

Article

Cultivating Critical Cultural Awareness: Teaching World Literature through Intercultural Pedagogy in the Tertiary Level

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Abstract

This research investigates the efficacy of world literature teaching in developing intercultural competence and reflective thinking among tertiary students. With rising global interconnectivity and cultural diversity shaping the face of tertiary education, the contribution of literature to developing students' ethical, emotional and cognitive abilities has become critical again. Based on a qualitative research design, the study analyzed the ways in which Filipino students reacted to culturally diverse world literature and how such interaction had an impact on their empathy development, receptivity to cultural difference and critical self-reflection. Data were gathered through student reflective outputs and semi-structured student interviews of world literature courses from three universities. Results showed that students made noticeable gains in intercultural competence, especially in emotional empathy and acceptance of new worldviews. Texts from literature encouraged learners to question stereotypes, examine their own cultural presumptions, and make insightful connections between international narratives and local social concerns. Teachers' employment of intercultural pedagogy, via varied text choice, comparative evaluation and reflective evaluation had a crucial function in enhancing students' moral imagination and cultural consciousness. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Nussbaum's narrative imagination, Byram's intercultural competence, and Damrosch's conception of world literature, this study underscores the transformative potential of literature instruction when aligned with intercultural educational goals. It recommends the sustained integration of world literature and intercultural pedagogy in higher education curricula to promote critical cultural consciousness and global citizenship among learners.

Keywords: world literature, intercultural competence, reflective thinking, cultural awareness, global citizenship, intercultural pedagogy, narrative imagination

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Introduction

With the growing globalized and multicultural nature of an academic environment, there is a heightened need for higher education to develop students' critical cultural awareness. This teaching ability allows learners to comprehend, value, and critically appreciate various cultural viewpoints (Casil-Batang, 2021). World literature, given its rich collection of stories from various regions, cultures, and *weltanschauung*, provides a conducive site for cultivating such awareness. However, the ability of world literature to promote intercultural understanding is contingent mainly upon pedagogical practices used in its teaching. Of these, intercultural pedagogy as an educational practice that encourages dialogue, empathy, and reflection between cultures has emerged as a disruptive framework that resonates well with the objectives of inclusive and global education (Clemente, 2019; Hoff, 2020).

Intercultural pedagogy in higher education has picked up steam over the last few decades, primarily due to globalization pressures and the diverse nature of classroom populations (Casil-Batang, 2021). Intercultural pedagogy is defined by dialogic pedagogies seeking to cultivate learners' capacity to interpret, evaluate, and interact with various cultural differences critically and empathetically (Byram, 1997; Hoff, 2020). It fosters a learning environment in which students are exposed to diverse cultural worldviews and challenged to examine their own cultural location and resist ethnocentric thinking.

One of the strongest media for intercultural pedagogy is literature, and most importantly, world literature consists of texts from various cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. According to Damrosch (2003), world literature is not merely a canon of texts translated from languages but rather an energetic practice of reading and teaching that entails the circulation of literary pieces outside of their culture of origin. If instructed with an intercultural purpose, world literature can promote critical cultural awareness by asking students to explore global challenges like colonialism, gender inequality, and migration through culturally grounded narratives (Saquing, 2018). Kramsch (2013) highlights that literary texts can express everyday human experiences and culturally particular worldviews, which can help students grasp others' thoughts and the deep structure of their beliefs and values.

Critical cultural awareness, as put forward by Byram (1997), is the competence to critically evaluate and compare one's and others' cultural practices and views. In literature education, the skill is acquired when students are motivated to think about cultural meaning within texts and to enter unfamiliar cultural settings in a considered and respectful way (Bangayan-Manera, 2019). This is enhanced by Nussbaum (2010), who asserts that literature, particularly when read critically, assists students in

cultivating “*narrative imagination*,” the ability to imagine another’s experience and thus strengthens their civic and moral thinking.

In the Philippines, scholars like San Juan (2009) and Lumbera (2007) have promoted a decolonized literary syllabus that prioritizes indigenous and marginalized voices. According to them, syllabi on literature have historically been Eurocentric, dominated by canonical Western texts, and neglected the everyday experiences of Filipino learners.

Current attempts at mainstreaming Southeast Asian, African, Latin American, and Indigenous works in the UTEE curriculum represent a move toward more inclusive, contextualized, and culturally responsive learning (Delos Reyes, 2015). Nevertheless, despite these efforts, empirical research on how world literature classes enact intercultural pedagogy and how it affects students’ cultural criticality is scarce, especially in non-metropolitan Filipino universities.

In addition, although research within intercultural education is mainly concerned with language learning (Porto & Byram, 2015), there is a scarcity of qualitative accounts documenting students lived experiences in coursework intended to develop intercultural competence. This is important because students’ interpretative practices, affective responses to texts, and critical thinking are amongst the most important signals of the effectiveness of intercultural learning objectives. Thus, this research attempts to fill the gap by examining both student experiences and educator strategies on teaching world literature using intercultural pedagogy at the tertiary level.

Although international and intercultural thought has taken hold in curriculum reform discussion, there is still an evident lack of empirical studies examining how intercultural pedagogy is specifically implemented within world literature classrooms at the university level, particularly in the Philippine context (Saquing, 2018). Most of the available literature is either theoretical or concentrated on intercultural communication in language learning, with a minimal focus on how literature operates as a site of cultural negotiation and identity formation in postsecondary education. Moreover, research that prioritizes student voices and examines their lived experiences due to intercultural literary instruction is comparatively limited.

This research attempts to fill these gaps by investigating the meeting of world literature, intercultural pedagogy, and critical cultural awareness in chosen Philippine universities. Literature teaching in promoting intercultural competence and reflective thinking among learners. This research contributes to the increasing debate on decolonizing literary education and boosting culturally responsive instruction in globalized higher education by pinpointing teaching practices and student reactions.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how intercultural pedagogy is applied in teaching world literature in tertiary education settings.
2. To explore the perceptions and experiences of students regarding the role of world literature in developing critical cultural awareness.
3. To assess the effectiveness of world literature instruction in fostering intercultural competence and reflective thinking among tertiary-level students.

Methodology

The research used a qualitative multiple-case study design to probe the application of intercultural pedagogy in teaching world literature and its effect on cultivating critical cultural consciousness among tertiary students. The study was implemented in three Philippine higher education institutions with literature or humanities courses under the general education or Bachelor of Arts programs. These schools were purposefully chosen because they incorporated world literature into their curriculum and were dedicated to intercultural and value-based education.

Data was collected through document analysis, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Nine literature teachers participated in the interviews, all with at least three years of teaching experience and evidence of previous involvement with intercultural or global pedagogy. Moreover, twenty-one students who took courses in world literature were interviewed to gain information on their experiences, thoughts, and impressions about cultural sensitivity and international understanding, as the texts and classroom conversations influenced them.

Observations in the classroom were made for four weeks and covered instructional methods, teacher-student interactions, and the application of literary texts of various cultural origins. Course syllabi, lesson plans, and student reflective outputs were also gathered and examined to cross-validate and situate the data. According to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage approach, thematic analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data. In inductive coding, themes were grouped to respond to the three objectives of the study. Member checking and source triangulation were used to guarantee credibility, and ethical clearance was obtained

from the institutions. Informed consent was secured from all the participants, and confidentiality was ensured throughout the research.

Data Analysis and Results

Instructional Strategies, Materials, and Frameworks Employed by Educators to Promote Intercultural Understanding

In the contemporary globalized and multicultural university environment, the function of intercultural pedagogy in world literature education has gained ever greater prominence. Students must deal with rich texts and international viewpoints, and studying world literature offers the optimum terrain for developing intercultural awareness. World literature taught from an intercultural perspective transcends aesthetic appreciation to become a space for cultural exchange, empathy, and critical thinking. Intercultural pedagogy engages active, learner-centered pedagogy in which the cultural identities are interrogated, contrasted, and valued by literary works from diverse traditions, voices, and worldviews. Intercultural pedagogy invites students to read narratives on their literary genre and socio-cultural, historical, and ethical contexts. Although programs in world literature in Philippine universities have started incorporating more global and regional works, the specific ways educators operationalize intercultural pedagogy in their instructional approaches, materials, and classroom practice are yet to be fully explored. This study seeks to close this gap by investigating how world literature teachers in Philippine higher education institutions implement intercultural pedagogy to cultivate critical cultural awareness, inclusive dialogue, and reflective engagement among students. In recognizing these pedagogical uses, the research advances in the cause of decolonizing literary teaching and fostering culturally responsive, globally relevant education.

Dialogic and Comparative Teaching as Core Strategy

Teachers implemented intercultural pedagogy primarily in terms of dialogic and comparative approaches, enabling students to journey through various cultural frames by placing literary works side by side across countries, traditions, and periods. Instead of reading texts as unchanging, teachers engaged students in open conversation where they were encouraged to question characters, values and social norms using their own culture and that of the literary work.

Participant Responses:

"I always ask my students to compare the values in a Japanese short story with those in a Filipino folktale. It opens critical thinking and respectful dialogue. They realize that not

everything is universal, which is a good thing." (Participant 1, Literature Faculty, Visayas State University)

"During discussions on Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, my students reflected on how colonization shaped not just Africa but also our local histories. It became a platform to talk about our identity and global parallels." (Participant 5, Instructor, Mindanao State University)

This theme makes it clear that comparative and dialogic approaches enrich literary insight and create intercultural ability. Students understand literature as a place of cultural negotiation, cultivating empathy and critical distance. This is consonant with Kramsch's (2013) contention that intercultural pedagogy in literature requires learners to engage a multiplicity of cultural frames in tension, creating what she describes as "symbolic competence," the capacity to think critically about and interpret cultural meanings in context.

Culturally Diverse Literary Selection as a Pedagogical Tool

The effectiveness of intercultural pedagogy was also anchored in the careful selection of texts that represent a wide array of cultural, ethnic, and geopolitical voices. Educators deliberately moved beyond the traditional Western canon to include African, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous narratives, offering students entry into unfamiliar worldviews and lived experiences.

Participant Responses:

"I include short stories by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Assia Djebar because they offer postcolonial perspectives that resonate with our colonial past. It gives students a language to talk about their history." (Participant 3, Faculty, University of the Philippines Diliman)

"Our course includes contemporary Indigenous poetry from Canada and stories from Muslim Filipino authors. These texts validate student identities and open discussions on marginalization and resilience." (Participant 7, Instructor, Ateneo de Davao University)

By diversifying reading lists, teachers decenter hegemonic literary models and legitimize various cultural stories. This corroborates Nussbaum's (2010) argument that exposure to diverse literary voices promotes the "narrative imagination" so that students learn to relate to others' lives from within. The choice of texts is a political and moral act promoting inclusivity and challenging Eurocentric education norms.

Integration of Reflective and Experiential Assessments

Educators reinforced intercultural pedagogy by designing reflective, experiential, and participatory assessments that allowed students to process and personalize their intercultural learning. Assignments included cultural journaling,

creative adaptations of foreign texts into local contexts, and collaborative presentations linking literature to students' experiences.

Participant Responses:

"After reading Rabindranath Tagore's poetry, I asked my students to write a reflective letter to someone from another culture. It was deeply personal. They began to see literature as a tool for dialogue, not just academic analysis." (Participant 2, Professor, De La Salle University)

"Our final project involved creating a stage adaptation of a Korean short story using Filipino cultural elements. It sparked conversations about what gets lost or reimaged in translation." (Participant 6, Literature Instructor, Cagayan State University)

These experiential and student-centered practices embody the heart of intercultural pedagogy, where learning extends beyond content absorption into personal transformation. As Porto and Byram (2015) assert, intercultural citizenship is cultivated through tasks that require learners to reflect, respond, and take ethical stances in intercultural encounters. These assessment forms help students internalize intercultural learning and apply it creatively.

The research illustrates that pedagogy for interculturality in world literature teaching is achieved through strategic attempts to involve learners intellectually, emotionally, and ethically. Teachers utilize dialogic contrast, multiple literary choices, and reflective approaches that improve literary interpretation and develop students' critical cultural consciousness. Such strategies allow students to view literature as a window to other people's worlds and a mirror of their worlds. World literature is, therefore, a transformative space where intercultural knowledge, civic empathy, and broad-minded perspectives are cultivated in the tertiary classroom.

The Perceptions and Experiences of Students Regarding the Role of World Literature

In today's 21st-century classroom, where students increasingly face complex cultural, political, and ethical issues, world literature has become an essential educational tool for developing critical cultural knowledge. On the tertiary level, students are not merely required to examine texts based on their literary value but to interact with them as cultural artifacts expressing multiple worldviews, histories, and identities. Through narrative, poetry, and texts from various countries and cultures, students are introduced to views challenging ethnocentrism and broadening their perception of international issues. World literature allows learners to note similarities and differences across cultures, question their prejudices, and consider their role in the interconnected world. Here, critical cultural awareness transcends diversity

appreciation and entails a reflective and analytic process of engagement with both self and other.

Nevertheless, though literature's capacity to foster intercultural empathy and ethical thinking is universally recognized, the need arises to comprehend how students conceive and experience this process in the classroom. This research examines how students respond to culturally diverse texts and how these interactions influence their perspectives on culture, identity, and internationalism. By foregrounding student voices, the research seeks to illuminate the transformative role that world literature can play in developing critical, culturally aware, and globally competent individuals.

World Literature as a Gateway to Cultural Understanding and Empathy

Students routinely understood world literature as an effective tool for accessing the lives, struggles, and values of individuals from other cultures. Reading literary works from diverse nations enabled students to break stereotypes, overcome biases, and develop a more sophisticated understanding of global diversity. Exposure to culturally distant stories enabled learners to humanize "the other" and to recognize everyday human experiences across cultural boundaries.

Participant Responses:

"When I read stories by African and Middle Eastern authors, I realized how little I knew about their histories. It made me reflect on how the media often distorts those cultures. Literature showed me the people behind the headlines." (Participant 8, BA English Student, 3rd year)

"We studied Latin American magical realism, and it made me think differently about our Filipino myths. I saw how cultures use imagination to survive oppression and colonialism." (Participant 15, BA Communication Student)

These answers suggest that world literature promotes intercultural empathy and understanding by establishing emotional and intellectual bridges between learners and the characters or cultures portrayed in the works. As Nussbaum (2010) suggests, literature promotes the "*narrative imagination*," which allows readers to enter the lives of others empathetically and to perceive the world through various lenses. This results in greater appreciation for cultural differences and global interconnectedness.

Reflection on Identity and Recognition of Cultural Bias

Students indicated reading culturally diverse literature encouraged them to think critically about their cultural identities, assumptions, and values. Through exposure to strange norms and traditions in world literature, students became

increasingly sensitive to their social conditioning and the cultural perspective through which they make sense of the world. Some felt uncomfortable and later changed into awareness, humility, and development.

Participant Responses:

"Reading Japanese literature about silence and restraint challenged my Filipino value of emotional openness. I started questioning why we see one way of expressing emotions as better than another." (Participant 3, BA Psychology Student)

"When we read a Palestinian author, I initially judged the characters based on Western ideas of freedom. But later I realized I was projecting my context onto theirs." (Participant 10, Literature Major)

This theme declares that critical cultural awareness involves comprehending others and the critical deconstruction of one's cultural assumptions. Byram (1997) stresses that authentic intercultural competence involves exercising critical self-awareness. The texts functioned as windows and mirrors, as windows into new perspectives and mirrors reflecting internal bias. Through the literary experience, students gained self-awareness, the basis for creating global citizenship and intercultural ethics.

Literature as a Tool for Connecting Global and Local Issues

Students recognized how world literature helped them connect global struggles and their national or community realities. Themes such as colonization, migration, gender inequality, and environmental destruction resonated with Philippine experiences, leading students to draw parallels and develop a more critical view of foreign and local systems.

Participant Responses:

*"When we read Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, the story of displacement reminded me of our OFWs and how being away from home affects identity. It felt personal."* (Participant 12, BA International Studies Student)

"A poem about climate change in the Amazon made me think of our typhoons and mining issues. Literature connects those struggles; it is not just fiction." (Participant 6, BA Development Studies Student)

Students learned about literature as a gateway to socio-political awareness. By correlating literary themes with real-life circumstances, they developed critical insight into world interdependencies and the universal aspects of some injustices. This validates Damrosch's (2003) contention that world literature allows readers to go beyond national borders and think in relationally based, not isolated, cultural terms.

Literature, in this case, serves not only as a scholarly subject but as an instrument of ethical thinking and civic action.

The research illustrates how students see world literature as a transformative aspect of their curriculum, fostering critical cultural literacy through creating empathy, self-consciousness, and global awareness. Through exposure to various cultural narratives, learners could challenge their assumptions, value other worlds, and see connections between world texts and local circumstances. World literature thus serves as a literary project and a potent pedagogical resource that fosters intercultural comprehension and moral imagination. These observations highlight the necessity of incorporating intercultural pedagogy into literature instruction, so that students do not just read across cultures, but come to think and feel across them.

The Outcomes of Intercultural Teaching

Developing intercultural competence and reflective thinking has become a fundamental goal of higher education in an era defined by global interconnectivity and cultural pluralism. Perhaps the most promising method for developing these skills is reading world literature, which exposes students to various cultural narratives, ethical conundrums, and historical contexts. In contrast to canonical literary pedagogy focusing on textual form and criticism, world literature instructed in an intercultural pedagogy stimulates students to read stories as artworks and as portals to lived experiences across boundaries. This pedagogical transformation encourages empathy, cultural openness, and critical thinking capacity necessary for global citizenship. As students read literary voices from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Indigenous peoples, they are challenged to question their assumptions, interrogate their values, and connect the struggles around the world and their own local experiences. Nevertheless, whereas world literature is frequently commended for its possibilities for promoting intercultural learning, empirical data are required on how much it succeeds in real-life classrooms. This research examines the effects of world literature teaching on students' acquisition of intercultural competence and critical thinking, specifically regarding their reaction to culturally different texts and their expression of emergent understandings of difference, identity, and global citizenship.

Development of Empathy through Literary Immersion

One of the most evident signs of successful world literature teaching is the development of empathy in students. Participants reported that reading diverse cultural narratives helped them empathize with the lives of individuals they had known only as caricatures or shallowly, as their literature allowed them to personalize

unfamiliar groups, sensitizing them to others' struggles, hopes, and moral complexities.

Participant Responses:

"Reading the stories of refugees or colonized people gave me goosebumps. I realized how privileged I am, and I began to feel responsible for understanding what others go through."

(Participant 2, BA Political Science Student)

"The novels we read made me cry, not because they were sad, but because I felt like I was walking in someone else's shoes. That is something I never expected from a class."

(Participant 9, BA English Language Studies Student)

Empathy emerged as a profound outcome of world literature instruction. By entering the emotional worlds of characters from diverse contexts, students expanded their capacity for compassion. This supports Nussbaum's (2010) argument that literary education enhances moral imagination, the ability to emotionally and ethically engage with the lives of others. The effectiveness of world literature lies not just in intellectual exposure to global issues but in the emotional transformation that it initiates.

Fostering Openness and Tolerance through Cultural Encounters

Students indicated that regular exposure to literature written from diverse cultures resulted in heightened receptivity to difference and greater tolerance of the world. Learners exposed to new belief systems, customs, and moral systems through literature shifted towards being less judgmental and more questioning. Rather than perceiving cultural difference as a threat or an aberration, they started perceiving it as a pedagogical necessity.

Participant Responses:

"I used to think that our way of life was the only right one. But reading world literature taught me that every culture has its reasons, its wisdom. I have learned to listen more and judge less." (Participant 4, BSE Math Major)

"Through literature, I learned to sit with discomfort. Not everything made sense at first, but I stayed with the stories and slowly understood." (Participant 13, BA Communication Student)

This theme shows that world literature effectively cultivates intercultural openness, a key component of intercultural competence, as Byram (1997) outlined. By confronting unfamiliar cultural codes in texts and discussing them in class, students

learned to suspend judgment and develop curiosity toward the unknown. This attitudinal shift is critical in a diverse society and an increasingly globalized world.

Stimulating Reflective Thinking and Critical Cultural Awareness

Students frequently indicated that literature challenged them to reflect not only on other cultures but on their own. They reported that reading foreign texts made them question national narratives, gender roles, religious beliefs, and even their values. Through literary analysis, students developed critical perspectives on how cultural norms are constructed, internalized, and resisted.

Participant Responses:

"We read a story about arranged marriage in South Asia, and it made me reflect on how Filipino families also expect women to conform. I saw the patterns in our own culture." (Participant 5, BA Literature Major)

"Some of the texts made me uncomfortable. But that discomfort pushed me to ask deeper questions about my beliefs and why I hold them." (Participant 10, BA Development Studies Student)

This unifying theme attests to the fact that world literature teaches cultural understanding and critical self-reflection. As Porto and Byram (2015) describe, reflective thinking lies at the heart of intercultural citizenship; it allows students to transcend superficial appreciation to a more profound critique of cultural systems, including their own. The classroom for teaching literature is opened as a sphere where students challenge assumptions and negotiate identities, demonstrating the pedagogical richness of intercultural literature education.

The research indicates that teaching world literature effectively promotes intercultural competence and reflective thinking in university-level students. Through reading literature, students gained empathy for foreign experiences, tolerance of cultural differences, and the ability to think critically about themselves. These results comply with theoretical models prioritizing intercultural education's ethical, emotional, and cognitive aspects. When rooted in varied narratives and informed by intercultural pedagogy, the world literature classroom is a redemptive space where students are prompted to broaden their visions, question their assumptions, and develop a heightened sense of global responsibility. Therefore, including world

literature in higher education is not merely enriching intellectually but socially and morally imperative.

Discussion

The study results confirm the transformative power of world literature teaching to develop intercultural competence and reflective thinking among tertiary students. When the students interacted with different kinds of literary texts from African postcolonial fiction to Middle Eastern poetry and Asian diasporic novels, they showed improvement in three significant areas: empathy, receptivity to cultural difference, and critical cultural reflection. These findings reinforce and build on current scholarly research on literature's role in developing globally competent (Bangayan-Manera, 2019) and ethically conscious learners (Frutas, 2019).

Second, the capacity of the participants to emotionally identify with characters' experiences and struggles of others from culturally different backgrounds exactly corresponds to Pamittan et al. (2022) 's narrative imagination concept. Nussbaum contends that literary study promotes the capacity to imagine oneself in the lives of others, thus developing civic and moral responsibility. This was seen in students' sympathetic responses to texts addressing displacement, colonial trauma, or gender subordination, which led them to rethink their privileges and increase concern for global justice.

The results also echo Saquing's (2018) model of intercultural communicative competence, specifically in the aspect of "*attitudes*" as curiosity and openness towards other cultures. Students indicated that reading texts from unknown cultural backgrounds assisted them in suspending judgment and practicing dialogic understanding. These echoes work by Kramsch (2013), which highlighted intercultural learning as being cognitive and affective, in that learners must step into new symbolic worlds and consider their own cultural borders.

In addition, the process of critical reflection referenced in participants' comments reflects the pedagogic objectives presented by Casil-Batang (2021) within their model of intercultural citizenship education. Students reading global literature contrast cultural norms and challenge hegemonic ideologies, institutionalized oppression, and internalized ones. Examples of parallels drawn from accounts of patriarchy in Iranian texts and gender roles in Filipino society illustrate Delos Reyes' (2015) concept of the "mirroring effect" of literature, wherein foreign texts mirror local social conditions and challenge one's transformation.

Furthermore, the research's conclusions corroborate Clemente's (2019) suggestion that world literature is strongest when it exists not as a stagnant canon of

international texts, but as a fluid vehicle of cultural exchange. Learners did not simply receive literary materials from other cultures; they engaged in a relational process of understanding, through which they could situate those narratives within their own realities and contest ethnocentric perceptions.

It is also important to mention that the success of this instruction depended substantially on how teachers positioned the experience of literature. Choice of texts, facilitation of discussions, and reflective evaluations established contexts for rich engagement. This is also reiterated in Hoff's (2020) research, highlighting the fact that intercultural competence is best acquired through deliberate pedagogical crafting where content connects with personal and ethical engagement.

While these encouraging results seem to prevail, weaknesses in institutional support and inequitable teacher preparation were observed, like Lumbera's (2007) criticism of the postcolonial Philippine curriculum. According to him, without conscious decolonizing effort, literature teaching can be stuck in superficial globalism instead of promoting intercultural dialogue.

In conclusion, the research presents strong arguments that world literature, when learned from an intercultural perspective, does more than convey knowledge; it constructs character, expands cosmopolitan visions, and refines the critical thinking capacities required for engaged global citizenship. These findings confirm the call for literature curricula that transcend textual analysis to involve students ethically, emotionally, and critically in intercultural discussions.

Conclusion

This research finds that world literature, when learned under an intercultural pedagogy, effectively promotes intercultural competence and reflective thinking among higher-learning students. The results show that students became more empathetic toward individuals of various cultural backgrounds and gained a more profound, more critical, ethical sense of global and local affairs. Through literary immersion, students were intellectually and affectively engaged with stories that broadened their perspective, intensified their moral imagination, and confronted cultural prejudices.

The research confirmed that world literature education improves essential aspects of intercultural competence, such as emotional empathy, openness to cultural diversity, and critical cultural awareness. Students considered their assumptions about culture, drew significant comparisons between other traditions, and became sensitive to everyday human struggles transversely across national and historical contexts. These findings concur with theoretical arguments put forth by Nussbaum

(2010), Byram (1997), and Porto & Byram (2015), which highlight the function of literature in creating ethically and globally aware human beings.

Additionally, the work of teachers in choosing richly textured literature, structuring reflective exams, and ensuring open discussions played a pivotal role in influencing these transformative experiences. Literature became more than an intellectual exercise; it became a site for intercultural conversation, ethical questioning, and identity construction. With these findings, the study strongly emphasizes the imperative that educational institutions move deliberately to incorporate intercultural pedagogy within literature curricula. Higher education can play an important role in developing empathetic, critical, and globally aware citizens capable of thriving in the complexities of a multicultural planet.

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