Exploring the Role of Literature in Improving Reading Skills: A Mixed Method

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Abstract
This research attempts to investigate the efficacy of using literary works as learning media in improving students' reading ability. This mixed-methods study involved grade IX students in a public junior high school in Gresik. Data were acquired by surveys for quantitative data utilizing questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for qualitative data. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics whilst the qualitative data from interviews were thematically analyzed to investigate students' perspectives and experiences. Three categories were identified from the survey data: students' interest in reading, their interest in English, and their perceptions on the usage of literary works to enhance reading abilities. According to the findings, 47% of students "agree" that reading literature can help them become better readers. This study suggests that teachers can utilize literature in reading skills according to the level of age appropriateness and alignment with learning objectives.

Keywords: Literature; Reading Skills; Interest; Perceptions; Experiences.

Abstrak
Penelitian ini mencoba menyelidiki efektivitas penggunaan karya sastra sebagai media pembelajaran dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa. Studi campuran ini melibatkan siswa kelas IX di sebuah sekolah menengah pertama negeri di Gresik. Data diperoleh melalui survei untuk data kuantitatif menggunakan kuesioner dan wawancara semi-terstruktur untuk data kualitatif. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif sementara data kualitatif dari wawancara dianalisis secara tematik. Tiga kategori diidentifikasi dari data survei: minat siswa dalam membaca, minat mereka dalam bahasa Inggris, dan persepsi mereka tentang penggunaan karya sastra untuk meningkatkan kemampuan membaca. Menurut temuan tersebut, 47% siswa "setuju" bahwa membaca sastra dapat membantu mereka menjadi pembaca yang lebih baik. Studi ini menyarankan bahwa guru dapat memanfaatkan sastra dalam keterampilan membaca sesuai dengan tingkat kesesuaian usia dan keselarasan dengan tujuan pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: Sastra; Keterampilan Membaca; Minat; Persepsi; Pengalaman.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial abilities in education is the ability to read, playing a crucial role in learning, cognitive development and in everyday life. According to Septiyana et al., (2021) states that Reading is a sophisticated cognitive activity that involves decoding symbols to create or extract meaning from the text. UNESCO reports that only 0.001% of Indonesians have decent reading habits, ranking the country 60th out of 61 in reading interest. Factors such as boring material, lengthy texts, and lack of guidance contribute to declining reading motivation. Meanwhile, reading interest refers to the desire to understand written language or symbols, either willingly or with external support (Sofiana & Suryadi, 2023). Language teachers often face students' refusal to read in their language of instruction. To improve reading skills, teachers can use literature to increase interest. Literature, including poetry, drama, and prose, can encourage fluency in reading, writing, and communication, crucial for academic achievement. Van (2009) believes literature is an effective tool in language learning, inspiring conceptual and practical reading, writing, and communication.

There are several previous studies on this topic. The first research was conducted by Ahmad, (2021) this study simplifies the importance of literature in EFL/ESL classes in promoting moral values to shield humanity from deterioration and decadence. The historical context of incorporating literature into instruction is examined in this study. In consideration of the study's results, teaching these kinds of books to EFL/ESL students would have numerous positive effects. Another study conducted by Kaowiwattanakul, (2021) this study aims to ascertain how the use of literature activities improved the reading and critical thinking skills of EFL students at the C1 level. The results of this study showed that after engaging in literature activities based on Reader-Response Theory, EFL students' reading and critical thinking abilities considerably improved. The EFL students' attitudes regarding using literature-based activities to enhance their reading and critical thinking abilities were positive, and their critical thinking abilities were mediocre. The third one is research conducted by Hussein et al., (2021) the title of this study examines learners' attitudes and opinions regarding the integration of literature in English language instruction, the results, literature is viewed by students as a valuable resource for learning English and enhancing the four main language skills.

Previous research has explored the use of literature in ELT classrooms, focusing on speaking and reading skills. However, there is limited research on using literature to improve reading comprehension using a mixed-method explanatory sequential design.

This study aims to fill this gap by combining questionnaire data with in-depth interviews to improve reading comprehension among secondary school students. This strategy will provide statistical trends and better understanding of students' viewpoints and experiences. This study is crucial in investigating literature as a substitute teaching tool to boost reading motivation and comprehension among Indonesian students.

Literature has various educational benefits. Literature can be used to engage students in a language teaching context. Simply put, literature makes language more appealing. This objective can be fulfilled by a variety of literary genres, including prose, verse, and theater, as well as fiction and nonfiction. Each has the potential to deepen student engagement and motivation while also paving the path for the improvement of key language components. They are also useful resources for giving more grammar, vocabulary, and translation materials. These materials assist teachers in making their lessons more holistic, resulting in higher learning results, in recent years, using literature to teach English has become more and more common. Enhancing students' language skills and literary appreciation is just one of the many advantages of incorporating literature into English language instruction. The use of literature in language instruction is seen by many educators as an intriguing and important topic (Sage, 1987, p.1). Literature is a powerful tool for communicating social norms, cultural values, and language.

Literary works are utilized to enhance students' reading skills, with various types available. Teachers can tailor readings to students' levels, as deep meanings may be challenging for those unfamiliar with new words. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating interpretation. According to Collie and Slater cited in Zengin et al., (2019) there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom these include personal involvement, cultural and linguistic enrichment, and valuable authentic material. Other criteria that need the use of literature as a potent resource in the educational context include universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy, suggestive power, and ambiguity.

According to Panjaitan et al., (2024) stated that One of the four language skills that all pupils should learn is how to read. Many students found reading difficult, and some even acknowledged that they had trouble understanding the books' limited vocabulary, complex language, and key themes or topics. Reading is a process in which the reader and the content interact, with all of the reader's social and contextual factors interacting with the schematic information (Pratiwi, 2019). The ability to read, understand, and interpret words from articles or other reading materials is referred to as reading abilities. According to Sofyan et al., (2021) stated that reading skills include detecting word

meanings, drawing conclusions, determining the author's perspective and understanding factual data. As a result, children are able to handle, analyze, and comprehend topics while reading with ease, and interpret the author's intent (Mardiana et al., 2023).

Furthermore, he or she understands different types of texts, understands information explicitly and not explicitly, understands conceptual meanings, understands how sentences relate to each other through lexical cohesion, and distinguishes the main idea from supporting details. Through teaching reading strategies, teachers can help improve students' comprehension(Panjaitan et al., 2024). Students who struggle with reading comprehension run the risk of not learning anything at all or at least having trouble moving forward Somadayo, Nurkamto, & Suwandi, (2013) cited in (Ardhian et al., 2020).

METHOD

Mixed methods research can be divided into two categories: explanatory sequential design and exploratory sequential design. The second phase aims to explain quantitative results and identify outliers. In this study, 32 19th-grade students participated in a quantitative survey, while four were interviewed in a qualitative stage. The research tools used were questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather narrative and statistical data on the impact of literature on reading ability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Perceptions of the Role of Literature in Developing Their Reading Comprehension Skills

Respondents' results mark one of the responses from 4 ("strongly agree"), 3 ("agree"), 2 ("disagree"), and 1 ("strongly disagree") to indicate how much they agree or disagree with each item or phrase. The researcher used a questionnaire with 15 items divided into three category tables that was created from a study (Khairunnisa & Nurmalasari, 2023). Descriptive statistics were used in analysis of the Likert-scale questionnaire's quantitative results. Every item had responses ranging from 1 to 4; subsequently, the mean score for every item and category was computed to ascertain the general trend of the responses. Percentage and mean score tables were used to show the data in order to find students' opinions on the application of literary works in raising reading competency.

Based on the result, it shows that the respondents' Likert-scale scores on a 15-item questionnaire about the use of literary works in enhancing reading ability. On a 4-point

rating system, each item—Q1–Q15—was scored 4 for strongly agree and 1 for strongly disagree. The "SUM" column shows each respondent's total score, so indicating their general degree of agreement with all the questionnaire items. A more favorable view of the use of literary works in improving reading ability reflects a higher total score.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Results

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Literary Works in Improving Reading SkillsLiterary Works in Improving Reading Skills	32	20	54	1357	42.41	7.448
Valid N (listwise)	32					

Based on observations made by the researcher of teaching and learning activities through literature, Students' responses to the teacher's questions and their confidence in reading the teacher's assigned texts or phrases demonstrated their interest in the reading lesson. They also disagree that literature can improve their reading skills. The result of this study derived from student's responses in questionnaire, divided in 3 categories there are student's interest in learning English, which are organized into eight table student interest in reading class and students' perceptions on the use of literature in improving reading skills.

Table 2 First Category: Students' Interest in Learning English

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	English is a subject that must be learnt at school. (English is a subject that must be learnt at school.)	47%	31%	6%	16%
2.	English subjects delivered by the teacher are difficult to understand. (English subjects delivered by the teacher are difficult to understand.)	13%	25%	31%	31%
3.	Difficult English problems always challenge me.	22%	38%	31%	9%
4.	I like it when the teacher gives me the opportunity to ask questions about English materials that I don't understand. (I like it when the teacher gives me the opportunity to ask questions about English	53%	34%	6%	3%

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	materials that I don't understand.)				
5.	I feel dissatisfied with the learning methods provided by the teacher. (I feel dissatisfied with the learning methods provided by the teacher)	9%	22%	31%	38%
	Total	29%	30%	21%	19%

The survey reveals that students are highly interested in learning English, with 47% agreeing and 31% agreeing that it is a worthwhile subject for schools. However, 13% of students find it difficult to understand English teachings in class. They also feel challenged by difficult English problems, and are happy when teachers allow them to ask questions about ununderstood material. Dissatisfaction with the teacher's teaching methodology is also high. Overall, students are highly interested in learning English in class, supported by a simple and engaging approach.

Table 3 Category 2: Student Interest in Reading Class

No	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I really enjoy reading in English. (I really enjoy reading in English)	50%	22%	16%	16%
2.	I find it difficult to comprehend reading in English. (I find it difficult to comprehend reading in English.)	19%	47%	22%	3%
3.	I can understand the reading lesson material with the teaching method that has been done by the teacher. (I can understand the reading lesson material with the teaching method that has been done by the teacher)	22%	59%	13%	6%
4.	I find learning with the reading technique very boring. (I find learning with the reading technique very boring)	22%	9%	28%	41%
5.	I believe that learning to read can help me do better in English. (I believe that learning to read can help me do better in English.)	59%	22%	9%	9%
	Total	34%	32%	18%	15%

The survey reveals that 50% of students are excited about learning to read, while 22% agree and 16% disagree. However, 19% find it difficult to understand English readings, 47% agree, and 22% disagree. The majority of students can understand reading material using the instructor's teaching strategy, while 22% agree and 59% agree. Learning with reading techniques is boring, and 59% feel dissatisfied with the method. The survey concludes that paying attention to reading techniques can improve English language skills. Overall, students are excited about learning to read.

Table 4 Category 3: Students' Perceptions on the Use of Literature in Improving Reading Skills

No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Reading literary texts helps me understand the main idea of a text "Reading literary texts helps me understand the main idea of a text."	28%	44%	9%	22%
2.	Reading literary texts improves my ability to find important details in a passage. "Reading literary texts improves my ability to find important details in a passage."	25%	53%	16%	9%
3.	Reading literary texts helps me make inferences from the information implied in the text. "Reading literary texts helps me make inferences from the information implied in the text.	41%	44%	9%	6%
4.	Using literary texts in reading lessons makes the learning process more interesting. 'Using literary texts in reading lessons makes the learning process more interesting.'	38%	44%	13%	6%
5.	I feel that literary texts improve my ability to analyze reading structures. 'I feel that literary texts improve my ability to analyze reading structures.'	19%	50%	22%	9%
	Total	30%	47%	14%	11%

The survey reveals that 28% of students strongly agree that reading literary texts helps them understand the main idea of a text, while 44% agree and 9% disagree. 25%

agree, while 53% agree, and 16% disagree. 41% agree, and 44% agree, while 9% disagree. 41% agree, and 44% agree, that using literary texts in reading lessons makes the learning process more interesting. 19% agree, and 50% agree, while 22% disagree. The survey concludes that using literature can improve students' reading skills. The survey indicates that students are generally interested in learning English, with positive responses to learning approaches and a strong sense of importance. However, some face difficulties in lesson delivery and dissatisfaction with certain teaching methods. They also recognize the role of literature in improving reading abilities and understanding important details.

2. What Challenges and Benefits do Students Identify when Using Literature to Improve Their Reading Comprehension

The difficulties form, the researcher adapts the theory from J. B. Wold. (2006) with the title: Difficulties in Learning English as A Second or Foreign Language. In the next stage, the researcher interviewed 4 students regarding the challenges and benefits they have gained from literary works in improving their reading skills through several questions. The first question was to find out their stories during learning about what is your impression of learning English in class?

Table 5. Impression of Learning English

Question (English learning)	Participant	Answer
What do you think about learning English in class?	S1	In my opinion, studying in class is really fun. There we can learn while interacting with friends who are good at English, so our knowledge of English lessons will increase.
	S2	In my opinion, learning English in class is more fun, and of course you can understand it quickly, than at home, because in class there is a teacher who explains everything and gives meaning to the reading and other English.
	S3	I think English in class is very fun, because learning that is done directly will be easier to understand if you pay attention to the material seriously. And learning with classmates also increases insight, because you can ask each other about material that is not understood by each other. Learning in class is also fun, especially if the teacher who delivers it is cheerful, enthusiastic to

Question (English learning)	Participant	Answer
		deliver the material. So, students like me don't get the benefit of asking.
	S4	So, in my opinion about learning English in class is that learning English in class is really fun for me, I myself am more comfortable learning English in class because it makes me more focused on understanding the material presented and I can learn about material that I don't understand by asking or can learn together with my friends, with that I can improve interaction with friends.

The study reveals that all participants find English in class learning enjoyable and effective. Direct learning makes the material easier to understand, and having a teacher as a facilitator or companion can help with difficulties. Learning with friends also increases interest and motivation, as they can interact with proficient English speakers. Overall, the English learning process in class can improve understanding due to the presence of teachers and many friends, making it more focused and enjoyable.

The second and third question to find out their stories while learning reading skills in English language learning was ow do you think about learning reading skills in English class? and what they thought about reading skills in reading comprehension. Do you think reading can help you better understand English?

Table 6 Reading Class

Question (Reading class)	Participant	Answer
How do you think about learning reading skills in English class?	S1	It's fun and stressful because you're afraid of saying the wrong sentence.
	S2	Learning to read in English class can help me improve my overall English skills, such as vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and writing. Reading can also help me develop the skill of guessing the meaning of unknown words, and I can speak a lot in English.
	S3	In my opinion, learning reading skills is also very important, because if we read incorrectly, then English will be difficult to understand. I mean, if we speak correctly, then the meaning of the vocabulary will also be correct, conversely, if we read the vocabulary incorrectly, then the meaning of the vocabulary will also be incorrect.

Question (Reading class)	Participant	Answer
	S4	My opinion about learning reading skills in English class, for me learning to read using English is very exciting with this reading learning I can pronounce vocabulary correctly.
Do you think reading can help you better understand English?	S1	Yes, with this reading method I am better able to read English sentences correctly, although at first it was difficult but I always try to learn.
	S2	Of course, but not just reading, we also have to understand the meaning of the reading.
	S3	I think yes because reading helps improve English language skills, by reading the material in class it can facilitate understanding which is more quickly accepted and remembered in the long term.
	S4	In my opinion that is very true, with reading learning I can understand how to pronounce vocabulary well and correctly.

Students in English class agree that learning to read improves vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and writing skills. They also recognize the importance of learning reading skills as incorrect reading can hinder English comprehension. However, some students fear pronunciation and find it stressful. Reading can help students pronounce new vocabulary with guidance from teachers, making it an exciting and enjoyable language learning experience. Reading improves English language learning by enabling correct reading of sentences, pronunciation of vocabulary, and understanding the content of the text. It facilitates quick and long-term understanding of material, making it more easily accepted and remembered. Repeated and continuous learning can lead to improved comprehension and retention of information.

The fourth and fifth questions are to find out their opinions on reading literature whether there is an improvement or not, and what are the benefits and challenges of reading literature in English language learning?

Table 7 Reading Literary Text

Question (Reading literary texts)	Participant	Answer
Are your reading skills improved by reading novels, short stories, poems, or other literary works? Why?	S1	Yes, really, because I'm a child, I really like watching cartoon films or what are usually called short stories and studying, yes, it becomes even more exciting if you balance it with watching funny films, so additional motivation to continue learning to speak English correctly.

Question (Reading literary texts)	Participant	Answer
	S2	Yes, reading literary works such as novels, short stories, poetry can improve reading skills, because it can enrich the reading experience and develop language skills.
	S3	Yes, because the vocabulary in short stories, novels and poems is repeated several times, it is easy to understand and remember.
	S4	In my opinion yes, because by reading we can find out something that we didn't know at first and by reading.
What are the benefits and challenges of reading literary works for English education?	S1	In my opinion, there are many benefits from reading literary works for English education. For me, the benefits of reading literary works can improve my knowledge in English lessons and my language skills. I often see or watch films or fairy tales. So slowly I finally started to be able to speak English.
	S2	The benefits include: Developing language skills and vocabulary, strengthen listening skills, develop critical thinking, develop creativity. Challenges: difficulty understanding vocabulary and sentence structure, difficulty understanding context and literary background, lack of interest and motivation.
	S3	The benefits of reading literary works for English language education are also needed, because for the reader it is one of the efficient ways of learning to remember and understand every vocabulary in the literary work. With literary works, learning English will feel easy and fast.
	S4	In my opinion, reading English literature can increase knowledge and increase literacy for Indonesian children, literacy is very important for us.

Reading literary works, such as novels, poems, short stories, and films, enriches the reading experience and develops language skills. The repetition of vocabulary in these works makes them easy to understand and remember. Reading also helps discover new words and expands vocabulary. Literary works also improve English education and literacy for Indonesian children. However, challenges include difficulty understanding vocabulary, sentence structure, context, and literary background. Despite these challenges, most students find reading literature books engaging and enjoyable in English language learning.

CONCLUSION

Reading skills are one of the skills in learning English, with good reading it will get a good understanding too, in everyday life it will not be separated from the word reading. but unfortunately reading skills are currently starting to be low, therefore it is necessary to develop media to improve the ability of reading skills, as well as in addition to the media that can be used, namely by using literature which has been explained above that literature has recently emerged as a based instruction that has begun to enter the curriculum. Teachers are required to create appropriate and interesting learning by using literature-based instruction. The purpose of reading comprehension is very diverse by not only reading but also knowing what the purpose, idea or understanding is in the text. Literary works also have various types such as, poetry, short stories, novels, dramas and others. All these types of literature can be developed in the reading learning process. The study reveals that students highly perceive literary works as beneficial for improving their reading comprehension, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. The use of explanatory research allows researchers to understand students' perspectives and identify benefits and challenges in using literary works for language learning. This research will be valuable for future language learning.

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