

Original Article

# A Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Improving Students' Literary Interpretation Skills and Engagement

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**Abstract.** This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Biographical, Structuralist, and Reader-Response Approaches in enhancing Grade 10 students' literary interpretation skills and engagement. A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest non-equivalent groups design was used. The participants were 124 Grade 10 students from a DepEd high school in Valencia, Negros Oriental, who were divided into three instructional groups through a one-stage cluster sampling. A validated essay assessment measuring thematic analysis, character insight, and affective interpretation, along with a questionnaire evaluating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, were administered. The data were analyzed using percentages, means, standard deviations, t-tests, analysis of variance, and Pearson's *r*. Initial pretest results showed that students across all groups were generally at the "Developing" level in literary interpretation, indicating moderate skill in analyzing themes, interpreting characters, and forming emotional connections with texts. After the intervention, posttest results demonstrated improvement across all groups, with the Structuralism Approach earning the highest scores in all areas. Additionally, all three methods promoted student engagement, with Structuralism consistently leading in engagement levels. Overall, the findings showed a statistically significant increase in literary interpretation skills from pretest to posttest across all groups. The higher posttest scores suggest that while all three approaches were effective, the Structuralism Approach had the most substantial impact on students' literary interpretation skills and engagement.

**Keywords:** *Biographical approach; Literary interpretation; Reader-response approach; Structuralism approach; Student engagement.*

Literary interpretation is central to literary learning, requiring students to move beyond literal comprehension toward the analysis of themes, character motivations, and emotional meaning (Duarte et al., 2018). Through this process, literary reading cultivates empathy, critical thinking, and reflective awareness. However, recent scholarship indicates a steady decline in students' motivation to engage deeply with literary texts (Dera, 2025). Many classrooms continue to struggle to sustain attention and encourage meaningful interaction, particularly in educational environments shaped by digital media and competing academic demands. In response to these concerns, scholars have developed structured instructional frameworks, such as the Biographical, Structuralist, and Reader Response approaches, to guide students toward a deeper and more systematic

understanding of literature.

Each of these approaches offers a distinct explanation of how meaning is constructed in literary study. Biographical Criticism posits that understanding an author's life, historical background, and socio-cultural context provides insight into thematic intention and emotional nuance (Barry, 1995; Eagleton, 1996). In contrast, Structuralist Literary Theory maintains that meaning resides within the internal systems of the text itself, emerging from patterns, symbols, binary oppositions, and relationships among narrative elements (Saussure, 1916; Culler, 1975). Meanwhile, Reader Response Theory conceptualizes interpretation as a transactional process in which readers actively construct meaning through the interaction between the text and their prior knowledge, emotions, and lived experiences (Rosenblatt, 1938; Iser, 1978). Taken together, these perspectives suggest that literary understanding may develop differently depending on the theoretical framework that shapes students' engagement with a text.

In the Philippine context, fostering deep literary interpretation presents additional challenges. Despite the inclusion of literature in the K to 12 curriculum, many junior high school learners report difficulty analyzing texts because of limited reading exposure, insufficient mastery of literary elements, and continued reliance on traditional teacher-centered strategies (Rosales & Sarce, 2023; Tomas et al., 2021). Consequently, only a small proportion of students demonstrate independent reading and interpretive ability (Cartoneros & Galvez, 2023). Similar concerns have been raised in international contexts, suggesting that difficulties in literary interpretation extend beyond a single educational system (McDowall, 2022).

Although previous research has examined methods of teaching literature, many studies focus on a single instructional approach or rely primarily on qualitative descriptions of classroom practices. Empirical comparisons of multiple theoretical frameworks within the same population remain limited. Furthermore, while engagement is widely recognized as a critical contributor to academic success, its specific relationship to literary interpretation skills has not been sufficiently investigated. Educational Engagement Theory posits that behavioral participation, cognitive investment, and emotional involvement influence how students process learning tasks (Fredricks et al., 2004). However, it remains unclear how these dimensions function within different models of literary instruction.

Because the Biographical, Structuralist, and Reader Response traditions propose distinct routes to meaning making, they are likely to generate different patterns of student engagement and interpretive growth. Determining which approach most effectively strengthens students' literary interpretation skills and understanding how engagement relates to these outcomes is therefore an important empirical concern. Guided by the identified gaps in the literature and the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study, the present research examines students' pre-literary interpretation skills in terms of thematic analysis, character insight, and affective interpretation. It also assesses their post-literary interpretation skills in the same domains following the implementation of the Biographical, Structuralist, and Reader Response approaches. In addition, the study investigates the level of student engagement in utilizing these approaches, determines whether significant differences exist between pre- and post-literary interpretation skills within each instructional approach, examines whether significant differences occur among the three groups' posttest performances, and explores whether a significant relationship exists between students' engagement and their post-literary interpretation skills.

These inquiries are grounded in both the literature review and the study's theoretical framework. Previous research consistently indicates that students struggle with deep literary interpretation because of limited reading exposure, reliance on traditional instructional methods, and insufficient mastery of literary elements. While earlier investigations have explored individual instructional approaches, comparative empirical studies examining multiple literary frameworks remain scarce. Moreover, although engagement is widely acknowledged as essential for learning, its direct relationship to outcomes in literary interpretation has not been thoroughly established.

The study's theoretical foundations further support the research questions. Biographical Criticism suggests that understanding an author's life and historical context can clarify thematic intention, thereby supporting the assessment of interpretive growth following biographical instruction. Structuralist Literary Theory emphasizes the analysis of textual patterns, structures, and relationships, thereby justifying the evaluation of students' interpretive skills within a structuralist framework. Reader Response Theory conceptualizes interpretation as a transactional process between text and reader, underscoring the importance of personal meaning-making and engagement. Additionally, Educational Engagement Theory highlights the roles of behavioral, cognitive, and

emotional involvement in shaping learning outcomes, guiding investigations into how engagement relates to interpretive development.

By addressing these gaps, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the comparative effectiveness of multiple literary approaches, clarify the role of engagement in shaping literary interpretation, and advance student-centered, inclusive, and contextually relevant literature instruction in Philippine secondary education.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest non-equivalent groups design to determine the effectiveness of three instructional approaches, namely Biographical, Structuralist, and Reader-Response, on students' literary interpretation skills and engagement. Three pre-existing Grade 10 classes were assigned to different instructional approaches. The distribution of participants across groups was as follows: 29 students in the Biographical Approach group, 21 in the Structuralism Approach group, and 22 in the Reader-Response Approach group. Students' literary interpretation performance was measured through pre- and posttest essay assessments, while engagement levels were assessed using a student engagement questionnaire that focused on behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement.

## Results and Discussion

### Pre-Literary Interpretation Skills of the Students

Table 1 presents the pretest results for the three groups prior to the implementation of the Biographical, Structuralist, and Reader-Response approaches. Across the domains of Thematic Analysis, Character Insight, and Affective Interpretation, students were mostly at the Developing level.

**Table 1.** Level of Pre-Literary Interpretation Skills of the Three Groups of Students

Points	Verbal Description	Biographical		Structuralism		Reader-Response	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>							
8	Excellent	---	---	---	---	---	---
6 - 7	Proficient	---	---	---	---	1	4.55
3 - 5	Developing	19	65.52	14	66.67	14	63.64
1 - 2	Beginning	10	34.48	7	33.33	7	31.82
<b>Mean</b>		2.92 (Developing)		2.85 (Developing)		3.07 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		1.40		0.91		1.42	
<b>Character Insight</b>							
8	Excellent	---	---	---	---	---	---
6 - 7	Proficient	---	---	---	---	---	---
3 - 5	Developing	15	51.72	15	71.43	11	50.00
1 - 2	Beginning	14	48.28	6	28.57	11	50.00
<b>Mean</b>		2.42 (Beginning)		2.80 (Developing)		2.78 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		1.20		1.35		1.52	
<b>Affective Interpretation</b>							
8	Excellent	---	---	---	---	---	---
6 - 7	Proficient	---	---	---	---	---	---
3 - 5	Developing	22	75.86	13	61.90	15	68.18
1 - 2	Beginning	2	24.14	8	38.10	7	31.80
<b>Mean</b>		2.90 (Developing)		2.90 (Developing)		3.07 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		1.09		1.13		1.33	
<b>Overall Pre-Literary Interpretation Skills</b>							
8	Excellent	---	---	---	---	---	---
6 - 7	Proficient	---	---	---	---	---	---
3 - 5	Developing	19	65.52	13	61.90	15	68.18
1 - 2	Beginning	10	34.48	8	38.10	7	31.82
<b>Mean</b>		2.75 (Developing)		2.85 (Developing)		2.98 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		1.10		0.97		1.19	

Note: Biographical Approach (n=29); Structuralism Approach (n=21); Reader-Response (n=22)

In Thematic Analysis, the Structuralist group had a mean of 2.85, the Biographical group 2.92, and the Reader-Response group 3.07. Most students in all groups were at the Developing level, with a smaller proportion at Beginning, and only one student in the Reader-Response group reached Proficient. This suggests that while students could identify central themes, their interpretations were limited. For Character Insight, the Biographical group had the lowest mean (2.42), with nearly half of the group at the beginning. The Structuralist and Reader-Response groups had means of 2.80 and 2.78, respectively, with the majority falling into the Developing category. These results indicate greater difficulty in analyzing characters' motives and traits compared to identifying themes. In Affective Interpretation, the Structuralist group had a mean of 2.90, the Biographical group 2.90, and the Reader-Response group 3.07, with most students at the Developing level and some at the Beginning level. Students were able to express emotional responses, but often with limited connections to the text's meaning.

Collectively, students' literary interpretation skills were predominantly at the Developing level. These findings are consistent with prior studies in the Philippines (Rosales & Sarce, 2023; Cartoneros & Galvez, 2023; Tomas et al., 2021) and abroad (McDowall, 2022), which highlight challenges in literary interpretation due to limited exposure, minimal contextual understanding, and reliance on traditional teaching methods. Existing literature also indicates that single-approach strategies, often at the college level, do not fully address interpretive skills, underscoring the need for multiple approaches (Bist & Kandel, 2024; Kumar, 2025; Grønli et al., 2024).

### Post-Literary Interpretation Skills of the Students

Table 2 presents the posttest results for the three student groups on literary interpretation skills following the implementation of the Biographical, Structuralist, and Reader-Response Approaches. The data indicate varying levels of post-literary interpretation performance across the domains of Thematic Analysis, Character Insight, and Affective Interpretation, as reflected in the mean scores of each group.

**Table 2.** Level of Post-Literary Interpretation Skills of the Three Groups of Students

Points	Verbal Description	Biographical		Structuralism		Reader-Response	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>							
8	Excellent	2	6.90	3	14.29	1	4.55
6 - 7	Proficient	8	27.59	8	38.10	3	13.64
3 - 5	Developing	18	62.07	9	42.86	17	77.27
1 - 2	Beginning	1	3.45	1	4.76	1	4.55
<b>Mean</b>		4.88 (Developing)		5.83 (Proficient)		4.16 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		1.64		1.40		1.56	
<b>Character Insight</b>							
8	Excellent	---	---	5	23.81	1	4.55
6 - 7	Proficient	4	13.79	5	23.81	4	18.18
3 - 5	Developing	20	68.97	11	52.38	11	50.00
1 - 2	Beginning	5	17.24	---	---	6	27.27
<b>Mean</b>		3.78 (Developing)		5.81 (Proficient)		3.78 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		1.55		1.43		2.34	
<b>Affective Interpretation</b>							
8	Excellent	---	---	2	9.52	2	9.09
6 - 7	Proficient	3	10.34	4	19.05	3	16.64
3 - 5	Developing	26	89.66	15	71.43	11	50.00
1 - 2	Beginning	---	---	---	---	6	27.27
<b>Mean</b>		4.20 (Developing)		4.97 (Developing)		3.78 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		0.93		1.45		2.34	
<b>Overall Pre-Literary Interpretation Skills</b>							
8	Excellent	---	---	2	9.52	---	---
6 - 7	Proficient	5	17.24	8	38.10	4	18.18
3 - 5	Developing	22	75.86	11	52.38	11	50.00
1 - 2	Beginning	2	6.90	---	---	7	31.82
<b>Mean</b>		4.29 (Developing)		5.54 (Proficient)		3.91 (Developing)	
<b>SD</b>		1.29		1.23		1.79	

Note: Biographical Approach (n=29); Structuralism Approach (n=21); Reader-Response (n=22)

In Thematic Analysis, the Structuralist group had a mean of 5.83, followed by the Biographical group (4.88) and the Reader-Response group (4.16). These results indicate that students exposed to the Structuralist Approach performed best in identifying and interpreting central themes, consistent with Puspitasari (2021) and Foucault et al. (2019), who emphasized the effectiveness of structuralist methods in analyzing character roles, plot development, and thematic connections. For Character Insight, the Structuralist group again had the highest mean (5.81), while both the Biographical and Reader-Response groups scored 3.78. The Biographical Approach, which considers the author’s life and experiences, supported students’ understanding of characters’ motivations and emotional tone, aligning with the findings of Pacalioga and Tagaylo (2025) and Lopes (2025). In Affective Interpretation, the Structuralist group achieved the highest mean (4.97), followed by the Biographical group (4.20) and the Reader-Response group (3.78). The Reader-Response Approach emphasizes personal and emotional engagement with the text, supporting affective interpretation, as noted by Spirovska (2019).

Taken together, the Structuralist Approach consistently yielded the highest posttest scores across all domains. At the same time, the Biographical and Reader-Response approaches contributed to students’ interpretive development, reflecting varied emphases on author-centered and reader-centered literary interpretation.

### Students’ Cognitive Engagement in the Utilization of the Three Approaches

Table 3 shows students’ cognitive engagement when using the Biographical, Structuralism, and Reader-Response approaches during literary interpretation activities. All three approaches promoted cognitive involvement, with engagement varying by approach.

**Table 3.** Level of Students’ Cognitive Engagement in the Utilization of the Three Approaches

Indicators	Biographical			Structuralism			Reader-Response		
	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE
1. I thought more deeply about the story.	4.03	A	H	4.38	SA	VH	3.59	A	H
2. I better understood the theme using this approach.	3.66	A	H	4.10	A	H	3.41	A	H
3. I understood the characters better.	3.72	A	H	4.33	SA	VH	3.59	A	H
4. I connected the story to real life.	3.55	A	H	3.86	A	H	2.59	D	L
5. I noticed more details while reading.	3.55	A	H	4.24	SA	VH	3.36	MA	M
<b>Composite</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>4.18</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>MA</b>	<b>M</b>

**Note:** Verbal Description (VD); Level of Engagement (LoE); 4.21–5.00, Strongly Agree (SA), Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, Agree (A), High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M), Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Disagree (D), Low (L); 1.00–1.80, Strongly Disagree (SD); Very Low (VL)

Students in the Biographical group had a mean of 3.70, described as High. They reported that this approach helped them think more deeply about the story (mean = 4.03), understand characters (mean = 3.72), and grasp the theme (mean = 3.66). Observations suggest that linking the text to the author’s life encourages reflection and comprehension, supporting Rajatman and Syamsi (2025), who noted that biographical reading enhances engagement by connecting content to prior knowledge and personal experiences. The Structuralism group showed the highest cognitive engagement, with a mean of 4.18. Students reported very high engagement in analyzing the story (mean = 4.38), understanding characters (mean = 4.33), and noticing textual details (mean = 4.24). Theme comprehension scored a mean = 4.10, while connections to real-life situations were moderate (mean = 3.86). These results indicate that structured textual analysis stimulates critical thinking and careful examination of literary elements, consistent with Robertson et al. (2025), who emphasized that text-centered reading fosters sustained mental effort and analytical reasoning. The Reader-Response group had moderate engagement, with a mean of 3.31. Students noted support in thinking about the story (mean = 3.59), understanding characters (mean = 3.59), and interpreting the theme (mean = 3.41). However, connecting the text to real-life experiences received a lower score (mean = 2.59). This suggests that while personal reflection is encouraged, some students struggle to apply it to their own experiences, aligning with Sun et al. (2021) and Cao et al. (2025), who highlight the role of metacognitive strategies in comprehension.

Collectively, all approaches promote cognitive engagement, with Structuralism yielding the highest and most consistent involvement, while Biographical and Reader-Response approaches foster engagement through contextual and personal connections. These findings affirm that cognitive engagement supports students in analyzing themes, understanding character motivations, and constructing meaningful literary interpretations.

### Students' Emotional Engagement in the Utilization of the Three Approaches

Table 4 presents students' levels of emotional engagement when using the Biographical, Structuralism, and Reader-Response approaches to literary interpretation. The results indicate that all three approaches foster high levels of emotional involvement, although the degree of engagement varies.

**Table 4.** Level of Students' Emotional Engagement in the Utilization of the Three Approaches

Indicators	Biographical			Structuralism			Reader-Response		
	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE
1. I enjoyed the story more.	3.86	A	H	4.33	SA	VH	3.73	A	H
2. The lesson made me curious.	4.14	A	H	4.29	SA	VH	3.91	A	H
3. I related to the characters.	3.00	A	H	3.33	MA	M	2.36	D	L
4. I felt excited to participate.	3.55	A	H	4.05	A	H	3.73	A	H
5. I felt confident sharing my ideas.	3.48	A	H	3.57	A	H	3.27	MA	M
<b>Composite</b>	<b>3.61</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>

Note: Verbal Description (VD); Level of Engagement (LoE); 4.21–5.00, Strongly Agree (SA), Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, Agree (A), High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M), Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Disagree (D), Low (L); 1.00–1.80, Strongly Disagree (SD); Very Low (VL)

Notably, the Structuralism Approach achieved the highest composite mean of 3.91, described as Agree and High. Students reported strong curiosity (mean = 4.29), enjoyment (mean = 4.33), and excitement to participate (mean = 4.05). This indicates that focusing on textual structures and patterns stimulates emotional investment and enthusiasm in literary activities, consistent with Hua et al. (2025), who found that structured, emotionally supportive reading instruction enhances curiosity, enjoyment, and intrinsic motivation. The Biographical Approach, with a composite mean of 3.61, was interpreted as Agree and High. Students reported enjoyment (mean = 3.86), curiosity (mean = 4.14), and excitement (mean = 3.55), although their ability to relate personally to characters was moderate (mean = 3.00). This suggests that connecting texts to the authors' life experiences fosters emotional reflection and empathy, aligning with Shalev and Gidalevich's (2024) findings. In comparison, the Reader-Response Approach showed moderate emotional engagement, with a composite mean of 3.40. Students expressed enjoyment (mean = 3.73) and curiosity (mean = 3.91), but felt a low personal connection to the characters (mean = 2.36), and confidence in sharing interpretations was moderate (mean = 3.27). This indicates that while the approach encourages reflection, some students struggled to relate personally or express confidence.

Taken together, these results demonstrate that emotional engagement involves personal connection, empathy, and intrinsic interest in literary texts. When students experience enjoyment, curiosity, and excitement, they become more invested in literary interpretation, leading to richer discussions and deeper comprehension (McGeown & Conradi Smith, 2023).

### Students' Behavioral Engagement in the Utilization of the Three Approaches

Table 5 presents students' behavioral engagement levels when using the Biographical, Structuralism, and Reader-Response approaches during literary interpretation activities. The data indicate that all three groups demonstrated high to very high levels of engagement. In particular, the Structuralism group obtained the highest composite mean (4.35, SA, VH), followed by the Biographical group (4.17, A, H) and the Reader-Response group (3.97, A, H).

**Table 5.** Level of Students' Behavioral Engagement in the Utilization of the Three Approaches

Indicators	Biographical			Structuralism			Reader-Response		
	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE	$\bar{x}$	VD	LoE
1. I joined the class discussion.	4.69	SA	VH	4.76	SA	VH	4.27	SA	VH
2. I finished the story activities.	4.31	SA	VH	4.57	SA	VH	4.32	SA	VH
3. I asked or answered questions.	3.72	A	H	4.38	SA	VH	3.68	A	H
4. I worked well with my group.	4.03	A	H	3.48	A	H	3.55	A	H
5. I paid attention throughout the class.	4.10	A	H	4.57	SA	VH	4.05	A	H
<b>Composite</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>VH</b>	<b>3.97</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>

Note: Verbal Description (VD); Level of Engagement (LoE); 4.21–5.00, Strongly Agree (SA), Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, Agree (A), High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M), Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Disagree (D), Low (L); 1.00–1.80, Strongly Disagree (SD); Very Low (VL)

This pattern indicates that students across all approaches actively participated in discussions, completed assigned tasks, and sustained attention during literary activities, with the most consistent participation observed under the Structuralism approach. This finding aligns with Robertson et al. (2025), who reported that structured, text-centered reading practices enhance behavioral engagement by promoting active participation, sustained involvement, and meaningful classroom interaction through clearly guided analytical tasks.

More specifically, students in the Biographical group demonstrated high participation in class discussions (mean = 4.69) and completion of story-related activities (mean = 4.31), as well as strong engagement in questioning (mean = 3.72), collaboration (mean = 4.03), and sustained attention (mean = 4.10). The Structuralism group recorded the highest scores across nearly all indicators, particularly in discussion participation (mean = 4.76), task completion (mean = 4.57), and sustained attention (mean = 4.57), reflecting very high behavioral engagement. In contrast, the Reader-Response group showed moderate to high engagement, with comparatively lower scores in collaboration (mean = 3.55) and questioning (mean = 3.68), suggesting that active participation was more challenging for some students under this approach.

These findings underscore the role of behavioral engagement in effective literary interpretation. Classroom behaviors such as discussion participation, task completion, collaboration, and sustained attention are established indicators of engagement and are associated with improved comprehension outcomes (Bråten et al., 2022; Gomes et al., 2023). In literary instruction, such behaviors support active text processing, analysis of themes and character motivations, and meaningful interpretation across instructional approaches.

### Pretest–Posttest Differences in Students’ Literary Interpretation Skills

Table 6 presents students’ pre- and post-test literary interpretation skills following the implementation of the Biographical, Structuralism, and Reader-Response approaches. It summarizes mean scores, t-values, p-values, and effect sizes across Thematic Analysis, Character Insight, Affective Interpretation, and overall performance, highlighting the effectiveness of each approach.

**Table 6.** *Difference in the Pre- and Post-Literary Interpretation Skills of the Students*

Variables	Pre	Post	t	p	Remark	Effect Size (d)
<b>Biographical Approach (n=29)</b>						
Thematic Analysis	2.92	4.88	7.526	<.001	Significant	1.397
Character Insight	2.42	3.78	5.782	<.001	Significant	1.074
Affective Interpretation	2.90	4.20	8.138	<.001	Significant	1.511
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.75</b>	<b>4.29</b>	<b>8.948</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>1.662</b>
<b>Structuralism Approach (n=21)</b>						
Thematic Analysis	2.85	5.83	8.565	<.001	Significant	1.869
Character Insight	2.80	5.81	8.359	<.001	Significant	1.824
Affective Interpretation	2.90	4.97	10.929	<.001	Significant	2.385
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>5.54</b>	<b>11.851</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>2.586</b>
<b>Reader-Response Approach (n=22)</b>						
Thematic Analysis	3.00	3.90	3.138	<.001	Significant	0.669
Character Insight	2.50	3.90	2.332	<.001	Significant	0.497
Affective Interpretation	3.60	3.60	1.652	<.001	Significant	0.352
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>2.973</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>0.634</b>

**Note:** Cohen’s d Effect Size: Ignored, 0.00 < d ≤ 0.19; Small Effect, 0.19 < d ≤ 0.49; Medium Effect, 0.49 < d ≤ 0.79; Large Effect, 0.79 < d ≤ 1.29; Very Large Effect, d > 1.29 (Cohen et al., 2018)

The results indicate significant improvement across all approaches. In the Biographical Approach, thematic analysis increased from 2.92 to 4.88, character insight from 2.42 to 3.78, and affective interpretation from 2.90 to 4.20. These gains suggest that author-centered instruction deepens understanding, supporting Abrams (1999) and Pacalioga and Tagaylo (2025). Effect sizes were very large for thematic analysis (d = 1.397) and affective interpretation (d = 1.511), and large for character insight (d = 1.074).

The Structuralism Approach showed the highest gains, with thematic analysis rising from 2.85 to 5.83 and character insight from 2.80 to 5.81, emphasizing analytical reading of textual patterns and structures (Saussure, 1974; Eagleton, 1996; Puspitasari, 2021; Foucault et al., 2019). Effect sizes were very large for all indicators: thematic analysis (d = 1.869), character insight (d = 1.824), affective interpretation (d = 2.385), and overall performance (d = 2.586). The Reader-Response Approach also led to improvements, with thematic analysis increasing from 3.00 to 3.90 and character insight from 2.50 to 3.90, while affective interpretation remained at 3.60. These results indicate gradual development in personal and reflective engagement, consistent with Rosenblatt (1978) and Spirovska (2019). Effect sizes were moderate for thematic analysis (d = 0.669) and overall performance (d = 0.634), and small for character insight (d = 0.497) and affective interpretation (d = 0.352).

Overall, significant t-values (p < .001) across all approaches indicate that theory-based instruction effectively enhances students’ skills in literary interpretation. The strongest impact was observed in the Structuralism

Approach ( $d = 2.586$ ), followed by the Biographical Approach ( $d = 1.662$ ) and the Reader-Response Approach ( $d = 0.634$ ).

### Post-Test Performance in Literary Interpretation Across the Three Instructional Approaches

Table 7 presents the differences in post-literary interpretation skills among students exposed to the Biographical, Structuralism, and Reader-Response approaches. The results indicate significant variation in performance across the groups.

**Table 7.** *Difference in the Post-Literary Interpretation Skills of the Three Groups of Students*

Variables	$\bar{x}$	F	p	Decision	Remark
<b>Thematic Analysis</b>					
• Biographical	4.88	6.231	0.003	Reject $H_{02}$	Significant
• Structuralism	5.83				
• Reader-Response	4.16				
<b>Post-Hoc Analysis (Tukey)</b>					
B vs. S: $p = 0.088$ (Not Significant)					
B vs. RR: $p = 0.242$ (Not Significant)					
S vs. RR: $p = 0.002$ (Significant)					
<b>Character Insight</b>					
• Biographical	3.78	10.90	<.001	Reject $H_{02}$	Significant
• Structuralism	5.81				
• Reader-Response	3.78				
<b>Post-Hoc Analysis (Tukey)</b>					
B vs. S: $p < .001$ (Significant)					
B vs. RR: $p = 1.000$ (Not Significant)					
S vs. RR: $p < .001$ (Significant)					
<b>Affective Interpretation</b>					
• Biographical	4.20	2.970	0.058	Fail to reject $H_{02}$	Not significant
• Structuralism	4.97				
• Reader-Response	3.78				
<b>Overall</b>					
• Biographical	4.29	7.534	0.001	Reject $H_{02}$	Significant
• Structuralism	5.54				
• Reader-Response	3.91				
<b>Post-Hoc Analysis (Tukey)</b>					
B vs. S: $p = 0.010$ (Significant)					
B vs. RR: $p = 0.630$ (Not Significant)					
S vs. RR: $p = 0.001$ (Significant)					

Note: Biographical Approach (n=29); Structuralism Approach (n=21); Reader-Response (n=22); ANOVA with  $\alpha = 0.05$

The Structuralism group consistently outperformed the Biographical and Reader-Response groups, particularly in thematic analysis (mean = 5.83) and character insight (mean = 5.81). This indicates that the text-centered, systematic framework of Structuralism enables students to analyze internal patterns, motifs, and symbols effectively, supporting Structuralist Theory (Eagleton, 1996; Saussure, 1974). Puspitasari (2021) similarly emphasized that structural analysis strengthens inferential skills by guiding learners to interpret character functions, settings, and plot within the text's formal unity, independent of external context.

Post-hoc comparisons show that while Biographical and Reader-Response groups perform similarly in thematic analysis and affective interpretation ( $p > .05$ ), the Structuralism group differs significantly from Reader-Response in thematic analysis ( $p = .002$ ) and from both groups in character insight ( $p < .001$ ), underscoring the effectiveness of analytical instruction. Affective interpretation shows no significant differences among groups ( $p = .058$ ), reflecting the individualized nature of emotional engagement with literature (Ahern, 2024; Rosenblatt, 1978).

In summary, the Structuralism approach demonstrates clear advantages in analytical and interpretive skills. In contrast, affective responses are largely shaped by personal experience, highlighting the complementary roles of systematic instruction and individual reader engagement.

## Correlation of Students' Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Engagement with Their Post-Literary Interpretation Skills

Table 8 examines the relationship between students' engagement levels and their post-literary interpretation skills across the three instructional approaches, revealing that the influence of engagement is approach-dependent.

**Table 8.** Relationship Between the Level of Engagement of the Students and Their Post- Literary Interpretation Skills

Variables	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	Decision	Remark
<b>Biographical Approach</b>				
Post-Lit. Interpretation Skills and...				
• Cognitive Engagement	0.333	0.078	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Emotional Engagement	0.300	0.113	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Behavioral Engagement	0.339	0.072	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Overall Engagement	0.375	0.045	Reject $H_{03}$	Significant
<b>Structuralism Approach</b>				
Post-Lit. Interpretation Skills and...				
• Cognitive Engagement	0.023	0.920	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Emotional Engagement	0.437	0.048	Reject $H_{03}$	Significant
• Behavioral Engagement	0.157	0.497	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Overall Engagement	0.255	0.265	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
<b>Reader-Response Approach</b>				
Post-Lit. Interpretation Skills and...				
• Cognitive Engagement	0.289	0.191	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Emotional Engagement	0.290	0.190	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Behavioral Engagement	0.367	0.093	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant
• Overall Engagement	0.390	0.073	Fail to reject $H_{03}$	Not Significant

Note: Biographical Approach (n=29); Structuralism Approach (n=21); Reader-Response (n=22); Pearson *r* with  $\alpha = 0.05$

Under the Biographical Approach, overall engagement is significantly correlated with interpretive performance ( $r = 0.375$ ,  $p = .045$ ), indicating that students who are behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally engaged achieve stronger interpretation outcomes. This finding supports Engagement Theory, which emphasizes the role of active involvement in enhancing comprehension (Fredricks et al., 2004). However, none of the individual engagement dimensions show significant relationships ( $p > .05$ ), suggesting that interpretive success in biographical instruction is driven by holistic rather than isolated engagement, consistent with Rachmad (2022). In the Structuralism Approach, only emotional engagement demonstrates a significant correlation with interpretive skills ( $r = 0.437$ ,  $p = .048$ ). Although Structuralism emphasizes analytical reading, this result suggests that emotional interest facilitates students' engagement with complex textual structures. This aligns with Ahern's (2024) view that affective engagement supports cognitive processing by activating interpretive awareness. The absence of significant correlations for overall, cognitive, and behavioral engagement indicates that Structuralist learning outcomes rely primarily on internal textual analysis. For the Reader-Response Approach, no significant relationships are observed between engagement and interpretive performance ( $p > .05$ ). Given the subjective nature of meaning-making emphasized in Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory, high engagement does not necessarily translate into higher scores on structured interpretation measures, likely due to variability in personal experiences.

Taken cumulatively, the findings demonstrate that engagement contributes to literary interpretation in distinct ways across instructional approaches. Biographical instruction benefits from holistic engagement, Structuralism is influenced primarily by emotional engagement, and Reader-Response outcomes are less directly associated with measurable engagement levels. These results underscore the multidimensional nature of student engagement and its differentiated role in shaping literary interpretation skills across varied instructional contexts.

## Conclusion

This study highlighted the need for deliberate, structured literature instruction to strengthen students' skills in literary interpretation. Explicit teaching of literary elements is essential, as students benefit when teachers clearly model how to analyze themes, characters, and textual structures rather than assuming independent interpretation. While student engagement is important, the findings indicated that engagement alone is insufficient without instructional structure; therefore, classroom activities should combine active participation with focused analytical tasks and guided questioning. Moreover, students require support in expressing

emotional responses using appropriate academic language, as many struggle to articulate feelings clearly without prompts, models, and textual evidence. The results further suggested that a balanced instructional approach is necessary, integrating the analytical strength of Structuralism with the personal connections fostered by the Biographical and Reader-Response approaches. Ultimately, emotional engagement plays a significant role in analytical learning, underscoring the importance of classroom environments that foster curiosity, interest, and confidence in discussing literary texts.

## Contributions of Authors

**Author 1:** conceptualization, data curation, investigation, writing – original draft (proposal writing)

**Author 2:** formal analysis, conceptualization

**Author 3:** writing – original draft (proposal writing)

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this study.

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