ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 1| January 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

ECHOES OF AMBIGUITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE GRADE 7 STUDENTS IN POETRY INTERPRETATIONS OF PHILIPPINE LITERATURE

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra19812
DOI No: 10.36713/epra19812

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examines the experiences of Grade 7 students as they interpret poetry from Philippine literature, with a focus on how they perceive and respond to ambiguity in poetic texts. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the research explores the students' interpretative strategies, the challenges they face, and their emotional responses to the complexities of poetic language. Thematic analysis reveals that students often struggle with issues such as limited vocabulary, figurative language, and cultural context, but also develop coping mechanisms such as using dictionaries, repetitive reading, and collaborating with peers and teachers. Ambiguity in poetry is a challenge and an opportunity for deeper engagement, as students develop perseverance, empathy, and a greater appreciation for multiple interpretations. These insights highlight the importance of instructional approaches that support students in overcoming the difficulties of poetic interpretation while encouraging critical thinking and creativity. By focusing on the learners' experiences, this study contributes to improving teaching methods that enhance the learning and appreciation of Philippine literature.

KEYWORDS: *phenomenology, poetry interpretation, Philippine literature, Grade 7 students, ambiguity, in-depth interview, focus group discussion, student experiences*

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In the context of global literature education, poetry plays a vital role in secondary schools becoming a fundamental aspect of students' learning experiences. However, despite its consistent presence in educational programs, many students grapple with the complexities of poetry. While acknowledged for its intellectual demands, poetry is prominent in classrooms. While poetry is recognized for its intellectual challenges, it is often used in schools. However, the recurring challenge is the interpretation process, the intricate layers of meaning, the reliance on figurative language, and the subjective nature of interpretation, all of which contribute to the perception that comprehending poetry necessitates a level of understanding that many students struggle to achieve.

In Zerqa, Jordan, Salameh (2019) in his study looked at the challenges facing third-year and fourth-year students at Hashemite University in Jordan who are studying English poetry. According to the students themselves, most of them don't show much interest in poetry. Only about 12% of students actively enjoy studying poetry, while the majority, around 88%, tend to ignore it. Besides, In Indonesia, Agustan (2019) did a study with thirty young students to see how well they understood poetry in the school year 2022-2023. The study found that many students are having a hard time understanding poetry. Moreover, in Malaysia's education system, the integration of literature as a component within the English language curriculum represents a significant pedagogical. However, within the component, one particular genre, poetry, stands out as the least favored among students, which raises significant concerns and challenges (Zainal, 2019).

In the Philippines, specifically in Cagayan De Oro City, Magulod (2019) found out that students have a fair understanding of appreciating literature, particularly in the field of poetry this means they grasp the basics but might not be experts. However, they face challenges in certain areas. Recognizing the author's perspective, which means understanding what the writer is trying to say, seems to be a point needing more attention. When it comes to evaluating the text, or looking closely at its content, structure, and overall quality, students need to improve their analytical skills. Additionally, figuring out personal beliefs from literary texts suggests that students may need help connecting the themes in literature to their values.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study aims to describe, understand, and recognize the subsisted experiences, coping

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mechanisms, and insights encountered by Grade 7 students in interpreting Philippine poetry in the Division of Davao de Oro

At this stage in the research, the experiences of Grade 7 junior high school students on poetry interpretation, will be generally defined as the concerns or needs regarding the challenges and difficulties that the Grade 7 learners encountered which will be properly documented and highlighted.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of Grade 7 students for poetry interpretations of Philippine literature?
2. How do the Grade 7 students cope with the challenges being encountered in poetry interpretation of Philippine Literature?
3. What are the insights of Grade 7 students on poetry interpretation in Philippine literature that can be communicated with others.

Theoretical Lens

The study is rooted in Rosenblatt's Literary Transaction Theory (1982), the theory suggests that reading is a dynamic interaction where the reader and the text continuously influence each other. In to this theory, readers create meaning through their thoughtful and creative interpretations, making their perspectives significant in understanding literary works. This theory empowers students by allowing their perspectives to be crucial in reading unlike traditional methods that teach a specific "authorized" meaning of a poem, Rosenblatt's theory acknowledges the individual's freedom to interact with the text, fostering a more personal response.

This study is also anchored by Jean Piaget's Constructivism Theory (1930) as cited in McLeod (2022), This theory highlights that learners are actively involved in shaping their understanding. Instead of just being told things, learners think about what they have experienced, create mental pictures, and connect new information to what they already know.and comprehension.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on the lived experiences of fourteen (14) Grade 7 Junior High School students within the Division of Davao de Oro in interpreting poetry in Philippine literature. The data of this research will be limited only to the responses and experiences of Grade 7 junior high school students who are from different schools in the Division of Davao de Oro specifically in Mawab, District who experience difficulty in understanding the literary text. This study will be conducted from January 2024 to March 2024 of the school year 2023-2024.

Thus, this research is limited to the detailed results from in-depth and focus group interviews with Grade 7 junior high school students. Then administrative authorization is required to acquire access to the informers, school heads, and superintendents who are informed of the research and its purpose.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher conducts an exhaustive literature review to establish a comprehensive understanding of the research area and identify gaps in knowledge. Drawing upon insights from recognized experts in the field, scholarly articles and books are scrutinized to contextualize the focal issue under investigation. Employing a rigorous approach, academic databases are searched using relevant keywords to retrieve pertinent literature.

Poetry Interpretation in the Philippine Literature

Exposure to literature enhances learners' language proficiency across listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills by introducing them to diverse linguistic expressions. It serves as a vivid depiction of cultural heritage, expressed in languages such as Spanish, Tagalog, English, and various dialects. Philippine literature, regarded as the second richest literary tradition, encompasses a wide array of forms including poems, riddles, proverbs, epics, short stories, folk songs, and novels. These literary treasures, rooted in both the pre-Spanish era and the contemporary period, reflect the enduring richness of diverse cultural expressions (Carreon, 2019).

In addition, Kalwar (2023) states that literature plays an important role in education, serving as a valued resource for materials and activities that enhance learning. It provides students with authentic examples, facilitating a deeper understanding of language usage in real-life contexts. By studying literature in the target language, students gain a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic community's emotions, thoughts, and customs, elevating their language learning experience.

Challenges of Students in Poetry Interpretations

Understanding a poem can be tricky and challenging and the readers generally accept that poems are often seen as mentally demanding unlike other types of writing that are more straightforward. In grasping a poem, learners are encouraged to put themselves in the writer's shoes and try to understand their state of mind when they are writing it otherwise the words might seem confusing, and learners might miss what the author is trying to express (Tate, 2020).

Ways of coping with difficulties in poetry interpretations

Interpreting poetry can pose challenges, but adopting certain strategies can make the process more accessible. When faced with difficulties in deciphering poetic verses, several strategies can enhance one's understanding and appreciation of the art form. Moreover, by embracing ambiguity and considering multiple perspectives the learners can successfully cope with the difficulties they have experienced (Sukmaningrum et al., 2023).

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In Agustan's (2023) study titled "Strategies for High School Students to Overcome Challenges in Learning Poetry Using the Case Method Model," he discovered effective approaches for addressing difficulties related to literary texts, particularly poetry. Practical approaches identified to aid students in understanding poetic texts include understanding both the tangible and abstract structure of the poem, identifying its central theme through the provided example, outlining the poem's structure, analyzing the selection of words (diction) related to the theme discussed, recognizing the rhyme and rhythm, and uncovering the poem's implicit message or importance.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This section delineates the approach and steps undertaken to conduct the study. It encompasses elements such as the chosen framework for research, the responsibilities of the investigator, profiles of the participants, methodologies for gathering data, strategies for analyzing data, the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical principles upheld throughout the endeavor.

Research Design

This research utilizes a qualitative-phenomenological method to examine the encounters of seventh-grade junior high school students as they interpret poetry in Philippine literature. According to Bhandari (2021), qualitative research involves a systematic investigation aimed in acquiring a deep understanding of different situations within their usual context, which can include individuals' experiences, behaviors, and organizational dynamics. Utilizing this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of underlying causes, perspectives, and motivations as noted by Aspers and Corte (2019). This research design is particularly suitable for understanding human experiences, situations, and challenges.

Research Participants

The participants of this study will be the Grade Seven (7) students selected from three (3) academic institutions in the district of Mawab, Davao de Oro Division. In this phenomenological investigation, the decision to include 14 participants aligns with the recommendation proposed by Creswell (2013), as cited by Stahl & King (2020), which suggests a research group size ranging from three (3) to fifteen (15) members. This number of participants is considered sufficient to gather comprehensive data for analysis while ensuring diversity in perspectives=

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher's function within the study involves comprehending the perspectives and emotions of participants, gathering data, and conducting analysis according to Creswell (2015) as cited by Muhammad (2019).

As a researcher, my foremost duty is to ensure the ethical integrity of the research endeavor. This encompasses the meticulous acquisition of written consent from parents, with particular attention to minors, and ensuring that participants provide informed assent before their involvement.

Data Sources

In this study, the primary data sources will be the responses of participants from In-depth interviews (IDI) and Focus-Group Discussions (FGD). Furthermore, in-depth interviews (IDI) are a qualitative research method involving detailed and open-ended discussions with individuals in which the goal is to gather comprehensive information by exploring participants' feelings, perspectives, viewpoints, and experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

Qualitative research encompasses a sequence of procedures within the data collection phase, which holds paramount importance in the research undertaking. Data, serving as the essential information for examining a research issue, is acquired through meticulous research design. The significance of data collection lies in its pivotal role as the foundational instrument of research (Mazhar et al., 2021). Identifying research participants, acquiring materials, and securing a suitable location to conduct the study are crucial aspects of this stage. As a researcher, I will undertake several activities as part of the data collection process before concluding the research.

Data Analysis

As a researcher, it is imperative to familiarize myself with the contemporary qualitative approach to data collection, which emphasizes gathering data in natural settings while remaining sensitive to the individuals and environments being studied. Additionally, employing inductive data analysis is crucial, wherein patterns or themes are established after a thorough examination of the data. Data analysis in qualitative research involves assessing and interpreting the collected qualitative data to discern its meaning, which includes categorizing data through various techniques such as data sorting, narratives, data categorization, and thematic investigation (Medelyan, 2020

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This chapter elucidates the findings from the learning experiences of Grade 7 students as they interpreted poetic texts from Philippine literature. Through in-depth discussions, students were encouraged to articulate their diverse experiences related to this interpretative process.

Table 1
Lived Experiences of The Grade 7 Students in Interpreting Poetic Text of Philippine Literature

After analyzing the responses of the participants about their experiences in interpreting poetic text from Philippine Literature,

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the following six (6) themes emerged: (1) Limited Vocabulary Knowledge (2) Language Differences (3) Emotional and Psychological Insight (4) Difficulty in Understanding Figurative Words and, (5) Cultural Context in a poem.

Table 1 shows the major themes and core ideas on the lived experiences of Grade seven (7) students in interpreting the poetry of Philippine Literature.

Major themes and core ideas of the ambiguities experienced by Grade 7 students in interpreting poetic text in Philippine Literature

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Limited Vocabulary Knowledge	• Struggling with understanding many words. • Having difficulty grasping the main ideas of the poem. • Lacking familiarity with some words. • Having limited exposure to various literary works. • Facing universal challenges with unfamiliar languages. • Encountering poems written in unfamiliar languages. • Struggling with a lack of familiarity.
Language Differences	• Switching between languages and experiencing confusion. • Dealing with linguistic disparity, complicating understanding among peers who do not share the same language background. • poems are not written based on their first language or the language they prefer and understand best.
Emotional and Psychological Insight	• Allowing students' feelings and experiences to influence their understanding of poems. • Recognizing the feeling of an interpreter matters. • Experiencing interpreters' emotions that might not coincide with the author's intention. • Applying the wrong emotion and potentially distorting the poem's intended meaning. • Requiring personal reflections to understand the poem fully.
Difficulty in Understanding Figurative Words	• Encountering single words with multiple meanings. • Not being fully exposed to flowery words. • Facing challenges with multiple meanings and pinpointing exact interpretations. • Needing to read thoroughly and carefully understand the figurative language present in a poem. • Struggling to comprehend poems fully when they offer multiple meanings.
Cultural Context in a Poem.	• Not understanding cultural or historical references in poems. • Finding the context of the poem unrelated to their practices. • Having a hard time relating to the themes and feelings in the poems. • Encountering cultural elements deeply rooted in Filipino tradition and history that are not immediately clear to them.

Table 2
Coping Mechanisms Used By The Grade 7 Students In Interpreting Poetic Text To Address The Challenges While Engaging In Interpreting Poetic Text In Philippine Literature

The participants shared their ways and strategies on how they coped with the challenges encountered in interpreting poetic text. Based on their responses, the following six (6) themes emerged: (1) Utilization of a Dictionary (2) Harnessing Google Translate for Multilingual Insights (3) Annotating the Poem for Clarity (4) Engaging in Repetitive Reading (5) Collaborating through Peer and Teacher Discussions.

Table 2 shows the major themes and core ideas on the coping mechanisms the Grade seven (7) students used to interpret Philippine Literature poetry

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Major Themes	Core Ideas
Utilization of a Dictionary	• Looking up difficult words to understand their meanings. • Ascertaining the precise definitions of unfamiliar terms encountered within the text. • Consulting a dictionary to elucidate meanings when encountering unfamiliar terms. • Mitigating prolonged delays and potential complications by using a dictionary.
Harnessing Google Translate for Multilingual Insights	• Using Google Translate to appreciate and interpret poetry with greater ease. • Understanding the basic meanings of complex poetic language through translation. • Overcoming difficulty in understanding the text by using translation tools. • Translating poetry into the preferred language of students for better comprehension.
Annotating the Poem for Clarity	• Breaking down the poem into smaller pieces for better understanding. • Writing or noting personal reactions and thoughts about the poem. • Engaging more deeply with the text, making it easier to comprehend and analyze.
Engaging in Repetitive Reading	• Reading the poem several times to grasp its deeper meanings and finer details. • Recognizing subtle elements that might be missed in a single reading through repetitive reading. • Enhancing comprehension gradually by reading the poem multiple times.
Collaborating through Peer and Teacher Discussions	• Gaining different perspectives and insights through discussions. • Uncovering subtle details with the help of peers and teachers. • verifying information by asking the teachers and others who knew about the topic Clarifying concepts and validating understanding through collaborative efforts. • Benefiting from guidance and collaboration rather than solving problems independently.

TABLE 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on The Insights of The Grade 7 Students on Their Experiences in Interpreting Poetic Text in Philippine Literature

The participants shared their insights based on the challenges the encountered in interpreting poetic text in Philippine Literature. Based on their responses, the following six (5) themes emerged: (1) Cultivate patience and steadfast and determination (2) Familiarize yourself with a variety of poems ahead of time (3) Embrace collaboration for effective outcomes (4) Empathize deeply with the author's perspective (4) Nurture a consistent intellectual curiosity

Table 3 shows the major themes and core ideas on the insights of the Grade 7 students in interpreting poetry from Philippine Literature.

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Cultivate patience and steadfast determination.	• Persisting through challenges encountered in understanding complex literary works. • Allowing for a gradual unraveling of the layers of meaning embedded within poems through patience. • Overcoming obstacles such as unfamiliar cultural references or challenging language with determination. • Understanding that giving up is not the answer. • having patience in finding the correct interpretation of the poem.

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	• Being patient in persistently finding alternatives and means to search for pieces of information. • Avoiding being annoyed while staying patient in interpreting the poem.
Familiarize yourself with a variety of poems ahead of time.	• Exposing themselves to diverse literary works to recognize patterns more easily. • Equipping themselves with a repertoire of strategies for interpreting poetry through familiarity. • Developing a deeper appreciation of poetry by engaging with a range of poems. • Learning from others and reading books to gain deeper insights into meanings over time. • Preparing for advanced study or idea exploration, enabling informed attempts at interpretation.
Embrace collaboration for effective outcomes.	• Facilitating the exchange of diverse perspectives and insights to better understand and appreciate literary works. • Fostering a supportive learning environment where individuals learn from one another's strengths and experiences. • Nurturing a collaborative environment where everyone can contribute. • Sharing to open avenues for diverse ideas and perspectives from others.
Nurture a consistent intellectual curiosity.	• Engaging with literary texts driven by a thirst for knowledge and understanding. • Cultivating a deeper appreciation for the complexities of poetry. • Motivating students to explore poetry beyond the classroom and pursue literary discoveries independently. • Persevering and exerting effort to diligently interpret poems.

In a nutshell, while students express a genuine interest in interpreting poems, they are more likely to succeed when provided with prior knowledge, clear guidance, and opportunities for collaboration with their peers. These elements create a supportive learning environment that deepens their connection to the material and significantly enhances their understanding of complex literary themes. By allowing students to engage in poem interpretation within the classroom, educators not only nurture their natural curiosity but also foster intellectual growth, sharpen their analytical skills, and encourage a more thoughtful and reflective approach to literature. This holistic process promotes both academic development and a lifelong appreciation for literary works.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the discussions, conclusions, and recommendations grounded on the findings that emerged in conducting the study using the phenomenological method of inquiry. This section consists of discussions of the emergent themes supported by related literature found in the existing body of knowledge and various authors. In addition, this chapter contains the implications of teaching practices and the recommendations for further research that the researcher has drawn from the findings.

Lived Experiences of the Grade 7 students in interpreting Poetic Text of Philippine Literature

After analyzing the responses of the participants about their experiences in interpreting poetic text from Philippine Literature, the following six (6) themes emerged: (1) Lack of Vocabulary Knowledge (2) Language Differences (3) Emotional and Psychological Insight (4) Presence Figurative Language (5) Multiple Interpretations and (6) Cultural Context in a poem.

Limited Vocabulary Knowledge

Interpreting poetic text requires one to be able to understand the meaning of the given poem. Some of the most common problems students face is due to their insufficient vocabulary knowledge. This is supported by a study conducted by (Hanauer, 1998; Toolan, 2016) as cited in (Nishihara & Takayuki, 2022) stating that poetry texts are notably underrepresented in the classroom due to their inherent complexity which poses significant challenges as poetry anthologies include texts that feature low-frequency vocabulary as these words are seldom encountered in everyday language, thus requiring learners to extend their lexical knowledge beyond common usage.

Moreover, the study by Okingga et al. (2023) supports this view, noting that students with limited vocabulary knowledge may experience cognitive overload when attempting to interpret poetic texts. This cognitive overload arises as students struggle to

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understand multiple unfamiliar words while simultaneously trying to apply new interpretive skills. This dual challenge makes it difficult for them to effectively comprehend the text. Okingga et al. emphasize that this cognitive strain can significantly hinder students' ability to engage with and appreciate poetry. Therefore, enhancing vocabulary knowledge is essential to reduce this cognitive load and improve overall comprehension and enjoyment of poetic texts.

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