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Literary Activities for the Teaching of English in a Namibian High School Setting: A Case Study

*KN Haimbodi and **HZ Woldemariam

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Abstract

The Namibian school syllabus covers literature as from the primary level to the high school although the teachers fail to use appropriate methodologies and models to interpret and present literary texts creating uplifting opportunities and engaging learners develop their passion for literature. Lack of sound subject delivery methods hinders the performance of learners in English as a second language (ESL). Namibian teachers have been introduced and trained to base their classroom practices on the learner-centered principle which promotes participatory pedagogy and active learning. Much focus has not been given to learners' participation in the English classroom setting. A questionnaire with 5 open-ended and 15 close-ended questions was distributed to English teachers and learners to find out the effects that literature had on the views, experiences, and practices of the teachers regarding lack of participation and performance in their English classes. FGDS and observations were also conducted to triangulate data. It was found out that the commonly used method of learner involvement was the discussion method and learners responding to questions. The teachers' roles were merely to give instruction and facilitate the learning process. In many situations, learners did not ask realistic questions and teachers preferred arranging learners to sit in groups. Teachers used the discovery and experiential methods through questioning techniques. However, despite the efforts to enhance participation, factors such as poor subject knowledge, little understanding of the topic, being coy, fear of making mistakes, lack of subject interest, hunger/tiredness, fear of teasing by classmates, and poor language proficiency hinder the performance of learners in ESL.

Keywords: /ESL/Fear of making mistakes/Language proficiency/Literature teaching/Subject knowledge/Vocabulary expansion/

*MEAL Candidate, Department of communication, FoHS at NUST, Namibia

** Corresponding author; Associate Professor and MEAL Coordinator, Department of communication, FoHS at NUST, Namibia

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Literature adds life to school curriculum for it represents the culture and tradition of the learners. A British scholar and novelist (1898-1963), C.S. Lewis argues that literature enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that the lives of learners have already become from. The focus of this study was on the relevance of literature and its effects on the learner's performance of the English lessons. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the context of all Namibian high schools because the study focused specifically on Haudano Secondary School in Omusati region as a case study. This study assumed that literature is the foundation of life. It places an emphasis on many topics from human tragedies to tales of the ever-popular search for love. Literature enables people to see through the lenses of others and sometimes even inanimate objects; therefore, it becomes a looking glass into the world of education and has provided a gateway to teach not only learners but also readers about life experiences from historical to the saddest events and the most joyful ones that will touch their hearts (St.Rosemary Educational Institution, 2015).

Literature is the main vehicle for teaching language. Literature is the proper place where language gets the superb position. Literary works provide additional material of grammar practice, vocabulary learning and translation (Liaw, 2001; cited in Khatib, Hossein & Rahimi 2012, and p.32). This is why, language is learnt through literature. Actually, language teaching is a process whose aim changes not only from country to country and culture to culture but from individual to individual too. In fact, it is up to individuals to decide whether literature will be somehow included in the course syllabus or particular lesson plans. If so, teachers then have to decide on which texts to include, why to use them and what activities will be done to explore the texts and promote language development. If literary works are selected according to the needs, level of learners, and age of learners, then literature will be an effective tool for teaching and learning language simply because we cannot possibly talk about teaching in exception for learning as the two goes hand in hand with each other.

From a very young age, learners can be exposed to literature in the most stripped-down form: picture books and simple texts that are for the sole purpose of teaching. Progressively, as learners grow academically, they explore other genres ones that propel them towards curiosity of English as a Second Language (ESL) and the overall significance of that particular subject. It is important that educators and learners understand the role of interaction in language. Lack, of participation thereof, is a serious issue that leads to poor performance because in language teaching, to develop speaking, comprehension and listening skills and interaction cannot be divorced from the English classroom. This means that teachers should integrate lessons that promote interaction to enhance performance and they should be aware of the factors that affect participation. The section below gives the overview of literature in the educational system of Namibia before and after Independence and it highlights teaching and learning situations in classrooms.

The educational system in pre-Independent Namibia was based on acute disparities, inequities and tensions (Amutenya, 2002). It was based on the Apartheid system that was introduced by South Africa. Education was not only divided along racial lines but also along ethnic or tribal lines. Unequal budgetary provision, unequal

resources and unwillingness of the majority to participate in teaching and learning activities led to enormous disparities in the education system. Before independence, the majority of the Namibian people were not literary oriented; they did not have much interest in literature, specifically the literary texts that were written in English simply because they did not have much knowledge on the language as those who could speak, understand and write a bit of English were a few of those who went in exile and got only the basic skills. The teaching methods were mainly teacher-centered and teaching practices were informed by the views that:

- Learners were empty vessels that went to school to be filled by the teacher.
- Learners had to sit quietly, listen passively and absorb the facts passively as a sponge absorbs water (Amutenya, 2002).

It was thought that learners had no prior knowledge or experiences on the English language and this was caused by the fact that they were not exposed to the reading culture at a young age, which is why they were not given a chance to think or discover things for themselves. Teachers held the view that it was more important to teach the content to the learners and cover curriculum topics rather than making content understood by learners (Kamati & Woldemariam, 2016). Teachers were considered to know everything and their roles were to transmit knowledge to the learners who played the passive role because they had little or no passion for reading novels and acquire new skills of the English Language that would enable them to participate actively and improve their performance in secondary schools. The aim of education was to prepare people for jobs required by the colonial rule. The education system was characterized by low-level learner performance and the learning participation was also very poor. This led to the education reform which was introduced by the new government after independence through the 'Toward Education for All' policy.

The Namibian Education for All Policy requires a broad participation of learners in extensive reading; thus, it even came up with the "Reader Thorn Week" that is commemorated annually in Namibia. The "Reader Thorn Week" which took place in October 2016 at Oshitudha Primary School in Omusati Region was under the theme "Read Namibia Read." It was a great experience for those that took part and their performance in the English lessons were believed to be fascinating. Democracy, as an aspect of the educational reform, aims at the broad participation and performance of teachers and learners in the teaching and learning process. Now teachers are required to take the needs of learners into consideration. The teacher's role is to facilitate learning rather than to transmit knowledge to learners. Learners are expected to read a range of texts including the popular African ones like Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" and Neshani Andreas's "The Purple Violet of Oshaantu" to enhance their performance in literature studies and get better points in English that would grant them an opportunity to pursue their studies at different universities. Ministry of Education and Culture (1993) states that whereby instructions are teacher-centered, it is not efficient and it is rather frustrating to most learners. Teachers and learners should have skills to develop and work in settings which are learner-centered. Therefore, the reform proposed the teaching methods to be learner-centered, interactive and result oriented in performance.

McKay (1982) argued that literature offers several benefits to English Second Language classes. It can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge both on a

usage and use level. The fact that only a few learners have been appreciating reading literature, it has increased their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately increase their reading proficiency. It may also enhance learners' understanding of a foreign culture and perhaps spur their own creation of imaginative works.

In the light of the discussions above, this research also assumes that literature influences participation in English; participation enhances performance and this whole cycle facilitates the teaching- learning process in secondary schools and above. Looking at the two education systems, before and after independence, one can see that: before independence, literature was not of interest to many, classroom participations and interactions were not really considered important in the classroom, and thus outstanding performance was not in competition due to the fact that only people who made it to standard 8 by then went to become pastors, teachers and nurses irrespective of their performance standards. However, after independence the education reform encouraged participation through a learner-centered system. The literary community in Namibia is relatively small. Most literature in the indigenous languages consists of traditional tales, short stories and novels written for school children.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although the Namibian education system covers literature in the school syllabus as from the primary level, there are still educators who are still failing to interpret and analyze the literary texts to be understood by learners, thus making it difficult for learners to develop the passion for literature and this, to a certain extent hinders their performance in English as a Second Language (ESL) from a very young age which makes it difficult for them to become active users of English as time goes. There is a saying that goes “train up a child the way they should go.” If children turnout to be well informed on the importance of literature then they will obviously develop the passion that would enable them to develop a broaderview of the language, build their vocabulary which may enable them to hear and produce a number of sentences that have never been heard before. If that happens, then learners will start to actively participate in English lessons and their performance per se would improve greatly.

Therefore, one can claim that the teaching of literature in language classrooms is a fast-growing phenomenon, although many language teachers are still reluctant to work with literary texts. Povey (1972, p.187), in summarizing the aims of using literature in ESL classes, argues that "literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax. " Many experts as well as many teachers like to see some pieces of literature in teaching materials” (Huda, 2004, p.131). They believe that literary texts in language teaching materials bring new flavor for learners and their beliefs in this regard conform to the views of Short and Candlin (1984) who hold that many learners enjoy literature and so literature can be potentially useful for language teaching and learning. English language learning generally happens to be a boring prosaic and monotonous task for the secondary school learners of this country if the materials they use are purely language-based, divorced from any kind of aesthetic value.

Therefore, inclusion of some pieces of literature in materials will bring variety, making the materials enjoyable for the students (Huda, 2012, p. 44).

Choudhury (2001) thinks that language teaching without the help of literature is doomed to be unattractive and, therefore, ineffective. Literature serves as stimulus to language use. A poetry lesson, for example, can involve students emotionally and prove enjoyable. Thus, a portion of our syllabus can comprise some pieces of literature (cited in Huda, 2012, p. 44).

On a different perspective, teachers are introduced and trained to base their classroom practice on the learner-centered principles, which promote democratic pedagogy and active learning. But since the introduction and implementation of learner-centered approaches in the programme, the question still remains if teachers base lessons on these principles. Also, not much of the focus has been given on participation in the English classroom setting, and the factors have not been examined. Therefore, this study aimed to find out if literature is really considered to be of paramount importance for secondary schools in a Namibian school setting and whether it is truly practiced the way it is supposed to be in schools; it further examined factors affecting participation (interaction) and the effects of poor performance.

1.3 Research questions

The study investigated the literary activities for the teaching of English in a Namibian high school setting and was guided by the following specific research questions:

1. What effect do foundational literary activities have on the learners' active participation?
2. How does active participation in literature sessions influence language performance in secondary schools?
3. Which literary learning activity can enhance language (ESL) learning competencies?

1. Literature Review and Theoretical framework

2.1 Literature Review

Literature should be taught and learned as a fully-fledged subject and not just a component of English Language where it is given a scanty coverage (Ayo, 2003, p.87). When it is taught fully at the secondary level, there would be an ample opportunity for the learners to be exposed to several literary texts at that impressionistic stage, which would in turn encourage the learners to cultivate the habit of reading extensively, participate in class and perform well. Getting students to participate and perform well in the classroom has been a problem that most English Second Language teachers face. Various studies have been conducted in support of different views concerning the issue of learner's lack of participation and performance in English. An aspect that is prominent in research studies in the field of participation and performance in English is that most researchers support the importance of participation in the English lessons for participation inculcates excellent interpretation skills that increase the performance level of most learners. This paper attempts to provide an overview of the relevance of literature teaching and the factors affecting learner's lack of participation and performance according to the findings of studies done by various researchers. After a thorough review of literature, it is clear that not

much research was done within Namibia on the relevance in the literature activities on English study. Therefore, the literature review will focus on ideas of a few researches that were done within the country and many others that were carried out in other countries.

Language and literature. Literature and language are not only intertwined but also inter-related (Woldemariam, 2015a, b). Literature pre-supposes language because it is with the instrument of language that literature concretized. Therefore, it sounds absurd to study literature without language at the center stage or to study language without literature playing prominent role. It is based on this view that the relationship between Literature and language is best described as symbiotic (Ihejirica, 2014).

According to Lazar (1993), literature should be used with learners because it is a motivation stimulus for language acquisition. Literature serves as a convenient source of content in a sense that when more of literary work is encapsulated then one gets to acquire a lot of words and phrases that enrich the mind and as time goes aid an individual with an elevated sense of self-expression in the classroom setting. In the same vein, Ayo (2003) is of the opinion that “through the creative methods of literature, the learners can be helped to develop confidence in them in producing coherent and cohesive spoken discourses and in organizing sentences into paragraphs with effective linkers and organizing paragraphs into coherent and meaningful written discourse” (p. 130).

Valdes (1986) opines that it is simply accepted as given that literature is a viable component of Second Language subjects like English at the appropriate level and that one of the major functions of Literature is to serve as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written. When we use literature in English classrooms, we are also enhancing the learning capability of the learners. One can therefore conclude that Literature is a high point of language learning; arguably it marks the greatest skills a language user can demonstrate.

Selecting literature. The effective use of literature in the English literature depends on the appropriate selection of literary texts. Literary texts that are stylistically uncomplicated, it is important to select themes with which the students can identify. Certainly, one common experience of most English Second Language students is their struggle with a language and culture with which they are unfamiliar. Thus, literature which deals with either of these themes should highly be relevant to them (cited in McKay, 1982, pp.531-532).

Text selection is a ‘crucial factor’ (Maley, 2001, p. 184) in making literature a resource for linguistic development, personal enrichment and cultural appreciation. McRae (1997) also says that “careful text selection is fundamental to the successful use of any kind of representational materials” (1997, p.49). Collie and Slater (1994) suggest that text selection depends on “each particular group of students, their needs, interests and cultural background and language level” (as quoted in Lazar, 1993, p.52) also talks about some criteria. Combined criteria from all the sources mentioned above are formulated in the following section:

- The student’s cultural background
- The student’s linguistic proficiency
- The student’s literacy background
- The student’s age and level of understanding.
- Interesting texts
- Availability and suitability of the text.

Literature and linguistic proficiency. Tsui (1996) indicated that learners' language proficiency is one of the factors contributing to lack of learner's participation and interaction. In Namibia, English is a second language or even the third language to some learners. They are often not very proficient in the language and might find it hard to interact with other learners or to participate orally in class as they might fear to make mistakes in front of other learners.

In addition to the factors, student's level of self-confidence and their unwillingness to take risks are important factors that affect lack of participation. Learners who are not confident in English do not contribute or ask questions in class (Amutenya, 2002). This means that the learners who are not confident in English do not participate in class as they might fear making mistakes or not answering the questions correctly. Teachers, therefore, need to motivate their English learners so that they can be confident in English, and perhaps participate in class. Mwamwenda as cited in Amutenya (2002) observed that teachers have a tendency to concentrate on a few pupils mainly those who raise hands willingly and forget those who do not put up their hands.

According to Namini (2011), participation usually means students speaking in class which consists of answering and asking questions, making comments and join in discussions. Besides that, paying attention begin on task, responding to questions, participation in group discussions and asking questions. Additionally, Tsui as cited in Bailey and Nunan (1996) stated that participation is very important in language learning. She stated that when learners respond to their teacher's or other students' questions, raise queries, and give comments, they are actively involved in the negotiation of comprehensible input and the formulation of comprehensible output, which are essential to language learning. Moreover, Tsui et al (1996) added that classroom interactions encourage learners to participate orally and the more they are engaged in the negotiation, the better they will acquire the language. This means that teachers should use literature in teaching the English language in schools, reason being that literature boost participation confidence thereby enabling learners to perform better. Teachers should allow learners to speak in class by asking questions, allowing them to make comments, and giving them a chance to ask the teacher and fellow student's questions for clarification. On a different perspective, literature made it clear that if learners are working in small groups, there is a greater opportunity of every learner to take part in discussions or to contribute to the discussion thus allowing a greater chance of understanding and better performance thereof (Amutenya, 2002).

In contrast to the extensive research on questioning patterns in content classrooms, very little research has been carried out on teacher or student questions and student responses in English Second Language Classrooms, particularly in Secondary schools where language is both the medium and content of instruction.

Questioning techniques in language classrooms. Teachers should use the best questioning techniques, and integrate other types of techniques during lessons. Teachers could use a variety of teaching techniques in their lessons; for example, the questioning pattern could be changed from that of teacher-learner to that of learner-teacher, and learner-learner. Instead of deciding who should be asked, teachers should give all learners a fair chance to respond to questions. The questioning strategy and questioning pattern should allow interaction to enhance active learner's participation and performance.

Wintergerst (1994) suggests that learner's language use, particularly learner's

responses to teacher questions, could be increased in the features of questions explored more descriptively. She further stated that it is not only the frequency and types of teacher and student questions but also the extent to which the length of student responses is affected by different types of teacher and student questions warrants explorations.

Teachers need to pose the right questions and give learners enough time to think before responding to the question. This does not only allow learners to give the right response, but it also helps them to develop their thinking skills, as well as, problem solving skills. Teachers should note that contributions from students help to create the content of the lesson. It is also an indicator as to whether the lesson is comprehensible, and whether the teacher needs to re-teach or move on with the lesson.

According to Tsui (1996), many teachers attribute the lack of participation to incomprehensible input. This means that the reason why learners sometimes do not respond to teachers' questions or participate during lessons is because they are unable to understand teacher's instructions and questions due to a lack of knowledge in the language because most of the learners hardly read extensively to acquire new vocabularies and so, they rarely think analytically or they cannot fully express themselves to give what they are asked. In addition to that, teacher's questions are sometimes vague and difficult to understand. Amutenya (2002) states that the way a teacher expresses him/herself is important in promoting understanding and participation of learners in lessons. She suggested that it is important that teachers are proficient in the medium of instruction to enable learners to use the same medium of instruction as proficiently as their teachers and this may possibly happen if learners incorporate the culture of reading as many literary texts as possible.

Those learners who do not put up their hands are often not asked questions; therefore, the questions are only directed to the learners who put up their hands. Teachers should also direct questions to those who do not put up their hands to have high pupil classroom participation. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (1993), participation should be voluntary. This suggests that learners should participate willingly and should not be forced to participate in any way. However, this is a challenge because participation should be enhanced by letting all learners to participate and not only those who are willing to. Teachers should find a way in which learners will participate when they are willing to, and at the same time increasing the classroom participation ratio.

Motivation. Teachers support to learners' engagement on literature work has also been identified as integral to the greater achievement in English as a Second Language. Also, when teachers support and interact positively with learners, then the learners are more likely to participate actively in English lesson (Njunguna, 2012).

In the same vein, Schunk (2010) states that motivated students display interests in activities, work diligently, feel self-confident, stick with tasks and perform well. Teachers should therefore motivate learners to participate in class. When learners are motivated to participate in class, it is most likely that they will have the courage to participate in lessons. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is very essential, especially for Second Language learning. According to Gavin (2007), learners can be extrinsically motivated if they are rewarded. Teachers should note that the type of reward or praise they give to learners when they ask questions can affect learner's participation and performance. For instance, when the teacher praise or give them rewards, it gives them self-assurance in their learning. Learners get the feeling that

they are progressing in the learning process, and they will therefore try to take part in class.

However, those who are not praised might feel left out and this might affect their participation and in such a case their performance is hindered in one way or the other. What teachers can do is to motivate all learners to participate, and the rewards or praises should motivate learners to compete positively with each other in a way that there will be an increase in the learner participation ratio. Adedji (2007) describes motivation as the delight and satisfaction of one's experiences when carrying out a task or activity. Applied to language learning, it refers to the inner interests of the learners for the language that they are learning. It is, however, not easy for teachers to control the intrinsic motivation of learners, but what they can perhaps do is to make lessons as interesting as possible, by taking into consideration the needs and interests of learners from different backgrounds.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Constructivism acknowledges that knowledge cannot be given directly from the teacher to the learner but must be constructed and reconstructed by the learner. This can be accomplished when learners start to engage in literature by exposing themselves to a number of different literary texts to enhance their language constructively. As new information becomes available, teachers must create learning situations where learners can build their own knowledge through active learning process. With active learning, learners are encouraged to think independently, to observe, to pose questions, to explore, to contribute and to work in collaboration with others. It is envisaged that through this process of learning and understanding, each learner can become aware that s/he is creating and constructing his/her own knowledge (Piaget, 1992; MEC, 1993; Bruner, 1996; Orstein, 1987, as cited in Amutenya (2002).

Learning is supposed to be an active and interactive process whereby individuals are encouraged to construct meaning for themselves and create knowledge by sharing experiences with others through collaborative interaction. When learners actively interact in class, they will develop a greater thinking capacity that will enhance their academic performance. The learner's previous knowledge constructions, beliefs and attitudes are considered in the knowledge construction process. Teachers serve as guides, monitors, coaches and facilitators of the learning process. The above-mentioned ideas are based on the work of educational philosopher, Dewey (1859-1952) and educational psychologists, Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner, among others. Dewey (1916) as cited in (Amutenya, 2002) indicated that the experiences of the individual learner should become the starting point in the class. For him, sharing, cooperation, and democracy were significant human values that schools should encourage. Learning should directly be related to the interests of the child. The teachers' role is not to direct but to advise or facilitate. Amutenya (2007) further argued that in a learning process the child has to take the responsibility for his/her own learning. The learners in the teaching-learning process must be encouraged to follow this "natural" proclivity to seek, enquire, explore, and immerse him /her in the environment and to learn by experience. Further, the teacher should act as a facilitator.

Vygotsky (1962) as cited in Amutenya (2002) indicated that each and every child is unique and he/she must be expected to learn at his/her pace. Vygotsky further

emphasized the value of prior experiences and knowledge. He emphasized that neither knowledge nor the acquisition of knowledge is static to a particular stage. He further suggested that the learner's knowledge, ideas, attitudes and values develop through interactions with others. His focus is for the learner to construct meaning and knowledge but not to memorize the information.

Amutenya (2002) indicated that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge. As far as instruction is concerned, the instructor should try to encourage the students to discover principles by themselves rather than simply accepting the teachers' explanations. He believes that teachers should provide problem situations that stimulate learners to question, explore, and experiment. The instructor and learner should engage in an active dialogue. The teacher's role is to provide guidance, feedback and motivation.

2. Research Methods

A mixed design was used to observe the effect that literature has on learners' participation and performance in English lessons. The researchers conducted observations, handed out questionnaires, engaged in interviews and focus group discussions. Conducting classroom observations at Haudano Secondary School, the researchers obtained first-hand data. The researchers observed three English classes taught by different teachers with the total number of five lessons for three consecutive days at Haudano Secondary School. The researchers observed English lessons and understood the extent to which learners participate in the class and the organization of learning activities. Three English teachers were interviewed including the Head of Department.

A questionnaire with 5 open-ended and 15 close-ended questions was distributed to English teachers and learners to find out the effects that literature had on the views, experiences and practices of the teachers regarding lack of participation and performance in their English classes. The questions were developed based on the major research questions and by taking into consideration the following factors: the classroom and school environment factors, such as the types of classroom activities, the teaching methods used, class organization and proficiency in the medium of instruction by both teachers and learners. Focus Group Discussions were made before administering questionnaires to triangulate and cross check the validity of data.

There were 16 secondary schools in Omusati region and the ideal population was to all secondary schools. However, because of the geographical vastness of the region and the lack of financial resources, out of 16 schools in the district, 15 were used for piloting while the remaining one was used in the actual case study. Therefore, the scope was narrowed to cover learners from Haudano Secondary School in Okalongo circuit, Omusati Region. The total study population was 60 learners and three English teachers at Haudano Senior Secondary School.

As the focus of the study was on the significance of literature and the effect it has on participation and performance in English lessons at the secondary level, the study was delimited to a secondary school only, in Omusati region, Okalongo Constituency and so the factors that influence participation and performance may vary from school to school. The research further sampled the grade 11 and 12 since their study population was undoubtedly bigger.

Purposive sampling technique was used to sample teachers while the random

technique was used to sample learners. The main advantage of simple random sampling technique was that it gave us equal chances for the learners to be sampled for the study simply. On the other hand, purposive sampling technique was deemed appropriate for the study as it allowed only those who were perceived to have specific information required for the study.

3. Major Findings and Discussions

4.1 Design and Participant's Profile

This section presents the research findings, interpretations and discussions. Data analysis for this study focused on qualitative and quantitative data obtained through the use of the two research instruments for measuring the level of participation among English learners and teachers in their classes. It was based on lesson observations, teachers and learners' responses on the questionnaire. The result of the analysis is presented in frequency tables. The personal data of the participants can be seen from the tables below:

Table 1a: Respondents' Demography: Teachers

Category	Characteristics	N	%
Teacher A	Female	1	33.33%
Teacher B	Female	1	33.33%
Teacher C	Female	1	33.33%
Total		3	100%

Table 1b: Respondents' Demography: Learners

Category	Characteristics		N	%
Learners	Male	Female		
Age	15-16	15-16	2	7%
	17-19	17-19	26	90%
	20+	20+	1	3%
Total			29	100%

As shown in Table 1a and 1b, 90% of the learners who participated in the study were between the ages of 17-19 years. Totally, 3 teachers and 29 learners participated in the study.

4.2 Teaching and Learning Literature

The researchers raised the following questions and the responses have been summarized as followed:

1. What effects does literature have on learner's active participation?

The total number of classes observed was three with a total number of 100 learners; one of the classes with 40 learners did not take literature. The researchers wanted to find out the difference in class participation among learners taking literature and those who are not studying literature. Out of the five observed lessons, teachers together with their learners were analysing the book titled "Crocodile Burning" by Michael Williams. These three lessons were interactive enough and

only 6 learners (10%) could not participate. The teachers were friendly and patient with the learners during the observation sessions and this indicated that the learners turned out to be more active when the environment was friendly. It can be realised that where the teacher was friendly with the learners, the latter were free to express themselves and asked the teacher to repeat something that they did not understand. However, where teachers were too friendly with learners, there was a high chance of class distraction resulting in noise and other discipline problems. On a different perspective, 40% with 40 learners who were not studying literature as a subject or part of ESL course in class lacked self-expression which in turn hinders their class participation.

2. How does participation affect performance in secondary schools?

It is widely claimed that active learners' participation in the classroom facilitates acquisition of knowledge and development of problem solving skills. This study confirms the view that active classroom participation does indeed improve learning. Learners who participate actively in the classroom learn the subject matter more effectively than learners who listen passively or taught in a traditional teacher centered approach. In addition, learners who participate actively in class show greater development in areas such as oral communication, critical thinking, and problem solving.

Although this assumption seems reasonable and intuitively appealing, there is surprisingly little empirical evidence in the literature on the extent to which active classroom participation actually does facilitate learners' learning and problem solving. Teachers make a greater use of instructional techniques that require learners' active participation such as class discussions, debates, role playing and classroom presentations. When active participation is involved, learners turn out to learn through others experiences. Critical thinking is enhanced through participation and this in the end will improve performance. Learners that do Literature at school do participate better than those that do not and their end year results are mostly motivating.

3. How do teachers' asking skills facilitate learning?

The types of questions the teacher asks can promote, stimulate and improve the quality and quantity of learner participation during the teaching and learning process (Amutenya, 2002). The unclarity of the questions can mean that learners will not answer because they do not understand the question that is directed to them. Asking questions is a natural feature of communication, but also one of the most important tools which teachers have at their disposal. Questioning is crucial to the way teachers manage the class, engage learners with content, encourage participation and increase understanding. It was observed that the three teachers mostly asked display questions. One of these three teachers asked referential questions which gave learners a chance to participate because it required learners to give an opinion, explain or clarify. Open-ended and divergent questions characterize referential question types. It was also observed that teachers used both open-ended and close-ended questions. The teachers asked higher order cognitive questions and this seem to allow learners create new knowledge because it required learners to think and create or construct knowledge instead of just reproducing information.

We realized that posing questions during discussion played a big role in learner participation. Questions, especially open-ended questions, can improve the quality and quantity of learner participation. However, we should not ignore the importance that close-ended questions have especially on slow learners.

4. What influence does literature have on class participation in English lessons?

Questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and learners to confirm and consolidate what had been observed regarding learner participation in the English classes.

Teachers' responses:

Literature enhances critical thinking and it makes learners to think critically and analyze novels, texts and poems from different perspectives thereby enabling learners to participate and express themselves better.

5. How often do learners participate in class?

Table 2 summarizes the responses on how often learners participate in class.

Table 2: Frequency of Learners' Participation in Class

Learners' responses	Frequency (%)
Always	5 (17%)
Sometimes	22(76%)
Not often	2(7%)

Twenty-two (22) learners (76%) indicated that they only participate sometimes. Two (7%) indicated that they rarely participate and only 17% indicated that they always participate in English lessons.

Teachers' responses:

Teacher A and B (67%) taught learners who were studying literature and responded that some learners always participated in class. Teacher C (33%) on the other hand did not teach learners that are doing Literature and she responded that learners rarely participate in class.

6. Why do learners sometimes fail to participate in class?

Learners' gave us the following main reasons:

- Poor subject knowledge or failure to understand the topic
- Shyness and fear of making mistakes
- Low self esteem
- Lesson not interesting enough
- Hunger or tiredness
- Fear of other learners laughing at them
- Poor language proficiency

7. How do learners participate in class?

Table 3 summarizes the main reasons discussed:

Table 3: Participation Strategies

Learners responses	Frequency (%)
• Class discussions	21%
• Asking questions	28%
• Responding to questions	51%

Only 21% of the learners indicated that they participate through class discussions; 28% indicated that they participate by asking questions and 51% by responding to questions. The results show that the mostly used method of participation is by responding to questions. All three teachers indicated that learners mostly participate by responding to questions.

8. What type of activities do teachers organize for learners to participate in class?

Learners' responses:

- Debates
- Group work
- Oral presentations
- Asking questions regarding the lesson
- Role plays

Teachers' responses

- Reading comprehension
- Group work/ discussions
- Oral presentations
- Asking questions to check understanding
- Context based questions
- Short exercises
- Debates

Participants indicated that debates, group work, oral presentations, role plays and asking questions after the lesson are the most used methods that teachers use to enhance learner participation.

9. How do English teachers encourage participation?

Teacher A encouraged participation by posing questions and she encouraged all learners to be ready to be pointed at any time in class. She further arranged presentations and advised learners to partake in class discussions. Teacher B indicated that she encouraged participation by praising them when they gave correct answers and teacher C indicated that she encouraged learners to read extensively for

them to be fluent in English and respond appropriately to the questions. It is evident from the respondent's views that when learners read a lot of literary texts, they enrich their vocabulary and have high self-esteem there by enabling them to participate in English classrooms without fear of being laughed at by other learners.

The Majority of learners indicated that their teacher encouraged participation by asking question directed to everybody in class. Some others indicated that their teacher encouraged them to participate when recording marks and praising them with presents when they did well.

10. What type of interaction mostly takes place in English classes?

The table below summarizes the learners' feedback:

Table 4: Type of Interaction

Type of interaction	Frequency (%)
Teacher-learner	86%
Learner-teacher	10%
Learner-learner	4%

Learners indicated that the type of interaction that mostly take place in class was teacher-learner (86%); 10% indicated that the learner-teacher pattern was the middle one used, and the learner-learner type of interaction is only used seldom (4%). Teacher A, B and C indicated that it was the teacher-learner interaction that almost always takes place in their classes.

11. To what extend do you think literature can improve participation and performance?

Learners indicated that literature improves one's English vocabulary and learning skills. Ones these are boosted, then they can participate well in the classroom and get more knowledge in the subject through other and they also learn through their own mistake and this will enhance their performance at the end of the day.

12. What should teachers do to encourage participation?

In response to what teachers should do to encourage participation, teachers suggested that learners should be motivated to participate, lessons should be interesting, activities should require learner participation, teachers should ask questions very often and they should ensure that learners understand the subject content. On the other side, participants indicated that teachers encourage learners to participate by asking questions and telling learners about the importance of participating.

They indicated that their teachers make learners aware of the importance of participating, by giving all learners a chance to participate and being given a chance to participate, delegating some duties to learners-switching roles. Learners indicated that their teachers role-switch with learners who then take the role of the teacher.

13. What are the consequences of learners not participating in class?**Teachers' responses:**

- Learners are more likely to fail in the exams
- Deprivation of the skills that are learned or enhanced by participation
- Teachers will find it difficult to measure learners' level of understanding

Learners' responses:

- Leads to failure
- Deprivation from the skills, such as speaking and presentation skills, that come from participating
- Isolation
- Learners will not have a high self-esteem
- Feeling inferior and fear to do something in future
- Slow learners are left out, teachers will not be able to determine their level of understanding
- They will be left behind

Teachers and learners responded that one of the consequences of not participating was that learners have a high possibility of failing because they might not understand the topic at all. Some participants however did not answer this question and the others gave the above mentioned responses.

14. What should teachers do to improve classroom participation?**Learners' responses:**

- Motivate learners
- Organize activities that will make learners to participate-oral
- Include all learners so that they can feel part of the class
- Make lessons as interesting as possible
- Allow learners to express themselves freely
- Give all learners a chance to participate
- Teachers should develop a friendly relationship with learners

A high number of participants responded that to improve participation, teachers should organize activities that require the participation of all learners, such as group work, projects, drama, and presentations. An above average number suggested that teachers should make lessons as interesting as possible. While some believe that motivation is important.

4. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary

The purpose of the study was to find out the effects that literature teaching on the participation and performance in English lessons at Haudano Secondary School. It also aimed at finding out whether teachers promoted learner participation, specifically, whether teachers encouraged learners to participate following the questions below:

- What effects does literature have on learner's active participation?
- How does participation affect performance in Secondary Schools?
- Which learning activities can enhance language skills?

To find out the effect literature has on learners' active participation, questionnaires and observations of English lessons were conducted. The questionnaires and observation schedules were designed in consideration to the following points:

- The types of activities that English teachers usually organize to promote learner's participation. The researchers sought to find out whether these activities promote learner participation and interaction among learners as well as between the teacher and learners.
- The type of teaching methods and strategies used by English teachers and whether they encourage learner participation.
- The types of questions asked by teachers and whether they stimulate learners to think and construct knowledge on their own.
- Teachers and learners' English proficiency. How well do teachers and learners clearly express themselves in English?

The purpose of the questionnaires was to find out the views, experiences and practices of the teachers regarding lack of participation in their English classes. The questionnaires allowed the researchers to access data that was not directly observable. Additionally, five lessons of the three participant teachers were observed. Lesson observation granted the researchers the opportunity to observe how English practiced learner participation by observing how teachers involved learners in lessons and class interactions during the instructional process.

After observing the five English lessons of the study, it was concluded that in all the five lessons teachers involved learners in the lessons which showed that teachers use the favored learner-centered approach in classrooms. In most cases, teachers involved learners in lessons through class discussions. Learners were also involved in lessons by responding to questions and it is clear that learners were also involved by asking questions. Learners however did not only use one method of participating in lessons but they used a combination of several others. The study showed that the most common activities in which learners participated was in whole class or small group discussions. The results also showed that to a large extent learner were involved in problem-solving and discovery of knowledge through activities.

The results of the study indicated that teachers involve learners in the lesson through various strategies, such as by asking questions or class discussions, which were the most common procedures that teachers used. It was observed that the type

of questions that were used by teachers increased learner participation because the questions required descriptive responses and further resulted in to discussions.

The researchers observed that most of the questions asked by teachers were open-ended and divergent questions, while a few of them were factual. Similarly, in her study, Amutenya (2002) found that open-ended questions stimulated and promoted learning with understanding in learners, while factual questions stimulate motivation among learners especially the slow ones. The results indicated that the role of learners had changed. Learners were knowledge constructors, while teachers facilitated the learning process.

The study also indicated that, to a large extent (70%), learners showed an understanding and participated by asking questions, responding to questions and taking part in class discussions. However, due to factors such as shyness, poor language proficiency, incomprehensible output to mention but a few, learners to a certain extent did not clearly and freely participate during lessons. In some cases, teachers themselves could not even clearly express themselves, failed to direct and-redirect questions and inadequately applied some activities.

5.2 Conclusions

Though there are a few limitations, literature is viewed as a rich resource for language learning. For many students, literature can provide a key to motivating them to read in English. For all students, literature is an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use and for introducing cultural assumptions. In other words, literature is used to “put students in touch with some of the more subtle and varied creative uses of language” (Carter & Long, 1991, p. 2, cited in Zyngier, 1994, p.9). Our success in using literature, of course, greatly depends upon a selection of texts which will not be overly difficult on either a linguistic or conceptual level. Ultimately, however, if learners wish to promote truly aesthetic reading and learning, it is essential to accept literature in a manner which establishes a personal and aesthetic interaction of a learner and a text. Therefore, Literature is a new material in teaching and learning communicative competence of the language.

In the literature-based classroom, literature can be the primary material of teaching the target language, providing authentic and real contexts of communicative situations. It also provides the pleasure of learning a new language with and through interesting stories. Students can extend their knowledge and experience of the world by reading literature. The language teacher should encourage students to read literature for their own meanings and experiences instead of being forced to accept the teacher's perception of the text. Literature provided examples of effective and appropriate usage of the language for the students to learn. Literature indeed has a strong place in the ESL curriculum and teaching language. In this light, literature is regarded as a beneficial medium in language teaching.

5.3 Recommendations

Answering three research questions as presented and concluded above, it can be recommended that:

- Teachers and learners should be aware of the importance of language usage in literature.
- Teachers should know how to organize and use teaching and learning aids frequently during literature lessons so that lessons are as interesting as possible.
- Education officials should visit schools often to observe teaching-learning situations to improve the literary texts to be used in Namibia when necessary.
- Teachers should ensure that learners understand the language content in literature books because, if learners do not understand they are less likely to participate in any learning activities.
- There should be good number of English teachers for each subject so that the teacher-learner ratio can balance in schools.
- Education officials should provide or improve libraries and equip them with learning materials necessary for teaching and learning. A language studio will help learners to develop their speaking, reading, listening and writing skills.

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Authors' contributions

¹The first author designed the study and defined the research problems in consultation with the second author. She conducted the fieldwork and analyzed the data. The study was originally in partial fulfillment of her honor's degree in English at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

²The second author advised the first author to design the study and define its research problems. Later, he restructured the paper into an article with additional literature review and analysis. He made ready the paper for publication and accommodated all comments from reviewers.

Author details

¹MEAL Candidate, Department of Communication, FoHS, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia; Email: kandyndeshihaimbodi@yahoo.com

²Associate Professor and MEAL Coordinator, Department of Communication, FoHS, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia ; Email: hwoldemariam@nust.na. Mobile: 00264 856 37 53 04

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