

Literature and Education: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Classroom Practice

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Abstract

Most scholars of English literature education experience the research-practice gap as having advanced literary theory and everyday classroom teaching work that is deeply disconnected with one another. This paper explores the myriad and complex reasons for the gap. In the literature, the reasons typically fall into six major categories: institutional factors (limited time, inflexible curriculum, scarce resources), low levels of teacher education and training on the latest theories, resistance (both attitudinal and linguistic) to frameworks labeled as "jargon-laden," New Criticism and humanism/colonialism, the socio-economic context of teacher beliefs and student outcomes, and the of the Furthering Colonization of the Educational System (F.C.E.S) model. In writing about the research and the primary theories on the research-practice gap, along with technology and pedagogy, the author attempts to illustrate the primary factors of the gap and the "schizophrenic split" in teacher identity whereby writing instruction is dominated by process, but in instruction of literature, it is dominated by product, text-centered, and procedural approaches. Reader-Response theory, Sociocultural theory, Critical Literacy with self-reflexivity and root narratives, Dialogic Literary Argumentation (DLA), Theory of Practice Architectures (TPA) reflection tool, Design-Based Research (DBR), and problem-based digital teacher education are frameworks for the transformation of the research-practice gap that the author proposes.

Keywords: Research-Practice Gap, Literary Theory, Pedagogy, English Education, Critical Literacy, Dialogic Teaching, Teacher Identity, Reader-Response Theory, Sociocultural Theory, New Criticism

Introduction

One of the triumphs of contemporary English education is the conflict between sophisticated literary theory and the mundane day to day practice of teaching (Purcell, 2020). The research-practice gap phenomenon is not simply one of inadequate communication of a dual absence, rather, it represents a profound divide both ontologically and epistemologically between academic

research and K-12 teaching (Wegner, 2025). While the researcher's focus is on the construction of the most innovative and, at times, highly abstract, theories to unravel the complexities of power, identity, and text, the practitioner is, more often than not, impacted by the institutional walls surrounding them, the placed and state mandated testing, and the pressing socio-emotional concerns of the students around them (Blikstad- Balas et al., 2023). There is a 'transfer problem', where the classroom is a place where most theoretical ideas seem to be missing, regardless of how innovative they might be. Closing this gap, would be the need for a radical transformation of the entire concept of teaching and teacher education, the tools of teaching, and a radical transformation of the idea of 'sayings', 'doings', and 'relatings' within the educational arena (Kemmis et al., 2024).

The Anatomy of the Research-Practice Divide

The disconnect between theory and practice is a crisis with social, cultural, and institutional dimensions, and can be described from a number of perspectives. One of the most prominent issues contributing to this divide is the perceived gap in social prestige and the public's respect for researchers versus that of teachers (IJFANS, 2022). In the hierarchy of English studies, university-based researchers are often given a so-called 'expert' status, whose main function is to generate knowledge, while teachers, in contrast, are given the status of 'practitioner' and function to merely consume and implement knowledge (Stewart, 2006). This divide in status perpetuates a culture in which teachers are recognized for their pedagogical skills, which contributes to a sense estrangement from the very research that is intended to support their efforts (Kriz et al, 2021). Researchers operate in an Academic Culture that privileges an achievement of a theory and a 'Science of Accumulation' approach meant to study mechanisms of learning in an isolated, controlled, or highly specified environment (Kuran, 2024). Differently, the classroom teacher works in a highly variable, time-constrained, teacher-controlled environment where the immediate goals are student engagement and mastery of (other) curricular standards (Ralfs, 2025). It goes without saying that the worlds and languages of these two scholars teachers are different, and as Kuran (2024) explained, a 'jargon ridden' contemporary literary theory is, in classroom, a 'hot potato' that pushes educators to abandon its use in favor of ostensibly accessible older models (Zhang, 2022).

Systematic Identification of Barriers

In order to appreciate the reason for the moderate, or more accurately, the lack of integration of writing and literary theory, one must look at the particular constraints described by practitioners. Teacher surveys yield quantifiable data, and in this case, the data identifies a more or less uniform set of constraints in the way contemporary research remains out of reach (McLure et al., 2022).

Table 1. Multidimensional Barriers to the Implementation of Literary Theory in Educational Practice

Barrier Category	Specific Factors and Perceived Obstacles	Impact on Implementation Frequency (IJFANS, 2022; Wegner, 2025)
Institutional & Structural	Time constraints, lack of material resources, and rigid curriculum standards.	High impact; forces teachers to prioritize "rote" over "inquiry."
Professional & Training	Limited teacher training in specific theories and a lack of specialized professional development.	High impact; leads to "theoretical charlatanism" or total resistance.

Cognitive & Attitudinal	Mental blocks regarding the "aesthetics" of literature and adherence to colonial/humanist paradigms.	Moderate to High; theories are seen as disrupting the "pleasure" of reading.
Social & Economic	Financial dependency, lack of native speaker access, and limited technological resources.	Variable; particularly impacts motivation in ESL/EFL contexts.
Methodological	Disjunction between research priorities and the practical needs of specific student populations (e.g., SEND).	Moderate; limits the perceived relevance of theoretical findings.

The motivated educators really do have practical challenges with time, resources, and training, as the obstacles have been documented the most. When research, time and theory frameworks are not present, they create additional challenges for teachers attempting to fit the interventions to the needs of the students (Livy et al., 2023). This causes teachers to have a variety of “research-based” practices and, furthermore, who have little to no understanding of the theories behind those practices (Fulton et al., 2023). This may even result in the practices being used in a manner in which they are not intended.

The Schizophrenic Split: Pedagogical Identity and Content Conflict

A particularly illuminating aspect of the gap is the "schizophrenic" split that often characterizes the professional identity of English teachers (Nigar, 2024). Teaching literature, for many educators, is fundamentally inconsistent with their goals and values as teachers when it comes to teaching writing (Lombard, 2024). Though these educators have developed passionate and vibrant writing classrooms, their literature classrooms often remain text-centered, product-oriented, and focus on "right-answer" interpretations (Reale, 2024).

The lasting impact of New Criticism, a formalist school of thought, has been seen as instrumental in creating this divide, as New Criticism continues to shape the customs and practices of the majority of literature instructors, even defaulting to a New Critical perspective. New Criticism assumes the literary text is an objective artifact to be closely read and analyzed in order to discover a central, unified meaning (Rains, 2015). Although this develops sophisticated literary analytical skills in students, it disregards the meaning of the text for the individual reader, as the text is treated as a container of meaning to be deciphered, rather than as a tool for thinking (Crozet et al, 2020). The objective nature of literary studies, and the contemporary theories of Reader Response and Post Structuralism that provoke a more subjective interpretation, produce a cognitive dissonance for instructors. These theories often feel to instructors as though they are shrouding the literature in an opaque veil and depriving it of its pure, aesthetic value (Jeyaraj, 2022).

Cognitive Dissonance in Classroom Practices

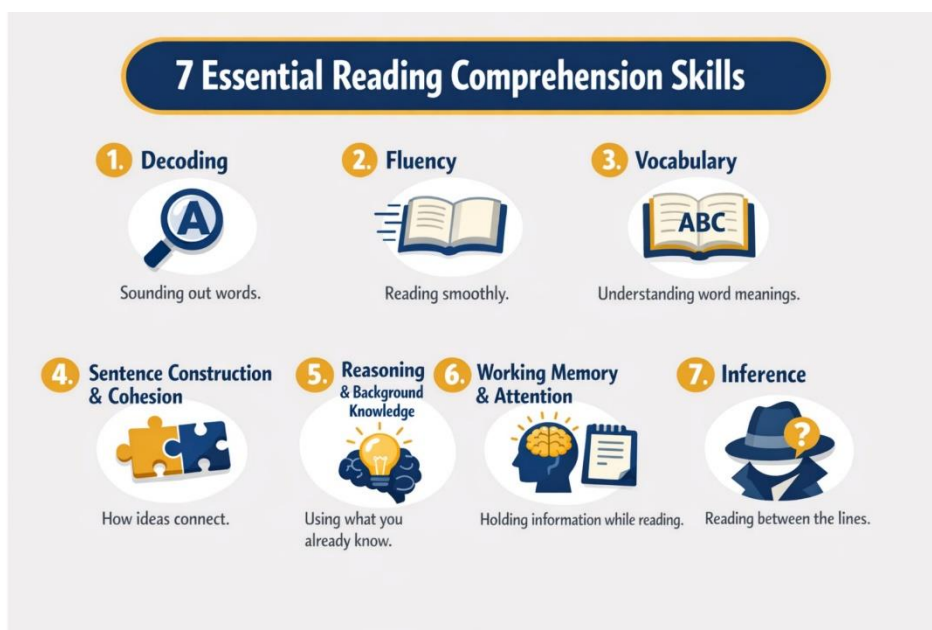
The most evident disconnect between theory and practice is in the inability to convert sophisticated frameworks into formative and summative assessments that drive student behaviors. Even in cases where practitioners are supposedly “theoretically theory-knowing,” they may sink back into the ‘traditional’ humanist’ (un)thinking during the actual instruction, unproblematically sustaining ‘colonial syndromes and Universalist (Shepard et al, 2018) assumptions. This results in ‘theory charlatans’, those who can talk a good game during professional development, but are entirely bereft of the ability to connect to the pedagogical reading and reflection processes in the classroom (Nakamba, 2025).

Theoretical Frameworks to Transform Pedagogy

Despite the overwhelming complexity of the challenges outlined, certain theoretical schools remain fundamentally robust, offering ‘building blocks’ that can serve to empower students as active participants in the process of reading and interpreting literature. When literary theory is taught, students gain the ability to verbalize and express the reasons for reading a text in a particular way as opposed to trying to figure out “what the teacher wants” (Seymour et. al, 2020). Close readings and the New Criticism Approach

New Criticism involves teaching students to view the text as independent from the author or any personal emotional responses to the text and is often critiqued for this perspective (Deane, 2020). New Criticism is often critiqued for this perspective but, as said above, provides the foundation for what almost all standards ask for, draw simplistically, and often reductively, from given moments in the text.

Figure 1. The Cognitive Foundations of Reading Comprehension: From Decoding to Inference



Structuring this as scaffolding that involves three-column notes is one way to implement this. In one column, they write a quote or symbol; in another, they write the formalist concept they think it represents; in the third, they write the thematic significance (Cartwright, 2021). In this way, students must confront the "tensions" not just within a text, but the elements that might resist one another and provide internal coherence to the text (Schoenfeldt, 2018).

Reader-Response Theory and the Transactional Approach

Unlike the formalist perspective, Reader-Response, and specifically Louise Rosenblatt’s transactional model, emphasizes the constructive role of the reader alongside the text (Fulton et al., 2023). Rosenblatt’s model is crucial in helping students establish personal connections as it considers that readers “fill in the gaps” according to their cultural frameworks and presuppositions (Rains, 2015).

Table 2. Comparative Pedagogical Perspectives of Major Literary Theory Schools

Theory School	View of the Text	Role of the Reader	Primary Pedagogical Strategy (Rains, 2015; Seymour et al., 2020)
New Criticism	A self-contained, unified artifact.	An objective observer performing "close reading."	Identifying formal devices and resolving textual tensions.
Reader-Response	A blueprint that requires completion.	An active agent performing a "transaction" with the text.	Connecting personal experience and world events to the text.
Sociocultural	A cultural product situated in a specific time/place.	A participant in a larger social and cultural discourse.	Collaborative projects and real-world writing applications.
Formalism	A collection of literary devices that "defamiliarize" the world.	A critic analyzing the "literary language" of the work.	Analyzing how figurative language changes perception of the ordinary.

The practical use of Reader-Response starts with students examining their own biases and social location prior to engaging with a text. When students' voices are legitimized, they become more invested and find that there is more than one right answer. This suggests that a text can be meaningful in a multitude of ways (Ohrvik, 2024).

Sociocultural Theory and the Writing Subject

Sociocultural theory is now the primary approach to writing research, and it is concerned with how the practices of literacy are embedded within the structure of a culture or society. In the literature classroom, this is often framed as a form of "subject reconstruction," where the students are conceptualized as meaning makers rather than recipients of "the canon" (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). This approach can be a significant way of alleviating "literary writing anxiety" and improving student outcomes by allowing students to embrace and perform a variety of writing practices to best fit their own identity (Xu et al., 2022).

The Function of New Pedagogical Tools

To bridge the gap, the gap researchers have created 'mediating tools' that bridge the gap between these theories and classroom practice, as well as help scaffold the reflections of both students and teachers Nguyen 2025.

The TPA Reflection Tool

The TPA Reflection Tool is a pedagogical resource, grounded in theory that seeks to assist educational leaders and faculty in the self-examination of their practice Kjær et al 2025. This Tool is designed to foster an organized form of reflection and, as such, involves a procedure to help identify the 'practice architectures', which are the structural arrangements that enable/ constrain particular dimensions of discourse and actions within particular educational contexts (Olney et al., 2023).

Design-Based Research (DBR) as a Collaborative Framework

Aung et al. (2025) suggest that Design-Based Research (DBR) is a possible method for closing this gap by focusing on collaboration for the first time between researchers and practitioners. Most

research is not collaborative, but with DBR, practitioners and researchers both engage in collaborative Design, Implementation, and Research cycles of collaborative educational innovations in real world settings. This dual collaboration is necessary for the innovations to be contextually relevant and sustainable. While practitioners evolve through the collaborative cycles of research, they keep modifying their teaching practices as research determines what works (Fahd et al., 2021).

Digital Problem-Based Cases in Teacher Education

The transition from lecture to real classroom teaching poses challenges for almost all student teachers (Tveitnes et al., 2025). Digital problem-based cases can assist in closing this gap, and facilitate the integrating 'teaching as craftsmanship' and 'research literacy' frameworks. Research shows that the engagement with digital problem-based cases develops an ability to construct a classroom and to manage it, interpreting and applying relevant research to real challenges, thus fostering a more complete professional identity (Tveitnes et al., 2025).

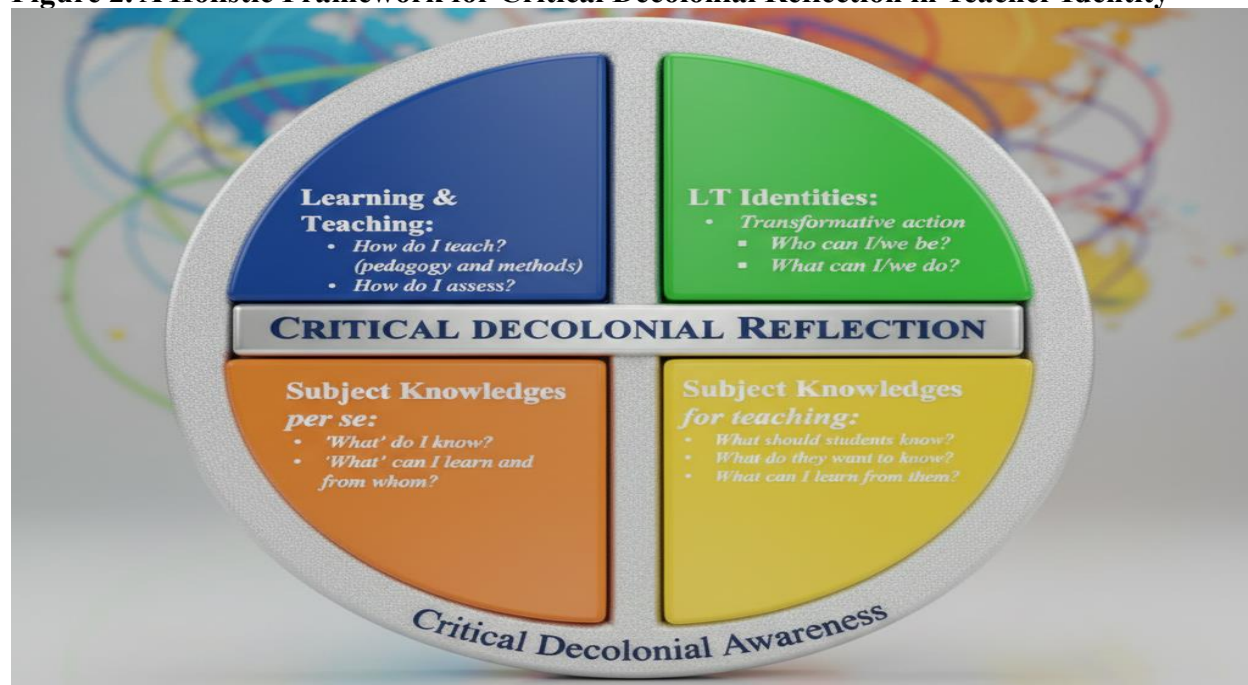
Critical Literacy: The Intersections of Language, Power, and Decoloniality

An important point of convergence in closing the theory-practice divide is the application of 'Critical Literacy' frameworks which integrate elements of critical pedagogy, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. This method transcends the mere "decoding" of texts, directing attention to the ways in which language constructs specific types of competencies that, on the whole, value and reinforce the dominant order (Andreotti, 2014).

The Move toward Self-Reflexivity

An important line of distinction in critical literacy practice is made between "reflection" and "self-reflexivity". While reflection concerns individual journeys and decisions made to transform practice, self-reflexivity relates to the tracing of individual assumptions to the collective, that is, to the root narratives the social, historical, and contextual narratives that inform what a particular society perceives as real and ideal (Parsons, 2024).

Figure 2. A Holistic Framework for Critical Decolonial Reflection in Teacher Identity



Critical Questioning Frameworks

Developing and implementing critical literacy actually calls for a different hierarchy of questions. For instance, when a teacher states to a student that education is the only way to “be somebody”, a critical literacy response would be, “Who decides what ‘being somebody’ is? In whose name and for what purpose? Who is represented and what interests? What has been ‘forgotten’?” (De Oliveira, 2017).

By using visual prompts, such as posters about global aid, educators can engage students in discussions about “complicity in harm” (Baker-Bell et al., 2017). Students examine the language of unequal donor-recipient relationships and how subordination operated in the proposed solutions from the historically oppressed (Forrest et al., 2023).

Root Narratives in Development Education

Andreotti (2014) describes four “root narratives” that educators may utilize to map differing narratives in the classroom:

1. Technician Instrumentalist: social engineering for economic expansion.
2. Liberal Humanist: universal advancement and the rights of the people.
3. Critical and Postcritical: the resistance of subordinate power and the politics of visibility.
4. Other Narratives: the examination of possibilities that are non-universal and exist beyond the European Enlightenment.

Mapping out these narratives enables students to understand that their views are not universal and that they are shaped by particular social contexts and histories. It engenders the ‘suspicion of the benevolence of benevolence’ and creates space for a moral humility and a solidary ethics that recognizes a skewed historical record (Futch et al., 2014).

Dialogic Teaching: ‘Arguing to Learn’ in the Literature Classroom

The ‘dialogic turn’ of education shifted emphasis from mental schemata to culture, intersubjectivity, and dialogue as the primary learning engines. The sign of the dialogic turn has been the emphasis on ‘structured’ forms of questioning and a teaching interaction that is collective, reciprocal, and cumulative (Racionero & Padrós, 2010).

Dialogic Literary Argumentation (DLA)

Dialogic Literary Argumentation (DLA) is one of the most recent frameworks established for secondary school (Saadi, 2025). DLA focuses on inquiry-based learning and positions argumentation, not as a competition, but as a cooperative tool to engage with and critique the social realities represented in the literature. In this case, texts serve as the basis of analysis for the exploration, deconstruction and reconstruction of the concept of personhood.

Table 3. Types of Classroom Talk and Their Pedagogical Roles in Literature Instruction

Type of Talk	Description and Learning Goal	Role in the Literature Classroom (Racionero & Padrós, 2010; Seymour et al., 2020)
Rote/Recitation	Memorizing facts or recalling teacher-specified meanings.	Limited; treats text as a "container of meaning."
Discussion	Exchanging ideas and information to uncover possibilities.	Facilitates initial exploration of competing interpretations.

Dialogue	Working toward shared understanding through structured inquiry.	Central; builds social relations and encourages risk-taking.
Argumentation	Testing cases by reference to reasons and evidence.	Focuses on deconstructing conceptions of "personhood."
Deliberation	Weighing the merits of different ideas or interpretations.	Supports the evaluation of alternative worldviews.

In DLA classrooms, teacher activities, such as role plays, encourage students to think from the perspective of characters. This approach is indicative of the understanding that learning different ways of being is a gradual process, and that the teacher needs to adopt a view that is appreciative of pluralism and community (Ferretti, et al. 2023).

Dialogic Teaching and Classroom Discourse

The link between performance and engagement, in the form of real questions and ‘uptake’, is well researched in the context of teaching English Language Arts (Magnusson et al., 2019). This has been documented in relation to teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as well. Despite this, even "naturally occurring" instruction is often characterized by a lack of discussion and teacher prompts, and what happens in discussion is often not remembered by the teacher for the purposes of follow-up (Howe, et al. 2019). In response to this, teacher inquiry groups focus on student discourse to help the teacher break the cycle of critique and develop new habits, in this case, a more dialogic disposition (Kim, et al. 2019).

New Directions: Drawing from Research

While there is optimism around proposed theoretical frameworks, the reality captured in large-scale empirical studies is sobering. In reviewing 178 video-recorded lessons from 47 lower-secondary classrooms in Norway, a dominant ‘genre discourse’ was identified, often resulting in a more reductive approach to literature (Blikstad-Balas et al. 2023).

Genre Instruction and the Loss of Inquiry

In regards to education, reading along literary texts entails students writing literary texts regarding the same motifs and focusing primarily on the same generic features and literary devices (Cui et al., 2021).

Most of the time, this stress on the same skills that can be measured socially, leads students to work “generic reading”. This is opposed to the curriculum of deep, experiential reflection (Davies et al., 2017). Moreover, there is the absence of a communal pedagogical support where the reading of more advanced texts, such as books and adult novels, is often considered a solitary “pleasure reading” (Yang et al., 2023).

Undermining Interpretive Agency

In most social studies, the discussion of the texts is mostly dominated by teachers, with a focus on a specific reading. This can erode students’ faith in their own ability to interrogate a text, as there rarely is the opportunity to delve into previously uncharted territory by building on each other’s arguments, or the opportunity to explore any countervailing oppositions (Olave, 2022.). Although students reading texts do so purposively, socialization is such that students read text to look for a “container of meaning” in the text. To learn literature as a “tool for thinking”, rather than a pedagogical resource to be dismissed, is a pressing pedagogical necessity (Tremayne, 2021).

Socio-Economic Factors and Institutional Resistance

The closing of educational gaps is above all pedagogy, but is also shaped by the socio-economic and institutional context of educational practice (Chari, 2024).

Meritocracy and Teacher Bias

The way teachers conceptualize the school system bears major ramifications on their readiness to embrace equitable practice. For teachers who believe schooling is a ‘meritocracy’, support to counterbalance the social and economic barriers of the bottom echelon of the socio-economic order is less likely to be forthcoming (Doyle et al., 2023). In addition, teachers’ biases may less likely lead them to rate lower SES students on various dimensions and therefore contribute to their underachievement (Wiederkehr et al., 2015).

Table 4. Socio-Cognitive and Contextual Factors Influencing Academic Performance and Equity

Factor	Statistical Significance & Impact	Research Findings (Wiederkehr et al., 2015; Ahmed et al., 2015)
Teacher Belief in Meritocracy	Negative correlation with equity practices.	Teachers less likely to support grade reductions for access.
Malleability of Intelligence	High impact on student motivation.	Fixed mindset beliefs correlate with lower student engagement.
Family Income/Status	Significant determinant of CGPA (alpha = 0.73).	SES variables significantly impact academic results.
Consultation with Teachers	Positive correlation with academic comfort.	Regular interaction with faculty improves grade performance.
Language Exposure	Key barrier in non-native contexts.	Lack of native speaker communication reduces motivation.

The Institutionalization of Theory in Diverse Contexts

In certain international areas, such as India, integrating literary theory into the curriculum at the postgraduate level is unavoidable, yet it has not been implemented in classroom teaching. This is often attributed to the 'humanist/colonial' conception of literature as an aesthetic and pleasurable venture rather than an academic instrument (Hughes et al., 2022). The multidisciplinary and ‘analytic’ nature of such theories can shake or jolt the prevailing notion of ‘unique and superior’ literary discourse, resulting in considerable resistance from faculty (Jeyaraj, 2022).

In China, the integration of literary theory into undergraduate courses is often contentious, as it is seen as a "complex field with jargon-ridden disciplines" (Zhang, 2022). However, there are case studies that demonstrate the positive impact of theory on students’ capacity to go beyond mere summaries, character analyses, and simplistic readings of fiction (Boske et al., 2018).

The Teacher Role Identity (TITRI) and Professional Development

The effectiveness of any attempt to close this gap relies on the strength of an integrated teacher identity. The T&I Teacher Role Identity (TITRI) framework is beneficial to all literature and language educators (Tao, 2019).

The Sub-Role Interactions

The “on-the-job” experience practitioner transforms into researcher effect positive multiplier. Conversely, the “trainer” role shift surplus value negative research activity, as the “trainer” role

consumes time and energy. The most important indicator of positive professional identity is ability to make theoretical knowledge “explicit and transferable” (Tao, 2019).

Literature Institute for Teachers (LIT) Model

Lit. Institute for Teachers (LIT) is an example of professional development model addressing the “split” between process-oriented writing instruction and product-oriented teaching of literature. LIT, as example of the National Writing Project model, fosters collaborative communities and partnerships where teachers work through challenging texts together (Levine et al., 2018).

Integration Outcomes: Empathy, Competence, and the Humanities

When the gap between theory and practice is effectively close, the positive impact on students is greatest. The study of the humanities, and more specifically, the study of diverse forms of literature, is an effective way of increasing students’ empathy and cultural competence (CMSRU, 2023).

Professional Training's Empathy and Cultural Self-Efficacy

Integrating reflective capacity and narrative competence in the humanities keeps high the levels of empathy in medical education as students’ progress through training. Cultural openness training through literature has been shown to improve ‘ethnocultural empathy’ in relation to the literature, which positively affects the diverse relational group in an academic setting (Zondi, 2025).

Table 5. Core Components of Intercultural Competence and Their Educational Outcomes

Competency Component	Definition in an Educational Context	Observed Student Outcomes (CMSRU, 2023; Zondi, 2025)
Cultural Openness	Willingness to acknowledge and appreciate cultural differences.	Improved intergroup relations in multilingual classrooms.
Ambiguity Tolerance	Reacting to ambiguous or complex tasks without distress.	Greater cognitive flexibility in clinical and literary interpretation.
Ethnocultural Empathy	Resonating with the emotions of people from diverse backgrounds.	Reduced biases and stereotypes in elementary through medical school.
Intercultural Dialogue	Exchanging views with individuals from different cultures.	Enhanced ability to navigate the intricacies of global migration.

Empirical research in elementary education suggests that multicultural literature is a vital tool for developing these skills, as it allows students to engage in both emotional and cognitive empathy (Davis, 2019).

Digital Literacies and the Future of the Classroom

A significant focus of contemporary pedagogy is the transformation of the concept of “digital literacy” from a singular skill into multiple digital literacies. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), digital tools promote and create the cross-cultural interactions and help students engage in the “knowledge economy” (Wiraningsih & Santosa, 2020).

Multiliteracies & Integrated Skill Development

The integration of digital literacy in cross-cultural ELT contexts fosters cultural sensitivity and “open-mindedness.” Moreover, teachers now guide students in the use of AI tools, such as Scopus AI and open knowledge maps, for searching, thinking, and creation (Lázaro, 2015). Utilizing technology for active learning ensures students build cultural empathy and critical thinking skills (Brandt, 2024).

Synthesis: Future Pathways

Closing the gap between the theory of literature and the practice of teaching literature as an ongoing topic of development in research, policy, and practice, is a complex undertaking (Racionero & Padrós, 2010). It would not be adequate to just “add” a theory course, the whole “practice architecture” of the literature classroom needs to be innovated. This is likely to involve the modernizing of teacher education to focus on learning what the mechanisms of learning are (evidence-informed alternatives) (Bekteshi & Avdiu, 2024). Incorporating research partnerships between educators and educational institutions is warranted to help ensure that research is practical (Wegner, 2025). When educational theory is applicable to practice in the classroom, the teaching profession can address and even resolve the “schizophrenic” divide in its professional identity and equip learners to be active, sympathetic, and robust critics of the world around them (Jeyaraj, 2022).

Conclusion

The divide that continues to exist between literary theory and the practice within the classroom in English education is more than a failure of communication, and is rooted in a more profound misalignment, both ontologically and structurally, which, in more simplistic terms, can be understood as the transformative power of advanced theoretical thinking being wasted. If real, and theorized, integration of practice and theory was to occur more frequently, most of the cited barriers (such as a lack of time, insufficient training, institutional constraints, and the prevailing ideologies of New Criticism and humanism) and other emerging barriers to pedagogical practice integration would need to be addressed. Integration of Reader-Response, Sociocultural, and Critical Literacy theories, in combination with dialogism and Dialogic Literary Argumentation, as well as reflective practices, such as those associated with the Theory of Practice Architectures, and Design-Based Iterative Research, to move beyond surface-level engagement to meaningful student engagement, authentic inquiry, and the development of both an empathic and culturally competent self-alongside a critical self-reflexive capacity and interpretive agency. Bridging this chasm requires a focused and coordinated effort across the three domains of research, policy and practice: the redesign of teacher education to focus on research and its practical application, the establishment of enduring university-school partnerships, and the realignment of classroom ‘sayings, doings, and relatings’ so that literature is conceptualized as an active, dynamic, thinking tool rather than a passive, closed container of meaning.

Addressing the ‘schizophrenic’ professional identity split and focusing on students as knowledge producers can help educators cultivate more equitable, innovative, and intellectually demanding literature classrooms. Educators can help students develop the critical awareness, solidarity, and ethics needed to traverse challenging social landscapes. This iterative and lifelong practice can help to close the theory-practice divide and re-establish the humanities' potential to develop empathetic and critically engaged citizens on a global scale.

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