

Using English Fiction as a Personal-Growth (PG) Catalyst for Empathy: The Role of Literature to Transplant Emotions between the Writer and the Learner

La fiction anglaise comme vecteur de développement personnel (DP) et catalyseur de l'empathie : Le rôle de la littérature dans la transmission des émotions entre l'auteur et l'apprenant

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Abstract:

As empathy rises to prominence as a beacon of human consciousness and cultural harmony, the study examines the transformative role of English fiction in fostering empathy in EFL classes applying a Personal Growth (PG) model. Grounded in a multidisciplinary framework, the study examines how narrative strategies evoke empathy through sympathy, altruism, and emotional contagion. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines qualitative semi-structured observation and quantitative Likert-scale assessments, purposefully selecting Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* as key materials for carrying out the intervention. Findings reveal that identifying with fictional characters enhances emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and fosters intercultural understanding. Furthermore, the study underscores the ethical dimension of storytelling that evokes students' personal distress and compassion for those in a state of social malaise—forming the bedrock of emotional empathy. Ultimately, the research reaffirms the enduring relevance of literature as a tipping point for holistic personal and social development.

Keywords: Empathy-English fiction-Personal Growth (PG) model- EFL classes- intercultural understanding.

Résumé :

À mesure que l'empathie prend de l'ampleur comme un phare de la conscience humaine et de l'harmonie culturelle, cette étude explore le rôle transformateur de la fiction en anglais dans le développement de l'empathie en classe d'anglais langue étrangère (ALE), en appliquant un modèle de Croissance Personnelle (CP). S'appuyant sur un cadre multidisciplinaire, elle examine comment les stratégies narratives suscitent l'empathie par la sympathie, l'altruisme et la contagion émotionnelle. En utilisant une approche méthodologique mixte, l'étude combine des observations semi-structurées qualitatives et des évaluations quantitatives sur échelle de Likert, choisissant délibérément *Shame* de Salman Rushdie et *Oliver Twist* de Charles Dickens comme matériaux clés pour l'intervention. Les résultats révèlent que l'identification aux personnages de fiction améliore l'intelligence émotionnelle, la conscience de soi et favorise la compréhension interculturelle. L'étude souligne également la dimension éthique de la narration, qui éveille la détresse personnelle des étudiants, formant ainsi la base de l'empathie émotionnelle.

Mots- clés : Empathie-Fiction anglaise- Modèle de Croissance Personnelle (CP)- Cours d'ALE (anglais langue étrangère) - Compréhension interculturelle.

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Introduction

In a postmodern climate marked by intricate interconnectivity, complex international financial systems, pervasive economic instability and environmental threats, and deeply entwined global markets, the planet witnesses mounting challenges in the air. Within this precarious landscape, compassion for others emerges not merely as an ethical imperative but a vital means of safeguarding individual and global well-being. This revolutionary emotional awakening has hastened forthcoming scholarly intrigue besieging intercultural dialogue, which focalises primarily on the extraordinary ways in which the human mind and spirit are spectacularly bound with the outer space through empathy. The act of empathizing with the self and the other epitomise, seamlessly together, a resilience mechanism and life-preserving nurture that fosters understanding across diverse cultural landscapes.

1. The Concept of Empathy

From a conceptual lens, empathy is not a static or universally understood concept. Though there is a well-worn truism that the term signifies the process of igniting a surge of emotions to rush through the interlocuter's heart, it often stays fuzzy around the edges, with a definition shifting across different social and academic contexts. In the literary field, the act of sympathizing with others is understood as an intercultural cognitive and emotional phenomenon. It encompasses the intellectual and emotional engagement of readers with the world or characters with whom they identify or relate. According to Davis (2019), the term refers to "the tendency of observers to affectively project themselves into that which they observe" (Davis, 5: 2019). This definition closely parallels that provided by Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1989), which defines empathy as the ability to mirror one's own experiences and behaviours onto the character of another, thereby fostering a deeper intellectual and emotional connection with individuals from different races, genders, and social communities.

American poet Frank Bidart (2002), through his evocative use of tropes, romanticized the term empathy, describing it as a transcendental act of imagining oneself into "*the skin of another*" (Veprinska, 7: 2019). Although the concept has undergone vigorous revitalization over the century, its vague conceptualization has proven to be one of the most obstinate questions in modern scholarship. Consequently, a multitude of theories and debates continues to emerge across various fields of research, including psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and aesthetics, in pursuit of a coherent definition. Historically, the term empathy owes its advent to American psychologist Edward B. Titchener, who in 1909 translated the German word *Einfühlung* ("*feeling into*") into English (Niezink, 2008). In *Beginner's Psychology*, Titchener conceptualized empathy as a natural human tendency to project oneself into perceived experiences. He described how, for instance, while reading about a forest, "*we may, as it were, become the explorer; we feel for ourselves the gloom, the silence, the humidity, the oppression, the sense of lurking danger; everything is strange, but it is to us that strange experience has come*" (Keen, 209: 2006). Theories linking empathy to aesthetics originated earlier with Robert Vischer in the 1870s, who explored empathy in art and perception (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). Vischer posited that empathy involves an act of transference, wherein aesthetic emotions are unconsciously transplanted or projected into the self. Later, scholars such as Keen (2007) expanded on this, emphasizing empathy as "*a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, hearing about their condition, or reading about their experiences*" (Keen, 4: 2007). This definition underscores empathy as both an unconscious and emotional response to others' experiences and emotions.

In psychology and neuroscience, the concept of empathy has been closely linked to the theory of mirror neurons (Jeffers, 2009). Neuroscientists have embraced the belief that the human brain innately possesses a shared cognitive system capable of instinctively perceiving emotions. These mirror neurons, described as a unique set of *“special cells”* located in the brain, act as stimuli that ignite emotional responses toward others. Iacoboni (2009) elaborates on this natural mechanism by suggesting that these neurons allow us to *“know how they’re feeling because we literally experience the same feelings ourselves”* (4: 2009). He adds that these tiny neural substances possess the electrifying ability *“to bind us with each other, mentally and emotionally”* (4: 2009). However, the role of mirror neurons remains a subject of debate, with some researchers questioning their precise function in emotional resonance (Decety, 2010).

From another spectrum, phenomenological research offers a divergent perspective, challenging the psychological interpretation of empathy. Scholars in this field argue that empathy is primarily a conscious epistemic state, arising only when the empathizer becomes fully aware that the target is in an affective situation (Zahavi, 2017). Social cognition researchers (Davis, 2019; Smith, 2010) support this notion, positing that empathy relies fundamentally on the imaginative act of perspective-taking, envisioning the emotions and experiences of others. Morton (2017) highlights that empathy imagination *“centres on a state to which [imagination] gives roughly the cognitive and motivational states that it actually has”* (182: 2017), emphasizing its role in triggering an emotional hedonic tone in the empathizer. This interplay of emotional and cognitive processing fosters an experiential understanding of others, shaped through intricate exercises of imagination, such as simulating experiences, recalling memories, and interpreting tonal subtleties (Coplan, 2011; Ratcliffe, 2017).

One ongoing challenge in the empathy debate is distinguishing empathy from sympathy and compassion. Maibom (15: (2017a)) notes that empathy often aligns closely with its conceptual relative, sympathy, creating frequent overlaps and misunderstandings. Sympathy, according to Wispé (1986), refers to a heightened awareness of others’ plight and an intention to alleviate their suffering. In contrast, empathy involves an attempt to understand another’s subjective experiences. In the same vein, Keen (2006) elaborates, describing empathy as predominantly tied to negative emotions, such as moral anguish, suffering, or sorrow, where individuals empathize with what they *“believe to be the emotions of others”* (208: 2006). In empathy, the empathizer may experience another’s pain as if it were their own. In contrast, sympathy evokes supportive but less intense feelings, such as pity, without directly mirroring the other’s emotional state. Sympathy’s effect is often surface-level, whereas empathy penetrates deeper, with its impact enduring longer. As Hogan (2011) provocatively asserts, empathy’s influence on how we perceive joy, grief, fear, or even violence may leave a lasting impression, often drawing individuals toward compassion (Ochoa and McDonald, 2020).

Compassion, distinct from both empathy and sympathy, is described as an altruistic response aimed at alleviating suffering. Interestingly enough, Calloway-Thomas (2010) captures compassion as a path to solidarity and benevolence. Watson (2005) illustrates this as *“living a life of compassion for all human beings, speaking and behaving gently, kindly, and accurately”* (117: 2005). It is a dynamic force that not only moves human consciousness but also acts as a leveller, fostering benevolence and generosity toward the vulnerable. Compassion ensures a better future for humanity by tightening the bonds of interconnectedness in the current globalized world. Calloway-Thomas (2010), in tune with Wilson’s (1993) vision, identifies three key gestures of solidarity within compassion: altruism, loving-kindness, and bounty. Altruism represents a

utilitarian structure of reciprocal actions that motivate individuals to give generously to others. Loving-kindness reflects a genuine concern for others' welfare, while bounty emphasizes acts of grace and abundance. Compassion, in this framework, becomes a cosmic force capable of transforming humanity, binding us together in shared acts of kindness and understanding.

In the same vein, recent scholarly discourse has illuminated profound distinctions between two forms of empathy—cognitive and emotional—that not only differ in nature but also in their intricate interplay. Cognitive empathy, at its core, refers to the remarkable ability of the human mind to grasp what others are thinking, perceiving, or experiencing. It is aptly described as *"the individual's capacity to take on the role of others, and understand how they view the world"* (Davis, 110: 2017). In a similar vein, Spaulding (2017) articulates cognitive empathy as *"the capacity to understand another person's state of mind from her perspective"* (13: 2017). For many cognitive scientists, this form of empathy is tightly knit with practices of perspective-taking or simulation. This may involve imagining one's own feelings or thoughts (self-perspective-taking) or *"putting one's self in someone else's skin"* to reflect upon their emotions and attitudes (other-perspective-taking) (Davis, 2017).

In contrast, affective empathy arises more directly from emotional responses prompted by the experiences of others, rather than by the empathizer's own feelings. Affective empathy, often seen as indelibly connected to 'sympathy,' covers a broad spectrum of emotional reactions to the states or situations of others, such as empathic anger, contagious joy, or sorrow (Maibom, 17: (2017b)). It represents a deep emotional connection with others, crossing boundaries to unlock ethical relationships, shared concerns, or celebrations of others' joys. These emotionally resonant experiences are increasingly carving out a place within the ethnographic landscape, advancing a richer understanding of what is now widely celebrated as intercultural empathy.

Broadly speaking, the concept of intercultural empathy was first enshrined in the 16th century through the insightful contributions of the Italian philosopher Vico, who recognised the significance of empathy in social life and human affairs, seeing it as a stimulus for rethinking behaviours, beliefs, and emotions, which underpin what is now known as cultural empathy (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). In Vico's conceptualisation, intercultural empathy embodies the human capacity for *"imaginative understanding,"* with the ability to grasp the experiences of others across time and space lying at the heart of its genuine mechanism. Analogously, Solhaug and Osler (2018) define this emerging concept as the creation of a meeting point between diverse groups marked by significant cultural differences. It reflects the tendency *"to empathise and identify with others in a spirit of solidarity"* (Solhaug and Osler, 109: 2018). This spirit of cross-cultural harmony encompasses both cognitive and emotional dimensions, which imply an openness to inclusivity, emotional contagion (such as empathic concern, sympathy, pity, and altruism), tolerance, and empathetic perspective-taking. Each of these empathetic layers provides higher-level modes for attunement, cultural awareness, and acceptance of diversity. Furthermore, inclusivity with others can help dispel ambivalence and stereotypes that have solidified into hatred, while reinforcing the transformative power of care and kindness, thereby strengthening *"a bridge to civility"* (Lähdesmäki *et al.*, 2022). In recent years, some researchers have explored the potential of reading fiction to foster *"narrative empathy"* in readers and learners, offering them the opportunity to *"step into another's shoes"* and exercise empathetic imagination with fictional characters, thereby gaining valuable insights into how to engage with art.

2. Empathy as a Catalyst for Intercultural Scholarship

In the current millennium, the concept of 'empathy' and its intricate interplay with intercultural research occupies a pivotal position at the intersection of the humanities, social sciences, philosophy, and, perhaps most compellingly, literary studies and criticism. Over the past three decades, the magnetic allure of art, particularly its profound connection to the study of affects and emotions within intercultural contexts, has inspired a wealth of ground-breaking scholarship. As Veprinska (2019), drawing on Rebecca Solnit's reflections in *The Faraway Nearby*, illuminates:

"The self is a patchwork of the felt and the unfelt...We make ourselves large or small, here or there, in our empathies... Through empathy, we piece ourselves together...We are ourselves, thus, through our relations with others. These empathetic relations—the nerves that run out into the world,...—work to enlarge us, to 'expand the self beyond its physical bounds' (Veprinska, 1: 2019)

As for Veprinska, 'empathy' is what makes us human, it is the artery that causes the circulation of moral thoughts and human conditions to course through the heart of the global world. Thus, our sense of self is shaped by both our emotions and what we suppress.

Across a wealth of scholarly sources, empathy 'as an emphatic discipline' is deemed unquestionably invaluable, especially for empiricists immersed in aesthetics and artefacts, who view it as an enriching extension of the study of arts and rhetoric. Katz (1963) encapsulates the commanding role of 'emphatic participation' — which he defines as "*feeling oneself into the other*" (25), through four vital dimensions: it serves as a spur to creative imagination, a signature of contemporary reflection and behaviour, a sort of therapy, and a boost to social involvements and action (Scuka, 89: 2005). Prominently, within the intertwined landscape of literature and cultural studies, the development of 'empathy' in both fields continues to resonate. From various vantage points, empathy— especially when grounded in compassion for the suffering of others—is considered a key driver of intercultural understanding. As Calloway-Thomas (2010) argues, in the twenty-first century, empathy forms the bedrock for resilient cosmopolitan relationships: "unless humans have robust habits of mind and reciprocal behaviour that lead to empathy, society as we know it will crumble. Humans are united by the powers and possibilities of empathy" (Calloway-Thomas, 7: 2010).

As in scholarly parlance, the concept of 'empathy' inside academia has enriched the rigour to the study of literature and culture aligning with the dynamic evolution of education in the 21st century. Amid the global unease of the 'bloody new millennium,' marked by turf wars between diverse communities, empathy serves as an antidote to the widespread antipathy and entrenched stereotypes towards the 'others' (Taylor, 299: 2007). This idea is rooted in the belief that "*where no empathy exists, conflict breeds*" (Manney, 51: 2008). As academic attention turns to the growing prominence of empathy within the scholarly sphere, the vital role of literature in fostering intercultural empathy becomes evident.

3. Fiction and Empathy in the Mirror Glass

Writers have long found a natural home in the world of fiction, often referred to as a thriving literary mouthpiece of relativism. From the emergence of the novel in the 18th century to the present day, fiction continues to play a pivotal role in literary criticism. Before delving into the complex relationship between fiction and empathetic engagement with fictional characters, it is important to ask fundamental questions: What is fiction? Can all narratives truly inspire empathy?

McArthur (1992) defines fiction as a creation of the human mind that blends invention with elements of reality. He explains, “[Fiction is] a general term for something created by the human mind. It has three aspects... Not fact, but an invention of some kind, sometimes fabrication or lie... Not fact, but still part of reality; imaginative narrative, often part of literature... A special kind of ‘fact’: a social or cultural construct” (McArthur, 401: 1992). Similarly, Baldick (2008) describes narrative fiction as “a telling of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events, recounted by a narrator to a narratee” (341). Fiction weaves together plots, themes, and cultural patterns, allowing the narrator to engage a specific audience—whether from a particular era or a universal readership. This broad genre encompasses novels, short stories, and novellas, as noted by Cuddon (2012), who highlights fiction as “a vague and general term for an imaginative work, usually in prose. At any rate, it does not normally cover poetry and drama, though both are a form of fiction in that they are moulded and contrived – or feigned” (296: 2012).

3.1 Fiction’s Role in Empathy

The realm of fiction has often been regarded as a fertile ground for fostering empathy. Over the past three decades, the role of fiction in educational practice has become increasingly significant. According to Hogan (233: 2011), studying literature is akin to teaching emotions. He asserts that fictional narratives inherently provide a “dazzling array of ‘instructions’” capable of evoking complex emotional experiences in readers. These experiences are closely tied to the story’s content, often eliciting subtle emotions, such as feelings of self-blame in *Macbeth*, or love, compassion, and sorrow in *The Tempest*. Hogan argues that the emotional impact of literature resonates deeply with readers, potentially shaping long-term empathetic responses to both neural and emotional stimuli. He notes that these responses may vary across individuals and even for the same individual on different readings (2011). Literary theorist Suzanne Keen (2007) similarly champions fiction for its ability to evoke empathy and drive behavioural change. She emphasizes that fiction allows readers to vicariously experience invented emotional states, simulate the lives of fictional characters, and engage in empathetic situations. In that, Keen (2007) writes, “Fiction not only holds vivid, impulsive sharing of emotions... but it also ought to change or make one want to change [their] behaviour” (66). In literature education, fiction is recognized as a powerful tool that influences learners’ thoughts and emotions about human conditions. By immersing readers in the vicarious lives of characters, fictional narratives foster ethical and social awareness.

Curiously still, recent works have offered compelling evidence for the significance of empathy in the study of fiction, particularly. Theorists on this ground of research have elaborated on sympathy as a vital component in the analysis of fictional texts across cultures, genders, racial dynamics, and language barriers. For instance, Morrison (1988) exemplifies this, describing fiction as the ‘third dimension’ of history—a perfect imitation of nature that can guide the heart towards harmony, teaching us lessons “historians ignore at the cost of diminishing the truth” (Morrison, xxiii: 1988).

In a similar vein, Manney (2008) argues that storytelling is key to cultivating empathy in readers. The literature on the aesthetic effects of reading fiction is vast, particularly studies from the 21st century that emphasize fiction’s role in fostering empathy. Conrad (2017) suggests that reading multicultural fiction enhances the mental strategies and skills needed to empathize with diverse communities, positioning empathy as a capstone “to human survival in our changing world” (Conrad, 70: 2017).

From a neuroscience perspective, Bergland (2014) elaborates how reading fiction activates brain networks similar to those engaged by real-life experiences. This allows readers to vicariously relive the emotions and experiences of fictional characters on a neurobiological level. Further supporting this, Chiaet (2013) cites an experiment by Emanuele Castano involving both schoolchildren and adults, in which participants read literary fiction, such as Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*, compared to non-fiction. The study found that reading fiction significantly enhanced participants' empathy, improving their social awareness and ability to understand others' emotions and thoughts. Chiaet argues that characters in fiction bridge the gap between reality and imagination, teaching the learners crucial social values, including the importance of understanding those different from themselves.

Similarly, Seifert (2020) provides examples of how fiction strengthens readers' self-awareness and sensitivity to the complexities of other communities. From a cognitive perspective, research shows that reading fiction nurtures cognitive skills and fosters open-mindedness, which are essential for effective decision-making (Seifert, 2020).

Besides, in diverse multicultural learning environments, it is often argued that readers' engagement with fictional narratives—by stepping into the characters' shoes—nourishes transformative qualities that cultivate empathy and compassion, essential for intercultural understanding of both self and others (Fialho, 2019; Keen, 2006; Maine and Vrikki, 2021). Fiction is seen as a captivating journey into a sanctuary of memories, hopes, sufferings, and deceptions shared with those who inhabit our imagined home (Veprinska, 113: 2019). As Leavy (2017) powerfully observes, engaging with fiction enables readers to form intimate connections with "*the imagined other*" (199). Similarly, Jeffers (2009) emphasizes the role of art education, particularly fictive stories, in creating immersive environments that connect students to art and culture, fostering emotional and intellectual engagement with personal cultural and spiritual values, often through embodied or physical responses. Polvinen and Sklar (2019) also highlight fiction's dual role in establishing emotional connections with characters, shaping perceptions and interactions with others, while enhancing sympathy by stimulating cognitive responses through the imagining of different identities (Kidd and Castano, 2013). This aligns with Keen (2006) concept of 'empathetic imagination,' which involves emotionally connecting with and vicariously experiencing the perspectives of others, particularly those different from oneself, thereby fostering empathy and interconnectedness.

4. Background of Study

Drawing upon the previously discussed perspectives, one can infer that empathy is an essential element of fictional worldmaking. In today's multicultural social landscape, teaching fiction with a focus on 'empathy' may serve as a powerful catalyst for cultivating altruism, cultural awareness, understanding, and respect—values that lie at the heart of contemporary educational paradigms and are, perhaps, an urgent necessity in our increasingly interconnected world.

However, despite the wealth of research on this topic (Hakemulder, 2000; Lähdesmäki et al., 2022; Polvinen and Sklar, 2019), few have investigated practical tools, effective methods, and pedagogical strategies to enhance the study of English fiction with the goal of nurturing empathy and compassion in students (Ntoulia, 1524: 2022). On another note, in sensibly considering 'empathy' within Algerian educational contexts, recent studies have revealed significant barriers to the study of literature in classrooms, where some literature instructors continue to favour

outdated, teacher-centred approaches characterised by transmissive, passive methods of instruction that failed to foreground the intimacy between the students and the literary materials. As Kheladi (2017) notes, many teachers at Algerian institutions, using Tlemcen University as a case in point, persist with traditional, informational approaches to teaching literature that *“regretfully, tend to exclude the students’ active engagement with the text”* (Kheladi, 172: 2017). Thus far, local literature classrooms continue to suffer a sluggishness of involvement, and a lack of entertainment and cooperation among the participants. Students are rarely prompted with thought-provoking questions designed to elicit emotional responses, such as: What do you feel about the story or a particular character? Do you feel sympathy for the protagonist? What does this scene from the story evoke or remind you of?

To surmount these challenges, this paper explores the pedagogical niche of utilizing fictional narratives to foster empathy in Algerian literature classrooms; an area that remains largely overlooked in educational research. It first argues that literature should be taught as a dynamic exploration of community lives and cultures, with teaching practices rooted in active, enriching learning modes that engage students directly with the text. In this context, the study examines the effectiveness of applying the ‘Enrichment’ or (PG) Model’ to teaching fictional narratives and stimulating empathy within Algerian literature classrooms. Its significance lies in assessing and offering practical, thought-provoking strategies that demonstrate the power of fictional narratology to evoke emotions, with ‘empathy’ as the cornerstone of cultural literacy (Lähdesmäki et al., 2022; Maine and Vrikki, 2021; Ochoa and McDonald, 2020; Stout, 1999). The paper also seeks to elevate academic standards while highlighting the role of emotion in engaging with diverse fictional discourses. Accordingly, the study aims to answer key questions, such as: Is empathy crucial to EFL teaching and learning? How does the (PG) Model impact students’ understanding of empathy through fiction? And, what challenges might empathetic responses present in literature classrooms?

To explore these questions, a mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining qualitative and quantitative research in order to provide a robust framework for examining the role of empathy in literature teaching. Specifically, the study will investigate how teaching literary texts at emotional, cognitive, and dynamic levels influences readers’ empathetic responsiveness and metacognitive skills. By doing so, researcher hopes to gain deeper insight into the potential of fiction to foster both empathy and critical thinking among learners. However, before addressing the details of the research design, it is essential to first clarify the design of research and methodology of investigation.

5. Research Methodology and Design

The study adopts a true experimental design, emphasizing cause-and-effect relationships and random assignment. Data is gathered using two primary instruments: semi-structured observations for qualitative data and tests for quantitative data. The objective is to derive reliable and valid conclusions regarding the efficacy of the personal-growth model in influencing learners’ engagement with fictional texts. Specifically, the study focuses on examining both emotional empathy (such as sympathy, altruism, emotional contagion, and personal distress) and cognitive empathy (including perspective-taking and empathetic imagination) as learners respond to the emotional and cognitive experiences of fictional characters in the texts.

5.1 Participants

Thirty-two mixed-gender EFL students (mean age 19 years, ranging from 18 to 24) at the University of Oran2 (Algeria) participated in this study, attending regular literary studies classes during the 2023/2024 academic year, with a particular focus on the analysis of fiction. Participants were randomly selected to take part in this empirical investigation, with the study assessing their abilities in perspective-shifting, metacognitive skills, and empathic sensitivity.

5.2 Materials

For the accomplishment of the current study, the researcher selected two fictional novels aligned with the second-year British literature curriculum as testing materials. The first novel, *Shame* by the renowned Indian writer Salman Rushdie, explores the harsh realities and ethical tensions arising at the intersection of culture and politics in Pakistan. Classified as magical realism, *Shame* was deliberately chosen for its vivid portrayal of cultural themes and its capacity to evoke profound empathy and emotional resonance in readers. The novel's emotionally charged exploration of historical, political, and religious sensibilities is intended to test the extent to which these emotions can be effectively transmitted to and experienced by the students. To achieve similar aims, the researcher also selected another fictional work from Charles Dickens' sombre Victorian masterpieces: *Oliver Twist*. This poignant tale, featuring the plight of its destitute orphan protagonist, is an engaging addition to the second-year literary studies syllabus. The narrative strikes a powerful emotional chord, vividly portraying Oliver's despair and turmoil as a representation of poverty and societal neglect. The harrowing scenes of social degradation and oppression are deeply evocative, designed to awaken personal and intercultural empathy within readers.

5.3 Procedures

During the academic year 2023/2024, spanning from the beginning of October to the end of May, a sequence of twelve sessions (90 minutes each, held weekly over the first semester and scheduled with an interruption for holidays and special cases) was devoted to spirited discussions of two literary works, *Shame* and *Oliver Twist*, which were selected as rich sites for exploration through an enrichment teaching model. The (PG) Model transcends the confines of the classroom by bridging the two most common models in literature teaching: Language-Based Model and the Cultural Model. While the Language-Based Model advocates the close analysis of linguistic features (e.g., lexis, grammar, word choices, discourse categories, direct and indirect speech, etc.), the Cultural Model focuses on stimulating learners' vested interest in the target culture and its central role in constructing the text's general meaning. The Enrichment Model integrates these two approaches, fostering active engagement and action research. This process requires students to use their knowledge of the world and personal experiences to examine the content and structure of literary texts. The goal is to create a network of attitudes and personal evaluations that learners develop through dynamic interactions with their families and communities (Klein, 1970; Yimwilai, 2015). Within this framework, the experimenter in his study has embarked upon four processes:

- **Offstage:** Before lectures, the teacher (researcher) asked students to read the assigned texts at home, with a focus on understanding their background, including literary devices, themes, characters, and plots in both works under study.

- **Warm-ups:** Sessions began with oral discussions to introduce the general scope of the studied narratives, helping students connect with the texts.
- **Backstage:** The teacher deepened participants' understanding by analysing language patterns and guiding them through activities such as reading aloud, close textual analysis, thematic mapping, word clustering, and identifying literary perspectives. These activities aimed to reframe the elements of the text as key components of social literacy.
- **Onstage:** The analysis shifted to performance-based tasks. The teacher employed dynamic methods, such as thinking aloud, oral debates, and inquiry-based activities, to help students engage with the text's cultural and linguistic elements. This stage targeted at encouraging the learners to scrutinize, evaluate, produce, infer, synthesize, and build value judgements when interpreting complex literary passages with multiple perspectives.

To clarify the practical implementation of the PG Model within the lesson plans, the following table Table 1) outlines its four main stages—Offstage, Warm-ups, Backstage, and Onstage—together with their pedagogical aims and sample classroom activities. Each stage was carefully designed to scaffold students' engagement, beginning with individual preparation, moving through guided discussion and textual analysis, and culminating in performance-based tasks that aim to foster critical thinking, empathy, and intercultural understanding.

Stage	Description in Lesson Plans	Example Activity (Oliver Twist)
Offstage	Pre-class preparation where students read assigned chapters with guiding questions focusing on themes, characters, and literary devices.	Students read Chapters 7–10 at home, reflecting on the moral dilemmas Oliver faces (e.g., "How would you respond in his place?").
Warm-up	Short oral discussions to activate prior knowledge, connect personal experiences to the text, and introduce key themes.	Class discussion on fairness and survival, encouraging students to relate Oliver's hardships to real-life experiences.
Backstage	In-class textual analysis focusing on language, style, and narrative techniques, linking them to broader cultural and social issues.	Close reading of the "Please, sir, I want some more" scene, analysing Dickens's diction, irony, and narrative perspective.
Onstage	Performance-based and inquiry-driven activities that encourage students to adopt perspectives, debate, and dramatize.	Role-play debate: students take on roles of Oliver, the Beadle, and fellow orphans to defend or critique Oliver's choices.

Table 01: Implementation of the PG Model in Lesson Plans

The table above illustrates how the PG Model was operationalized in practice, thereby setting the stage for the data collection phase, where appropriate instruments were employed to assess its effectiveness.

6. Data Collection and Instruments of Research

In line with the research objectives, the researcher has employed a mixed-methods approach to data collection, utilizing two standardized research instruments: 1/ semi-structured observation and 2/ a Thurstone-type Scale.

6.1 Qualitative Data

To validate research hypotheses, this study incorporates less-structured observation as a primary qualitative data collection method. As Sapsford and Jupp (2006) highlight, this approach affords an “*insider’s perspective*”, enabling researchers to understand the social world from the participants’ viewpoint (23). Moreover, as emphasized by Cohen *et al.* and Denzin and Lincoln, observation provides valuable qualitative data that complements quantitative findings by offering a nuanced understanding of human behaviour within its natural context (Cohen *et al.*, 172: 2017; Denzin and Lincoln, 41: 2017). This study utilizes participant observation, where the researcher actively engages with participants within their natural environment, observing their interactions and responses to stimuli. This immersive approach facilitates a deeper understanding of their subjective experiences and emotional responses to literary texts, particularly within an intercultural context. Observations were conducted during literature classes for second-year EFL students in the 2023/2024 academic year. The instructional approach evolved gradually throughout the first and second semester, progressing from traditional language-focused activities to more dynamic and interactive methods, including dynamic assessment and problem-solving tasks. These diverse teaching strategies formed the framework for the observed classroom interactions.

The researcher conducted less-structured observations during the fourth lecture of the first semester and a subsequent session in fall 2024. The observational design focused on capturing the nuances of social interactions during specific classroom activities. The researcher, as a participant observer, actively engaged in discussions while meticulously documenting student behaviours, including verbal and non-verbal cues, to gain a comprehensive understanding of their engagement with literary texts in a culturally situated context.

The aim of this qualitative empirical instrument is to explore how participants respond to key aspects of literary engagement. Guiding questions include: How do participants react to challenging or conflicting interpretations? Do they sympathize with fictional characters? How do they engage in cooperative interactions during discussions? Are they willing to adopt the perspectives of writers or characters, comparing those experiences with their own? And to what extent are learners prepared to build meaningful relations with other communities and demonstrate compassion across cultures?

Building on the insights gained through classroom observation, the study also incorporated a quantitative dimension to further investigate the learners’ empathetic engagement with literary texts and to test the reliability of emerging patterns across a broader dataset.

6.2 Quantitative Data

In order to obtain more qualitative and quantitative information that lays the foundation for the ethnographic social comparison of students’ different perspectives, 32 respondents among the second-year English learners at Oran2 University were asked to fill in the same Summary Scale (a Thurston-like scale), which aimed to measure the participants’ empathy before and after treatment. The Summary Scale mainly consists of six variables, namely emotional contagion, sympathy, altruism, perspective-taking, narrative transportation, and cultural understanding. Each variable consists of exactly six items, divided fairly to treat the novels examined accordingly (see Appendix A).

- A **Emotional contagion (coded as EC):** Emotional contagion was assessed using six items presented in the survey table. Each item asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they experienced emotions similar to those of fictional characters, such as confusion, distress, relief, or emotional pain. Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Scale values across the six statements were averaged and analysed to distinguish between respondents with high versus low emotional contagion.
- B **Empathic Concern / Sympathy (coded as SYM):** Sympathy was measured through six tabled items focusing on compassionate, protective, and concerned reactions toward fictional characters. Respondents indicated the degree of agreement with statements such as feeling protective, compassionate, or indignant on the characters' behalf. Each item was rated on the same 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree), and the aggregated scores reflected the intensity of sympathetic concern.
- C **Altruistic Motivation (coded as ALT):** Altruism was captured through six items in the table, each targeting respondents' willingness to help others based on insights gained from the two novels. Statements highlighted motivation to support marginalized people, address social issues, or assist vulnerable groups. Responses were coded on the 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Higher aggregate scores indicated stronger altruistic motivation inspired by literary engagement.
- D **Perspective-taking (coded as PT):** Perspective-taking was assessed through six items designed to measure how readers adopted the cultural or personal viewpoints of characters. Respondents evaluated statements reflecting attempts to understand historical contexts, social positions, and lived experiences different from their own. All items were rated on the 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree), and composite scores indicated the degree to which participants engaged in imagining or reconstructing alternative perspectives.
- E **Narrative Transportation (coded as NT):** Narrative transportation was operationalized through six items that assessed how absorbed respondents became in the fictional world. Items asked participants to evaluate experiences of immersion, emotional involvement, and loss of awareness of the real world while reading. Scores were collected on the 7-point Likert scale (1-7), with higher scores reflecting greater absorption in the narrative.
- F **Cultural Understanding (coded as CU):** Cultural understanding was measured by six items that asked respondents to evaluate their intercultural appreciation and awareness of historical and social contexts gained from the novels. The items highlighted insights into Victorian England and postcolonial Pakistan, respect for cultural diversity, and curiosity for intercultural learning. Again, responses were marked on the 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree), and higher composite scores reflected stronger intercultural comprehension.

By grounding the questions in concrete episodes from *Shame* and *Oliver Twist*, the scale situates learners' responses within authentic literary contexts, allowing for a nuanced evaluation of affective, cognitive, and cultural aspects of empathy. This multidimensional approach not only enhances the validity of measurement but also ensures that learners' emotional, ethical, and interpretive engagements with the texts are meaningfully assessed.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretations of the Findings

7.1 Semi-Observation Results

To examine the learners' behaviour and interactions inside the classroom, the researcher opted for Conversation Analysis (CA) as a supplementary method of data collection. This approach focuses on how tasks are accomplished in a naturalistic setting by recording students' conversations and feedback (Jackson, 2017). CA, when combined with observational methods, provides dynamic assessment tools that allow for in-depth analysis of real-time interactions (Sacks, 1985). To minimise bias, the teacher adopted a discreet, unobtrusive role, intervening only during rare moments of silence, thereby enabling students to guide the flow of discussion. The aim was to capture an accurate snapshot of participants' social interactions and learning progression within the context of a PG teaching model.

The researcher compiled transcripts, coded key observations, and organised field notes to address specific research questions. Throughout the experiment, the researcher was able to substantiate the following summarised findings, based on learners' spontaneous interactions and responses within the classroom setting (see Table 2).

Category	Sub-Category	Findings/Results
Emotional Empathy	Reactions to undesirable/deceptive content	Some learners reacted with discontent to the writer's views on Islamic religion; others countered the arguments; a few accepted cultural differences without agreement.
	Sympathy with characters	Learners showed more sympathy for Oliver (from <i>Oliver Twist</i>) than for Sufiya (from <i>Shame</i>), due to the story's realistic nature.
	Cooperative interactions	Enthusiastic participation overall, though a minority remained silent or hesitant in group activities.
	Empathy with characters' perspectives	Learners were delighted to step into the shoes of the characters, particularly with Oliver, simulating the life of an orphan in harsh conditions.
	Comparison with personal experiences	Many learners compared characters' experiences (e.g., Oliver and Sufiya) to their own personal lives, feeling deeply moved by themes like violence, loss, and fear.
	Building mutual relations with other communities	Most learners were willing to form mutual relations but were less inclined to change their attitudes toward other cultures or communities.
	Altruism and compassion	Compassion was shown toward characters in some cases, especially when imagining them as siblings or close relatives, but not consistently for strangers.
Cognitive Empathy	Ascribing mental states to others	Many learners were able to understand others' beliefs, intentions, and emotions, particularly through discussions of social and religious beliefs in the narratives.
	Putting themselves in others' positions	Learners showed a strong desire to understand others' viewpoints, feelings, and responses.
	Counter-arguments to the author's positions	Many learners successfully presented counter-arguments, especially around social issues, such as the inability to stay virtuous despite societal malaise.
	Critiquing the author's ideology	Some learners critiqued the author's views (e.g., Dickens' portrayal of poor people as "born to be murderers"), seeing them as unfair to human dignity.

Category	Sub-Category	Findings/Results
General Questions	Importance of empathy in fiction	Empathy played a central role in connecting students to the text and enhancing their understanding of the material.
	Complexity in emotional engagement with fiction	Some learners faced challenges in connecting emotionally with the fiction due to factors like passive interaction, cultural unfamiliarity, or language barriers.

Table2: Comprehensive summary of semi-observation findings in classroom engagement

Drawing insights from table three, the analysis reveals the following key results:

(a). Emotional Connections with the Texts:

After assessing the students' behaviour and interactions inside literature classes directed through a PG model, the researcher could notice some strong yet ambivalent reactions to the narratives, especially for what concerns sensible religious values. Some key comments include;

▪ **Feelings towards Controversial Contentions:**

Observation: A significant majority (over 60% of participants) had shown a readiness to express their inward emotions with or against the values embedded in the stories during backward discussions. For instance, in relation to the narrative *Shame*, the majority of students (approximately 80 percent) expressed discontent toward the writer's contentious portrayal of Islamic religion and culture. Many were not delighted with how the writer depicted certain religious practices and cultural traditions, deeming these subtle representations as confusing or potentially stereotypical. Participants argued that the narrative failed to capture the nuanced complexity of Islamic beliefs and instead depended on controversial generalizations that could perpetuate misconceptions. While certain participants countered these critical views with strong arguments defending the author's artistic freedom and the legitimacy of literary critique, others acknowledged the cultural differences presented in the text but refrained from fully accepting the writer's interpretative framework. This group of students (only in minority representing less than 30% of participants) recognized the importance of cross-cultural dialogue while maintaining reservations about the author's approach to sensitive religious and cultural themes.

- **Sympathy Towards Characters:** Learners displayed significant empathy for characters across the two narratives diagnosed. For example, in some heated debates inside classes, a majority of more than 70 percent of participants were remarkably more emotionally engaged with *Oliver* than with *Sufiya* in *Shame*, attributing this complex feeling to the greater realistic atmosphere pervading Dickens' narrative. During the active lectures on *Oliver Twist*, many students were enthusiastically and more emotionally attached with the orphan child Oliver, whom they pitied for as enduring cruel predicaments in his Victorian environment. On the other hand, more than half of the attendees viewed Sufiya Zinobia's suffering as a complex political satire, was delineated as "bewildering," "metaphorical," and "odd" at their ethical contentions.
- **Engagement in Cooperative Interactions:** As noticed, many students participated enthusiastically and effectively in collaborative classroom discussions. They might have felt confident in groups than individually. Despite of this strong zeal characterising the

literature classes, a minority of nine learners remained silent and hesitant to engage in oral activities.

- **Drawing Comparisons with Personal Experiences:** Numerous participants (about 65 percent) connected the characters' experiences to their own lives, particularly when addressing themes such as violence, bereavement, and fear. For instance, while analysing the story of *Oliver*, some students indicated that their lives are not any better, as some mentioned that they are also orphans, and went through similar hard perils that caused melancholy to sink to their hearts. Even when discussing *Shame*, around half of the participants divulged how hard circumstances can make us unhuman and may turn men's hearts stiff. These insights fostered lively classroom debates, though a minority remained disengaged or indifferent.
- **Building Mutual Relations Across Communities:** Learners demonstrated a readiness to form connections with other communities, which is central to social cohesion. However, they appeared less inclined to alter their personal attitudes or ethical perspectives that represents one of the serious limitations in this study.
- **Expressions of Compassion and Altruism:** While participants showed considerable compassion toward the characters, their willingness to extend altruism was limited and often required personal associations, such as imagining the characters as family members.

(b). Cognitive Responses to the Narratives

- ⌘ **Understanding Beliefs, Intentions, and Emotions:** Learners effectively aligned their thoughts with the characters' and authors' perspectives. Discussions often centered on religious and social beliefs, including *Rushdie's* notion of violence as a consequence of societal vice.
- ⌘ **Perspective-Taking:** Students exhibited a strong desire to adopt the viewpoints of others, attempting to grasp how they might think, feel, or respond in similar situations.
- ⌘ **Constructing Counterarguments:** During post-group (PG) debates, participants presented robust counterarguments to the authors' stances. For instance, they debated the inherent challenges of maintaining morality amidst pervasive societal hardships.
- ⌘ **Critiquing Ideological Overtones:** With teacher support and autonomous learning habits, learners critically analysed the authors' ideologies. They questioned reductive views, such as Dickens' assertion in *Oliver Twist* that "poor people in society are born to be murderers and robbers from their very cradle," deeming it an unfair judgment of human nature.

(c). General Insights

The role of empathy in fiction analysis proved to be central, as learners' meaning-making processes and emotional engagement underscored its pivotal contribution in bridging readers with texts and deepening their understanding. However, this engagement was not without complexities. A minority of participants (about 15 percent) encountered difficulties during classroom debates, revealing barriers such as limited interaction with the text, unfamiliarity with cultural contexts, and challenges in forming authentic connections with the narrative. Negative perceptions of cultural codes, restricted exposure to literary language, and insufficient proficiency in the second language further hindered their ability to articulate nuanced emotional reactions. These limitations highlight the paradox of empathy-based pedagogy: while it has the potential to foster deeper literary appreciation and intercultural awareness, it may simultaneously exclude or

marginalise those who lack the linguistic, cultural, or cognitive resources necessary to engage fully with the narrative.

Despite these barriers, approximately 78% of the sample actively participated in discussions, contributing to a dynamic and enriching classroom environment. This learning experiment succeeded in fostering a vibrant and engaging atmosphere, inculcating a sense of safety for the learners to critically, emotionally, and intellectually engage with multicultural literature.

As far as quantitative data are concerned, the following section will display the summated scale results, offering a statistical analysis of learners' development in empathy before and after the implementation of the enrichment model.

7.2 Summated Scale Results

The descriptive statistics from the Likert scale response values (see Table 03), coded and tabulated via SPSS, are categorised into six rubrics () to assess the learners' ability in empathy prior and after intervention.

7.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The statistical data displayed in Table three showcase strategic improvements across all six empathy constructs following implementation of the PG pedagogical model. A fundamental examination of central tendency measures demonstrates universally positive shifts in participants' responses, with diverse magnitudes of change across the theoretical layers of literary empathy. As can be noticed from construct-specific response patterns demonstrated in the table, *Emotional Contagion* (EC) revealed the most significant pre-post differential, with mean scores ascending from 23.96 (SD = 5.47) to 30.34 (SD = 4.34), revealing a raw score enhancement of 6.38 points. This 26.6% surge exposes dramatic flourish in participants' capacity for vicarious emotional experiencing during literary engagement. Important still, the concomitant reduction in standard deviation (Sd = -1.13) suggests not only mean-level improvement but also enhanced homogeneity in affective responsiveness across the participant cohort.

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
EmotionalContagion_pre	32	12.00	33.00	765.00	23.9062	5.46755	29.894
EmotionalContagion_post	32	19.00	39.00	971.00	30.3438	4.33745	18.814
Sympathy_pre	32	17.00	33.00	768.00	24.0000	3.54692	12.581
Sympathy_post	32	18.00	34.00	804.00	25.1250	4.01409	16.113
Altruism_pre	32	12.00	37.00	816.00	25.5000	5.88053	34.581
Altruism_post	32	15.00	38.00	856.00	26.7500	5.76418	33.226
PerspectiveTaking_pre	32	15.00	33.00	756.00	23.6250	5.28388	27.919
PerspectiveTaking_post	32	15.00	37.00	807.00	25.2188	5.46387	29.854
NarrativeTransportation_pre	32	10.00	34.00	770.00	24.0625	5.66220	32.060

NarrativeTransportation_post	32	11.00	38.00	814.00	25.4375	5.66220	32.060
CulturalUnderstanding_pre	32	15.00	35.00	772.00	24.1250	5.17282	26.758
CulturalUnderstanding_post	32	12.00	37.00	816.00	25.5000	5.88053	34.581
Valid N (listwise)	32						

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics: Pre-Post Intervention Empathy Construct Changes

With respect to Empathic Concern/Sympathy (Sym), the latter exhibited a modest net change, with scores rising from 24 (SD = 3.55) to 25.13 (SD = 4.01), culminating in a net gain of 1.13 points (15.9% increase). This pattern sheds light on less notable growth in other-oriented emotional responses—compassionate attunement to literary characters’ well-being. As also observed, scores in Cultural Understanding witnessed a considerable advance from 24.13 to 25.50. Variance also increased (26.76 → 34.58), indicating that while cultural awareness flourishes overall, it nourishes in turn a greater heterogeneity in individual responses after the experiment. In light of the same displayed statistics, improvement in the rest three constructs was incremental yet sustained. Coupled with a stable variance, the participants’ mean for Altruism (25.50 to 26.75), Perspective Taking (23.63 to 25.22), and Narrative Transportation (24.06 to 25.44) knew an ongoing revival in scores, therefore revealing stimulated keenness to help those in need, and deeper absorption in the narratives.

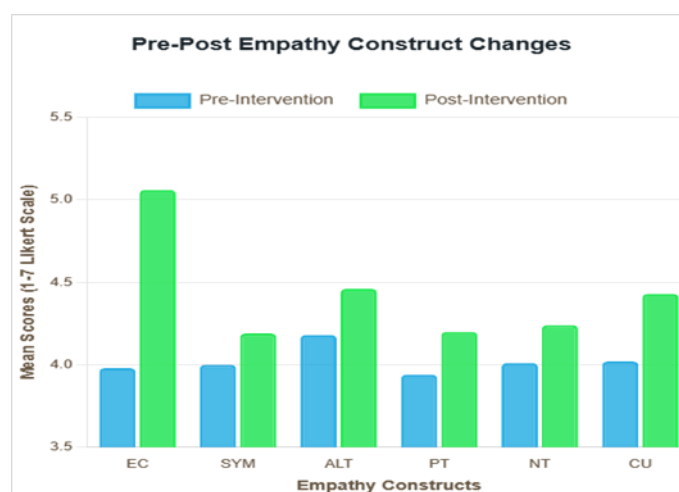


Figure 1: Pre Vs Post Intervention Changes in Constructs

As visualized in Figure 1, the clustered bar chart highlights an upward increase across all six empathy categories from pre- to post-intervention, with (EC) presenting the largest robust growth (+1.08 points) and Cultural Understanding demonstrating pronounced refinement (+0.41 points). The visual transparently illustrates the yielding effects of the enrichment model on fostering empathy. Noteworthy still, the scrutiny of measures of dispersion, as captured in table three, illuminates critical differential findings pertaining to the experiment effect across the whole performance spectrum. Extrapolating from students’ variability, Emotional Contagion rose from a minimum of 12 (pre) to 19 (post), while its maximum extended from 33 to 39, pointing an elevation in both the lower and upper bounds of participant scores. Analogously, the intervention pushed upper limits of *Perspective Taking* performance — shifting from a ceiling of 33 (pre) to 37 (post) — revealing the effectiveness of the treatment to stimulate greater capacity in the learners’ cognitive skills, namely their potency to venture at the map of others’ minds to fathom out their

underlying needs and undercurrents. From another significant variability measurement lens, table three exposes nuanced elements of convergence in the standard deviation (*SD*) values encompassing all variables under appraisal. Notably, the analysis revealed a significant decrease in the variance of *EC*, (*SD* = 5.47 pre vs. 4.33 post), underscoring greater convergence of participants' responses following the implementation of the PG model. In contrast, *CU* recorded a minor uptick in variability (*SD* = 5.17 pre vs. 5.88 post), implying that even if average scores rose, the capability of the students of internalising cultural understanding proved diverge and less uniform. However, for *ALT* and *SYM*, (*SD*) values exhibited high temporal stability, signifying reliable yet unpronounced heterogeneity in the sample from pre-to post-test.

From a holistic perspective, the measures of central tendency and variability delineate not only upward mean shifts across investigated categories, but also subtle differences in how consistently the intervention took effect, revealing how the employment of the PG teaching framework impacted learners differently across different facets of empathy.

7.2.2 Reliability

Before conducting inferential analyses, it is very significant to ensure that the measurement instrument features internal consistency and reliability. This step verifies that the items grouped under each construct collectively capture the intended dimension of empathy.

- A **Case Processing Summary (Table 4):** The case processing summary indicates optimal data completeness, with all 32 participants (100%) providing valid responses across all reliability analysis variables. The absence of excluded cases (0%) demonstrates no missing data patterns that would compromise internal consistency estimates, ensuring robust reliability assessment.
- B **Internal Consistency Assessment (Table 5):** The obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .650 for the 12-item scale falls within the lower bounds of acceptable reliability for research purposes. While this value is below the conventional .70 threshold typically preferred for established instruments, it approaches the .60 minimum criterion often considered adequate for exploratory research contexts.

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	32	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	32	100.0
a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.			

Table 4: Case Processing Summary of Included Participants in Reliability Analysis

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.650	12

Table 5: Reliability Statistics of the 12-Item Intercultural Empathy Scale (Cronbach's Alpha)

To draw a meaningful comparison between pre-and post- likert scale values, researcher has conducted the paired T-test to assess the changes in scores over time using SPSS. The paired T-test particularly examines whether the change in the same participants' scores after a course of instruction is statistically significant. It mainly includes the measurement of the probability of

significance value (P-value), the degree of the difference between the variations of the test (T-value), the degree of freedom of variables (df), and the correlation between tests (rp).

7.2.3 Paired-Samples Tests

After running the paired T-test, the SPSS output displayed in Table 6 illuminates a change in participants' empathy-related constructs before and after the intervention across six dimensions: EC, SYM, ALT, PT, NT and CU. The findings (table 6) reveal that the students EC is the most highly significant dimension across all remaining categories, with a mean increasing from 6.44 points ($t(63) = -14.24$, $p < .001$). Consequently, it can be inferred that the PG model has successfully honed the participants' ability for empathetic attunement with the fictive narratives. Significantly still, the reported paired differences values ($t(63) = -4.87$, $p < .001$) demonstrate a marked surge in the participants' empathetic concern for others (SYM). From the same pro side, a refreshing, significant change in other empathy constructs can be witnessed after treatment. Regarding ALT paired statistics ($t(63) = -5.50$, $p < .001$), the table reports a mean difference of 1.25 points, with a p value bigger than .001, which reveals ultimately that the enrichment model, as opposed to the language, teacher-based method of teaching, has been much effective in fostering the learners' willingness to stand by others enduring a social or mental distress. Nonetheless, a less statistically significant difference is noticed in the Sig. (2-tailed) value ($t(63) = -1.47$, $p = .145$) of post-test CU, despite the mean increase (1.38 points). The results enlighten inconsistency, yet a stimulation, in the participant's readiness for appreciating cross-cultural differences with an openness of brains and hearts.

Optimistically, the last row in the same table (Table 6) captures a highly significant overall change in empathy across all constructs combined. The statistical data ($t = -20.592$, a very large t-value; $df = 63$; $p < .001$) from the Paired Samples Test substantiates the effectiveness of using the Personal Growth Model in teaching English fiction as a catalyst for intercultural empathy, encompassing both emotional and cognitive dimensions.

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	EC_total_pre - EC_total_post	-6.43750	3.61599	.45200	-7.34075	-5.53425	-14.242	63	.000
Pair 2	SYM_total_pre - SYM_total_post	-1.12500	1.84735	.23092	-1.58645	-.66355	-4.872	63	.000
Pair 3	ALT_total_pre - ALT_total_post	-1.25000	1.81703	.22713	-1.70388	-.79612	-5.503	63	.000
Pair 4	PT_total_pre - PT_total_post	-1.59375	2.38859	.29857	-2.19040	-.99710	-5.338	63	.000
Pair 5	NT_total_pre - NT_total_post	-1.37500	2.27826	.28478	-1.94409	-.80591	-4.828	63	.000
Pair6	CU_total_pre - CU_total_post	-1.37500	7.46101	.93263	-3.23870	.48870	-1.474	63	.145
Total Empathy Paired Samples Test									
Pair1	Total_empathy_pre - Total_empathy_post	-2.44271	.94897	.11862	-2.67975	-2.20566	-20.592	63	.000

Table 6: Paired Samples Statistics: Empathy Pre- and Post-Scale Values

To provide a visual support reinforcing the credibility of this research, the line graph (in Figure 2) draws a clear line of demarcation between post-intervention green line soaring above or crossing the blue line (pre-intervention), ensuring that no student experienced a decrease in empathy. The pattern also demonstrates that the treatment drive empathy gaps to subside, as students with the least empathy predicted proportionally satisfactory growth. Besides, the variability reveals that the instructors must predict heterogeneity in empathetic engagement, meanwhile staying confident of the vital role that the PG model plays for the entire cohort. The final observation to draw from the graph is the absence of Ceiling Effects, inasmuch as high-baseline learners continue to shine, showcasing the potency of the enrichment model to maintain its stimulus to students who already possess stronger empathetic skills.

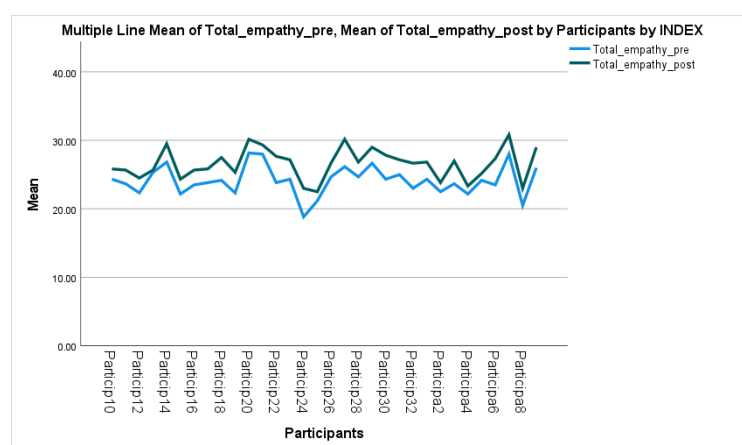


Figure 2: Individual participant total empathy scores before and after PG model implementation

From a statistical vantage point, compelling evidence now substantiates the assertion that the implementation of the (PG) teaching model—an innovative training programme or intervention introduced in this study — has exerted a profound and reliable influence on the participants' cultivation of intercultural empathy, encompassing both emotional and cognitive empathy.

8. Concluding Findings and Discussions

Extrapolating from the results obtained through both the semi-structured observations and the Likert scale employed in this research, one can confidently arrive at substantial conclusions regarding the generalizability of the findings. The first key conclusion pertains to the question of whether empathy is a part and parcel element to teaching and learning practices.

(a). Is empathy crucial to teaching and learning practice?

With particular reference to the study of English fiction, this research has effectively highlighted the pivotal role of fiction in bringing literature classroom back into life by transplanting an emotional bond between the writer and the learners. As observed during the active discussions of meaning advanced through a (PG) model, the students were deeply moved by both fictive stories, especially *Oliver Twist*. This novel, in particular, demonstrated significant emotional depth and cognitive appeal, striking a chord with the learners. It encouraged them to simulate interpretative roles in society, fostering a heightened sense of empathy that urged them to create depictive representations of memory, self-reflection, emotions, and thoughts.

The use of the 'Enrichment Model' in teaching fictional narratives significantly enhanced the learners' capacity for and interest in intercultural empathy. This form of empathy encompasses the understanding of emotional and cognitive frameworks and the potential to negotiate those systems among a variety of ethnic contexts. The substantial results observed highlight that the application of the PG model, particularly its focus on interpersonal and group dynamics, effectively strengthened the pathway to empathy. This process involved a shift from emotional contagion (EC) and sympathy (Sym) to the more refined sentiments of altruism (Alt) and the intellectual skill of perspective-taking (PT).

(b). What is the impact of teaching fictional narratives through the implementation of the 'Personal Growth Model' on learners' development of empathy?

As far as emotional empathy is concerned, there has been a considerable difference in statistics before and after the intervention. Initially, when the texts were only closely read, participants' responses were somewhat equivocal, if not indifferent, indicating a lack of emotional engagement. The language-based teaching model employed in this phase, which focused on the linguistic tools of the texts, effectively kept the learners' emotions at bay, resulting in a learning environment that stifled emotional connection with the material. As a result, students had an unclear perception of how the characters were suffering, feeling, or thinking, which led to low empathy scores for both stories. The pre-treatment scores () were notably modest in comparison to the post-treatment results.

The PG model acts as a robust catalyst for empathy enhancement that functions through what the evidence ensures is an "emotional gateway" pedagogical framework. The quantitative findings capture the reinvigorating role of the enrichment model to promote EC skills in the participants, evidenced by the most dramatic development (mean increase of 6.44 points) in their ability to connect with literary characters after treatment. This progress in empathy has been accompanied with a significant gain in cultural understanding and the ability to engage with the fictive discourse from the other's perspective.

Beyond its ability to convey emotions, the PG model also fostered a moderate development of sympathy and altruism, essential components of intercultural empathy. As already illustrated, pre- low-rank participants showed increased sympathetic emotions toward the characters in both *Shame* and *Oliver Twist*, enhancing their desire to help others in need, whether morally or materially. The post-intervention results, supported by findings from the Likert scale, in-class debates, and teamwork, showed a significant rise in social consciousness among the participants. After the experiment, students were better able to form emotional connections with the narratives. For example, SYM4 (indignation at injustices) demonstrates notable enhancement from 4.06 to 4.34. This item specifically addresses both characters and both forms of oppression (poverty and gender discrimination), suggesting indicating that the PG model hones students' potency to shape and respond emotionally to social injustices across a range of cultural contexts.

Seemingly noteworthy, qualitative results revealed that the study of fiction through (PG) model also contributed to fostering empathy development in the trained group. Students' spontaneous comparisons between character experiences and their own lives (65% of participants) reveals the successful impact of model to activates personal relevance, re-visualising the analysis of literary works as meaningful self-reflection rather than an academic practice. The finding that students immersed in strong counter-arguments to authors' ideological positions indicates that empathy

development through the PG model promotes critical thinking rather than enhancing uncritical emotional identification.

This progress is evident when considering both the results from the classroom observations made during the intervention, after the intervention, students were better at interpreting characters' emotional states, with a notable mean increase in EC1 (Sufiya's confusion and distress), shows substantial improvement from 4.31 to 5.44, representing a 1.13-point increase that indicates students have overcome initial cultural distance to achieve emotional identification with a Pakistani female protagonist. This shift was especially noticeable in the way they engaged with complex social and psychological themes within the narratives, moving beyond surface-level emotional reactions to deeper, more analytical understandings of the characters' inner worlds. The PG model's structure, which involved group discussions, debates, and reflective exercises, encouraged students to step into the shoes of others, fostering an increased ability to articulate and interpret perspectives different from their own.

Observationally, the participants' cognitive empathy was further illuminated through their interactions and discussions during the classroom activities. Teachers noted that students began to engage in more nuanced conversations, not only about the events in the narratives but also about the characters' motivations, dilemmas, and emotional responses. These discussions were richer and more thoughtful than those observed before the intervention. The PG model's emphasis on group dynamics and collaborative inquiry created a space where students were encouraged to consider the perspectives of others, analyse various viewpoints, and formulate reasoned arguments. This collaborative learning environment enabled the students to move past simplistic or one-dimensional interpretations of the characters, developing a more sophisticated understanding of the complexities of human experience as presented in the fiction.

Through these methods, cognitive empathy was nurtured as students were guided to think critically about the emotional and intellectual contexts of the characters' actions, decisions, and suffering. The enhancement of cognitive empathy not only made the students more adept at understanding others' perspectives but also contributed to their ability to navigate complex social issues and cultural differences in real-world situations. Thus, the PG model played a pivotal role in promoting the cognitive aspects of empathy, reinforcing the importance of perspective-taking and intellectual engagement in literature education.

However, the model's effectiveness appears mediated by several factors that warrant consideration. The observation that students showed resistance to changing their personal attitudes toward other cultures, despite increased empathic engagement, suggests that empathy development and attitude change may be distinct psychological processes requiring different pedagogical approaches. Additionally, the finding that Cultural Understanding showed increased variance post-intervention (SD = 5.17 to 5.88) indicates that while average cultural awareness improved, individual responses became more heterogeneous, suggesting that the model may amplify rather than eliminate individual differences in cultural empathy capacity.

(c). What challenges would empathic responses, whether emotional or intellectual, raise in the literature classroom?

Empathic responses, both emotional and intellectual, can raise several challenges in the literature classroom. One challenge is the potential for emotional discomfort or dissonance when learners

are confronted with contentious or culturally unfamiliar material. The finding that over 80% of students expressed discontent with Rushdie's portrayal of Islam illuminates how empathy instruction can inadvertently become a site of cultural contestation rather than cross-cultural understanding. This suggests that educators must possess sophisticated cultural competency and be prepared to facilitate complex discussions about representation, stereotype, and artistic interpretation.

The linguistic and cognitive challenges identified affect approximately 22% of participants and include limited textual interaction, unfamiliarity with cultural contexts, and insufficient L2 proficiency to articulate complex emotional responses. These barriers suggest that empathy-based instruction may inadvertently exclude students who lack the linguistic or cultural resources to engage fully with the pedagogical approach. The observation that nine students remained consistently silent in group activities indicates that empathy instruction can paradoxically marginalize those who might benefit most from emotional engagement with literature.

Perhaps most significantly, the research reveals what might be termed the "authenticity challenge" of classroom empathy. The finding that students were more willing to form connections with other communities than to change their personal attitudes suggests that classroom empathy may remain performative or superficial rather than transformative. The observation that altruistic responses required personal association (imagining characters as relatives) further questions whether empathy developed through literary fiction translates meaningfully to real-world intercultural encounters.

The methodological implications are equally challenging. The reliability coefficient of .650, while acceptable for research purposes, indicates measurement difficulties inherent in empathy assessment. The substantial individual variation in response patterns suggests that empathy development resists standardization and may require highly individualized pedagogical approaches that current educational systems struggle to accommodate.

These challenges do not negate the value of empathy-based literary instruction but rather illuminate its complexity and the need for sophisticated pedagogical frameworks that acknowledge empathy's cultural specificity, linguistic demands, and potential for both bridging and inadvertently reinforcing cultural divisions. The evidence suggests that successful implementation of empathy-based EFL instruction requires educators who can navigate cultural sensitivity, linguistic accessibility, and the authentic integration of emotional and intellectual engagement with multicultural literature.

9. Conclusion

Literature has long been celebrated in schools, not only as a powerful sinew for language acquisition and social transformation, but also as a conduit through which emotions and personal growth intertwine within the classroom. It is not merely the grandeur of style or depth of content that keeps the greatest works of art alive in our minds, but the profound emotional resonance they inspire in readers over time. Empathy, therefore, becomes a crucial bridge to cultural literacy, enriching literature education and human connection with the entire globe. Yet, within the realm of intercultural understanding, the concept of empathy – its delicate interplay with sympathy and hermeneutics – remains an elusive frontier, a field still unfolding within the academic landscape.

However, its transformative potential holds the promise of deepening our comprehension and compassion across diverse cultural contexts.

Given this credence, this study confirms that empathy is indeed crucial to teaching and learning, particularly within the context of literature. By fostering emotional engagement with fictional narratives through (PG) model, students' capacity to understand and connect with the emotions of characters is significantly enhanced. The results show a marked improvement in emotional empathy, where students, initially detached, began to identify more deeply with the characters' struggles and experiences. This indicates that empathy not only aids in understanding the text but also cultivates a deeper sense of compassion and cultural literacy in learners. The effect of teaching fiction through the PG model has been evident: students' emotional responses and cognitive empathy progressed substantially. As illuminated by the changes in their Likert scale ratings and classroom observations, the interactive and dialogic elements of the PG model enabled students to feel more emotionally connected to the characters, thus improving their ability to understand diverse cultural and emotional contexts.

From a less satisfactory lens, the study is limited by its relatively small sample size and context-specific focus, which restrict broad generalisation. The moderate reliability coefficient (.650) highlights methodological constraints, while the very nature of empathy assessment presents challenges, particularly when dealing with culturally sensitive texts such as *Shame*. In this context, increased disagreement or resistance may reflect defensive cultural positioning rather than genuine perspective-taking, making it difficult to separate performative responses from authentic empathetic growth. Overall, this study attests to the power of fiction not only as an academic tool, but as a vehicle for emotional and intercultural growth. Empathy, when carefully cultivated through dynamic teaching practices, becomes a pathway to understanding – both of ourselves and of others. In this sense, empathy shapes not just an outcome of teaching; but the very essence of what it means to learn, to grow, and to connect across the vast expanse of the human condition. To open doors for further research and innovation in education, educators must acknowledge empathy's cultural specificity and implement compensatory strategies for diverse learners. Future applications should integrate active learning strategies – such as role-playing, multimedia character analysis, and virtual cultural exchanges – to create more inclusive and engaging empathy-building environments. Such creative teaching practices under the PG model can address the linguistic and cultural barriers identified while maintaining its interactive core strength in fostering authentic emotional engagement with cross-cultural literature.

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Appendix A:

Pre/Post Literary Empathy Scale (RLES)

Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement based on your experience reading the assigned literary texts. Use the following 7-point scale for all items:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat Disagree
- 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 5 = Somewhat Agree
- 6 = Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

Category	Item Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Emotional Contagion (EC)	EC1	While reading about Sufiya's inner turmoil in <i>Shame</i> , I felt the same confusion and distress that she was experiencing.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	EC2	Oliver's hunger and desperation in the workhouse affected my own mood while reading <i>Oliver Twist</i> .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	EC3	I found myself experiencing anxiety when Oliver faced dangerous situations with Fagin's gang.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	EC4	When Oliver finally found safety with Mr. Brownlow, I experienced similar feelings of relief and happiness.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	EC5	Sufiya's silent suffering and social shame caused me to feel genuine emotional pain.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	EC6	I felt emotionally connected to both Oliver's resilience and Sufiya's internal struggles throughout both stories.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Empathic Concern/ Sympathy (SYM)	SYM1	I felt compassionate toward Sufiya when she struggled with the shame imposed on her by society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	SYM2	I was concerned about Oliver's wellbeing when he was mistreated in the workhouse.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Category	Item Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Altruistic Motivation (ALT)	SYM3	I felt protective toward Oliver when he was manipulated by Fagin and his gang.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	SYM4	The injustices faced by both Oliver (poverty) and Sufiya (gender oppression) made me feel indignant on their behalf.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	SYM5	I hoped that Oliver would escape the criminal underworld and that Sufiya would find peace.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	SYM6	I felt moved by Oliver's efforts to maintain his moral integrity despite his harsh circumstances.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ALT1	Reading about Sufiya's mental anguish has increased my desire to help people facing similar psychological struggles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ALT2	Oliver's experiences have motivated me to be more supportive of children in difficult family situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ALT3	I am more willing to help marginalized people after seeing how society failed both Oliver and Sufiya.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ALT4	These stories have inspired me to take an action to address social problems like poverty and gender discrimination.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ALT5	I feel motivated to support causes that help orphaned children like Oliver or women facing oppression like Sufiya.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	ALT6	Reading about how Nancy sacrificed herself to protect Oliver has strengthened my commitment to helping vulnerable people.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Perspective-Taking (PT)	PT1	I tried to understand the cultural and historical context that shaped Sufiya's position as a woman in Pakistani society.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	PT2	I attempted to see situations from Oliver's point of view as an orphaned child in Victorian England, even when his choices seemed naive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	PT3	Reading <i>Shame</i> helped me understand perspectives about honor and family reputation that differ from my own cultural background.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	PT4	I found myself considering how my own experiences of social expectations might differ from those faced by both Oliver and Sufiya.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	PT5	Reading about the workhouse system in <i>Oliver Twist</i> increased my ability to understand people from different economic circumstances.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	PT6	Both novels challenged me to reconsider some of my assumptions about how people respond to social pressure and poverty.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Narrative Transportation (NT)	NT1	While reading about Oliver's experiences in the workhouse, I felt as though I was witnessing these events first-hand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Category	Item Code	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cultural Understanding (CU)	NT2	I was so involved in following Sufiya's story in <i>Shame</i> that I lost track of time while reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	NT3	The experiences of both Oliver and Sufiya affected me emotionally even after I finished reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	NT4	I found it easy to imagine myself in Victorian London's poor districts or in the social settings of <i>Shame</i> .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	NT5	Characters like Oliver, Sufiya, and Nancy felt like real people to me while I was reading.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	NT6	I became so absorbed in both stories that the real world around me faded away during reading sessions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CU1	Reading <i>Shame</i> has enhanced my understanding of Pakistani cultural contexts and social dynamics.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CU2	<i>Oliver Twist</i> has given me insight into the social issues affecting people in Victorian England's class system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CU3	Both novels have helped me appreciate the complexity of different cultural practices regarding family honour and social mobility.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CU4	Reading these works has made me more curious about learning about both South Asian and British historical contexts.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CU5	I better understand how historical periods (Victorian England, postcolonial Pakistan) shape people's experiences and choices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CU6	These stories have increased my respect for how people from different cultural backgrounds navigate social challenges.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Table 7: Pre/Post Literary Empathy Scale (RLES)

Thank you for your efforts and time