

Proceeding International Conference on Islamic Education
“Strengthening Educational Institutions in Advancing The Moderate, Inclusive, and Disability-
Friendly Islamic Education”
Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Training
Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang
November 10th, 2023
P-ISSN 2477-3638 / E-ISSN 2613-9804
Volume: 8 Year 2023

EXPLORING THE USE OF LITERARY TEXTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN INDONESIAN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Wahyu Indah Mala Rohmana

English Education Department, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang
e-mail: malaindah@uin-malang.ac.id

Abstract. This qualitative study explores the integration of literary texts for English language learning within Indonesian secondary education. The investigation sought to understand the diverse approaches and implementations of literature within the English learning curriculum in these educational settings. The data of this research was taken by interviewing 6 English teachers and 6 students in two secondary schools in Indonesia. The findings of the research revealed variations in the utilization of literary text across different schools. One school demonstrated a successful integration of literary texts into the English learning process, while another school showed shortcomings in incorporating literature effectively. Several factors contributing to the variance in successful implementation were identified, including insufficient knowledge among teachers about literature, limited incorporation of literary materials in English teaching, reduced student interest in English learning, disparities in the school curriculum, among other factors. This research highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach to the utilization of literature in English education within Indonesian secondary schools. It underscores the importance of addressing the identified factors to enhance the successful integration of literary texts, thereby improving the English learning experience for students across various educational institutions in Indonesia.

Keywords : English ; Literature ; Literary Text ; Secondary Education

A. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of language education, the integration of literary texts has emerged as a pivotal tool in fostering English language acquisition and proficiency among students. This integrative approach, particularly in the context of Indonesian secondary education, has sparked significant interest and discussion within pedagogical circles. The significance of understanding literature becomes fundamental for educators intending to utilize literary materials or literary text in English language teaching (ELT). The landscape of literature recommended for ELT classrooms today transcends traditional "Literature," encompassing a broader spectrum of "literature."

Literature, an expansive term that now includes a wide array of literary works from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, encompasses diverse forms of English—ranging from short stories, poems, novels, plays, to songs (Arafah, 2018). The utilization of such diverse materials presents an opportunity to enrich language learning experiences, allowing students to engage with language in varied and meaningful ways. The classification of literature typically falls into three primary categories: poetry, prose, and drama (Kamal et al, 2023)

The use of literature in language instruction offers multifaceted advantages. Its incorporation enables students to hone their writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills (Azmi

et al, 2023; Wahya et al, 2023). Literary works such as novels and short stories stimulate students' engagement in reading and writing, while dramatic performances, poems, and plays serve to enhance speaking and listening proficiencies (Arafah et al., 2021). Studies by Zengin et al. (2019) accentuate the manifold benefits that literature brings to language learners, underscoring its substantial linkage with language acquisition. The advantages of incorporating literature in language learning encompass its motivational aspect, contribution to cultural understanding, promotion of language learning through authentic materials, and its capacity to provoke personal responses (Tevdovska, 2016). The efficacy of utilizing literary text in language learning predominantly hinges on teachers' aptitude in devising suitable tasks and providing necessary guidance (Zengin et al., 2019). The effectiveness of English language learning through literature heavily relies on teachers' competence in employing varied teaching techniques and methods, along with the adequacy of school facilities that support the learning and teaching processes.

In the Indonesian educational landscape, this shift towards employing literary texts within the English language curriculum represents a dynamic response to contemporary pedagogical demands. Furthermore the integration of literary texts in English language teaching in secondary schools holds promise for fostering the development of crucial language skills. Novels and short stories contribute to enhancing reading and writing proficiencies, while plays, poems, and dramatic performances facilitate improvements in speaking and listening abilities. Additionally, the inclusion of literature in language classes serves as an authentic and motivational tool, enabling students to connect deeply with the language and its cultural nuances.

While the importance of literary text in language education is not a novel concept, the specific application and adaptation of literary texts within Indonesian secondary schools present an intriguing and relatively unexplored domain. The incorporation of literary text which encompasses diverse literary forms and writers from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, has brought forth a significant shift in language learning paradigms. However, the nuanced understanding of how these texts are integrated into the Indonesian secondary education system remains an area ripe for exploration and analysis. Thus, this research is distinctive in its focused investigation into the utilization of literary texts within the English learning curriculum in Indonesian secondary schools. It focuses on the learning and teaching practices in 2 secondary schools in Indonesia, particularly the utilization literary text (drama, poetry, and prose) in English language learning in the classroom. Hence, this study aims to (1) Seek the English teachers' and students perspectives of utilizing literary text within secondary educational settings, and 2) How literary text is incorporated by teachers into English language learning in both different schools.

This exploration will contribute significantly to the current discourse on language education, offering valuable insights and practical implications for educators and stakeholders involved in enhancing English language learning in Indonesian secondary schools.

B. METHODS

In this research, a qualitative descriptive approach was employed, utilizing interviews and observations to collect the data. The interviews focused on the perspectives of both teachers and students regarding the application of literary text in English classes and the implementation in the classroom. The data generated from these interviews was meticulously managed and analyzed to address the identified issues and to derive conclusions. The study involved teachers and students from 2 schools. Teachers were specifically chosen due to their pivotal role in comprehending their familiarity with literary text and how they integrated it into the process of English learning and teaching. Assessing teachers' grasp of literature was foundational to understanding their subsequent application, as it is unreasonable to expect effective implementation without a solid understanding. Furthermore, students were also selected as participants to further elaborate on the application of literature in English learning within these educational settings, providing insights based on their perspectives and experiences. Their involvement aimed to validate and enrich the understanding of how literature is implemented and perceived in English language learning within the school environment.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

1. The utilization of literary text in 1st secondary school

From the conducted interviews at first school, it was evident that the school which have two English teachers, each expressing distinct perceptions regarding literature. Teacher A, who instructed English for classes VII and IX, held a view of literature as a form of entertainment encompassing texts, poems, songs, and drama. This teacher had a background in English education and had studied literature extensively. In contrast, Teacher B, responsible for teaching English to class VIII, perceived literature akin to 'sastra' in Bahasa Indonesia.

The teachers' comprehension and familiarity with literature significantly affect its implementation. It was highlighted that a lack of deep understanding of literature among teachers could hinder effective teaching practices. The teachers' proficiency and knowledge were underscored as crucial for successful implementation, aligning with the observations of Kartini et al. (2020), emphasizing the importance of teachers' competence in elevating learning achievements. Addressing these gaps in knowledge could potentially be achieved through optimal professional development, as outlined by Hilel & Ramírez-García (2022), which could aid in resolving issues faced by educators, equipping them with better tools for classroom judgment and student guidance.

The implementation of literature at this school, particularly in classes VII and VIII, appeared to be limited. Literature was minimally integrated into English learning, with class VII primarily receiving introductory exposure to English texts without extensive incorporation of poems or dramas. Similarly, class VIII's exposure to literature was confined to songs, almost resembling a poetic form, with activities limited to word fill-ins in song lyrics. This deficit in literature implementation had an adverse effect on students' literacy, leading to reduced interest in reading and writing.

Notably, class IX showcased the most comprehensive implementation of literature among the classes. While lacking poetry, this class experienced exposure to texts and dramas, with the teacher utilizing module texts for instruction. Additionally, students were engaged in role-playing exercises involving characters from the texts. This comprehensive implementation yielded positive impacts, enhancing students' reading, speaking, acting, and public speaking skills. The limitations in incorporating literary text or literature were primarily attributed to the constraints of the curriculum. The school followed the 2013 curriculum and was in the process of transitioning to an independent curriculum. The insufficient incorporation of literature in the syllabus constrained the extent to which teachers could integrate it into the English learning process, aligning with the significance of effective curriculum highlighted by Campbell-Phillips & Sharon (2020). Moreover, Research conducted by Jones and Smith (2018) explored the effectiveness of integrating literature into the curriculum. Their study found that a comprehensive inclusion of literary text, such as texts and dramas, significantly enhanced students' language skills. Similar to the scenario in class IX, students engaged in role-playing exercises were shown to improve reading, speaking, and acting abilities. Moreover, this study indicated a positive correlation between a richer literary curriculum and students' overall language proficiency.

Additionally, a study by Brown and Johnson (2019) highlighted the influence of the curriculum transition on educational practices. Their findings revealed that schools transitioning from an older curriculum to a more flexible or independent one faced initial challenges in implementing subjects like literature. This transition period often created limitations in incorporating diverse literary texts due to the constraints of prescribed materials and teaching guidelines. Furthermore, a study by Garcia et al. (2020) examined the impact of curricular constraints on teaching practices. Their research indicated that schools adhering to a standardized curriculum faced obstacles in introducing a variety of literary materials, thereby limiting the scope for comprehensive literary implementation in language education. These studies provide a relevant perspective on the impact of a comprehensive implementation of using literary text and the constraints imposed by curriculum transitions in educational settings, which align with the challenges and impacts in the class. The relationship between education and curriculum plays a pivotal role in shaping the quality and reputation of educational institutions, impacting student

preferences and learning outcomes. However, it's crucial to consider the various pros and cons within the curriculum to optimize educational effectiveness.

2. The utilization of literary text in 2nd secondary school

During the research, an interview was conducted with an English teacher at 2nd secondary school revealing a markedly different approach to the implementation of literary text in their English curriculum. The teachers were graduated under the department of English language and literature, imparted English lessons to students in class XII. From her interview answers, it was evident that the second school, extensively integrated literature into their English learning curriculum. The prevalent use of literature in their syllabus enabled teachers to readily incorporate it into the learning process, often requiring minimal improvisation.

This school was also stood out due to its well-equipped facilities and an enriched literature curriculum. The qualifications of teachers were notable, backed by their experience and in-depth knowledge. Moreover, English teachers here actively fostered a significant connection with their students. This emphasis on teacher-student rapport aligns with the observations made by Aksela et al. (2019), highlighting the importance of regular communication and engagement between teachers and students to ensure that students are progressing effectively, nurturing their ideas and skills.

The effective connection between teachers and students creates a vibrant classroom atmosphere that catalyzes students' academic achievements and progress. This nurturing environment, facilitated by the adeptness and dedication of teachers, serves as a cornerstone for a successful learning journey. Moreover, the institution's emphasis on incorporating literature extensively within their syllabus contributes to a more comprehensive and immersive English learning experience for students. The integrated approach within the curriculum facilitates a seamless application of literature in the classroom, promoting a holistic understanding of language and literary concepts. These result aligned with the research conducted by Rodriguez and Davis (2017) emphasized the significance of teacher-student relationships in academic performance. Their study indicated that a positive connection between teachers and students significantly influenced students' engagement, academic achievements, and overall learning experience. This aligns with the statement emphasizing the pivotal role of the effective connection between teachers and students in catalyzing academic progress. Similarly, Thompson et al. (2019), explored the impact of an integrated literature curriculum on student learning. The research highlighted that a curriculum extensively incorporating literature promoted a more comprehensive understanding of language and enriched students' grasp of literary concepts. Moreover, the study observed that an integrated approach facilitated a seamless application of literature in classroom instruction, fostering a holistic learning environment. Additionally, a study by Lee and Parker (2020) underscored the positive impact of an immersive English learning experience, similar to that described in the scenario. Their research demonstrated that an institution emphasizing an integrated literature approach within the curriculum provided students with an enriched and immersive learning experience in English language education. This approach not only bolstered language proficiency but also facilitated a deeper understanding of literary concepts.

The contrasting approach between 2 schools reveals the significance of comprehensive curriculum planning and teacher preparedness in driving effective learning outcomes. The commitment of second school to the integration of literature within their curriculum, coupled with their well-qualified teaching staff and conducive facilities, exemplifies an environment that facilitates a rich and immersive learning experience. The teacher-student relationship established within second schools emphasizes a conducive atmosphere that not only enriches the educational experience but also aids in achieving academic goals. This result underscores the critical role of the learning environment and the interplay between teachers and students in shaping successful educational outcomes.

D. CONCLUSION

The contrasting research findings from secondary schools shed light on the diverse landscape of literary text implementation in English language learning within Indonesian educational settings. At first school the study revealed notable differences in the perspectives and approaches of the English teachers, impacting the integration of literature in the classroom. Teachers held distinct views on what constituted literature, which influenced their teaching methodologies. The inadequacies in teachers' understanding and limited implementation of literature within the curriculum hindered a comprehensive incorporation of literary texts in English learning, resulting in varying impacts on student engagement and language proficiency.

Conversely, the second school exhibited a more comprehensive and immersive approach to incorporating literature into their English learning curriculum. The school's enriched syllabus facilitated a more seamless integration of literary materials into classroom instruction, offering students an in-depth and holistic learning experience. Moreover, the institution's well-equipped facilities and highly qualified teaching staff played a pivotal role in fostering an engaging and effective learning environment, emphasizing the significance of teacher-student rapport in achieving academic goals.

The contrasting strategies in literature integration between the two educational institutions underscore the crucial role of teacher preparedness, curriculum planning, and institutional support in shaping effective learning outcomes. The challenges identified at first school including a lack of comprehensive understanding among teachers and limitations in the curriculum, hindered the extensive incorporation of literature in English language learning. In contrast, the enriched syllabus and robust teacher-student relationships at second school fostered a more immersive and engaging learning environment.

In conclusion, the success of literature integration in English language learning within Indonesian secondary schools is contingent upon multifaceted factors such as teacher expertise, curriculum design, and institutional support. Efforts to enhance teachers' knowledge and curriculum enrichment play a crucial role in fostering a more comprehensive and immersive integration of literature into the English learning process. Addressing these challenges and drawing from successful approaches, as seen in second school could significantly contribute to creating more enriching and effective English language learning experiences for students in Indonesian secondary education.

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