

---

## Essentials of Qualitative Research in English Literature: A Critical Perspective

---

**M. Sarika**<sup>1</sup>, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Yogi Vemana University, Vema, Kadapa, India, mylarisarika@gmail.com

**Dr .R.V Jayanth Kasyap**<sup>2</sup>, M.A.MPhil., Ph.D,PGCTE,Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, Department of English, Yogi Vemana University, Vemanapuram, Kadapa, India  
rvjayanth@gmail.com

---

Paper Received on 16-11-2023, Accepted on 14-12-2023,  
Published on 16-12-23; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2023.8.4.196

---

### Abstract

This article delves into the multifaceted aspects of Research in English literature. Research is an organized investigation to gain new knowledge. Research is any study that advances knowledge for the person conducting research. This research paper titled "Essentials of Qualitative Research in English Literature: A Critical Perspective" examines the importance of certain aspects that enrich the quality of research besides reflecting a deeper understanding of research. The primary objective of this paper is to emphasize the necessity of the four significant factors one should take into account: Historical Context, Theoretical Frameworks, Cultural Context, and Textual analysis, which help the researcher to evaluate a particular area of literature more critically and comprehensively in research of English literature. This paper aims to provide a better sense of direction to those currently pursuing and those who wish to undertake research in English literature.

**Keywords:** historical Context, textual analysis, literary research, unraveling gender discrimination

### Introduction:

Research is the exploration from the known to the unknown, which is general to specific. The one who wants to pursue research must have a thorough knowledge of what has been done in the past and the

present status of knowledge in the field of his investigation. Suppose the researcher wants to research Milton; then he or she must study not only all the works of the poet but also the views of different critics from the time of Milton to the present day. Also, one has to study from different perspectives more interestingly and critically and assimilate wisely for a complete understanding of the problem that will be explored. Literature expresses man's problems and studies life and its myriad facets. It influences and, in turn, is influenced by all the branches of knowledge. Having an awareness of the interdisciplinary areas would be beneficial for more qualitative and authentic research. Such an understanding would help to comprehend the works of Milton, who made use of Ptolemy's concept of the universe and executed it in his works. It is pertinent to note that literary artists, regardless of genre, come under the influence of various contexts that will make way for the evolution of the text. Therefore, a researcher must pay careful attention to the text and the Context that will help understand the text. The Context includes factors such as the place and time of the utterance, background knowledge of the world, shared experience, and interpersonal relationships.

Historical Context is associated with social, economic, political, and religious events that influence the writing of a text. Since literature deals with the problems of human existence, the writer focuses on the problems of life, and society becomes the backdrop. So, suppose someone wishes to research Shakespeare's plays. In that case,

he/she must understand the Elizabethan period, traditions, qualities, beliefs, customs, their way of living and relationship with other groups, and the dominant ideas of England's sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With the following illustration, one can understand how the historical Context of a particular work is significant for better comprehension of a literary text. Suppose a researcher desires to analyze **King Lear**; he or she is expected to know the socio-economic and political conditions during its publication. Shakespeare wrote **King Lear**, drawing inspiration from the historical figure of King Leir and earlier works like **The True Chronicle History of King Leir and His Three Daughters**.

During the Elizabethan period, an extremely hierarchical society existed, where the upper class dominated the middle-class people. Respect was given to the people who were powerful and wealthy. It shows how vulnerable parents and noblemen are to be treated by unscrupulous children and, thus, how fragile the fabric of Elizabethan society is. His unwise decision based on his daughters' flattering and sugar-coated words leads the family into chaos, and the power goes to two wicked daughters. The greed and selfishness of Goneril and Regan give scope for political and moral conflicts. The play **King Lear** reflects how people were materialistic and how basic ethics, values, and relationships were ignored. The evils that prevailed in the society of England all surface of the play projects all things such as materialistic pursuits, disregarding principles, and desirous of power and money, drawing the researcher's attention to perform research in the deeper probe. As the two wicked sisters desire power and the ascension of Edmund, the kingdom descends into a civil and moral crisis. The characters exhibit the nature of greed and merely pursue selfish goals and personal ambitions. It depicted the importance of material things rather than eternal things.

The destruction of family relationships was portrayed clearly in the play. The avarice of his daughters brings disgrace to the kingdom and familial relationships. King Lear was blindfolded by passion and ignored a true devotion of Cordelia. He could not understand Cordelia's steadfast devotion and disowns her, depriving her of her parental care. The play shows how he was trapped by sugar-coated words uttered by his greedy daughters. The cupidity leads to suffering, which is also shown in certain characters. Materialistic desires like the lust for money, power and authority, and hierarchy in improving social status are represented in detail in the play. In order to get a broad discernment, a researcher can evaluate various aspects of research from domestic, familial, political, and social perspectives.

To illustrate the above Context, another remarkable work, **The Wasteland**, which can be observed as a poem about brokenness and loss and implicit reference to the First World War, suggests that the war played a significant part in bringing about social, psychological, spiritual, and emotional degradation. It explores life in London after the First World War, which became a backdrop for the people to live with unrest. Eliot is anxious about spiritual degeneration since there is a belief in science. People's lives generally have a paucity of spiritual significance, which is shown through the character of a typist in the section of the poem **The Fire Sermon**, which serves as a true moral crisis. Eliot has described the evil effects of the First World War, and the poem reflects his concern about the world's lack of harmony and peaceful coexistence. The poem seeks to portray a world in the web of materialistic desires. It is a poem where the present civilization is perplexed without emotion. Eliot says that a land is dead where humanity is degrading. It portrays a crisis in spiritual and moral values and their degeneration. A researcher can instill all the

above-discussed ideas to make his or her research more qualitative and authentic.

To evaluate the literary work, theoretical insights offer a rich understanding of Formalism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, Modernism, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism, Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, Feminism, New Historicism, Reader response criticism, Cultural Studies, and Eco Criticism provide newer viewpoints and insights. If someone is critiquing feminist concern, they must be aware of its existence, dominant factors, and features. There was a thought that the male was superior in everything and the female was inferior, and she had to be ruled by the male. There was such gender discrimination prevailed in those days, and women were treated as imperfect in all aspects compared to men. Roots of prejudice against women were embedded in culture. For instance, **A Vindication of the Rights of Women** by Mary Wollstonecraft reveals that women should stand up for their votes and not allow male-dominated society to define their existence. The patriarchal society accentuated that women were inferior to men, and they did not have the right to freedom to write and to express their feelings and emotions. They are confined to household work and taking care of their children. Education was given only given to men. That is why Woolf, in her writing **A Room of One's Own**, says that centuries of prejudice and financial and educational disadvantages have deprived women of creativity. Subsequently, Simone de Beauvoir in **The Second Sex** (1949) declares that,

"One is not born, but rather becomes a woman."

Having inculcated these discussed aspects, one must acquire a comprehensive comprehension regarding the theory that he wishes to pursue research.

Cultural Context is another crucial factor in pursuing research in English literature. Literary texts often reflect cultural

nuances and worldviews. The keen observation of diverse cultures with sensitivity, avoiding cultural appropriation and stereotyping gives scope to a better appreciation of cultural aspects in literary works. Developing cultural competence allows for a deeper appreciation of the text's authenticity—the author who produces a work with the influence of his or her society. So, in literary research, it is essential to ensure that one should approach their work with respect, empathy, and accuracy. It helps avoid harmful stereotypes and involves literary texts responsibly and ethically soundly. In cultural studies, specific important sites are explored, and a researcher conducting a deeper probe is expected to focus on nation, gender, caste, creed, etc.

The novel "**My Antonia**" by Willa Cather helps to understand the Context of culture clearly. It depicted various ideas about immigration and race that greatly concern America. It depicts a story of loss and remembrance that depends on her imagination. The national attitudes about immigrants, race, culture, and her unconscious ones are easier to interpret if one has a conscious cultural Context regarding the above aspects. The immigration and race took place in the United States at the time of her publication of this work. So, to have authenticity and accuracy in her writing, one must have a thorough understanding of cultural Context and observation of immigration and race at the time of her writing. Hence, one must evaluate all these perspectives and inculcate the ideas of the above discussion to conduct research in literature.

Text can be expressed as "the verbal record of a communicative act."

Text is created and interpreted between two people in a specific context. There are various contexts, such as situational and cultural contexts. Several linguists have done different research to build a relationship between text and Context. In linguistics,

Context determines text, and text reflects Context.

Textual analysis is considered one of the most essential tools in pursuit of research in English literature. Through textual analysis, one must be able to evaluate a particular work by considering how the different components of literary texts are related to one another. To research a particular work, one should consider the author and his biography, which was neglected in those days.

It was I. Richards first demonstrated how subjectivity creeps into one's mind when interpreting a poem. He organized a method called **Practical Criticism**, by which one can interpret a poem objectively. One must have a keen observation of sense, feeling, tone, and intention regarding the evaluation of a particular work. It is concerned with the words and syntactical structure of the text and their inter-relationship. A literary work is an imaginative reproduction of reality. The one who produces a work possesses the creating power and is not confined to only one idea, feeling, emotion, or experience like an average man. The language that he or she uses is referential. For instance, the concluding lines of Yeast's "**Among School Children**" give an idea of the nature of a work of art.

"O Chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomed,  
Are you the leaf, the blossom, or the bole? "  
The Chestnut is all three and yet more than that. Here, it is an organic whole, the verbal icon. Hence, one can discover and demonstrate the truth by analyzing the above text.

#### **Conclusion:**

English literature includes Historical Context, Textual Analysis, Cultural Context, and Theoretical Frameworks that relate to English Literature research. Historical

Context helps to understand the movement, background, themes, and features of the particular work he or she wants to research. On the other hand, textual analysis helps to discover and demonstrate the truth of the text. Cultural Contexts provide exposure to bicultural and multicultural aspects. Theoretical Framework enhances the quality of discussion besides proving the basis for arguments put forth. It gives a broad idea regarding that particular author and the theory that he or she inculcated in his or her work. Hence, it guides young researchers in conducting research in English literature.

#### **References:**

- Gilian.B., Geroge. Yule., Discourse Analysis, Cambridge University Press, 1983
- Nozar, N., Rama Goutam, How to study Literature Stylistic and Pragmatic Approaches.
- Asoke Ghosh, PHI Learning Private Limited, M-97, Connaught Circus, New Delhi-110001
- Rajitha Venu Gopal, Krishnan, and A., Dhamma pal Babaji Fulzele, Swapna N.R. Mary Regitha Bellamine., What About Theory? ed., Kalyani Vallath.
- Shaozeng Ren. (1995). Discourse Functions of Tense in English, Foreign Language, 3, 222-29
- Showalter, E, Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness, 1981
- Simon de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 1949
- Sinha, M, P., Research Methods in English, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2004
- Tory Young " Studying English Literature Practical Guide." Cambridge University Press, 2008
- William Shakespeare King Lear, 1608

#### **How to cite this article?**

**M. Sarika & Dr .R.V Jayanth Kasyap** "Essentials of Qualitative Research in English Literature: A Critical Perspective" Research Journal Of English (RJOE)8(3), PP:195-198,2023, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2023.8.4.198