



## Teachers' Instructional Approaches in Teaching Literary Texts in an ESL Classroom: Learners' Impressions at Core

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**Abstract**

*This study was conducted to examine the challenges of the learners on the instructional approaches employed by their English teachers in teaching literary texts. It also sought the impressions of the learners towards these instructional approaches and practices. The study employed qualitative realistic phenomenology as design and utilized researcher-made probing questions to elicit responses from the participants. Using In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among the learners with Framework Method as the unit of analysis on the responses, the researcher found several themes that emerged and were categorically charted respectively. The challenges hindered learners from learning and appreciating literary texts. It also revealed the favorable impressions of the learners on the instructional approaches and practices of the teachers upon evaluating the teachers' approaches. With the study's limitations, it was recommended to investigate other lived realities of the learners to bank new knowledge and practices in literature education.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, literature education has been part of the curriculum in the Philippines. Literature, as a discipline, is embraced as a springboard in English classes as it helps to increase the language ability of the learners. However, the curriculum does not develop learners to be readers and appreciative of literature. Thus, it is challenging for literature teachers to present and teach literary texts in interesting, compelling, and attractive ways to develop a genuine love for literature.

English textbooks include literary texts in instructional and learning materials for the learners because literature is language-based, which provides patterns for students to develop structural acquisition of the language. In time, learners are fond of stories that successfully hold their attention to the literature and the language. Lazar (2008) claimed that literature could be

used to extend the language knowledge of the students. The possibility can be attributed to their likeness and attachment to some literary texts they love to read. As Coolie and Slater (2007) confirmed, for students, reading literary texts exposes them to the functions of written language and eventually widens the students' perspective to the language and the world.

The abovementioned account redirects to the challenge of teaching students literature and how students learn pieces of literature. Reports say, nowadays, learners lack the inclination to read literature since they find it uninteresting. Today's learners prefer to navigate social media applications and watch videos rather than read books and other masterpieces. Neglecting the essence and opportunity to read texts in schools, learners have no hopes of paying attention to language and literature understanding and development. As ascertained, in the world of language teaching (especially English), many scholarly ideas emerged and reinvented apt to give central attention to how ESL countries would acquire the language.

In Turkey, Tevdovska (2016) reported that the type of texts (text selection) has an integral part of literature education. She further claimed that the texts should be suitable for the learners. It means that the text should be one level beyond the capacity of the learners. Since students are still studying the language, the language of literary texts that are highly creative could be why learners do not want to pursue reading the texts assigned to them. These linguistic difficulties of the learners in reading hardly understood texts are not recommendable in any available ways. Should culture and history not be at the forefront of learners' struggles in defining the meaning of the texts.

Likely, in China, Zhen (2012) articulated that the need for qualified teachers to teach English is a problem in their field. Without excellent teachers, literature teaching would be comparable to boring reading. Secondary to that is the lack of appropriate and effective teaching materials that would meet the different levels of the learners. Zhen certifies that lagged and old-fashioned books do not keep the students' cognizance.

Researchers in language education consensus believed in the insufficiency of strategies introduced to educators of middle and intermediate students. As emphasized in teacher preparation, literature teaching (approaches, methods, and strategies) is minimal due to a lack of teacher training advocated by resident institutions. Because of this, many foreign educators of literature agree that these inadequacies are a pitfall hindering student appreciation of masterpieces.

In the Philippines, many teachers rely on traditional approaches in teaching literature. For instance, the widely celebrated silent reading as a method of reading literature is still rampant despite this shift in the K-12 curriculum. The curriculum guarantees equal opportunity of literature as a tool to develop language ability and at the same time nurture appreciation. Nevertheless, teachers resort to assigned, silent, and group reading to introduce literature to students. With this remark, students will not conserve much of retention nor appreciation due to scarcely unreliable methods in delivering, interpreting, and understanding literary texts (Calingacion, 2002).

The study of San Jose (2015) in the University of Mindanao, Davao City, shared that students in literature classes cited lecture-discussion as the most effective strategy for learning literature. Aside from that, findings also unveil that literary criticism is a helpful strategy as learners better understand the text. Theatre acts are also suitable venues as it channels their

kinesthetic talents in the class. As teachers never cease learning, innovations of strategies must be developed to achieve the lesson's objectives.

In the paper of Simene (2014), teachers handling Philippine literature classes in Bukidnon utilized approaches that are paraphrastic and personal. Teachers highlighted the idea that learners' responses and self-understanding can move them to appreciate these masterpieces taught to them deeply. Though the approach is student-centered, learners complained that not enough activities were implemented to channel their appreciation of the literary works.

As per empirical attention, English teachers do not employ activities as part of the teaching-learning process in teaching literature to students. Students were directly fed with the information about the literary text and had no chance to discover its values and meaning through the supposed teacher-initiated activities. Students do not value these literary texts as there are no ways to channel their apprehension and appreciation. Thus, it is for this reason that the researcher pursued this study to evaluate how teachers handle and implement approaches in literature lessons and, foremost, how learners perceive the effectiveness of these approaches in the context of their learning.

The primary goal of this undertaking was to examine the learners' impressions on the instructional approaches utilized and employed by literature teachers in their classes. Specifically, this study sought to address the following narrowed concerns:

1. What are the challenges of the learners on the instructional approaches employed by teachers in teaching literature?
2. What are the learners' impressions of the instructional approaches employed by their teachers?

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This research used the qualitative – realistic phenomenological method developed by Daubert, Reinach, Pfander, Scheler, Ingarden, Hartman, and Kocher in 1902 (Smith, 1997). Realistic phenomenology analyzed the 'intentional structures' of mental acts directed at real and ideal objects (Masten, 2008). It searched for the universal essences of various matters, including human actions, motives, and selves (Linsenmayer, 2011).

This method is appropriate to this research because it focuses on describing what students experience and 'how it is that they experience what they experience' (Patton, 1990). It searches for essentials, invariant structure (or essence), or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasizes consciousness's intentionality (Creswell, 2007). It also focuses on the essence of 'lived experiences of the learners (Rossman and Rallis, 1998), and it understands "how the everyday, intersubjective world is constituted" (Schwandt, 2000). In this study, the learners' actual experiences, impressions, and insights on the instructional approaches used by the teachers in teaching literary texts were at the core of this study.

### **2.2. Participants**

The research participants in this study were Grade 9 learners from La Filipina National High School in the locality of Tagum, Philippines. This research utilized purposive sampling since the teachers nominate one student from each section to participate in the study. The teachers were encouraged to select the participant based on the criteria (a) The average grade of the

learner in English should at least be 90% or above; and (b) The teacher should refer a learner whom he/she knew who could contribute to the discussion during the interview, definitely a participative and active student in the class.

### **2.3. Instrumentation**

An interview guide sheet for semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussion was formulated based on the research questions. The interview guide was composed of probing questions aimed at bringing out the experiences, specific challenges of the participants towards the use of instructional approaches of their English teachers in teaching literary texts, and their impressions or impact these had made on them. These questions were subjected to experts' evaluation and validation before the conduct of the study.

### **2.4. Procedure**

The foundation of information in this study was acquired through IDIs and FGDs. During IDIs and FGDs, the researcher and the team facilitated the discussion procedures and took detailed notes and recordings. In-depth interviews were conducted to elicit individual experiences from the participants. IDIs were conducted individually to generate the primary source of data in the study. IDI was used first as it is the most valuable qualitative tool in understanding issues and problems at the personal level. As Del Siegle (2017) mentioned, the phenomenological approach to interviewing, as developed by David Schuman, aims to understand the experience of other people and the meaning people make on those experiences. Likewise, IDI helps the participants to reconstruct the experience on the topic studied. The rigorous interviews enabled the researcher to draw out differential responses compared and tied against other participants' responses.

Likewise, focus group discussions were also conducted of the same participants but were grouped strategically. Phase 1 of focus group discussions was done by forming groups with the same teacher. It was systematized to find patterns of teaching practices of the teacher throughout all the sections handled. Phase 2 of the focus group discussion was done by gathering all the participants in the study. In this phase, the participants can reflect and either add responses, modify observations, or glue the same experiences from the previous interviews. The FGD was used since the participants share similar backgrounds and experiences. It was the best data-gathering technique to utilize because they can express themselves clearly and discuss familiar topics (Learning Space Toolkit, 2019). Besides, when there is only a limited opportunity for data collection, focus groups are a reasonable alternative to conducting individual interviews (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

### **2.5. Data Analysis**

Specifically, this study utilized the Framework Method as the primary methodology in generating results and analysis. The method was developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) under a research agency in the United Kingdom known as the NatCen. Five (5) procedural steps were taken to arrive at the best and most significant finding.

The first step is called the familiarization, where the data analyst listens to recordings or reads the interaction transcripts. The researcher printed all the transcripts for analysis. The researcher scanned through the whole transcripts of all the participants to get a general sense of the textual data. In this stage, the researcher familiarized responses, possible themes, and recurring topics based on the participants' experiences anchored to the research problems.

After familiarizing with the raw data, the second step is identifying themes out from the readings. The identified themes served as the framework to work on in the further analysis of the data obtained. The researcher formed possible themes based on the research questions or problems. The themes generated were rooted in the researcher's inferences, intuitions, and the sense made on the preliminary scanning of the transcripts.

The third step is indexing/coding. The analyst, in this step, picks up fragments from the transcription and shall begin the coding process. The researcher used markings in the printed pages of the transcript to highlight essential responses of the participants contributory to the research problems. The segmented information was marked appropriately for later use in the analysis. Codes like assigning topical phrases and underlining responses were utilized to signify that information segments were significant and tailed to analyze the participants' experiences further.

The fourth step is charting. The indexed or coded data were then sorted out in a chart. The textual data from the coding process were placed under columns from the chart of themes. The relevant actual responses were situated to the appropriate themes to support the themes formed and emerged.

The final step in this method is interpretation. The analyst compares data from the themes. It describes the themes, creates typologies, finds associations, provides explanations, and develops interpretations of the phenomena studied. The researcher explained the significant experiences of the participants by discussing and citing the coded data in the interpretation. Inferences, generalizations, and syntheses from the data pool were the basis of interpreting their experiences, realities, and phenomena under study. Interpretations were likewise supported by an existing body of knowledge from the field to confirm and validate phenomena experienced by the participants.

The transcripts, findings, and interpretations of the experiences of the participants were subjected to validation. The validation process was done to secure that the findings and interpretations—although qualitative research is interpretive—were accurate and credible as reported, implicated, and concluded. The researcher used a peer review or debriefing strategy in the validation process. The debriefer listened to the recordings of the actual interviews and focus group discussions on validating the transcriptions. Besides, the debriefer investigated the findings of the study and examined interpretations of the researcher.

Data saturation impacts the research study's quality, validity, and reliability on the lighter side of interpreting and conducting qualitative research. In this study, the methods used to reach data saturation were interviews and group discussions. Bernard (2012) posited that data saturation could not be quantified as to how many interviews were conducted to ensure no novel flourishing analysis came out. He further added that the researcher could get from these methods enough to work on in the analysis. Mainly, the research in this study uses all the available data to get the substance on their responses. Recurring and occurring responses from interviews to group discussions were the basis of data saturation.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### *3.1 Challenges of the Learners on the Instructional Approaches Employed by their English Teachers in Teaching Literary Texts*



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Seven (7) themes were generated and as follow: difficulty in dealing with vocabulary words; varied personal reader responses; failure in deepening literary text discussion; lack of learners' competence in tasks; language barrier in text discussion; teacher's nonattendance; and learners' personal struggles. The themes generated made the researcher accompany some core excerpts that detailed the learners' experiences on the instructional approaches employed by English teachers in teaching literary texts. Mainly, the experiences centered on the challenges the participants endured during their English classes, particularly in the teaching and learning of literary texts.

*3.1.1 Difficulty in Dealing with Vocabulary Words*

Having been introduced to numerous literary texts throughout the school year, the participants invoked that the language of the text impedes them from understanding the literary text substantially. It was also revealed that all the participants have difficulty in unlocking the meaning of the unfamiliar words. Moreover, they also expressed that their teacher helped them by defining unfamiliar words. Further, it is inferred that these learners have no self-sophisticated strategies to unlock these meanings without consulting the teacher and other sources of defining the vocabulary words in the text.

For instance, Participant 3 expressed that isolated words made it difficult for her to understand the text and the extent of the English language itself.

*So, my difficulty is that I cannot understand, I mean, I understand but not profound English words. I have difficulty understanding the English language.*

-Translated: Participant 3-IDI

Similarly, participants of the focus group discussion expressed the same outlook. Mainly, Phase 2 FGD 5 shared her dilemma on the words not encountered before.

*Same answer. Words that we have not yet encountered before.*

-Translated: Phase 2 FGD 5

Inevitably, learners will not feel challenged by the words used in the literary texts taught to them. The literary texts are the product of the writer's skill in flawlessly using language to present and develop ideas or storylines in an exciting way. However, the participants are ESL (English as Second Language) learners with inadequate batteries of strategies to unlock these lexes. Teachers at hand should help learners and equip them with strategies in dealing with vocabulary words.

As a pioneer in academic classroom instruction, Kramsch (1985) claimed that learners are not expected and be expected by the teacher to understand every word in the literary text upon first reading. Teachers should employ preliminary activity on vocabulary building of the text. Additionally, Shanahan et al. (2012) illustrated that when learners face a challenge in a challenging text, teachers should know what makes the text difficult for them and support them in reading. The readability of the text is measured in two factors: vocabulary and complex sentences. Learners were surveyed why they do not understand the text, the words that they do not know. If this exists, there is a diminutive chance that they will make sense of the text. Hence, the understanding of the text relies heavily on the learner's knowledge of words.

### 3.1.2. Varied Personal Reader Responses

Given that literary texts have subdued meanings and interpretations that the readers must unlock, problems arise when interpretations do not meet halfway. The teacher might have a different understanding of the text from the learners. However, suppose teachers place the responsibility on the learners in understanding the text. In that case, teachers must likely guide the learners to arrive at the authentic interpretation of the piece. Further, complex texts must be broken into parts and have the learners process each part and later put it into a whole as the general understanding of the text.

In response, Participant 1, a learner, conveyed that she has doubts about the assignment given to her by the teacher to analyze the poems. The cynical learner stems her doubt from the possibility of having a differently interpreted text from the teacher's perspective.

*Every night, (the teacher) gives series of poems, and we are tasked to analyze each. We found difficulty in it because what if our interpretation is different from her.*

-Translated: Participant 1-IDI

Likewise, the focus group discussion participants stated that the literary texts are complex and hard to understand alone. Aside from having the learners scan and share some thoughts on their readings, the teacher's guidance towards the correct understanding of the text is of utmost concern to not deviate their ideas from the sense of the text.

*So, our challenges are pieces of literature like poems that are hard to understand. It needs guidance from the teacher to arrive at the correct understanding.*

-Translated: Phase 1b FGD 1

Another challenge that emerged from the learners is the varied personal responses to the literary text. All readers are entitled to their interpretation. However, literary analysis has standard procedures for uncovering the hidden themes of the texts. With the right authorized to individuals or readers, they tend to become independent on how they perceive the literary texts from self-interpretation. Teachers of literature shall employ approaches in studying literary texts as deemed appropriate. The participants' teachers may explain to learners that despite the distinct views and responses to the sense of the literary texts, there is a standard and concrete interpretation of them.

The finding aligns with the theorist in the reading process and interpretation. As to Rosenblatt (1982), the reader's role is emphasized in the reading process as a requisite. As theorized, reading text is a two-way process between the reader and the text. The reader uses past experiences to build up interpretation of the text and sets imaginative notions on the meaning of the text. Teachers now have a crucial role in leading the learners to relevant notions and in challenging their responses to the significant and appropriate ones. As added by Agbemabiese (2007), the personal interpretation and response of the text are challenged and refined lately in the arena of literary instruction. It is noted that in a pluralistic society where various cultures arise from time to time with different levels of thinking, it is hard to settle on

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a single interpretation and be directly construed as appropriate. Moreso, the meaning of the text without abandoning the reader's role as a contributor to the text's interpretation must still be explicated.

*3.1.3. Failure in Deepening Literary Text Discussion*

It does not sound like a 21st-century teacher skill, but teachers are the dispensers of knowledge inside the classroom. The idea cannot be denied that learners depend on much of the learning of the teacher. As a practice in the profession, teachers' standard method of delivering instruction is through discussion. It is the time that learners can obtain much of the needed information and understanding. However, some teachers left learners hanging on the things they should be learning. Much more, teachers should deepen lessons to grasp a complete understanding of the lesson and possibly carry it to their own lives.

On an account, Participant 1, a learner, admitted that the teacher did not explain the text very well and just guessed the meaning of the text. This instance made the whole class predictably unnourished with the proper understanding of the text.

*Sometimes, the teacher fails to explain the text well that I guess all of us in the classroom cannot understand the text.*

-Translated: Participant 1-IDI

Just as well, participants of the focus group discussion agreed that there were times literary texts were not discussed well to the class leading to poor comprehension of the text. Citing Phase 1a FGD2, she accounts for a gap of understanding among the teacher, the text, and her as a reader since the teacher falls short of generalizing and concluding discussion about the sense, meaning, or point of the text.

*She is the same in our class. Sometimes, we cannot understand and get the point or sense of the literary text.*

Translated: Phase 1a FGD 2

Another challenge of the participants that surfaced in the study is that teachers lack in-depth analysis of the literary texts. The text may have a simple storyline for short stories or a basic plot for dramas and plays. However, the texts' themes are as important as these. Teachers need to materialize and put up the connection of the text to human lives, specifically the learners. When learners truly understand the text, they can remember the values, morals, and lessons from the teacher's discussion of the text.

Teachers are the primary vessels of information inside the classroom during discussion. However, given that fact, teachers also failed to provide information to the learners vital to the learners' understanding of the literary text. Gellis (2002) outlined a student-centered approach in discussing literary texts. The approach draws on asking inquiry to the learners rather than directly feeding them the information. Students should be given critical exploration and encouragement for them to develop their critical minds in understanding literature. Similarly, suppose the teacher takes much of the responsibility in a literature classroom as an "interpretive



role." In that case, students expect the correct answers and follow the teacher's understanding of the text only (Eddleston et al., 2002). They recommended that teachers should refrain from doing what the learners are supposed to be doing. Teachers doing whole-class discussions in interpreting literary texts shall establish systems that allow learners to participate and inquire about their learning process. Teachers then assume different roles to occur fruitful dialogues among learners on the discussion of the literary text.

#### *3.1.4. Lack of Learners' Competence in Tasks*

Teachers utilize activities as part of the lesson. Solely employing discussion in an hour may lose the appetite of the learners in learning. Activities are an essential part of the lesson because they can apply and integrate what they have learned after discussion. Else, activities help learners to be active and communicative of their ideas towards others. However, learners' competence could also be a problem why they cannot carry and accomplish the activities for learning.

On the narrative of Participant 6, a learner, confirmed they usually do activities like role-playing in their literature class or lessons. However, the activity might not be successful or has no quality results because of the members of the group. Poor skills like acting skills, language skills, and comprehension skills cramp the group to demonstrate knowledge of the text through the activity.

*Role-playing. Sometimes, some group members cannot portray the role given to them because they do not understand the characters and the story.*

-Translated: Participant 6-IDI

Additionally, the focus group discussion participants conformed that most of their activities are performance-based, particularly role-playing. Role-playing is the most celebrated activity or strategy in a literature class as learners can channel their understanding and skills in portraying characters from the story. However, this requires time and preparation to achieve surpassing performance.

*Same with role-playing that there is just a short time for preparation and immediately followed by performance.*

-Translated: Phase 2 FGD 5

The participants' challenge in dealing with the literary activities inhibits them from excellently showing their understanding of the text. Participants revealed differing causes of their incompetence to accomplish the tasks with difficulty. Pointing to a lack of understanding of the text, participants are haltered from the accomplishment. Teachers opt to consider giving activities as means of checking learners' understanding. Teacher evaluates their degree of understanding based on their behavior and competence in the tasks given to them. Above this, teachers must also consider factors that affect the successful completion of the task.

Role-playing is an admirable strategy in exploring issues and complex situations such as those found in literary texts as an everyday activity. As a strategy and widely used activity in a literature classroom, it presents laudable advantages in students' learning. On the other hand,

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Fisher and Frey (2009) declared that learners' background knowledge, prior knowledge, and previous experiences are strong predictors of success, especially in reading and comprehension of the texts. Prior knowledge helps in forecasting probable proficiency and mastery of learners on the topic. This knowledge is dormant in that it is activated when the learners in accomplishing tasks need it. During activities, most of the learner's prior knowledge is utilized in exhibiting skills on the tasks assigned to them. Likely, teachers must see that the activities are within the range of the learner's previous experiences.

*3.1.5. Language Barrier in Text Discussion*

Language will always be the principal instrument to communicate ideas and emotions. Teachers have the most excellent investment in language, for it is the medium of instruction no matter what language is utilized. ESL (English as Second Language) classrooms often find it challenging to express themselves in the target language. Others also have problems with the medium of instruction utilized by the teacher. Features on speaking pacing, the voice quality, and straight use of language interrupt learners' understanding of the text.

The tale of Participant 1 accounts the English language as an impediment of the learners to share some thoughts on the text. As they are encumbered with the language, learners feel the phenomenon called "fear of negative evaluation." It is an anxiety of the learners to use the language because of judgments on the learner's error upon sharing thoughts before the class.

*My most significant concern is my classmates. Most of them are unskilled in using the English language. You have to answer in English. That is why they fear to speak because when they got it wrong, they will get embarrassed.*

Translated: Participant 1-IDI

Adjunct to the aforementioned account, the teacher's articulation and excessive use of the target language baffled learners during the text discussion. It must be further noted that a balanced language use during the discussion can help both the mastery of the concept or matter and the developmental process of acquiring the target language.

*Sometimes, sir. She talks too fast and uses straight English. Sometimes, we cannot understand her.*

-Translated: Phase 1c FGD 1

Communication and understanding go together in the classroom. This means lack of communicative skills of the teacher leads to poor relations and misunderstanding. The language and voice as the primary weapon of the teachers in delivering lessons are crucial to the learners. Participants tipped during interviews that the English language as the medium of instruction clogged their ability to understand discussions from the teacher. The secondary is the modulation of voice that stumped the participants to listen to the discussion of the text. Another allied cause of the language barrier of the learners is mentioned by participants, which is their anxiety to use the language when asked to participate during discussion.

The utilization of mixed languages in the classroom made learners inactive during lessons of teachers and has adverse effects on the proficiency of the learners in English. It is thereby recommended that teachers and learners be exposed to materials of EMI with comprehension during the discussion as foremost consideration (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Incomparably, AlBakri's (2017) study revealed that English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) affects the quality of learners' experiences. The participants revealed that their proficiency in the English language deteriorates due to EMI.

### *3.1.6. Teacher's Nonattendance*

Teachers function in many of the related instructional tasks such as lesson preparation, instructional materials preparation, checking of assignments and activities of the learners, and mainly holding classes. The teaching routines of teachers are disrupted due to several reasons. It can be interposed with an urgent meeting to attend, personal needs to settle, indolence at work, and other related reasons. However, it has been an incessant practice that teachers often do not attend classes and leave seatwork for the learners to take during the class period. This becomes a problem since learners feel neglected and left behind from the lessons they are supposed to learn for the day.

Participant 2's testimony is that her teacher seldom attends classes and leaves seatwork for the class due to personal travel, thus affecting their learning and was considered the learner's struggle. Because of this, the learner posed that some of the lessons are left overlooked and perhaps forgotten. Personal necessity is part of every human's life. For teachers, it is hard to leave the class because they have the responsibility for the learners. The use of seatwork is just a substitute for the absence of the teacher during the period.

*I had lots of struggles when ma'am was teaching literature to us before. Sometimes, she does not enter the class, maybe because she is doing something, but she leaves seatwork for us. She tells me, "This is what you will be doing today since I am not around because I have an important matter to attend to." Sometimes too, some lessons are not well-explained to us.*

-Translated: Participant 2-IDI

Besides, the learner laments that her teacher sometimes does not attend classes with them. The activity serves as the task of the learners despite the absence of the teacher. Consequently, the learner maintains a good disposition on the teacher's teaching of literature despite the intermittent class withdrawal of the teacher.

*Her teaching is okay despite that sometimes she does not hold classes, maybe she is busy, but she leaves an activity for us that day.*

-Translated: Phase 1b FGD 1

Teachers are vital in the teaching-learning process. Their physical presence in the classroom brings positive energy to the learners, and in turn, learners feel actuated and excited to learn new lessons. Teachers are viewed as the facilitator in the learning process. Their

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absence, most especially to young learners, means the non-existence of class hours. Teachers must be present so learners can feel cared for, nurtured, and loved. The participants unveil disappointment when their teachers fail to hold classes and meet them.

In the paper of Miller et al. (2007), teacher absences from the class affect student learning in so many ways. Firstly, the instructional intensity in the classroom may be reduced to some extent. Learners may feel a loss of instructional focus if teachers are absent themselves frequently. Secondly, teacher absences create discontinuities of instruction and disrupt regular routines and procedures of the classroom. Because of intermittent absences, learners might forget previous lessons or move to new lessons without continuing or finishing the assignment.

Meanwhile, Finlayson (2009) finds that students' learning achievement gradually regresses due to repetitive teacher's nonattendance or absence from the class. Further, her study uncovers that students score negatively low from the tests when teachers are not attending the classes. This is a clear manifestation that the teacher's physical presence in the classroom is delegated to be a foremost contributor to what and how learners will learn. Statistically, on average, teachers leave the school for about ten days in a school year.

#### *3.1.7. Learners' Personal Struggles*

Apart from the external factors that arise in the teaching and learning process, there are factors too that learners experience internally—these are their struggles as individuals. Numerous studies have been conducted and resulted in learners' struggles and deficiencies in not maximizing and learning lessons the way teachers wanted them to learn. Understanding them through needs analysis and personal dialogues helps to increase the chances of balanced teaching where everything is reckoned, especially the learners. The learners' totality and being are what the heart of the learning process should concentrate on.

Participant 3 pointed out that the class schedule where English class is a factor and difficult for her to learn literary texts. The drowsiness of the learners affects the learning process. Attention and brainwork are at the stake of deviating from the teacher. Especially during this period, teachers shall break the silence and have students avoid such circumstances.

*Our English class falls in the second period in the afternoon. That is also the time when I feel drowsy. I think that is the problem of fighting sleepiness.*

-Translated: Participant 3-IDI

Interesting responses were also elicited, like hunger and the lack of night sleep that hamper learners' learning of the literary text. If these needs are not addressed, a greater possibility also that learning will not transpire for these learners who experienced internal struggles. Teachers must ask the learners why they cannot focus and see what they can do to help them recover from these struggles.

*Just like you cannot eat. Yes sir. Also, if you have lacked a night's sleep, you will feel tired in school.*

-Translated: Phase 1c FGD 1

Difficulty in learning or understanding is not always attributed to intelligence and other neurological factors. Other factors can be contemplated, such as those that are personal to the learners' lives. Participants announced different reasons why they had a hard time participating and understanding literature lessons. Not to mention their problems individually, such as hunger, drowsiness, and inattention.

In the study of Pope (2016), findings reveal that learners who had English subjects during the first or second period in the morning had slightly higher grades in the subject than students who had English class later in the afternoon. He remarked that learners are more productive in the morning than in the afternoon classes by pointing out three contributing factors, changes in the quality of instruction over the school day, changes in students' learning ability during the school day, and differences in student attendance at the start and end of the school day. It is recommended that time schedules for a subject shall be re-arranged periodically towards effective and increased learners' academic performance. On the other hand, Finley (2015) suggested that if learners frequently fall asleep in the class, teachers must engage them in stimulating physical activities inside the classroom or even outside. Switching the activities to physical movement will impact the learner's alertness and have fun with the teacher's activities. Just as possible, teachers also need to interview these sleepers to accommodate concerns and adjust learning activities in the classroom.

### *3. 2 Impressions of the Learners on the Instructional Approaches Employed by their English Teachers in Teaching Literary Texts*

There are five (5) major themes emerged: engaging learning activities, complimentary teaching approach, preparedness in literary discussion, positive reception on assessment and evaluation, and admirable teacher personality. The themes generated made the researcher accompany excerpts that detailed the learners' impressions on the instructional approaches employed by English teachers in teaching literary texts. Mainly, the experiences centralized on the impressions the participants conceived during their English classes, particularly in the teaching and learning of literary texts.

#### *3.2.1 Engaging Learning Activities*

Activities make the class alive and think on their own. It is where learners can showcase their varying degrees of abilities. Activities are an integral part of the teaching and learning process. It is also essential that activities stimulate thinking and improve learning for learners and not for aesthetics or dallying. The participants expressed positivity about the activities they did during their literature class.

Participant 3 sees that the activities given to them by their teacher are a chance to unify their whole class since cooperation and collaboration of ideas, the people, and the like are wielded in each of them.

*It is enjoyable because, in the activities, we become united.*

-Translated: Participant 3-IDI

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Consistent with the account above, the Phase 1a FGD1 participant iterated that the activities are enjoyable to them, with a plus factor of a hilarious teacher during their class. In this way, the learners' attention is caught and directed towards the learning activity and instruction.

*It is enjoyable. Enjoyable! Ma'am did not only teach us, but she jokes before the class. In that way, our attention is caught.*

-Translated: Phase 1a FGD 1

Participants approve that they enjoyed their literary tasks, activities, and other matters despite the stress it caused them. Strong evidence of learning occurs when learners learn while having fun and enjoying doing their teachers' activities slated to them. A sense of fulfillment and pride were among the values deduced from learners' engagement in the activities.

Having seen that games can impact the learners, educators create gamified learning environments to enhance learners' engagement in simpleton activities initiated by teachers. Given the potential of gamification in education, educators opt to adapt game-based activities in literature to stimulate learning outcomes among learners (Nah1 et al., 2014). Additionally, results from the study of Kabilan and Mara (2010) unveiled that the learner-participants perceived that their comprehension of the literary text increased and their motivation and interest to learn literature because of fun and enjoyment. This is the time when the teacher utilized Reader's Theater as a classroom activity. Learners gain new knowledge and experiences while not being conscious to learn, understand situations among group members, and engage themselves in a very well-lit learning environment.

*3.2.2. Complimentary Teaching Approach*

Learners may perceive different things in learning, such as their dislike or preference of how the teacher teaches them. Diversified as learners are, an approach becomes effective when learners feel that the teaching is recommendable. It is vital that teachers self-monitor themselves and ponder on how they are performing in the class.

Participant 7 expresses approval of her teacher's methodology in teaching literary text. Aside from the teacher not being boring in teaching them, the teacher also excels in understanding the text handily.

*I like how she teaches. It is not dull. We can understand the lesson easily.*

-Translated: Participant 7-IDI

As confirmed in the focus group discussion, a participant shared that the style of her teacher is agreeable to some extent that the teacher notices boredom and inattention in the class. The teacher breaks the silence using puns. The creativity of the teacher in teaching tolerates understanding of the lesson maximally.

*Our teacher's style in teaching is favorable. When she feels that there are non-attentive students and the class is boring, she cracks jokes related to the lesson. I think it is the creativity of my teacher.*



-Translated: Phase 2 FGD 4

Learners freely evaluate their teachers' style in teaching them silently. They may not voice their perceptions to the teachers, but learners share their ideas on the teacher's style within the class during casual and small talks. These participants' perceptions are important in the re-alignment or modification of style or approach that suits the type of learners, their learning level anchored to their perceptions. Patently, the use of humor in the classroom kindles learner interests.

Students who like their teachers also start liking the subject and become attentive to the lesson, as a popular connotation says. "A strict teacher can be successful, but a humorous teacher can be more successful" (Vijay and Phil, 2014). Hence, students' attitudes towards their teachers and subjects taught by them are judged on how the teacher efficiently delivers the lessons. Most surveys mention that students favor teachers who adopt a light-hearted attitude in teaching. In the study of AbdAli1 et al. (2016), learners indicate a positive attitude to teachers who use humor as incorporated during lessons and discussions. Likely, Berk (2002) thinks humor is a suitable means to grab learners' attention in dull and lengthy classes; Deiter (2000) also advocates that humor is a great tool to teach stressful and challenging lessons for them. He added that learners might lose the fancy to learn and discover more ideas without humor with the addendum of a tedious and challenging subject. Besides, humor also revitalizes classes and removes off dispositions of learners toward the subject.

### *3.2.3. Preparedness in Literary Discussion*

Preliminaries help set up the mind of the learners towards the discussion. Motivational activity as a starter pack of the lesson plan serves to prepare the learners on the target lesson for the session. Pre-activities are given to learners for them to find affinity in the lessons to take. Much more than that, teachers have reasons why such activities are given beforehand and before the discussion to invigorate and activate learners' minds.

For Participant 6, before they delve into the literary text, the teacher shows previews or trailers related to the literary text. This builds excitement for the learner as the participant thought that the lesson for the day is exciting and surprising to her. The use of videos connected to the text boosts learner's attention towards the text discussion.

*She shows previews or trailers, and we feel excited about it.*

-Translated: Participant 6-IDI

The participant in the focus group discussion corroborated previous accounts that advanced reading is likely an everyday preliminary activity before proceeding to the text discussion. This gives learners chances to prove thoughts and understanding about the text. The teacher then listened to the students' ideas and corrected them if they did not fit the text's sense and meaning.

*Before proceeding to the text discussion, she lets us do an advanced reading. Before the start of the discussion, she opens the text and solicits ideas from us. If ever it is wrong, she corrects it immediately.*

-Translated: Phase 1b FGD 1

Pre-reading activities set an outlook on what will transpire in the class for a period. Learners may find it easy if they are prepared for the day's lesson with the help of the teacher's strategies. Participants reveal that they do a last reading of the text before the teacher discusses or explains the lesson before the class. As revealed, it helps them to obtain ideas and cognition about the text, which will be utilized during discussion.

Essentially, the Texas Education Agency (2019) offered suggestions to promote comprehension of the texts by paying attention before reading the text. Based on research and practical implementation, learners or readers likely to comprehend text with pre-reading activity better than by directly discussing the text. Before reading, the reader's task is to activate his or her prior knowledge of the topic and prepare the mind to interact with the new information contained in the text. Students bring concepts, experiences, and associations to the text. Teachers then motivate students to engage in the reading process (Rochester Institute of Technology, 2019).

#### *3.2.4. Positive Reception on Assessment and Evaluation*

Technically, the measure of learning can be done through series of testing. There are methods of facilitating assessment and evaluation for learners as deemed appropriate to many contexts, such as the learner's ability, proficiency, content complexity, and the like. Teachers have the most significant responsibility as designers of assessment tasks and tools to measure learners' progress. It is also meaningful if learners do not feel anxiety and ascertain that test-takings are part of the learning process.

For instance, Participant 3 completely understands that the assessment of her teacher to them is a test and measure of their understanding. Besides, the participant also acknowledges the importance of assessing them as learners. Assessments are given to track the generative or stagnant progress of the learners.

*It is okay. It helps us. That is the way also to measure us if we understood the teaching of our teacher. So, it is very okay.*

-Translated: Participant 3-IDI

As evident in the participant's response from the focus group discussion, assessment communicates, and which part of the lesson is still nebulous or confusing for the learners. Hence, the assessment result shall be used to create a mechanism and address the low-level comprehension areas of the lesson.

*It is okay that she gives a quiz every after discussion since the information is still fresh. However, sometimes, there are questions that we cannot answer because we do not know or understand them.*

-Translated: Phase 2 FGD 6

The participants valuably understand assessment as a key component in the teaching and learning process. The participants have a positive disposition and acceptance of the type,

nature, and purpose of the assessment conducted by their teachers. With the help of positivity and a clear mindset, learners will feel less anxious when they sophisticatedly do and answer assessment tasks. Findings reveal that they purposively apprehend the role of assessment in their learning achievement.

Assessment is considered one of the most critical aspects of education because students' learning processes and learning outcomes are strongly influenced by the assessment system (Gibbs and Simpson 2004). In the study of Vaessen et al. (2016), participants valued frequent assessment in their class as it becomes a controlling force for them to understand the lesson and among others. Teachers too should clarify that these assessments are valuable tools in helping learners keep on track of learning. Correspondingly, McSweeney (2014) respectively reported that learners experience a good and wide range of vital and transferrable assessments beyond just assessment. Learners view assessment as a judgment of their knowledge and learning level. Moreso, learners view assessment as an evaluation of the teachers and the learners. The teacher's perspective evaluates how the teacher performs before the class in teaching lessons to them. Whereas, in the learner's perspective, it is the measurement and achievement of the learner's comprehension of a topic of study.

### *3.2.5. Admirable Teacher Personality*

Neither in the range of developmentally sequential strategies and activities nor the application of teacher's knowledge to the mastery of the content is the basis of learner's perception if teachers are teaching them the scrupulous way. Learners matter too and heavily on the personality of the teacher in dealing with them. Personality must fit the kind or group of learners to be nursed and nurtured in the best possible way.

Marking from Participant 11's response, the teacher, is an encourager of less proficient students in the class and lacks understanding of the text. The participant sees this personality as elemental to a teacher since not all learners learn simultaneously. Encouragement will boost the learner and tries his/her best to follow the lesson flow and discussion.

*Her teaching is enjoyable and not boring. She encourages those students who lack understanding of the text. She is kind too.*

-Translated: Participant 7-IDI

A participant from the focus group discussion prioritizes the encouraging nature of the teacher at the top of the list since caring and attending to the learner's difficulty is an actual act of concern for the learners.

*Encourages students, especially those who have not understood the lesson.*

-Translated: Phase 2 FGD 6

Participants pointed out the professional and personal qualities of a teacher to teach them. Seemingly, the participants rooted their admiration in their teachers on the job performance exhibited to them. Participants feel high regard for teachers dedicated to teaching them and

have the sense of being a friend or a parent to them. It is ostensibly meaningful if learners and teachers build relationships that foster learning and good fellowship.

Many people emphasize the importance of good teachers. Research, as evident in the learners' scores in some standardized tests, confirms the common perception that some teachers are more effective than others and reveals that student achievement is derived from the effective teaching of teachers. Research also suggests that above any factors that affect student learning, teachers matter the most. They impact learners triple than some factors like individual characteristics and external factors. Hence, teachers of great quality help learners develop desired skills and competencies. The quality of the teachers depends on how they perform in the classroom and how learners progress in their learning (Engberg et al., 2019). Additionally, the personality of the teacher extensively impacts the academic success of the learners. Both personalities of the teacher and the student's motivation in academic activities have a significant relational effect (Mohammad et al., 2011). Hence, to sustain interest, promote motivation, and inculcate discipline among learners, the teacher's personality contributes to these indicators (Kheruniah, 2013; Hirota et al., 2016.) Likely, the personal qualification of a teacher affects students' learning.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION**

This study aimed to bring out challenges and impressions from the learners on the teaching practices of their teacher in literature classes. Emergent themes surfaced as to the challenges of the learners in their respective classes. As previously mentioned in this paper, the learners reflected in their responses that the text, the teacher, and they as learners are sources of difficulties learning literary texts. Significantly, these perceived challenges of the learners fail them to realize, comprehend, and appreciate literary texts, which are endpoints why literature is taught in school. Moreover, these difficulties hamper the learners from generating elusive lessons, morale, and critical contexts of literature in their individual lives.

On the contrary, the learners were impressed with how their teachers taught them literary texts. Teachers and activities as essential factors of their impressions developed commendatory themes on the aspect of instructional practices of the teachers in teaching literature. Sensibly, learners, guided by the articulateness and effectiveness of their teachers in teaching literary texts, earned the appreciation of the teacher's approaches and practices. However, blatantly, learners hope for structured and well-taught teaching in bringing literary texts in the context of utility, significance, and congruity in their learning.

The results of this undertaking reflect processes and practices that went on in a literature classroom of the participants. The challenges or difficulties the participants face in learning literary texts are introspectively implicated in educational practice. Some underlying implications and recommendations include: teachers must include in their lesson parts the unlocking of vocabulary words whenever they teach literary texts and equip learners too with a battery of strategies to uncover the meaning of the unfamiliar words in the text structurally; teachers shall guide learners to the careful interpretation of the text while giving flexibility on their ideas to understand the text as it also empowers them to exercise critically and creatively their mind; teachers then ought to explore the hidden themes found in the text so learners can appreciate the message and its relevance to them; teachers may employ literary activities a step higher and within the range of capabilities of the learners; teachers must vary the medium of

instruction as it can also be an instigation why learners are challenged in learning the text; teacher's physical presence must be observed in the classroom so learners can deeply root to teacher's discussions and activities in realizing the sense of the text; and teachers must be extra cautious in assessing learning and personal needs of the learners as these impact learners' understanding of the text.

Furthermore, where creativity and innovativeness as hallmarks of pedagogical efficiency, teachers must unceasingly hunt for ways learners can learn literary texts with utmost understanding and appreciation. Few implications based on the essential themes obtained include: teachers should find varying platforms where learners can showcase an understanding of the texts; teachers must constantly monitor learners' perceptions, and progress on the approaches employed by them in teaching literature as continuous use of uniform strategy bores learners; teachers must seize the importance of preliminary activities to prepare learners in the course of learning; teachers may find meritorious assessment tasks and tools to reap actual learner's progress; teachers may show genuine personality before the class without compromising and aggravating the learning situations.

On the other aspect, learners are advised to do their part as responsible and committed learners. They are the heart of the educational institution and the corresponding client of the teachers, where teachers have the obligatory nature to unleash their existent potential, skills, knowledge, and values. It is a pivotal role of the teachers to emboss and engrave in them that literary texts are part and a way of life they need to understand and appreciate. Moreover, the study advances towards instructional reforms of the teachers in teaching literary texts through reflecting, assimilating, and accommodating the findings and or results of the study in their respective literature classes. Finally, with limitations and circumstances, this study is delimited only to its purpose and objectives why it was conducted. Further reconstruction and redirection of this undertaking are essential to secure an extensive contribution of knowledge and practices in the world of research, literature education, and language teaching.

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