Editorial

Empirical Research in Reading and Literary Education

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The empirical studies on literary education and/or literary reading have often been situated on the margins of academia. The presumption of literature as an inexhaustible knowledge has distanced this type of research from the academic sphere, although in recent decades, novel approaches have emerged that have revitalized the discipline.

The seventh issue of the Journal of Literary Education focuses on 'Empirical Research in Reading and Literary Education,' as articulated in its CFP, which posed the challenge of publishing a set of contributions that not only consider the scientific nature of literary studies but, even more importantly, they also highlight the need to gather evidence from actual observation in the classroom about how literature might be read ,taught or appropriated in schools. How and in what ways individual actual readers reflect on a literary work? How they might shape their interpretations of literature and how they negotiate meaning? In what ways they -as R.E. Probst in his seminal work (Probst 2004) points out- discussion is conducted inside the interpretative community

of the classroom and how individual readers respond to literary texts differently and at the same time carefully and thoughtfully?

The interest in empirical research in Literary Education arises from the observation of the relatively low number of publications in disciplines such as Psychology, Linguistics, or Educational Studies that rigorously examine, from an empirical standpoint, how individuals read, comprehend, share, and/or enjoy literary works of different genres, understood in uppercase letters. For instance, in an influential meta-analysis (Delgado et al., 2018) comparing the effect of reading on paper versus digital reading on reading comprehension, the authors concluded that there was a clear advantage of paper reading over digital reading for expository texts and no effect for narrative texts. However, the authors emphasized the need to expand research with narrative texts since the majority of studies included in the meta-analysis used expository passages (14% vs. 67%). In many cases where narrative texts are included in psychological research, they tend to be short passages extracted from longer works (as in the case of the Harry Potter series) and/or created ad-hoc by the researchers, ensuring experimental rigor but possibly limiting the literary authenticity and quality of the texts (Gómez-Merino et al., 2022; Troyer & Kutas, 2020).

From a philological perspective, however, we find corpus analyses of literary texts or careful adaptations of classic works of such significance as the *Bible* or *Don Quixote* (see the interesting proposal of the UAM Easy Reading team) for children or adult learners of second languages or those with reading difficulties, whose impact on comprehension or learning is not empirically analysed by systematically and controllably observing the reader from a cognitive or human learning model (Arfé et al., 2018).

Empirical studies about literary reading cover many areas and methodologies: from neuropsychological studies on the reception of metaphors (Schnitzer & Pedreira, 2005) to the measurement of Literary Competence (Mínguez-López & Alfonso-Benlliure, 2021), the analysis of the very core of literariness (Miall & Kuiken, 2013; Salgaro, 2015), and the inclusion of different studies with one point in common: the aim to use empirical methods and materials to check assumed statements on how to "teach" literature.

With this background, the seventh issue of the *Journal of Literary Education* has sought to compose a monograph with contributions from disciplinary perspectives (psychological, developmental, transcultural, cognitive, linguistic, and educational) to deepen our understanding of literature, literary processes, literary applications, and the notion of empirical research within the framework of literary education.

In the same vain, this particular focused issue of JLE aims to become a forum for interdisciplinary research, encouraging researchers, professors, and educators to exchange knowledge and collaborate in the field of empirical literary research.

We open this issue with the study by Jana Segi Lukavská and Anežka Kuzmičová on the inner states of characters in Children's Literature anthologies and its use in classrooms in 'Polarised Worlds: Female and Male Inner States in Children's Reading Anthologies'

Anastassiya Andrianova analyses in 'Low-stakes reflections on learning as a tool for teaching theory through children's books' the role of children's literature for teaching literary theory at the university level.

Panagyota Miké introduce the "Critical Thinking Skills Evaluation Tool" (C.T.S.E.T.) to assess critical thinking with picturebooks in First grade students in 'Assessing children's critical thinking through the "Critical Thinking Skills Evaluation Tool" (C.T.S.E.T.)'.

In 'Understanding and Text Properties: Investigating Readers' Sense-making Processes', Leonie Kirchhoff and Judith Glaesser delve into students' approaches to difficult texts (Shakespeare sonnets) and the more challenging literary phenomena they have to confront.

'Innovative Pedagogical Strategies to Motivate Reading in Young People with Intellectual Disabilities: Presentation of an Experience,' an article written by Vicenta Ávila and Laura Gil, showcases the word-cloud activity as a fruitful way to encourage reading with intellectual disabilities.

Olle Nordberg and Anna Lyngfelt, in 'The students expect to read non-fiction, so that's what they're set on' – or are they? Educational perspectives on 413 middle school students' reading, analyse responses to subjects such as vulnerability and racism and

the possibilities of literary texts for engaging students in reading and current social debate.

To conclude the monographic section, Yasemin Yilmaz Yuksek presents Reading Literary Texts with an Ecocritical Consciousness in the Anthropocene' where she questions the effect of guided reading on students' comprehension of the reading material and compares their initial responses to the texts with those given after the lecture.

The miscellaneous section is opened by Niyati Gangwar with the article 'Ideological Engagement in a Colonial Society: A Case Study of Premchand's Children's Literature'. She analyses ideology in works of a popular Indian author as a way to face British colonialism.

Maretta Sidiropoulou in Reading and Space: Unveiling Dynamic Interactions explores the ways in which of Greek urban middle-class individuals defined as readers engage with and navigate social and cultural spaces, emphasizing the agency and creativity in their reading practices.

Finally, Maria Botella-Martinez and Rebeca Cristina López-González analyse how the introduction of intercultural cinema as a pedagogical tool enhances students' communication, cooperative skills, and motivation in 'Intercultural Cinema to Foster Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: a Didactic Case Study'.

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