

# Literary Skills and Performance in Selected Afro-Asian Literature of Junior High School Students in Malilipot National High School

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**Abstract:-** This study determined the literary skills and performance in selected Afro-Asian literature of Grade 8 students in Malilipot National High School. It answered the following problems: 1) What is the performance in the pre-test of Grade 8 students of Malilipot National High School in selected Afro-Asian literature along the following literary skills: describing the notable literary genres contributed by African writers, identifying the distinguishing features of notable African chants, poems, folktales, and short stories, expressing appreciation for sensory images, and explaining the literary devices used?; 2) What is the performance in the post- test of the students on the above-mentioned skills?; 3) Is there a significant difference between the performance in the pre-test and the post-test of the Grade 8 students?; 4) What are the least mastered skills in the post-test? 5) What learning activity sheets may be proposed to improve the least mastered skills?

The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference on the performance of the Grade 8 students on the pre-test and post-test was tested using paired T-test at 0.05 level of significance. This study employed a one-group pre- experimental research design. This type of design was deemed appropriate because the subjects were purposely chosen to test whether a nonconventional learner-centered approach through innovative and collaborative teaching activities improved their performance in selected Afro-Asian literature.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Education and good academic performance intertwine in shaping individual lives and societies. Education ignites curiosity, fosters critical thinking, and equips individuals with knowledge and skills to navigate the world. It empowers them to break free from limitations, pursue passions, and contribute meaningfully. Meanwhile, good academic performance, while not the sole definition of success, often unlocks doors to higher education, better career options, and improved living standards. It hones valuable skills like discipline, time management, and problem- solving, applicable far beyond classrooms.

Creating inclusive, egalitarian, high-quality education that fosters chances for lifelong learning is one of the numerous goals of every government agenda worldwide. In fact, in its enactment of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, SDG Number 4 or commonly known as category of education, UNESCO aims to encourage success for everyone, as well as good levels of academic achievement. In order to fulfill this objective, educational institutions must provide the structure and procedures required to create an inclusive and effective learning environment within the framework of a school for all.

The English language is crucial for the Department of Education's mission to promote inclusiveness, efficacy, and high-quality instruction for academic achievement. It is a universal language used in various fields, including business, politics, media, education, and technology. It facilitates easier interaction and faster access to information which makes it a vital tool to connect and thrive in the modern, technology-driven world. The English language is regarded as a second language in the Philippines. As stated in Section 7, Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, Filipino and, unless otherwise specified by legislation, English<sup>4</sup> are the official languages of the Philippines for the purposes of teaching and communication.

Filipinos learn English in school, at home, and in the community. It is included in the curriculum for basic education at all learning levels. Republic Act 10533 mandates the Department of Education to establish a mother language transition program for Grades 4-6, introducing English and Filipino as primary languages. The law emphasizes the importance of English in learners' lives. Studying this language is an investment in one's future self since it will expand horizons, enhance communication skills, and equip a person to thrive in an increasingly globalized world. However, based on recent findings, the Philippines' performance in national and international standardized assessments has been rapidly declining with students ranking among the lowest in reading, despite the Department of Education's firestorm reforms to enhance it.

One of the English subjects in Junior High School is the teaching of Afro- Asian literature. According to the curriculum guide, English for students in the eighth-grade level of the K-12 Program primarily focuses on African-Asian or Afro- Asian literature where learners are expected to demonstrate “communicative competence through his/her understanding of Afro- Asian Literature and other text types for a deeper appreciation of Philippine Culture and those of other countries.”<sup>14</sup> This ensures that learners are exposed to the rich cultures of Africa and Asia through a variety of literary pieces that elicit interest of learners.

The literary skills expected of them are: (1) describing the notable literary genres contributed by African writers, (2) identifying the distinguishing features of African chants, poems, folktales, and short stories, (3) expressing appreciation for sensory images, and (4) explaining literary devices used are important for the literary competence and appreciation of students in secondary schools as sought in this paper. Thus, students should be exposed to diverse literary works to cultivate a multifaceted skill set that extends far beyond literacy. Through the analysis of intricate narratives, poetic structures, and dramatic presentations, they will be able to hone their critical faculties.

The researcher, an English teacher, explored the impact of a nonconventional learner-centered teaching approach, centered on innovative and collaborative activities, in teaching Afro-Asian literature to the literary skills and performance of Junior High School students in Malilipot National High School for school year 2023-2024. The study provided research-based data on the effectiveness of incorporating Afro-Asian literature to the performance of the students, which can aid in developing engaging activities in the classroom and creating supplementary materials like learning activity sheets.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

In language classrooms, literary texts improve language learning, structural knowledge, and reading ability by offering intelligible information through the utilization of language resources. Sharma et. al. (2022)<sup>3</sup>, claimed that literature, through poetry, can be a means to improve a person's communication skills. Poetry is a potent teaching tool for the reason that it gives readers a platform to share their thoughts and perspectives on challenging issues that may be social, moral, or economic in nature. It is a succinct language that expresses feelings, brings happiness, and helps with speaking skills development, which makes it a crucial component of language learning. Literary genres are frequently used to teach English language proficiency in a variety of contexts. Hamimed (2021)<sup>4</sup>, discussed the advantages of employing literary textbooks in foreign language as well as the selection of suitable fictional materials in the classroom. Drama, poetry,

tragedy, and short stories are among the many categories effective for teaching language skills and literary genres. However, there are obstacles that language teachers must overcome when teaching English through fiction. These include lack of experience in teaching literature, deficiency of specific objectives for the function of fiction, insufficient training for teaching English as a second language and teaching English as a foreign language, and scarcity of appropriate teaching resources. Activities centered on literature in the classroom help students become more proficient in the language by encouraging meaningful communication, improved comprehension, and efficient language use. On the other hand, even when literary works are chosen for teaching, some students still have trouble with language proficiency because they perceive sentences as meaningless strings of characters.

In an article of Paran et. al., (2020)<sup>5</sup>, they explained that literary competence is evident when the learner is able to recognize storyline, character command of the English language and literary skills. This responsibility predominantly falls on educators who play a crucial role in equipping students with the necessary tools and techniques to comprehend paragraphs share detailed insights on this significant aspect to further elaborate on its importance. Literature is not widely accepted by junior and high school teachers. Due to its complexity, this difficulty in teaching literature has deterred them from incorporating it into their teaching methods. However, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of integrating it in teaching, and Mohammed (2019)<sup>7</sup>, enumerated several of these advantages. In light of language learning, reading literature provides students with an uncommon opportunity to improve their syntactic, pragmatic, cultural, and discursive awareness. Literature authentically combines syntax, lexis, pragmatic, and cultural points. It is an invaluable tool for language acquisition since it offers authentic language examples in a range of contexts. In terms of motivation, the study of literature inspires students by taking them on a journey of discovery that offers fresh perspectives that can be applied to everyday life. Relevant content stimulates curiosity and excitement, enabling students to fully immerse themselves in various kinds of situations and ultimately increasing their motivation and level of engagement with the material. Literature is not widely accepted by junior and high school teachers. Due to its complexity, this difficulty in teaching literature has deterred them from incorporating it into their teaching methods. However, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of integrating it in teaching, and Mohammed (2019)<sup>7</sup>, enumerated several of these advantages. In light of language learning, reading literature provides students with an uncommon opportunity to improve their syntactic, pragmatic, cultural, and discursive awareness. Literature authentically combines syntax, lexis, pragmatic, and cultural points. It is an invaluable tool for language acquisition since it offers authentic language examples in a range of contexts. In terms of motivation, the study of literature

inspires students by taking them on a journey of discovery that offers fresh perspectives that can be applied to everyday life. Relevant content stimulates curiosity and excitement, enabling students to fully immerse themselves in various kinds of situations and ultimately increasing their motivation and level of engagement with the material. Literature can alter attitudes, reduce prejudices, and foster empathy, sympathy, and tolerance. Its diverse themes can be applied to real-world and enjoy literary works. The succeeding

Situations, enhancing students' understanding. Mitchell (2023), shared that literature has grown to be a powerful instrument for bringing about social change and a voice to air people's grievances. This is apparent based on popular works such as Uncle Tom's Cabin, Les Misérables, and even Jose Rizal's two famous novels, Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo. From the Age of Enlightenment to the Age of Digitalization, literature has always been a significant tool for molding our society. Literary works never cease to be a powerful force for social change as long as authors write with passion and intention.

Another study which discussed about corrective feedback as a valuable tool to help learners during instruction when used effectively was the investigation of Patra et. al (2022). They examined the impact of teachers' written and verbal feedback during formative assessment on English as foreign language learners' academic anxiety, performance, and attitude toward learning. The study employed a convenience sampling method where 76 students were divided into two groups, experimental and control groups. The EG was given Corrective Feedback (CF) during formative assessment while the control group was taught traditionally. Findings revealed that teachers' feedback positively affected learners' academic performance and reduced anxiety levels. Additionally, teachers' feedback significantly improved learners' attitude towards learning (ATL) in English, leading to significant improvements in their over-all performance.

Whitten et. al (2019), validated the reading preferences of 65 Junior High School students, their age ranging from fifteen to seventeen. The researchers theorized that learners who read independently chosen books for enjoyment would perform better, in general, than their counterparts who did not in subjects namely Science, History, Mathematics, and English. The authors concluded that students who read for enjoyment performed better throughout the study in the subject areas tested than their peers who did not. Moreover, although the educators were aware of the connection between pleasurable reading and academic achievement, they felt constrained by required assessments and state curricula.

Salleh et. al (2022)<sup>38</sup>, looked into the experiences of Malaysian novice chemistry teachers teaching mixed-ability students during their practicum. The researchers selected 12 trainee teachers for semi-structured interviews and analyzed the data using the constant comparative method. Two themes emerged, namely the whole-class approach and adjusting to learners' needs. Findings showed that beginner teachers primarily engaged mixed-ability students through whole-class instruction, focusing on active classroom engagement and collaboration. They considered students' interests and preferences when selecting activities and materials. However, they did not use formative assessments to differentiate instruction for mixed-ability learners. The study recommended adequate training for novice chemistry teachers to improve their knowledge and skills in differentiated instruction as these can greatly develop their craft and help learners achieve competence.

Sebastian (2020)<sup>40</sup>, investigated the interests of Grade 8 students in literature, particularly poetry and narratives, using a quasi-experimental design. The study revealed a substantial difference in pre-test and post-test scores after seven weeks of song exposure. Learner performance in the subject was significantly enhanced by the intervention material, especially in the area of the basic figurative language and literature comprehension. Sebastian suggested that educators, curriculum developers, and administrators take motivation into account as a crucial component of teaching and learning. In another study where the research integrated how Filipinos value songs as a tool for teaching figurative language, as they effectively convey thoughts, feelings, and emotions happened three years later in Mangelen et. al's (2023)<sup>41</sup> study which sought to use the Maguindanaon love songs as instructional resources in English language instruction. This study was grounded on Ferdinand de Saussure's Structuralism Theory and Employed the explanatory sequential mixed method design. The study specifically compared the students' proficiency with figurative language before and after using these songs as a teaching tool. Pre- and post-test results showed a substantial change in the study, suggesting that the intervention material is highly successful in enhancing learners' comprehension of fundamental figurative languages.

Further focusing on Afro-Asian literature as a genre that emphasizes the beauty and challenges of life while reflecting on varied perspectives of African and Asian people, Rodriguez (2022)<sup>42</sup> conducted a qualitative study using the content analysis method of selected Afro-Asian short stories, which served as the basis for proposing a learning module. The study involved a pool of experts who validated the researcher's work and provided feedback for improvement. The findings were used to enhance the quality of teaching literature and deepen values towards students, highlighting the significance of Afro-Asian short stories in education.

Rodriguez' work is akin to the current study based on its focus on the analysis of selected Afro-Asian short stories which is one of the literary genres that they dealt with and an emphasis on the findings to be used for enhancement of literature teaching and integration in classrooms. The studies differed because of the following reasons namely the research design, the method of data analysis, and the respondents.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on four related theories to form its theoretical framework. First, the Theory of Literary Development by Witte, Rijlaarsdam, and Schram (2012) outlines six levels of literary competence, ranging from experiential to academic reading. It emphasizes the importance of matching reading materials to students' developmental stages to enhance their literary skills. Second, Gadamer's Theory of Hermeneutics (1960) highlights the interactive nature of interpreting texts, stressing that understanding emerges from a dynamic interplay between the interpreter and the text, informed by tradition and subjectivity. This theory challenges the notion of fixed meanings and promotes a more nuanced and iterative approach to literary analysis. Third, Culler's Theory of Literary Competence (1975) posits that proficiency in literary analysis involves not just knowledge of literary terms and historical context, but also the skills to analyze language and conventions, and the attitude to engage critically with texts. This theory emphasizes that literary competence is built on a combination of knowledge, skills, and active engagement. Lastly, Elger's Theory of Performance (2007) asserts that achieving high performance requires a focus on results, a supportive environment, and reflective practice. It identifies six components—context, knowledge, skills, identity, personal factors, and fixed factors—that influence performance. This theory encourages educators to enhance their own performance to better support student learning.

### IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The researcher employed a systems approach for the study, which includes three main components: input, process, and output, with feedback serving as an embedded subsystem.

The input of the study involved assessing Grade 8 students' performance on pre-tests and post-tests focused on Afro-Asian literature at Malilipot National High School. Key literary skills assessed included identifying notable African literary genres, recognizing features of African chants, poems, folktales, and short stories, appreciating sensory imagery, and explaining literary devices. Based on post-test results, the researcher identified skills needing improvement and developed learning activity sheets to address these areas, aiming to enhance students' understanding. Process involved preparing and validating research instruments with experts, administering a pre-test, and implementing a learner-centered

teaching approach with innovative, collaborative activities over six weeks. A post-test followed, with data tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted to evaluate outcomes. For Output, consisted of creating learning activity sheets designed to improve student performance and encourage active learning. These sheets support various learning styles and allow for customized instruction.

### V. METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a quantitative, pre-experimental design. A pre-experiment, as defined by Vizcarra (2019)<sup>1</sup>, is the most basic type of study design in which one group is observed after receiving a treatment or intervention that is presumed to produce a significant change. Thus, the dependent variable is measured twice in this study: once prior to the implementation of instruction and again following its execution. This study employed a teacher-made test about the four (4) literary skills namely describing the notable literary genres contributed by African writers, identifying the distinguishing features of notable African chants, poems, folktales, and short stories, expressing appreciation for sensory images used, and explaining the literary devices used. The researcher utilized the results of the test to examine the performance along the aforementioned skills of Grade 8 students. The least mastered skills were also determined. Afterward, all the results were analyzed and interpreted. Based on the recorded least mastered skills, supplementary classroom activities in the form of activity sheets were proposed by the researcher to further develop and improve the literary skills and performance of the learners in English, particularly at Malilipot National High School.

### VI. FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### A. Summary

This study determined the literary skills and performance in selected Afro-Asian literature of Grade 8 students in Malilipot National High School. It answered the following problems: 1) What is the performance in the pre-test of Grade 8 students of Malilipot National High School in selected Afro-Asian literature along the following literary skills: describing the notable literary genres contributed by African writers, identifying the distinguishing features of notable African chants, poems, folktales, and short stories, expressing appreciation for sensory images, and explaining the literary devices used?; 2) What is the performance in the post-test of the students on the above-mentioned skills?; 3) Is there a significant difference between the performance in the pre-test and the post-test of the Grade 8 students?; 4) What are the least mastered skills in the post-test? 5) What learning activity sheets may be proposed to improve the least mastered skills? The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference on the performance of the Grade 8 students on the pre-test and post-test was tested using paired T-test at 0.05 level of

significance. This study employed a one-group pre-experimental research design. This type of design was deemed appropriate because the subjects were purposely chosen to test whether a nonconventional learner-centered approach through innovative and collaborative teaching activities improved their performance in selected Afro-Asian literature.

### B. Findings

Here are the key findings from the study:

#### ➤ Pre-Test Results.

Students showed poor performance in all four literary skills. The highest score was for describing African literary genres (total score 162, mean 4.91, performance level 32.73). Next was identifying features of African chants and stories (total score 147, mean 4.45, performance level 29.67), followed by appreciating sensory images (total score 145, mean 4.39, performance level 29.27). The lowest was explaining literary devices (total score 128, mean 3.88, performance level 25.87). All skills were rated as having Low Mastery.

#### ➤ Post-Test Results

Significant improvement was seen. The highest post-test score was for describing African literary genres (total score 377, mean 11.42, performance level 76.13), followed by identifying features of African chants and stories (total score 374, mean 11.33, performance level 75.53), both achieving Mastery. Appreciating sensory images (total score 319, mean 9.67, performance level 64.47) and explaining literary devices (total score 313, mean 9.48, performance level 63.20) showed Near Mastery.

#### ➤ Statistical Analysis

The pre-test mean was 17.64, while the post-test mean was 41.85, showing an improvement of 24.21. The computed t-value was 14.32, well above the critical value of  $\pm 1.69$ , indicating a significant difference. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected, confirming that the innovative teaching approach improved students' performance.

#### ➤ Least Mastered Skills

Despite improvements, expressing appreciation for sensory images (performance level 64.47) and explaining literary devices (performance level 63.20) remained the least mastered skills.

#### ➤ Recommendations

To address these weaknesses, learning activity sheets are proposed to further enhance students' performance in the identified areas.

### C. Conclusion

The researcher concludes;

- The Grade 8 students exhibit low performance in the pre-test in the four literary skills such as describing the notable literary genres contributed by African writers, identifying the distinguishing features of notable African chants, poems, folktales, and short stories, expressing appreciation for sensory images, and explaining the literary devices used.
- The subjects of the study display a notable improvement in all the above-mentioned skills. However, only the first two literary skills have an adjectival description of Mastery. The latter competencies are interpreted as Near Mastery in the post-test.
- There is a significant difference on the performance of Grade 8 students in the pre-test and post-test at 0.05 level of significance.
- The least mastered skills are expressing appreciation for sensory images used and explaining the literary devices used.
- The learning activity sheets to develop the least mastered skills of the Grade 8 students are needed.

### D. Recommendation

- When the pre-test result is relatively low on the least mastered skills indicated in this study, the proposed learning activity sheets by the researcher are highly recommended.
- Seminar and trainings relevant to the development of activities in teaching literature is encouraged to ensure further improvement in students' academic performance.
- The Education Program Specialists and other department heads may be provided with the least mastered skills so they can discuss and make adequate interventions regarding this matter.
- Similar studies in teaching literature by future researchers is encouraged.

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