



ENHANCING THE SKILL OF IDENTIFYING LITERARY DEVICES IN NARRATIVES USING THE AUTHOR'S TOOL BOX

Rodriguez, Divilyn M.

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ABSTRACT

This classroom-based action research aimed at helping the students enhance their skills in identifying literary devices in narratives using the Author's Tool Box in analyzing a text. This was conducted in the school year 2018–2019 in one of the schools in Cluster 7. Students were purposefully chosen to participate in this action research as they were found to fare poorly in identifying literary devices in narratives. Identifying literary devices is a paramount skill in developing practical and creative skills in reading and writing fiction, poetry, and drama in the subject of creative writing, which is one of the specialized subjects in the Humanities strand of senior high school. However, there are still students enrolled in the creative writing class who have not yet mastered the skill. The Author's Tool Box, which is the intervention used in the study, is a graphic organizer that allowed the students to identify and organize the figurative language found in the reading selections. The results of the tests gathered before, during, and after the intervention were analyzed using charts comparing the scores before, during, and after the intervention. Observations on students' behavior and participation during class discussions and group activities were also used to support the results. Results showed that the Author's Tool Box in analyzing a text helped the students improve their skill in identifying figurative language in narratives, as revealed in the results of the pre-test, formative assessments, and post-test, and the participation of the students during class discussion and group activities. Based on the results, it is suggested that this strategy be used in teaching the above-mentioned competencies. Moreover, the teaching of literary devices should not be taught in fragments but in the context of the literature.

Keywords: Action Research, 2018, Senior High School, English Teachers, Author's Tool Box, Figurative Language, Literary Devices

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I. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Teaching literature is one of the teaching tasks that calls for passion. As an English teacher, I am very passionate about it.

Based on the curriculum competencies, one of the basic skills needed in the study of literature is identifying literary devices. For students taking the Humanities strand in senior high school, the skill of identifying figurative language is paramount in the subject of creative writing since students are expected to develop practical and creative skills in reading and writing fiction, poetry, and drama. Creative writing is one of the specialized subjects in the Humanities strand. According to McLaughlin and Smith (2016; 2018), a firm grasp of literary devices fosters critical thinking and analytical abilities crucial for understanding and appreciating various literary forms.

Within the context of the senior high school Humanities strand, the emphasis on identifying figurative language emerges as a pivotal component, particularly in the domain of creative writing. As highlighted by Thompson (2017) and Johnson (2019), the ability to recognize and utilize figurative language is essential for crafting evocative and engaging narratives, poems, and dramatic works. However, I have observed that some students in my creative writing class have not yet mastered the skill of identifying literary devices. Scores in their written outputs revealed that while the majority of the class got average scores, there were still a few who got very low scores in identifying figurative language. On the other hand, scores also showed that most of them have already mastered the skills of identifying imagery, which is also a literary device but not figurative language.

With this, I focused my attention on the figurative language. Sometimes, I wondered if the reason for not mastering the skill was due to a language barrier or a lack of cultural background about the text, or if the topic was taught in fragments of

phrases and sentences that were never taught in the context of the literature. Nonetheless, I was steadfast in helping my students learn this essential skill. As a 21st-century teacher who embraces the belief that learners are unique and have different learning needs, I am convinced that choosing the appropriate strategy will result in better learning. As noted by Larson (2020), students are tasked not only with comprehending literary techniques but also with applying them innovatively in their own compositions. This sentiment is echoed in the curriculum guidelines, emphasizing the cultivation of expressive and imaginative capacities crucial for effective storytelling and literary expression.

The teaching of literature is indispensable in education, especially in the humanities strand. The teacher may face these dilemmas, but he or she must research some strategies that will help address these problems in class. As a teacher who considers learning pivotal to the success of my learners, I have to try different strategies, such as the use of graphic organizers, to address their needs.

II. INNOVATION, INTERVENTION, AND STRATEGY

As an intervention in my class, I used the Author's Tool Box through guided and independent practice. I also used group work activities where students helped each other comprehend and analyze the reading selections.

An author's tool box is a graphic organizer that allows students to organize their ideas. It is composed of two or more quadrants. The number of quadrants depends on the figurative language and images found in the selection. Students will read and comprehend narratives and analyze the literary devices used. Students will then identify the lines and phrases in the selection, which is figurative language, and write them in the appropriate quadrant in the Author's Tool Box.

The Author's Tool Box can be used in a variety of ways. It can be guided where the quadrants are already labeled with the figurative language (such as simile, metaphor, etc.) or the paragraphs where the figurative language is most likely to be found. It can also be independent, where students will label the quadrants themselves and independently browse through all the paragraphs to be able to identify lines and phrases, which is figurative language. The Author's Tool Box can also be done in individual or group works.

I believed that using the Author's Tool Box would help my students enhance their skills in identifying literary devices in narratives. This belief was also based on the theory of cognitive learning that by systematically presenting information and classifying it in an organized, meaningful, and workable way in the learner's minds, learning can be considerably achieved (McElroy & Coughlin, 2009).

The study focused on identifying literary devices and did not include the skill of inferring the meaning of figurative language. The intervention was carried out for two months in my creative writing class, where we met twice a week for two hours per session. Although the intervention was applied to all learners in the class, the study was focused on the five learners who had been identified as having a problem with the skill mentioned earlier.

III. ACTION RESEARCH QUESTION

This action research aimed to answer the question:

1. How can I help my students enhance their skills in identifying literary devices in narratives?

IV. ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

In my study, I utilized classroom-based action research to help me understand what is happening in my classroom and identify changes in my classroom teaching and learning process. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), action research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken to improve educational practices, as well as their understanding of those practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

a. Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information

The participants of this study are five students in my Creative Writing class in the Senior High School Humanities strand at Calinan National High School for the school year 2018–2019, chosen through the purposive sampling technique. According to Crossman (2017), purposive sampling is a selective sampling that is based on the population's characteristics and the objective of the study. The subjects were chosen because they have not mastered the skill of identifying literary devices in narratives; hence, they can help provide data on whether or not the proposed intervention will help enhance the skill of identifying literary devices in narratives.

To uphold the learner's rights to confidentiality and privacy, the names of the student respondents were withheld. The students were not informed that a study was being conducted so they would not be conscious of their performance, behavior, and scores. The results of the tests gathered were also kept confidential.

b. Data Gathering Methods

In preparation for the conduct of the study, I recorded the pre-test results of the students, which I used as the baseline data. Then, I prepared the materials to be used for the intervention. I collected five narratives from different authors, such as *The Deep* by Adam Smith, *Two Days in a Foreign Land* by Jonathan Tan Ghee Tiong, *Pyramus*

and Thisbe, Ceyx and Alcyone, and Baucis and Philemon as translated by Edith Hamilton in the book, *Timeless Tales of Gods and Goddesses*. I carefully chose these selections because they are rich in imagery and figurative language such as simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, synecdoche, and metonymy. I also prepared the Author's Tool Box for each reading selection.

The Author's Tool Box is a worksheet with divisions resembling a carpenter's tool box. It is a graphic organizer that allows students to organize the different literary devices used by authors in their reading selections.

I introduced the Author's Tool Box as a whole-class activity. I divided the class into eight groups. I gave each student a copy of the story "Ceyx and Alcyone," translated by Edith Hamilton, in the book *Timeless Tales of Gods and Goddesses*. The groups read and discussed the story, and then I gave each group a task to work on to monitor if they comprehended the story. After the groups had presented their outputs, we revisited the story to check if their outputs were correct. Then, I made a short review of the different figurative language and imagery. After the class discussion, I introduced the author's toolbox to the class. I also labeled the quadrants in the Author's Tool Box with the heading (simile, metaphor, personification, etc.). I also wrote the paragraph numbers so students were guided on which paragraphs most likely contained figurative language. As a class, we analyzed each paragraph of the story to see if it contained any figurative language and imagery. Then, I asked students to write these lines and phrases in the appropriate quadrant in the Author's Tool Box. While doing the activity, I noticed that the five students (who were my participants) did not exchange discussions with their groupmates, while the class already enjoyed the discussion. However, I could see that they were also thrilled with the story, as they smiled when we discussed some interesting events in the story.

During the first intervention, I divided the whole class into ten groups with five to six members each. I grouped the five students (research participants). I did the same with those who had already mastered the skill. I intended to do this so that members of the groups would work together as a team in brainstorming ideas and analyzing the text. I wanted to know whether the intervention would work for them. In this activity, I facilitated the students by labeling the quadrants in the Author's Tool Box. Students were reading the love story of Pyramus and Thisbe. The story is very rich in imagery and figurative language. At first, they were hesitant to discuss, but with constant monitoring, they finally talked with each other. I also kept track of their outputs to check if they were able to identify the literary devices.

During the second intervention, I gave them the story of Baucis and Philemon, as translated by Edith Hamilton. The students retained their groups. As I watched them do the task, this time I saw the research participants more engaged with the text and with one another. They freely discussed the story, sharing what they understood and analyzing each paragraph line by line. They were discussing the lines and phrases that contained figurative language and imagery. I noticed that they were gaining confidence in doing the task. They brainstormed ideas, discussed them, and tried to come to a consensus on their answers. It was indeed overwhelming to see that they were learning from each other. I took note of the students' feedback in my journal and cautiously observed their participation and behavior. I also kept track of their outputs to check if students were able to identify the literary devices.

During the third intervention, the author's tool box was no longer labeled. This time, I gave the class the 21st-century Asian literature "Two Days in a Foreign Land," written by Tan Ghee Tiong. Students, on their own, read and analyzed the narrative.

They did the Author's Tool Box by grouping all the images and figurative language such as simile, metaphor, etc., and students independently labeled the Author's Tool Box.

In all the activities, I also made sure that students were given individual copies of the selection. The author's tool box activity sheets were then collected and checked. I also kept a journal noting the feedback of the respondents on the use of the Author's Tool Box, and I have also noted their behavior and participation during group activities and class discussions. I also kept track of their outputs to check if students were able to identify the literary devices.

During the fourth intervention, students worked on a 21st-century American novel, *The Deep*, by Adam Smith. It was suspenseful flash fiction. Again, the author's tool box was no longer labeled. Students have to make the appropriate heading for each quadrant in the Author's Tool Box depending on what figurative language is found in the narrative. At first, I had second thoughts about giving this literature because there were a lot of difficult words. So, we did unlock the difficult words first. While they were reading, the whole class was very quiet. I wondered if they understood the story or not. After I collected their Author's Tool Box activity sheet, we had a class discussion of the story. I also took note of my observations during the group activity and class discussion. I also kept track of their outputs to check if students were able to identify the literary devices.

After the fourth activity, I gave them the post-test because I observed that students already gained much confidence in using the Author's Tool Box, as exhibited in the scores in their different intervention activities. The post-test was also the same test that I gave during the pre-test.

c. Data Analysis

Results gathered before, during, and after the intervention were analyzed by comparing the scores during the pretest, formative assessments, and posttest. I also analyzed my observations and notes on students' behavior and their participation during class discussions and group activities.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION

This section of my action research presents the data gathered after the implementation of my innovation. I used graphs and tables to present the progress of my students.

After the data were gathered and analyzed, the results of the pretest and posttest were presented and discussed.

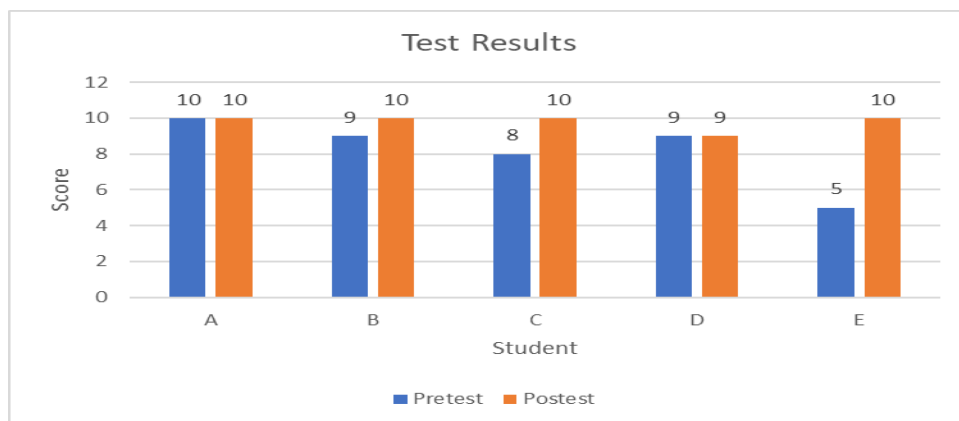


Table 1. Pretest and Posttest Results on Imagery

Table 1 shows the comparison of results between the pretest and posttest on imagery. The table shows that four (4) of the students got a perfect score of 10, while only one (1) student got a 9 in the post-test. This indicates that the students have already learned the skill of identifying imagery in narratives.

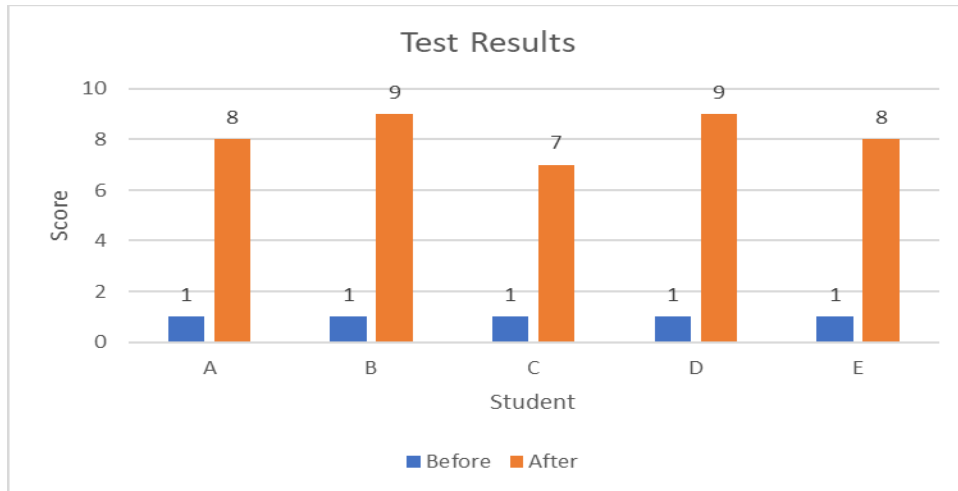


Table 2. Pretest and Posttest Results on Figurative Language

Table 2 shows a graphic presentation of the student's performance before and after the intervention. The table indicates that all five (5) students increased their scores from the pretest to the posttest. This shows that the use of the Author's Tool Box enhanced their skill in identifying figurative language in narratives.

Literary Devices	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4
Figurative Language	2	2	6	14
Imagery	5	7	4	18

Table 3. Literary Devices Identified in the Narratives Read

Table 3 reveals that students have increased knowledge of identifying literary devices as recorded in the different literary selections that they have read. Although different texts vary in the number of literary devices, the result indicates that students are now able to identify the lines or phrases in the narrative that use figurative language.

The data also shows that students are adept at identifying the images in the lines and phrases in narratives.

Observations	Statements
Participants learned to appreciate literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Nalingaw gud mi”. (We really enjoyed.) • “Ganahan kaau mi sa story. Ma feel gyud namo ang na feel sa author.” (We love the story! We feel the author.) • “Hadloka sa story oi.” (It is scary!) • “Mas masabtan gud ang story”. (I understand the story better.)
Participants learned and organized content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Hala naa gyud diay mga figurative language ang story noh?” (Indeed, there are figurative language in the story!) • “Makatabang gud siya (Author’s Tool Box) kay ma aware man ka nga naa diay mga figurative langue ug imagery nga gigamit ang author nga naa sa story. (The Author’s Tool Box helped us understand that there are literary devices in the stories.)
Students increased participation in class and group discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pwede ta mag extend, lunch pa bitaw.” (Can we extend? Anyway, after this is lunch.) • “Unya na padayon sa mi”g basa”. (Can we just continue reading?)

Table 4. Classroom Observations on the use of the Author’s Tool Box

Table 4 shows my notes during classroom observations. The observations were encapsulated with supporting statements.

“Nalingaw gud mi”, “Ganahan kaau mi sa story. Ma feel gyud namo ang na feel sa author”, “Hadloka sa story oi” and “Mas masabtan gud ang story” are statements that show that students were able to appreciate literature. To me, these were powerful words. Students can only say these words if they have understood the story and if they can make mental images of the different events in the story; hence, this is the purpose of the author in using literary devices.

“Hala naa gyud diay mga figurative language ang story noh?”, *“Makatabang gud siya kay ma aware man ka nga naa diay mga figurative langue ug imagery nga gigamit ang author nga naa sa story”*, these are statements that show that students are learning the content. Students were able to identify the images and the figurative language, thus bringing them to the realization that authors use devices (literary devices) to make their work creative and interesting.

“Pwede ta mag extend, lunch pa bitaw.” and *“Unya na, padayon sa mi’g basa”* are clear manifestations of eagerness to learn and the confidence to make connections with the reading selection.

The results revealed that the students were actively engaged in the different reading selections, making connections with the author, analyzing the figurative language, and making vivid mental images of the literature. Analyzing literary devices in the context of literature allowed the students to develop literary appreciation as expressed in their statements.

The use of the author’s tool box also allowed participants to analyze the presence of literary devices in narratives and organize them using the graphic organizer to clearly see that authors, just like a carpenter, have a “tool box” of literary devices to make literature more interesting. The result of this study supports the theory of cognitive learning that by systematically presenting information and classifying it in an organized, meaningful, and workable way in the learners' minds, learning can be considerably achieved (McElroy & Coughlin, 2009).

Reflection

Based on this study, I realized the formidable effect of the Author's Tool Box in enhancing students' skills in identifying literary devices in narratives. The Author's Tool Box allowed the students to see and appreciate how authors like carpenters bring with them tools such as figurative language and imagery to make literature interesting for the readers.

I have also realized that students learn better figurative language when it is taught in the context of literature. Hence, they should not be taught in isolated sentences and phrases only.

As an English teacher who had witnessed how the Author's Tool Box worked well in my Creative Writing class, I passionately recommend that this strategy be used in teaching the competency of identifying literary devices. If this works in their classrooms, other teachers should share this strategy with other teachers.

It is also recommended that the teaching of literary devices not be taught in fragments and isolated sentences but should be taught in the context of the literature. Hence, students appreciate literacy devices when they analyze literature and study its content, theme, and structure.

It is also further recommended that this be tested in other literary devices, such as the teaching of sound devices in poetry and other literary genres in group and individual activities.

Action Plan

No.	Objectives	Activities/ Strategies	Persons Involved	Timeline	Materials Needed	Expected Output
1	To inform the SDO, District Supervisor and the School Principal on the result of the study; and submit policy brief out of the study.	Send copy of the policy brief; the result and reflection of the study to the Schools Division Office, District office and Principal's office.	Researcher	Dec. 18, 2019	Hard copy of the research paper and policy brief, transportation allowance	Received copy of the policy brief and manuscript by the SDO, District Office and the principal

2	To notify teachers on the making of Author's Tool Box that will help the learners in the English subject.	Meeting with the teachers on the conduct of the study, introduction of the innovative teaching strategies and teaching materials needed.	Researcher, School Principal, Teachers	Jan. 7, 2020	Copy of action plan Training-workshop matrix, snacks	Submitted minutes of the meeting; Narrative report with MOVs, action plan; training-workshop matrix
3	To help learners improve their skills in identifying Literary Devices in Narratives through the use Author's Tool Box	Pre-Assessment of learners	Researcher	Jan. 13, 2020	Bond paper, Printer ink, school data base, snacks	Copy of evaluation and assessment results; final list of participants
		Launching of innovative teaching strategies	Researcher, School Head, Teachers, Learners	Jan. 17, 2020	Tarpaulin used as backdrop, sound system, snacks	Copy of program launching, matrix, attendance sheet
		Production of learners materials and assessments	Researcher, Learners	Jan. 13, 2020	Photocopied learner materials, bond papers, printer inks, snacks	Furnished copy of assessment results
		Commencement of the innovative Author's Tool Box	Researcher, School Head, Teachers, Learners	Jan. 18, 2020	Bond paper, ballpen, printer copy of class schedule	Learner-recipients are settled. Provided narrative report on the implementation process.
		Program monitoring and evaluation and weekly assessment on learning progress	Researcher, School head, Teachers Learners	March 4-6, 2020	Bond paper, Pens, printer inks, snacks	Produced a copy of tracking record showing the learners' English performance

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