

Exploring Bac 3 Students' Perspectives on Analyzing Fiction Through Essay Writing at Isp Bunia

Abstract

*This study investigates the perceptions of BAC 3 students at ISP Bunia regarding the practice of analyzing fiction through essay writing, focusing on their analytical methodologies and the pedagogical frameworks that shape their literary interpretations. By integrating theoretical perspectives and practical examples, the study draws on qualitative data from student reflections and existing literature, the research examines the perceived benefits and challenges of this pedagogical approach. Based on a classroom survey in which 11 students expressed a liking for the practice and 15 students disliked it, the article investigates reasons for the polarized views. The study draws on pedagogical frameworks presented in *Teaching Literature to Adolescents* by Richard Beach, Deborah Appleman, Bob Fecho, and Rob Simon (2016), analyzing how instructional strategies can affect students' engagement and perceptions. Findings suggest that students recognized improvements in critical thinking, reading comprehension, and writing skills. By integrating theoretical perspectives and practical examples. However, challenges such as limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with literary analysis concepts are also noted. The study concludes with recommendations for enhancing the integration of fiction analysis in academic curricula.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of fiction through essay writing is a critical component of literary education, fostering skills in critical thinking, comprehension, and expression. At ISP Bunia, a higher education institution in the Democratic Republic of Congo, BAC 3 students engage in this practice as part of their academic development. Understanding their perceptions can inform pedagogical strategies and curriculum design.

Essay-based literary analysis has long been a staple for student, designed to develop students' critical thinking, interpretative skills, and written expression. However, its reception among students, especially at the BAC 3 level, can be ambivalent. In a recent survey conducted in a BAC 3 literature class, 11 students reported liking essay-based fiction analysis, while 15 expressed disliking it. This article investigates the reasons behind these attitudes and considers how pedagogical approaches can influence student perception, drawing on the theoretical insights of Beach et al. (2016).

In the realm of higher education, literary analysis is an essential component in fostering critical thinking and interpretative skills. At the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique (ISP) in Bunia, the practice of analyzing fiction in essay form is part of the curriculum for BAC 3 students in the English department. However, this method of analysis has garnered mixed reactions from students. A recent informal class observation reveals that while 11 students appreciate the approach, 15 others find it less appealing.

The study of fiction within academic settings provides students with tools to critically engage with narratives, fostering a deeper understanding of literary art. At ISP Bunia, BAC 3 students are introduced to various analytical frameworks that aid in deconstructing fictional texts. This article explores how these students approach fiction analysis, considering both the instructional strategies employed and the theoretical models that inform their interpretations.

Essay writing is an essential pedagogical tool in the study of literature, offering students opportunities to explore, interpret, and engage with fictional texts. At ISP Bunia, English literature forms a critical component of the English department's curriculum. Yet, students' subjective experiences in navigating fiction through analytical essays remain under-researched. This study aims to illuminate B3 students' perspectives, challenges, and aspirations in engaging with this academic practice.

Many students appreciate the opportunity to analyze fiction because it enhances their critical thinking and interpretive skills. They argue that fiction is more than entertainment; it offers a lens through which one can view life's complexities. Through analysis, students begin to see beyond the surface of a story. They learn to question why an author chose a specific setting, how a character's development reflects broader societal issues, or what symbolic meaning lies within a seemingly minor detail. These students feel empowered by the interpretive

freedom fiction allows, often expressing that the process of dissecting literature helps them better understand not only the text but also themselves and the world around them.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perspectives of BAC 3 students at ISP/Bunia on analyzing fiction through essay writing?
2. What challenges do students encounter when writing essays that analyze fictional texts?
3. How do students perceive the role of essay writing in enhancing their understanding of fiction and improving their academic writing skills?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research draws on reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978), which emphasizes the reader's role in constructing meaning, and constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively build knowledge through experiences. These perspectives align with the idea that analyzing fiction is not only about textual understanding but also about forming personal connections and developing interpretive autonomy.

Research indicates that analyzing fiction enhances students' ability to understand narrative structures and intrinsic elements such as characterization, plot, and theme. For instance, a study by Setyowati and Sukmawan (2018) found that students who engaged in fiction analysis through essay writing reported improved reading and writing skills, with 58% noting enhanced reading comprehension and 20% indicating better idea expression in writing. Similarly, Cwinya'ay (2018) highlighted the importance of background knowledge in text structure for effective reading comprehension, suggesting that awareness of narrative structures aids in understanding and analyzing fiction.

A foundational aspect of fiction analysis is the application of structured methodologies. One such model is Tzvetan Todorov's narrative theory of equilibrium, which posits that narratives typically follow a five-stage structure: equilibrium, disruption, recognition, resolution, and new equilibrium. This framework allows students to map the progression of events within a narrative, identifying key turning points and understanding the underlying structure of the story.

Additionally, Nelson Goodman's concept of *inductive formal analysis* offers a method for examining how the components of a literary work interact to form a cohesive whole. By focusing on the internal dynamics of a text, students can appreciate the intricacies of plot development, character interactions, and thematic cohesion.

Previous studies have highlighted the role of essay writing in promoting critical thinking and deeper engagement with literary texts (Norton, 2013; Lazar, 1993). Fiction, in particular, offers rich material for interpretation, requiring students to develop analytical skills and contextual awareness. However, in many African higher education contexts, including the DRC, challenges such as limited resources, insufficient reading culture, and lack of writing instruction persist (Mwanza, 2020). This study contributes to a localized understanding of these issues.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study employs a reflective approach, analyzing student essays and feedback collected during the 2024- 2025 academic year. Data were coded to identify recurring themes related to the benefits and challenges of analyzing fiction through essay writing.

A qualitative research approach was employed. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a purposive sample of 15 B3 English literature students at ISP Bunia during the 2024–2025 academic year. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in students' responses, supported by direct quotations to highlight authentic voices.

V. FINDINGS

5.1 Benefits:

Students acknowledged several benefits of analyzing fiction through essays, such as:

Students reported that analyzing fiction encouraged them to question narrative elements and explore underlying themes, fostering critical thinking skills. Also they appreciated the requirement to go beyond surface reading and engage in deeper interpretation

These findings resonate with Beach et al.'s (2016: 92) observation that “students are often alienated by assignments that do not appear to have relevance to their lives or that require a mastery of abstract interpretative strategies before they are developmentally ready”.

Engaging with fiction analytically helped students develop a deeper understanding of texts, as they learned to identify and interpret various literary components.

Writing essays on fiction analysis allowed students to practice structuring arguments and articulating ideas clearly, leading to improved writing proficiency. Some students recognized essay writing as essential preparation for teaching, research, or further studies.

Over time, repeated practice helped students develop greater confidence in expressing their thoughts in writing. The findings align with existing literature, underscoring the value of fiction analysis in developing critical academic skills. However, the challenges identified suggest a need for targeted support, such as vocabulary development workshops and introductory sessions on literary analysis concepts, to enhance student engagement and success in this area.

5.2 challenges and considerations

Despite the structured approaches to fiction analysis, students often encounter challenges in applying theoretical models to complex narratives. The richness of literary texts can sometimes complicate the straightforward application of frameworks like Todorov's, necessitating a more nuanced understanding of narrative structures.

Furthermore, the diversity of students' backgrounds and prior exposure to literature can influence their interpretative approaches. Instructors must therefore be adaptable, providing scaffolding that accommodates varying levels of familiarity with literary analysis while encouraging critical engagement with the texts.

Some students expressed difficulty in articulating their analyses due to a limited academic vocabulary, hindering their ability to fully express their insights.

The split in opinions highlights the need for a diversified approach to teaching literature. While essays remain a crucial academic tool, educators might consider blending different methods of analysis to cater to varying student preferences and learning styles. Workshops on essay writing, peer review sessions, and alternative assessments like presentations or creative writing assignments could help balance academic rigor with student engagement.

A lack of prior exposure to literary analysis concepts posed challenges for some students, making it difficult to engage deeply with the texts.

The extensive time required to thoroughly analyze and write about fiction was cited as a barrier, particularly during periods of heavy academic workload.

5.3 Student attitudes toward essay writing

The 11 Students who liked analyzing fiction in essay form often cited the following reasons:

Opportunity for Expression: They appreciated being able to express their own interpretations of characters, themes, and narrative structure.

Structured Thinking: Some students found the essay format helped them organize their ideas logically.

Appreciation of Literature: A minority mentioned that essay writing deepened their understanding of literary texts.

In contrast, 15 students who disliked it typically noted:

Perceived Difficulty: Many felt that essay writing was too rigid or challenging, especially in terms of organizing ideas and interpreting symbolism.

Lack of Engagement: Some felt disconnected from the texts or found the analysis tasks repetitive and uninspiring.

Stress and Time Constraints: Several students mentioned that the pressure to perform in writing assignments reduced their enjoyment of reading fiction.

3. Better Understanding of Literature: By dissecting fiction in essay form, students claim to gain a more profound understanding of literary elements such as plot, symbolism, and narrative techniques.

4. Preparation for Future Academic Work: Some students see essay writing as essential preparation for research projects and dissertations that await them in their academic journey.

Students Who Do Not Appreciate the Practice

On the other hand, 15 students expressed dissatisfaction with analyzing fiction through essays. Their concerns include:

Perceived Complexity and Pressure: These students often feel overwhelmed by the technical demands of essay writing. The process of organizing ideas, citing textual evidence, and following academic formats can be daunting.

2. Lack of Interest in Fiction: Some students expressed a general disinterest in fictional works. As a result, they struggle to engage with texts deeply enough to write analytical essays.

3. Preference for Oral Discussion or Creative Expression: Several students suggested that they would prefer more interactive methods of literary analysis, such as group discussions or dramatizations, which they find more engaging and less rigid than essay writing.

4. Language Challenges: As English is a second language for most students at ISP/Bunia, some find it difficult to articulate their thoughts clearly in writing, which affects their confidence and performance.

VI. DISCUSSION

6.1. Engagement with Fiction

Most students expressed a deep appreciation for fiction, citing its role in expanding imagination, cultural awareness, and emotional empathy. One student noted:

"Reading fiction opens my mind to other lives and worlds. It helps me understand people better."

6.2. Challenges in Essay Writing

Despite enthusiasm for reading, students found essay writing challenging. Common concerns included:

Language barriers: Many students reported difficulties in expressing complex ideas in academic English.

Structuring arguments: Organizing essays coherently was a recurring issue, particularly in developing thesis statements and supporting paragraphs.

Interpretation anxiety: Several students feared their interpretations might be "wrong," indicating a need for more reassurance and scaffolding in interpretive freedom.

VII. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings suggest that while B3 students value the process of literary analysis, they require more structured support. Pedagogical interventions might include:

Choice of Texts and Prompts: Allowing students to select texts or focus areas can increase ownership and emphasis on multiple interpretations being valid

Multimodal Expression: Combining essay writing with creative or digital formats (e.g., video essays, podcasts) can cater to diverse learning styles.

Collaborative Writing: Peer discussion and group analysis before writing can scaffold students' thinking and reduce anxiety. Also peer review workshops are very important.

By adapting these methods, teachers may be able to reduce negative perceptions and increase engagement with essay-based literary analysis. Grammar and academic writing support integrated into literature courses.

Application in Classroom Settings

At ISP Bunia, instructors employ these theoretical models to guide students in their analysis of selected fictional works. For instance, in analyzing Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, students might apply Todorov's theory to trace the narrative's progression through periods of stability and upheaval, thereby gaining insight into the socio-political undercurrents of the story.

Moreover, through close reading exercises, students are encouraged to identify and interpret literary devices such as symbolism, metaphor, and irony. This practice not only enhances their appreciation of the text but also hones their analytical skills, enabling them to construct well-supported arguments in their written analyses. Beach et al. (2016) argue for responsive and student-centered pedagogy in literature classrooms. They propose that traditional essay analysis tasks can be made more meaningful by incorporating

VIII. CONCLUSION

The work entitled *Exploring B3 Students' Perspectives on Analyzing Fiction through Essay Writing at ISP Bunia* has come at the end. B3 students at ISP Bunia recognize the benefits of analyzing fiction through essay writing, particularly in enhancing critical thinking, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Addressing the challenges, they face can further improve the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach. Future research could explore the impact of specific interventions, such as vocabulary enhancement programs and literary analysis workshops, on student outcomes in fiction analysis.

The mixed attitudes among B3 students regarding essay-based fiction analysis highlight a need for more adaptive teaching practices. While a significant portion of students appreciate the depth and structure the essay form provides, an even larger group finds it inaccessible or disengaging. Through responsive teaching strategies as outlined in *Teaching Literature to Adolescents*, educators can bridge this gap, making literary analysis a more inclusive and enriching experience for all students.

The case of Bac 3 students at ISP/Bunia reveals a clear divide in how students perceive the value and effectiveness of analyzing fiction in essay form. As educational institutions strive to equip learners with both analytical and expressive capabilities, it is vital to listen to student feedback and adapt teaching strategies accordingly. A hybrid approach could not only improve learning outcomes but also make literary studies more inclusive and enjoyable for all student

The academic study of fiction at ISP Bunia equips BAC 3 students with essential analytical tools that enhance their understanding of literary works. By integrating theoretical frameworks with practical analytical exercises, students develop the skills necessary to critically engage with narratives. Continued emphasis on diverse literary theories and adaptive teaching strategies will further enrich students' analytical capabilities, fostering a deeper appreciation for the complexities of fictional texts.

Analyzing fiction through essay writing provides a fertile ground for developing interpretive skills, critical thinking, and academic writing competencies. At ISP Bunia, B3 students demonstrate a willingness to engage with fiction but face notable challenges that can be addressed through targeted pedagogical strategies. Future research may explore how these findings translate across different linguistic or educational contexts in the DRC and beyond.

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