



EXPLORING THE TEACHING OF THE INTEGRATION OF LITERATURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A CASE STUDY OF DAHINSHELI JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Acquaye V. N. A.¹ and Yahaya R.²

¹Department of Basic Education, University of Education, Winneba.

Email: ynaacquaye@uew.edu.gh

²Gurugu RC Junior High School, Tamale.

Email: nandoespower@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT: Ghana introduced a New Standard-Based Curriculum in Basic Schools. To promote literacy, imagination, and creativity, an integrated approach to teaching English language and Literature is recommended. This study explored the teaching of integrated English Language and Literature in the Dahinsheli Junior High School. A qualitative research approach and an Exploratory Case Study Design were employed. An observation checklist and interview were used for data collection. Basic 7 and 8 students and their teachers were purposely sampled for the study. Using thematic analysis, the results indicate that the teachers employed diverse and innovative teaching strategies. However, it was observed that the integration was more pronounced during literature lessons and nonexistent during language lessons. Also, the voluminous nature of the curriculum, limited time allocation, inadequate teaching aids, and lack of professional development were challenges teachers face as they implement the curriculum.

KEYWORDS: Integration, English Language, Literature, Curriculum, Literacy, Creativity.



INTRODUCTION

The English Language is now an essential tool in our daily lives, and it is employed in such diverse areas as politics, education, economics, and international relationships and transactions. Knowledge of the English Language thus increases the individual's opportunities to participate in social and cultural contexts, and in international studies and working life (Grahm & Walldén, 2022). The global prevalence of the English Language can be attributed to a confluence of factors, including migration and establishment of English-speaking communities, the impact of colonialism, the economic and political influence wielded by English-speaking nations, and advancements in science, technology, and culture associated with the English Language (Jenkins, 2014). Consequently, English has attained an unparalleled status as a universal language.

In the contemporary global landscape, characterized by increasing multicultural interactions, the significance of English as a medium of international communication cannot be overstated. Recognizing this, there have been notable shifts in English teaching paradigms, with a growing emphasis on incorporating literature into language education frameworks, as highlighted by Karakaya and Kahraman (2013). Tedick & Cammarata (2012) are of the view that by integrating literature into English language instruction, educators aim to achieve multifaceted objectives such as enriching language acquisition and usage. The integration of English Language and Literature has been an area of growing interest in research and education (Applebee et al, 2003).

The integration of various aspects of the English Language, particularly with a focus on Literature, is a comprehensive approach that seeks to combine linguistic elements with literary analysis. This concept not only enriches language skills but also promotes a deeper understanding and appreciation of Literature (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000). Barzani (2020) points out that the onset of the 21st century, marked by the 2000s, signaled a pivotal shift towards incorporating literary texts in English Language instruction. This approach emphasizes the development of all four language skills, placing equal importance on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as each skill complements the others. Much like individuals learning their native language, proficiency in the four skills typically follows the sequence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This balanced approach recognizes the interdependence of these language abilities (Krashen, 2005).

In Ghana, a New Standard-Based Curriculum has been introduced since 2019 to replace the old objective-based curriculum in Basic Schools. Curriculum changes are necessitated by several factors, including addressing the ever-changing needs of both learners and stakeholders. The new curriculum is designed with a holistic aim to empower learners to engage with the English language in multifaceted ways. It seeks to foster not only linguistic proficiency but also critical thinking, creativity, and imagination (NaCCA, 2020). Thus, it emphasizes an integrated approach to teaching the various language skills as a key concept (NaCCA, 2020). Furthermore, it is stated in the note to the teacher in the New English Language curriculum that small doses of human values should be fused into literature and composition and reading and oral work. (NaCCA, 2020).

The New Curriculum specifies guidelines, pedagogical approaches and a complete framework by which teaching and learning should be carried out in all pre-tertiary educational institutions. Since the introduction of the new curriculum into the Junior High School in September 2021,



the implementation process has largely been left in the hands of the teachers with support from the School Improvement Support Officers (SISO). Workshops were organized for teachers at the Junior High Schools and Primary Schools to enable them to acquaint themselves with the curriculum and to implement it successfully. Thus, it is expected that teachers possess the skills to facilitate the learning process to enable students to acquire both language and literary skills within the stipulated period of study. However, Karakaya and Kahraman (2013) posit that despite the sensitization about the benefits of integrating literature in language classrooms in theory, most teachers do not use it consciously and practically. There is, therefore, the suspicion that most teachers may not adhere strictly to the dictates of the new curriculum since there is little or no external supervision to ensure compliance.

Also, it is not certain whether the teachers fully understand the demands of the new curriculum and the pedagogical approaches that are required to facilitate teaching and learning, especially in the English Language. This situation may negatively affect the attainment of the goals and objectives of equipping the learners with the core competencies, essential skills, and values necessary for the Ghanaian child to become creative, honest, and responsible citizens of Ghana and the world. (NaCCA, 2022) and thus justifies research into the phenomenon.

Much literature exists on the implementation of the English Language Curriculum in Ghana. For instance, Torto (2017) explored the implementation of the “old” English Language curriculum in the Cape Coast Metropolis in Ghana and concluded that the implementation process was flawed. Such studies contribute to curriculum review and change. However, the New Standards-Based Curriculum is still in the implementation process. There is a paucity of literature on the teaching of the integration of English language and Literature as founded on the recommendation of the New Standards-Based Curriculum in Ghana in general and in the Northern Region in particular. As this new curriculum “comes of age” and its review becomes necessary, studies on the curriculum’s recommendations and implementation need to be carried out to fill the gap in its performance index. It is for this and other reasons that this study explored the teaching of the integration of English Language and literature in the Dahinsheli Junior High School of the Sagnarigu Municipality.

The following research questions guided the study: (i) How is the integration of English Language and Literature taught in Dahinsheli Junior High School? (ii) What are the perceived benefits of the integration of English Language and Literature in Dahinsheli Junior High School? (iii) What are the main challenges and barriers faced by English Language teachers in Dahinsheli Junior High School in effectively integrating English Language and Literature? and (iv) What strategies and recommendations could enhance the integration of English Language and Literature in Dahinsheli Junior High School?



LITERATURE/EMPIRICAL REVIEW

There have been many studies in the past on the integration of Literature and language learning. An example is the study conducted by Xiaojuan (2022), in his article “Using Children’s Literature to develop pupils’ English Language acquisition”. This research was conducted in Hong Kong, China, where English is studied as a foreign language. In this research, Xiaojuan (2022) concluded that reading and listening to children’s literature is a good way to improve children’s reading abilities. Therefore, using children’s Literature to support students’ English learning is not only meaningful but also necessary (Ye, 2022).

Grahm and Walldén (2022) in their study “Children’s Literature as teaching material in the EFL classrooms for years 1-3,” conducted in Sweden, also point to the fact that children’s Literature can play an important role in immersing pupils in the new language, offering rich and authentic contexts.

A similar study conducted by Banda and Kakoma (2020), in the Chipata District of Zambia, titled “English Language and Literature in English Integration into One Subject: A Case of the Zambian Secondary Education System.” The study found that the integration of English Language and Literature learning could curb the numerous challenges facing the study of the two subjects, such as low interest and poor performance in the individual subjects (Banda & Kakoma, 2020). However, the focus of the study was on the secondary school educational level. Furthermore, a study conducted by Gabrielsen, Blikstad-Balas, and Tengberg (2019) investigated the use of literary texts in 178 video-recorded LA lessons across 47 lower-secondary Norwegian classrooms. They also examined instructional practices related to literary texts and the functions of texts in instruction. It offered a systematic overview of how literary texts are read, used, and discussed across classrooms. The results revealed a strong genre discourse across classrooms; reading literary texts is strongly connected to students’ writing, focusing on generic text features that are relevant to texts across the same genre.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study is situated in the interpretive research paradigm and the qualitative research approach, which emphasize understanding subjective meanings and interpretations of the phenomenon being investigated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Bryman, 2016) and focus on studying how people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the world.

Qualitative research aims to achieve a deep understanding of a specific case through in-depth exploratory studies, ensuring quality responses are elicited throughout the research. Additionally, qualitative methods enable the researcher to understand how people interpret their life experiences. In this study, the research interest was in exploring the teaching of the integration of English Language and Literature in real classroom settings. Qualitative methods of data collection allowed the researcher to explore the views and opinions of teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic under study (Creswell, 2002; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).



Research design

An exploratory case study design was used to investigate the process of implementing the recommendation of the New Standard-Based English Language curriculum, with a focus on the integration approach to teaching English Language and Literature. This type of design is used to examine complex potential causal relationships that may be too intricate for a survey or experiment (Yin, 2014). In exploratory case studies, the focus is on answering "how" and "what" questions and providing a detailed description of a social phenomenon (Yin, 2014).

The research employed the exploratory case study design to explore the implementation process of the English Language curriculum. According to Yin (2009), a case study can involve either a single case study or multiple case studies. A single case study was adopted to gain a rich insight into how the integration of English Language and Literature is done in Dahinsheli Junior High School.

Population

The population for this study is all English Language teachers and their students who are involved in the implementation of the New Standard-Based English Language Curriculum in Ghana. The target population, however, was all English Language teachers and their students in the Sagnarigu Municipality. The accessible population is all English Language teachers and their learners in the Dahinsheli Junior High School implementing the new curriculum. Dahinsheli Junior High School was selected because they have been the best-performing school in the English Language in the Municipality over the years. The idea is to observe how the best school is implementing the new curriculum.

There are three English Language teachers in the school, and each is assigned to one level (Basic 7, 8, and 9). However, because the focus of this research was on the integration of English Language and Literature, which is a prominent feature of the New Standard-Based Curriculum, the two English teachers for Basic 7 and 8 and their students were selected for this research. because they were the English Language teachers involved in the implementation of the new curriculum in the school at the time of this research.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study because it involves the intentional and selective identification of individuals or groups based on specific traits, qualities, or expertise pertinent to the research query (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Palinkas et al., 2015). The English Language teachers for basic 7 and 8 were purposefully selected for this study because they were teaching the levels at which the new standard-based curriculum is being implemented.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study is direct observations of English Language lessons utilizing a checklist that was designed by the researchers. The observation was followed by key informant interviews (KII) of the English Language teachers to elicit their views, opinions, and narrations from their perspectives on the topic under study

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Ethical Considerations

Permission was sought from the Municipal Education Directorate of Sagnarigu, through the Head teacher and the School Improvement and Support Officer (SISO), to conduct this study. A copy of the letter from the Municipal Director of Education, granting permission for the study, was then presented to the Head teacher of the school where the research was conducted.

Finally, the researcher sought the consent of all participants involved and made it clear to all participants involved that the research was purely for academic purposes. Participants were also assured of the confidentiality of their identities and all the information they provided.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was designed so that it would not overwhelm the teachers or interfere with their lesson delivery. However, steps were taken to ensure that the learning environment remained as natural as possible, with the teachers willing to provide the required responses when called upon. This was achieved through the building of rapport between the teachers, the learners, and the researcher. The teachers were properly briefed about the research, while the researcher also utilized his interpersonal skills of socializing to settle into the environment seamlessly. The researchers observed English Language lessons of basic 7 and 8 for ten (10) weeks. During each lesson, the researcher would sit at the back of the classroom without any interference with the lesson delivery. Notes of the lesson delivery process were taken by filling out an observation guide, which was designed by the researchers. The observation guide was divided into two broad sections. These were (A) Teacher activities and (B) learner activities. Each of these sections was further divided into units such as 'introduction,' 'main lesson,' 'evaluation,' and 'remarks.'

The two English Language teachers involved in the study were interviewed after ten weeks of observation. The teachers were allowed to explain their pedagogical choices, instructional strategies, and the thought processes that guided the way they handled the subject. This aligns with the qualitative research goal of capturing the richness and depth of teachers' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Integrity and Trustworthiness

To affirm that interpretations are grounded in the data, the researcher employed member checking by sending the transcribed interviews to the interviewees for them to affirm that the transcription was in line with their perspectives, opinions expressed and views shared during the interviews. This was done in line with the guidelines outlined by Creswell (2005) and Yin (2014). Creswell and Miller (2000) maintain that member checking plays a vital role in establishing trustworthiness within qualitative research.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Observation data was collected using an observation guide. The data was abstracted, and close reading was used to identify key themes. The interview data were transcribed, taking care to include all paralinguistic features. Using close reading, similar themes were identified,



abstracted, and given code names. Similar code names were put together and given overarching code names as themes. Observation and interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS/FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

This section deals with the results, findings, and discussion of the data collected for the study over ten weeks, taking into consideration the opinions and views of the study participants about the integration of English language and Literature.

Research Question 1: How is English Language and Literature taught using the integration approach in the Dahinsheli Junior High School?

Analysis of the observation data indicates that the teaching of Literature largely relied on reading stories and poems from the book *Cock Crow*. The teacher often asked learners to read a story or poem aloud for the rest of the class, followed by a discussion. However, in some instances, the teacher initiated discussions at the beginning of the lesson, even before the reading took place.

During the English Language lesson on June 12, 2023, the teacher began by writing the title of the story *Tell My Son to Hold On to His Gun* on the whiteboard. He then asked learners to reflect on the title and share their interpretations. Several students provided various insights on what they believed the title signified. This exercise encouraged students to express themselves while the teacher corrected their grammatical errors, reinforcing the view of Khatib, Ranjbar, & Fathi (2012), who assert that studying Literature enhances students' interpretative skills and improves their language and communication proficiency. Literature, known for its authenticity, serves as a valuable input for language learning. This claim is further supported by Barzani (2020), who stated that exposure to literary texts enables learners to acquire and use English naturally and effectively, facilitating smooth communication.

Encouraging students to analyze the title's meaning promoted critical thinking. This aligns with Kırkgöz (2012), who posited that studying different perspectives in Literature broadens students' viewpoints and nurtures critical thinking by illustrating various ways a situation can be interpreted. Zyngier (1994) also supports this by asserting that literary texts stimulate intellectual engagement, allowing readers to construct unfamiliar worlds through language.

Similarly, on July 17, 2023, the teacher asked learners to suggest possible interpretations of the poem title *The Color of God*. Many students shared their perceptions of what they believed to be God's color. This exercise encouraged imaginative thinking, supporting Erkaya's (2005) argument that short stories and poems promote higher-order thinking. Advanced-level students can analyze the content they read, prompting critical engagement with narrative texts.

Following the preliminary discussions, it was observed that teachers often grouped learners into teams of six or more to read the stories or poems collaboratively. During these sessions, teachers paused occasionally to discuss the meanings of certain words and correct pronunciation errors. After reading the stories, discussions centered on analyzing literary devices. For instance, on May 29, 2023, the teacher divided learners into four groups and instructed each to identify ten literary devices in the story *Dilemma of a Ghost*. The students engaged in discussions and compiled their findings collectively.



These observations indicate that collaborative and cooperative learning is integral to the instructional strategies employed by teachers in this study. Slavin (1980) defines cooperative learning as organizing students into small groups to work together and earn recognition based on their collective achievements. He highlights that cooperative learning enhances academic performance and strengthens group cohesion, fostering positive intergroup relations and mutual support.

A key positive observation was that learners had ample opportunities to improve their vocabulary and language skills during English lessons. It is, therefore, evident that various aspects of the English Language are reinforced through Literature lessons.

Furthermore, teachers sometimes employed dramatization and demonstration techniques to teach Literature. On July 18, 2023, some learners were asked to dramatize the story being read, while the teacher also acted out parts of the narrative. This approach captivated the learners' attention, as they were engaged by watching their peers perform the story, making the lesson more enjoyable. Barzani (2020) supports this method, stating that Literature not only presents language in authentic contexts but also resonates with learners by exploring relatable themes such as happiness, jealousy, and prosperity. These real-life connections enhance the learning experience, making it both engaging and beneficial.

The observation data also showed that integrating English Language and Literature provides teachers the opportunity to experiment with innovative pedagogical practices. The respondents employed learner-centered methods, such as the "Teachers of the Week" technique, to enhance student engagement. In this approach, learners were grouped into small teams and assigned different sub-strands to study. Afterward, the students took on the role of teachers, leading the lesson while their peers had the opportunity to ask questions and critique their performances. This method not only boosted students' confidence but also encouraged more interaction, thereby improving their vocabulary. The teacher also used these sessions to correct grammatical errors made by students. The technique also provided learners with opportunities to achieve some notable core competencies, including collaboration and communication, Leadership and personal development, critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, and in some cases, digital literacy and cultural diversity.

Additionally, during the Literature lesson on July 17, 2023, the teacher wrote key words from the poem being studied on the whiteboard. Learners were then encouraged to brainstorm and determine the meanings of these words. This approach enriched their vocabulary and grammar. This observation aligns with Chen (2007), who suggests that Literature provides a relaxed yet effective environment for students to develop their linguistic abilities organically, in contrast to the rigid structure of formal vocabulary lessons.

Classroom participation was notably high during Literature lessons, as most learning activities were conducted in groups. Learners actively engaged in discussions, freely expressing their thoughts and opinions, which demonstrated their enthusiasm for the subject. This observation is supported by Thom (2008), who asserts that students who enjoy literary works develop greater motivation to interact with texts, leading to improved reading skills and a deeper appreciation of different cultures. Furthermore, Literature fosters creativity and allows students to produce imaginative works. However, it was also noted that, at times, learners became overly excited, making classroom management a challenge for the teacher.



The study also sought to explore the perception of the teachers on how English language and literature are taught using the integrated approach in Dahinsheli Junior High School. Data gathered from the key informant interview revealed that the English Language teachers employed diverse teaching approaches to enable them to integrate the Literature and English Language. One of the respondents, referred to as Teacher A, stated that:

“With English, especially in Literature, there is no one way of teaching something. It depends on how you understand it and how you interpret it when it comes to Literature, especially with poems.”

Teacher A further explained that she modifies her teaching techniques when teaching English language and literature. She states:

“These are two different things, even though it's being incorporated in Literature. In our days, in English Language at Junior High School levels, we used not to do Literature. But these days it's a subject on its own, and there's a book for the students, which is the “cock crow,” to study as well. So, in each of these situations, you have to handle every situation uniquely, even though they intertwine, but then, they are two separate things.

The second respondent, Teacher B, acknowledged the use of both teacher-centered and learner-centered methods, emphasizing the effectiveness of the learner-centered approach and discussing instances when each method is employed.

“I use a teacher-centered method. But, not all the topics that you will be able to use a teacher-centered method; in others you will use the learner-centered....”

Teacher B expressed utilizing both teacher-centered and learner-centered approaches, depending on what he views as either difficult or easy for learners to comprehend. This is done to enable learners to be more involved in English Language lessons, and when he deems the concept to be difficult, he employs the teacher-centered approach.

The views expressed by the respondents clearly show that they employ varying approaches in teaching the English Language. Using multiple teaching strategies in instruction plays a pivotal role in meeting the varied needs of learners (Burkett, 2013). Furthermore, the use of multiple pedagogical approaches to lesson delivery serves as a framework aimed at empowering students across various proficiency levels to reach their maximum potential (Munro, 2012).

Teacher B also indicated that he sometimes uses practical and audio techniques in teaching the Literature aspect. In response to the question on the strategies he employs in teaching the integrated English Language and Literature, he said,

“What we do is that, with regard to Literature, I sometimes play an audio...”

Also, he explains the importance of making lessons practical in;

“When we teach using practicals, it encourages the learners to engage more in conversations. This will improve their speaking and listening skills. Also, they would become more conversant with the Literature aspects such as drama and poetry...”

According to Nunan (2016), the Audio-Lingual method has likely exerted a more substantial influence on second- and foreign-language teaching than any other approach. It stands out as



the pioneering method that can be credited with establishing a "technology" of teaching grounded in "scientific" principles. Mansilla (2015) notes that the teaching of Literature to students can be accomplished through various media such as audio texts, music CDs, and film clips, facilitating a nuanced understanding of language aesthetics with ease.

Throughout the data collection, it was observed that the use of the integration approach was more pronounced during Literature lessons and non-existent during Language lessons. That is, during Literature lessons, the teachers engaged in both implicit and explicit oral corrective feedback (OCF), such as correcting pronunciations and grammatical errors, drawing attention to vocabulary use and their meanings, etc. However, during Language lessons, the teachers did not engage in literary activities such as drawing attention to literary devices and the aesthetic use of language. This is consistent with Paran (2004), Lazar (1993), and Carter and Long (1991), who assert that in Language lessons, Literature is usually employed as a tool and not for its literary or aesthetic properties.

Research Question 2: What are the benefits of integrating English Language and Literature in Dahinsheli Junior High School?

The study also sought to find out from the respondents the perceived benefits of integrating English language and Literature in the Dahinsheli Junior High School. In response to questions based on this objective, several themes were uncovered. These included (i) student engagement and enjoyment, (ii) foundational understanding of Literature, (iii) improvement of communication skills, and (iv) practical lessons for enhanced understanding, among others.

On the issue of student engagement and enjoyment, Teacher A stated that,

"...So the integration of the Literature aspect into the English Language can increase the interest of the students in studying English...."

This assertion is supported by Barzani (2020), who posited that Literature not only exposes learners to language in authentic contexts but also holds a special appeal for individuals, particularly through stories that delve into real-life themes like happiness, jealousy, and prosperity. People connect with and understand these situations, making the experience enjoyable and, consequently, highly beneficial (Barzani, 2020).

Teacher A also expressed how learners gain more interest in the English Language when Literature is integrated into the English Language. The respondent also expressed how the interest gained at the Junior High School level is built upon at the Senior High School level in

"...but it gives them an idea of what Literature is all about and so when they get to the senior high school and they take it as an elective, it becomes very easy for them to understand and as they grow, you can see that they start to enjoy it as a whole...."

The views expressed by the respondents indicate their perceived benefit of the integration of English Language and Literature. This finding is supported by McKay (2001), who contends that Literature holds numerous advantages for ESL classes. Firstly, it aids in the development of linguistic knowledge at both the level of use and application. Secondly, students' enjoyment of Literature can heighten their motivation to engage with texts, thereby improving their



reading proficiency over time. Also, language learning tends to become dull for students if the materials they utilize solely focus on language without any aesthetic value. Hence, incorporating literary pieces into materials can introduce variety and make learning enjoyable for students (Huda, 2012).

Another theme about the perceived benefits of the integration of English Language and Literature at Dahinsheli Junior High School is a foundational understanding of Literature. The respondent expressed how integrating Literature with the English Language establishes Literature foundations for the learner and helps learners grasp basic literary concepts of Literature easily.

“.....I did Literature just as an elective in Senior High School, but then with what I have seen now that the students do it in Junior High School, it might not be extensive, but it gives them an idea of what Literature is all about and so when they get to the senior high school and they take it as an elective, it becomes very easy for them to understand and as they grow, you can see that they start to enjoy it as a whole....” (Teacher A)

This view of foundational understanding is also expressed by Teacher B in,

“.....So with that, It gives the learners a clear picture of what they are reading.....”

These views expressed by the respondents show they perceived foundational understanding of Literature by the learners to be a benefit of integrating English Language and Literature.

Furthermore, the analysis identified improvement in communication skills as a prominent benefit stemming from the integration of English Language and Literature. This theme was identified as the Respondents consistently expressed the view that the combination of English Language and Literature serves as a catalyst for enhancing learners' communication skills. Their perspective underscores the belief that this pedagogical approach not only bolsters traditional language skills but also significantly contributes to the refinement of speaking and listening abilities among students. This view is expressed by Teacher B in:

“...it encourages the learners to engage more in conversations. This will improve their speaking and listening skills.....”

This assertion is in line with the findings of Chen Yuh Mei (2007), who suggests that, unlike the formal learning of vocabulary and syntactical elements in a classroom setting, Literature offers a relaxed yet supportive environment for students to organically develop their linguistic abilities. Also, Belcher and Hirvella (2000) assert that Literature abounds with authentic language examples, aiding in the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills (cited in Khatib, 2011).

Research Question 3: What are the main challenges and barriers faced by English Language teachers in Dahinsheli Junior High School in effectively integrating English Language and Literature?

Analysis of data collected from the observation of lessons and key informant interviews revealed some challenges that are faced by English Language teachers in Dahinsheli Junior High School who teach English Language and Literature using the integration approach. Notable among the challenges are (i) inadequate time allocation for the teaching of English



language, (ii) curricular challenges, (iii) perceived complexity of Literature, and (iv) resource limitations.

Time allocation for English language lessons was woefully insufficient. This challenge was even more evident during the teaching of the Literature aspect. It was observed in most instances that the time allocated for the lesson would be over while lessons were still going on. This was mostly so because the teachers always engaged the learners in pre-reading discussions, reading of the story or poems with intermittent stops for the correction of pronunciation errors, post-reading discussions, and analysis of literary devices. However, the average time allocation for English Language was one hour and ten minutes for double periods and forty-five minutes for single periods. This forced teachers to always rush through the activities to beat the time. This observation is in line with Gabrielsen et al. (2019), who concluded that there is a lack of coherence between instruction and focus within distinct Language Arts (LA) instructional practices. There was a prevalent inclination for instruction to aim at covering various aspects of the English Language simultaneously, potentially because of time constraints, as seen in the integration of reading and writing instruction. However, this approach may carry the risk of prioritizing literacy instruction over Literature instruction. Graham and Hebert (2011) also stated that the tendency to present students with brief excerpts and partial texts during instruction might be a strategy to manage the extensive nature of the subject, including multiple issues on attempts to navigate through the curriculum, possibly at the expense of the valuable lessons Literature imparts beyond mere literacy skills.

Another challenge that was identified from the data collected was curricular challenges. The respondents expressed that the integration of English Language and Literature into a single subject posed a considerable challenge, primarily stemming from the voluminous nature of English Language as a standalone subject. From the perspectives of respondents, the extensive content within the English Language curriculum, when combined with the literary elements, exacerbated the difficulty of the integration. The respondents expressed concerns about the sheer volume of material to be covered within a limited time, suggesting that the comprehensive nature of English Language content posed a formidable obstacle in achieving a seamless integration with Literature. This view was expressed by Teacher A

.....with the integration of Literature, they have given us a whole book to study. I think the book has 19 or 16, With drama, poetry, and then prose. And here is the case you're supposed to teach grammar comprehension and composition. English itself is voluminous, so if they were introducing Literature to be integrated with the English Language, I think it should have just been the basics, where you introduce the student to

She further explained that

..... but this is a whole book that is voluminous on its own and you're supposed to treat that whole book. And you're supposed to treat the English aspect as well, so you see that it becomes difficult for you to teach. It becomes very difficult to complete the syllabus; that is my challenge....

This explanation showed the challenges that the respondents had in the process of integrating English Language and Literature. This finding is in line with the finding of Graham and Hebert (2011), who found that there was a prevalent inclination for instruction to aim at covering



various aspects of the English Language simultaneously, potentially because of time constraints.

Another challenge that emerged from the data analysis was the perceived complexity of Literature. The respondents provided insights into learners' perceptions of the difficulty associated with the Literature component. Their observations suggested that learners find Literature challenging due to its perceived complexity, with the consensus being that the literary aspect extends beyond the current level of the students. This is evident from a statement by Teacher B in

.....Finally, as I told you earlier, some of the things in the Literature aspect are above the level of the learners in J.H.S., so they should make them simple for them.....

Furthermore, the respondents shed light on an additional dimension of the challenge associated with the Literature component. They highlighted that teaching Literature can pose difficulties for educators, particularly when some teachers lack the essential background knowledge to handle Literature effectively at the Junior High School level. This is evident from a statement by Teacher B in

..... it is not simple. Even for the teachers. You have to read more, especially in the Literature. If the teacher did not do Literature in secondary school, you will find it very difficult.....

He further lamented that:

... There are certain things in this Literature that we are doing here that those who are even doing pure Literature in the university or the second cycle institutions should have been doing. But we are doing it at the basic level here.

The statement above revealed that the teacher sees the Literature aspect that has been integrated with English Language as being above the level of the Junior High School students, who are expected to learn it.

Furthermore, analysis of data collected in the study also revealed professional development gaps on the part of teachers in the integration of English Language and Literature as a major challenge. It was observed that the second respondent, Teacher B, struggled with the demands of the new curriculum. He confirmed this observation in the interview when he stated that:

I must be honest with you, most of us don't know how to combine the two subjects into one

This statement exposed the perceived difficulty he faced in implementing the new curriculum.

As a follow-up question, the respondents were asked to provide some recommendations to make the New Standard-Based Curriculum's position on teaching English Language and Literature more achievable. In response, they proposed that teachers should engage multiple and innovative teaching strategies in their lessons to suit the learning abilities of their students. Teacher B explained that learners nationwide do not have equal abilities.

... Also, if they could allow us to teach based on our students' level. Why am I saying this? You see that all the students in the country are expected to be doing the same thing at the same time so that they will all be examined in the same way. This is impossible because the background of some of our students is not the same, so whereas students in Accra can speak English very



well even at Primary School, our students here are still struggling to construct some sentences....

He observed that teaching strategies such as ‘teachers of the week,’ which fall in the broader context of student-led instruction, worked out very well for the integration of the English Language and Literature. Therefore, teachers involved could be encouraged to fine-tune the strategy to make it more effective for the teaching of integrated English Language and Literature.

Innovative strategies and pedagogical approaches like “Teachers of the week” provide learners with opportunities to learn at their own pace and engage in activities that easily facilitate knowledge acquisition. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to explore innovative pedagogical practices that help their students learn easily.

Analysis of the data collected during this study through observation and interviews of the participants revealed that several strategies could be employed to enhance the teaching of the integration of English Language and Literature. These strategies include improved teaching strategies or pedagogical approaches, the need for continuous professional development, and curriculum modification.

In response to the follow-up question on recommendations, the respondents expressed that English Language teachers require Professional Development to enhance the teaching of the integration of English Language and Literature. They believe that the new curriculum, which recommends the integration of English Language and Literature, requires teachers to develop their teaching techniques to meet the new way of teaching English Language. They suggested that workshops and seminars should be organized for English Language teachers to upgrade their teaching and professional skills to meet the demands of the new English Language curriculum. This would help to meet the knowledge and skills required to integrate English Language and Literature as one subject. This was evident in a statement by Teacher B.

.... okay, one, I think that organizing seminars and workshops for English and Literature teachers to enhance our knowledge or professional skills in teaching English and Literature. I must be honest with you; most of us don't know how to combine the two subjects into one. So, we need more training on that.

In the same vein, the respondents expressed that English Language teachers from various schools need to come together and share ideas on how to teach English Language while integrating Literature. This was evident from statements by Teacher A,

So, I think there should be workshops organized for English teachers as to how we should go about this or as to what they think should be done adequately or effectively to help treat this topic. So, there should be workshops organized for English teachers generally. And then English teachers in various schools themselves have to come together to see how they can help manage this situation and help each other with the syllabus.

The new curriculum recommendation for teaching English Language and Literature is new to many teachers. There is a need for more Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions for English Language teachers to be effectively equipped to implement the curriculum successfully. Kennedy (2016) posits that professional development is the process of obtaining



and improving the information, skills, and abilities that people need to succeed in their careers and carry out their professional tasks. Beyond initial education and training, professional practice is a lifelong learning process, and it is necessary to keep teachers up to date in their profession, adapt to changes, and continuously enhance their performance.

The respondents also mentioned that time allocation for the teaching of the English Language was not sufficient to cover all the instructional activities that the teachers desired to carry out during their lesson delivery. Additionally, the respondents revealed that the curriculum is loaded, and this causes teachers to rush to cover all content to meet examination deadlines, which leads to learners not understanding the content. This was evident in statements by Teacher B, who said,

... I think the curriculum is very loaded and broad for the learners at this level. so if they can reduce some of the things, especially in the Literature aspect.

The respondents, therefore, recommended that the English Language curriculum should be modified or reduced, or more time should be allocated for essential Literature concepts. Finally, the respondents pleaded that since the teaching of Literature is largely dependent on the use of a required text (The Cockcrow), the text should be made readily available to the students. This will improve the teaching and learning process in many ways, such as students preparing for the class before the actual time for the lesson and promoting the integration of English Language and Literature.

CONCLUSION

This research set out to explore how the integration of Literature and English Language is taught using Dahinsheli Junior High School as a case study. Ten weeks were used to collect observation data, and the two teachers involved were interviewed afterwards.

The study revealed that the teaching of integrated English Language and Literature at Dahinsheli Junior High School is facilitated through diverse pedagogical approaches and innovative teaching strategies, comprising both teacher-centered and learner-centered methods. Teachers adapted their instructional strategies based on the nature of the lesson, ensuring that students received a comprehensive learning experience. The use of techniques such as discussions, dramatization, audio recordings, and practical activities enriched students' engagement and understanding of literary concepts. However, the integration approach was lopsided towards Literature lessons and nonexistent during Language lessons.

The findings highlight several benefits of integrating English Language and Literature. Firstly, it enhances student engagement and enjoyment, fostering a deeper interest in the English Language as a subject. Secondly, it provides a foundational understanding of Literature, making it easier for students to transition to more advanced literary studies at the Senior High School level. Third, integration improves communication skills by encouraging discussions and active participation, which contributes to better speaking and listening abilities.

Additionally, the study observed that collaborative learning strategies, such as group discussions and peer-led teaching, played a crucial role in reinforcing vocabulary acquisition and critical thinking. The interactive nature of Literature lessons created an environment where



students could express their interpretations and analyze literary devices, further enhancing their analytical skills. However, teachers face serious challenges in connection with inadequate time allocation for the teaching of English language, curriculum-overload challenges, perceived complexity of Literature, and resource limitations.

Overall, the integration of English Language and Literature proves to be a valuable pedagogical approach. It not only enhances language proficiency and literary appreciation but also promotes creativity and critical thinking among learners. Given these benefits, it is recommended that teachers continue to employ diverse teaching strategies and refine their approaches to optimize learning outcomes in integrated English and Literature instruction. Additionally, Continuous Professional Development workshops and seminars should be organized for teachers to upgrade and improve their professional skills in implementing the recommendations of the New Standard-Based Curriculum in integrating English Language and Literature.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Many education systems adopt a five-year curriculum review cycle to ensure that instructional content, learning materials, and pedagogical practices remain current and responsive to evolving societal needs (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017; ACARA, n.d.; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013). The New Standard-Based Curriculum was introduced in 2019, and it must be reviewed. This current study should be replicated nationwide to ascertain the accuracy of the findings so that it can influence the curriculum review and policy.

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