The Literature-Enactment-Process

Exploring narratives through performative conventions

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This project promotes reading literature for students through a new approach termed the Literature-Enactment-Process (LEP) where students can gain access to and comprehend narratives and associated topics of inquiry through a range of phases, with drama-based conventions as a pivotal point. As a pedagogical tool, these performative strategies are embedded in a larger approach that combines individual and collaborative comprehension processes. The LEP seeks to explore literature interactively, in that the student's individual views, the perceptions of others, and the text details are equally taken into account. Teaching literature should not remain restricted to correctly answering interpretative questions. If teachers demand only one "right" interpretation, learners are deprived of the enrichment and multiple meanings texts can generate. Students must be motivated to think and learn for themselves and for a world which is constantly changing, often to the detriment of our natural environment. For this purpose, the Literature and Ecology (LITECO) workshop was designed to fuse the study of literature and ecological learning using and exemplifying the LEP. At the University of Graz, the Literature-Enactment-Process was tested with current and future teachers as well as language arts students and positively evaluated as an interdisciplinary teaching approach for the (foreign) language classroom in secondary education.

1 Inspiring reading and the construction of meaning

Adept readers readily delve into literary worlds, where they engage with a story and its characters and can be personally enriched by the imaginative worlds and ideas of a text. By contrast, students for whom this entrance into the world of literature remains inaccessible need some guidance on how to discover the pleasures of reading. If teachers want to promote literature and arouse interest and engagement, they will have to reconsider their teaching approaches, particularly if they merely present prepared interpretations or discuss them with a few interested students, who are supposed to correctly answer predetermined interpretative questions. Quieter students may not participate in these teacher-led conversations about literature for other reasons: they may not have read the literary text or struggled with it, which is why they feel unable to contribute something valuable. Some may be anxious that they might not provide the right answers to the teacher's queries, and still others may remain silent because they are tired of the entire process, even if they are avid readers in their leisure time.

Thus, a lack of student engagement in school does not mean that they are all uninterested nonreaders, a label which has been used by scholars within the last decade more cautiously because there are different "reader identities" as well as perceptions of reading in school and private contexts among students (Crumpler & Wedwick, 2011, p. 64). For example, self-descriptions of three adolescents indicate that one girl makes a distinction between pleasure reading and reading materials that need to be read for school, the latter of which, as far as she is concerned, does not count as 'reading'. One boy sees reading as embedded in various contexts serving different purposes, both as a private and as a school activity, whereas another boy perceives reading as the decoding of messages. Although these stances differ from each other, they generally do not shed a favorable light on reading as practiced in schools.

Since school readings often seem uninspiring or simply focused on cracking a code, they cannot engender the motivation and interest that teachers should wish for. This can also lead to the unfortunate development that students eventually stop reading in their private lives because they have been denied rich experiences with literature. In a four-year study, teacher-researcher Jeffrey D. Wilhelm (2016, p. 42) asked his students in middle school to complete "attitude inventories" at the beginning of each school year, which demonstrated that almost half of them regarded themselves as nonreaders or reported that they only occasionally read in their free time. Even though thirty to fifty percent claimed to be "competent readers", they merely associated reading with a necessary skill acquired in school rather than a personally satisfying endeavor.

Today, in a world where films, computer games, and other media arrest the attention of children and adolescents, it has probably become significantly harder for teachers to ignite their students' passion for reading in school and beyond. When students are assigned readings, they might not devote their time to a critical engagement with a literary text but instead search the World Wide Web, a treasure box which holds all the information they need, from summaries to ready-made interpretations. If their search yields no results or their findings are irrelevant to them, students are inclined to give up and tend to turn into "reluctant readers", who deem the treatment of literature to be dull and displeasing (Grimm & Hammer, 2015, p. 323). They do not sense the value of personally engaging with literature and simply reproduce the insights of others, such as that of a writer of an online source or a teacher, who is believed to present a valid interpretation which students can be tested on. In this way, not only the student but also the teacher is deprived of the genuine purpose of reading, to stimulate one's own imagination, curiosity, and involvement in the active creation of meanings that are generally and personally relevant. Mono-directional strategies with an emphasis on comprehension questions and systematic procedures reduce the teaching of

literature to a passive, unexciting, and uncreative part of the curriculum, where students do not expend any effort on actively contributing (Grimm & Hammer, 2015, p. 324). The reports and interviews conducted in Wilhelm's study reveal that students do not consider reading to be a vigorous pursuit but an act of determining a text's meaning, receiving its meaning from someone else or knowing answers to questions at the end of a text (Wilhelm, 2016, pp. 42-43).

However, the treatment of literature in school must not be an information-driven part of general education but should be a form of inquiry through which real-life issues can be illuminated and strategies for reading and exploring texts can be practiced. But how can we as teachers trigger our students' interest in and motivation for reading? How can we facilitate meaning construction in the classroom, where students establish a closer relationship with texts and make real-world connections? How can we communicate the value of literature to them?

Without doubt, we should direct our attention to more attractive approaches. When students enter fictional worlds through the use of drama, or engage with the story and its characters performatively, an emotional connection between reader and text is being established. For readers who are less proficient, drama conventions can serve as a springboard into story worlds, and for both less engaged and avid ones, it provides opportunities for creatively exploring narratives and sharing insights. A case study that focuses on the advantages of utilizing dramatic means demonstrates that strategies such as teacher or student in role, still images or in-role writing support the students' entry into a novel (Crumpler, 2007, as cited in Crumpler & Wedwick, 2011, p. 71). Further research substantiate these benefits by showing that these techniques stimulate students' thoughts about and understanding of works of literature (p. 72).

As a medium of literary exploration, drama enlivens the experience of reading and moves away from pre-determined teacher-controlled interpretations of literature. Thus, drama removes teachers' mere fixation on the narrative and broadens their view to include students as readers who negotiate meaning by consciously examining their own experiences and memories in response to the text.

Different efforts have already been made to combine drama with narratives, one of the earliest approaches going back to story dramatization practiced by Winifred Ward (1930). In creative drama sessions, stories are performed and thus brought to life (Wagner, 1999, p. 5). However, dramatizing a story only provides a limited scope for its exploration. The narrative is reduced to a known script, which is presented rather than explored (Bolton, 1980, p. 140).

Consequently, story dramatization is mainly a playful endeavor, which remains on the surface of the story without illuminating deeper layers.

The concept of *story drama*, coined by the academic and drama educator David Booth, refrains from dramatizing stories or knowing a script (Booth, 1985, p. 196). Instead, it utilizes the narrative, or more precisely its characters, themes, dilemma, atmosphere or spirit, as a starting point and an enrichment for a dramatic improvisation, where students process their emotions, thoughts, and inferences in response to a story. In Booth's combination of drama and literature, the narrative becomes a resource to sustain the improvisation and to extend the exploration of universal themes. Here, the actual story fades from the spotlight, though its elements serve as a steppingstone into imaginative worlds and as a source to uphold the drama. However, even if the events and issues in the book might become clearer through this dramatic engagement, these understandings remain imbued with personal feelings, thoughts, and conclusions in reaction to the enacted story. If we want to study narratives in more detail and uncover deeper and implied meanings in the classroom, it requires more than an improvisation that is merely influenced and informed by a narrative.

The third major concept which links literature and drama-based approaches was created in the 1970s by the German teacher and academic Ingo Scheller and became known as *scenic interpretation* (Scheller, 2009, p. 302)*.* The given text constitutes an outline for the scenes, which are imagined and depicted through scenic procedures such as freeze frames and improvisations. The participants should discover their own feelings, experiences, and behaviors while engaging with and interpreting unfamiliar content and the lives of characters in literature (Scheller, 2004, p. 48).

Scenic interpretations stress self-reflection with the goal to establish students' empathy for past times and literary characters by imagining themselves in their positions (Eigenbauer, 2009, p. 66). This allows for an aesthetic experience of literature centered on the body and sensory perceptions, which should spark or sustain students' interest in and fascination by literature and reading (Schau, 1996, p. 7). The concept offers a structured and valid means of treating literature more actively. However, the employed drama techniques are repetitive and predictable, and the predetermined procedure restricts the rich potential of enactment strategies. Furthermore, the scenic interpretation as proposed by Scheller is primarily based on aspects of reader response theory. Students' associations with and individual reactions to a text are at the center of attention. If individual fantasies, self-exploration, and self-awareness are prioritized when interpreting literature, one will run the risk of distorting and diverging from the words written by the author. Thus, Scheller's concept limits interpretative efforts by treating literature as a mere source for dramatic playing (Schau, 1996, p. 15).

Therefore, valuing personal reader responses cannot be the only aim of language arts because we also need to take account of the written text to validate our interpretations. It is important to consider how performative strategies can be applied and at times combined with analytical methods to illuminate different dimensions of literary texts, sustain students in their development of reading and analytical skills, and engage their interest in broader topics of inquiry. The use of drama strategies for investigating literature has not been extensively exploited so far because little emphasis has been put on the "teaching and learning of *literature* through drama" (Schewe & Scott, 2003, p. 61). Although there are some instances of drama-based approaches to specific literary texts, there is a notable lack of a clear theoretical outline. Thus, systemizing the use of drama conventions in the teaching and learning of literature would be a crucial extension of existing uses of drama in education.

With all these considerations in mind, a pedagogical model called the *Literature-Enactment-Process* (LEP) was devised including a range of phases, with drama-based approaches as a pivotal point. The LEP is intended to promote reading among students and to foster their access to but also their understanding of narratives and real-world topics through aesthetic enactments as well as analytical means. The process provides a structural guideline while remaining flexible and open for various drama strategies. Students can voice and demonstrate their reactions, feelings, and ideas triggered by the narrative. Different meanings can surface but interpretations are tested by taking account of textual evidence. During the LEP, stories are explored interactively, whereby personal views, the perceptions of others and the narrative are respected and inform the meaning-making. The potential and value of the LEP as an interdisciplinary teaching approach were shown and confirmed by its implementation at the University of Graz, where current and future teachers as well as language arts students have already participated in the Literature and Ecology (LITECO) project. The project was designed to fuse the study of narratives and ecological learning, fostering not only literary understanding but also raising environmental awareness through the LEP.

In the following, the methodology of the LEP is explained together with practical applications from the LITECO project. An abridged evaluation of the workshops based on the feedback of participants is presented at the end of the article.

2 Putting the pieces together – Phases of the LEP

The terms *literature* and *enactment* indicate that in this particular process comprising general phases, the exploration of literature is combined with enactment strategies. When engaging with literary texts, teachers should take account of three guidelines to tap the full potential of literature: establishing a link to issues of the real world, allowing for different interpretations, and encouraging personal commitment (Grimm & Hammer, 2015, p. 321). The LEP fulfills all

these demands because, on the one hand, the narrative is not examined in isolation but combined with a topic of inquiry that is relevant for our lives on this planet. For instance, in the LITECO project, where the LEP has been put into practice, our perception of, attitudes towards, and connection with nature and its exploitation by humans are addressed, which should help raise environmental awareness. Moreover, since all students are welcome to participate in a collaborative meaning-making through preparatory, enactive, and reflective phases, the LEP ensures an openness for more than one interpretation and the opportunity for personal involvement. The model below (see Figure 1) illustrates the consecutive phases of the LEP, the order of which might differ depending on the actual teaching situation. The process happens before, during and after students' encounter with a narrative.

Before the narrative is explored, the LEP commences with pre-reading activities such as visualizations or statues related to the chosen topic of inquiry. When the text or parts of it have been read, each session starts with warm-ups using suitable drama conventions. These exercises provide an entry point into the LEP, which can either immediately begin with the aspect of "Experiencing" using enactment strategies, or with "Personal Comprehension – Reading/Listening/Preparing", where students engage with details of the narrative on their own. Students read/listen to, and study texts, excerpts, chapters or related materials and/or complete preparatory tasks that inspire individual thoughts and ideas. Thus, students engage in personalized meaning making, and learn to ponder their own interpretations before sharing them with others.
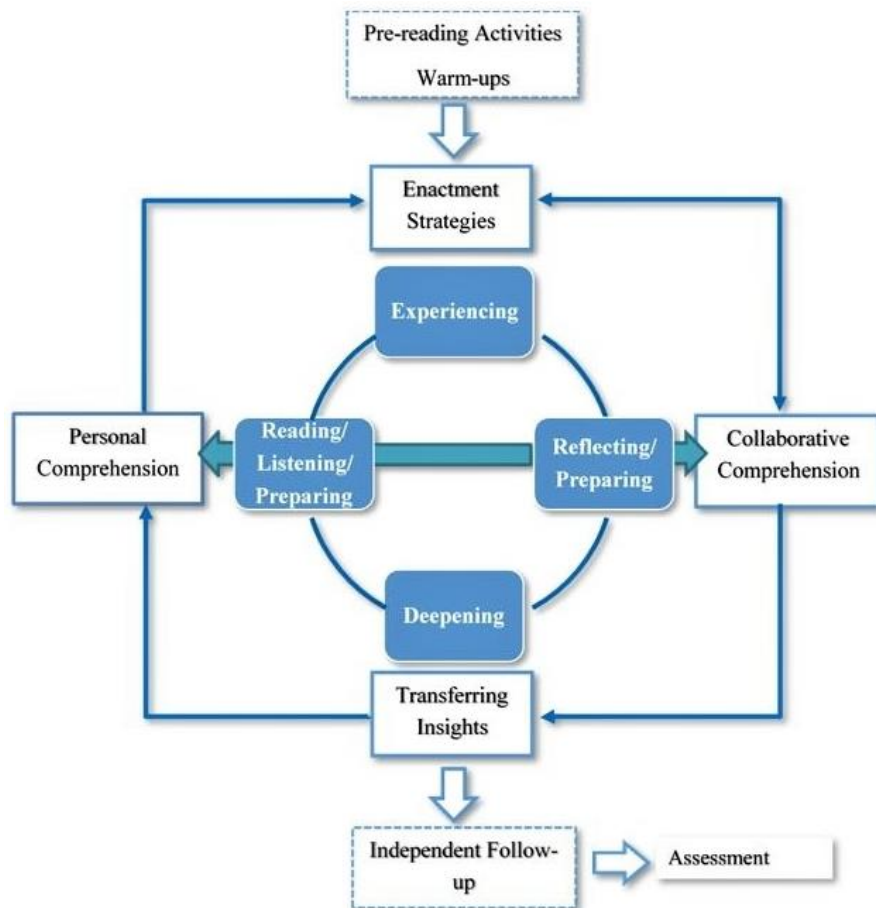
Figure 1: Phases of the Literature-Enactment-Process

This sharing can happen through enactments, on the one hand, expressed by the one-sided arrow between "Personal Comprehension" and "Enactment Strategies". On the other hand, the "Collaborative Comprehension" phase serves to exchange ideas and to reflect on findings in groups as a general and specific preparation for a drama activity. This close link between "Personal Comprehension" and "Collaborative Comprehension – Reflecting/Preparing" is indicated by the thick arrow in the center of the model. Both phases have proven conducive to the following "Enactment" phase in terms of a deep understanding of a narrative.

After or sometimes between the use of enactments, a collaborative reflection takes place, shown by the two-sided arrow between "Enactment Strategies" and "Collaborative Comprehension – Reflecting". Overall, the LEP primarily oscillates between the three described phases "Personal" as well as "Collaborative Comprehension" and "Enactment Strategies", thereby facilitating an individual and cooperative construction of meaning.

The phase "Transferring Insights – Deepening" rounds off the process. In follow-up assignments, students transform their insights into written texts or other creations such as digital stories or videos, thus deepening their understanding of the narrative, the topic of inquiry, and personal perceptions. These results can be shared, used for formative feedback

by the teacher and further discussion. During the phases of the LEP students should generally not be assessed to allow an uninhibited exploration. As implied by the arrow leading back to "Personal Comprehension" and thereby closing the circle, the aim of the different phases is to enrich and heighten each student's personal comprehension of the narrative and the topic of inquiry.

2.1   Delving into the process

To clarify the stages of the LEP, the single phases and their interaction are presented together with respective examples of the LITECO project, which is divided into three larger sessions being "Space/Setting", "Characters" and "Time". Since the emphasis in this workshop was on ecological awareness and the relationship between nature and humans, it was decided to start off with the aspect of "Space". However, every narrative has different demands, which is why teachers must determine which features they want to foreground and which topic of inquiry could be illuminated through the LEP.

Before reading the story *A White Heron* by Sarah Orne Jewett, the workshop participants were introduced to the sequence termed "Relationships to Nature". Both the visualization and the statues as well as circle monologues here served as pre-reading activities (see Table 1). These drama exercises prepare the reading process, help activate and broaden prior knowledge where necessary, conjure up memories and/or feelings, and relate issues to students' lives.

Name of the Sequence	Activities	Process Phase (LEP)	Reading/Analytical Strategies	Ecological Learning
Relationships to Nature	Visualization	Pre-reading Activities	Activation of own perspectives on a prominent theme in the story	Creating a personal vision of nature and thinking about attitudes towards it
	Statues and Circle Monologues			

Table 1: Pre-reading activities

Visualization

Together with the other activities in this sequence, this enactment strategy that is classified as "drama in the mind" (Heathcote & Herbert 1985: 176) has participants reflect on their views and perceptions of nature, which already foreshadows the topic of inquiry and a major theme of the narrative *A White Heron*. In this pre-reading activity, students walk through the room and listen to the teacher's prompts and questions. In their imagination, they now move beyond the indoor location and to an outdoor scenery. After slowing down their pace and

coming to a halt, the students shut their eyes to better concentrate on the visualization. The teacher's questions guide them to form a mental image of nature filled with sensory details: In which natural surrounding are you now? Is it pleasant or unpleasant? What do you see there? What do you hear? Do you smell something special? When their impressions have sunk in and their vision has clarified, they are asked to think about their relationship to nature and the feelings associated with it. Once students are ready, they open their eyes.

Statues

Students condense their emotions towards nature into a statue, thus making an abstract concept visible. Creative and abstract thinking are linked when students mold their idea into a body sculpture with a certain posture, gesture, and facial expression. After having created their statue, students adopt a neutral position, find a partner, and show their creation to him or her. Each one guesses what the other's sculpture could signify before explaining what they wanted to express with it.

Circle monologues

Students form a circle and, if they want to, they can show their statues and their significance in this setting before the circle monologue commences. One after the other completes the phrase "For me, nature is…", thereby offering a glimpse into their attitude towards it. With each added sentence, the monologue grows into a kaleidoscope of perspectives. A short reflection of how their perceptions of nature differ or converge can follow.

After these pre-reading activities, the sequence "Imagining Space" (see Table 2) introduces the story through excerpts dealing with space in order to create a sharper focus and tension. With longer narratives such as novels, sections and chapters that will be read continuously during the LEP, the reading process continues over an extended period. Even if enactments take place before the entire text has been read, they positively impact the participants' comprehension by heightening their awareness of meanings, fostering metacognition, and improving their preoccupation with characters, events, and issues (Wilhelm, 2012, p. 23).

Name of the Sequence	Activities	Process Phase (LEP)	Reading/Analytical Strategies	Ecological Learning
Imagining Space	Reading Excerpts General Pre-enactment Preparation	Personal Comprehension Reading/ Preparing	Defining linguistic devices	Recognizing nature's description and significance in a literary text
	General and Specific Pre-enactment Preparation	Collaborative Comprehension Reflecting/ Preparing	Noticing the importance of scenery and atmosphere	
	Narration and Soundtrack	Enactment Experiencing	Imagining Reading as a sensory experience	
	Post-enactment Reflection	Collaborative Comprehension Reflecting	-	

Table 2: Sample activities and phases of the LEP

Personal comprehension: Reading excerpts/ general pre-enactment preparation

In the sequence "Imagining Space", the LEP begins with the phase of "Personal Comprehension – Reading/Preparing", where students explore the narrative on their own and can "respond personally, free from out-side intervention, to enter as deeply as they decide into this … world of meaning" (Booth, 1985, p. 193). At this stage, students ponder analytical questions and, focusing on their text passage, deduce elements of meaning from a story. However, these analyses should not merely be an end in themselves, but a general preparation for an upcoming enactment strategy.

A worksheet helps students determine which atmosphere is created in their excerpt of the story *A White Heron* and by which linguistic devices. This first emphasis on space and atmosphere creates an aesthetic entry into the narrative in the LITECO project.

Collaborative comprehension: General and specific pre-enactment preparation

The process continues with the phase "Collaborative Comprehension – Reflecting/Preparing". At this stage, everybody's findings can be compared and consolidated, in order to reach a collective understanding of textual features and to prepare the following tasks. Occasionally,

a closer examination of a narrative can be beneficial, not only to train analytical skills and search for details and answers, but also to improve and intensify the subsequent enactive presentation. The internationally acclaimed drama educator Jonathan Neelands (1990) describes the "preparatory work" for a drama technique as "context-building action", by which participants are guided "towards making the experience concrete, particular and manageable" (p. 67). If the text base is studied closely beforehand and students do not immediately plunge into enactments, more weight is given to the narrative, which can both intensify the involvement in the process and deepen the results of the enactment.

In the workshop, students had a lively conversation about their observations in groups and then obtained a written guideline to specifically prepare for the enactment. To bring the atmosphere of the text to life, they had to design a soundtrack for their passage. At first, participants marked all the sounds mentioned in their excerpt. Next, they imagined which additional sounds could be included in the envisioned space. After the group had decided on a narrator, the students determined how to produce the sounds through their voices, bodies or other aids, which was not only enthusiastically received but also led to an intensified engagement with their respective excerpts.

Enactment: Narration and soundtrack

The LEP moves on to the central phase termed "Enactment Strategies – Experiencing", where the results of the teams are shown in the plenary, meanings merge with one another, and a literary world is actively visualized and experienced. Enactment strategies constitute an expandable and adjustable variety of methods that include physical and/or verbal action and interaction. As in theater, speech, images, and emotions are harnessed and combined differently in various dramatic conventions (Neelands, 1990, p. 66). While utilizing the mode of drama, participants can be asked to adopt roles, empathize with them, recreate the story, or imagine additions. By sharing their ideas, they creatively mediate between their own personalized readings and the narrative, which supports collective understanding of the text. Through the enactments as well as the negotiation of individual and collective meanings, they make their thoughts and understanding of concepts tangible, communicable, and amenable to investigation (Neelands, 1990, p. 62). Due to the social nature of enactments, readers have a stake in weaving the web of textual meaning together with their peers and teachers. This web may contain various strands that illustrate the facets and ambiguity of complex narratives. Thus, enactments have the potential of stimulating not only emotional and aesthetic faculties but also critical thinking about texts.

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In the LITECO project, the teams presented their excerpt together with their personalized soundtrack. By listening to these presentations with closed eyes, students confirmed that this enactment technique provided an engaging access to the text, triggered their imagination of the story's space, and raised awareness as to its importance.

Collaborative comprehension: Post-enactment reflection

After the drama activity or sometimes even between enactments, a reflection phase takes place in groups/plenary during which students can reflect and evaluate their thoughts and feelings. Here, the phase of "Collaborative Comprehension – Reflecting" invites three kinds of reflective thinking. The category of "literary reflection" pays attention to the story itself and for instance, revolves around questions about language, characters, and literary themes. The teacher and students assess the likelihood of the content and ideas illustrated by the enactments with respect to the narrative. In addition, they consider the results of the analytical tasks that were previously completed as well as the influence of textual clues on the dramatic representation. Possible questions about general themes that are relevant to humans and the world are explored in a "universal reflection". These types of reflections might blend in with a "personal reflection", as students exchange individual attitudes, emotions, thoughts, and reactions concerning the narrative, as well as discuss other emerging issues. Questions such as "How would you have felt/reacted/decided in the character's situation?" or "What have you gained or learned from the story?" can cause students to realize how literature can shape their view of their own lives and the world.

In the case of the LITECO workshop, the reflection after the enactments made the participants aware of the enactments' effects, the changes in atmosphere and the author's use of language when describing the space. Questions that arose were:

- How was the sound experience for you?
- Which atmosphere was created through text and sound in the excerpts?
- How did the mood change?
- How did the narration add to the creation of the atmosphere?
- Which language devices does the author utilize for this purpose?

The larger session of "Space" in the LITECO project includes further sequences of activities such as a "recreation of space" through a tableau vivant and "whispers in the wind" where students adopt the perspective of a natural entity.

Transferring insights: Monologue and reflection

Finally, the modules "Space" as well as "Characters" and "Time" conclude with the phase "Transferring Insights – Deepening", where students engage in independent follow-ups. Generally, these tasks can take on various forms such as new media creations or writings on paper as well as online platforms, and offer participants the chance to transfer their thoughts, ideas, and understandings to another medium. Students can be asked to write letters, e-mails, blog posts, private journals in role or produce narrative sequences from the viewpoints of different characters. Prequels or sequels to a story, missing scenes or alternative endings may be invented, which the students can afterwards reflect on, for example by pondering on the plausibility and implications of their creations regarding the narrative. Students might also be requested to empathize with characters or other entities from a story in order to write an in-role reflection on issues that have emerged during the activities.

When students present and expand their understandings of different textual features and topics in an aesthetic format, either in creative writings or other expressive modes such as films or cartoons, they adopt what Rosenblatt (2013, p. 340) defines as an aesthetic stance. If these creations are composed after having adopted other people's perspectives through dramatic means, they tend to be more complex and exhibit more sophisticated language (Booth, 1994, p. 123). Students place more emphasis on sensory details, characters' emotions as well as the selective disclosure of information, and on the target reader(s) (Wagner, 2002, p. 6).

In the final phase of the LEP, both universal and personal reflection hold as much importance as in previous phases. By contemplating issues addressed in a narrative and relating them to their own lives and the real world, students might realize that literature influences perceptions. In a concluding discussion, they might talk about how their comprehension of the novel has deepened their reception of the narrative. Higher level learners might consult and report on secondary sources and adopt an efferent stance (Rosenblatt, 2013, p. 940).

The independent follow-up in the LITECO project is called "Future Omen" and includes writings in and out of role.

Name of the Sequence	Activities	Process Phase (LEP)	Reading/Analytical Strategies	Ecological Learning
Independent Follow-up **Future Omen**	**Writing in Role: Monologue**	**Transferring Insights** Deepening	Adopting a role Connections between the text and the real world	Exploring the future of the environment from a non-human and human perspective Thinking about the nature-human relationship Paying attention to environmental problems and positive contributions to the environment
	Writing out of Role: Reflection			

Table 3: Independent follow-up

In the monologue, the students should capture the voice of a wise tree that provides an omen for the future of the natural world and the consequences for humans and non-humans. In this assignment, students envision the future from the perspective of an entity that belongs to nature and plays a crucial role in the narrative, thereby developing heightened awareness and understanding of ecological issues.

In a reflection out of role, they ponder on how humans currently harm nature and what humans in general and they themselves in particular could do to ensure a balance with nature. By completing these individual follow-up tasks, students think about the future and determine negative impacts on the environment as well as potential positive contributions to it.

Within the sessions "Space", "Characters" and "Time", as used in the LITECO project, the perspective on the story can fluctuate between four dimensions: (a) exploring the narrative, (b) extending it, (c) moving beyond it, and (d) evaluating it. When exploring the narrative (a) attention is directed to the text itself, e.g. by searching for textual details or examining events, characters' actions, behaviors or dilemmas in an existing narrative sequence. Extending the narrative (b) takes place when layers are added to the narrative, e.g. by imagining the unwritten past or future of characters, inventing alternative decisions, or investigating missing links or gaps in the text. Since stories only depict a condensed part of a person's life, they offer good opportunities to envisage a character's history or future, based on clues in the text. Such activities might shed light on underlying motives, motivations, and reactions of characters. Moving beyond the narrative (c) means that text, themes and/or situations can be connected to real-world issues and brought closer to students' individual experiences. Independent follow-up assignments during the module "Time" have students step out of the literary world for good and help them evaluate the narrative (d) from a broader perspective.

3   The LEP in practice: The LITECO project

The LITECO project was tested at the Center for Inter-American Studies at the University of Graz with future teachers and those who already pursue this profession to familiarize them with the potential of drama in education in general and the LEP in particular. Most of the participants did not have a lot of experience with enactment techniques, especially not in the context of teaching literature. Nonetheless, the whole workshop was received positively, as demonstrated in a final reflection session and by the feedback sheets that were filled out at the end of the workshop. Most participants enjoyed the workshop and perceived the engagement and cooperation among the participants as an enriching experience. Overall, they deemed the LEP and its strategies to be useful for language teachers because the narrative was not merely analyzed but brought to life through enactments. Many of them want to work with drama in the future and cited examples of activities that they particularly favored. According to their comments, the "Soundtrack and Narration" exercise proved to be an interesting entry into the story and highlighted the importance of setting and its description.

Generally, their feedback revealed that the LEP brought them into closer contact with the narrative, its setting and characters, and gave them a "feeling" for the text through active engagement, which also helped them remember the story. By slipping into their roles or seeing them visualized by others, they not only gained a deeper appreciation of the contributions of other members of the group, but also of the literary characters, their actions, motivations, and relationships. As one person noted, "becoming another character can create more depth" because the world is perceived differently through the eyes of another person.

Nevertheless, it became apparent that the participants, not being familiar with exploring literature in this interactive and emotional manner, were reluctant to adopt roles. During enactments, some of them answered on a meta level at times instead of reacting as the character they were representing. However, reflective commentaries should rather be reserved for the reflection phases.

Apart from emotional and social competences, the LEP also involves and fosters cognitive skills. In order to comprehend the narrative and the topic of inquiry, students need to think for themselves as well as in collaboration with others. Students noted that experiences through enactments give rise to more natural and fruitful discussions and reflections. Thus, the interplay between the phases "Experiencing" and "Reflecting" results in new perspectives and a more profound comprehension of a narrative. Overall, as one participant aptly put it, participants in the LEP become more active and attentive readers that acknowledge different interpretations of the same text, which can be ambivalent and hold many truths.

4   Conclusion: The LEP as an interdisciplinary approach

In the entire LEP, students move from personal and collaborative takes on a story to a deeper comprehension. During the process, shared perceptions and understandings of the narrative and related issues as well as concomitant feelings, attitudes, and values connect the textual content to students' own lives. Meanings are derived from both individual and joint investigations of the text, and students aesthetically demonstrate their understandings in performative enactments as well as creative assignments. In pre-enactment preparations and reflections, the textual base is a central point of reference to validate analysis and interpretation.

In 2018 and 2019, the LEP was evaluated at the University of Graz by current and future teachers as well as language arts students. In the context of workshops, hosted by the Center for Inter-American Studies (CIAS) and held by teacher researcher Christina Poeckl, the LEP was considered a valuable interdisciplinary approach to literature because it not only fosters emotional, social, and cognitive capacities but also involves the engagement with a larger topic of inquiry that corresponds with and complements the themes in works of literature. For instance, the short story *A White Heron*, in which nature and the human-nature relationship are of crucial importance, offered a perfect opportunity to foster ecological learning within the LITECO project.

All the phases of the LEP allow for responses to a text and afford a playful and motivating learning experience. Participants have attested to a deep involvement with and understanding of a narrative. The entire process renders reading purposeful and inspirational, includes communicative interactions as well as aesthetic representations and reflections, and thus activates students to think, speak, feel and move.

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