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Teaching Poetic Literary Texts in Middle School Education: Characteristics, Objectives, and Pedagogical Challenges

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ABSTRACT: This article highlights the importance of teaching poetic literary texts at the middle school level, emphasizing their role in developing students' literary taste, enriching their linguistic repertoire, and refining their communicative skills; It explores poetry for children as both an artistic and educational tool that respects their psychological and developmental needs, contributing to their ethical and cognitive formation. The article further examines how these texts are integrated into school curriculaparticularly in the second year of middle schoolwith a focus on their educational and pedagogical objectives and artistic characteristics. It calls for a more effective pedagogical use of poetic texts to ensure a balanced integration of linguistic and educational goals.

Keywords: Poetic texts, children's literature, literary appreciation, text-based approach, educational values, language skills, instructional objectives.

Introduction

Children's literature represents a rich domain of artistic creativity, in which various intellectual, cultural, and educational dimensions converge. It serves as a conduit through which creative energies are channeled toward the minds of young learners, generating diverse responses shaped by the ethical, religious, and pedagogical values embedded within these texts. Since this form of literary production is specifically designed to meet the evolving needs of the child at particular stages of development, it has become an effective educational and moral tool embraced by several stakeholders, foremost among them the educational institution. As such, children's literature has been given a prominent place in school textbooks intended for learners in the early stages of formal education, as it encompasses elements that stimulate and engage the child's imagination and curiosity.

This type of literature, in both its prose and poetic forms, has occupied a significant role in the educational experience of the child, particularly after educators and specialists in curriculum design recognized its value in achieving pedagogical goals. Children are naturally drawn to content that reflects their immediate reality, appeals to their curiosity, and satisfies their innate desire to explore and discover. Moreover, given their spontaneous inclination toward rhythm and musicality, there is a compelling case for granting greater prominence to the poetic dimension of children's literature within school curricula. Poetry, more so than prose, is capable of conveying educational messages through its rhythmic and auditory effects, which elicit emotional and cognitive engagement from the learner.

In light of the vital role that poetic texts play in shaping the child's educational experience, this article aims to explore the extent to which such texts contribute to the development of literary taste, the enrichment of linguistic competence, and the refinement of communicative and moral skills; This will be achieved through a focused analysis of their characteristics and educational objectives in Arabic language textbooks, with particular attention to the curriculum of the second year of middle school.

1. The Literary Text Activity

The direct integration of literary texts into Arabic language textbooks is fundamentally based on the educational value they offer learners, Through engaging in the study and analysis of these texts, students are exposed to a range of artistic, linguistic, structural, and semantic features that encourage active and meaningful participation in the learning process. This pedagogical approach has been accompanied by a paradigm shift in the teaching of Arabic, whereby the literary text is no longer treated as an isolated element, but rather as a central axis around which various learning activities are organized. This shift is grounded in the recognition that the educational goals of Arabic language instruction can only be effectively achieved by approaching the text as a dynamic entity, rich with dimensions that must be explored in order for learners to benefit from its full potential.

1.1 The Concept of the Literary Text and Its Aesthetic and Educational Function

The inherent connection between "text" and "literature" reveals a highly manifest category within the field of literary studies; The term literary text derives its linguistic roots from two Arabic roots: (ن.ص.ص) and (أ.د.ب); The first root conveys in itslexicalmeaning, the idea of elevating or raising something ; For example, "nassa al-ḥadīth" means to raise or highlight a narration, and "nassa al-matā" implies arranging items in a layered manner1. Thus, the semantic field of the term revolves around the notions of elevation and structural arrangement.

As for the second root (a.d.b), definesthe term (adab), conveys the idea of refined behavior and moral cultivation. The term (adab) refers to what disciplines an individual toward virtues and discourages vices. Etymologically, it is associated with values such as ethical conduct, noble action, and self-restraint2;Thus, the linguistic meaning of the term (adab) ultimately refers to everything that is good inwordor deed.

In its terminological usage, the literary text aligns closely with its linguistic meanings; It refers to a textual form characterized by aesthetic qualitieslinguistic, structural, and semantic. Literary texts rely heavily on creative expression, rendering them inherently aesthetic artifacts. They communicate ideas, perspectives, and emotions through artistic means that both captivate and intellectually enrich readers. These texts are crafted with the intent to affect the reader deeply, prompting repeated engagement without diminishing their aesthetic or intellectual appeal3 ; Thus, when we refer to a "literary text", we are pointing to a dimension of artistic creativity where the author seeks to convey a message to a specific audience through a distinct linguistic and stylistic construction, often deviating from conventional usage to assert originality and uniqueness.

From this perspective, literary texts serve a specific communicative and expressive function, often"encapsulating a range of purposeful messages aimed at a particular reader;"They primarily strive to generate pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment, addressing individual needs and concerns through language that delights and inspires reflection 4"; Therefore, it expresses individuals' needs and concerns through enjoyable styles, using words and expressions that captivate minds and intellects, prompting reflection and contemplation of this literary creation.

Pedagogically, literary texts are "selected excerpts from literary heritage, that possess artistic merit, and are presented to students as integrated or thematically linked ideas; They serve as effective tools for training students in literary appreciation and aesthetic sensibilityHence, literary heritage becomes an educational ; 5" resource that supports curricular goals due to its intrinsic artistic and aesthetic richness.

From another perspective, "the literary text is considered a linguistic resource that enriches learners' vocabulary, develops their interpretive skills, and fosters critical thinking and personal expression. It also appeals to students' emotional awareness and sensibility, which teachers can harness for character education and the promotion of ethical behavior6"; The linguistic and rhetorical richness of literary texts reveals boundless creativity, often associated with the unique capabilities of exceptional writers. These features make such texts

valuable pedagogical instruments through which learners are exposed to new words, meanings, syntactic structures, and expressions that expand their linguistic and cognitive repertoire.

In sum, the literary text constitutes a distinctive discursive space defined by unique features that evoke an appreciation of creative expression. Through its specific use of words, structures, and meanings, it enhances the likelihood of delivering its message effectively to the reader. Based on the idea that a literary text seeks to communicate one or more messages to a targeted audience, its construction is strategically designed to fulfill this purpose. Since its construction depends on elements capable of affecting the readeroscillating between literal and figurative usageit naturally becomes a rich learning environment in which students practice various linguistic and rhetorical usages. It also provides them with opportunities to engage with the moral and educational messages embedded within these texts.

1.2 The Pedagogical Value of Literary Texts within the Educational System

The teaching of Arabic across all educational stages is built upon a range of structured learning activities aimed at equipping learners with diverse knowledge and competencies. Among these, the integration of literary texts has emerged as a significant component, stemming from a growing recognition of their value in various educational levels ; Literary texts are regarded as an "effective means of introducing students to the distinctive features of the Arabic language, its stylistic richness, and its evolution over time. Additionally, they contribute to the development of literary culture and the cultivation of aesthetic appreciation7".

Presenting literary texts to learners provides them with access to a rich linguistic heritage and a vibrant literary tradition encompassing both poetry and prose, Through this exposure, learners become familiar with the core characteristics of their language and gain insights into the historical and cultural contexts embedded in these texts. This, in turn, fosters a unique literary sensibility and appreciation of the artistic expressions of previous generations.

In a broader sense, literature invites both readers and listeners to engage in critical thought and emotional response, transporting them into imaginative realms that extend beyond immediate reality; Imagination is a fundamental human faculty, and the finest development of this capacity often occurs through carefully selected literary works. Moreover, literary texts refine one's character, enhance aesthetic sensitivity, deepen emotional responsiveness, and sharpen intellectual faculties. They carry within them profound ethical and human values while offering enjoyment and linguistic enrichment8; Thus, literatureand the literary texts it comprisesserves as a vast and fertile ground for the construction of knowledge. It enables learners to move from concrete to abstract thought, and from factual representation to creative interpretation. In doing so, literature not only supports the acquisition of language and cognitive skills but also instills moral virtues and nurtures the learner's sense of humanity.

The educational significance of literary texts, however, depends fundamentally on how they are selected and implemented within the curriculum. Meaningful integration requires deliberate choices that align with learners' needs for both intellectual growth and enjoyment. Therefore, literary texts chosen for instructional purposes must serve specific pedagogical goals appropriate to each educational stage. The thematic depth, stylistic elegance, and expressive richness found in such texts are precisely what affirm their value as essential components of language instruction across all educational levels.

1.3 The Educational Objectives of Teaching Literary Texts

The importance of teaching literary texts lies in the educational and pedagogical objectives they serve ; Upon closer examination of these objectives, a strong correlation emerges between the overarching goals of teaching the Arabic language and those specifically achieved through the study of literary texts. It is as though the inclusion of literary texts was designed to fulfill these goals in a comprehensive manner; The specific aims of engaging with literary texts in the classroom may be summarized as follows:

- Reading and comprehending a variety of texts, and classifying them according to genre and form.
- Practicing fluent, expressive oral reading.
- Engaging in independent reading of various documents for purposes of learning or entertainment.
- Analyzing texts by organizing content, identifying central ideas, and discussing or critiquing them.

- Developing literary appreciation through the discovery of aesthetic dimensions in the textan experience that often deepens with repeated readings, as learners progressively uncover new artistic and stylistic elements that enhance their understanding of the text's overarching meaning.
- Enriching students' linguistic competence by expanding their vocabulary and syntactic repertoire, thereby enabling them to express emotions and articulate ideas with precision and clarity.
- Cultivating an aesthetic sensitivity to language and a deeper emotional engagement with the written word, whether in poetry or prosethus fostering a sense of beauty and enjoyment, which are key components of literary creativity.
- Allowing students to experience linguistic creativity, both through interpretative reading and written expression, particularly as they explore the expressive potential of the literary text.
- Facilitating a deeper understanding of the underlying structures and techniques of language, enabling learners to incorporate features of literary discourse into their own linguistic production ; This leads to more coherent and stylistically refined writing[9], contingent upon the guidance of the teacher, whose role is essential in directing students toward effective engagement with literary texts.
- Providing learners with a variety of experiences and insights conveyed by the author through the text, which may prove valuable in facing real-life situations[10].
- Connecting students with moral ideals and exemplary human behavior, as depicted in morally driven stories, socially conscious poetry, plays, proverbs, and wisdom literature ; These texts present ethical values and humanistic principles that elevate thought and behavior, making it crucial to expose students to them so as to instill virtuous conduct and upright action.

In conclusion, the overarching goal of teaching literary texts across educational levels is to instill refined literary thought in learners, allowing them to internalize the foundational principles of literary composition; Through this process, students develop an appreciation for the aesthetics of literary discourse and the creative techniques of expression, They become more attuned to the subtle elements that reflect the author's imaginative power in representing reality and conveying meaning through poetic and narrative structures. This ultimately equips them with a nuanced understanding of expressive techniques, enabling them to craft original expressions grounded in the literary knowledge they have acquired.

2- Poetic Content in the Second Year of Middle School : Between Aesthetic Orientation and Educational Purpose

Literary texts, with their multifaceted messages, are distributed among a diverse readership that varies according to age, cultural background, and cognitive maturity. As such, literary production intended for children differs significantly from that aimed at adolescents or adults. Accordingly, each genre of literary textwhether narrative or poetichas its own defining characteristics and intended learning outcomes. Consequently, texts selected for children must take into account the specific cognitive, emotional, and developmental features of this age group to ensure a meaningful and lasting educational impact.

2.1 Features of Literature Aimed at Children

Children's literature has emerged as a distinct genre of literary production that places the child's needs at the forefront of its design and content, It is built on the foundational premise that today's child is tomorrow's citizen, and that it is the educational system's responsibility to provide a literary environment that stimulates the child's psychological, linguistic, cognitive, aesthetic, and sensory faculties. Only through carefully crafted literary texts can we respond to the child's urgent need for imaginative pleasure, conveyed through tailored narrative techniques and stylistic features. These texts serve as vehicles for the exploration of societal issues pertinent to children, allowing them to interact with the world around them in a meaningful way.

Effective children's literature must align with the developmental characteristics of the target age groupspecifically, between the ages of 10 and 13. At this stage, physical growth rates vary between boys and girls, with girls often maturing earlier. Reading interest increases significantly for both genders, especially in genres such as international tales and historical fantasy. Children at this age are also able to approach problems from multiple perspectives and engage with imaginative literature in more sophisticated ways[11]; These developments call for literary texts that offer richly imaginative portrayals of events and characters, designed to evoke excitement, curiosity, and emotional engagement.

It is worth noting that "children at this stage may begin to distance themselves from familial structures, experiencing a growing desire for independence and expanding their social affiliations. They require Islamic literature that promotes sound understanding of familial dynamics and helps them navigate peer relationships and personal autonomy. This literature should also instill in them core Islamic values appropriate for their developmental stage[12]";Accordingly, the fundamental objective of literary texts for this age group is to address the child's primary developmental needs, particularly the need to feel a sense of belongingto family, to community, and to religion. These texts often present didactic and reflective visions that reinforce the idea that individual identity is deeply rooted in social and familial connectedness.

Additionally, during this stage, children "demonstrate increasing interest in biographies and autobiographies, often seeking out heroic figures as role models. Their engagement with scientific literature, realistic fiction, and thematic books related to hobbies and sports also intensifies. Girls in particular tend to gravitate toward literature that reflects their interests, such as women's magazines and books with themes relevant to their lived experiences [13]"; Therefore, literary texts for children must aim to fulfill these diverse needs, often through narrative techniques that recount historical heroism and address major societal concerns, thus broadening the child's cultural and cognitive horizons.

This intrinsic specificity that characterizes children's literary texts at this developmental stage underscores the importance of addressing their unique psychological and educational requirements. These needs must be met to ensure balanced growth across the social, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic domains. Indeed, children require guidanceliterary and otherwiseto interpret their environments meaningfully and to begin constructing their personal and social identities in a coherent and healthy manner.

2.2 The Educational and Pedagogical Dimension of Poetic Texts in the Second Year of Middle School

The Arabic language textbook for the second year of middle school serves as a structured knowledge-based record that encompasses a diverse set of learning contents distributed throughout its pages; The delivery of these contents to learners is governed by a specific pedagogical methodology known as the Textual Approach, which "considers the text as the central focus around which all linguistic activities revolvecovering various linguistic levels including phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic, and reflects multiple indicators such as contextual, situational, cultural, and social markers[14]" ; In this sense, texts of different genres become epistemological tools through which learners build integrated linguistic and cognitive knowledge by engaging with them in diverse learning tasks.

Returning to texts across all learning activities thus represents a purposeful strategy aimed at achieving cognitive integration, while also reinforcing the acquisition of knowledge in a lasting manner. It is important to note that the teaching of literary texts, in general, "constitutes an essential activity in shaping the learner's personality. Contemporary educational studies confirm that literary texts hold a primary position in nurturing learners emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorallyLiterary texts, therefore, act as catalysts in learners' ethical, ; [15]" behavioral, and intellectual formation ; However, the effectiveness of these texts depends largely on how well they are selected and pedagogically exploited by educators.

The literary texts chosen for inclusion in the curriculum should meet several criteria to align instructional practice with intended educational outcomes. Accordingly, "texts must contain a suitable density of linguistic forms, grammatical structures, and functional vocabulary, in addition to fulfilling certain aesthetic dimensions that can nurture learners' imagination, refine their literary taste, stimulate emotional engagement, and develop analytical and critical thinking skills Furthermore, these texts should elicit joy and pleasure during the reading experience. When such criteria are met, the selected texts gain legitimacy as central resources in [16]" Arabic language instruction.

When considering the poetic texts specifically included in the Arabic textbook for the second year of middle school, it becomes clear that while they are fewer in number compared to prose texts, they still play a significant role in providing learners with essential educational content. These texts are distributed across the first three modules under activities such as "Explained Reading" and "Text Study," as well as "Guided Reading." Each of these activities leverages poetic texts to fulfill its distinct pedagogical objectives and contributes to reinforcing educational components related to grammar, morphology, rhetoric, prosody, and other domains.

The use of these poetic texts creates an instructional space that supports knowledge integration and contributes to a dynamic, interactive learning environment. Thus, poetic texts offered to second-year middle school learners serve as a pedagogical field for exploring various linguistic rules and structures. For instance, in the first instructional module titled (Family Life), the poem (In Service of Families) is included to instill a range of valuesboth educational and ethical.

The educational values embedded in this poem are reflected across all its poetic units.one particularly explicit moral lesson can be observed in the following stanza :

O children of the nation, be upright, And care for your families.

For they are of great importance, They are the essence of life.

In their protection lies all goodness, And every blessing abounds.

In their contentment resides all righteousness, Success, and salvation.

This passage conveys a clear pedagogical message, emphasizing the importance of family cohesion and the moral imperative to uphold familial bonds. It encourages learners to recognize the family as a foundational pillar for navigating life's challenges, thus fostering a sense of responsibility, belonging, and ethical awarenesscore components of holistic educational development.

From an educational standpoint, the poem conveys equally important values, following a similar path as the moral lessons, though these are often more readily observable in their application. These values are actively practiced through instructional tasks that require learners to revisit the text multiple times, using it as a central learning scaffold, thus enhancing knowledge retention and accessibility.

When the text is poetic in nature, it also enables learners to practice recitation with intonation, engage in idea analysis, and apply rhetorical and prosodic principles[17]; Accordingly, the instructional dimensions of poetic texts in the Arabic language curriculum for the second year of middle school are multifaceted and closely tied to the nature of each learning activity; These dimensions include:

- Acquisition of new vocabulary that enriches students' lexical repertoire.
- Training in rhythmic poetry recitation.
- Identification and interpretation of core and secondary ideas within poems.
- Recognition and conjugation of defective verbs, including hollow and assimilated forms, with relevant transformations highlighted in poetic contexts.
- Practice in constructing new examples modeled after those in the text.
- Development of organizational skills for arranging ideas and presenting key textual elements.
- Recognition of textual modes, with an emphasis on dialogical style.
- Understanding of textual cohesion through the use of cohesive devices.
- Application of expressive techniques to enhance communication effectiveness.

In conclusion, the poetic texts included in the second-year middle school curriculum constitute a fundamental pedagogical tool in managing learning processes and facilitating knowledge acquisition. Beyond their linguistic content, these texts offer students meaningful opportunities to explore the depths of the Arabic language and its stylistic nuances. Simultaneously, they serve as a source of ethical and educational values that help learners navigate life's challenges, while fostering critical thinking, structured reasoning, and systematic engagement with both formand content in literary expression.

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