

# The Effectiveness of Activities in The Classroom When Teaching English Literature

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**Abstract:** *This research aims to understand the factors affecting the performance of students in literature classes. Therefore, this project paper aims to examine the relationship between methods/ activities used on students' performance in class. Besides, this project paper analyses data surveys from 70 respondents who are secondary school students using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The project paper further demonstrates that activities used in class are positively significant with students' performance in class. Future researchers might want to increase the sample size to study students in special schools such as sports schools. Other than that, future researchers can try to compare other factors with students' performance because there are other factors that can impact students' performance.*

**Keywords:** Activities in Class, Students' Performance, Types of Activities, English Literature, Learning Style

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## 1. Introduction

Education at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was done through simple means. A teacher would stand at the front of the class, whiteboard marker in hand, while a sea of wide-eyed children stared at her. She would write on the board and provide explanations using the prescribed textbook and the students would have to force themselves to understand it. There wasn't much activity other than copying the given notes into notebooks. Obviously, this does not work with everyone, which is why concepts like 21st-century learning came about where students are taught to hone their critical thinking, collaborative, and creative skills. Learning is no longer just 'teacher says, students do' but is rather a combination of teachers and students taking the role of the teacher.

Literature in Education is aimed at developing the potential of students in a holistic, balanced, and integrated manner encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects to create a balanced and harmonious human being with high social standards (Mustakim, 2018). Hence, learning literature equips students with a wide range of vocabulary and allows them to immerse themselves in the culture of many different people. It teaches them not just about the fundamental elements of the written piece but also enhances their critical thinking and creative writing skills (Magulod, Jr, 2018). This study was conducted to assess just how effective certain teaching methods are in helping students not just retain but understand the information that they are taught about works of literature.

## 2. Problem Statement

Most people regard literature as a rather dry and boring subject, especially the more historic pieces. Shakespeare is one of the greatest literary geniuses of his time, but his work can be construed as long and rambling to the untrained eye. Writers like Wordsworth and Plath, who use simpler language are more preferred but even they aren't the first choice to many readers because the main idea isn't found through just one read-through. Classic literature is rarely the first thing students pick up when the mood to read strikes. This could be due to how teachers rarely use fun methods to get students interested in the more complex parts of literature. The incorporation of the literature component had initially mixed response from teachers, parents, and students (Rashid, 2010). More people have come on board with this initiative, but more does not mean all. Some teachers still see literature as an unnecessary element of the English language syllabus. Is there a significant effect when activities are done when teaching literature? Developing literary competence is one of the most important outcomes of teaching literature (Magulod Jr, 2018) but sadly, not everyone feels the same as literature is sometimes just pushed away.

Teaching literature is not as easy as reading from a textbook and writing on a whiteboard. It requires critical thinking to analyze what styles suit the students and it also calls for creativity to utilize and come up with activities that can engage the students. When it comes to the learning styles of the students, some students can learn easily just by reading the text and making notes, while others require a more hands-on approach where they need to reenact the literary piece that they are reading at the time. Some students require an auditory approach to learning and sometimes students just need an interesting activity or something out of the ordinary that will make them feel excited and genuinely interested in learning more about what they are reading. Unfortunately, not every teacher is more than willing to go to these lengths for their students. Education in the 21st-century requires innovation and creativity (Magulod Jr, 2018). When only information-based approaches are used, it slowly dulls whatever semblance of interest in literature the child possesses. Is there a relationship between the usage of activities in teaching and the way students perform on the test as well as in class?

When you do not cultivate interest, it slowly disappears, and then it becomes much harder to rekindle. Sometimes, doing an exciting activity such as a treasure hunt can help a student remember a piece more vividly than reading the book ten times over.

The importance of this study is to understand the significance of literature in the lives of students. Literature is life. It is the gateway of looking the world outside. We can learn, understand and appreciate the world. Reading literature is the best way to know who we are, what we are, and what we used to be (Magulod Jr, 2018). Literature is not just Shakespeare and Yates. It is also Dr. Seuss, Enid Blyton, and all the books' people grew up reading and loving. It is all the little nursery rhymes parents used to read to their children. When people think of literature, they automatically go to the difficult passages in books that students must study, forgetting that literature is more than that. It is childhood. Myths, fables, and fairy tales – originally founded on oral tradition – allowed adults to communicate with young people in an uninterrupted process until nowadays (Pulimeno, 2020). In addition, it is hoped that this study would help close a knowledge gap in this area of study in relation to recent research and easily accessible data. Results from this study's findings could be compared to those from similar studies in the future.

The findings of this study will also evaluate how incorporating activities into the usual classroom environment can help students not just learn literature but feel excited about it. Teachers of English are required to motivate their teaching by connecting the subject matter to the syllabus for English (McGee & Nilsson, 2012). This is why it is important to incorporate different activities when teaching literature, to glean interest and make the students want to read the pieces themselves rather than just flipping through the pages because their teachers forced them to open the book. With the incorporation of the literature component into English syllabus, the responsibility to develop reading habits through literature lays heavily on teachers (Rashid, 2010). This research paper will be able to assist future researchers in investigating the relationship between engaging activities in the classroom and the potential increase in understanding of a subject.

## **2.1 Research Questions**

- i. Is there a significant effect when activities are done when teaching literature?
- ii. What is the relationship between how the respondents answer the test and the methods used to teach the material?

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 The Students' Performance**

What does it mean to have a good performance in a class? Is it good grades, being able to relate the learned material to other people, or is it simply handing in your assignments on time and getting that stamp of approval from the teacher? When it comes to the subject of literature, it is not easy to answer that question. Fakoya and Ogunpitan (2001) say that literary appreciation could be seen as the process by which the reader of a work of literature acquires a meaningful understanding of its theme and gains personal insight into the structure of this same work. This means that a good performance is indicated by a high literary appreciation. Being able to process what you are reading and understand the various concepts, characters and other elements of the piece indicates a good literary appreciation which in turn is indicative of good performance in the classroom. According to Collie and Slater (1987), by reading a specific text, students are exposed to the formation and function of sentences, the diversity of possible structures, and the different ways of linking ideas. All these will expand and deepen students' writing skills (Rashid, 2010). It can also be said that when a student is able to speak and write well that it is a sign of good performance. Not only does it instil a sense of trust in the people that they interact, but when a person can speak well, it creates the perception of intelligence.

### **3.2 The Methods and Activities Used in The Classroom**

The teaching world today is not as it was fifty years ago. At that time, the only needed materials in the classroom were the blackboard and the chalk. The teacher would read from the book and provide some extra notes, and the students absorbed what they could. Sure, some would incorporate the odd special activity here and there, but it was mostly on the students to make sure they took down whatever the teacher said in class. Today, students have different styles of learning. Some learn through a hands-on approach while the traditional method works for others. Obviously, one teacher cannot satisfy the intellectual requirements of all students with just one teaching method. This is where the incorporation of activities in the classroom comes into play. Talley and Hui-ling (2014) recommend that topics should be creative to allow the teacher to mix varied classroom activities for instance videos, songs, role play, and storytelling which help in promoting learner regular inclusion and participation (Gudu, 2015). Sometimes, the reason students do not perform well in class is that the lesson is too dry. Nobody can thrive in a strictly structured setting, adding fun elements that not only attract the students but hold

their attention can really boost their understanding and appreciation of literature. The importance of social media for today's youth often elicits teachers to explore the added value of educational use of these media (Van Den Beemt, 2019). Kahoot is a rather popular platform among the students of today. It is just a normal quiz platform; however, it is the addition of gadgets and media that makes it such an exciting and alluring option for many students. This shows that even the regular traditional methods can still work with today's students if it is spiced up a little.

### **3.3 The Relationship Between the Methods and Activities Used in The Classroom and The Students' Performance**

The performance of a student in the classroom can be influenced by the methods that a teacher utilizes to impart wisdom to his students. Student performance is measured not just by how high the student scores on a test but also by how well they understand the material. There is a big difference between understanding the material and applying it to life and just rote memorization. One of the newest initiatives is the implementation of High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions in exams. NCTM (2000) states that the learners must study with understanding, it means learners must develop their new knowledge actively from their own experience and previous knowledge. To achieve those things, it is formulated in 5 general aims of learning, i.e.: first, learn to communicate, second, learn to reason, third, learn to solve them, fourth, learn to connect an idea, and fifth, form the positive attitude towards the subject. These skills are normally called Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) (Yaniawati, 2016).

Basically, this means that HOTS questions test a student's understanding and appreciation of the subject and how they can use the information to solve different problems. This is where the different activities come in. By using fun activities like roleplaying and treasure hunts, the student subconsciously connects the activity with whatever information the teacher is giving. People don't forget something they enjoy so now, that new information is stored in their minds. Their performance in class improves because they not only remember the information but also understand it and know how to use it in different situations.

### **3.4 The Rubbish Dump by Steve Chimombo (Short Story)**

The literary focus of this research is a short story that was studied by secondary school students called 'The Rubbish Dump' that is from a collection of short stories called "Changing Their Skies: Stories from Africa". The Rubbish Dump seems like a dull and simple story when it's read for the first time, but there is a deeper meaning to it. The story is about a young boy named Joey and an old man named Mazambezi. Joey likes to spend his free time watching the airplanes take off and land. He likes to imagine the kind of people who are on the plane, where they are going, and the lives they lead. Joey fantasizes about the exciting places that the plane goes to, and he thinks about reading up on them as soon as he learns how to read. Mazembezi, whose name translates to 'rubbish collector' is a man who goes around with his wheelbarrow, collecting the rubbish from the planes. He finds his food there and whatever other interesting knickknacks that catch his fancy.

The story seems like it is not going anywhere but it's what's written between the lines that carry the true meaning. The Rubbish Dump is set in Africa, and it starts off by talking about how rubbish is a rich person's problem while people in Africa don't face that issue because they don't have much to throw away, to begin with. Right away the story delves into the difference between the people who watch the plane take off and land and the people who are on the plane. As the story deepens, it is shown that Mazambezi is the one who is looked down upon. Parents tell their children to stay away from him, they call him a rubbish collector behind

his back and make fun of him. Even in a place where it seems like everyone is equal and faces the same problems, there is still a difference in the treatment of a person who has even less than them. There is also the notion that nothing will change, and this is shown when, at the end of the story, Joey makes plans to meet Mazambezi the following day. This is hinting at the fact that that is what life will be like for them in the long term, Mazambezi collecting his rubbish and Joey watching him do so.

## **4. Research Method**

### **4.2 Research Design**

The type of research design chosen for this study is correlation research under non-experimental research based on recent research on students' performance in class when activities are incorporated into the lesson. Survey questionnaires are used to collect data and are classified as quantitative. Quantitative methods focus on precise measurements and statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data received through surveys, polls, and other forms of data collection, as well as by modifying previously collected statistical data using computing methods. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon. (Babbie, 2010).

This has been determined to be appropriate for the study because the types of data required to answer a research question and the people from whom the researcher wishes to obtain data determine its suitability. Questionnaires are the most effective way to collect data. This study also employs the research methodology to better understand the relationship between the two variables without attempting to control any of them. The surveys were distributed at random to students aged 15 and up, and they were distributed among their peers based on their level of education and attention to class activities. Simple random sampling was employed.

The data collected through questionnaires and surveys can be analyzed in a variety of ways. The most modern and successful method of collecting data through surveys is to use online versions of questionnaires such as Google or other techniques, particularly during a pandemic when face-to-face encounters are not possible.

The questionnaire's sections A and B were divided into two sections. Section A focuses on the respondents' demographic information. Section B was divided into two sections. The first section focuses on the study's independent variable, namely the classroom activities. The second section of Section B focuses on the dependent variable of the study, the students' performance. The literary focus of this research and the questionnaire is a short story called 'The Rubbish Dump' by Steve Chimombo. In the study, hypothesis testing was used, which is a statistical method for determining the plausibility of a hypothesis using sample data. For this research, students have participated in being respondents.

## **5. Result and Discussion**

This study examined the relationship between methods/ activities used in the classroom and the students' performance in class. It has achieved its objective by successfully discovering that usage of engaging activities in the classroom does influence the students' performance in English Literature classes.

The use of engaging activities in the classroom was proven to have a significant impact on the performance of the students in class. This is because the activities manage to capture their

attention and the knowledge that the teacher is imparting can be absorbed and stored in the brain. The students will associate the fun activity with whatever was taught in the class when the activity was done.

Based on the results obtained in the research, it leads to the conclusion that students do respond positively when their teachers carry out activities in the classroom and it is shown through their good performance in class. The results indicate a strong positive correlation between methods/activities used in the class and the students' performance. These results correspond to a study conducted by Xioayu Huang and Xinyue Hu whereby their findings indicate that both students and teachers expressed a strong agreement in wanting to add more activities in classes as it both stimulated and interested the students as well as helped them to learn better and retain more information.

### **5.1 Implications of Study**

Future research will be able to better comprehend the relationship between methods/ activities used in the classroom and the students' performance. Future scholars will therefore be able to further explore and provide a more detailed explanation of why and how these examined aspects affect the students' performance itself with the use of this knowledge.

Besides that, another implication is that teachers and educators will be able to comprehend the reasons as to why students who are taught using the same methods score differently in class. Some students respond positively to a certain method or activity while others react negatively. The implication of this study is that it will help them understand why different methods elicit different responses from the students.

### **5.2 Limitations of Study**

One of the limitations of this study was the platform used to collect respondents to answer the questionnaire. Because only a few platforms were used, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, obtaining a larger and more significant sample size was difficult, if not impossible. The second limitation is that only one variable, the independent variable, was studied. According to research, other variables, such as social media or physical factors, play a significant role in influencing students' performance in class. The following limitation is that the sample size obtained was rather small, at just under 100, leaving most other students' responses unknown. This means that the results acquired on the effectiveness of activities in the classroom when teaching English Literature cannot be generalized to say that it applies to all students.

### **5.3 Recommendations for future research**

Future studies should think about employing a qualitative technique in which researchers interview students who have a real passion and love for literature since the results would be richer and more individualized than those from quantitative methods, where the responses are more generic. Additionally, adding more variables to the research would be advantageous and result in more thorough data because there would be more explanations for how classroom activities affect student performance. Furthermore, researchers could also interview or include students from special schools where different aspects other than education are highlighted, such as sports or arts. This can help to show how schools that are more activity-oriented handle teaching and learning.

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