

Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching Children's Literature in Higher Education: Insights and Implications for Transformative Practices

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Abstract

This study examines the various pedagogical strategies used in teaching children's literature at the university level, revealing notable disparities in approaches and highlighting the need for further in-depth research. The method adopted is based on a careful analysis and rigorous synthesis of existing publications, academic points of view and empirical research in order to develop a holistic vision of the research problem and to formulate relevant answers to the questions posed. The importance of children's literature in academia is highlighted as a dynamic area of research, highlighting its transformative role in society. The results indicate a predominance of technical aspects of literacy, with fragmented implementation of innovative teaching practices. The study's findings highlight the critical need for teacher training programs that effectively integrate children's literature, as well as increased awareness of its transformative potential. By identifying current gaps, the study suggests ways to enrich educational programs and promote a more inclusive and diverse literature. The implications also suggest the importance of promoting innovative teaching methodologies and diversifying the literary sources used in the classroom. In conclusion, this study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of current teaching practices and suggests valuable avenues for the continuous improvement of children's literature teaching, thereby promoting high-quality and more holistic literary education, accessible to everyone and everywhere.

Keywords: children's, literature, literary diversity, teaching strategies, teacher training.

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Introduction

In a context where children's literature is recognized for its potential for developing literacy, this study aims to examine pedagogical practices in the teaching of this literature at university level. We explore the various approaches used by educators, the challenges faced in implementing these approaches, and existing gaps in research on children's literature pedagogy.

Previous work has highlighted the importance of children's literature for literacy development and has argued for the adoption of innovative teaching methods. However, research on children's literature pedagogy at the university level remains relatively limited, despite its potential to enrich students' critical thinking and address contemporary issues.

Academic work on children's literature is diverse and covers a wide range of perspectives. For example, Lundin (1994) offers practical resources for teachers, while Duncan (2008) focuses on teaching strategies specific to certain authors. Ghosn (2013) highlights the use of quality literature for language learning, and Webb (2015) highlights the need for international analysis to understand cultural constructions. Osen (1970) and Schwedt (2007) also make significant contributions by offering educational guides and methods for teaching writing through children's literature.

However, despite these contributions, inconsistencies persist in the application of educational methodologies. Teachers vary considerably in their use of literary elements, often relying on predefined modules (Mustakim, 2014). Nawawi (2023) identifies several methodological approaches, but a certain inconsistency remains, with an emphasis often placed on the technical aspects of reading and writing (Mustakim, 2018). Despite these challenges, the transformative potential of children's literature remains widely recognized (Campagnaro, 2021).

Research Problem

The inconsistent implementation of pedagogical practices in teaching children's literature raises questions about the effectiveness of current educational programs and how educators can better integrate this literature into the academic curriculum.

Scope of research

The research examines the different perspectives and approaches used in teaching children's literature, with a particular emphasis on innovative methods and best practices. It also explores the implications of these approaches for students' learning and the development of their understanding of children's literature.

Research Aim

This study aims to examine pedagogical approaches used in teaching children's literature at the university level, identify challenges faced by educators, and suggest avenues for future research in this area.

Research Questions

1. What are the different pedagogical approaches used in teaching children's literature in a university setting?
2. What practices are most effective for engaging students with children's literature?
3. How can these practices be adapted to meet current educational needs?

Research objectives

1. Examine the pedagogical approaches currently used in teaching children's literature in a university setting.
2. Identify best practices for engaging students with children's literature.
3. Explore the adaptations necessary to meet contemporary educational needs.

Methodology

The method adopted is based on a careful analysis and rigorous synthesis of existing publications, academic points of view and empirical research in order to develop a holistic vision of the research problem and to formulate relevant answers to the questions posed.

1. Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Children's Literature in University Settings

Campagnaro, Daly and Short (2021) highlight the relative insufficiency of research on the pedagogy of children's literature in university teaching. Their work highlights the significant contribution of children's literature to the development of literacy and deplores the historical undervaluation of this literary field. They advocate for the adoption of innovative teaching methods and the promotion of global and multicultural literature, essential for enriching students' critical thinking and addressing contemporary issues (Campagnaro, Daly, & Short, 2021).

As part of their study, Mustakim, Mustapha and Lebar (2014) analyze the pedagogical approaches used by ESL teachers for teaching contemporary children's literature. Their evaluation reveals minimal incorporation of literary elements, a lack of creativity among teachers and an over-reliance on the educational modules provided, while highlighting the program's potential to improve students' language learning (Mustakim, Mustapha, & Lebar, 2014).

Nawawi and Mohd Kamil (2023) conducted a systematic review of teaching approaches and challenges in teaching English literature in Malaysia. Their analysis, based on the PRISMA 2020 checklist, reveals various teaching strategies and common challenges, providing crucial insights for educators to optimize literary teaching and improve learning outcomes (Nawawi & Mohd Kamil, 2023).

Mustakim, Lebar and Minghat (2018) examine pedagogical practices in the teaching of literature, noting a predominance of the technical components of reading, writing, listening and speaking compared to literary education itself. Their study highlights the inconsistency in the use of teaching approaches and the importance given to the development of portfolios by students (Mustakim, Lebar, & Minghat, 2018).

Mohamad Fikray and Habil (2022) explore the challenges and pedagogical approaches in teaching literature in ESL context, identifying obstacles such as the exam-driven system, class size and time constraints. Their study also highlights the importance of continuous reflection and transformation in teaching practices to overcome these challenges (Mohamad Fikray & Habil, 2022).

Ramlan (2015) investigates the teaching methods employed by secondary English teachers in teaching the literature component, revealing a predominance of teacher-centered approaches due to students' lack of linguistic competence. This study is based on questionnaires distributed to 149 teachers to identify the teaching strategies used (Ramlan, 2015).

Harper (1988) discusses moves towards student-centered approaches to the teaching of literature, in response to the decline in the number of students opting for literary studies and the challenges of traditional methods. It highlights the effectiveness of humanistic approaches to motivate students and enrich their experience beyond the classroom (Harper, 1988).

Finally, Zancanella (1991) explores how teachers' personal approaches to literature influence their teaching practices. This qualitative study highlights the tension between personal and institutional approaches, emphasizing the importance of pedagogically useful knowledge while being limited by institutional constraints (Zancanella, 1991).

2. Effective Practices for Engaging Students with Children's Literature

Reading experiences in groups, whether small or large, can foster enriching discussions and meaningful writing applications. This article analyzes the impact of high-quality children's literature, particularly picture books, on motivating and encouraging students to write. These works illustrate effective writing skills and provide academic and social benefits for children (Paquette, 2007). Indeed, children's literature and picture books motivate and encourage students' writing by demonstrating effective writing skills, then integrated into their own compositions, and by sharing these writings, students benefit both academic and social (Paquette, 2007).

Children's literature provides accessible material for students of all ages, allowing the practice of essential language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. Kipling (2018) highlights the use of children's literature to encourage students to practice these skills, while promoting critical thinking and discussion skills. The article offers practical examples and recommendations for effectively integrating children's literature into teaching. Using this literature not only helps practice key language skills but also helps develop critical thinking and discussion skills (Kipling, 2018).

Teachers must encourage personal, multiple and critical interpretations of a text. Using children's literature for young ESL/EFL learners helps with language and literacy development, promoting intercultural understanding, and improving critical thinking skills (Lee, 2011). It is essential to avoid biased books and to encourage students' personal connections with the texts. Engagement with children's literature supports language development and critical thinking, while raising students' awareness of different cultures (Lee, 2011).

This article discusses the distinction between library books and textbooks to encourage reading in children. Ediger (2002) examines the varied types of literature available, the learning opportunities offered by children's literature and the importance of illustrations. The study highlights the informal selection of library books and the structured use of textbooks for varied activities such as dramatization, artwork, book reviews and discussions (Ediger, 2002). Developmental goals should be tailored to students' maturity levels and learning styles.

Harits (2017) discusses the importance of life experiences and prior knowledge in teaching children's literature. The article examines how the teaching of this literature interacts with historical and educational values, and how cognitive criticism derived from social constructivism can be applied. By linking psychology, literature, and readers' life experiences, teaching children's literature becomes more cognitively and emotionally engaging and enriching (Harits, 2017).

Ghosn (2013) advocates for the use of high-quality children's literature to humanize the teaching of English to young learners. This approach not only improves language learning, but also develops various skills and qualities in children. Children's literature plays a crucial role in enriching language learning and the overall development of students (Ghosn, 2013).

Words and images in literary texts serve as catalysts for generating ideas that deepen understanding and interest in language learning. Ljungdahl (2010) discusses strategies for using literature to improve the literacy skills of primary school students, integrating reading and writing through imaginative approaches. The article highlights the importance of using literary texts to develop creative reading and writing skills in young children (Ljungdahl, 2010).

Barone's (2010) article explores various methods such as reading aloud, independent reading, and genre exploration to engage students with children's literature. By using a variety of strategies, teachers can promote lasting reading habits among students. The importance of reading aloud and class discussion is highlighted as essential for inspiring students to engage with literary texts and develop a lifelong love of reading (Barone, 2010).

3. Adapting Practices to Meet Current Educational Needs

According to Havlicek and Ghandour (2005), it is crucial for educators to be able to adopt or adapt practices developed by others in order to meet specific educational needs. The summary highlights the importance of using educational programs, practices or products from other contexts to effectively address educational issues, while saving time and resources. This would allow educators to focus on the essentials by relying on solutions proven by their peers.

Truța and Chiș's (2021) study focuses on identifying effective ways to improve teaching practice, particularly in primary and preschool education, using a synchronous format. The strategies identified aim to strengthen students' autonomy and understanding in terms of educational practice, having a widespread positive impact. The methodology adopted included the analysis of teaching practices from various angles and the collection of data through questionnaires, followed by analysis with teaching tutors.

Heaton (2012) discusses best practices in education, emphasizing increasing the capacity and efficiency of institutions to meet the needs of large numbers of students. The document highlights the importance of accessibility and distance learning, while emphasizing the crucial role of student control over their own learning and interaction with tutors. The methodology involves removing distance barriers, promoting deep learning approaches and providing resources for accessible and effective education.

Foshay (2012) highlights the need for schools to adapt to changing social forces, placing the individual at the center of the educational service. The summary identifies twelve essential practices to enable schools to fulfill this role, with examples of current implementation and suggestions for teachers and administrators. The emphasis is on adapting educational programs to new social realities, although the summary does not provide detailed methodology.

Surghi and Iuri (2012) address the importance of critical analysis of teaching practices by educators themselves in the context of continuing education. The study proposes a transition from academic training to practical experience in the educational job market, emphasizing self-analysis and theoretical enrichment of teachers. The methodology involves a research project on beginning teachers, aiming to encourage introspective analysis of teaching practices by groups of educators.

Amar and David (2019) discuss the need for educational institutions to prepare students with essential 21st century skills, presenting a new perspective on learning environments. The study highlights the importance of creating innovative and diverse learning spaces to promote student success. The methodology is based on action research carried out over several years, aiming to propose innovative characteristics for future educational environments.

Chiappe et al. (2020) question the relevance of contemporary education to the needs of 21st century society, emphasizing the importance of a curriculum focused on soft skills and personal goals. The study advocates an educational approach favoring research rather than traditional teaching and emphasizes the integration of technologies for personalized learning paths. The methodology includes a systematic literature review, surveys and school visits, aimed at identifying and analyzing key ideas for modern education.

4. Discussion

The results of this study highlight the diversity of pedagogical strategies used in the teaching of children's literature at the university level. While some approaches integrate literary elements in a limited way and rely primarily on available modules, others seek to promote a deeper, autonomous understanding of literature among students (Mustakim, 2014). This variability in approaches reflects persistent challenges in implementing quality literary education, with a tendency to place greater emphasis on the technical aspects of reading, writing, listening and speaking. speech (Mustakim, 2018).

Compared to current research in the field, the results of this study reveal a relative gap in research on children's literature pedagogy in university education (Campagnaro, Daly, & Short, 2021). Although previous work has highlighted the importance of children's literature for literacy development and the need to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches (Campagnaro, Daly, & Short, 2021), the implementation of such practices remains inconsistent. The results thus suggest an increased need for in-depth research into best educational practices in this area.

Implications of these findings for future research include the need to develop teacher training programs that emphasize the effective integration of children's literature into the academic curriculum. It is also crucial to promote research into innovative teaching methodologies and the diversification of literary sources used in the classroom. Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of raising awareness among teachers and policy makers about the transformative value of children's literature for learners of all ages.

In conclusion, this study contributes to clarifying current pedagogical practices in the teaching of children's literature at the university level. By identifying existing gaps and highlighting areas requiring additional research, it offers valuable avenues for improving educational programs and promoting more inclusive and diverse literature in classrooms.

5. Research Limitations

1. Limited geographical and cultural scope: The study mainly focuses on pedagogical practices in teaching children's literature at university level in a general context. It could be beneficial to include a comparative analysis of practices in different countries or regions of the world, as well as varied cultural perspectives, to better understand the diversity of educational approaches.
2. Lack of longitudinal data: The lack of long-term monitoring of teaching practices and their results on student learning could limit the ability to fully evaluate the long-term effectiveness of different educational approaches.
3. Specific institutional context: Teaching practices may vary depending on the institutional context, available resources, and specific educational policies. Further analysis of these factors could help contextualize the results and provide recommendations more suited to different educational environments.

With these limitations in mind, future research may aim to overcome these challenges to provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of pedagogical practices in teaching children's literature at the university level.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to strengthen the impact of children's literature in higher education, by creating richer, inclusive learning environments adapted to the needs of students.

1. Assessment of current practices: Systematically analyze the various pedagogical strategies used in the teaching of children's literature at the university level.

2. Development of specialized training: Design training programs for teachers emphasizing the thorough integration of children's literature into university curricula.
3. Promote educational innovation: Encourage the use of innovative teaching methodologies that facilitate independent and deep understanding of literature among students.
4. Diversification of literary resources: Increase the variety of literary sources used in class in order to offer richer and more inclusive content.
5. Awareness and commitment of political decision-makers: Highlight the benefits of children's literature and its transformative potential to policy makers to obtain institutional and financial support.
6. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of programs: Establish continuous evaluation mechanisms to adapt and improve training programs based on feedback and developments in the field.
7. Contextualized and personalized teaching: Adapt teaching strategies to the specific contexts of students, taking into account their cultural diversity and individual needs.

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the diversity of pedagogical strategies employed in teaching children's literature at the university level, while also highlighting the persistent challenges and inconsistencies in the application of these methods. Although some educators are content to build on pre-existing modules, others seek to foster a deeper, self-directed understanding of literature in their students. This variability reflects significant challenges in implementing quality literary education, often dominated by the technical aspects of reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Mustakim, 2018).

Despite the recognized advances in the importance of children's literature for the development of literacy (Campagnaro, Daly, & Short, 2021), this study reveals a gap in research on the pedagogy of this literature at the university level. The findings suggest a growing need for in-depth research to identify best teaching practices and develop teacher training programs emphasizing the effective integration of children's literature into university curricula.

The implications for future research are clear: it is essential to promote innovative teaching methodologies and diversify the literary sources used in the classroom. Furthermore, raising awareness among teachers and policy makers about the transformative value of children's literature is crucial to improving educational programs and fostering more inclusive and diverse literature in classrooms. In conclusion, this study makes a significant contribution to the understanding of current teaching practices and suggests valuable avenues for the continued improvement of children's literature teaching.

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