RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDENTS' INTERESTS AND PERCEPTION IN STUDYING LITERATURE

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Manuscript Info

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Abstract

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The study aimed to determine the students' interest, perception and needs in studying literature. The result of the study served as the basis in enhancing the learning activities of the English major students in studying literature. The descriptive-survey was used to interpret the students' interest, perception and need in studying literature. A survey questionnaire was administered to all English major students in the College of Teacher Education. Survey data were treated statistically utilizing percentage, weighted mean and ranking. Analysis of the data showed that the students are interested and they enjoyed attending Literature classes. According to the respondents, studying literature can help improve their macro skills, vocabulary and grammar. The teacher can provide some activities that will enhance the students' macro skills and skills that they can be used in real life context. Also, it is very much necessary that the literary themes should be aligned with the field of specialization of the students in order for them to appreciate literature more. Moreover, the enhancement of the learning activities will be based on the result of this study. The study suggests that the EnglishInstructors may consider the students' interest, perception and needs in order for them to appreciate literature.

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Introduction:-

The value of literature is so immense that its mention can never whipped. For instance, literature can give us opportunity to come to know most brilliant authors, and personalities of all time. However, laziness is one of theidentified reasons why students do not study literature anymore. Not surprisingly, digital media and other forms of technology are hindrances in appreciating reading literary texts. It was reported declines tend to look at traditional print-based formats, ignoring digitally-mediated literacy practices that comprise an increasing amount of teen reading. The Reading at Risk report blamed downturns on the rise of interactive media such as video-games and the allure of passive media, such as television and film, that require less intellectual exertion than reading. New media is a reason that people not engaged from traditional formats is not new (Baym, 2015).

Today, a lot of our children are leaving secondary school without the aptitude for independent study neither do they acquire sufficient proficiency in reading. How would such students survive the competitive world of academics or world of work. They choose to be spoon-fed. Instead of buying and reading the actual recommended text, they would buy the summarized version with questions and answers; versions that aid examination malpractice. Some of the students would read the texts at home and summarize them in the class leaving greater details out while the nonchalant ones would simply ask the students to read and summarize for themselves. This is sheer case of

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laziness. The teaching and learning of literature go beyond story telling. The styles of the authors, the language aphorisms, diction, vocabulary, didactics, characterization, gestures and body language are important components to be discussed in their relevant contexts while reading the texts with class participation. When literature texts are read in the class, the students will develop interest that will be infectious enough to motivate one another. The more they brand themselves with the characters in the books, the more they popularize the books and the subject.

Before, people whether students or not irrespective of their discipline would undertake recreational or leisure reading to kill boredom, relax their nerves, for fun or for whatever reason. This is hardly observed days because of competing mass media. Today, television viewing and precisely movie watching has become the undoing of most children. Students these days are so engrossed with movie viewing that they throw away useful time to gratify their obsession. The time they would have availed themselves to read is directed to movie watching. Some of them claim that movie watching is a way of studying literature. This is not far from being true but the issue is, what type of movies do students watch? If the literature texts are acted out and cut into CD it is good but if they watch all manner of films censored and uncensored with wild and anti-social didactics at the expense of their recommended texts, it is their undoing.

Furthermore, the new technology competes with students" interest in reading and studying literature. The social media such as 2go, whatsApp. Twitter, You Tube, face book to mention but a few have brought a new dimension to the concept of talking without noise. Students spend more time chatting with friends and peers on phone than they are ever willing to give to their studies.

To address this gap, this research was conducted to identify the students' interest, perception and needs in studying literature. Further, the result of this study served as basis in enhancing the learning activities in studying literature.

Review Of Literature
The study of Sullivan et.al (2018) states that declining interest also corresponds with the downward trend in reading abilities, with data from the Nation's Report Card showing only a third of students in the US performing at or above the proficient achievement level. This is aligned with the study of Wexler (2018) that a panel of experts concluded that the root of the problem is the way schools teach reading, with current instructional approaches relying upon outdated methods based on assumptions about learning. Steps need to be taken to avoid alienating students who are not interested in reading and help them connect.

Further, Watkins and Ostenson (2015) address the debate about the value of merely using literary classics when viewed as less relevant and interesting to teen readers. This is especially pertinent when considering that engagement and motivation have been identified as primary modes of getting students to embrace lifelong reading practices.

On the other hand, Noor (2011) claims that in any higher learning environment, reading is valued as the most important academic language skill for all second and foreign language learners. Students learn new information and become more competent in their subject matters through reading. Loan (2009), moreover, stresses the importance of reading by claiming that individuals with good reading habits have the chance to widen their mental horizons and to multiply their opportunities. Noor (2011) supports Loan's idea and adds that reading is essential in teaching individuals how to cope with new knowledge in the technologically changing and developing world of today. Holte (1998) emphasizes the importance of reading in that it increases quality of life as well as creating culture and making cultural heritage available; moreover, he claims that it both strengthens and brings people together (as cited in Akanda, Hoq and Hasan, 2013). The importance of reading is obviously high, so the question becomes what is to be done to facilitate reading? Since technology affects how we read by changing the medium from printed to electronic, methods to foster new reading habits should be studied.

A recent study published by Alshammari & Elsayed (2019) has examined the impact of exposing college students to English literature through an intensive training program using an English novel as an authentic language reference. The study employed a pre-and-post language performance test to explore the influence of English literature on the improvement of the overall language skills of participants. It was found that there were some challenges EFL learners encountered at the initial stage of the experience; however, all participants' overall language skills were improved with a specific increase in their metalinguistic awareness.

To help students develop a fondness for reading, we argue that educators need to take an approach that liberally draws upon the works, formats and genres that students enjoy reading. Our approach supplements the literary canon, finding ways to help students connect with literature, and developing a curriculum that honors and teaches multimodal literacy skills. Instead of exclusively using literary classics, we advocate for an eclectic mix of genres, formats and media, and attention to multiple communicative modes. Science fiction, horror, and fantasy are extremely popular genres among teens but have been traditionally ignored or downplayed in K-12 education.

Although the current approach from kindergarten up to grade 12 (K-12) may succeed in exposing students to traditional literary texts, it can come at a cost which has a negative impact on overall literacy. The required reading list and loss of choice in terms of reading material conflicts with developmental expectations of increasing autonomy for students in this age range; the education system disciplines students while the social structure encourages autonomy, independence and agency. Similarly, learner autonomy and student agency are considered very important for students in ELT settings.

According to the researcher's observation and experience in the field of teaching EFL and English literature, it is strongly believed that the English literature texts are easier to be studied and perceived by high achievers than the low-level students. This observation is supported by Krishnasamy (2015) who suggests that studying English literature correlates with EFL learners' level of proficiency where stronger ones find it easier than low achievers. In a similar context, Işıklı&Tarakçıoğlu (2017) explored the problems of implementing English literature course in high schools in Turkey using a survey and an English proficiency test to collect the data. They found that the low proficiency level of participants was the most influential factor that prevented them from studying the literature course successfully.

Learners' proficiency level may not be the only reason that leads students to avoid studying literature courses. Krishnasamy (2015) found that EFL learners were generally not interested in the literature of the target language. In fact, the researcher's observations also indicate that many EFL learners misperceive English literature thinking that it contradicts their own culture, values, and beliefs. Other learners generally dislike studying literature whether it is written in the first language or the target one, which complicates the issue and calls for the need to reconstruct their motives and appreciation of literature. For example, Hussein & Al-Emami (2016) found that the source of problems EFL learners encounter when studying English literature is mostly attributed to the low level of proficiency in English, the difficult literature text offered to learners, and the cultural familiarity. Claiming that the cultural barriers prevent EFL learners from studying literature of the target language and discourage the inclusion of literary texts in the EFL curriculum maybe unreasonable. However, it would be reasonable that the EFL learner finds it difficult to study and understand deep literature texts that are mostly offered with specific requirements such as learners' need to be equipped with a rich understanding of English vocabulary and their usage.

Tevdovska (2016) has researched Literature in ELT setting: Students attitudes and preferences towards literary texts, which poses teaching short stories in the EFL classroom gives learners many linguistic advantages. Specifically, the author asserts that short stories and novels are similar in many ways. Both include components such as a chronology, events, a narrator, and a set of characters. However, reading a novel requires the reader to dig deeper to understand as well as spend more time thinking. Moreover, the novel is not the only kind of literature that makes it inaccessible to students, poetry, as observed by Tevdovska (2016), is one of the most sophisticated literary and expressive forms. Therefore, the way learners or teachers choose texts plays a key role in improving language competence.

One of the common difficulties raised by Padurean (2015) in his research is that the language used in literary works is too complex. Literary language is often not helpful to the reader in absorbing grammatical and lexical structures that may be used in everyday life. On the other hand, Alhamdi (2014), and Alharbi (2015), found that motivation in EFL learners also has a certain role in reading literature. It can be seen that the literary learning of English students is hindered due to many different reasons, in which, include external factors, the lack of self-motivation of students is also a big obstacle.

On the other side, teaching literature involves contextual learning which enables the students to understand the learning material related to the social, historical, psychological, and cultural contexts. In other words, students are to gain access for multi-disciplinary knowledge related to literature. Teaching literature focusing on enhancing students' creativity in having critical thought is usually done in various ways. Lecturers can execute various

discussions through journals, class presentations, class competitions, internships, seminars, video presentations, storytelling, speeches, debates, class performances, dramas, etc. Those activities are recommended for lecturers who supervise in the class and students who attend the subject. The creativity of students to exhibit some reasons, argumentative ideas, forums for discussion and contemporary ideas make students' critical thinking more honed. All these learning media ultimately generate a successful goal in teaching literature. Lecturers facilitate the students to gather as many as information they need. The need should concern on the discussion of literary works and criticisms by utilizing applications or learning media. This step assists the students in reading in the comprehension of philosophy, politics, religions, morality, culture, and even politics. The work of fictions integrates the universal knowledge of literary criticism and fictions gives chances for the students to grasp, interpret, analyze, and appreciate.

Literary studies are regarded as one of the two sub-disciplines of English, and in several institutions over the past decade or so they have been allotted an increasing space in the curriculum (Dodou 2020). This development, which testifies to the privileging of literature as an object of study, raises the question of the value ascribed to literary studies by the disciplinary and teaching community of the English subject. Value here is understood in terms of the rationale and objectives formulated for the study of English literature, of the subject matters, knowledge, and skills that are foregrounded in English literary studies. The question of value thus defined is at once intellectual and pedagogical.

There are several ways to make teaching literature effective. First is the selection of the theory that would be discussed in the class, and the second is the selection of literary objects. These two ways should be conducted based on the level of the semester. The third is to develop method of teaching that would impress the students and prevent them from boredom. Thus, the teaching and learning activity in the class would be effective. The use of media technology, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic has involved significantly that the lecturers and students must undergo particular circumstances in the classroom and require cooperation from both parties.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the students' interest, perception, and needs in studying literature as basis for enhancing the learning activities for literature classes.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following problems:
1. What is the level of interest of students in studying literature?
2. What is the perceived level of significance of studying?
3. What are the students' needs in studying literature?

Methodology
Research Design

The researcher employed descriptive survey method as its design. Descriptive survey is a method that tries to describe phenomenon, occurrence, event that happens in the present (Creswell, 2013).

Population and Locale of the Study

The respondents of the study are students from Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College-College of Teacher Education, Sta. Maria Campus taking Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English who are currently enrolled in Literature classes. There are a total population of thirty-six (36) which broken down as follows: seventeen (17) coming from second year and eighteen (18) from third year college respectively. Moreover, purposive sampling was used to select sample. In addition, purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The set criteria are as follows: (1) students who are taking English as their major, (2) they should be enrolled in Literature classes.

Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire consisted of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents accompanied by a Likert scale. The questionnaire is adopted from Sivapalan and Subramaniam (2008). It was partly modified. The questions were divided into two sections. The first section was utilized to surface the students' interest and their attitudes towards literature. The second section was used to

identify the perception of students in studying literature. Notably, the questionnaire was subjected for validity and reliability test.

Treatment of Data
The researcher used statistical tools to help in carrying out the quality of this study. These tools include the mean. The Mean was utilized to determine the level of students' interest and perceived level of significance in studying literature.

Data Categorization
The norms below were used in the analysis and interpretation of data:

Level of Interest

RATING SCALE	RANGE	DESCRIPTIVE RATING	OVERALL DR
5	4.20-5.00	Very Much Interested	Very High
4	3.40-4.19	Much Interested	High
3	2.60-3.39	Moderately Interested	Moderate
2	1.80-2.59	Quite Interested	Fair
1	1.00-1.79	Not Interested	Poor

Level of Perceived Significance and Needs

RATING SCALE	RANGE	DESCRIPTIVE RATING	OVERALL DR
5	4.20-5.00	Very Much Necessary	Very High
4	3.40-4.19	Much Necessary	High
3	2.60-3.39	Moderately Necessary	Moderate
2	1.80-2.59	Quite Necessary	Fair
1	1.00-1.79	Not Necessary	Poor

Results and Discussion
Level Of Interest Of Students In Studying Literature
Table 1:- Level of Interest of Students in Studying Literature.

INTEREST in Literature	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Enjoying learning literature	4.48	VMI
Reading literary texts	4.20	VMI
Reading literary texts as time consuming	3.88	MI
Available literary books at home	3.08	MoI
Reading short stories	4.28	VMI
Reading novels	4.05	MI
Writing poems	3.60	MI
Reading and analyzing poems	3.71	MI
Attending Literature class	4.57	VMI
Overall Mean	**3.98**	**MI**

Table 1 shows the level of students' interest in studying literature. It can be gleaned that the students enjoy attending Literature class who got a mean score of 4.57 described as very much interested. This means that the students are not bored in attending their Literature class. The result affirms the claims of Stewart and Maisonville (2019) that there is just no better way to be successful than to go to class. It is in class that you will receive the direction and guidance you need to be successful. Also, it shows from the result that the students enjoy learning literature that got a mean of 4.48 with a descriptive rating of very much interested. This means that the students show interest in studying literature. This affirms a study that students consider their learning effective learning if enjoyment is present (Hernik and Jaworska, 2018).

On the other hand, the results revealed that the statement "we have literary books available at home" got the lowest mean of 3.08 described as moderately interested. This implies that the students have little number of literary books available at their homes. Perhaps there are other books that are available. This negates the claims of Evans (2017) that regardless of how many books the family already has, each addition to the home library helps children do better.

Perceived Level of Significance of Studying Literature
Table 2shows the students' perception in studying literature. It can be gleaned that Literature can help students improve their listening skills, grammar and vocabulary that got the highest mean of 4.85 described as very much necessary. This means that by reading literary texts, the students can get input that can help widen their vocabulary, master their grammar, and improve their listening skills by means of listening to what the teacher is reading aloud. The teacher can provide some activities that will enhance the students' macro skills and skills that they can be used in real life context. The result affirms the study of Henrietta (2021) that vocabulary intensifies our ability to function in a complex world, helping us to express ourselves clearly and concisely. Without assimilating enough vocabulary, students cannot have relevant communication, cannot express their ideas and cannot understand each other.

Table 2:- Perceived Level of Significance of Studying Literature.

Perception in Literature	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Literature at the foundation/ pre-university English language course	4.54	VMN
Literature should be taught as a subject on its own	4.60	VMN
Literature is important for academic achievement	4.80	VMN
Literature is learned better through lectures.	4.68	VMN
Literature is learned better through tutorials.	4.42	VMN
Literature is learned better through activities	4.62	VMN
Literature can be learned by own	3.82	MN
Literature class help understand major subjects better	4.32	VMN
Literature needs to learn to improve language skills	4.80	VMN
Literature should be a component of the syllabus for English courses taken by Education students in addition to grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking activities	4.62	VMN
Literature should only be taken by students majoring in arts or language courses	3.42	MN
Literature should be made compulsory for all Education students studying English at the pre-university level	4.17	MN
Literature should be made compulsory for all Education students studying English at the undergraduate level	4.08	MN
Literature should be mastered by students to improve language skills.	4.6	VMN
Literature can help improve reading skills	4.82	VMN
Literature can help improve writing skills	4.82	VMN
Literature can help improve speaking skills	4.80	VMN
Literature can help improve listening skills	4.85	VMN
Literature can help improve grammar	4.85	VMN
Literature can help improve vocabulary	4.85	VMN
Overall Mean	**4.52**	**VMN**

However, the statement "Literature should only be taken by students majoring in arts or language courses" got the lowest mean of 3. 42 described as much necessary. This implies that Literature should be taken by all courses, not only those who are taking arts or language courses. The result affirms the claims of Jacobs (2022) that studying English literature opens to the world of creative imagination. Not only does it develop skills that are essential for today's global environment, but it also inspires change and innovation. English literature studies help us understand our world in all its social, political, economic, and cultural aspects through stories, novels, poems and plays.
Students' Needs in Studying Literature.

Table 3 shows the students' needs in studying literature. It shown from the results that reading literary texts with themes that are relevant to their field of study would help them appreciate literature better that got the highest mean of 4.65 described as very much necessary. This means that the students would appreciate more literature if the themes from literary texts would be aligned or there is something to do with their field of study. If the students can relate to their reading literary texts, they would love reading literature then. This affirms the claims of Wright (2019) stating that reading literature enables us to see the world through the eyes of others. It trains the mind to be flexible, to comprehend others point of view- to set aside one's personal perspectives to see life through the eyes of someone who of another age, class, or race. Also, the type of genre used in the literature class can affect students' interest to learn literature got a mean of 4.65 described as very much necessary. This means that the teacher should choose appropriate genre to be utilized in class in order to catch the students' interest and motivation to study literary texts.

The result affirms the study of Cosgum (2022) that pre-service English Teachers had certain preferences regarding the specific genres of literature that they read in their literature classes.

Table 3:- Students' Needs in studying Literature.

Students' Needs in studying literature	Mean		Descriptive Rating	
Classic literary texts like Shakespeare's works should be used in the literature class to promote students' interest in literature.	4.45		VMN	
A mixture of classic and modern texts should be used to promote students' interest in literature.	4.54		VMN	
The literary texts used in the English 1 and English 2 literature classes helped me to develop a sense of appreciation for literature.	4.37		VMN	
I read literary texts for my English language lessons because I want to score high marks in my English class.	4.28		VMN	
Reading literary texts with themes that are relevant to my field of study would help me appreciate literature better.	4.65		VMN	
Reading literary texts with themes that are relevant to my field of study would help me appreciate my field of study better.	4.62		VMN	
Stories on teenagers/young adults are more interesting to read than stories on adults.	4.00		MN	
It is easier to relate to the characters in young adult literary texts compared to texts with adult characters.	3.94		MN	
Texts with teenage characters help me understand myself better.	4.40		VMN	
Texts with teenage issues and concerns should be taught to increase students' awareness of the importance of learning literature.	4.45		VMN	
It is easier to understand short stories than poems.	4.45		VMN	
It is easier to understand short stories than novels.	4.45		VMN	
The literary texts used in class must be culturally sensitive.	4.60		VMN	
The type of genre (poem, short stories, novels) used in the literature class can affect students' interest to learn literature.	4.65		VMN	
Incorporating movies into literature lessons would help technical students gain interest in literature.	4.62		VMN	
Overall Mean	**4.43**		**VMN**	

Implications
Based on the result of the study, the following conclusions were made: The English major students show interest in studying literature. They are not easily got bored and they enjoyed literature as a whole. In terms of students' perception, they believe that by studying or learning literature, the students can improve their macro skills, vocabulary and grammar. Lastly, students need literary text themes that are relevant to their field of study in order for the them to appreciate more literature. It is also a need for the teachers to give appropriate literary genres to be utilized to make students catch their attention and make studying literature an enjoyable one.

Recommendations
Based on the result of the study, the following recommendations were made: The English language Instructors should make studying literature more interesting and exciting. The English Language Instructors should also give activities that can also improve the students' macro skills by making use of literature as their springboard. For pre-service teachers, they should also consider the interest of their future students when they are going to teach literature. They can provide more engaging activities so that they will learn to appreciate literature.

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