

Need And Importance Of Literature In School Curriculum

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The use of literature across the curriculum refers to integrating literary texts into subjects beyond the traditional English language arts class. It involves incorporating novels, poems, plays, and other forms of literature into various academic disciplines, such as science, history, mathematics, and even physical education. Reading literature remains at the heart not only of the language arts (LA) curriculum but of the cultural debate and the educated public sphere of imaginative and experiential reflection in general. Across the world, educational systems invest heavily in the expectation that literary reading in the classroom may teach students a number of social, human, and cultural values. Active engagement in literary reading has long been considered a form of vicarious experience (Rosenblatt, 2005), and it is linked with the ability to understand the perspectives of others (Poulet, 1969).

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Introduction

This interdisciplinary approach offers numerous benefits to students, including enhanced understanding, critical thinking skills, and a deeper appreciation for both literature and the subject matter being studied.

1. **Enhancing Understanding:** Literature can provide students with a different perspective and deeper understanding of complex concepts. For example, reading historical fiction can bring historical events to life, helping students connect emotionally with the people and situations they are studying. Similarly, using literature in science classes can present scientific principles in engaging and relatable narratives, making the subject more accessible and memorable.

2. **Developing Critical Thinking Skills:** Literature often explores complex themes, moral dilemmas, and character motivations, encouraging students to think critically and analyze situations from multiple angles. Integrating literature into different subjects allows students to practice these skills in various contexts. They can analyze the motivations of historical figures, make connections between scientific principles and ethical considerations, or interpret mathematical problems presented through storytelling.
3. **Fostering Empathy and Cultural Understanding:** Literature exposes students to diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences. By incorporating literature from different authors, time periods, and regions, educators can promote empathy and broaden students' worldview. Students can develop a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity, social issues, and the complexities of human experiences.
4. **Improving Language and Communication Skills:** Literature is a rich source of language, vocabulary, and literary techniques. Integrating literature across the curriculum allows students to encounter sophisticated language use in various subjects, enhancing their reading, writing, and communication skills. Literary texts can inspire students to express their thoughts, engage in discussions, and improve their overall literacy abilities.
5. **Fostering Creativity and Imagination:** Literature stimulates creativity and imagination by presenting imaginative worlds, thought-provoking scenarios, and rich descriptions. Incorporating literature into different subjects encourages students to think creatively and envision possibilities beyond the immediate content. This can inspire innovative problem-solving, unique perspectives, and imaginative approaches to learning.
6. **Engaging and Motivating Students:** Literature has the power to captivate and engage students in ways that traditional textbooks may not. The inclusion of literary texts in different subjects adds variety, novelty, and a personal connection to the material, making learning more enjoyable and meaningful for students. This engagement can increase motivation, curiosity, and a desire for lifelong learning.

There are a number of reasons why English teachers are turning back to literature as a way to develop students' reading skill:

- As most English language literature is written for native speakers, it prepares learners for the types of language they will have to read and understand in the real world.
- It encourages students to communicate with others, by sharing their thoughts and feelings about the story.
- Students engage with the attitudes and opinions expressed by the author or the characters. This helps students to develop their sense of self, their moral code, and their understanding of the world.
- Exposure to non-standard forms of English (as is often found in novels) can help students to recognize norms and patterns.
- Books written by popular authors will likely be more interesting and engaging than texts in language course books, no matter how much effort is put into writing them.

- Literature is motivating, as finishing a book is a real achievement for language learners.
- Most importantly, by fostering a love of reading from a young age, students become independent learners who, whenever they pick up a book to read for pleasure, are actually improving their language skills more than any homework task could.

The imaginative powers of literature may even expand our capacity for empathy and social judgment (Nussbaum, 1997). Interestingly, empirical studies have recently supported such notions, both for adult readers (e.g., Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Mar & Oatley, 2008; Koopman & Hakemulder, 2015) and within a secondary language arts school context (see Schrijvers, Janssen, Fialho, & Rijlaarsdam's (2019) thorough review of literature classroom interventions studies). However, recent trends in national policies on literacy—favoring comprehension over creativity, cognition over feeling, and measurable skills over *Bildung*—have reactivated the need to investigate how literature is actually read and taught in school (Alsup, 2015; Ongstad, 2015). Certainly, the imaginative potential of which Aristotle speaks in his *Poetics* and the critical powers that Nussbaum has tied to the reading of literature come neither by themselves nor without careful teaching. Therefore, exploring the practices and functions by which adolescents are introduced to literature in school is an endeavor that is both essential and timely in educational research. Following Judith Langer, the literary experience “involves openness and inquiry—where we continually search for and ‘try out’ possibilities for the moment and for the future” (Langer, 2011, p. 29). This kind of inquiry is different from other kinds of thinking; it has the potential to support and improve explorative and creative thinking.

As Langer (2013) emphasizes, “reading literature involves cognitive dimensions that are critical components of intellectual development” (p. 162). Reading fiction develops not only literary text competence but also a more general text competence as well as enabling students to acquire knowledge and express themselves in various subjects and situations (Alsup, 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Langer, 2011, 2013; Leverage, Mancing, Schweickert, & William, 2011). The extent and degree of children's opportunities to engage with literary texts at home vary greatly (e.g., Heath, 1982; Wazik & Van Horn, 2012). Therefore, meetings between students and literary texts orchestrated by competent schoolteachers have become increasingly important. If literary competence is something that schools should develop (as is often the expectation across countries), it is of paramount importance that teachers contribute to socializing students into ways of reading literature and the literary discourse that we draw on to make sense of what we read.

While literary texts still play a key role in LA instruction, the meaning of reading in the context of language arts has undergone a shift in many countries: many curricula and policies in educational systems around the world now stress the importance of generic text competence and non-fiction literacy skills (see, e.g., Harris & Ammermann, 2016; Liberg, Wiksten Folkeryd, & Geijerstam, 2012; Pieper, Aase, Fleming, & Samahaian, 2007; Witte & Sâmihaian, 2013). Some scholars worry that this change may leave less room for literature in the curriculum and less time for reading fiction in the classroom (Alsup, 2015; Appleman, 2014; Krogh & Penne, 2015; Langer, 2013; Penne, 2013; Stotsky, Traffas, & Woodworth, 2010). The situation is no different in India (Ongstad, 2015), where this study was conducted. Fiction and non-fiction have the same status in the national curriculum from 2006, which

contains fewer guidelines than in previous curricula regarding how instruction might be organized and what literature students should read.

The increased focus on generic skills, which might challenge the value of literature, calls for deeper knowledge of how literary texts are used in LA instruction and how teachers justify the reading of literary texts. Further, studies of literary texts in instructional contexts have often considered existing textbooks and curricula, thus providing important information about the intended or possible rather than the actual teaching of literature. While such studies are important, they cannot broaden our understanding of actual practices in LA classrooms, including the use of literary texts and how teachers socialize students into using them. A number of small-scale studies have considered students working with literature, particular pedagogies, or even literary interventions.

While these studies are well suited to inform theoretical development and analytical work, they, again, do not provide solid descriptive and observational data on the roles of literature in classrooms. How literature is presented through instruction in the LA subject is crucial, as the literary tradition within which students learn appears to be an important factor influencing how students handle literary qualities in the texts they read (Alsup, 2013; Johansson, Myrberg, & Rosén, 2015). There are several ways to approach literary texts in educational settings (e.g., Grossman, 2001; Langer, 2011, 2013; Rosenblatt, 1978), and a key aspect is that students need to engage in meaningful instructional practices with a variety of texts that prompt them to build a deeper understanding of textual content (Applebee, Burroughs, & Stevens, 2000; Duke & Carlisle, 2010; Duke & Pearson, 2008; Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2011; Nystrand, 2006; Nystrand & Gomoran, 1991). However, the way in which students actually work with literary texts in LA lessons remains an understudied area.

Experiential and analytical approaches

Despite the strong positioning of discussion-based approaches in recent theoretical developments as well as evidence from design studies, limited knowledge exists regarding the extent of its use in classrooms. This is also the case for influential instructional traditions based on experiential and analytical approaches (Brevik, Fosse, & Rødnes, 2014; Rødnes, 2014). Within an experiential approach, interpretive work departs from students' experience of the literary text and encourages subjective reasoning. Rather than focusing on comprehension and developing interpretation as a skill, experiential approaches emphasize the unique meeting between reader and text, targeting appreciation of literature as an aesthetic process. The experiential approaches draw on theoretic perspectives from reader-response theories (Bleich, 1978; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978) and cognitive theory regarding the function of literature, such as the theory of mind (Mar & Oatley, 2008). In an analytical approach, interpretation is predominantly text-oriented rather than reader-oriented, using evidence from the text rather than experience as a basis for analysis (Rødnes, 2012; Swann & Allington, 2009).

Theoretically, the analytical approach is closer to literary theory and the analytical traditions of comparative literature. Comparative studies of the instructional focus and interpretive behavior of students in different European countries indicate that the analytical approach is more prevalent in, for instance, French and Russian literature education, while the experiential

approach appears dominant in countries such as Finland, Sweden, and India (Johansson, 2015; Torell, 2002; van de Ven & Docke, 2011). Some of these studies also indicate that the instructional traditions and curricula of different countries have substantial effects on students' interpretive repertoires (Johansson, 2015; Torell, 2002). Experimental studies on the short-term effects of different instructional approaches show similar indications. Fialho, Zyngier, and Miall (2011) compared the effects of interpretive and experiential approaches and found that the former seemed to promote a more plot- or story-driven reading style while the latter spurred more voluntary participation in discussion. In a similar study, Liang (2011) investigated whether sixth-grade students' comprehension and response were affected differently by a reader-response approach (equivalent to the experiential approach) and a cognitive-oriented approach (emphasizing active participation and scaffolding comprehension through strategy instruction).

Although no difference was found in terms of their contribution to general comprehension, the study showed that the response-based approach promoted a superior ability to apply different response modes to open-ended tasks, while the cognitive-oriented approach was more beneficial in promoting students' use of textual evidence to support interpretations. Researchers propose that teachers should facilitate both personal and analytical readings (e.g., Alsop, 2015; Rødnes, 2014, Langer, 2013).

Sustained silent reading

The use of sustained silent reading (SSR)—where students read individually in (mainly) self-selected books (Malloy & Gambrell, 2012)—is widespread in American classrooms (Reutzel, Fawson, & Smith, 2008). The practice is also known as independent reading time (IRT), drop everything and read (DEAR), and individual reading (IR). Such independent reading is a growing practice in Indian classrooms (for an overview, see Svanes, 2016). As an instructional practice, SSR of self-selected books has been promoted for its potential to stimulate motivation and positive attitudes towards reading (Siah & Kwok, 2010; Von Sprecken & Krashen, 1998) and to combine the student's development of literary judgment with pleasurable reading (Bertschi-Kaufmann & Graber, 2017).

Research shows that continued silent reading might improve reading flow (Pressley & Allington, 2014), vocabulary (Cunningham, 2005), and reading comprehension (Hiebert, Wilson, & Trainin, 2010). However, focus has recently shifted from how much to how, emphasizing the importance of instructional quality in silent individual reading (e.g., Svanes, 2016; Topping, Samuels, & Paul, 2007). In American classrooms, this has led to a change towards a more active teacher role in SSR, which is now more commonly referred to as scaffolded silent reading (ScSR; Reutzel et al., 2008). No large-scale studies have investigated the extent or quality of SSR in the Nordic countries. However, findings in a recent study on teachers' role during silent reading in Indian classrooms (Svanes, 2016) indicate that teachers' scaffolding and variation in individual guidance has developed over the last decade compared with earlier classroom practices (e.g. Haug, 2006; Klette, 2003). However, these studies all consider instruction on the elementary level, leaving a research gap concerning SSR instructional practices in the higher grades that requires investigation of both the extent and instructional quality of students' individual in-class reading.\

Language Arts in the Indian context

The empirical data for this study were gathered in Indian secondary classrooms. In India, children have a legal right to 13 years of free education; schooling starts at age 6. The school system is divided into primary (1–7), lower-secondary (8–10), and upper-secondary grades (11–13) and does not distinguish types of schooling in lower-secondary language arts. The focus of this study is on the first year of lower-secondary school (Grade 8; ages 13–14). The 178 lessons in the present study are from Indian LA classrooms, the mother tongue subject (L1) in India. Of all subjects, LA accounts for the largest number of lessons—approximately five per week—throughout secondary school. LA in India is not systematically divided into, for example, reading, writing, vocabulary, and so on. Rather, these elements are integrated into one subject taught during a regular block at each school. The Indian national curriculum is being renewed (the renewed curriculum will be implemented in 2020), with an ambition to be more attuned to the students' futures.

Both the Knowledge Promotion from 2006 and the renewed curriculum define reading as a “key competence.” While reading competence should be developed across all subjects, the Indian LA subject explicitly bears a particular responsibility when it comes to developing students' reading competence. After year 10 (the last year of lower-secondary school), this includes competences regarding (1) Written communication (reading and writing), such as reading and analyzing a wide selection of texts in different genres and presenting possible interpretations, recognizing the literary devices, and using some of them in their own texts as well as using model texts to write different types of texts (creative, informative, reflective, and persuasive texts); and (2) cultural aspects in Language, literature, and culture, such as presenting themes and modes of expression in key contemporary and classical texts in Indian literature, commenting on how society, values, and ways of thinking are portrayed in texts translated from other languages, and describing the interaction between aesthetic devices in texts. The curriculum gives equal weight to fiction and non-fiction. With regard to fiction, excerpts from literary works—scenes from plays, chapters from novels—have, as part of a long-standing practice of using literature anthologies, dominated and continue to dominate literature instruction (Skaug & Blikstad-Balas, in press; Skjelbred, Askeland, Maagerø, & Aamotsbakken, 2017; Penne, 2012).

Understanding the roles of literature in education requires examining not only texts but also how texts are integrated into classroom instruction as they are “reconstructed in interaction” (Wade & Moje, 2000, p. 615). Video observation has proven useful as a method for systematic analysis of situated classroom practice (Blikstad-Balas, 2017; Klette, 2009; Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2010; Snell, 2011), as it allows systematic investigation of how literary texts are introduced, contextualized, read, discussed, and referenced later in lessons. It has proven particularly relevant in studies of how texts are used across different school contexts (Blikstad-Balas & Sørvik, 2015; Sørvik, 2015). Previously, only small-scale qualitative or design studies have used video observation of literature instruction in Nordic classrooms. Thus, an aim of the present study is to contribute more general insight into not only how often or how much students read in school but also the nature of their interaction with literature and how literary texts are interpreted and used.

Conclusion

Students' views on language learning are an important foundation in formulating language learning plans and processes. This study aims to look at students' views about the benefits of learning literature in language learning at the high school level. This study also seeks to reveal differences in the views of students from several schools. Researchers use a comprehensive approach to analyse students' views about the benefits of learning literature in learning. Researchers used a survey research method involving an open-ended questionnaire to see students' views on the benefits of learning literature in language learning. The research participants were 90 high school level students from fifteen schools. The research findings show that most students provide a positive view, that is, learning literature in learning Indonesian really supports the linguistic aspects of language learning. Generally, students' views of the benefits of literature are based on the teaching approach used sequentially from the largest to the smallest percentage, namely the language approach, the context approach, followed by the reader's approach and the text approach. The most proportionate combination of approaches is the language approach with context. Some differences from the research sample regarding the benefits of learning in aspects of supporting language skills are caused by differences in the style of approach or pedagogies used by teachers. The results implied that teachers can see and consider students' perspectives or views regarding the benefits of learning literature which are then used to support language learning.

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