

Best practices in teaching world literature: A phenomenological study

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Abstract

This study envisioned and explored the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and best practices of English teachers in teaching world literature in Montevista District, Davao de Oro. It utilized the qualitative-phenomenological method of research. Data for this research were collected in random sampling method from the five English teachers in four participating schools through individual in-depth interview. The result of this study revealed that English teachers experienced difficulties and challenges in teaching world literature because of the lack of literature-related trainings and seminars attended. Moreover, this study also found that there were several teaching strategies as coping mechanisms in exploring literature. In addition, this research determined the best practices of the participants in teaching world literature such as the use of differentiated teaching strategies, video materials, and group activities. Thus, on the basis of the results of this research, it can be concluded that due to lack of trainings and seminars conducted, English teachers experienced difficulty in teaching world literature. As a recommendation, District English coordinator of Montevista District in Davao de Oro should conduct more training and seminars in teaching world literature.

Keywords: Trainings and Seminars; Experiences; Challenges; Coping Mechanisms; Best Practices

1. Introduction

Collecting the best practices in teaching world literature helps all English teachers effectively explore and nurture the students' language skills, cultures, morals, and worldviews. Literature is valuable, authentic material created for the primary purpose of teaching language. In the English as a Second Language curriculum, teachers use literature as a springboard to teach grammar rules and aim at enhancing students' language proficiency. However, literature teaching has mostly remained traditional in many classrooms, emphasizing teacher text-centered approaches like lectures, literary surveys, biographical summaries, and text analyses with occasional discussions. According to the study by Ugwu (2022), teachers face many challenges, including an acute shortage of textbooks, low language proficiency, a heavy workload, and misconceptions about the value of literature. Thus, these prevent them from delivering quality education. Further, it is also said that teachers need help with several issues, including the inability of students to see the benefits of literature and comprehend the different characteristics of literary genres due to poor and compromised language skills.

In the Philippines, Benonguil and Barnido (2022) highlight the different teaching instructional approaches English teachers use in teaching texts in an ESL classroom. He also gathered lived experiences of the students and concluded that teachers need help deepening the literature in their explanation due to the lack of training attended. Training and seminars are mandatory action plans to help teachers learn teaching strategies to explore literature. Moreover, particularly in schools within Montevista District, English teachers have always considered teaching literature

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challenging in the English curriculum. Teachers must successfully transfer necessary skills in reading, critical thinking, and literary criticism even while reading lengthy texts. Aside, students' level of comprehension and analysis skills are the main threats to exploring literature, and it is observed that teachers have poorly integrated literature as a springboard to grammar lessons.

The phenomenon mentioned above has challenged the researcher to undergo qualitative research, specifically on the side of experienced English teachers teaching World literature, to discover how they effectively teach literature through performed best practices. This study considers the current struggles of every English teacher, especially of newly hired English teachers as they handle literature subjects in Junior High School. As observed, teachers had difficulty imparting the lessons to the learners. Hence, these pressing issues in the teaching field have moved the researcher to conduct this study. This study looked into English teachers' lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and best practices in teaching world literature.

2. Material and Method

2.1. Qualitative – Phenomenological Method

This study utilized a qualitative-phenomenological approach to gather the best practices of English teachers in teaching world literature. The qualitative research design is generally defined as a method that delves into participants' observations, experiences, thoughts, and feelings. This would be used to understand underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. In addition, it was stated that qualitative research is a method of exploring and understanding a group of people or individuals who experienced a situation or phenomenon.

2.2. Individual In-Depth Interview

In this study, the participants were five (5) English teachers who were assigned to different participating schools in Montevista District who have undergone face to face individual in-depth interview (IDI). These English teachers have been in the service for five years and above in teaching world literature are the qualified participants based on the set of criteria by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). They are also called the proficient English teachers who encountered different teaching experiences related to literature. On the other hand, it took fresh considerations on the said experiences of the five participants.

3. Results and Discussion

The structured themes and the emerging therein were made as bases for broadening the discussion of the findings in this study. As each theme was linked to related literature and studies, a substantial discussion was made in order to find their alignment with the theme.

What are the experiences of English teachers in teaching world literature?

3.1. Experiences of English Teachers in Teaching World Literature

The emerging themes are problems with comprehension, lack of literary materials, students lack of interest with written activity, spoon feeding style of teaching, found teaching literature difficult, and both rewarding and challenging. These are the lived experiences of English teachers in teaching world literature. This reveals that teachers have different encounters in their daily teaching routines inside the classroom in teaching world literature. Further, almost of the themes connote negative experiences and it signifies problems in teaching and learning process. These served as the reasons why teaching literature is a challenging part of being an English teacher.

Ugwu (2022) emphasizes on his study that students' performance rate towards learning literature has failed. The study investigated the problems encountered by the teachers in public schools and found out that this crisis is getting worse each year. The result shows that teachers are faced with many challenges that prevent them from delivering quality instruction. These include poor learning environment, acute shortage of textbooks, low language proficiency, misconceptions about the value of literature, heavy workload, and lack of parental support. Some schools do not have literature teachers. The biggest obstacle, however, is lack of textbooks and literary materials. The situation is critical and points to a crisis of teaching and learning in literature classrooms.

3.2. Trainings and Seminars Acquired in Teaching Literature

These are the emerging themes that coming from the responses provided by the participants: Attendance to national, regional and local level trainings, none, no formal invitation received. Trainings and seminars are necessary to equip teachers in promoting global competitive education. This serves as the main purpose of this study which is to discover the approaches employed by literature teachers. To summarize, training and seminars may have significantly impacted teachers in selecting the approaches to be employed in a literature lesson. This may also assist in ensuring that the teaching and learning of literature reach its visions.

Suliman, et. al. (2019) indicates the positive effects of seminars in enriching classroom learning and students' responsibility for their own learning which can be achieved through training for teachers and students. In contrast, when teachers lack trainings nor attend seminars, learning competency may fail. Additionally, seminars promote critical reading and writing skills as participants read a wide range of sources and synthesize data that serves the purpose of the seminar.

3.2.1. Help Trainings Provide in Teaching Literature

The emerging themes were learned a lot of strategies, able to adapt new strategies, learned some techniques and theories, learned some techniques watching videos, gained some understanding in world literature. In our competitive world, the primary objectives of trainings and seminars is to nurture teachers with educational theories and to equip them with effective teaching strategies. The research participants were expressing benefits on attending trainings in teaching literature. They listed down a lot of strategies, techniques, and theories, adapt them in their class to create meaning learning and understanding the text.

According to the study of Mustakim, et.al (2014) about teaching approaches of ESL teachers in literature, teachers are highly effective in teaching literature when they are trained enough with the teaching methods and approaches. They concluded their study dictating that approaches of teachers revealed that the incorporation of literary elements in the classroom was minimal. They explained that this is because teachers lack creativity and fully utilized the provided literary materials. This only explains that lack of exposure to different techniques in teaching would greatly affect the learning process.

What are the challenges encountered by teachers in the teaching world literature?

3.3. Challenges Encountered in Teaching World Literature

These are emerging themes that have developed by the participants: lack of references, and students' comprehension and analysis skills, student's interest, non-availability of learning materials, explaining message of the author, the differences of cultures, language, and the worldview. These are the reasons why teachers encountered problems in teaching literature. The participants are considering these problems as crisis that need an attention to reinforce with.

Teaching literature might be easy as it is associated with language teaching and poses many challenges and needs to be undertaken well. On top of that, literature teaching would still pose a big challenge to schools as faced by teachers and students. Even though literature is associated with language learning, there would be difficulties if suitable approaches and methodologies are not employed as asserted by Violetta-Irene (2015).

3.4. Description on the Performance of Students in World Literature

The emerging themes that have described by the participants are performance poorly in world literature, nonparticipative in class, poor performance among students in lower class, students vary in performance, either advantaged or struggled students. It is expected that students' achievements and exemplary academic performances lead to producing the best quality graduates who can become future leaders and provide an efficient workforce for the country (Ali, et al., 2009). However, majority of the participants described the performances of students in their world literature class as poor and low due to vital reasons.

How do the teachers cope with the challenges of teaching world literature?

3.5. Ways Used in Coping with Challenges as English Teacher Teaching World Literature

The emerging themes that emphasize the coping mechanisms of the participants are the following: Do group activity, search for videos, provide learning materials, and deeply study literature. After discussing the constraints and challenges of English teachers in teaching world literature, with the desire to fight against them, coping mechanisms are

needed to practice and consider to avoid getting the problems worst. Most teachers are coming into the teaching profession and receive little or no assistance. Nevertheless, teachers are expected to perform the full teaching responsibilities

Coping mechanisms according to Uugwanga (2010) are strategies to significantly impact academic performance. Thus, these are also depending on different factors, such as personality traits, commitment, organizational attributes and teacher education. In this current paper, English teachers have employed different coping mechanisms based on how severe the problems they encountered. Primary coping mechanism used was through group activities.

3.6. Solutions Employed on the Challenges Encountered

These are the solutions served as the emerging themes done by the English teachers: Do group activity, use of video of presentations, use of differentiated activities, reinforce of reading and comprehension skills and encourage critical thinking. In general, English teachers employed necessary solutions and alternatives responding the need of reinforcing those mentioned classroom threats toward learning literature. Teachers come with one solution encompasses all the said themes on the challenges they encountered and that is employing different activities to reinforce reading, comprehension, and critical thinking skills.

According to McCarthy (2023) established and explained the advantages and disadvantages of students who are exposed and equipped through differentiation. Differentiation is defined by the author as to ensure learners in critical thinking. Thus, it is about meeting needs for all learners through equitable critical thinking activities and challenges. Advanced or struggled learners are capable to analyze, evaluate, and create meaning of literature through activities.

3.7. Assistance Sought with the Challenges Encountered

The emerging themes are teacher collaboration, ask teachers on ways in teaching the lesson, sought help from school principal, and browsed for online resources. In all challenges encountered, participants considered collaboration as useful assistance on successful teaching process. Teachers are aware that through asking helps and advices from their colleagues and of seeking online resources would greatly benefit them methods to prevent any problems on attaining learning competencies.

An article from Student-Learning Support emphasizes that to facilitate teaching, alleviate problems, and promote good learning and healthy development, collaborations between the teachers and others (principal, teacher colleagues, staff, aides, facilitators) are highly encouraged as this is ensuring personalized instruction, responding interventions, and addressing external barriers with a focus of prevention.

What are the best practices of the English teacher in teaching world literature?

3.8. Best Practices in Teaching World Literature

The following are the best practices of English teachers, discussed emerging themes, in world literature class: coming up with reading materials, unlocking of difficulty, the use of differentiated teaching, slowly discuss the text, and creating inclusive and welcoming environment. Every teacher possessed different strategies and practices in teaching. This study elaborated each practice that English teachers employed in teaching world literature. Due to non-availability and outdated literary pieces particularly to be used in reading activities in school, participant improvised and created instructional materials instead. This practice is called Diversifying Classroom Texts by Southeastern Oklahoma State University (2020).

According to the educational article, this refers to diversifying the materials to be used in teaching literature because of changing social attitudes and population demographics that have contributed to the sense of classic, traditional literary works and unrelatable for many students. This suggests that teachers should coming up with updated texts to increase students' representation. Furthermore, this practice may develop students' awareness of the value and pleasure of reading good literary works.

3.9. Effective Teaching Strategies in Teaching World Literature

The emerging themes are differentiated strategy, use of video materials, group dynamics, doing oral narration, and close reading strategies. Teachers are expected to possess and know teaching strategies to attain the objectives. In every literary class with diverse students, encountering different learning and classroom challenges, teachers utilized different approaches that tailor instruction to meet individual needs that they may learned from attended seminars and trainings. Differentiating instruction may mean teaching the same material to all students using a variety of instructional

strategies, or it may require the teacher to deliver lessons at varying levels of difficulty based on the ability of each student (Weselby, 2014).

Aside from differentiated strategies, teachers also conducted group dynamic activities and use video materials. The Group Activity Method is a participatory problem-based training methodology that focuses on participants and the important role of peer-to-peer interaction discussed in an article.

3.10. Assessment of Students' Performance in World Literature

The emerging themes formed as ways of assessment the performances of learners in world literature are giving of activities, discussion with videos, grouping and individual assessment, follow rubrics, and assess participation and work outputs. Teachers have different ways of assessing student's performance in teaching world literature and these forms of assessment are mentioned accurate and engaging. Part of the lesson planning is giving the activities. Giving activities is said to hook student's attention and hone the skill intended for the lesson objectives. By this assessment, either in group or individual, teachers would be able to identify which part of the lesson is less learned and what learning skills are still need to nurture.

From the study of Richardson and Swan (2003), every learning activity should be made intentional, meaningful and useful and it is the teacher's fundamental task to get students engage in learning activities that are likely to result in achieving the intended learning outcomes.

4. Conclusion

The sole purpose of this study after analyzing the gathered data is to suggest the District English Coordinator to design an action plan for a yearly professional development focusing on literature for all English teachers in Montevista District schools. The researcher has collected different lived experiences and challenges of the English teachers towards teaching literature. Challenges encountered were coped with differentiated teaching strategies and best practices implied. Furthermore, important observation and understanding gathered by the researcher about the trainings and seminars acquired by the English teachers: attendance to national, regional and local level trainings, none, and no formal invitation received. This can be concluded that teachers lack of formal trainings and seminars on how to teach literature. They are also not exposed to teaching approaches that they might acquire from any professional development.

Moreover, this study also found out that students had poorly performed towards learning literature. This leads the researcher a conclusion that the urge to conduct more trainings and seminars in teaching literature, exploring teaching effective approaches, would help teachers teach literature effectively. Pushing to seek and implement continuous professional development – trainings, seminars, workshops, in teaching literature, could be done monthly or yearly, would become the first encounter of the new hired English teachers in the district.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to disclosed.

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