

The Effectiveness of Storytelling and Dramatization Methods in Teaching the Literary Representation of Alash Figures in University Education

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ABSTRACT: The growing emphasis on culturally responsive and decolonizing approaches in higher education highlights the need for pedagogical methods that support deeper engagement with national literary heritage. Within this context, teaching the literary representation of Alash intellectuals poses both educational and methodological challenges, particularly when traditional lecture-based instruction results in low student engagement and surface-level historical understanding. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of storytelling and dramatization as integrated instructional methods for teaching Alash-related literary content at the university level. The research tasks included designing a structured pedagogical model, implementing it in a controlled classroom environment, and assessing its impact on students' cognitive, emotional, and communicative outcomes. The study contributes to the field by offering a systematic instructional framework combining narrative and performative learning and by providing empirical evidence of its effectiveness. Results demonstrate that students exposed to storytelling and dramatization showed significantly higher comprehension, memory retention, participation, emotional engagement, and creative expression compared with those taught through traditional lecture methods. These findings confirm that narrative-based and performative approaches enhance learning effectiveness and support deeper historical and literary understanding in culturally specific university courses.

Keywords: Alash intellectuals, fiction, storytelling, dramatization, innovative teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of independence, one of the pressing tasks of the education system is to introduce students to the most significant figures in national history. Teaching the artistic image of the Alash intellectuals (Kazakh figures of the early 20th century) within the subject *Kazakh Literature* strengthens students' historical and literary consciousness and promotes a holistic perception of national culture [1]. However, existing instructional practices still predominantly rely on traditional, text-centered and teacher-led formats, which tend to reduce student participation to passive reception. Recent classroom studies in Kazakhstan demonstrate that such approaches result in superficial factual recall, limited emotional engagement, and weak development of analytical and interpretive skills [2].

Therefore, innovative pedagogical approaches are needed to increase interest and actively involve students. Among these, storytelling and dramatization are particularly effective. Storytelling presents educational material as a narrative, engaging students' emotions and imagination, whereas dramatization stages the material through role-playing, allowing students to embody artistic or historical plots. Both methods enliven learning and foster interactive participation.

Beyond the national context, pedagogical study of Alash figures holds broader relevance for international scholarship. As higher education increasingly emphasizes intercultural literacy and curriculum decolonization, integrating local intellectual traditions such as Alash offers insights into how literature can mediate identity formation and critical reflection across cultures. Moreover, the selected methods storytelling and dramatization are culturally resonant and align with major educational theories. Storytelling is consistent with contemporary experiential and constructivist learning models proposed by Kolb and Kolb, who emphasize that meaning emerges through active engagement, reflection, and narrative framing of experience [3]. Recent research reinforces this connection: dramatization has been shown to transform abstract historical material into embodied and emotionally anchored learning experiences, enabling students to develop understanding through action, role interpretation, and reflective dialogue. Mastrothanas (2025) demonstrates that drama-based instructional methods not only support experiential learning, but also strengthen teacher and learner confidence in navigating complex cultural narratives, making dramatization a relevant methodology in higher education settings [4].

Despite the theoretical relevance of these frameworks, their application in teaching culturally specific literary material particularly Kazakh national heritage remains limited. Existing empirical studies tend to focus either on language learning, on general historical education, or on Western canonical texts, leaving a methodological gap concerning how narrative and performative techniques operate within postcolonial or culturally rooted literature courses. Furthermore, no prior studies have examined whether combining storytelling and dramatization produces additive or synergistic effects on learning outcomes. To address this gap, the present study pursues the following research questions: (1) How do storytelling and dramatization influence students' comprehension, motivation, creativity, and engagement when studying literary representations of Alash intellectuals? (2) Does a combined application of these two methods produce stronger learning outcomes compared with traditional lecture-based instruction?

The contribution of this study lies in developing a structured and replicable instructional model that integrates storytelling and dramatization within university-level literature education and in providing empirical evidence supporting its pedagogical value. By combining theoretical justification with classroom-based experimentation, the research demonstrates how narrative and performative techniques can be systematically applied to enhance student learning. The findings indicate that students taught through the integrated method exhibited notably higher levels of comprehension, retention, creative expression, and participation compared with peers exposed to traditional lecture-based instruction. Thus, the study positions storytelling and dramatization not merely as supplementary tools, but as pedagogically impactful strategies capable of transforming literature teaching in culturally grounded academic settings.

To summarize, the aim of this study is to examine the pedagogical effectiveness of integrating storytelling and dramatization into the teaching of literary representations of Alash intellectuals in higher education. The research seeks to determine whether these methods lead to measurable improvements in students' comprehension, motivation, creativity, and engagement when compared with traditional lecture-based instruction. The contribution of this study is twofold: first, it proposes a structured instructional framework that operationalizes storytelling and dramatization as sequential and interdependent teaching strategies applicable to culturally grounded literature courses; second, it provides empirical evidence demonstrating that the combined use of these methods results in significantly enhanced learning outcomes. By addressing a clear methodological gap, this study offers new insights into culturally responsive and interactive pedagogical practices in Kazakh literature education.

II. RELATED WORK

The pedagogical methods of storytelling and dramatization have been widely examined across diverse educational contexts for their capacity to strengthen student engagement, deepen comprehension, and stimulate creative expression. Within higher education, storytelling is defined as a structured instructional technique that presents educational material in narrative form, allowing factual content to be embedded within emotionally resonant, chronologically meaningful sequences. A growing body of research demonstrates that narrative-based learning increases conceptual clarity, supports schema formation, and enhances long-term memory retention by linking new information with emotional and experiential associations [5, 6]. Psycholinguistic research further confirms that the probability of recalling information increases up to twentyfold when content is presented as part of a coherent event structure rather than in isolated, decontextualized fragments [6]. Empirical findings from language instruction, literature pedagogy, and multimodal learning environments show that storytelling not only fosters imagination and positive attitudes toward the learning material but also supports the development of linguistic competence, socio-cultural awareness, and communication skills [7, 8].

Dramatization, by contrast, transforms educational material into embodied performance and is increasingly framed within contemporary theories of experiential and drama-based learning. Recent research confirms that drama-based instruction facilitates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement by situating learners inside historical or literary contexts rather than positioning them as external observers. According to Arias and Guerrero, dramatization serves as a mechanism for immersive meaning-making: when students enact historical events or literary characters, they engage in situated learning that strengthens empathy, analytical reasoning, and retention. Their meta-analysis demonstrates that drama-based learning consistently yields higher emotional involvement and more durable conceptual understanding compared with conventional instructional approaches, indicating that performance-based techniques activate both cognitive processing and affective response in ways that traditional instruction does not. This embodied interaction fosters emotional empathy, supports multi-perspective reasoning, and promotes a holistic understanding of complex subject matter. Moreover, international research highlights that dramatic arts constitute a catalyst for active learning, facilitating intrinsic motivation, collaborative participation, improvisation, perspective-taking, and enhanced retention of academic content [10, 11]. The integration of dramatization within higher education is increasingly discussed not merely as a supplementary activity but as a legitimate pedagogical methodology aligned with inquiry-based, constructivist, and student-centered pedagogical paradigms.

Within the context of Kazakh literature, both storytelling and dramatization acquire additional cultural, historical, and epistemological significance. Their relevance becomes particularly pronounced in teaching the literary representation of Alash intellectuals—historical figures whose contributions played a foundational role in shaping modern Kazakh identity, literary discourse, and intellectual tradition. Representations of these figures occur across multiple genres, including the poetic works of Akhmet Baitursynuly, Mirzhakyp Dulatuly, and Magzhan Zhumabayev; prose and dramatic texts by later writers, such as Mukhtar Auezov, who integrated the figure of Alikhan Bokeikhan into *The Path of Abai* [12]; as well as contemporary theatrical works such as M. Titakululy's *About Alash*, which reconstruct artistic, ideological, and psychological portraits of both prominent and lesser-known members of the movement [13]. In this literary context, storytelling and dramatization serve not only as pedagogical tools but also as mechanisms of cultural continuity, national memory transmission, and decolonial knowledge recovery.

Kazakhstani and regional scholarship strengthen this perspective. Smagulov, for instance, traced the methodological evolution of Kazakh literary studies and emphasized the significance of context-sensitive, culturally rooted pedagogical approaches for national literature instruction [14]. Building on this foundation, recent research by Arda Tuncdemir demonstrates that drama-based learning in higher education significantly strengthens historical empathy, analytical reasoning, and interpretive depth, particularly when complex cultural or historical narratives are taught through embodied and playful performance rather than passive reception [15]. Complementing these findings, Mashkova showed that storytelling strategies grounded in local literary heritage markedly improve memory retention, creativity, and emotional engagement [16]. Broader regional studies across Central Asia support the claim that combining narrative

and performative pedagogies strengthens collaboration, critical thinking, and interpretive reading skills, while simultaneously reinforcing national cultural identity and relevance in learning environments.

Despite the richness of existing literature, significant gaps remain. Most research foregrounds the effectiveness of storytelling or dramatization independently, rather than examining their synergistic pedagogical potential when intentionally combined. Additionally, prior investigations tend to prioritize language acquisition, general historical education, or Western canonical literature, whereas the culturally situated application of these methods within Kazakhstan's postcolonial, national-literature framework remains underexplored. Furthermore, few studies examine how these methods influence higher-level competencies such as cultural literacy, epistemic reflexivity, narrative reasoning, or identity formation.

This study addresses these gaps by systematically analyzing the theoretical foundations, applied implementation, and pedagogical outcomes of an integrated storytelling–dramatization methodology specifically adapted for courses focused on the literary representation of Alash intellectuals. The present research contributes to the field not only by applying these methods within an underexamined cultural context but also by evaluating their combined instructional impact using mixed-methods empirical analysis.

III. MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods pedagogical research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The aim is to enhance literature education through innovative instructional methods, specifically storytelling and dramatization. These methods are applied in teaching the literary portrayals of Alash intellectuals in higher education. The research is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes active student engagement, experiential learning, and the integration of cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions in the learning process. The choice of these two methods was based on their demonstrated potential to foster emotional involvement, creativity, collaboration, and deeper comprehension of national identity themes in literature education. The design allowed for a comparative approach, examining the effects of traditional lecture-based instruction versus interactive, student-centered activities.

The research was conducted during the spring semester of the 2024 academic year with second-year philology students. Preliminary stages included a review of relevant scholarly and methodological sources to establish the theoretical foundations of the selected methods. To operationalize the proposed method in a systematic and replicable manner, the intervention followed a sequenced instructional protocol. First, students completed a preliminary diagnostic task and baseline assessment to determine their initial level of knowledge and motivation. Second, during a six-week instructional phase, the experimental group was taught using storytelling and dramatization activities, while the control group continued with traditional lecture-based instruction. Third, at the end of the intervention, both groups completed post-assessment tasks identical in format to the initial measurement, enabling direct comparison of learning outcomes.

Storytelling Implementation. The storytelling component encompassed multiple approaches. One approach was teacher-led historical narration, which presented emotionally engaging stories based on episodes from the lives of Alash figures, such as Alikhan Bokeikhan. These stories highlighted his activities for the Kazakh nation, his struggles on the path to independence, and his personal experiences. Historical facts were conveyed through artistic description, making them more memorable than isolated factual lists. Another form of storytelling involved assigning students, working in small groups, to create short stories or diary entries from the perspective of a specific Alash intellectual, combining creative imagination with historical reflection and empathy. Additionally, first-person retelling was employed, in which students reinterpreted literary texts through the lens of individual characters, allowing for a deeper understanding of their inner worlds. Story-based classroom discussions followed, in which students analyzed and reflected on the narratives to establish emotional and intellectual connections with the historical material.

The implementation of storytelling in this study functioned not only as a creative instructional technique but as an intentional pedagogical procedure: students first received narrative exposure, then produced an interpretative text, and finally participated in a guided analytical discussion. This three-stage cycle constituted a core element of the proposed method.

The theoretical underpinnings of storytelling are designed to activate students' emotional and social perception. Research indicates that information presented in narrative form is perceived more clearly, with abstract concepts becoming more tangible for learners [5]. Psychologically, the human brain remembers information related to a network of events more effectively than unstructured data, with studies showing that event-based presentation can increase recall probability by up to twenty times compared to ordinary factual delivery [6]. Storytelling serves multiple pedagogical functions: motivating learners, simplifying complex concepts, sustaining attention, and fostering emotional connection. Evidence from language teaching shows that storytelling cultivates positive attitudes toward the subject, develops imagination, and increases creative activity [7, 8]. By listening to stories, students compare themselves to characters and visualize the events, enhancing their creative abilities, while shared listening and analysis strengthen social bonds within the group.

Dramatization Implementation. The dramatization method was implemented as the staging of educational material in the form of theatrical performance. Students assumed specific roles and enacted selected plots, whether from literary works or historical events, "experiencing" the situations as the characters would have. The theoretical basis for dramatization lies in the concept of learning through play, where turning lessons into performative activities increases internal motivation and deepens knowledge acquisition. Methodologists describe dramatization as a unique means of recreating the image of historical figures from a past era, allowing students to experience historical events firsthand [17]. In literature lessons, dramatization helps to explain characters' inner worlds and the author's ideas more deeply. This approach proved particularly suitable for the portrayal of the Alash intelligentsia, as many fictional works depict these figures or the events of their time. Drawing on both classical and modern literature, excerpts were selected for staging, including episodes from Zhusupbek Aimaurov's novel *Kartkozha* [18], Mukhtar Auezov's epic *The Path of Abai* [19], and contemporary plays such as M. Titakululy's *About Alash* [20], which reconstruct authentic literary images of both well-known and lesser-known intellectuals [12,13]. Contemporary public scholarship also reinforces the cultural relevance of these figures, highlighting renewed interest in their intellectual legacy and representation in national memory discourse [21]. Recent studies further demonstrate that storytelling and dramatization remain relevant within contemporary digital and culturally grounded learning environments. Munajah, Sumantri, and Yufiarti note that digital storytelling rooted in local cultural values significantly improves writing fluency, reflective reasoning, and emotional engagement, especially when learners interact with historically meaningful content [22]. Similarly, findings by Ginting confirm that storytelling delivered through narrated video formats enhances knowledge retention and the transferability of learned material to new contexts, reinforcing the cognitive value of narrative structuring in higher education [23]. Together, these studies align with the goals of the present research and emphasize that narrative- and performance-based teaching strategies retain pedagogical effectiveness even when adapted to modern instructional formats.

Even in the absence of ready dramatic works, teachers prepared short scripts based on historical events. One example was the improvisational scene "The meeting of the Alash Horde," in which students portrayed figures such as A. Bokeikhan, A. Baitursynov, M. Dulatuly, and H. Dosmukhameduly engaging in political discussions of their era. In preparation, students studied archival materials and literary sources to accurately depict speech patterns and behavioral traits. Post-performance discussions encouraged reflection on historical accuracy and artistic interpretation. Within the proposed method, dramatization followed a structured cycle similar to storytelling: preparation (role assignment and text work), performance (embodied enactment), and reflection (analytical group discussion). Applying this structure allowed dramatization to function not merely as an artistic task but as a research-based pedagogical intervention.

Dramatization offers significant didactic and educational benefits. Embodying a historical personality enables students to feel the spirit of the era and emotionally immerse themselves in history, experiencing feelings such as love, compassion, pride, and responsibility for their homeland [9]. It also develops teamwork and communication skills, as students collaborate on scriptwriting, role distribution, and set design, building stronger interpersonal relationships in the process [10]. Additionally, dramatization enhances creativity and critical thinking, as students must imagine and design stage elements based on historical or literary data, analyze character motivations, and employ expressive language to convey meaning [11].

The practical work undertaken in this study included the development, application, and evaluation of the proposed pedagogical method in a real instructional setting. The author designed and adapted storytelling and dramatization activities specifically for the topic of Alash intellectuals, structured lesson plans according to the sequential instructional model, and implemented these lessons across a six-week teaching period. During the intervention, student-created texts, performances, classroom interactions, and engagement behaviors were documented and systematically analyzed. Quantitative assessment tools were developed to compare pre- and post-instruction comprehension, creativity, and participation levels between the experimental and control groups. In addition, qualitative materials including written reflections, survey responses, classroom observations, and performance transcripts were collected to capture student experience, emotional engagement, depth of historical understanding, and perceived learning value. Through this process, the article provides not only theoretical justification for the method, but also empirical validation and methodological guidance for its potential pedagogical use in higher education.

The instructional framework tested in this study represents a combined pedagogical method integrating storytelling and dramatization as sequential, interdependent components. Unlike conventional lecture-based approaches, the proposed method activates cognitive, emotional, and performative dimensions of learning. The method consists of two core structured cycles: (1) the storytelling cycle, in which students receive narrative exposure, reinterpret literary material creatively, and engage in guided analytical reflection; and (2) the dramatization cycle, which requires role preparation, embodied performance of literary or historical material, and post-performance reflection. These cycles are intentionally applied in a fixed order story first, performance second to support gradual internalization of content, emotional engagement, and active meaning-making. The proposed method is therefore conceptualized as a scaffolded instructional sequence designed to enhance memory retention, cultural understanding, interpretative thinking, and student motivation in literature education.

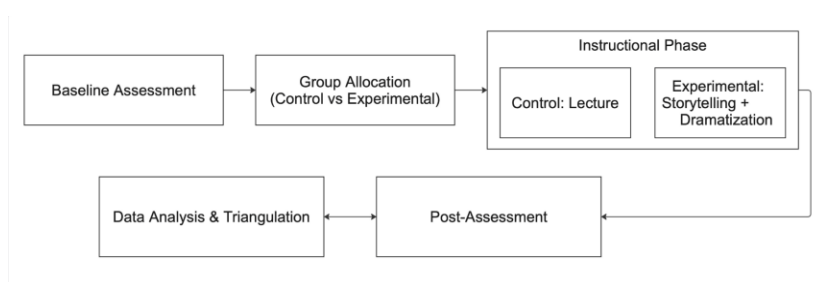


FIGURE 1. Overview of the experimental research procedure.

The model illustrates the sequential stages of the study, beginning with baseline assessment, followed by random allocation of participants into control and experimental cohorts. The instructional phase then proceeded through two distinct pedagogical approaches: traditional lecture-based teaching for the control group and a combined storytelling-and-dramatization methodology for the experimental group. After the intervention, both groups completed post-assessments, and comparative analytical procedures were conducted with the support of triangulation to ensure internal validity and reliability.

To ensure methodological transparency, internal consistency, and replicability, the intervention was designed and implemented as a structured multi-stage research procedure. The process commenced with a baseline diagnostic assessment measuring prior knowledge, motivation, and creative writing ability, providing an empirical reference point for subsequent comparison. Following this step, participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group, a methodological decision intended to minimize selection bias and achieve balanced demographic and academic profiles across groups. The core instructional intervention took place over a six-week period during which both groups studied the same thematic content related to the literary representations of Alash intellectuals. The instructional experience, however, diverged: while the control group received traditional lecture-based instruction, the experimental group engaged in an integrated instructional sequence that included narrative exposure

(storytelling), student-led interpretive reconstruction of literary material, embodied performance (dramatization), and guided reflective discussion.

Upon completion of the instructional phase, post-assessment tools equivalent to those administered at baseline were used to measure learning gains in comprehension, retention, creativity, and engagement. Finally, the collected data were analyzed through a combination of statistical comparison and qualitative triangulation. Quantitative differences between pre- and post-intervention scores were used to evaluate the effect of the instructional design, while qualitative materials including reflective responses, classroom observations, performance transcripts, and student surveys were independently coded by multiple reviewers to strengthen analytical rigor and reduce subjective bias. This sequential, rigorously controlled design enabled an empirically grounded evaluation of the pedagogical impact of storytelling and dramatization in contrast to traditional lecture-based instruction.

1. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection followed a mixed-methods framework to capture both measurable learning outcomes and experiential learning processes. Qualitative data were obtained through classroom observations, analysis of student-generated narratives and dramatization outputs, and post-lesson surveys assessing engagement, comprehension, and perceived skill development. Quantitative data included comparative testing scores and rubric-based assessments of creative writing tasks, allowing systematic comparison between the experimental group (storytelling + dramatization) and the control group (traditional lecture-based instruction).

To ensure analytical reliability and minimize subjective interpretation, all qualitative materials were evaluated through triangulation. Two literature instructors independently reviewed observational records and student work, while an educational psychologist conducted categorical coding and cross-checked thematic patterns against survey responses and quantitative test results. The student survey included twelve items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), complemented by open-response prompts to capture nuanced reflections. Content validity was evaluated by subject-matter experts (two literature instructors and one educational psychologist), while internal consistency reliability demonstrated strong coherence (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$). The integration of qualitative and quantitative datasets provided a comprehensive evidence base for evaluating the instructional effectiveness of storytelling and dramatization in teaching the literary and historical representations of Alash intellectuals.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research was designed as a controlled pedagogical experiment positioned within a mixed-methods framework, allowing comparison between traditional lecture-based instruction and an innovative instructional model integrating storytelling and dramatization. The design followed a sequential structure to ensure methodological transparency, internal validity, and replicability. The study began with a baseline diagnostic assessment measuring students' initial knowledge of Alash-related literary material, motivation levels, and creative writing abilities. These initial measurements served as reference indicators for evaluating the impact of the intervention. Following the baseline assessment, participants were randomly assigned to control and experimental groups to minimize selection bias and ensure comparable demographic and academic characteristics across both cohorts.

The instructional intervention took place over a six-week teaching period during regular university literature classes. Both groups received identical thematic content focused on the literary representation of Alash intellectuals; however, the pedagogical approaches differed. The control group continued learning through a conventional lecture-based format, while the experimental group engaged in an instructional model that combined narrative exposure through storytelling, student reinterpretation of literary material, performative dramatization, and guided reflective discussion. This sequence was intentionally structured so that storytelling established emotional and conceptual grounding, which was then explored and embodied through dramatization.

Upon completion of the instructional phase, a post-assessment identical in structure to the baseline was administered. This allowed direct comparison of learning outcomes in terms of comprehension, retention,

motivation, creativity, and engagement. Quantitative results were analyzed through statistical methods to evaluate measurable differences between the two groups, while qualitative data consisting of written reflections, classroom observations, performance transcripts, and survey responses were thematically coded by multiple independent reviewers to enhance analytical reliability and reduce subjective bias. Through this multi-stage, comparative, and methodologically triangulated research design, the study made it possible to examine not only whether the integrated storytelling–dramatization model improved learning outcomes, but also how and why these effects emerged in the context of culturally grounded literature instruction.

IV. RESULTS

The analysis of the collected data revealed clear differences between the control and experimental groups, demonstrating the measurable impact of storytelling and dramatization on student learning outcomes. Quantitative results showed that students in the experimental group performed significantly higher across all assessed indicators. Memory retention after lessons reached 90% in the experimental group, compared to 55% in the control group. Participation rates during dramatization tasks increased to 100% in the experimental group, whereas the control group demonstrated only 62% engagement. Post-instruction comprehension scores were also higher in the experimental group ($M = 87.3$, $SD = 5.4$) compared to the control group ($M = 75.9$, $SD = 6.2$), and the difference was statistically significant ($t(50) = 6.42$, $p < 0.001$). Creative writing outcomes followed the same trend: the experimental group achieved an average score of 8.4/10, while the control group scored 7.2/10 ($t(50) = 4.15$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that the implementation of storytelling and dramatization substantially improved comprehension, creativity, participation, and retention compared with traditional lecture-based instruction.

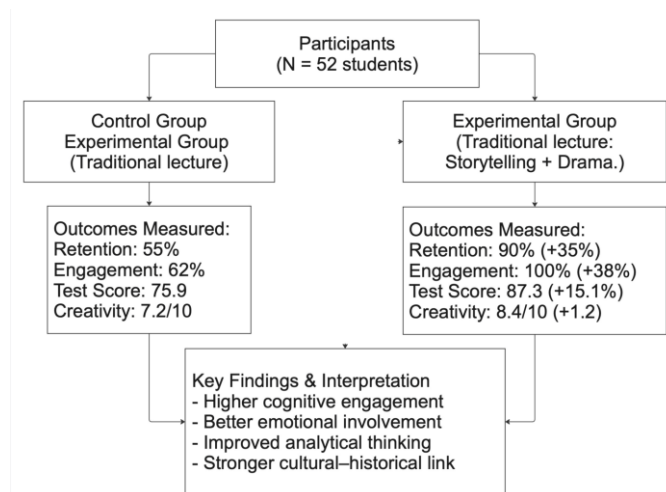


FIGURE 2. Visual comparison of learning outcomes between the control and experimental groups.

This diagram presents a structured comparison of four key indicators measured during the study: memory retention, student engagement, comprehension test scores, and creativity development. The visualized data clearly demonstrate substantial differences between the two instructional approaches. Students in the experimental group, who were taught using an integrated method combining storytelling and dramatization, showed markedly higher retention rates (90% compared with 55%), full participation during learning activities (100% compared with 62%), and improved academic performance as reflected in post-intervention test scores ($M = 87.3$ vs. $M = 75.9$; $p < 0.001$). Creativity scores also demonstrated meaningful improvement, with the experimental group outperforming the control group by an average margin of 1.2 points. The results visualized in Figure 2 reinforce the conclusion that storytelling and dramatization lead to

improved cognitive–emotional engagement, deeper learning, and enhanced performance outcomes in comparison with traditional lecture-based instruction.

Following the quantitative analysis, classroom-based observations and qualitative data provided further insight into how these methods influenced students’ motivation, emotional engagement, and depth of understanding. In interactive lessons delivered through storytelling and dramatization, students demonstrated noticeably higher motivation and participation. For instance, during a lesson focused on A. Bokeikhan, students in the experimental group showed increased attentiveness and active engagement compared with those in traditional lecture sessions. A short survey confirmed this effect, with 90% of respondents stating that narrative-based presentation significantly improved memory retention. Similarly, dramatization of the image of M. Dulatuly resulted in strong emotional involvement: after the performance, all students voluntarily participated in the discussion and shared their interpretations of the historical material.

To enhance the reliability of classroom observations and minimize subjective interpretation, a triangulation procedure was employed. Multiple forms of qualitative evidence classroom observation notes, student-generated creative texts, and survey responses were independently reviewed by two literature instructors, while a third specialist conducted categorical coding of responses and narrative materials. This multilayered validation approach strengthened the methodological rigor and increased confidence in the consistency of the findings regarding the effectiveness of storytelling and dramatization.

Teacher observations further confirmed that the applied methods not only generated emotional engagement but also deepened understanding of educational content. During a seminar on the theme of Alash intellectuals, students who initially provided brief or surface-level answers began to articulate more informed and complex interpretations after participating in dramatization activities. Students assigned performance roles reported conducting additional inquiry into biographical and historical context to accurately portray the characters and the sociopolitical conditions of their time. One student reflected: “Only after performing the role of R. Marsekov did I fully understand the complexity of the situation in which the Alash-Horde government operated. Acting forced me to notice details I had previously overlooked when merely reading.” This reflection illustrates how dramatization transformed passive reception of information into analytical engagement and reflective thinking. The method brought historical realities into the students’ experiential space, reinforcing embodied understanding and long-term memory consolidation. A similar pattern emerged during the storytelling component. After completing the creative assignment titled “The Last Monologue of A. Bokeikhan”, students demonstrated enhanced capacity to reason about historical causes and consequences. Their written texts included elements of narrative logic, emotional inference, and personal interpretation. These outcomes demonstrate that narrative reconstruction supports higher-order cognitive processing, enabling students not only to recall facts but also to interpret, synthesize, and contextualize them.

Related international studies support these findings. Research from the United States demonstrates that theatrical reenactment in history education improves not only conceptual knowledge but also historical empathy and motivation to engage with historical materials. Consistent with this, many students in the present study produced extended written reflections on the consequences of the 1937–38 repression and its impact on the Alash intelligentsia. The emotional tone and analytical precision of these reflections indicate meaningful cognitive–affective integration skills rarely observed in traditional lecture-based instruction.

The study sample consisted of 52 second-year philology students (aged 19–21; 28 females, 24 male), randomly assigned to control and experimental groups to ensure equitable distribution of demographic variables and minimize potential selection bias. Key competencies were operationalized as measurable variables: reflection (assessed through written reflections and narrative retellings), creativity (measured through creative writing tasks and improvisational dramatization), and collaboration (observed during group coordination, role negotiation, and mutual feedback).

Across these indicators, the integrated application of storytelling and dramatization demonstrated a more substantial pedagogical effect than either method implemented independently. Storytelling increased cognitive engagement and strengthened memory links by embedding factual content within narrative structures. Dramatization promoted emotional resonance, active participation, and empathic understanding

of historical figures. Together, these methods supported multidimensional learning processes connecting cognition, emotion, and social interaction. Importantly, the method aligns with decolonial pedagogical principles, positioning students not as passive learners of state-approved narratives, but as active interpreters of cultural memory and national literary heritage. To synthesize these patterns, Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the instructional impact of storytelling, dramatization, and their combined implementation across core learning indicators measured in the study.

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of the influence of storytelling and dramatization methods on the learning process.

Learning Dimension	Storytelling	Dramatization	Combined Method
Engagement & Motivation	Builds interest through narrative structure and emotional tone.	Stimulates active participation through role-play and performance.	Highest engagement: narrative curiosity transforms into embodied participation.
Emotional response	Encourages empathy through character identification and personal narrative framing.	Generates strong affective involvement by “living through” historical events.	Emotional connection deepened and sustained across learning phases.
Knowledge acquisition	Facilitates understanding through structured narrative context and sequencing of events.	Enhances content retention through experiential and contextual immersion.	Produces stronger conceptualization and long-term retention compared with either method alone.
Cognitive processing	Activates imagination and triggers reflective and inferential reasoning.	Promotes analytical thinking through role interpretation and decision-making.	Supports higher-order thinking: interpretation – embodied reasoning – synthesis.
Creativity development	Encourages narrative construction, figurative language use, and imaginative framing.	Enhances improvisation, expressive performance, and problem-solving.	Generates the strongest creative output due to dual verbal–performative modality.
Identity and cultural meaning-making	Connects learners with cultural narratives and national heritage.	Personalizes historical figures and fosters identity-based reflection.	Strengthens cultural literacy and historical empathy through layered meaning-making.
Collaboration and communication	Supports dialogue-based reflection and shared interpretation of text.	Requires collective negotiation, coordination, and co-performance.	Produces dynamic social learning environment with sustained group cohesion.
Reflection and metacognition	Promotes written and verbal reflection on meaning and narrative choices.	Encourages post-performance analytical discussion and evaluation.	Enables iterative reflection across narrative, action, and interpretation stages.

Source: prepared by the author.

The combined method demonstrates the strongest pedagogical effect across all dimensions, particularly in cognitive processing, creativity, and emotional engagement, confirming the synergistic impact of narrative and performative learning. The student-produced materials provide additional evidence of linguistic and cognitive development. Narratives written after storytelling activities demonstrate increased competence in shaping coherent plots, applying artistic language, and integrating metaphor, dialogue, and personification. These linguistic features reflect not only heightened creativity but also the reconstruction of historical perspective through literary means. Such skills represent core learning outcomes in literature education, specifically the development of aesthetic sensitivity and mastery of expressive language.

Classroom dynamics during dramatization further revealed affective and behavioral shifts. While initial hesitation or stage anxiety was observed among some students, repeated engagement with performance tasks increased confidence, self-expression, and collaborative problem-solving. These behavioral changes indicate strengthened self-efficacy and social participation dimensions central to competence formation in contemporary higher education frameworks. A noteworthy pedagogical insight from the implementation is the balance between prior knowledge and new content. In practice, approximately 60% of narrative framing relied on students' existing knowledge bases (historical context, school-level learning, cultural memory), while 40% introduced new material. The experimental group showed a stronger ability to integrate new information into prior conceptual frameworks, forming more coherent and meaningful knowledge structures.

Quantitative results confirmed these qualitative trends: the experimental group scored 15% higher on comprehension assessments and 1.2 points higher on creative writing rubrics compared with the control group. The convergence of both data types reinforces the conclusion that storytelling and dramatization not only enhance measurable academic performance but also deepen interpretive engagement and analytical reasoning. Students' written and oral reflections highlight further pedagogical benefits: strengthened motivation, increased autonomy in learning, and improved teamwork. Challenges were also noted, including the time required for dramatization preparation, varying student readiness for performative tasks, and the sensitivity required when presenting historical figures. These were mitigated through supportive planning, scaffolding strategies, and flexible task distribution. Overall, the evidence demonstrates that storytelling and dramatization significantly improve comprehension, retention, creativity, and communicative competence. More importantly, these methods foster historically situated critical thinking, empathy, and reflective interpretation. While applied here to the topic of the Alash intellectuals, the approach has broader pedagogical potential across literary and historical topics within Kazakh literature curricula.

V. LIMITATIONS

While the findings demonstrate clear pedagogical benefits of storytelling and dramatization, several methodological and contextual limitations must be acknowledged. First, dramatization as an instructional technique requires considerable preparation time, including script adaptation, role distribution, and rehearsal, which may not be feasible in settings with limited instructional hours or rigid curriculum structures. Second, given the sensitivity of historical material particularly the portrayal of real Alash intellectuals there is a risk of oversimplification or unintended emotional discomfort, requiring careful facilitation and historically informed guidance from instructors. Third, the effectiveness of the method is partially influenced by individual differences in students' confidence, creativity, and willingness to engage in performance-based tasks. Although scaffolding strategies and optional participation formats were implemented, variation in student readiness may have affected learning outcomes. Finally, the relatively small sample size ($n = 52$) and single institutional context limit the generalizability of results to broader educational environments. To mitigate these constraints, the study incorporated staged support strategies, secondary role assignments, historically verified material, and triangulated data analysis. Nonetheless, future research employing larger, multi-institutional samples and longitudinal observation would further validate the instructional model and its scalability.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research provide robust empirical and theoretical evidence in support of storytelling and dramatization as integrated instructional methods for teaching the literary representation of Alash intellectuals in higher education. Quantitative results demonstrated statistically significant increases in comprehension, retention, creativity, and student engagement among participants in the experimental group compared with those instructed through traditional lecture-based methods. These outcomes align with previous studies showing that narrative formats enhance motivation and memory retention [5–6], while performative methods promote experiential learning, empathy, and higher-order cognitive processing [7–9, 12]. Qualitative evidence further illuminated the pedagogical mechanisms underlying these gains. Student reflections, observational data, and performance-based responses revealed increased emotional involvement, deeper analytical reasoning, and stronger capacity for contextual interpretation of historical and cultural material. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that narrative and performative learning foster historical empathy, sustained engagement, and meaningful cognitive integration [11–13]. Thus, the mixed-methods analysis confirms that the integrated model not only improves measurable academic outcomes but also transforms the learning process by engaging cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of understanding. Beyond measurable impact, this study offers broader pedagogical significance. Storytelling allowed students to connect course material with existing cultural knowledge and personal meaning, whereas dramatization personalized historical narratives and encouraged active reinterpretation. Together, these methods shifted learning from passive absorption to co-construction of meaning, resonating with contemporary decolonial and culturally responsive pedagogical frameworks in which learners engage critically with national literary heritage rather than memorizing predefined interpretations.

The study also presents practical implications for higher education. The integrated method can be adapted for other themes in Kazakh literature and related humanities fields concerned with cultural identity, intellectual history, memory studies, or narrative epistemology. The development of structured teaching resources including ready-to-use story modules, dramatization scripts, and reflective assessment tools may support broader implementation. Additionally, digital storytelling environments and virtual performance platforms offer future pathways for scaling this approach in blended, remote, and multilingual learning contexts. In summary, the integrated application of storytelling and dramatization represents an effective and culturally grounded pedagogical strategy that enriches literature learning by fostering comprehension, reflection, creativity, collaboration, and emotional engagement. The instructional model developed in this research is replicable, pedagogically justified, and adaptable across curricula, offering a meaningful contribution to contemporary approaches in literary and humanities education.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization, A.S. and Z.Zh.; methodology, A.S.; software, M.Zh.; validation, A.S., Z.Zh., and K.A.; formal analysis, K.A.; investigation, K.Au.; resources, B.A.; data curation, M.Zh.; writing—original draft preparation, A.S.; writing—review and editing, Z.Zh.; visualization, M.Zh.; supervision, Z.Zh.; project administration, A.S.; funding acquisition, Z.Zh. All authors made an equal contribution to the development and planning of the study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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