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" Cultivating Aesthetic Competence: Literature's Role in Language and Cultural Education "

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to find out the shifts in the strategies of foreign language learning and teaching as well as the aesthetic competence concerning the romance literature that could be beneficial for intercultural communication. It becomes a tasking challenge for educators to find interesting sections in multi-media that meet the new demands for multilingualism in learning institutions. What was previously practiced as using and recommending a text book is now an 'integrated approach' to literature, where various authentic texts make learners use a more real life like language and encourages originality, analytical skills and language proficiency. However, while appreciating the positive effect literary interest has on student performance, there are still drawbacks with regard to students' response and behavior with reference to literature. Therefore, this study raises its voice calling for an expansion of the definition of literature to embrace printed words together with graphics and visuals such as those used in graphic novels and comics in the enhancement of educational delivery. First, it posits aesthetics experience on which is understood as an individual's capacity to identify and/or value texts in the learning process of the second language. It is within this context that the study concentrates on exploring the literature in the formation of this competence and its relevance to aesthetics in culturally diverse class environment which shapes the learning space and the intention of the educators. Finally, this study emphasizes on the importance of using literature in language education to assist the students to understand, think and be informed on the cultural issues and interactions in multicultural society.

Keywords: Literacy, CEFR, Aesthetic, Literary and Cultural Literacy, Aesthetic Literacy, Foreign Language Teaching and Learning.

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Introduction

In the past, this meant picking books which could contain textbooks as suggested by Ornstein's (1994) seven books that belong to school curriculum. Although some teachers continue to employ such resources (Luukka, 2019), there are suggestions for the switch to the other forms of authentic media such as literature because they are closer to real language use (Bloemert et al., 2019; Paesani, 2011). ect real-world language use (Bloemert et al., 2019; Paesani, 2011). This shift stems from fears that the kind of dialogues depicted in textbooks are contrived and that content may be quite dated (Calafato, 2018b). Literature in language teaching includes the immersion, creativity, and analysis of information over the second language vocabulary/grammar/structure/application for teaching, in addition to students' understanding (Aptheker, 2014). authentic materials, such as literature, which can better reflect real-world language use (Bloemert et al., 2019; Paesani, 2011). This shift arises from concerns that textbooks often present unnatural dialogues and outdated content (Calafato, 2018b).

Incorporating literature in language education is believed to enhance students' immersion, creativity, critical thinking, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic skills (Hall, 2015). Some influence can be observed today when a body such as the Modern Language Association comes out in support of the curriculum, which is based on language, culture, and literature (Modern Language Association 2007). In relation to the analyses conducted by Calafato and Gudim (2022b), the authors observed that the literature is useful to promote the enjoyment and confidence on the reading associated with the development of speaking fundamental skills and competencies. Nevertheless, there are still questions as to how students read and utilise literature in fL learning environment. Similar to Pappamihiel, most works investigate preconceptions of literature and the sort of texts to bring into classrooms with much less dedication to students' literary responses (van Schooten et al., 2001). Teachers could improve their relationship with authentic texts if they have a better grasp of students' literary reactions, particularly under the newest CEFR descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020). Further, there is scarce literature informed by students' literacy skills in foreign languages for literary interaction (Alter & Ratheiser, 2019). The field also has few findings regarding the role of personality characteristic such as aesthetic appreciation to student engagement with literature while studies show that aesthetic appreciation enhances learning (Sarasso et al., 2021).

Literature in Language Education

It can concern any type of text: short stories, songs, hypertext (Luukka, 2019), or it is more limited to professional writing, such as famous novels, or dramatic works (Paran, 2008). The last definitions of the CEFR descriptors directly link the literature with the creative texts (Council of Europe, 2020) without giving the exact meaning to this term, enabling the definition of what can be referred to as literary more flexible for foreign language class. Interestingly, these descriptors do not distinguish between language teaching and literature education; instead, they

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allow language teachers to integrate literary texts into language activities and to assess students' interpretative, critical, and analytic skills regarding real texts (Paran et al., 2020). Nevertheless, most studies on literature in language education have targeted traditional forms of texts; while infrequently, little attention has been paid to the literary dimensions of multimedial texts such as graphic novels, comics and picture books (Calafato & Gudim, 2022b). Despite these forms being considered as literary, some people ask whether they even have enough text to qualify as so (Meskin, 2009). In this study, we have a broad definition of literature that goes beyond novels and short stories, stories from magazines and newspapers, graphic novels, comics, and picture books. Literary texts are defined as works that serve multiple purposes: they enlighten; they lead while calling the attention to themselves; they solicit the interest of readers while, at the same time, making use of persuasion; and they retain the ability to document despite being fictional in some instance (Baetens, 2008).

First of all, it is crucial to describe what multimodal literary texts imply; actually this term indicates that an original literary text is built on various levels with the help of a text, images, and/or audio symbols. According to the dual coding theory by Sadoski and Paivio (1994), some authors have pointed that the use of these texts increases learning retention and transfer in the L2 acquisition because students are simultaneously activating both the image and the language processors in the brain (Calafato & Gudim, 2022b). Furthermore, these scholars have opined that multimodal literature is not different from other fully textual works in that the latter cannot be considered easier than the former. However, a poor competency in decoding multimodal texts can prevent student's from fully understanding the diverse and multiple meanings that such texts portray. The Gardner's multiple intelligence theory (Gardner & Hatch, 1989) also endorses this idea meaning that students use interpersonal, linguistic, and spatial—when engaging with graphic novels (Lyga & Lyga, 2004).

Research on the incorporation of multimodal texts, with particular reference to graphic novels in foreign language classrooms is still extremely limited (Sabbah et al., 2013). However, research evidence shows that such worked texts have positive impact on the speaking ability, understanding, appreciation and vocabulary of students. Fewer are studies that have compared interactions with textual and multimodal texts and those few mainly concerned themselves with reading comprehension (Wong et al., 2017) with varied effects. Sabbah et al. revealed that the participant-comprehension comparisons were significant between traditional novels and graphic novels with mean values of Traditional Novels = 27.4, Graphic Novels = 25; Traditional Novels = 187.336, Graphic Novels = 179.158 among students preferred with the visual mode of learning. In contrast, Wong et al (2017) found that both interest in reading as well as comprehension were improved when students read graphic novels for reading, regardless of their preferred cognitive mode or prior reading experience. This hints that other crucial characteristics can either positively or negatively influence learners' processes of engaging with, understanding, and enjoying literary pretend books in multimodal as compared to textual forms.

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Literary competence and response.

Literary competence is the capacity to construct meaning within a specific text by using important analytic concepts, in addition to an appreciation for the values of employing such traits (Paran et al., 2020). This idea is generalizable enough to appeal to many scholars, even though, different frameworks clarify, which components literary competency includes. For example, Spiro's (1991) model identifies six key skills: narrative interpretation, empathy, historical, cultural, and social perspective of the work, and theory. On the other hand, frameworks developed by Burwitz-Melzer (2007) and Diehr et. al. (2015) are more focused on upper and lower secondary education and they include motivation, intercultural sensitivity, aesthetics, cognitive and emotive skills, and linguistic and communicative abilities respectively and as classified by Torell (2001).

In addition, Alter and Ratheiser (2019) present a framework with empathic, aesthetic, stylistic, cultural, discursive, and interpretative competencies. Compared to other models, their one is closer to the recent CEFR descriptors and incorporates elements that can easily be operationalized. steering clear of abstract notions like motivation or broad skills such as creativity. However, even when adopting the evaluation methods recommended by Spiro (1991) and Alter and Ratheiser (2019), such frameworks have not yet become popular in the studies into the students' literary profile in the context of foreign language. This gap persists thus with different current literatures and literary competence as observed by European Commission (2019), Modern Language Association (2007), and the Council of Europe (2020). However, there are some works, - van der Pol (2012), Qutub (2018), Ho (2000), Prasasti (2020), and Sauro and Sundmark (2016), that consider the aspect of literary competence in the context of foreign language education.

Nevertheless, such studies are only cross-sectional, observational, and restricted to particular national samples at a given moment in time (Prasasti, 2020); it was unclear how the construct of literary competence was measured. Among the above studies, only Qutub has created a scoring criteria for the assessment of different facets of literary competence in an achievement test with 15 EFL students studying at a Saudi Arabian university. Research findings of this study are however constrained by limited subject sample hence the small number of participants where all of them are female students doing English. Literary response is a related concept to that of the literary competence, which defines how students interact with literature in novels and short stories and so on. Response to literature is seen as a moderately stable personality characteristic, which is in fact an individual's cognitive and affective processes when reading (van Schooten et al., 2001).

This stability is supported by research which shows that the measure of literary reception is constant when compared across the general and the specific of the genre and the stories (Bunbury, 1985). To assess literary response, Miall and Kuiken (1995) developed the

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Literary Response Questionnaire (LRQ), which consists of seven components: Author Interest, which reflects the biography of the author and the manner of writing, Character/Reader Identification, which is feeling the same as the characters, Imagery Intensity, Self-Knowledge from reading, where the reader obtains certain information about himself, Relaxation, through reading, and Rejecting Literary Critique, where the question of striving for literary criticism is deemed unnecessary. (emphasis on plot and action). Research has shown that while literary response can be influenced by factors such as verbal intelligence and motivation, it appears unaffected by literary competence (Miall, 2006). Nonetheless, studies examining the relationship between literary response and literary competence remain limited, particularly within the context of foreign language education.

Statement of the Problem

There has also been observed a concern on improving the communicative proficiency of the foreign language learners in multicultural environment. This shift amply illustrates an interest in language analysis involving a variety of languages alongside the analysis of knowledge in relation to a specific language per discipline. However, teachers experience a number of difficulties when it comes to choice of attractive materials in coordination with the curriculum. This has in the past been done by use of textbooks, but an emerging trend is the use of authentic material, especially literature, which offers a closer to real world picture. Pointed out as having the ability to click to increase students' interest, innovative thinking, and reciprocal language abilities, literature has some gaps regarding students' responses to these texts in foreign language classes. The majority of related researches have focused on such rational gains and categories of literature to use rather than on students' literary reactions and perceiving processes. Unfortunately, due to this lack of information, educators lack general information on how to engage students with the literature.

Furthermore, existing studies explore the students' literarily performance in the foreign languages, which is considered to be essential for appreciating the literature. More importantly, the field does not delve fully into ways in which aesthetic appreciation modifies the ways in which students engage with literary texts notwithstanding signs that such characteristics can powerfully predict learning. Current literature discussions often prioritize traditional forms, such as novels and short stories, while neglecting the potential of multimodal texts like graphic novels, comics, and picture books. This oversight limits the understanding of how diverse literary forms can be utilized in foreign language education. There is a need to adopt a more inclusive definition of literature that encompasses a broader range of textual forms, allowing for richer educational experiences. Research on the use of multimodal texts in foreign language classrooms is still developing, yet preliminary findings suggest these texts can improve various language skills and increase student engagement. However, more studies are still limited when comparing the traditional textual and the multimodal forms. It is important to know how students interact with these different types of media formats to support the development of



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improved instructional practices and to meet the current and future needs of language instruction.

Significance of the Research

Finally, the purpose of “Literature in Language and Cultural Education” concerns the theoretical and practical issues of better incorporation of literature into foreign language curricula. Moreover, as the world is getting more multilingual, the stress on using adequate materials, mainly as literature, meets the lack of the actual language materials, which modern textbooks reveal. Based on these questions, this study intends to provide clear and valuable insights into the manner in which students engage with literature in their FL classrooms in regards to both responses and competence. For that reason going for the identification and incorporation of traditional and multimedia literature such as graphic novels as well as comics can make a difference in affecting all the learners. Further, it will be reasonable to use the concept of aesthetic competence in order to show how the students’ disposition towards literature can influence the learning activities that enhances creativity, critical thinking and language skills acquisition. Knowledge of such attributes is crucial to teachers who have an intention to maximize the language learning process and to make further education more effective, engaging and exciting beyond the identified components such as the words and grammar rules. Overall, this study is not only the theoretical framework for including literature in language education but also offers teachers useful recommendations, which would assist in improving the educational model as classrooms continue to diversify.

Research Questions

1. What role does literature in language classrooms play to enhance the aesthetic quality of the students?
2. How do students’ responses to literature improve their intercultural communication competencies?

Research Objectives

- 1: In order to investigate the ability and significance of literature in enhancing the aesthetic sensitivity of students in language learning.
2. In order to understand the nature of responses students are providing in literature how it is going to help in developing the intercultural communication competence of students in various arenas.

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Analysis and Discussion

Language and Culture are however related to a larger extent primarily because they play a critical role especially in the ability of; The society especially among human beings to engage in an effective communication. As a system of accumulating cultural representations and language, literature has a central significance for the development of aesthetic competence: the individual's capacity to decipher and interact with art cultural texts. Communication skills grows in multilingual contexts, the emphasis on using authentic materials, particularly literary texts, addresses the limitations of traditional textbooks that often fail to reflect real-world language use. This research aims to fill critical gaps in understanding how students interact with literature in foreign language classrooms, particularly focusing on their literary responses and competence. By examining both traditional and multimodal literary forms—such as graphic novels and comics—the study promotes a more inclusive view of literature that can engage diverse learners. This chapter examined the manner in which literature develops aesthetic literacy in language education by enhancing linguistic abilities, cultural sensibility, and analysis in language and culture learning. The aesthetic competence can be described in many ways and the examples include the competency to appreciate the aesthetics in art, the competency to understand art, the competency in relation to artworks, artefacts and so on. Not only in terms of words and language, the language and the vocabulary, but also and perhaps especially in terms of comprehending the contextual, the emotional and even the tonal. In literature aesthetic competence means approaches to phenomena and their themes, signs and styles which create add values in the material under review. They build upon the learners' competencies dealing with diversity in cultural environments and developing and maintaining relationships.

It also appears to be useful for languages in lemans and the construction of the potentiality of the language in the literature. Thus, reading enables the students to extend their linguistic code by familiarizing yourself with the range of genres, styles and lexis. The connection of the literature into context and the possibility to provide arresting examples of the language in use are provided, which helps in the comprehension of idioms, syntactic constructions, rhetorical figures and much more. For example, poetry extends students' idea of rhythm and sound while prose provides them stories other than dialogues. On the same note, reading improves critical thinking and in the exercise also masters how to interpret various literature as one is faced with. Characters, plots and themes require people to have opinions, make relations and ask questions. Through this analytical process learner would be in a position to extend and improve their ability to perform high order thinking skills within language and cultural ventures. When decoding literature texts, the students understand that complications and vagueness are virtues that are useful in other spheres of the interaction. Besides, literature serves as a means to understand different cultures, their perception of the world, as well as the principles and customs of people. By comparing different kinds of works from various cultures the students are able to reflect on the essence of cultural similarities and differences. For

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instance, if women, Black Indigenous and other minority writers appear in literature, literature becomes de-colonial. With this it focuses the students on the various cultures and at the same time try to change this perception of the students towards diversity. As for the aspect of feelings the literary criterion so closely associated with it provides a reader with a sense of 'emotional literacy' in the sense of reading different types of characters and/or situations in literature. As for Sokrates' ideas, students learn feelings and other's feelings within themselves, by discussing the experience of different characters and their suffering, this broaden students' interpersonal skills. Such emotional involvement is especially significant within multicultural context, where understanding how to find value in point of view other than yours can only be useful.

This can be achieved through offering a suitable number of multicultural source of books and diversity of different types, ages and styles of books. In addition to it, discussion, creative contribution and comparative discussion could also aid the students in getting a better exposure and interaction of the concerned material. But, if literature is combined with other subjects such as history, art or social studies, then, students will have a total and even a more realistic view of cultural implications. The assignments that can be carried out on students and are based on the literary works to include making of a multimedia presentation of plots or characters and creation of artistic pieces can only enhance the development of the aesthetic and linguistic domain. However, teaching with the aid of literature in culture has its own pitfalls which are expounded below. The challenges include; One major issue will be diversity. They should not be in a position to represent the society in a normal mode or be in a position to determine how the domination of culture is carried. The idea of inviting authors to give a visit should involve variety so that the materials presented will be interesting to all the students. Secondly, while trying to ocularize language, the didactic aspect of the matter pays attention to the mechanical aspect that the aesthetic competence attained by educators. An integration of grammatical, syntactical, and lexical resources in tuned with Literature prepares the students for real life situations.

Therefore, literature is the most capable method of developing aesthetic competence as a part of language and cultural learning. Given the focus on language skills culmination, critical and cultural sensibility, literature prepared learners for interpersonal and intercultural communicative competence. Each time the teachers are relating to the students in regards to literature, language, and culture, one is poling the environment in a manner that will aid learning because culture is reflected in language.

Findings

Literature is contributed into the foreign language education as the key component which mediates the formation of the students aesthetic competencies and intercultural communicative competence. Elementary teachers turning away from conventional texts – Typically, literature from novels to graphics include a better representation of true language in use. This is a major step up as in the process they also acquire language and in the process they are trained to

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become critical, creative and interested. Coming back again to the aspect of character portrayal Books with people Culture bridges which can open the familiar and novel way of being. It is this kind of emotional imposition that is called for in multicultural world of today, in order to be able to fathom how to interface with the various cultures. |

The value of literary engagement as one of the key assessment practices is widely acknowledged; however, there are still open questions regarding the students' interactions with literary works. Previous studies may consider the potential benefits but rarely looks into students' reaction to literature or their actual writing speed. This missing link prevents classroom instructors from teaching literature to the learners especially from a foreign language perspective. In addition, commonly used literary genres have been researched widely whereas, the applied multimodal texts are relatively new though they have shown the potential for improving language and students' interest.

Based on the definitions of both praxis and typical educational conceptions of esthetics, aesthetic competence as a competency capable of properly interpreting artistic discourse and texts presupposes language training as well as practical contextual and emotional competency. As students analyze literary texts, they develop critical thinking and (or) simply realize that a person cannot be black or white. As a result for such competence to grow, the teachers should use an emancipatory curriculum that is diverse in literature. It also provides a good opportunity for the students to know the culture of their fellow learners, and embrace differences. Therefore, for literature to be used most optimally, the following issues have to be fits; for example, how to accommodate issue of diversity, or the fact that there are almost always two major goals of literature: the appreciation of the artistry and the teaching of language techniques. Integrating Literature with the other arts courses together with offering an all- rounded(set of subjects) while encouraging multiple way answers to problems can improve the understanding of the students

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