

# Teachers' Approaches in Teaching Literature in the New Normal

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**Abstract:** *The study aimed to identify the commonly used approaches in teaching literature in the Philippine context as observed and evaluated by the students. Furthermore, the researchers would like to investigate the activities employed by the teachers to cater the needs of the 21st century learners in literature subjects in the new normal. This study used descriptive method of research among the forty six (46) 3<sup>rd</sup> year English major students who were enrolled in English and American Literature, First Semester, SY 2020-2021 and used frequency count, weighted mean, and ranking as the statistical tools. The study revealed that most of the literature teachers in the College employ Information-based Approach, followed by Personal Response Approach, Paraphrastic Approach, Moral-Philosophical Approach, Language-based Approach, and lastly, the Stylistic Approach. Moreover, the results of the study found out that most of the literature teachers in the new normal still use Comprehensive question exercises as one of the major activities in teaching literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, followed by Lecture session and Discussion. It is then recommended that the teachers shall conduct an initial evaluation of the students' interests and preferences in order to match the appropriate approach to be used in teaching literature. Further, looking at the students' interests and preferences may also help the teachers to devise and prepare activities which will nail the interest of their students. Through this, students will not have the notion that literature is a boring subject.*

**Keywords:** teaching literature, approaches in teaching, new normal, learning activities, 21<sup>st</sup> century learners

## 1. Introduction

Myriads of researches have proven that reading of literary pieces is an important part of the English subject for several reasons. Krashen (2004) once claimed that the nature of reading and the development of reading skills indicate that practice is essential if pupils are to become proficient readers. This simply implies that literary pieces give readers opportunities to practice reading; hence, helping them to be proficient readers. Moreover, the study of Day and Bamford (2002) argue that extensive reading of foreign language texts may also play an important role in the development of pupils' interests in foreign language reading. The same claim is made by Hellekjær (2007) who has found that the extent to which pupils read English texts in their free time has a high correlation with reading test scores, therefore, pupils who read English outside school appear to be better readers than those who do not.

Previous researches attest that having pupils read more may not only give them the practice that they need if they are to become proficient readers, but if done correctly, it might also encourage them to read more and thus become even better readers. Several theories of Second Language Acquisition acknowledge the importance of input in the development of several aspects of learner language, and in relation to learners' mental grammars in particular (Ellis, 1997; Krashen, 2004).

Further, grammatical, and by implication also linguistic competence, underlies the development of reading and listening skills as well as pupils' ability to speak and write English (Alderson, 2000; Hellekjær, 2010; Luoma, 2004; Weigle, 2002). It therefore seems reasonable to infer that literature, as written input, can potentially contribute to the continued development of these skills as well. According to Kramsch and Kramsch (2000), literature is, at present, regarded as an authentic source of English language.

Furthermore, reading is both necessary and beneficial for the development of the pupils' vocabularies (Krashen, 2004; Schmitt, 2000). According to Schmitt (2000), written input is probably more important than oral input in this process, since written texts contain a larger portion of low-frequency words than do oral texts. Moreover, written texts can also provide pupils with the repeated exposures they need to both expand and consolidate their vocabularies. According to Alderson (2000), vocabulary plays a crucial part in reading and text comprehension. It might therefore be reasonable to assume that, as pupils' vocabularies develop, so will their reading skills (Read, 2000; Schmitt, 2000).

As far as the teaching of literature involves, different activities in which pupils use English, it may also play an important role in generating output, that is to say spoken or written production in English. Swain (2000) argues that pupils also need to practice using a language in order to learn it, and that there are several ways in which they can learn from the language they produce themselves. Output can, for instance, help pupils notice the ways in which their linguistic proficiency may be improved.

Furthermore, the teaching of literature can consequently contribute to the development of pupils' English skills in numerous ways (Swain, 2000). Three aspects recur very often in current research articles as the main reasons for teaching literature in the EFL classroom (Yimwailai, 2015): language improvement, focusing on the linguistic features and structures of a text, as a cultural model to discuss societal issues from a different culture's point of view, or as a way to achieve personal growth through reading.

However, there are not many studies conducted on teachers' views towards literature, their implications for practice, and the analysis of different approaches in literature teaching. Therefore, teaching literature requires extra effort for the teacher to cater different types of the learner

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nowadays, since strategies to consider is undeniably unlimited in the 21st century.

According to Rashid (2010), in a study in Malaysia, the most preferred approach by teachers and students is the Information-Based approach. The aforementioned findings prompted the researchers to know which approach is commonly used in the Philippine context as observed and evaluated by the students and teachers. Furthermore, the researchers would like to investigate the activities employed by the teachers to cater the needs of the 21st century learners in literature subjects in the new normal.

## 2. Methodology

This study used the descriptive method of research among the forty six (46) 3<sup>rd</sup> year English major students from the College of Education at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology, Sumacab Campus, Sumacab Este, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija who were enrolled in English and American Literature, First Semester, SY 2020-2021.

The researchers used questionnaire to gather the necessary data. The responses were then tabulated and tallied using the following: Frequency count, Weighted mean, and Ranking.

Further, the following scale was used to identify and interpret the teachers' approaches in teaching literature: 4:20-5:00 (Always); 3.40 – 4.19 (Often); 2.60 – 3.39 (Sometimes); 1.80 – 2.59 (Seldom); and 1.0 – 1.79 (Never).

## 3. Results and Discussions

### Teachers' Approaches in Teaching Literature

Table 1 below displays the different characteristics of the various approaches employed by teachers in teaching literature. Further, it shows which approaches are commonly used by teachers, in the new normal, as perceived by the student and teacher respondents.

**Table 1: Approaches Employed in Teaching Literature**

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
<b>Information-based Approach</b>		
Elicit information from students about the text.	4.025	Often
Explain the content of the text to the class.	4.325	Always
Ask questions to check students' knowledge based on what they have read.	4.4	Always
Provide students with background information.	3.975	Often
<b>TOTAL WEIGHTED MEAN</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>Often</b>
<b>Personal-Response Approach</b>		
Encourage students to relate the themes to personal experiences	4.1	Often
Elicit students' response to a text	4.125	Often
Encourage students to express feelings towards the issues of the text	4.125	Often
<b>TOTAL WEIGHTED MEAN</b>	<b>4.12</b>	<b>Often</b>
<b>Language based approach</b>		
Guide students to express their opinions towards a text	4.125	Often

Set language activities in literature lesson	3.95	Often
Encourage students to actively participate in the process of understanding the meaning of text	4.1	Often
Students work with their classmates in the process of understanding the text	4.2	Always
Generate language practice using the text	3.925	Often
<b>TOTAL WEIGHTED MEAN</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>Often</b>
<b>Paraphrastic Approach</b>		
Re-tell the text to students to help them understand	4.275	Always
Use simple terms to explain what the story is about to students	4.175	Often
Discuss what the author says in the text	3.875	Often
Get students to tell the storyline of the text	3.85	Often
<b>TOTAL WEIGHTED MEAN</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>Often</b>
<b>Moral-Philosophical</b>		
Incorporate moral values in lessons	4.075	Often
Ask students the values they learn from the text	3.975	Often
Get students to search moral values from a text	4.00	Often
Raise students' awareness of values derived from the text	4.05	Often
<b>TOTAL WEIGHTED MEAN</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>Often</b>
<b>Stylistic approach</b>		
Guide students to interpret a text by looking at the language used by the author	4.00	Often
Get students to mark any linguistic features from the text that are significant to their reading	3.725	Often
My literature lesson looks at the language of the text, thus, encourages language awareness	3.975	Often
Encourage students to discuss beyond the surface meaning of the text	3.975	Often
<b>GENERAL WEIGHTED MEAN</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>Often</b>

The above data shows that among the approaches in teaching literature, teachers commonly employ Information-based Approach which garnered a General Weighted Mean of 4.18 with a Verbal Interpretation of *Often*. Information-based approach gives knowledge and information to students (Thunnithet, 2011). It is teacher-centered and demands a lot of teacher's input in giving students various contents of literary text like on historical, political, cultural and social background. Knowledge of literature is delivered as a source of information to students (Rashid, Vethamani, & Rahman, 2010). It includes reading from the criticism or notes, explanations and lectures given by teacher for examinations sake (Hwang & Embi, 2007).

Moreover, *Personal Response Approach* ranked 2nd among the approaches used by the teachers which got a General Weighted Mean of 4.12 and a Verbal Interpretation of *Often*. This approach encourages students to make sense of their experiences and personal lives with text themes. It also promotes students to associate the subject matters of the reading texts with personal life experiences (Rashid, Vethamani & Rahman, 2010). It engages individual in literary text reading as personal fulfilment and pleasure can

be met while developing the language and literary competency (Divsar, 2014).

Third among the approaches in the *Paraphrastic Approach* which garnered a General Weighted Mean of 4.04 with a Verbal Interpretation of *Often*. This approach is primarily paraphrasing and rewording the text to simpler language or use other languages to translate it. Teachers use simple words or less complex sentence structure to make the original text easy to understand (Divsar, 2014). It is teacher-centred and does not contribute much interesting activities toward students (Hwang & Embi, 2007).

Then, the *Moral-Philosophical Approach* which got a General Weighted Mean of 4.03 with a Verbal Interpretation of *Often*. In this approach, the learners seek moral values from a particular literary text while reading it. It helps students to be aware of values of moral and philosophical and identify them that lies in their reading (Rashid, Vethamani & Rahman, 2010). Students need to go beyond the text for moral and philosophical inference (Divsar, 2014). With this approach, teachers are able to direct students to achieve self-realization as well as selfunderstanding while interpreting literary works (Lim & Omar, 2007). This approach is very much in line with the aim of Malaysian Secondary English Language Syllabus to instil values for good citizenships.

It is followed by the *Language-based Approach* which got a General Weighted Mean of 3.93 with a Verbal description of *Often*. This approach helps students pay attention to the way the language is used when studying literature. It is student-centred and activity-based for productive use of language. It improves students' language proficiency, and incorporates literature and language skills among the students (Dhillon & Mogan, 2014). It engages students more on experiences and responses (Aydin, 2013). Role play, cloze, poetry recital, discussions, forum and debate, dramatic activities, making prediction, brainstorming, rewriting stories ending and summarizing are practised in this approach (Divsar, 2014).

Lastly, the *Stylistic Approach* which got a General Weighted Mean of 3.92 with a Verbal Interpretation of *Often*. Stylistic approach implies literary critics and linguistic analysis. It is for students to appreciate and understand in a deeper manner of the literary text. It helps students to interpret the text meaningfully and develops language awareness and knowledge (Thunnithet, 2011). It analyzes the language prior to the elements of literary text (Aydin, 2013).

It can be inferred on the results of the study that most of the teachers still cling to idea of Input Hypothesis of Stephen Krashen (1970) which believes that students progress and improve when appropriate amount of inputs are provided to them. Hence, the teachers adhere to the importance of providing sufficient amount of information in teaching literature. Further, the data revealed that most of the approaches used by teachers are teacher-centered approaches and the least commonly used approaches, the language-based and Stylistic Approaches, tend to be student-centered approaches, yet, nearly rejected to be used. This result of the study intensifies the claims of the students that

literature classes tend to be boring and and less engaging. Hence, the result of the study must be an eye-opener to the Literature subject teachers to shift their approaches to student-centered approaches than the teacher-centered approaches.

Moreover, the results of the study is what Karalis (2020) called for and emphasized in the new normal. According to him, what are worth studying in this situation are the implications that have risen, the adjustments need to be made, the extent of the situation and the dimension of education in the new normal. Therefore, the implications of focusing on the teacher-centered approaches must be taken into consideration and shall be adjusted in order to focus on students-centered approaches in order to shift students' notions on teaching and learning literature.

**Teachers Activities in Teaching Literature**

Table 2 shows the different activities used by teachers in teaching literature. Further, it shows which activities are commonly used by teachers as perceived by the student and teacher respondents.

**Table 2: Activities in teaching Literature**

Item	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Comprehension questions exercises	4.2	Always	1
Lecture sessions	4.125	Often	2.5
Read notes from workbooks/handouts with students	3.775	Often	16
Explain a text to students	4.075	Often	4.5
Journal writing	3.675	Often	19.25
Brainstorming sessions	3.675	Often	19.25
Small group discussions	3.9	Often	12
Writing about feelings/reactions towards an issue	3.8	Often	15
Group work	3.675	Often	19.25
Language activities (cloze, jigsaw puzzle, prediction exercises)	3.45	Often	23
Debate	3.25	Sometimes	24
Performance activities (drama, role play, poetry recital)	3.6	Often	22
Translation of text using L1	3.7	Often	18
Re-tell story to students	3.85	Often	14
Students read paraphrased notes in the workbook/handouts	3.725	Often	17
Students re-tell story to the class	3.95	Often	11
Reflective sessions	4.025	Often	6.5
Discussions on moral dilemmas	4	Often	8
Tell moral values to students	3.875	Often	13
Conduct self-evaluation activities	3.975	Often	9.5
Identify linguistics features (eg. vocabulary, tenses) in a text	3.975	Often	9.5
Discuss different meanings of a text	4.125	Often	2.5
Extract examples from a text that describe a setting	4.025	Often	6.5
Identify adjectives that describe a character	4.075	Often	4.5
GENERAL WEIGHTED MEAN	4.0552	Often	

The table clearly shows that most of the literature teachers, during the new normal, still use *Comprehensive question exercises* as one of the major activities in teaching literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as it garnered the highest weighted (4.2)

mean among the respondents with a verbal interpretation of *Always*. It is followed by *Lecture session and Discussion* of different meanings of a text which both got a weighted mean of 4.125 and a verbal interpretation of *Often*. On the other hand, *Debate* is enlisted as the least commonly used activity by the literature teachers in the new normal, as it garnered a General Weighted Mean of 3.25 with a verbal interpretation of *Sometimes*.

It is apparent on the data that comprehensive question exercises, as an activity in literature classes, never grows old as it is always indispensable to gauge whether the students understood the literary pieces presented. Through this, teachers can always measure and examine the level of their students' understanding, performance, ability, and inclinations toward the piece and the subject.

Aside from this, since the mode of teaching and learning switches from face to face to modular and online classes, the mere use of comprehensive questions is seen as a major means and a parameter to measure whether literary pieces are really appreciated and realized by the students. Further, it can also be deduced from the collected data that since literature teachers still cling on the use of Information-based Approach, it is also evident that they adhere on the use of lecture session and discussion of different meanings of a text as activities being used in their classes.

The finding of the study is in consonance to the study of Aggabao and Guiab (2014) who found out that discussion and teacher-student discussion are perceived to be the most effective and interesting activities in teaching literature. Moreover, their study revealed that through these activities, students can incorporate their real life experiences and can relate to the scenarios and events present in the literary pieces.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based from the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1) Information-based Approach is the most commonly used approach by the literature teachers even in the new normal. It is apparent that teachers still want to provide more inputs not only on the literary pieces discussed, but also on the historical background of the story, including its author.
- 2) Aside from the Information-based Approach, the teachers were also found out to always incorporate the experiences of their students in discussing the literary pieces. Since the world faces pandemic which affects not only one of the facets of everyone's life, the teachers also see the situation as a foundation of getting bits of information to incorporate in the analysis of the literary pieces presented.
- 3) Stylistic Approach is the least commonly used approach by the literature teachers in the new normal. Since this approach is seen to be the end pole of Information-based approach, the teachers opted to analyze the story by not looking at the linguistic features present and used in the literary pieces, but by providing schema and more inputs pertaining to the literary pieces.

- 4) Comprehension question exercises are the commonly used activities by the teachers in their classes to check whether the students understood the literary pieces or not. On the other hand, debate is seen as the least activity conducted by the literature teachers in the new normal.

#### 5. Recommendations

From the conclusions drawn, the researchers recommend the following:

- 1) Throughout the teaching process of developing students' ability to learn, love and embrace literature, teachers have a very important role to play. Hence, choosing appropriate approach is very crucial. It is recommend for the teachers to have an initial evaluation of the students' interests and preferences in order to match the appropriate approach to be used in teaching literature.
- 2) Looking at the students' interest and preferences may also help the teachers to device and prepare activities which will nail the interest of their students. Through this, students will not have the notion that literature is a boring subject.
- 3) Teachers have to promote a positive environment and learning attitude for the students to feel comfortable with literature learning and not to feel scared and intimidated by the complexity of the texts chosen.
- 4) Incorporating technology may also be used as an effective mode and tool of teaching literature, as well as in providing activities, since it is the major mode of teaching used in the new normal.

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