage recorded among the 8 weeks. Furthermore, the results of the checklist validate this result because the checklist indicates that students responded to uptakes. Moreover, Brookfield and Preskill (2005) add that one reason behind lack of participation in class discussions is that the teacher ignores or does not value students’ responses. According to Kelly (2007), students do not participate in discussions because they prefer to avoid taking the risk of giving the wrong answer. They fear that the teacher will embarrass them in front of their peers who will in turn label them as ‘poor students’.
The results of the study verify this in which the percentage of students who pointed out that they participated in the discussion is close to those who indicated that the teacher encouraged students who participated. For example, during week 5, 83% asserted that they participated in the discussion and 71% indicated that the teacher praised the students who responded correctly and guided others who gave wrong answers.

As a participant observer, I recognized that students did not interact with each other during the discussion. Serafini (2008) elaborated on the role of the students during discussions. He stated that students should honor and respect each other’s responses. Besides, they should address other students, as well as the teacher, when sharing ideas. Furthermore, students should base their responses on what has been mentioned earlier by their peers and try to develop the incomplete ideas that their classmates stated. This entails that the students listen carefully to each others’ responses. Besides, this shows that the students are listening and understanding. To attain this, I asked students to evaluate the other student response instead of me. Students did not feel comfortable about this practice. They were reluctant in critiquing others’ opinions or responses. During this week, students were not all motivated. However, their understanding of the text was not affected since 43% gave answers to the performance assessment question that were rated as accomplished and 32% gave exemplary answers.

To improve student-to-student interaction, during weeks 7 and 8, I asked students to sit in groups and discuss the open-ended questions that I ask before they share their responses with the class. Students showed interest and enthusiasm. Moreover, they felt free to ask their peers in groups about misconceptions they had about the text. This was manifested in the results. During week 8, 34% gave exemplary answers in the performance assessment question and 45% gave answers that were regarded as accomplished. In addition, according to the results of the rubric
83% of students indicated that they were involved in the discussion session. Pulido et al. (2003) and Smith & Connolly (2005) emphasize the importance of group discussion in fostering students’ interaction. In addition, Besides, Gladwin and Stepp-Greany (2008) indicate that one way of dealing with the problem that students pointed out in the questionnaire, responding to higher level questions, is by giving students the chance to sit in groups and discuss the questions with their peers before sharing their answers through whole class discussions.

6.2 – Conclusion

The discussion of the results concurred with what most of the scholars indicated. Besides, it revealed that the results answered the research questions. The following chapter concludes this study and presents the limitations and the suggestions for further studies.
Chapter Seven
Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 – Conclusion

The research was conducted to explore the effects of the discussion based approach on students’ involvement, understanding, and motivation. The literature asserted that the discussion based approach is useful in the literature session. Besides, scholars have elaborated on the role of the teacher and that of the students during the discussion.

What can be concluded from this research is that discussion based approach affects students’ understanding, motivation and involvement. Based on students’ responses in the questionnaire that was administered before the implementation of the discussion based approach, students indicated that they enjoyed the literature session when the teacher allowed them to voice their thoughts and to share their experiences. This study gave students the chance to do so. The results of the other three instruments verified this.

This study gives teachers an insight on how to use the discussion based approach in their classrooms. All the amendments implemented during the study are supported by the literature review. I recommend that teachers start implementing the discussion based approach in their literature classrooms to make a difference in students’ perspective towards the literature session and their engagement in this session. Teachers should consider the elements of the discussion while implementing it. Those elements include: authentic questions, uptakes and level of evaluation (Nystrand et al., 2003). Moreover, the teacher should take into consideration that when high achievers participate in the discussion, this does not mean that the discussion is fruitful because the purpose of discussion is that all students are involved. Furthermore, the
teacher should make sure that students’ responses to the open ended questions are relevant and add to their peers’ understanding.

The official exams that are set by the government limit the use of the discussion based approach because the teacher has limited time to cover specific skills set by the government. Therefore, teachers cannot dedicate time for the implementation of the discussion based approach that requires time because as indicated earlier in the literature review, the teacher should listen to students’ ideas and questions to enhance their understanding and involvement in the literature classroom. In grade ten, teachers can incorporate this approach in their instruction because they have more time than those who teach grade 11 and grade 12. Thus, when students are in grade 11 they will be accustomed to this type of instruction and the process of starting and directing the discussion will not take a lot of time.

7.2 - Limitations of the study

The findings of the study are generally valid and reliable because the triangulation method was used to collect data. Observations, questionnaires, rubrics and performance assessment questions were used to substantiate the dependability of answers.

However, few uncontrollable factors could have affected the reliability and validity of the results. Thus, these factors tend to hamper the researcher’s ability to generalize the results. The main limitations are three.

The first limitation is time. The time limit to collect the data was two months. Thus, I was not able to take my time in assessing the stability and consistency of the results.
The second limitation is number of participants. The number of students who participated in the study was 24 students. Given more time, other grade levels and other grade 10 classes would have been involved in the study.

The third limitation is the results of the rubric filled by students. Students were not all objective. Some of them did not take this task seriously because they knew it was not going to be graded.

7.3 – Reflexivity

If I were to redo the study, I would change few things about this study. First, I would give more time to implement each change that I introduced after assessing the results of each session. For example, when I realized that not all students were able to respond to uptakes, the two weeks were not enough to ensure that all students mastered doing so. Therefore, to achieve better results, more time is required. Moreover, I would include other classes in the study to ensure the applicability and usefulness of the amendments introduced.

7.4 - Suggestions for further studies

Further research can be conducted to include not only a greater number of students but also a greater number of schools in Lebanon. This will help in generalizing the results. The same instruments can be used to attain more reliable results. Moreover, the study can be repeated over a period of 9 months and not 2 to give time for the implementation of the changes required and to make sure that students acquired the necessary skills to understand the text better and be further involved in the session.
Besides, I suggest that the study be conducted on students in the elementary school. It is very efficient to trigger students’ interest and understanding in the elementary school because these years serve as the fundamental ones for later school years.
References


Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.


Hadjioannou, X. (2007). Bringing the background to the foreground: What do classroom


Shernoff, D. J., Csikszentmihalyi, M., Schneider, B., & Shernoff, E. S. (2003). Student engagement in high school classrooms from the perspective of flow theory. School


Appendix 1

Dear Students,

You are kindly requested to fill out the following questionnaire. This questionnaire helps the researcher in assessing your level of engagement in literature classes. Moreover, it helps the researcher in determining your familiarity with the discussion based approach. Besides, it helps in indicating the problems that you face during literature classes. Furthermore, it helps the researcher in making literature sessions enjoyable. This questionnaire will not be graded.

Date:
Sex: □ Female □ Male

Based on your opinion, tick the suitable choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I enjoy literature classes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I don’t understand the reading text.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I like discussion time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I participate in discussions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I share my knowledge and experiences on the topic with my classmates.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Answer the following questions in details.

1. Do you enjoy the literature class? Give two reasons why you enjoy or do not enjoy literature classes.

1. __________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________

2. Do you think that discussion helps you better understand the text? Give two reasons why you think they do or they do not.

1. __________________________________________________________________________

2. __________________________________________________________________________
3. Do you like it when the teacher explains the reading text without any discussion with the students? Give two reasons why you think it is better or why you don’t.

______________________________________________________________________________

1.____________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

2.____________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

4. Give three examples of questions you find difficult to answer during literature classes.

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Appendix 2

Checklist

After the literature session, the participant observer completes the following checklist based on his or her observations of students’ performance during the session.

1= yes, 2=most of them, 3=some of them, 4=few, 5= no

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students showed interest and enthusiasm</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Only high achievers participated in the discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Students were able to answer “authentic questions”</td>
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<td>4. Students shared their background knowledge about the topic</td>
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<td>5. Students shifted to a new topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Students gave elaborate responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Students were able to respond to uptakes</td>
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<td>8. There were student-to-student interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Students responses showed understanding of main concepts and ideas</td>
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<td>10. Students gave constructive criticism</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Students participated in group discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Students participated in class discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Students tried to distract their peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Students do not participate even when the teacher calls on them because they didn’t understand the text</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3

**Rubric:**
Assess the literature class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beginning 1</th>
<th>Developing 2</th>
<th>Accomplished 3</th>
<th>Exemplary 4</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong></td>
<td>I didn’t understand what the text is about</td>
<td>I understood part of the text</td>
<td>I understood the text except for few ideas</td>
<td>I understood the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The questions asked didn’t help me understand the text</td>
<td>The questions asked were direct and easy</td>
<td>Few questions asked helped me in analyzing the text</td>
<td>The questions asked helped me in analyzing the text deeply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong></td>
<td>The teacher dominated the discussion</td>
<td>Few students dominated the discussion</td>
<td>Few students didn’t participate in the discussion</td>
<td>The whole class participated in the discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The discussion was not discussing the main topic</td>
<td>The discussion covered few points about the topic</td>
<td>The discussion focused on the main idea of the text and few irrelevant ideas</td>
<td>The discussion focused on the main idea of the text only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Involvement</strong></td>
<td>I didn’t participate in the discussion</td>
<td>I wanted to participate in the discussion, but I was afraid that others will make fun of me</td>
<td>I wanted to participate in the discussion, but the teacher didn’t call on me</td>
<td>I participated in the discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The discussion was boring</td>
<td>The discussion was difficult to understand</td>
<td>The discussion was interesting but I could not find the right words to participate</td>
<td>The discussion makes learning enjoyable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher’s evaluation of my answers stopped me from participating</td>
<td>The teacher ignored whatever I said during the discussion</td>
<td>The teacher praised me when I gave correct answers but didn’t guide me when I gave wrong answers</td>
<td>The teacher praised me when I gave correct answers and guided me when I gave wrong answers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Performance Assessment Questions

Week 1:
Based on scene 5 and what you know about Romeo from previous scenes, do you think that love exists? Explain.

Week 2:
In act 2 scene 1, Mercutio said, “If love is blind, love cannot find its way”. Do you think that Romeo’s love towards Rosaline was blind? Justify your answer.

Week 3:
Do you advocate Romeo and Juliet’s decision to give up their names? Why or why not?

Week 4:
How do the similes used in the text compare to the similes you use to describe similar experiences? Do the similes presented in the text have meaning for you? If not, what similes would work better for you?

Week 5:
Friar Lawrence said: “When evil wins, the spirit dies.” Explain what he means. Use what you learned from previous scenes in your response.

Week 6:
Based on scene 4, what can you say about Mercution? How does he regard others? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Week 7:
Do you think that the nurse’s role as go-between is excusable because she wants Juliet to be happy or inexcusable because she is party to deceit?

Week 8:
The first lines that Romeo speaks in Act 2 scene 6 are related to the tragedy of his love for Juliet.
   a. Explain why?
   b. Comment on Friar Lawrence’s predictions in reply.