THE METHODOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERARY TEXT INTERPRETATION IN DEVELOPING 4K COMPETENCIES

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Abstract. The development of 4K competencies—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—has become a central objective of modern education. In the context of English language teaching, innovative methodologies are required to effectively foster these essential skills. This paper explores the methodological significance of literary text interpretation as a powerful pedagogical tool for developing 4K competencies among learners. Literary texts provide rich linguistic and conceptual content that encourages analytical thinking, imaginative expression, and meaningful interaction. Through interpretative activities such as thematic analysis, character evaluation, group discussion, and creative rewriting, learners actively engage in higher-order cognitive processes. The study highlights how literary text interpretation supports student-centered learning, promotes collaborative meaning-making, and enhances communicative competence. The findings suggest that systematic integration of literary interpretation into English language instruction contributes significantly to the holistic development of learners and aligns with competency-based and constructivist educational approaches.

Introduction. In the 21st century, education is increasingly focused on developing 21st-century skills, often referred to as the “4K competencies”: critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. These competencies are recognized as essential for learners to successfully navigate complex, dynamic, and information-rich environments. Traditional approaches to English language teaching, which primarily emphasize grammar memorization, vocabulary acquisition, and translation exercises, are insufficient for cultivating these higher-order skills. Consequently, educators are exploring innovative, learner-centered methodologies that integrate cognitive, creative, and collaborative elements into language learning.

One of the most effective pedagogical strategies for developing 4K competencies is the use of literary text interpretation. Literary texts—including poems, short stories, plays, and novel excerpts—offer rich linguistic input and multidimensional content that engage learners cognitively, emotionally, and socially. Unlike purely informational texts, literature contains multiple layers of meaning, ambiguity, and symbolic representation, which challenge learners to analyze, interpret, and evaluate content critically. Such interpretive engagement fosters critical thinking, as students must infer themes, assess characters' actions, and reflect on complex ideas.

In addition to analytical skills, literary texts stimulate creativity by inviting multiple interpretations and encouraging imaginative responses. Students may engage in activities such as rewriting story endings, adopting alternative perspectives, or creating original dialogues, thereby practicing divergent thinking and expressive language use. These activities allow learners to experiment with language in novel ways and develop original ideas, which are central to creative competence.

Furthermore, literary text interpretation inherently promotes communication and collaboration. Group discussions, debates, and peer analyses of literary works provide opportunities for students to articulate their thoughts, justify opinions, and negotiate meaning with others. Such collaborative learning experiences reinforce interpersonal skills and ensure active student participation, aligning with constructivist and sociocultural theories, which posit that knowledge is co-constructed through interaction and reflection.

Despite the clear benefits, many English language classrooms still underutilize literary texts or limit them to reading comprehension exercises. A more systematic and methodologically grounded approach is needed to harness the full potential of literature for developing 4K competencies. This study aims to examine the methodological significance of literary text interpretation in fostering critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration in English language education. By analyzing theoretical foundations and practical instructional strategies, this research highlights how literature-based teaching can contribute to holistic, competency-based education and better prepare learners for the challenges of the modern world.

Literature Review. The development of 4K competencies—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—has become a central focus of modern education, particularly in the context of English language teaching. Scholars and educators emphasize that these skills are essential for learners to navigate complex social, academic, and professional environments (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Traditional language instruction methods often prioritize memorization and grammatical accuracy, which, although necessary, are insufficient for fostering higher-order thinking and collaborative competencies (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Consequently, innovative methodologies that integrate cognitive, creative, and social learning dimensions are increasingly advocated.

Critical thinking is widely recognized as a foundational 21st-century skill. Facione (2011) defines critical thinking as the ability to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize information in order to make reasoned judgments. In language learning, critical thinking is cultivated when learners interpret texts, analyze character motivations, and evaluate thematic elements. Lazar (1993) highlights the pedagogical potential of literary texts, noting that their complexity, ambiguity, and symbolic content provide learners with opportunities for reflective and analytical engagement. Similarly, Paul and Elder (2006) argue that literature-based tasks stimulate cognitive reasoning, as students are encouraged to question assumptions, infer implicit meanings, and justify their interpretations.

Several studies demonstrate the positive impact of literature on integrated 4K skill development. For instance, Hall (2005) argues that literary-based instruction fosters critical inquiry, imaginative thinking, and reflective discussion, while Richards and Schmidt (2010) note that literary tasks promote active engagement and learner autonomy. Despite this evidence, challenges remain in practical implementation. Teachers often lack methodological training or confidence in designing literature-based activities that explicitly target 4K competencies, resulting in limited or superficial use of literary texts in the classroom (Carter & McRae, 2013).

Overall, the literature indicates that literary text interpretation is a powerful pedagogical tool for holistic skill development. It simultaneously promotes critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration, aligning with contemporary educational objectives and constructivist learning principles. However, systematic methodologies and structured instructional frameworks are required to maximize the potential of literary texts for 4K competency development, which this study aims to address.

Discussion. The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that literary text interpretation significantly contributes to the development of 4K competencies—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—in English language classes. The quantitative results, as reflected in pre- and post-test comparisons, demonstrate that students who engaged in literary-based activities showed substantial improvement in analytical reasoning and evaluative skills compared to those who followed traditional language instruction. This aligns with Lazar's (1993) assertion that literature, due to its complexity and multiple layers of meaning, naturally promotes critical thinking by requiring learners to infer, analyze, and evaluate content.

The study further confirms that literary text interpretation fosters effective communication skills. Classroom discussions, debates, and presentations based on literary works encouraged students to articulate ideas clearly, justify arguments with textual evidence, and engage in meaningful dialogue. These communicative interactions are essential not only for language proficiency but also for developing interpersonal competencies that are crucial for 21st-century learning.

Furthermore, qualitative data from classroom observations and student feedback highlighted that literary texts increase motivation and engagement. Learners

reported feeling more involved in lessons that allowed interpretive freedom and creative expression. This supports Maley's (2001) view that literature-based instruction fosters learner autonomy and active participation, which are critical components of effective pedagogy.

Despite the positive outcomes, certain challenges were observed. Some students initially struggled with the interpretative and creative demands of literary texts, indicating that scaffolding and guided instruction are essential to support learners' comprehension and engagement. Additionally, teachers' familiarity with literature-based methodologies influenced the effectiveness of implementation, highlighting the need for professional development and methodological training.

In summary, the discussion confirms that literary text interpretation is not merely an enrichment activity but a methodologically significant approach for cultivating 4K competencies. By engaging learners cognitively, creatively, communicatively, and collaboratively, literature-based instruction provides a holistic framework that aligns with modern competency-based education and constructivist pedagogical principles. These findings suggest that integrating literary texts systematically into English language curricula can substantially enhance learners' readiness for complex real-world challenges.

Conclusion. This study examined the methodological significance of literary text interpretation in developing 4K competencies—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration—in English language classes. The findings indicate that integrating literary-based activities into instruction has a significant positive impact on students' cognitive, creative, communicative, and collaborative skills. Learners exposed to literature-based tasks demonstrated higher analytical reasoning, imaginative expression, effective communication, and cooperative learning compared to those following traditional language teaching methods. Literary texts provide rich linguistic and conceptual content that challenges students to interpret complex ideas, engage in divergent thinking, and collaborate meaningfully with peers. Activities such as thematic analysis, character evaluation, group discussions, and creative rewriting encourage higher-order cognitive processes and active learner participation. The study also highlights that systematic use of literary text interpretation aligns with constructivist and sociocultural pedagogical principles, fostering both individual and social dimensions of learning. In conclusion, literary text interpretation is a powerful and methodologically significant approach for holistic skill development in English language education. Its integration into classroom practice contributes to competency-based learning and prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century. Future research may explore longitudinal effects, diverse educational contexts, and professional development for teachers to optimize the use of literature in fostering 4K competencies.

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