

# Using the Emic Perspective in Identifying the Significance of Teaching Literature in the Secondary Level Classrooms

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**Abstract**— This paper studied the significance of teaching literature in the secondary classrooms in the City of Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines. Literature has been imbedded in the English subject curriculum even before the implementation of the K12 Basic Education and the competencies expected to be mastered by the students are already established by said curriculum; however, there are very limited number of studies about the language and literature teachers' perspective about the significance of literature in teaching the English language subject. Hence, the study tried to utilize the insider's perspective, or the emic perspective, of the ethnographic research in identifying its significance and possible drawbacks. Twelve teacher-informants participated in a focus group discussion organized by the proponents of the study. The discussion was led by guide questions that were validated through a peer debriefing. On the one hand, it was concluded that teaching literature in the secondary level classrooms enhances critical thinking, strengthens awareness to cultural diversity, and provides support to creative growth. On the other, some teachers think that the drawbacks include: outdated content of lessons, too much emphasis on "literature component", and lack of resources. Ultimately, it is recommended to enlarge the sample size of the study to gain more insights from the language and literature teachers and to include the perspective of the learners to corroborate the response of the teachers.

**Keywords**— Emic Research, K12 Basic Education, Language and Literature, Literature Lessons, Secondary Level Classrooms

## I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is essential to education because it reflects society, allows for cultural expression, and fosters intellectual growth. The teaching of literature has a significant role in Philippine secondary education. It helps students develop their critical thinking, appreciation of culture, and language skills. Moreover, it is also an avenue in achieving the 21st century skills needed by the learners (Parcon, 2022). This study intends to investigate the significance of literature instruction in the secondary education system in the Philippines, assessing its advantages and addressing any drawbacks, from the emic perspective of the educators who teach literature in the secondary education level.

Students are encouraged to analyze, interpret, and evaluate numerous texts as part of their study of literature, which develops their capacity for critical thought. Deep reading is encouraged by reading a variety of literary works, which helps students recognize themes, examine character motives, and assess the social and historical contexts of the stories, as emphasized, and reflected in the communicative language teaching (Khatib and Nourzadeh, 2011). This analytical method helps students become better questioners, critical thinkers, and argumentative writers—skills that are useful outside of the literary classroom. A society's experiences, customs, and ideals are reflected in literature's complex tapestry of cultural narratives (Shanahan, 1997) and with this, secondary school teachers in the country can help students connect with their own cultural heritage and develop a sense of identity and belonging by teaching literature to them. Students' comprehension and appreciation of

their unique cultural landscape are heightened by exposure to indigenous, regional, and national literary works, encouraging cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication.

The use of literature in the classroom helps students' vocabulary, grammar, and communication abilities grow. Students are exposed to complex linguistic patterns, figurative language, and a variety of writing styles through literary texts (McGlynn & Fenn, 2018). Students' linguistic repertoires can be expanded, and their communication skills can be strengthened by analyzing and debating these texts in the classroom. Consequently, there are a number of difficulties being encountered by educators as well. These include a shortage of resources, outmoded curricula or lack of preparation in the language programs, and the absence of clear cut-objectives defining the role of literature in language classes (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). However, these obstacles can be solved with the incorporation of technology, teacher professional development programs, and curriculum reforms (Martin, 2010), enabling a more comprehensive literary education. The study of Santos and Nanquil (2023) even went and beyond into creating a basis for teaching literature in the secondary classroom with the integration of 21st century materials based on the etic perspective of the secondary school literature teachers' practices to further enhance the teaching and learning experience of both the teachers and students.

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of teaching literature in secondary schools in the Philippines. In order to reap the benefits of literary education and provide Filipino students the skills and information they need for personal, academic, and professional success, educators and policymakers must overcome obstacles through strategic interventions. In the opposing end, there might be educators with different views in teaching literature. With varying opinions about said component, there is a need to have a bigger idea about the significance of teaching literature in the secondary level through the perspective of the teachers themselves.

Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to utilize the emic perspective, or the insiders' perspective, into identifying the significance of teaching literature in the secondary education level in the Philippines. The emic perspective of this ethnographic paper will also help in finding the possible problems or difficulties that teachers experience. Meanwhile, the proceeding sections will go into more details about how the paper progressed. The methodology will give details on the participants, methods used to collect the data, data analysis, and ethical considerations for the publication. Furthermore, the answers of the teacher-informants will be discussed in the results. The discussion will finally summarize the most important findings, offer interpretations, and note the paper's limitations.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Design

The researchers employed the qualitative approach, to be more particular, the emic perspective in ethnographic research. The meaning that people attribute to events, relationships, behaviors, and experiences is what the emic point of view is interested in. The teaching of literature in the secondary education level is not new or an added element in the curriculum. Even before the K12 Basic Education Curriculum (RA 10533), the Secondary Education Curriculum (SEC) and the Revised Secondary Education Curriculum (RSEC) had these components; hence, the teacher-informants may come from a wide age range.

### B. Participants

As mentioned, the teacher-informants came from a wide age range. Twelve teachers with the age of 29-52 years old were the informants of the study. Private and public school teachers from the City of Malolos, Bulacan, Philippines, shared their insights about the significance of teaching literature in the secondary schools they currently teaching. They were selected through a snowball sampling. The demographic profile of the informants, aside from their locale, was not considered in the data presentation and analysis. Consequently, their years of experience in teaching the language subject with literature components, although will not be emphasized in this paper, range from 7 to 39 years.

### C. Instrument and Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers conducted a focus group discussion with the teacher-informants of this study. The said discussion was led by guide questions which was validated through a peer debriefing. Guba and Lincoln (1994) mentioned the importance of "paradigm lenses" in the validation of qualitative research instrument. In the peer debriefing process, three individuals with post-graduate degrees in the educational field checked and approved the content of the guide questions. Afterwards, the focus group discussion was then held through an online (virtual) meeting.

### D. Data Analysis

For the qualitative data analysis, the researchers employed inductive or open coding to arrive at the themes of the discussion. Rubin and Babbie (2013) described this type of coding as a "qualitative data processing method

in which, instead of starting out with a list of code categories derived from theory, one develops code categories through close examination of qualitative data.”

**E. Ethical Consideration**

The proponent upheld the dignity of the participants while adhering to the Data Privacy Act. The names, gender, and other information submitted by participants were recorded but kept private in all other respects, with the exception of the department, school, or institution to which they were under. The transcript of the focus group discussion will be utilized for academic purposes only. The researchers followed the American Psychological Association style that the institution specifies and ensured that the research data was kept appropriately confidential. They also recognized any other authors' works that were used in the study.

**III.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

TABLE I

SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING LITERATURE IN THE SECONDARY LEVEL EDUCATION

Meaning Unit	Condensed Meaning Unit	Code	Theme
“I am using literature as a medium in teaching English syntax. Story telling provides a wide range of verb tenses conjugation that is why it is useful for grammar lessons.”	Literature components as means of teaching grammar lessons such as conjugating verbs in multiple tenses	Teaching grammar	Enhancing Critical Thinking
“Some literature components, particularly short stories and other proeses, may be utilized in teaching grammar. Longer texts require long term memory as well, and it enhances both the memory and comprehension of students.”	Using proeses to teach grammar with the purpose of enhancing memory and comprehension		
“Some literary pieces were written in different eras and there are words that students are not familiar with. These said literary pieces are good avenue in teaching vocabulary to students.”	Using literary pieces from different writing periods to teach vocabulary	Teaching vocabulary	
“The competencies required by the curriculum is very particular in teaching and enhancing students’ vocabulary and I use the literature components of the syllabus to do that.”	Complying with the competencies required by the curriculum		
“The main objective of teaching literature, aside from introducing the content and the author to the students, is to enhance [the] reading comprehension of students. Different grade levels have different reading materials that depend on their competency, and it is important to prepare the students before they proceed to the next level.”	Preparing the students for their next grade level by enhancing their reading comprehension	Enhancing reading comprehension	
“It is important to prepare the students [for] their future, either for their higher education or future workplace, and reading, one of the macro skills of language [is] a must. Literature is a great help for that.”	Preparing the students for their future by prioritizing reading comprehension through teaching literature.		
“Almost, if not all, literature discussed mentioned lessons about values or moral. Religions and philosophies are being discussed during lessons.”	Opening the topics of religion and philosophy during literature discussion.	Morals	Awareness to Cultural Diversity
“In short stories, one of the elements is the value or moral of the narrative. This is a nice way of integrating the lesson with something that may be imparted to the students.”	Integrating moral and value with the literature lesson.		
“During discussion, language competency can both be showcased and enhanced when students are asked to share their opinions about the theme or content of the literature.”	Using literature lessons for students to enhance and showcase their language skills.	Viewpoints	
“When literary pieces are in need to be analyzed and criticized, I often ask my students about their insights or what they think about the literature. Such as in poetry, there are writers known for their ambiguous works.”	Criticizing and analyzing literary pieces during lessons		

<p>“The literature components of the different grade levels vary. We have Philippine, Afro-Asian, Anglo-American, and World Literature. Some cultural practices or traditions may not be the same with [ours] here in our country. It is important to let the students be aware of these things.”</p>	<p>Gaining awareness of the practices and traditions of different cultures through literature.</p>	<p>Traditions</p>	
<p>“In relation [to] enhancing the competencies of the students, literature lessons can be used as well for the development of students’ creativity. Poems, stories, reflections, these activities allow [students] to express themselves in creative manners.”</p>	<p>Developing students’ competencies through writing activities</p>		
<p>“The generation of students now are different. Their way of thinking, their backgrounds, and how they were raised affected how they communicate. Literature-related [writing] is one of the ways in which they can express their ideas and at the same time, their peers will be able to relate to them.”</p>	<p>Using writing to assess students’ creative interpretation of the texts</p>	<p>Writing Activities</p>	
<p>“I always see to it that my students will be assessed every after a literature lesson, and one of the assessments that I usually do is writing. Their outputs [let] me know about their opinions and how they understood the text. This is also a way to identify if students have creative interpretations of the text we discussed.”</p>			<p>Support to Creative Growth</p>
<p>“Literature is a gateway for creative self-expression. In multiple lesson components, we, the literature teachers, may integrate any part of the discussion with any activity in that may allow the students to be: engaged with the lesson, engage with each other, and able to share their insights about the literary piece being discussed.”</p>	<p>Allowing students to share their creative insights in multiple parts of the lesson</p>	<p>Engaging Activities</p>	

Table I, on the first hand, shows that literature can assist students in a lot of ways. With the aid of literature, students can improve their language proficiency, gain knowledge of many cultures and viewpoints, sharpen their critical thinking abilities, cultivate their imagination and creativity, develop an appreciation for the arts, and learn about the Filipino and the world’s culture and history. Students are exposed to a variety of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax through literature. They can use this to hone their own speaking and writing abilities. Students may learn words and phrases they have never heard before, for instance, when they read a novel. They can learn how to utilize language more efficiently and increase their vocabulary as a result. Additionally, reading literature can provide students a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of people from all ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds. They may get a deeper comprehension of their surroundings as a result. For instance, students can learn about another country's culture and customs by reading a book set there. They may grow more tolerant and well-informed as a result of this.

Results showed that most of the responses provided were leaning towards the importance of teaching literature in secondary education. When it comes time to examine and critique literary works, most of the informants tend to frequently ask their students about their thoughts or opinions. This proved the importance of students’ opinion in creating classroom engagement and interaction. A suggestion came from Seedhouse (1996) stated that teaching literature should not be just a traditional setup thus must be genuine and authentic. This proved that asking students for follow-up in line with learning language has a big part in creating classroom engagement thus creating a more effective teaching experience.

Writing activities is also considered as one of the significances in teaching literature in secondary level. This highlighted the creativity that the students may possess. Bore (2006) discussed that teaching literature as spearheaded by the teachers fostered an enabling creative learning space for the students. The creativity learned by the students helped them to be more expressive and more interpretative as they unfold the message of the texts.

TABLE III  
DRAWBACKS OF TEACHING LITERATURE IN THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Meaning Unit	Condensed Meaning Unit	Code	Theme
“The purpose of teaching literature to the students is for them to be introduced with the cultures across the country or the world. However, some of these pieces do not reflect the present practices and traditions of the location they are representing. This may cause confusion to the students.”	Literary pieces do not reflect the culture and traditions they are representing	Outdated Literature	Drawbacks of Teaching Literature in the Secondary Level
“Literary pieces are usually timeless but there are those that can be categorized as less relevant nowadays. Those that counter the ideas of inclusivity, for example, may be condoned by learners since they are advocates of said idea. That’s why we call them “wokes” nowadays.”	Some literary pieces are less relevant today compared to when they were first published		
“As a subject coordinator, I always observe teachers being too focused on the application of literary criticism approaches. This may sound good for some [but] they should remember that secondary education students are not tertiary level students, nor they are language majors. Teachers should be more focused on making the learning more fruitful, such as letting the students know the relevance of the lessons to their lives outside the school environment.”	Teachers are too focused on the application of literary criticism approaches	Too much emphasis on the “literature” part of the lesson	
“Personally, I am not an advocate of teaching literature outside purposive means. It would be better if the curriculum will be revised in a way that the language lessons of students will be more on the application side. The other macro skills should be more emphasized over literature lessons that are less relevant.”	Emphasis over literature lessons that are less relevant		
“Literature lessons sometimes [require] the use of technology. Such as when the literature has a pop culture equivalent, and it will be more fruitful to integrate technology or pop culture in order to get the students’ attention. But, in our school, there are limited number of available devices.”	Schools have limited number of available technologies	Lack of resources	
“Teaching literature is always associated with performance task, be it in poetry or in proses. Students always associate theatre or drama related lessons with performance tasks such as roleplaying, in which they are not wrong. Producing an output requires a lot of resources and not all students can comply with this requirement.”	Lack of financial resources may hinder the students to comply with their requirements.		

Table II, on the other hand, shows that there are certain grounds against placing a strong emphasis on literature in the Philippines' secondary schools. One argument is that other language components that are more useful outside the school setup are more important than literature. These components are considered to be more crucial for students' future performance in both the classroom and the workforce. It is stated that it is more crucial to concentrate on things that are perceived as more significant given the short time that is allotted for instruction. From some viewpoints, literature is perceived as a topic with fewer immediate advantages and less practical use. Another defense from one of the informants is that many Filipino students' lives are unrelated to literature. The literary masterpieces that are frequently taught in schools are frequently set in other nations or in different eras. Students may find it challenging to connect with the story and characters as a result. The emphasis on literature in secondary school in the Philippines is clearly called into question in light of these points. The advantages that literature can provide for students must also be taken into account.

The study also investigated the drawbacks of teaching literature in the secondary level. This discussed that some literature being used by the teachers were not reflecting the current situation of the society most especially when talking about tradition and culture. Bagot and Ayra (2006) elaborated that the literature published in 1960s



was not relevant as they were published before. The study discussed that it is difficult on the part of the teacher to relate the outdated literature in the situation of today's world thus creating some sort of confusion to the students.

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