**Teaching English fiction to Iranian Students: Read to them or by them?**

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**Abstract**

The ultimate goal of teaching literature is to transform it from ethereal to practical; from the lost paradise of conceits and oxymorons to the banal street car reality of a salesman, this path does not pass through previewing prismatic types of literary criticism or reporting the interpretations of other critics, but via engaging them in an active reading of the literary texts. Involving learners in reading the original text requires culturally befitting methods apt for speakers of different languages. However the methods might vary, they all aim to reduce the cultural / historical gap between students and the literary text: fiction in the case of the present research. Analyzing western methods of teaching fiction as the first part of research argument provides illumination in designing novel teaching methods for Iranian students. However following those methods, designed for native students, leaves them in the vague realm of a distant world inhabited by untouchable characters. Western methods merely concentrate on connecting the present to the past and the future, whereas in an Iranian fiction class environment the student should be connected to a culturally different past or future. This research indicates that close reading of a novel is required prior to any literary analysis and our teaching methods and strategies help students to employ their own background knowledge to read and connect to fiction. Moreover, this research renders a couple of strategies capable of helping students to achieve their individual reading of fiction.

**Keywords:** *Teaching methods, Teaching fiction, Native/nonnative students, Cultural difference*