

Literary genres preferred by English pre-service teachers in teaching literature in a state university

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Abstract

In the realm of education, literature holds a significant role, particularly in shaping the language development and fostering a passion for reading and critical thinking. This study explored the profiles, preferred literary genres, and reasons for both using and not using literary texts in teaching literature among 4th Year Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students at a higher education institution in Aklan during the academic year 2022-2023. The total population of thirty-five (35) students officially enrolled in the program was chosen to provide data through a survey questionnaire analyzed using descriptive and content analysis techniques. The results revealed that most of the English pre-service teachers who utilize literary texts are female and fall with the age range of 20-24 years old. The inclusion of literature in English language classroom has been perceived as a beneficial process as it contributes to students' meaningful language teaching and learning, personal development and fostering a love for literature (Carter & Long, 1991). The findings indicate the positive attitudes of pre-service teachers toward using literary texts in their classes, as they express that literature is advantageous for the linguistic, affective development, and literary awareness of the students. However, some pre-service teachers acknowledge to finding it challenging to use literary texts due to doubts on their own teaching efficacy and their students' linguistic capability in the target language for processing literary texts. Additionally, they highlight limitations imposed by the framework of the university's pre-service teacher training program.

Keywords: *literature, literary genres, pre-service teachers, English language teaching*

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Introduction

Literature, derived from the Latin word ‘litera’ which means a letter of the alphabet, holds a foundational position in education and language learning. Literary texts in English language teaching offer various benefits, including facilitating language development, fostering cultural understanding and cultivating appreciation for literature among students. Despite the imaginative nature of literature, it reflects intricate facets of human nature and diverse cultural perspective.

On the study conducted by Erdem Coşgun (2022), it highlighted English pre-service teachers’ preferences for specific literary genres, favoring short stories over poetry due to perceived difficulties in understanding the figurative and intense nature of poetry. Similarly, Arslan (2001) emphasized the necessity of exposure to literary texts for language learners, yet many educators find these texts challenging to incorporate effectively in teaching practices, potentially leading to demotivation among students.

Language teachers need expertise in utilizing literary texts to create engaging lessons. Training support, whether during pre-service or in-service stages is important to develop this skill. Teachers’ classroom decisions are often shaped by their core beliefs, influenced by prior learning experiences (Borg, 2003). Hence, this study focuses on identifying preferred literary genres and reasons for using and not using literary texts in literature among 4th Year Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, aspiring teachers in Western Visayas. The aim is to facilitate an understanding of the value of literature in English learning, fostering unbiased appreciation for various literary forms among students.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed research method, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single investigation. This approach, as highlighted by Molina-Azorin (2016), aims to systematically collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data to comprehensively describe phenomenon and address research questions. Conducted among thirty-five (35) 4th Year Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students at a Western Visayas higher education institution during the Academic Year 2022-2023, the research revealed a predominance of female respondents (88.6%), which

indicates that a significant female presence in incorporating literary texts into teaching literature.

A validated researcher-made questionnaire, comprising demographic profile, a Likert-scale assessment of preferred literary genres, and open-ended questions, served as the primary data collection tool. The researchers also performed a pilot test to ensure that the statements on the questionnaire were understood and interpreted correctly by the intended respondents.

The study analyzed the data through descriptive techniques, such as frequency count, percentage distribution, rank and weighted means in Microsoft Excel and content analysis, unveiling patterns in respondents' preferences and beliefs about teaching literature.

Findings

In this study, drama emerged as the highly preferred genre with a weighted mean of 4.25, closely followed by prose at 4.1, while poetry was least favoured among the respondents with a weighted mean of 3.64. This shows the significance of drama in teaching literature, aligning with its portrayal of life's complexities and its focus on active human experiences (Boudreault, 2010). Conversely, previous research by Aluko (1990) and Lockward (1994) revealed students' avoidance of poetry and English teachers' unease with this genre which indicated a prevalent reluctance towards its study.

Among respondents, 18 or 51.43% emphasized the integral role of literary texts in classroom discussions which advocate their value in fostering comprehensive learning experiences. This aligns with the assertion made by Owoye (2003) on the pivotal role of literature in the educational curriculum that facilitates holistic development. Participants also highlighted literature's impact on linguistic development (11 or 31.43%), citing its role in enhancing language skills and proficiency, consistent with scholarly views emphasizing its role in improving language competency (Abdalraham, 2021; McKay, 1982).

Moreover, 4 or 11.43% of the respondents identified the affective benefits of using literary texts that emphasize in cultivating learners' belief systems and emotional involvement in cultural experiences. This resonates with the study of Lazar (1993) in literature nurturing critical thinking and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, a smaller fraction (8.57) appreciated the literature for fostering an appreciation of literary works and knowledge enrichment. However, reasons for not employing literary texts in teaching

literature encompassed challenges such as students' linguistic capabilities (22.86%), pre-service teachers' perceived inefficiency in teaching language and literature (17.14%), and constraints posed by the framework of teacher training programs (8.57). These findings highlight the multifaceted challenges educators face in incorporating literary texts into their teaching practices.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it remains evident that English pre-service teachers preferred drama over prose and poetry as literary genres. The results also highlighted that literary genres play a significant role in teaching literature as they contribute to students' linguistic success, affective development and literary awareness. However, participants' perspective suggested that literature's effectiveness in teaching might be hindered by learners' disinterest in English language learning, their low proficiency in language skills, and their unfamiliarity with literary concepts.

English pre-service teachers are recommended to put effort into fostering interest in all literary genres to maximize knowledge and gain mastery to make pedagogy more effective and efficient. Educational institutions should conduct seminars and workshops, specifically tailored for English pre-service teachers to provide them with proper training in creating innovative classroom activities through the utilization of literary genres. Thus, it will enhance their skills and knowledge, enabling them to address challenges in employing literary texts during classroom discussions. Additionally, mentors should practice teaching the three literary genres in equal proportion of time to enable students to grasp and enhance their understanding of each genre. Parents are encouraged to expose their children to reading and listening to literary pieces before their formal introduction in school. This early exposure can stimulate curiosity and interest in children, encouraging them to explore various literary genres and increase their engagement in literature-related subjects. Future researchers interested in conducting similar studies should design and implement programs aimed at promoting the integration of literature into classroom teaching.

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