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Genre-Oriented Philippine Literary Pieces That Appeal to the Learners' Motivation to Read

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Abstract: Despite the rich landscape of Philippine literature, there remains a limited understanding of how specific literary forms and their linguistic delivery influence students' motivation to read across the archipelago. Grounded in Guthrie and Wigfield's Engagement Model, this study addresses this gap by exploring the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that shape learners' engagement with local texts. Utilizing an exploratory qualitative design, the study involved 18 language students purposefully selected from the Philippines' three major island groups, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, who participated in semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed a duality in reading motivation: while learners are primarily driven to read contemporary genres due to their social realism and linguistic accessibility via "Taglish", they simultaneously exhibit deep engagement with complex historical narratives like *Noli Me Tangere*. This finding suggests that historical consciousness, the desire for identity reclamation, can override linguistic barriers regardless of regional background. The study concludes that effective literature instruction must navigate both the psychological need for mirroring lived experiences and the sociological need for anchoring a unified national identity. These insights support a pedagogical strategy of thematic pairing, where educators integrate high-interest contemporary texts with canonical works to optimize student engagement on a national scale.

Keywords: L2 Reading Motivation; Literary Pedagogy; Philippine Literature; Genre Analysis

1. Introduction

Reading motivation plays a critical role in language development and academic success [1–3]. In the Philippine educational context, the integration of local literature into the curriculum serves not only to promote national identity and cultural awareness but also to engage learners in meaningful reading experiences [4–6]. Philippine literature, rich in themes, diverse in form, and reflective of Filipino identity, offers a wide array of genres including short stories, poetry, plays, and essays [7–9]. However, despite its curricular inclusion, there remains a noticeable gap in understanding which specific literary genres most effectively appeal to learners and how these texts and their linguistic delivery influence their motivation to read [10–12].

To address this, this study is grounded in Guthrie and Wigfield's Engagement Model of Reading, which posits that reading engagement is sustained not merely by the ability to read, but by intrinsic motivation characterized by curiosity, aesthetic involvement, and social interaction [1, 13]. While prior studies have explored reading motivation in general, few have utilized this theoretical lens to localize this inquiry to Philippine literature and its specific genres [14, 15]. Furthermore, in a bilingual nation where English, Filipino, and "Taglish" (code-switching between Tagalog and English) coexist, the interaction between a text's genre and its linguistic accessibility remains underexplored.

As a result, educators may lack evidence-based strategies for selecting texts that resonate with students' preferences, experiences, linguistic realities, and cultural identities [16, 17]. The study focuses on two primary variables: learners' reading motivation (as the outcome variable) and Philippine literary genres (as the influencing variable). Within this framework, key concepts explored include genre appeal, thematic resonance, cultural relevance, literary elements (e.g., character development, language use, themes), and the influence of historical or societal contexts on reader engagement [18–20].

The language students will share their personal experiences and preferences through in-depth, one-on-one interviews [21]. By applying reflexive thematic analysis to the interview data [22], the study aims to uncover patterns and themes that explain how and why certain Philippine literary genres capture learners' interest more than others. Specifically, this study seeks to identify which genres most effectively stimulate intrinsic motivation and uncover the textual elements, such as thematic resonance and language use, that sustain this engagement. The expected outcome is a clearer understanding of the genre-specific factors that enhance reading motivation among students. This knowledge will inform educators, curriculum developers, and language teachers in selecting and designing literature-based materials that not only meet educational goals but also cultivate a lasting interest in reading among learners.

2. Literature Review

Theoretical Framework: Learner Motivation and Literary Engagement. Motivation is a key determinant in students' engagement with reading, especially in literary contexts. To understand this dynamic, this study utilizes Guthrie and Wigfield's Engagement Model of Reading [1], which posits that reading is sustained not just by cognitive skill, but by the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

According to this framework, intrinsic motivation is the internal drive to read for curiosity, aesthetic involvement, and personal enjoyment [23]. Guthrie and Wigfield [1] assert that this form of motivation significantly contributes to sustained reading behaviors. In the Philippine context, this intrinsic drive is strongly influenced by the degree to which texts reflect learners' realities. Bautista et al. [24] highlight that students are intrinsically motivated to read literary works when these texts mirror their experiences, emotions, or cultural identities. Similarly, Paguio et al. [25] found that emotional and cultural resonance in Philippine literature leads to greater reading frequency and deeper textual analysis. This confirms that intrinsic engagement is an emotional and intellectual response to literature that speaks directly to the learner's sense of self.

Conversely, extrinsic motivation involves external drivers, such as grades, compliance, or support mechanisms [23]. While often viewed as secondary, support systems are crucial. Shebani et al. [26] identified that parental support strategies serve as critical motivators for language learning. Their findings suggest that when learners feel emotionally and academically supported, their motivation increases. However, Li et al. [23] caution that if external intervention is too controlling, it may stifle independent curiosity. Therefore, the ideal reading environment is one that fosters intrinsic interest through relatable content while providing supportive, rather

than controlling, external guidance.

Distinction Between Literary Form and Genre. To accurately analyze student preferences, it is necessary to distinguish between literary form and genre. The structural codes of a text, its form, include modes such as novels, short stories, or poetry, whereas genre typically refers to thematic categories like romance, mystery, or historical fiction [27].

However, in practical application, the line between form and genre is often blurred. Rafferty [27] notes that major professional standards often group these concepts together under genre/form terms, indicating that, institutionally, they are viewed as a combined tool for organizing literary materials. Furthermore, the relationship between form and genre depends on the user; while theorists view genre as a fixed structure, readers often view it as a fluid ecosystem based on shared characteristics [27]. Consequently, this study adopts a learner-centric perspective, examining how both the form and the thematic genre interact to influence motivation.

Popular Philippine Literary Genres among Students. Philippine literary works appeal to learners in varying ways, with some forms standing out due to their accessibility and performative nature. Contemporary fiction, spoken word poetry, and folklore are among the most favored categories among younger Filipino readers [28]. These often feature current social issues, youth-centered themes, and modern language, which resonate with students' lived experiences.

Spoken word poetry, specifically, demonstrates how form influences engagement. According to Michalko [29], spoken word has seen increased popularity due to its performative and expressive nature, often addressing topics such as identity, family, and mental health. In this case, the oral form itself becomes a driver of motivation. Meanwhile, traditional genres like legends and folktales continue to captivate readers, especially when retold with modern illustrations or adaptations that blend Filipino and English [30].

Linguistic and Cultural Factors Influencing Preferences. The elements within Philippine literature, such as characters, themes, language, and structure, play an essential role in shaping students' reading preferences. Butac et al. [31] emphasize that students are drawn to texts featuring relatable characters and contemporary themes. However, a critical factor in the bilingual Philippine context is the use of "Taglish" (code-switching between Tagalog and English).

Lesada [32] notes that learners prefer stories with realistic dialogue that reflects their own modes of communication. Recent findings by Bahingawan and Bulatao [33] support this, indicating that using Taglish simplifies complex content, making it easier for students to bridge the gap between what they already know and new lessons. They argue that code-switching helps reduce the mental effort required to translate terms, allowing students to focus their energy on understanding the actual subject matter. Consequently, students explicitly prefer learning materials presented in Taglish because they find the lessons more enjoyable and easier to follow [33].

Beyond language, historical context serves as a powerful motivator. Caliboso et al. [34] argues that when learners encounter familiar cultural symbols or historical references, their reading comprehension improves significantly. Luyt [35] expands on this by observing that the Filipino public has historically held a strong desire to reclaim a cultural identity free from Spanish influence.

This explains the enduring appeal of canonical works like those of José Rizal. Luyt [35] notes that Rizal's works served a dual purpose: while American colonizers promoted them to encourage peaceful reform, Filipinos read the same texts to fuel their national pride and desire for self-governance. This historical motivation persists today; Filipino learners continue to value these texts not just for entertainment, but because establishing a connection to a recorded past is viewed as a necessary step toward defining national identity [35].

Role of Philippine Literature in Developing Reading Habits. When meaningfully incorporated into educational settings, Philippine literature serves as a powerful tool for cultivating reading habits. Makgabo and Quintero [36] posit that students are more likely to engage in voluntary reading when texts are culturally resonant. Chavez et al. [37] emphasize that when literature includes themes of civic engagement and identity, learners demonstrate increased connection and long-term interest.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate the Philippine literary genres that most appeal to learners' motivation to read. The exploratory nature of the research is appropriate given the aim

to uncover in-depth insights into learners' literary preferences and the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence their reading interests. Rather than testing a hypothesis, the study sought to explore patterns, perceptions, and meanings as expressed directly by the learners themselves.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The study utilized purposive sampling, targeting language students ($n = 18$) enrolled in tertiary education institutions across the Philippines' three major island groups: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. These participants were selected based on the specific criterion of having completed at least two semesters of Philippine Literature coursework, ensuring they possessed sufficient exposure to local texts to provide meaningful insights. To ensure a broad range of perspectives, the sample was stratified to include diversity in terms of gender, year level, and academic program. The demographic distribution of the participants is detailed in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants.

| Characteristic | Category | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|---|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 8 | 44.4% |
| | Female | 10 | 55.6% |
| Year Level | 2nd Year | 6 | 33.3% |
| | 3rd Year | 7 | 38.9% |
| | 4th Year | 5 | 27.8% |
| Course/Major | B. Secondary Education (English/Filipino) | 10 | 55.6% |
| | B. Arts (Literature/Communication) | 5 | 27.8% |
| | Other (General Education) | 3 | 16.7% |

3.3. Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a researcher-designed semi-structured interview guide. The questions were open-ended and structured to gather responses about preferred literary genres, emotional and cultural resonance, and the literary elements that enhance motivation. To ensure content validity, the instrument underwent a rigorous validation process by three experts: one specialist in Philippine Literature, one in Applied Linguistics, and one curriculum developer. All validators held doctoral degrees in their respective fields. They reviewed the guide for clarity, bias, and alignment with the research objectives. Based on their feedback, double-barreled questions were split, and technical jargon was replaced with student-friendly terminology. The tool was subsequently pilot-tested with two non-participant students to verify the flow and clarity of the questions. **Table 2** presents the instruments used in the study.

Table 2. Interview guide questions.

| Objectives | Interview Question |
|---|--|
| 1. To explore the Philippine literary genres that learners find most engaging and appealing in their motivation to read. | 1. Which Philippine literary genres do you enjoy reading the most, and why? 2. Can you describe a story, poem, or play from Philippine literature that captured your attention recently? 3. How do these genres influence your willingness or interest to read more often? |
| 2. To examine the underlying approaches that emphasize sensitivity to language and tone influence students' appreciation of diverse cultures and communication practices. | 1. What elements in the stories, poems, or plays (e.g., characters, themes, language) make them interesting to you? 2. How do cultural or historical aspects of Philippine literature affect your connection to the text? 3. Are there specific topics or styles in Philippine literary genres that motivate you to continue reading, and why? |

3.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Data for this study were collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to ask guiding questions while maintaining flexibility for probing and follow-up inquiries. This approach ensured alignment with the study's two central objectives: (1) to explore the Philippine literary genres that learners find most engaging and appealing in their motivation to read, and (2) to examine the underlying factors in

selected Philippine literary genres that influence learners' reading interests and habits. The interview questions were organized according to these objectives. For example, questions such as "Which Philippine literary genres do you enjoy reading the most, and why?" and "What elements in the stories, poems, or plays make them interesting to you?" were used to prompt reflective and detailed responses from participants. All interviews were conducted in a conversational manner to encourage openness and deeper insight into individual literary preferences. With the participants' informed consent, each interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data collected.

3.5. Data Analysis

The study employed reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's [22] six-phase framework. This method was chosen for its flexibility in capturing complex, subjective experiences. The analysis was inductive, allowing themes to emerge organically. For example, during the coding phase, raw responses such as "I see my own family's struggles in the story" and "The character is just like me" were initially coded as "Personal Connection." These codes were then clustered with similar codes like "Realistic Situations" to form the sub-theme "Relatability," which eventually contributed to the final major theme: Reflecting Lived Experiences. Researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout by keeping analytic memos to document decision-making and minimize potential bias.

4. Results

Research Objectives 1. To explore the Philippine literary genres that learners find most engaging and appealing in their motivation to read.

4.1. Theme 1. Immersion through Extended Narratives (Novels)

The most prevalent form of engagement among participants was a preference for novels, driven by the desire for immersion and long-term connection with characters. Unlike shorter forms, novels were praised for their ability to simulate lived time, allowing readers to witness character growth and complex plot developments. This preference was often linked to contemporary romantic trilogies (e.g., *Until Trilogy*) and historical narratives (e.g., *Noli Me Tangere*). Participants noted that the length of these texts was not a deterrent but a motivator, as it provided an escape and a deeper emotional payoff.

"I prefer novels because they allow me to immerse myself in the characters' journeys. Filipino novels often show the realities of society while still being entertaining, which makes me appreciate our history and culture more deeply."

"Novels influence me to read more when the plot is engaging because I enjoy following the characters' journeys across chapters; it feels like building a long-term connection with their stories."

4.2. Theme 2. Accessibility and Instant Gratification (Short Stories)

A significant segment of the participants favored short stories, citing manageability and instant gratification as key motivators. For students with busy academic schedules, the short story offers a complete narrative arc without the time commitment of a novel. This theme highlights a pragmatic approach to reading motivation: the sense of accomplishment derived from finishing a text quickly encourages learners to pick up another. Furthermore, the slice-of-life nature of Filipino short stories was highlighted as a major draw, offering realistic snapshots of daily struggles.

"Short stories encourage me to read more because they are not too long, but they still give meaningful insights. I feel accomplished finishing them quickly, so I'm motivated to pick up another one."

"I enjoy reading Philippine short stories because they capture slices of life that feel very real and relatable, often showing the struggles, values, and humor of Filipino families and communities."

4.3. Theme 3. Aesthetic and Intellectual Engagement (Poetry)

While a minority preference compared to prose, poetry was identified as a powerful motivator for learners seeking intellectual challenge and aesthetic appreciation. These participants were not looking for plot-driven nar-

ratives but for the layered meanings and deep imagery found in works like *Gabi* by Lamberto Antonio. This theme suggests that for some learners, motivation stems from the cognitive effort of decoding symbolism and the emotional resonance of concise language.

“Poetry makes me more interested in reading because it challenges me to think deeper. Even short verses can have layered meanings, and I enjoy interpreting them in my own way.”

“I liked ‘Gabi’... because it uses night as a symbol of struggle and silence. It made me reflect on how poems can carry both personal feelings and social messages at the same time.”

Research Objectives 2. To examine the underlying factors in selected Philippine literary genres that influence learners’ reading interests and habits.

4.4. Theme 4. Resonance of Relatable Themes

The strongest factor influencing reading interest was thematic relatability, specifically Social Realism. Participants consistently reported being motivated by texts that mirrored their personal realities, family conflicts, romantic relationships, and societal issues like poverty or injustice. When literature acted as a mirror to their own lives, intrinsic motivation increased. This explains the popularity of contemporary fiction that deals with real-life issues over purely fantastical or abstract works.

“Themes catch my attention, especially when they deal with real-life issues like love, injustice, or identity... Love always captures my interest because it shows the different sides of human emotions.”

“What keeps me reading is when the story deals with social issues like poverty or inequality. It makes me reflect on real-life struggles and inspires me to think about solutions.”

4.5. Theme 5. Character Identification and Narrative Tension

Beyond themes, the construction of characters and plot twists played a critical role in sustaining engagement. Participants expressed a strong preference for flawed or growing characters in whom they could see themselves. This identification process transformed reading from a passive activity into an active emotional experience. Additionally, narrative tension, specifically unexpected twists, was cited as a crucial extrinsic factor that maintained curiosity and prevented attrition during the reading process.

“I find characters the most interesting part because they show different personalities and struggles. I often see myself in them, and that makes me more engaged with the story.”

“I am drawn to stories with unexpected twists in the plot because they keep me curious and make me want to finish the whole piece.”

4.6. Theme 6. Cultural Anchoring and Historical Consciousness

A unique and profound motivator identified was the desire for historical consciousness. Despite the general preference for modern language, participants expressed deep engagement with historical texts (specifically *Noli Me Tangere*) because these works connected them to their national identity. This theme bridges the gap between literary interest and civic duty; students are motivated to read not just for pleasure, but to understand their roots, freedom, and resilience.

*“When I read about the Spanish colonial period in novels like *Noli Me Tangere*, I feel a stronger connection because it shows the roots of our struggles as Filipinos.”*

“When we encounter literature about resilience and hope, we feel motivated because it shows how our culture values endurance even in the hardest times.”

5. Discussion

This study aimed to analyze the Philippine literary genres that appeal to learners’ motivation to read and to examine the underlying factors within these genres that influence their reading interests. By viewing the results

through the lens of Guthrie and Wigfield's Engagement Model [1], this section interprets how specific literary forms and themes trigger intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among Filipino learners.

The Dominance of Relatability and Linguistic Accessibility. The findings indicate a strong preference for contemporary genres, specifically modern novels, short stories, and spoken word poetry, primarily due to their social realism and linguistic accessibility. This aligns with the Engagement Model's assertion that intrinsic motivation is heightened when the text minimizes cognitive barriers and maximizes personal relevance.

Regarding language, participants expressed a distinct preference for texts written in conversational Filipino or "Taglish." This finding directly corroborates Lesada [32], who argued that learners are drawn to realistic dialogue that mirrors their own modes of communication. Furthermore, this study supports the findings of Lamorinas et al. [38], who identified that generational language shifts have distanced Gen Z learners from purely archaic Tagalog texts. By favoring "Taglish" and modern vernacular, students are effectively reducing the cognitive load of translation, allowing them to focus on emotional connection rather than linguistic decoding [33].

Historical Consciousness Overriding Linguistic Ease. A notable and seemingly contradictory finding is the high engagement with *Noli Me Tangere*. While students generally preferred easy and modern language, they simultaneously identified this complex, Spanish-era novel as deeply motivating. This contradicts the general trend towards linguistic accessibility found in Theme 2.

This paradox can be explained by the concept of historical consciousness. The motivation to read *Noli* is not derived from linguistic ease, but from a desire for identity reclamation. As noted by Luyt [35], Filipino learners often view the reading of historical documents not as leisure, but as a necessary act of defining national identity. Therefore, the difficulty of the text is overridden by the intrinsic value of connecting with one's roots. This finding suggests that motivation is not linear; students are willing to struggle with complex language if the cultural payoff, understanding their history and freedom, is sufficiently high.

Aesthetic Engagement through Spoken Word. The emergence of spoken word poetry as a preferred genre highlights a shift in how poetry is consumed. Unlike traditional poetry often analyzed for structure, the spoken word was valued for its emotional delivery and layered meanings. This mirrors Michalko's [29] observation that the performative nature of this genre allows it to address mental health and identity in ways that feel immediate and intimate. For these learners, the form of the literature acts as the primary hook, facilitating an aesthetic engagement that traditional print poetry may fail to achieve.

Implications for Literature Instruction. The results suggest that a rigid dichotomy between canonical and contemporary literature is unhelpful. Instead, engagement is maximized when these forms are understood as fulfilling different motivational needs. Contemporary fiction and spoken word satisfy the need for relatability and linguistic comfort, while historical texts like *Noli Me Tangere* satisfy the need for identity and historical grounding.

Educators should therefore adopt a balanced approach. Curriculum designers might pair a contemporary spoken word poem on identity with a canonical short story exploring similar themes, utilizing the modern text to build initial engagement and the historical text to deepen cultural literacy.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into reading motivation, several limitations regarding its scope and methodology must be acknowledged. First, the qualitative exploratory research design utilized a purposive sample of only 18 language students enrolled in a single tertiary education institution. Because the selection criterion required participants to have completed at least two semesters of Philippine Literature coursework, the findings are context-specific and may not be entirely generalizable to the broader student population or learners from non-language academic programs. Additionally, because the research is exploratory rather than hypothesis-testing, it uncovers qualitative patterns but does not quantitatively measure the statistical relationship between specific literary genres and reading frequency.

To address methodological rigor and the qualitative equivalent of reliability, the study heavily emphasized trustworthiness and validity. To ensure content validity and shy away from researcher biases, the researcher-designed interview guide was referred to three experts, specializing in Philippine literature, applied linguistics, and curriculum development, who reviewed the tool for clarity, bias, and alignment with the research objectives. Furthermore, dependability and trustworthiness were maintained during data collection by audio-recording each

interview and transcribing the responses verbatim to preserve the integrity of the participants' statements. Finally, researcher reflexivity was strictly maintained throughout the thematic analysis by utilizing analytic memos to document the decision-making process, thereby further minimizing potential bias.

6. Conclusion

This study moves beyond a general understanding of reading motivation to offer a nuanced analysis of how literary form, language, and cultural context interact to drive engagement among Filipino learners. While previous research has established the importance of relatability, this study contributes a novel insight into the duality of motivation in a post-colonial context. Specifically, the findings reveal that while linguistic accessibility via "Taglish" or modern vernacular is the primary driver for leisure reading, it is not the sole determinant of engagement. The enduring appeal of *Noli Me Tangere* demonstrates that students possess a distinct historical motivation, characterized by a willingness to grapple with complex, archaic texts when they serve the higher purpose of identity reclamation. This challenges the assumption that difficult texts invariably lead to disengagement. Furthermore, the study highlights the emergence of spoken word poetry as a bridge genre, where the performative form itself acts as a scaffold for aesthetic engagement. Ultimately, this research posits that effective literature instruction in the Philippines must navigate two distinct motivational pathways: the psychological need for mirroring lived experiences through social realism and the sociological need for anchoring national identity through historical consciousness.

In light of these insights, educators and curriculum designers are encouraged to move away from a rigid dichotomy between pop culture and canonical literature. Instead, a thematic pairing approach is recommended, where high-interest contemporary texts are taught alongside canonical works. For instance, a curriculum could pair a contemporary spoken word poem regarding youth identity with a chapter from *Noli Me Tangere* exploring similar themes. In this model, the modern text serves as an emotional hook that scaffolds the cognitive demands of the historical text, bridging the gap between accessibility and cultural depth. Additionally, language instructors should leverage students' preference for conversational language as a pedagogical bridge rather than a barrier. This could be achieved through translation exercises where students rewrite classical scenes using modern "Taglish" to demonstrate comprehension, or through performance-based assessments that utilize spoken word to tap into learners' proven engagement with oral forms. Finally, as this study was exploratory in nature, future researchers are advised to conduct quantitative correlational studies to test the relationship between specific genres and reading frequency across a larger population, as well as to investigate the empirical impact of linguistic accommodation on reading comprehension.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to the non-interventional nature of the research, which focused on professional public duties and general community environmental practices rather than sensitive personal data.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AI Use Statement

Regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the authors certify that this study's research, data, and conclusions are entirely original, relying on personal interviews and fieldwork that reflect human experiences. AI-assisted language tools were utilized strictly for grammatical refinement and linguistic polishing to aid English as a Second Language (ESL) expression. The authors personally reviewed the final manuscript and take full responsibility for its content and integrity.

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