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Literature and Literacy: Reading and Writing in the Framework of Literary Genres on the Theme of "The Family" in the Project "Literature in the Context of Literacy"

Abstract
The article presents the rationale and the ways of implementing an interdisciplinary method – combining the principles and objectives in literary research and the teaching of literature with the aims and approaches in literacy within the school framework. This methodology aims at written production by the learner on the principle of "reading for the purpose of writing," thematically related to "the family" and to the characteristics of the literary genre. The experiment was conducted in a Literature Learning Center set up by third-year students majoring in literature at Achva College of Education, in the framework of their project, under the guidance of the author.
The article will feature the theoretical rationale of the methodology and the manner of its practical operation.

Introduction
Two elementary assumptions underlie the interdisciplinary approach: first – each of the disciplines is to be represented at its best, according to its leading essential and fundamental principles; and *second – when specific instances of weakness (mainly from the learner's perspective) arise in one of the disciplines, and definitely powerful elements exist in the other, the weaker elements in the one discipline can be supported and bolstered by those elements that are specifically stronger in the other discipline.*
In presenting the theoretical rationale of "Literature in the Context of Literacy," we shall try to demonstrate that this interdisciplinary method is indeed built on the two basic assumptions presented above, integrating the literary "doctrine of genres" on the one hand and the "reading-writing" model of literacy on the other.

1. The doctrine of genres as the basis of literary research and the teaching of literature

Since the days of Aristotle, classification of genres has constituted one of the main elements in the frame of knowledge in literature. "The genre conception is inherent in the essence of literature, which signifies that the issue in hand belongs to the field of literary phenomena, since genres are not related to other types of utterance, except in instances of analogy with literature, in a non-committing manner." (Globinski, 1970, p. 14.)

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle related to three main principles when defining the genre of Tragedy: the **object** of imitation, the medium of imitation and the **mode** of imitation. These principles likewise serve to distinguish between the main genres of literature as well as between literature and non-literature (Halperin, "On 'Poetics' by Aristotle," 1978).

Aristotle employed the concept of "the object of imitation" to distinguish between Tragedy and Poetry. Tragedy deals with the **hero's** acts and the thoughts related to the acts; Poetry relates to feelings and thoughts of the **poet** himself. "The object of imitation" likewise serves to distinguish between Tragedy, in which the role model is a great hero of outstanding, vigorous and idealistic character, and Comedy, in which the hero is lowly, ignoble and provokes ridicule.

"The **medium** of imitation" applies to the distinction between Tragedy, which involves both visual and acoustic functions, and Poetry, which involves an acoustic function only.

"The **mode** of imitation" applies to structural criteria and language principles that distinguish between the different genres as well as between literature and non-literature (Halperin, 1978).

As is well known, Aristotle established his theory based on the literary inventory prevalent in his day. Consequently, the above principles of categorization cannot be applied when describing the variety of genres and sub-genres as developed over the epochs prior to modern literature. Nevertheless, even though the criteria of genre and of genre-distinction did undergo modification, the basic theory regarding the existence of literary genres as determined by Aristotle has endured to this day as part of the cultural consciousness and understanding of literature in general (what is and what is not literature). The Aristotelian principles likewise serve with regard to elementary understanding of the proprieties of literature, that is, "what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in every one of the literary utterances" (Globinski, 1970). In other words, the elementary notion regarding the doctrine of genres, as laid down by Aristotle, has become a primary constituent in literary research and study, notwithstanding the

changes and modifications evolving from the progress in the field of literature and literary poetics, as will be explicated below.

a. The doctrine of genres within a biological perspective: structure, quantity and function.

In *Principles of Literary Criticism*, Avrakomby (1969) states that since Aristotle was a scientist and philosopher, he based his doctrine of genres on the analogy between Nature and Art. "This analogy is apparent in classification of the world of art in categories of types and sorts, conventional in the scientific world of biology, as in the system attempting to examine the 'anatomy' and 'physiology' of each genre. However," argues Avrakomby, "'anatomy' and 'physiology' are inadequate. In order to describe the characteristics of a living creature, it is not enough to describe the structure of its build and the number of its organs. We would have to perform observation of its behavior and modes of functioning: only when knowing what it is capable of doing and how it behaves in its natural environment can we understand the uniqueness of its being" (Avrakomby, 1969, p. 48). In spite of the slight absurdity in the analogy, Avrakomby does not reject the scientific-biological approach in its essence and, in fact, agrees with the notion that the doctrine of genres inquires into the "physiology" and "anatomy" of each genre. The principle to be applied in addition to the Aristotelian notion, according to Avrakomby, is the principle of functioning.

The differences between each genre are determined according to three principles: **quantity, structure,** and **function**. **The principle of quantity** is an important principle in the differentiation of genres since there are genres characterized by quantitative numbering, for example, five acts in the tragedy, fourteen lines in the sonnet, the numeric element characterizing rhythmic features in poetry, etc**. The principle of structure** relates to every genre characteristic regarding the components of the work of art and the relation between them. This principle is qualitative in its nature, requiring inner analysis**. The parameter of function** is the most significant in the essence of genre observation and aims at presenting the meaning and purpose of the literary genre on the basis of the two previous parameters. It involves aesthetic-philosophical discussion that frequently regards the essence and intent of literature in general. Avrakomby demonstrates this parameter in relation to tragedy: "The brevity and pith, comprising the capacity and structure of the tragedy, arouse our amazement and trepidation at the fate of the hero, as of Man. Thus, the intensity of the experience and the intensity of insight into that fate are attained spontaneously" (Avrakomby, 1969, p. 56). In other words: the doctrine of genres examines the "physiology" and "anatomy" of each genre in relation to external

parameters and gauges, in relation to internal-qualitative parameters (structure), in order to build up a notion regarding the parameters of essence (function).

b. The rhetorical approach – the addresser, the recipient and the parameters of aesthetic persuasion

In a special chapter, "Theory of Genres," devoted to the discussion of literary genres, Frye (1957) defines genre from the point of view of rhetoric. The author's notion is interesting and important in itself as well as in its relevance to the subject of this article. According to Frye, the concept of "rhetoric" consists of two elements: (1) logical structure, and (2) linguistic elements affecting the structure. These can be perceived in each of the three leading genres: poetry is established on presenting the emotions and conflicts prevailing within the human soul. Thus, this logic is realized by means of "associative language." Prose aims at presenting a short or continuous chain of events and this internal logic is realized through presentation of the narrative in the "rhythm of continuity"; drama presents an act or a series of acts performed or to be performed by the hero. This internal logic is realized through the linguistic use of dialog features and "discourse conventions."

Frye claims that according to principles of rhetoric, the relationship between the author and the recipient should be related to in the literary genre: in the drama, the presence of the author is not perceived and the characters act, as it were, on their own. "Discourse markers" and dialog features (comic or dramatic) permit the writer's "disappearance" from the scene of action, thus creating direct contact between the spectator / reader and the deed or deeds the hero is performing or is planning to perform. In the genre of prose, the presence of the writer is perceived within the fiction, as the narrator or as the observer / commentator, addressing the recipient / reader directly or indirectly. The author's presence and mode of address toward the recipient determine the "rate of continuity." In poetry, the poet does not address the recipient; he addresses himself, raising his feelings and internal struggle by means of the "chain of associations," the recipient becoming an unobserved partner in that situation by chance.

Another interesting point raised by Frye regarding the rhetorical aspects is that the literary idiom is based on the principle of ornamentation and persuasion. Ornamentation signifies stimulating in the reader an aesthetic sensation and enthrallment at the linguistic utterance per se; the principle of persuasion signifies directing the reader toward a certain emotional response and a certain mode of thinking. In other words, "the principle of ornamentation is aimed at arousing feelings whereas the principle of persuasion is aimed at directing feelings" (Frye, 1957, p. 247). The characteristics of all literary genres derive from these two principles:

rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration, which characterize the poetic genre, have the effect of ornamentation, and arouse the reader's admiration for the aesthetics of the literary utterance. Yet, simultaneously, they contain an effect of persuasion as they direct the feelings of the reader toward a certain bearing and a certain emotional response. The combination of these two principles constitutes "poetic persuasion" that is realized in a different way in each genre, according to the internal logic of the genre and the addresser-recipient relationship in each.The rhetorical approach presents the literary text as a type of rhetoric in which the reader is partly familiar with of the rules of the game beforehand. "Designation and consciousness of the genre constitute the underlying basis of the agreed perception accepted between the author and the reader – the genre informs the reader of what he might anticipate in the forthcoming utterance, thus building up his behavior as a recipient of **literature" (Globinski, 1970, p. 20).**

c. The Structuralist approach – the permanent elements and the dynamic elements of the literary genre

The Structuralist approach perceives the characteristics of genre in their double attribute: both as permanent basic structures having a maintaining function as well as structures having an open, dynamic nature (conjunctures), open to changes. These feature in literary texts in which a new connection between the work of art and the genre characteristics is effected, stemming mainly from cultural, historical or other circumstances. "The literary genre is conceived of as a structure constantly open to the pressure(s) of conjuncture (the specific position of the genre in a certain period) and an ongoing process of structuralization and de-structuralization" (Globinski, 1970, p. 20). The author defines the literary genre as "a dynamic structure in constant motion." The structural elements may become more "pointed" or may "fall apart" as "the literary genre is constantly changing in nature, though always in the context of those factors inherent in it currently and in the past. At any given moment, something rises in it and something falls back, something attains perfection and something perishes" (Globinski, 1970, p. 20). These processes do not take place within one specific genre but occur in a circle of phenomena that can be termed "inter-genre relations." The processes of structuralization in one genre concur with processes of de-structuralization in another – for instance, the increasing dominance of the novel and the wane of the epic in the eighteenth century.

In *Critical Assumption*, Ruthven (1979, p. 20) presents another characteristic of the structural approach. According to Ruthven, the structural approach considers the structural characteristics of genre both

"characteristics of product" (Form-as-Product) and "characteristics of process" (Form-as-Process).

When relating to the genre characteristics as "characteristics of product," they are employed in order to examine the extent to which the work of art can be assigned to a specific genre and the manner in which it can be assigned. The "characteristics of product" are likewise employed to determine how far the specific work of art conforms to the basic rules of the genre structure. On the other hand, when relating to the features of genre as "characteristics of process," the question that arises is totally different: How does the artist employ the principles of genre in order to create a complete, coherent, and convincing reality? Furthermore, how far does the literary work of art succeed in realizing the dynamics of life itself by maintaining or altering the genre structure? "Only if we conceive of genres as structures in a process can we understand why the artist changes the components of genres or ignores them in the process of creation" (Ruthven, 1979, p. 20). On this issue, see Brinker (1989), *Is the Doctrine of Literature Feasible?* (pp. 47-52).

In other words, the Structuralist approach perceives the code of genre according to some basic questions of principle: how the work of art realizes the principles of genre structure; how the genre structure serves the theme of the work of art and its significance; and finally, how far it is required to redefine the rules of the literary genre in view of a system of literary works that do not comply with the basic familiar rules of the genre currently accepted before these works appeared.

d. The doctrine of genre and the teaching of literature in school The lore of literature constitutes an integral part of the teaching program in school and indeed, most of the works of art encountered by the learner during his school years are taught on the basis of genre study. Literature textbooks are likewise organized according to genre classification, enabling the learner to grasp the principles of genre via comparative examination, both according to the inductive and the deductive approach. It should be stressed that the teaching program attempts to match the level of psychological and linguistic comprehension on the part of the learner to the genre texts encountered throughout the school year. The parable, for instance, which is considered an "easy" genre, is studied in the fourth or fifth grade, whereas the ballad, which requires more psychological insight, is studied in the seventh grade. The tragedy, considered a "difficult" genre, more complex from the linguistic and psychological points of view, is studied in the upper division.

e.   The "weak areas" in teaching literature in school from the aspect of the doctrine of genres

The "weak point" in teaching literature in school from the aspect of the doctrine of genres is the fact that each genre is taught in hermetic isolation, disconnected from other genres. Consequently, with regard to the three approaches described above, the teaching program relates only partially to each of these approaches: when completing school, the learner is capable of identifying the structure of each of the genres according to the "product features" (section c above). He/She can describe each genre in terms of "quantity" and "structure" (section a above) and can likewise define the role relationship between the addresser and the recipient in every genre encountered. However, the learner has not been confronted with a cluster of varied genres thematically connected round one central topic. He/She is therefore incapable of answering the deeper and more complex questions on the doctrine of genres – for instance, the **issue of function** posed by Avrakomby as the most essential in the doctrine of genres (section a above). Another example is **poetic persuasion** and the **internal logic of rhetoric** of each genre, presented by Frye as part of the rhetoric aspect of the genre (section b above). Yet another example would be characteristics of the genre as **process features**, that is, why this and no other genre was chosen specifically and why the artist employs the genre in this manner and not in any other manner, regarding the type of reality he wishes to depict and delineate (section c above).

The learners are not confronted with these types of questions because they cannot be answered without the learners having been exposed to a system of literary works of different genres simultaneously, in the context of one thematic topic.

f.   **Strengthening "weak areas" in teaching literature in school via the aspect of the doctrine of genres by means of the "Literature in the Context of Literacy" program**

In the "Literature in the Context of Literacy" program, the learner encounters an assortment of literary genres – all centered around one thematic subject: **the family**. Literacy maintains that exposure to a variety of genres is a basic factor in the "reading-writing" model, as follows in section 2 below. This principle, pertaining essentially to literacy, enables the learner to become familiar with each genre separately according to its structural and rhetorical features, as well as to its characteristics of quantity and structure. Moreover, literacy enables the learner to distinguish, albeit intuitively, that each genre selects one aspect of the topic, "the family," and that in each genre there is a different mode of "functioning" and a different "internal logic." For example, the pupils were asked to relate to the fact that in the genre of the **parable**, the event (regarding the father and the son) is

abstract and anonymous, as opposed to the genre of the **short story**, in which the event is personal and realistic. Likewise, the **proverb**, which preaches an ideal relationship within the family, contrasts with the humorous quartet, which presents a distorted, paradoxical, albeit amusingly ludicrous, relationship within the family. All the genres were being studied in parallel at the Learning Center. Since they were all connected to one central topic – "the family" – the learner was given the option of comparing the various genres, and could thus relate to the essential, basic features of each.

The concluding assignment, in which we wanted to verify that the learners had indeed internalized this important principle, which constituted the focal point at the Learning Center, the pupils were asked to perform the following task:

Chart 1

Final literature assignment at the Learning Center

Describe an experience or an event connected to your family life (real or imaginary, as you like).

Choose one of the genres you have encountered (and are familiar with) and write according to the "writing model" of the genre.

(You may go back and look at the information sheets.)

Give reasons for your choice.

Complete: I want to write about_____

I have chosen the genre of_____

The reason for my choice is:_____

This assignment requires not merely active operation of the principles of the genre in relating an experience or a personal event, but also serious consideration as to the genre most appropriate for the topic chosen. These considerations oblige the learner to make a comparison between the genres he has become familiar with through the aspects of "functioning," "internal logic," and "poetic persuasion," but mainly to employ the genre features as "process characteristics" by adapting the genre to the topic chosen.

Samples of arguments supplied by participants in the project at the Learning Center (fourth grade)

I want to write about this. This morning, my parents told me that they are getting divorced. I am very sad, so I am writing a lyrical poem because it suits me now.

Yesterday I quarreled with my sister. I want to tell my big brother who lives abroad about it, so I will write a personal letter.

I want to tell about a funny event that occurred in our family. I also like to write in rhymes, so I have chosen the (humorous) quartet.

The (fourth-grade) pupils' answers indicate that they have implemented the required considerations and acquired insight into the doctrine of genres: they can account for the choice of genre according to the event they have chosen to relate.

2. The reading-writing model as a basic and essential principle in promoting literacy in school

The "reading-writing" model was first presented in the early 1980s as the central methodology for the advancement of literacy. The model is based on the theoretic conception of Tirney and Pearson (1983) that "reading and writing are two parallel and complementary processes within one cognitive framework." In both of these processes the reader/writer creates meaning while employing parallel strategies and schemata (linguistic, rhetorical etc.).

According to this model, reading is conceived of as having a central role in the context of the writing process. Various researches have attempted to define and describe the relation between the reading text and the written text, as will be demonstrated below:

a. Imitation through internalization
Internalizing good text models permits the promotion of writing. Analysis of the reading text and comprehending its rhetorical attributes and the discourse conventions that feature in it make the text a model for emulation – imitation through internalization (Sullivan, 1989).

b. "Writing Patterns"

While writing, the writer is required to relate to rhetorical, linguistic, morphological and syntactic "writing patterns" when organizing the information and presenting it. The writer can acquire these "writing patterns" while confronting the reading text. Internalization and processing of the "writing patterns" – as part of the reading process – subsequently serve the learner as a basis for writing. In other words, the process is not merely imitation through internalizing models, but rather deep processing of the reading text, while comprehending the relation between form and content as the basis for proper use of relevant "writing patterns" (Olshtain, 1982; Bravik, 1986).

c. Using products in the process

Awareness of the product is required in order to improve the writing process (Askolt et al., 1960). In his comprehensive study regarding the writing product, Stahl (1995) proved that awareness of the requirements of the product affects the writing process with respect to the objectives of the writing assignment, the stages in its production, and the quality of the final product. The learner's confrontation with the text/product affects the styling of the written text.

d. "Reading to Write" (Flower, 1987) / "Reading like an Author" (New Kirk, 1986; Stuart, 1991).

The "reading-writing model" is based on a distinctive type of reading, different than "reading for comprehension," though they have several elements in common. Spivey (1991) proved that achievers in "reading for comprehension" are also achievers in "reading for writing," since the two activities are based on the common elements of: (1) re-entry of prior knowledge; (2) selection; (3) organization; and (4) alertness to cohesion. Spivey claims that the fact that different readers do not summarize a given text in the same way indicates that in reading for comprehension, every reader performs these stages differently. These differences also affect "reading for writing," that is, the differences between the two types of reading are more a matter of individual differences among the various readers.

Stuart (1991) examined records of learners who were required to read in order to write – "to read as authors" – and arrived at the conclusion that such reading is different than "reading for comprehension" since it involves (1) elements of critical reading; (2) distinguishing strategies employed by different writers; and (3) relating more profoundly to the connection of content to structure and language. In the reading text(s), the learners looked for the different options they had as authors, paying special attention to the uniqueness of the text. The reader processes the text from the point of view of his aims as a writer.

e.   The "weak areas" in the "reading-writing" model

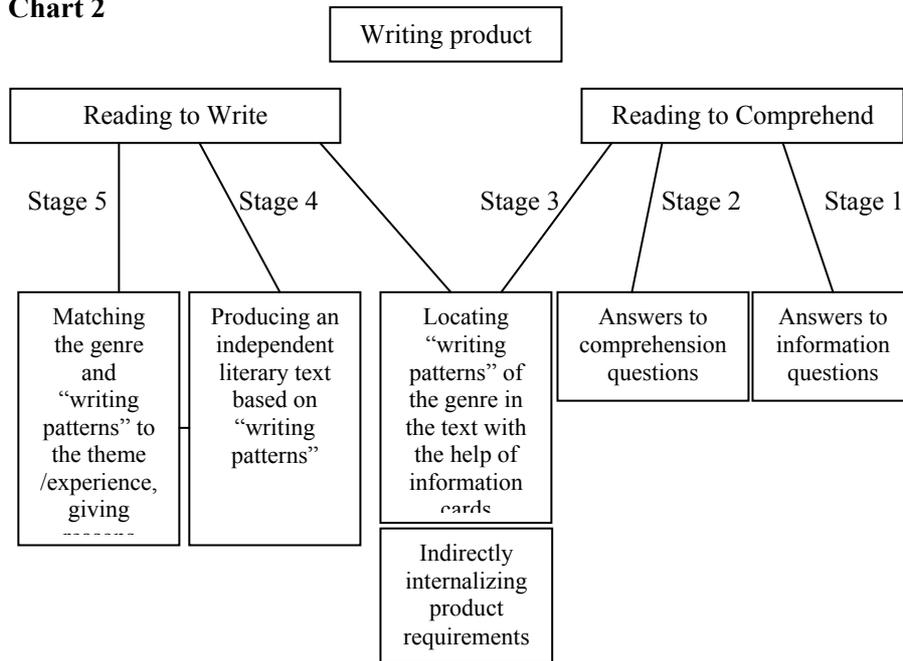Some researchers have expressed a critical approach to three different aspects of the "reading-writing" model:

1. **The learner's aspect**: Following research, Spivey (1991) concluded that a "reading-writing model" is appropriate only for good, achieving learners who are capable of "learning" the principles for good writing from the given text. He likewise claims that achieving readers in "reading for comprehension" are also achievers in "reading for writing" owing to the similarity between these two types of reading.

2. **The aspect of discipline**: Debaker (1986), claimed that this method works well only when the learner is required to write a text in a particular discipline: only within that restricted framework can the writer draw on the discourse principles and writing conventions accepted in the specific discipline.

3. **Writing as a holistic process**: Sullivan (1991) argued that writing is a holistic process with communicative aims. There are two stages in the process: (1) organization of the text; and (2) continual rewriting of the written text. Writing as a process demands the production of an independent text, while in the reading-writing model, the learner is required to write a text restricted to the model he has been familiarized with and has eventually internalized. He claims that the reading-writing model restricts the options of the writer since it ignores the idiosyncratic personality of the writer and the specific communicative aims of the text produced.

f. Strengthening "weak points" in the "reading-writing" model by means of the "Literature in the Context of Literacy" program

Chart 2

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   Writing product   │
                        └─────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────┐
│     Reading to Write     │          │   Reading to Comprehend   │
└─────────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────┘

  Stage 5      Stage 4        Stage 3      Stage 2        Stage 1

┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│ Matching │ │Producing │ │ Locating │ │ Answers  │ │ Answers  │
│ the genre│ │   an     │ │ "writing │ │   to     │ │   to     │
│   and    │ │independent│ │patterns" │ │comprehen-│ │informa-  │
│ "writing │ │ literary │ │ of the   │ │  sion    │ │ tion     │
│patterns" │ │   text   │ │genre in  │ │questions │ │questions │
│  to the  │ │based on  │ │the text  │ └──────────┘ └──────────┘
│  theme   │ │ "writing │ │with the  │
│/experience│ │patterns" │ │help of   │
│  giving  │ │          │ │informa-  │
│  reasons │ │          │ │tion cards│
└──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────┘
                          ┌──────────┐
                          │Indirectly│
                          │internaliz-│
                          │ing product│
                          │require-  │
                          │ments     │
                          └──────────┘
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In the framework of the "Literature in the Context of Literacy" program, learners were asked to produce five types of writing products (see chart 2 above).

First type – answers to information questions relating to initial, basic understanding of the text on a superficial level. At this stage, the pupils were asked questions of "quantity" and simple questions of "structure" regarding the literary genre of the text, for instance, "Mark the sentence which is the moral of the fable." "How many lines and stanzas are there in this lyrical poem?" "Who addresses whom in the ballad?"

Second type – answers to comprehension questions referring to deeper understanding of the text and filling information gaps. At this stage, the questions were more complex and included questions of "structure" relating to the literary genre, for example: "What is the climax of the story?" "What are the implications of this proverb?"

Third type – locating "writing patterns" of the genre in the text handled with the help of information cards. At this stage, the learner was given an "information card" in which the features of the genre are presented and was

asked to identify each of the characteristics – the "writing patterns" – in the text he had read.

Note: These three assignments were performed by the pupils at each station in the Learning Center in relation to the various texts (of the same genre) they had chosen at each specific station.

Fourth type – the learner is asked to describe an experience or an emotion relating to his family (real or imaginary), while referring to familiar "writing patterns" of the genre, encountered and internalized in the process of the previous assignments.

The learners performed the fourth assignment only after having repeated the three previous assignments with several literary texts of the same genre. They were asked to perform this as the conclusive assignment before moving on to the next station.

Fifth type: This concluding assignment was performed only after the learners had "wandered" through all the genres stations and after having gone through the fourth stage of each one (see chart 1 above). The assignments of the first and second type are based on "reading for comprehension," while those of the third type are based on both "reading for comprehension" and "reading for writing." In the last two assignments the learner, using his own words and individual story, employs "writing patterns" after having been exposed to different texts in which these "writing patterns" are applied in different ways, and are related to the theme of the family. In view of the above, one is able to conclude that the "weaknesses" related to by critics of the "reading-writing" model are actually "strong points" regarding the teaching of literary genres in our program. To begin with, the argument that the "reading-writing" model is appropriate "only for producing a distinctive disciplinary text" (as follows from paragraph 2) becomes an advantage, the basic requirement being the writing of a literary text according to the "discourse principles" and the "writing conventions" accepted in the literary discipline and the specific genre.

Second, the argument that the "reading-writing" model is suitable "only for good learners and achievers capable of acquiring principles of good writing from the given text" (as follows from paragraph 1) is slightly weakened when the pupil is guided in a graded manner, step by step, toward the ultimate required writing product.

Thirdly, the argument that the "reading-writing" model limits the writer's options by requiring that the pupil write only according to the model/genre that he/she has become familiar with (as follows from paragraph 3) is

somewhat invalidated when relating to the fifth type of writing. Here the learner, who supports his choice of the specific genre in order to express an emotion or experience relating to his family, is guided in his selection by communicative **considerations, according to his individual personality.**

Conclusions and implications
"Literature in the Context of Literacy" aims to accomplish several objectives in the domains of both literature and literacy:

- internalizing literary genre characteristics via practical "hands-on" activation and creative employment of these characteristics in order to describe a personal emotion or experience;
- viewing the genre system within a wide perspective through the possibilities of confronting the different genres on the common basis of the thematic framework – "the family";
- developing proficiency in reading and writing skills in a structured method in which the learner proceeds from "reading for comprehension" to "reading for writing," the literary genre text serving as a writing model;
- turning the teaching of literature and the subject of literary genres into an enjoyable experience both for teacher and pupil.

In conclusion, I would like to state that implementing the interdisciplinary approach of "Literature in the Context of Literacy" through a Learning Center greatly contributed to the accomplishment of the above goals.

The Learning Center, as set up by third-year students majoring in literature at Achva College of Education, made the project a thrilling, aesthetic experience for every single learner. The pupils came to the attractive premises and saw the numerous artistic works, illustrations, and colorful work-cards, and found the students ever willing to guide them and listen patiently and understandingly to the initial texts, produced with diffidence and trepidation.

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