

# Teaching Literature in Classroom Action Research Course to Prospective English Teachers

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## Abstract

This study explores how literature is interpreted by undergraduate students within the context of English language learning, particularly in the Classroom Action Research (CAR) course. Conducted over one semester (March 5 to June 4, 2025), the research involved 35 third-year students (8 male, 27 female) and employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings indicate that students view literature as both engaging and professionally relevant, particularly in relation to their future roles as English teachers. Literature is seen as instrumental in developing critical thinking, reflective teaching practices, and the ability to frame meaningful research questions. Through its integration in the CAR course, literature enables students to better understand classroom dynamics and pedagogical challenges. It is not only appreciated for its aesthetic and imaginative value but also for its potential to inform practical and context-sensitive teaching interventions. This dual perspective fosters deeper engagement, enhanced creativity, and a stronger sense of pedagogical responsibility. The study concludes that literature, when embedded in research-based learning, serves as a powerful medium for shaping the professional identity and research competence of prospective English language educators.

**Keywords:** Teaching Literature; Classroom Action Research; Prospective English Teachers

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching literature within English language education, particularly in courses such as the Classroom Action Research (CAR) course, provides a meaningful opportunity to cultivate both critical inquiry and pedagogical reflection. Prospective English teachers bring diverse beliefs, interpretive strategies, and prior experiences to their engagement with literary texts. While previous studies have emphasized the role of literature in enhancing language proficiency, cultural awareness, and critical thinking in English Language Teaching (Küçükoğlu and Arıkan, 2011), there remains a lack of focused research on how teacher candidates interpret and integrate literature within research-based learning environments. Specifically, little is known about how literary narratives influence their understanding of instructional challenges or guide the development of classroom-based research projects (Holt-Reynolds & McDiarmid, 1994). This study addresses this gap by investigating how literature is received and interpreted by prospective English teachers in the CAR course. Literature, particularly short stories valued for their accessibility and emotional relevance, functions not only as a linguistic resource but also as a reflective medium that encourages students to analyze educational issues from multiple perspectives. This engagement supports the development of research questions, the justification of methodological choices, and the articulation of findings within broader pedagogical contexts. In response to the need for teacher education programs to bridge theory and practice, this study highlights how the integration of literature in the CAR course fosters deeper engagement, reflective thinking, and culturally responsive research practices (Puspita and Rosnaningsih, 2020; Puspita et al., 2022). By doing so, it offers a novel contribution to the field, illustrating

how literary engagement can shape classroom inquiry, professional identity, and learner-centered pedagogical development. In the evolving landscape of English Language Teaching (ELT), teacher education programs are increasingly expected to cultivate not only linguistic and pedagogical competencies but also critical, reflective, and research-oriented mindsets among prospective English teachers. Integrating literature into courses such as Classroom Action Research (CAR) offers a meaningful way to develop these competencies in a comprehensive manner. Literary texts, particularly short stories and novels, support prospective English teachers in building empathy, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and creativity while simultaneously enhancing their language proficiency (Küçükoğlu & Arikan, 2011; Baharuddin et al., 2022; Junaid, 2012; Du, 2022). When thoughtfully incorporated into teacher education, literature helps bridge theoretical knowledge with classroom application and fosters a deeper understanding of pedagogical practice (Castañeda-Trujillo and Losada-Rivas, 2025). The CAR course plays a vital role in preparing prospective English teachers to become reflective practitioners. It encourages them to investigate instructional problems, implement pedagogical interventions, and assess classroom outcomes. In this setting, literature promotes analytical thinking and supplies authentic content for inquiry, allowing students to engage with educational issues through multiple perspectives (Lauer and Ariew, 2022). Despite these benefits, the use of literature in teacher education often remains limited to traditional instructional formats such as lectures and basic comprehension questions. These approaches may hinder the potential of literature to foster reflective and transformative learning (Permanaludin, 2017). Moreover, although methods like digital storytelling and multimodal analysis have been introduced, they are not yet widely adopted or consistently implemented in pre-service teacher education programs (Yu and Wang, 2025; Mega, 2024; Rohaniyah, 2012). While prior research has acknowledged the value of literature in enhancing language learning and cultural sensitivity, little attention has been paid to how prospective English teachers interpret and apply literary texts within the context of research-based learning environments. Specifically, few studies have explored how literary engagement contributes to the formation of teacher identity, the development of research questions, and the design of classroom inquiry. This lack of focused investigation represents a critical gap in current scholarship and underscores the need to examine how literature functions within action research settings. To address this gap, the present study investigates how prospective English teachers receive and interpret literature in the CAR course. It aims to uncover how literature shapes their understanding of classroom dynamics, informs their pedagogical decisions, and supports the development of reflective, context-sensitive teaching practices. By examining these processes, the study contributes a new perspective to the field of ELT, emphasizing the pedagogical value of integrating literature into research-based teacher education. Ultimately, literature-based instruction in the CAR course enhances both the cognitive and affective domains of teacher preparation. When paired with strategies such as Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA), podcast creation, and collaborative analysis, it encourages active engagement, strengthens communicative competence, and cultivates reflective habits of mind (Liu, 2024; Peng et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of literature into the CAR course is not only an instructional enhancement but a strategic response to the broader demands of preparing socially responsive, critically aware, and professionally capable prospective English teachers. The preparation of prospective English teachers requires holistic training that combines linguistic proficiency with pedagogical insight. One promising yet underexplored component of this training is the intentional use of literature to enhance speaking skills for academic purposes. When strategically integrated, literature-based instruction fosters not only language development but also intercultural competence, critical thinking, and personal growth. It allows pre-service teachers to engage with diverse voices, develop empathy, and cultivate reflective perspectives essential for effective language teaching. Furthermore, engaging pre-service

teachers in critical reflection on their language biographies has been shown to heighten awareness of linguistic diversity and promote inclusive practices in multilingual classrooms (Weger, 2025). In broader EFL contexts, digital modalities such as podcasts and digital storytelling have demonstrated their potential to support spoken fluency, learner autonomy, and academic motivation (Peng et al., 2025; Yu and Wang, 2025). In tandem, comprehensive language support through formative assessment, peer mentorship, and targeted modules helps address persistent gaps in proficiency among future educators (Dzormeku et al., 2024). However, despite growing attention to these innovations, prior research has seldom examined how prospective English teachers interpret and apply literature within research-based courses designed to develop inquiry skills and classroom-based intervention strategies. More specifically, while studies have investigated literature's contributions to reading comprehension, cultural learning, and general language development, few have focused on how literature is used to cultivate academic speaking skills within the framework of Classroom Action Research (CAR). The intersection of literature, oral academic communication, and teacher-led research remains largely unexplored. In particular, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how literary engagement informs the formulation of research questions, the articulation of pedagogical problems, and the planning of context-sensitive interventions among prospective teachers. This study addresses that gap by examining how prospective English teachers engage with literature as a medium for reflection, inquiry, and academic speaking within the CAR course. It investigates how students interpret literary texts, connect them to classroom realities, and use them to express and refine their pedagogical ideas. By focusing on the integration of literature into an inquiry-based, research-oriented setting, this study provides new insights into how literature can function not just as language input but as a generative tool for developing critical speaking, reflective teaching, and practitioner research skills in pre-service teacher education. Ultimately, literature-based instruction in the CAR course enhances both the cognitive and affective domains of teacher preparation. When paired with strategies such as Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA), podcast creation, and collaborative analysis, it encourages active engagement, strengthens communicative competence, and cultivates reflective habits of mind (Liu, 2024; Peng et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of literature into the CAR course is not only an instructional enhancement but a strategic response to the broader demands of preparing socially responsive, critically aware, and professionally capable prospective English teachers. To guide this investigation and clarify the focus of the study, the following research question is posed. How do prospective English teachers interpret and utilize literature as a tool for reflective practice and pedagogical inquiry in the Classroom Action Research course?

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how prospective English teachers perceive and interpret the use of literature within the context of the Classroom Action Research course. Descriptive qualitative research emphasizes an in-depth, case-by-case analysis of problems, recognizing the uniqueness of each issue and seeking to understand phenomena from the participants' perspectives, with the goal of describing and interpreting lived experiences, events, or conditions in rich, contextual detail through non-numerical data such as words and images (Kartini et al., 2021). The qualitative approach was chosen to capture participants' in-depth experiences, reflections, and attitudes toward the integration of literature into oral academic communication. A qualitative descriptive design provides in-depth insights into individuals' experiences, motivations, and challenges, revealing context-specific cultural factors that shape teacher effectiveness, satisfaction, and collaboration in educational settings,

and highlighting the importance of understanding these dynamics to improve organizational communication and learning environments (Risi et al., 2025). The descriptive qualitative method involves organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject under study (Marliana & Fachruddin, 2020).

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were 35 undergraduate students (8 male and 27 female) enrolled in the sixth semester of an English Language Education program at a state university in Indonesia. All participants were taking the Classroom Action Research course during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. These students were identified as prospective English teachers, preparing for future careers as language educators in various contexts, including public schools, private institutions, and higher education.

### **Research Setting and Duration**

The study was conducted over a one-semester period, from March 5, 2025, to June 4, 2025, within a regular classroom setting. The course, which integrated selected literary texts into speaking tasks, served as the main context for data generation and analysis.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected using two main techniques called classroom observations and semi-structured interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The findings of this study reveal that prospective English teachers perceive the integration of literature in the Classroom Action Research (CAR) course as both engaging and enlightening. As captured in Figure 1, the lecturer is seen actively guiding students through the significance of literature in educational research. The students, seated in rows within a traditional lecture hall setting, appear attentive and enthusiastic, reflecting a high level of interest in the topic. Their focused expressions and consistent engagement throughout the session indicate that they view literature not merely as supplementary reading but as a fundamental component that enriches their understanding of CAR. Through classroom observations and reflective notes, it was evident that literature served as a powerful tool to contextualize educational theories and real-world classroom practices. Students expressed that reading literary texts such as teacher narratives, educational short stories, and excerpts from pedagogical novels helped them grasp the abstract elements of action research. Several participants noted that literature humanized the research process and allowed them to emotionally and intellectually connect with the challenges faced by real teachers in diverse classroom settings. Moreover, during class discussions, students highlighted that literature helped them develop critical thinking and reflective inquiry, which are essential skills for conducting effective CAR. They acknowledged that stories and case-based narratives often provided deeper insight into pedagogical issues such as classroom management, student motivation, and culturally responsive teaching. This connection fostered a more nuanced approach to problem identification and solution planning in their own research proposals.

Overall, the figure and field data collectively demonstrate that literature plays a vital role in enhancing prospective teachers' engagement, comprehension, and application of action research principles. The integration of literary texts into the CAR course not only enriched the academic experience but also fostered a deeper pedagogical awareness among prospective teachers.

Participants shared that literature exposed them to complex syntactic structures, varied vocabulary, and culturally rich content, all of which are crucial for academic discussions and presentations. They felt that literary texts such as poems, short stories, and excerpts from novels encouraged deeper thinking and offered a meaningful context for developing their argumentation and oral interpretation skills. The dialogic nature of literature-based discussions allowed them to express personal insights, interpret textual meanings, and practice structured speaking in a more confident manner.

The lecturer played a vital role not only in delivering content but also in fostering an environment of inquiry and collaboration. Students felt encouraged to speak, ask questions, and engage critically with both texts and peers. This figure represents more than a visual snapshot; it reflects a dynamic interaction between pedagogy and learner identity. Most participants reported that the literary approach helped them see themselves not merely as language learners, but as future educators who must be articulate, reflective, and culturally literate.

Overall, the use of literature in this course was not only well-received but also seen as instrumental in shaping students' confidence, communicative competence, and readiness to use English effectively in academic and professional contexts.



**Figure 1.** Prospective teachers practice their literature style in speaking for academic setting

Figure 1 illustrates a dynamic classroom scene where prospective English teachers take turns, in small groups, to present their observational findings in the Classroom Action Research (CAR) class. Each group comes to the front of the classroom and explains the CAR cycle they have either implemented or analyzed, based on real or simulated teaching experiences. For those who have not yet conducted teaching practice through KKN (Kuliah Kerja Nyata) or PPL (Program Pengalaman Lapangan), they rely on classroom recordings from PPG (Pendidikan Profesi Guru) students to support their observations. The image reveals a high level of engagement as each group articulates their classroom analysis, emphasizing the practical application of literature in the observed teaching cycles.

Through classroom observations and interviews, it became evident that students were not merely reporting procedures but also reflecting critically on the pedagogical impact of literature. Many explained how integrating literary texts such as short stories, poems, or dramatized dialogues helped draw students' attention and stimulate classroom interaction. Literature was regarded not only as a tool for language development but also as a strategic medium to cultivate emotional and cognitive engagement among learners.

Students shared that through these presentations, they began to appreciate the value of literature in formulating more student-centered and reflective teaching models. They also recognized how

CAR allowed them to cycle through planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, while incorporating literary techniques to address real classroom challenges.

Figure 2 thus reflects more than academic routine. It showcases the prospective teachers' growing awareness of literature's pedagogical relevance and their evolving professional identities. Their ability to connect literary approaches with research-based teaching practices demonstrates an important shift toward becoming reflective practitioners who view literature as a powerful instrument for both academic and affective learning outcomes. The research process continued with a series of semi-structured interviews conducted to gain deeper insights into the prospective teachers' individual experiences and perceptions regarding the use of literature in the Classroom Action Research (CAR) course. In the image, students are seen waiting patiently for their turn to be interviewed. The atmosphere was calm and reflective, suggesting that participants were thoughtfully preparing to share their personal views.

These interviews provided rich qualitative data that complemented classroom observations. During the sessions, students were encouraged to reflect on how literary materials influenced their engagement with the course content and their development as researchers. Most participants described the interview as an opportunity to articulate ideas they had previously only explored through class discussions or written reflections. They reported that literature made the learning experience more relatable and meaningful, particularly when dealing with complex research issues such as formulating problems, identifying variables, and designing interventions. Several participants emphasized that reading narratives drawn from actual classroom experiences gave them the confidence to frame their own research questions more realistically. Others mentioned that literature helped them see teaching not just as a technical act but as an ethical and reflective practice that requires empathy and deep understanding of learners' contexts. These insights were frequently expressed during the interviews, indicating a shift in the way students conceptualized their roles as both teachers and researchers.

The process of conducting semi-structured interviews also served to reinforce the reflective character of the CAR course. It provided space for prospective teachers to critically evaluate their own growth and connect theoretical learning with practical application. Overall, Figure 3 underscores the importance of dialogic and reflective spaces in teacher education programs, particularly when introducing literature as a pedagogical and research tool.

## Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the multidimensional role literature plays in shaping the academic engagement, pedagogical awareness, and research competencies of prospective English teachers within the context of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) course. The integration of literary texts (particularly teacher narratives, short stories, and poems) was perceived not only as pedagogically valuable but also as intellectually stimulating and professionally formative.

As illustrated before, students demonstrated sustained attentiveness and active participation during sessions that explored the intersection of literature and classroom inquiry. This level of engagement reflects the findings of Küçükoğlu and Arıkan (2011), who reported that prospective teachers view literature as an accessible and meaningful resource, particularly when teaching elements of target language culture and classroom practices. Literature was not merely introduced as a linguistic supplement but served as an epistemological tool one that enabled students to bridge abstract research principles with the lived realities of teaching.

Observational data and reflective notes revealed that literature facilitated the internalization of CAR concepts by contextualizing theoretical models within human experiences. Students resonated with the emotional and ethical complexities portrayed in literary texts, thus developing a more nuanced understanding of pedagogical dilemmas. This finding parallels the

observations of Baharuddin et al. (2022) and Du (2022), who emphasize literature's ability to support both linguistic development and personal growth.

Moreover, student responses indicated that literature enhanced their metacognitive capacities. During class discussions and small-group presentations, participants employed literature as a scaffold to articulate educational problems, formulate research questions, and conceptualize solutions. The narrative nature of literary texts provided a reflective lens through which students could examine classroom events more empathetically and analytically. This aligns with Lauer and Ariew's (2022) argument that literature fosters inquiry skills and critical reflection qualities essential for navigating classroom complexity through research.

The semi-structured interviews further validated these findings. Students described literature as a catalyst for rethinking the role of the teacher not solely as a transmitter of knowledge, but as a reflective practitioner and classroom researcher. These reflections resonate with Holt-Reynolds and McDiarmid (1994), who argued that prospective teachers' interpretations of literature are shaped by varied premises and beliefs that often remain unexplored in teacher education. Through engagement with literary texts, participants were able to reconceptualize their teaching identities and consider the ethical and cultural dimensions of education.

Importantly, literature was not only instrumental in theoretical understanding but also in developing students' communicative competence. Participants consistently noted that the interpretive demands of literature enriched their vocabulary, argumentation, and public speaking skills. This observation reinforces findings by Puspita and Rosnaningsih (2020) and Puspita et al. (2022), who highlight the critical role of speaking skills in shaping future teachers' effectiveness. Literature discussions provided a dialogic space where students could rehearse academic discourse, express diverse viewpoints, and reflectively evaluate pedagogical strategies.

In the CAR course, students actively applied literature to analyze data from real or simulated classroom contexts. Those who had not conducted school-based teaching utilized recordings from the *PPG (Pendidikan Profesi Guru)* program. As shown in Figure 2, group presentations emphasized the practical applicability of literary frameworks in supporting cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Students explained how literature-based interventions enriched classroom interactions, particularly in fostering learner motivation and classroom engagement. These findings suggest that literary texts serve not only as didactic tools but also as mediators of emotional and cultural meaning qualities that are indispensable for crafting responsive and contextually grounded CAR projects.

Finally, the interviews highlighted students' appreciation for the reflective ethos embedded in literature-based inquiry. Participants noted that literature encouraged them to frame research questions more authentically, grounded in actual classroom experiences. These reflections mirror the arguments of Castañeda-Trujillo and Losada-Rivas (2025), who emphasize the value of inquiry-based learning for empowering teacher candidates to become both knowledge producers and agents of pedagogical change.

Overall, this study reaffirms that literature, when integrated into Classroom Action Research with pedagogical intentionality, cultivates a multifaceted development of prospective English teachers. It enhances their language proficiency, critical inquiry, and professional identity formation. However, as Permanualudin (2017) observed, literature instruction still suffers from overly traditional methods. Therefore, teacher education programs must adopt more student-centered, multimodal strategies (Yu & Wang, 2025; Mega, 2024) to unlock literature's full transformative potential. The use of literature in CAR not only bridges theory and practice but also prepares future educators to respond to the diverse linguistic, cultural, and cognitive needs of their students with creativity, empathy, and reflective depth.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that the integration of literature into the Classroom Action Research (CAR) course significantly enhances prospective English teachers' academic engagement, pedagogical awareness, and research competencies. Literary texts such as teacher narratives, short stories, and poems proved instrumental in helping students connect abstract theoretical concepts with real classroom experiences. Observations, class presentations, and interviews revealed that literature supported the development of critical thinking, reflective inquiry, and communicative competence, while also nurturing a more grounded understanding of teaching as both an intellectual and ethical practice. Students articulated how literature made the research process more meaningful and accessible, enabling them to formulate authentic research questions and consider the emotional and cultural dynamics of learning environments. These findings confirm that literature can play a central role in shaping students' professional identities as thoughtful, empathetic, and articulate educators. Therefore, the study validates the use of literature in CAR as an effective pedagogical approach that bridges theory and practice while enriching the educational experience for prospective English teachers.

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