

Exploring Directions for Literature Education through the Relation of K. Burke's Pentad to Bruner's Narrative Thought

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential of integrating K. Burke's Pentad and J. Bruner's narrative thought to provide new directions for literature education. While Burke's Pentad offers a rhetorical framework for interpreting human actions in terms of act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose, Bruner's narrative thought emphasizes the human tendency to make sense of the world through stories. By examining the relation between these two theoretical perspectives, this study highlights their complementary strengths in analyzing literary texts and in shaping pedagogical practices. Drawing upon a literature analysis research method, the paper conducts a systematic review of existing scholarship

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on Burke and Bruner, situating their insights within the context of contemporary literature education. The study argues that combining the multidimensional interpretive power of Burke's Pentad with Bruner's narrative model can foster students' imagination, empathy, and reflective thinking. Such an approach not only broadens interpretive possibilities in literature classrooms but also contributes to students' identity formation and critical engagement with texts.

Key Words: Literature Education, Burke's Pentad, Bruner's Narrative Thought, Narrative Pedagogy

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, literature education has faced increasing demands to move beyond the transmission of textual knowledge and to cultivate students' interpretive, reflective, and affective capacities. Traditional approaches often emphasize formal analysis or factual recall, but these methods may fail to capture the narrative, experience, and dialogue dimensions of literary engagement. Against this backdrop, rhetorical and narrative theories offer valuable insights for rethinking the aims and practices of literature education.

K. Burke's Pentad, proposed in *A Grammar of Motives* (1969), provides a rhetorical tool for analyzing human action by examining the interrelation among five elements: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. This framework emphasizes that meaning emerges from

multiple, overlapping perspectives, allowing for a more nuanced interpretation of human motives and contexts. Similarly, J. Bruner's concept of narrative thought, articulated in works such as *Acts of Meaning* (1990) and *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986), underscores the centrality of stories in human cognition. According to Bruner, narrative is not merely a literary device but a fundamental mode of thought through which individuals can construct reality, negotiate identity, and generate meaning.

By systematically reviewing and analyzing prior scholarship on Burke's Pentad, Bruner's narrative thought, and their applications in education, this paper attends to synthesize theoretical insights and identify pedagogical implications. It aims to clarify the theoretical relevance between Burke and Bruner, and to explore how their combined perspectives can suggest new directions for literature education.

The intersection of Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought provides a promising framework for literature education. While Burke highlights the dramatic analysis of action, Bruner emphasizes the psychological and cultural role of narrative. Together, they offer a complementary perspective that can guide both literary interpretation and pedagogical practice. This paper therefore seeks to explore how the relation of Burke's Pentad to Bruner's narrative thought can open new directions for literature education.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. K. Burke's Pentad: A Rhetorical Framework for Analyzing Human Action

The Pentad consists of five elements (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose), each of which highlights a distinct dimension of action within a narrative context. Burke (1969) emphasized that these five elements are interdependent, forming a structure through which narratives and human motives can be understood. Rather than treating these as isolated variables, the Pentad invites researchers to examine the tensions among its elements, thereby uncovering the values, motives, and sociocultural contexts embedded within narratives. In the context of literature education, the Pentad provides a powerful analytical tool, enabling students to approach texts not only by asking what happened but also who acted, how, why, and under what circumstances. This multidimensional lens aligns closely with Bruner's notion of narrative thought, together fostering a richer and more reflective engagement with literary works.

2. Bruner's Narrative Thought: Constructing Meaning as a Mode of Human Cognition

Bruner (1986, 1990) proposed that human cognition operates through two complementary modes. The paradigmatic mode, which seeks universal truth and logical coherence, and the narrative mode, which

organizes experience through stories of human intention and action. The narrative mode emphasizes particularity, temporality, and rationality, attaching importance to meaning-making over abstract generalization. According to Bruner (1990), narratives are essential for constructing identity, imagining possible worlds, and fostering moral understanding. Story structures thus serve as cognitive tools that enable individuals to interpret motives, contextualize actions, and engage with cultural values. For education, this means that literary texts become vital resources where students practice narrative reasoning, particularly in assessing motives, reconstructing temporal sequences, and accommodating diverse perspectives.

The relation of Burke's Pentad to Bruner's narrative thought lies in their shared focus on human action and meaning-making. While the Pentad provides a structural lens for dissecting the components of narrative action, Bruner's framework situates these actions within broader cognitive and cultural processes. Together, they encourage a multidimensional approach to literature education: one that emphasizes rhetorical structure, interpretive practice, and the role of narrative in shaping identity and social understanding.

3. Mission, Vision, and Action of Contemporary Literature Education

The mission of contemporary literature education extends beyond the transmission of canonical texts and literary knowledge; it aspires to

cultivate interpretive competence, critical awareness, and empathetic imagination in learners. Literature classes are envisioned as spaces where students encounter diverse voices, explore human motives, and reflect on the cultural, historical, and ethical dimensions of narratives. As Nussbaum (1998) emphasizes, literature fosters the capacity for “narrative imagination,” enabling learners to place themselves in the positions of others and thereby develop civic responsibility and moral sensitivity.

The vision of contemporary literature education must respond to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Globalization, digitalization, and cultural pluralism have broadened the scope of literary texts to include not only traditional canonical works but also world literature, multimedia narratives, and transmedia storytelling (Damrosch, 2003). This vision positions literature classrooms as inclusive forums for dialogue, where students critically confront and cope with multiple identities, perspectives, and cultural frameworks. Moreover, the vision underscores the importance of connecting literary study to students’ life experiences, promoting reflective engagement and lifelong learning.

The action dimension of literature education achieves its mission and vision through pedagogical strategies and curriculum practices. Teachers are encouraged to design activities that integrate close textual analysis, creative interpretation, and collaborative discussion, thereby

connecting theory to practice. Burke's (1969) Pentad can guide students in deconstructing narrative elements, while Bruner's narrative thought provides the cognitive and ethical rationale for interpreting these elements in context. Such practices empower students to develop critical thinking, interpretive skills, and moral imagination, translating the abstract goals of literature education into concrete classroom experiences.

Furthermore, the mission, vision, and action of literature education today is aligned with fostering lifelong learning and personal growth. Bruner (1990) argues that narrative is central to how individuals construct meaning and identity. In this sense, literature provides a curriculum of human possibilities, helping students not only to interpret texts but also to reflect on their own life stories. By combining careful analysis of text structures with narrative thinking and actual learning experiences, literature education helps students achieve holistic development, enhancing their critical thinking, moral awareness, and understanding of different cultures.

III. The Relation of K. Burke's Pentad to Bruner's Narrative Thought

This section explores the theoretical intersection between Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought, emphasizing how both frameworks contribute to a deeper understanding of human action,

motivation, and meaning-making. As mentioned above, while Burke highlights the rhetorical analysis of human behavior through the Pentad, Bruner underscores the cognitive and cultural functions of narrative. By examining their convergence from constructivism inquiry, human culture, and pedagogy practice perspectives, this chapter clarifies how Pentad and narrative together provide a comprehensive framework for interpreting human experience. Such a synthesis not only enriches theoretical discussions but also offers valuable implications for literature education, paving the way for the practical applications discussed in the following section.

1. Constructivism Inquiry: Active Meaning-Making through Pentad and Narrative

From the perspective of constructivism inquiry, the relation of Kenneth Burke's Pentad to Jerome Bruner's concept of narrative thought offers a productive framework for understanding how learners actively construct meaning. Constructivism emphasizes that knowledge is not passively received but actively built through interaction with context, prior experience, and social negotiation (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). In this respect, both Burke's rhetorical model and Bruner's psychological theory provide complementary approaches to analyzing and narrating human action. Examining their convergence through a constructivism lens highlights the dynamic processes by which learners

interpret events, motives, and identities.

Burke's (1969) Pentad serves as a heuristic for analyzing human behavior and motivation. Within a constructivism framework, the Pentad does not impose fixed meanings but rather enables learners to deconstruct and reconstruct the elements of action in ways that reflect their own interpretive stance. For example, emphasizing Scene foregrounds environmental constraints, while focusing on Purpose prioritizes intention. Such variability reflects the constructivism notion that learners build individualized understandings through analytical engagement with multiple perspectives (Fosnot, 2005).

Bruner (1990) argued that narrative thought is central to how humans make sense of the world, as it organizes experience into temporally and culturally situated stories. From a constructivism standpoint, narratives are not objective recounts but interpretive constructions shaped by context and perspective. In the classroom, encouraging students to retell, reinterpret, or reconstruct stories allows them to negotiate meaning collaboratively and integrate personal experience with academic knowledge. Thus, narrative thought resonates with the constructivism emphasis on learners' active engagement in meaning-making processes (Bruner, 1996).

Polkinghorne (1995) further underscores that meaning emerges not only through deconstructing narrative elements but also through

reconstructing them into meaningful wholes. When applied to literature education, the Pentad functions as a heuristic for critical deconstruction, whereas narrative analysis functions as a constructive process that enables learners to generate new meanings and identities through storytelling. Just as the saying goes, “*three measures of pearls become a treasure when strung together*,” narrative functions as the thread that binds individual literary elements into a coherent whole. Through such narrative-based interpretation, students not only enhance their ability to analyze text content more deeply but also improve their capacity for memory.

When combined, Burke’s Pentad and Bruner’s narrative thought illustrate a constructivism cycle of meaning-making. Learners first analyze actions through Pentad elements and then reassemble them into coherent narratives that express cultural values, personal perspectives, and critical interpretations. This dual process encourages both analytical deconstruction and narrative reconstruction, fostering critical thinking and empathy in literature and humanities education. In line with constructivism inquiry, such integration emphasizes that knowledge emerges from active participation, dialogue negotiation, and reflective storytelling rather than from passive reception of authoritative interpretations (Nussbaum, 1998; Fosnot, 2005).

2. Accumulation, Transmission, and Promotion of Human Culture:

Insights from Burke's Pentad and Bruner's Narrative Thought

From the perspective of the accumulation and transmission of human culture, both Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought emphasize that human action and meaning are deeply embedded in cultural contexts. Burke's (1969) Pentad provides a framework for analyzing human conduct not as isolated behavior but as culturally situated performance. At the same time, Bruner (1990, 1996) underscores narrative as a cultural tool through which individuals construct and share meanings. This convergence suggests that both frameworks align with the cultural-historical view of development, which conceives learning and cognition as inseparable from the cultural settings in which they unfold (Vygotsky, 1978).

In cultural development theory, culture is not simply a backdrop but an active mediator of meaning-making. Burke's Pentad foregrounds the interdependence of scene and act, showing that cultural settings profoundly shape human motives and interpretations. Likewise, Bruner's narrative thought asserts that stories provide cultural scripts that guide how individuals interpret and account for their experiences (Bruner, 1990). Through narratives, learners internalize shared values and social practices, mirroring Vygotsky's (1978) claim that higher psychological processes emerge through culturally mediated activity. Thus, both Pentad and narrative thought exemplify how culture functions as a

semiotic system for development.

Another key aspect of culture development is the formation of agency and identity within cultural narratives. Burke's Pentad highlights the role of the agent and purpose, which are always interpreted relative to cultural contexts and social expectations. Bruner (1996) similarly maintains that narrative is central to the construction of self and identity, as individuals position themselves within culturally available story-lines. This resonates with the view that identity development is inseparable from the appropriation of cultural tools, practices, and symbols (Fosnot, 2013). Together, the Pentad and narrative thought illustrate how cultural frameworks shape both personal agency and collective belonging.

Viewing Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought through the lens of human's culture development highlights significant implications for education. Learning environments should be designed as culturally rich contexts where students engage in meaning-making through narrative and dialogue interaction. By integrating the Pentad's rhetorical framework with Bruner's narrative orientation, educators can foster students' capacity to interpret human actions within cultural systems of meaning. Such an approach aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) foundational insights that cognitive growth is a culturally situated process, making education both a developmental and cultural practice.

3. Folk Psychology and Folk Pedagogy: Connecting Burke's Pentad and

Bruner's Narrative Thought

Examining the relation of Burke's Pentad to Bruner's narrative thought from the perspective of folk psychology and folk pedagogy allows for a deeper appreciation of narrative as both a cognitive and pedagogical tool. Bruner (1990) argues that folk psychology provides the implicit framework by which humans interpret behavior, attributing motives, intentions, and emotions to others. This aligns with Burke's Pentad, which similarly dissects human action by asking "what was done, by whom, with what means, in what context, and for what purpose" (Burke, 1969). From this perspective, Burke's Pentad can be seen as a formalized extension of folk psychology. These two systems recognize that human actions are always interpreted through narrative categories. Thus, when individuals construct or interpret stories, they are already employing a form of narrative reasoning that bridges Burke's rhetorical analysis and Bruner's psychological framework.

Folk pedagogy, as Bruner (1996) outlines, refers to the implicit beliefs teachers, parents, and communities hold about how children learn. These beliefs inevitably shape the narratives through which knowledge is transmitted. Burke's Pentad becomes relevant here because pedagogical narratives can be analyzed in terms of how actions (act) are structured in specific contexts (scene), by specific learners (agent), with methods (agency), for particular educational aims (purpose). In other words, the

Pentad provides a rhetorical lens for examining the tacit stories educators tell about teaching and learning. When combined with Bruner's narrative thought, it highlights how pedagogy is itself a narrative act, where teachers and learners co-construct meaning through culturally embedded stories.

By situating Burke's Pentad within Bruner's frameworks of folk psychology and folk pedagogy, the relevance between the two theories becomes evident. Both perspectives emphasize that human understanding is intrinsically narrative in structure, whether in interpreting action or designing education. Burke formalizes the categories of action that underlie folk psychological reasoning, while Bruner demonstrates how such reasoning informs pedagogical practice. Together, they reveal that narrative is not only central to how individuals make sense of human conduct but also essential to how educators design and deliver meaningful learning experiences.

IV. Educational Implications for Literature Curriculum:

Focusing on Burke's Pentad and Bruner's Narrative Thought

1. Literature Curriculum Design Informed by Burke's Pentad and Bruner's Narrative Thought

Integrating Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought into literature curriculum design provides a framework that moves beyond textual knowledge toward interpretive and reflective engagement. In Kenneth

Burke's dramatic framework, the Act refers to what was done. It is the central event or behavior that forms the nucleus of any rhetorical or narrative analysis. The Act is crucial because it anchors the interpretive process. By identifying what action takes place, readers begin to uncover the motives and implications behind it. For example, in literature, the Act may involve a protagonist's decision, a symbolic gesture, or a climactic event that drives the narrative forward. From Burke's perspective, actions are not mere physical movements but symbolic performances that convey meaning and values. Moreover, the Act cannot be fully understood apart from the other elements of the Pentad. Its significance is always conditioned by the Scene in which it occurs, the Agent who performs it, the Agency through which it is carried out, and the Purpose it seeks to achieve.

Applied to literature education, the focus on Act encourages students to ask: What exactly happens in this story? and What is the meaning of this event? Such inquiries guide learners beyond surface-level summary toward interpretive analysis, where they begin to connect narrative events to larger questions of motive, identity, and culture. This resonates with Bruner's (1990) notion that narratives are structured around intentional actions, making Act the pivot where rhetorical form and narrative cognition intersect.

Within Burke's Pentad, the Scene refers to the background, situation,

or context in which an act takes place. As Burke (1969) clarifies in *A Grammar of Motives*, Scene encompasses the temporal, spatial, cultural, and social conditions that frame human action. In dramatic terms, Scene is not a mere backdrop but an integral determinant of meaning, shaping how acts are understood and interpreted. The importance of Scene lies in its explanatory power. By situating an act within a specific Scene, readers uncover the constraints, possibilities, and cultural dynamics that influence human behavior. For example, a heroic act in a wartime setting may be interpreted as patriotic sacrifice, whereas the same act in a peaceful environment might be seen as reckless or unnecessary. Thus, Scene highlights how context fundamentally alters the significance of action.

Scene provides the interpretive lens through which students can ask: Why did this action occur here, in this particular time and place? From an educational perspective, focusing on Scene aligns closely with Bruner's (1986) notion that narratives are culturally and temporally situated. Scene encourages learners to recognize that texts emerge from, and speak to particular cultural and historical conditions. In literature classrooms, this translates into teaching practices that connect textual events to broader social, political, and ethical contexts. In this way, students not only analyze narratives more deeply but also develop cultural literacy and critical awareness of how setting shapes meaning.

In summary, Scene in Burke's Pentad represents more than physical location; it signifies the contextual framework that both enables and constrains action. Its integration into curriculum design allows educators to guide students toward a nuanced appreciation of how literature reflects, critiques, and is shaped by the worlds in which it is situated.

In Burke's Pentad, the Agent refers to who performs the act. The individual or character whose choices, capacities, and intentions shape the course of action. Agent pays more attention to characters' personal qualities, including their identity, values, and disposition. The Agent is a symbolic construct whose characteristics influence how actions are interpreted. For example, the same action may carry different meanings depending on whether it is performed by a hero, a villain, or an ordinary individual. In literary analysis, focusing on Agent prompts students to examine who is acting in a story and why their identity matters. Characters in literature embody not only personal motives but also broader cultural narratives and archetypes. Bruner (1996) reinforces this point by emphasizing that narratives are central to the construction of self and identity. Individuals and literary characters alike are situated within cultural storylines that define their roles, intentions, and possibilities.

For literature education, the concept of Agent becomes a powerful pedagogical tool. By analyzing characters as agents, students learn to

interpret actions in relation to identity formation, social roles, and ethical responsibility. This fosters critical reflection on questions such as: How do cultural norms shape the roles available to agents? and In what ways do characters' identities influence the meaning of their actions? Such inquiries resonate with Bruner's claim that narratives not only describe actions but also reveal how people position themselves and others within cultural frameworks (Bruner, 1996). Agent in Burke's Pentad foregrounds the role of identity and motive in shaping human conduct. Its pedagogical significance lies in encouraging learners to see characters not simply as participants in events but as symbolic agents whose actions and identities illuminate broader cultural and moral questions.

Within Burke's Pentad, the Agency refers to the means, methods, or instruments through which an act is carried out. As Burke (1969) defines it in *A Grammar of Motives*, Agency answers the question: "How was the act accomplished?" It diverts attention away from the act itself or the actor who performed it and toward the tools, strategies, and resources that made the act possible. Agency in Burke's Pentad highlights the mediating role of instruments, strategies, and symbolic systems in human action. No act is performed in isolation. It requires mechanisms. For instance, a character's decision to persuade others depends not only on personal motive (Agent) or contextual situation (Scene) but also on the rhetorical and linguistic strategies employed. Thus, Agency highlights

the importance of technique and medium in shaping meaning.

From an educational perspective, focusing on Agency resonates with Bruner's (1990) insight that narrative meaning depends on symbolic and linguistic tools. Bruner emphasizes that humans make sense of the world through cultural and linguistic systems that mediate experience. Agency, therefore, overlaps with Bruner's narrative thought in that both stress the role of symbolic means, such as irony, metaphor, and analogy in enabling action and constructing meaning. In the context of literature education, analyzing Agency prompts students to ask: What strategies or instruments are used to achieve this action? and How do these means shape the ethical and cultural implications of the story? This inquiry not only deepens interpretive analysis but also helps learners appreciate the broader cultural resources through which narratives operate.

In Burke's Pentad, the Purpose refers to the reason, goal, or motivation behind an act. As Burke (1969) explains in *A Grammar of Motives*, Purpose answers the question: "Why was the act performed?" It highlights the intention dimension of human behavior, suggesting that actions are rarely accidental but are undertaken with some intention that gives them meaning, whether it is explicit or implicit. Purpose is central because it connects human conduct to values, desires, and worldviews. Identifying the purpose of an act allows readers to discern not only what happened and how it happened, but why it happened. For instance, in a

literary context, the same act, such as a character's sacrifice, can be interpreted differently depending on whether its purpose is framed as loyalty, revenge, or redemption. Purpose therefore functions as the key interpretive hinge that situates actions within a moral or cultural logic.

Thus, Purpose serves as a critical category for understanding not only what characters do but also what motivates them to act. From a pedagogical standpoint, Purpose resonates strongly with Bruner's (1990) emphasis on narrative as a mode of thought oriented toward intentionality. Bruner argues that stories are distinguished from mere chronicles of events precisely because they foreground human intentions, making actions comprehensible within cultural and moral frameworks. Purpose, therefore, aligns with Bruner's idea that narratives function to explain why people act as they do, thereby constructing meaning and guiding moral reflection.

In literature education, focusing on Purpose encourages students to ask interpretive questions such as: What motives drive the characters' actions? What values or goals are being pursued? and How does the stated or implied purpose shape the moral meaning of the story? Such inquiries foster critical and empathetic engagement with texts, allowing learners to link narrative analysis to wider issues of ethics, identity, and culture. By integrating Purpose into literary pedagogy, educators can help students move beyond descriptive analysis to explore the

underlying motives that shape narratives, thereby cultivating deeper interpretive and moral competency.

Tolstoy's *War and Peace* provides a compelling case study for integrating Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought into contemporary literature curriculum design. As a monumental narrative of individual lives entangled in historical upheaval, the novel vividly demonstrates the intersection of human motives, cultural values, and political contexts. In today's international circumstance, which is characterized by ongoing conflicts, geopolitical rivalries, and urgent calls for peace, the novel holds particular relevance for classroom discussions. Through its exploration of war and reconciliation, *War and Peace* functions not only as a literary masterpiece but also as a pedagogical tool for cultivating critical reflection on contemporary global realities.

Integrating *War and Peace* into curriculum design thus fosters both interpretive and moral engagement. Bruner's narrative thought underscores how the novel enables students to enter "possible worlds" where they can imagine alternative futures beyond conflict. By comparing Tolstoy's historical epic with current global tensions, educators can encourage learners to ask critical questions: How do narratives of war shape our understanding of peace? Such curriculum design transform literature classrooms into dialogue spaces where students connect canonical texts to pressing contemporary issues,

cultivating empathy, critical awareness, and citizen responsibility.

2. Narrative Pedagogy for Literature Education in the Instructional Classroom

Bruner (1996) emphasized that education should not only transmit the past but also illuminate the present and open possibilities for the future. Applied to literature education, this temporal orientation highlights three interrelated dimensions. First, the past is preserved in canonical and cultural texts that serve as repositories of human experience and wisdom. Engaging with these works allows students to inherit collective memory and cultural identity. Second, the present situates literary learning in students' real life, enabling them to connect textual meanings with contemporary issues and personal experiences. Third, the future is envisioned through the narrative imagination, as students use literature to project possible worlds, explore ethical alternatives, and imagine new ways of being. This tripartite perspective (3P: Past, Present, and Possible) transforms the literature classroom into a dialogue space where tradition, reality, and possibility converge.

Time is a crucial concept in narrative thought, for narrative not only sequences events but also provides a meaningful structure to human experience. As Ricoeur (1988) further argues that narrative is not only a configuration of events but also a temporal mediation that shapes human experience and identity, transforming the flow of events into a humanly

intelligible plot. Through this temporal configuration, learners are able to interpret actions not as isolated occurrences but as parts of an unfolding story that bridges memory, present understanding, and future projection.

Within this framework, literature education should also cultivate what Bruner (1960) called the “joy of discovery.” When students uncover hidden meanings, recognize narrative patterns, or reconstruct stories through their own interpretations, they experience literature not as a burden of rote learning but as an intellectual adventure. Such discovery fosters intrinsic motivation and deepens students’ interpretive agency, reinforcing the constructivism idea that meaning is actively built rather than passively received.

Lauritzen and Jaeger (1997) emphasize that learning can be most effectively integrated through story, proposing the concept of a “narrative curriculum.” Within this framework, stories serve not only as objects of study but also as pedagogical vehicles through which learners connect knowledge, experience, and identity. By situating literature education within a narrative curriculum, educators can transform classrooms into narrative communities where teachers and students co-construct meaning through shared storytelling practices. In this way, Lauritzen and Jaeger’s approach complements Burke’s dramatic analysis. Students can use the Pentad to deconstruct narrative elements and then reassemble them into reconstructed stories that reflect their own

perspectives and cultural contexts.

In practical terms, students may be encouraged to read and reinterpret the same literary work multiple times across different contexts, echoing the spiral model of curriculum design (Kang, 2022; Smidt, 2011). Each retelling or adaptation invites learners to explore new dimensions of the text while deepening their interpretive skills, whether through rewriting, dramatic performance or digital media reinterpretation.

Rooted in Bruner's (1960, 1990) theory of the spiral curriculum, this strategy emphasizes that the same knowledge content can be reintroduced across different stages of learning. In literature education, such a spiral approach allows students to engage repeatedly with canonical works or recurring motifs, thereby reinforcing understanding and fostering long-term retention. This pedagogical practice can be compared to rewriting an academic paper on the same theme, where each iteration sharpens argumentation and reveals new insights, or to the process of adapting a literary text into multiple film versions, where reinterpretations of the same story highlight diverse cultural contexts, aesthetic choices, and ideological standpoints. By applying the spiral curriculum to literature instruction, educators not only consolidate content knowledge but also cultivate students' ability to approach texts from multiple angles, developing critical thinking, interpretive flexibility, and creative imagination.

Furthermore, these processes resonate with the notion of curriculum internalization, whereby the content of the curriculum is not merely learned externally but integrated into students' cognitive and affective structures. In literature education, curriculum internalization occurs when narratives become part of students' own life stories, shaping their values, perspectives, and identities. Through repeated engagement with texts in a spiral curriculum model, learners move from surface comprehension to deeper absorption, eventually embodying the cultural, ethical, and imaginative dimensions of literature.

Everyone sees a different landscape depending on where they stand. If an egg is placed at the front of the classroom, each student, sitting in a different position, will perceive its shape differently, and thus each will draw the egg in a different way. In the same manner, a single literary work may come into being diverse interpretations, and its meaning will vary with each reader. Therefore, there are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand readers' eyes. When we first encounter a literary work and see its title, it is like opening a package. We know what it is in general, but not its exact appearance. Upon opening it, the contents may match our expectations and bring great satisfaction, or may disappoint us by falling short of what we had anticipated. However, a classic literary work, like a well-prescribed medicine, has the power to heal, to comfort, and to inspire. It requires us to read it again and again, and with each reading,

we make new discoveries.

Language is composed of a wide variety of symbols, and spoken words possess their own intrinsic power. Narrative, as a distinctive form of organizing these linguistic symbols, does more than convey information; it structures experience, evokes emotions, and shapes human understanding. Through the act of layout, narrative arranges scattered events and symbols into coherent patterns, enabling meaning-making within cultural and temporal contexts (Bruner, 1990; Ricoeur, 1988). In this sense, narrative is not merely a mode of expression but a cognitive and pedagogical tool that allows individuals to construct identity, negotiate values, and engage in dialogue interpretation.

In educational contexts, narrative may be conceptualized as an organizational framework through which learners structure their experiences and knowledge about the phenomena of the world, as a communication medium most vividly realized in the practice of storytelling, and as the most natural and powerful mode of learning that enables individuals to construct meaning and connect personal understanding with shared cultural frameworks (Kang, 2023). The essence of narrative thought lies in the creation of meaning through narrative. The very nature of the mind is oriented toward meaning-making, and narrative functions as the primary mechanism through which meaning is formed. Narrative serves as the structure of

human experience. When we recount our own experiences through narrative, knowledge is both constructed and continuously reconstructed. From a narrative perspective, the spiral form embodies the cyclical and changeable nature of human experience.

As we all know, knowledge is understood as originating in experience, which itself circulates and develops through a spiral process of continuous return and advancement. Within this framework, narrative operates as the structure of experience, providing a means through which learners can order and reorganize their life realities. Narrative pedagogy, therefore, may be seen as the systematic organization of experience into meaningful forms. By guiding students to articulate, revisit, and reinterpret their experiences through narrative, teachers foster both the construction and reconstruction of knowledge.

The American writer O. Henry is renowned for his short stories characterized by a “smile with tears” style and the unexpected, yet fitting, “O. Henry endings.” Drawing on his personal experiences and his deep concern for the lives of ordinary people, he vividly depicted a wide range of characters, including vagrants, thieves, policemen, painters, and clerks. The so-called “O. Henry ending” refers to a literary technique in which the narrative culminates in an unforeseen reversal that is simultaneously surprising and logically consistent, often producing effects of humor or irony. For instance, in *The Cop and the Anthem*, the

tramp Soapy repeatedly fails in his attempts to get arrested, only to be apprehended at the very moment he resolves to reform his life. It is a paradox that underscores the absurdity of social reality. Similarly, in *The Gift of the Magi*, the tragic irony of a couple exchanging useless gifts on Christmas not only critiques the constraints of a materialistic society but also elevates the theme of pure and selfless love.

In literature classrooms, O. Henry's works can be effectively utilized to cultivate students' interpretive and reflective skills through narrative-based pedagogy. Teachers may guide learners to identify the distinctive features of the "O. Henry ending," analyzing how the unexpected reversals are both surprising and logically consistent. This process can be structured through Burke's Pentad: the Act of a sudden reversal, the Scene of urban life in early twentieth-century America, the Agents such as vagrants, policemen, or struggling couples, the Agency of irony and concise narration, and the Purpose of exposing social contradictions while affirming human values. Such analysis enables students to understand how narrative techniques reflect and critique social realities.

Moreover, Bruner's narrative thought highlights how learners can reconstruct meaning by retelling or adapting O. Henry's stories in contemporary contexts. For example, students might reinterpret *The Gift of the Magi* in modern urban settings, exploring themes of materialism,

sacrifice, and love in relation to today's consumer culture. Similarly, dramatizing *The Cop and the Anthem* allows learners to critically reflect on issues of poverty, justice, and moral agency in contemporary society. These pedagogical practices resonate with Bruner's spiral curriculum model. Each revisit of O. Henry's texts provides opportunities for deeper engagement, moving from plot comprehension to thematic analysis, and eventually to critical and creative reinterpretation.

By integrating O. Henry's short stories into classroom pedagogy, literature education can foster narrative imagination, critical awareness, and empathy. Students not only appreciate the aesthetic charm of O. Henry's ironic twists but also gain insights into enduring human dilemmas, thereby connecting literary study with broader cultural, ethical, and social concerns.

3. Cultivating Students' Competency Development through the Integration of Burke's Pentad and Bruner's Narrative Thought

A central aim of literature education is to contribute to students' holistic development, extending beyond textual comprehension to the cultivation of interpretive competence, moral imagination, and critical agency. Integrating Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought into classroom practices provides a framework through which learners can engage not only cognitively but also emotionally and ethically with literary texts. In this sense, literature education becomes a site for personal growth and

social awareness, shaping students' capacities as reflective individuals and responsible citizens.

First, from a cognitive perspective, Burke's Pentad encourages learners to approach texts through multiple dimensions. Such analysis can cultivate critical thinking, as students are invited to consider how meaning is constructed through the interplay of these elements. By repeatedly engaging with texts in a spiral curriculum model, learners strengthen their ability to recognize complexity, trace motives, and evaluate different interpretive possibilities. These analytical practices lay a foundation for intellectual rigor and transferable reasoning skills.

Second, narrative thought, as emphasized by Bruner, contributes to the affective and imaginative dimensions of development. When students encounter stories, they practice adopting perspectives different from their own, thereby cultivating empathy and moral sensitivity. Through retelling and adapting stories, learners attempt to explore the "possible worlds," stimulating creativity while also reflecting on cultural norms and ethical dilemmas. This process enhances not only their narrative imagination but also their capacity to confront diverse social realities.

Third, the integration of narrative pedagogy supports identity formation. Literature invites learners to position themselves in relation to characters, events, and values, fostering self-reflection and personal meaning-making. In reinterpreting works such as *War and Peace* or *O.*

Henry's short stories, students share their own voices within broader cultural discourses. Such practices resonate with Bruner's claim that narrative is central to the construction of self, enabling learners to articulate who they are and who they might become.

Finally, literature education informed by Pentad analysis and narrative thought equips students with intercultural competency. By engaging with texts that explore conflict, injustice, and reconciliation, learners develop critical awareness of contemporary social issues and make an earnest endeavor to envision alternatives grounded in empathy and dialogue. In this way, literature classrooms become transformative spaces where students not only acquire academic knowledge but also cultivate the capacities necessary for lifelong learning and responsible global citizenship.

The KDB (Knowledge-Do-Be) model, proposed by Drake and Burns (2004), has recently gained attention as a curriculum approach that integrates knowledge, skills, and character development. Building on the theoretical insights of Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought, the KDB model offers a practical framework to translate these concepts into effective classroom practices. The KDB framework emphasizes not only what students know (Knowledge), but also what they do (Do) and who they desire to become (Be), thus fostering a holistic approach to literature education.

In the Knowledge dimension, students are encouraged to develop a deep understanding of literary texts, narrative structures, and authorial intent. Applying Burke's Pentad, learners systematically analyze the five key elements of a story, allowing them to comprehend the intricate interplay between characters, actions, and context. Simultaneously, Bruner's narrative thought guides students to recognize thematic patterns and narrative logic, enabling them to appreciate the broader cultural and social implications embedded in literary works.

The Do dimension emphasizes active engagement and experiential learning. Students are invited to apply their knowledge through interactive classroom activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and story reconstruction. For example, learners may reenact characters' decisions or rewrite a story from a different narrative perspective using Pentad analysis. These practices encourage critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving, ensuring that theoretical insights are effectively translated into tangible skills.

The Be dimension focuses on students' personal growth and identity development through literature. By engaging deeply with narratives, learners cultivate empathy, ethical reasoning, and cultural awareness. Understanding diverse human experiences through stories allows students to reflect on their own values and social roles, thereby promoting the development of well-rounded individuals who are both

analytically capable and morally sensitive.

As a result, from the perspective of students' competency development, integrating Burke's Pentad and Bruner's narrative thought within the KDB framework establishes a comprehensive approach to literature education. Students are not only equipped with analytical knowledge and practical skills, but also guided toward personal reflection and humanistic growth. This framework bridges the gap between theory and practice, creating a classroom environment where literary analysis, narrative comprehension, and character formation mutually reinforce each other.

4. Teacher's Role in Bridging Literature Curriculum, Narrative Pedagogy, and Student Growth

The teacher's role in literature education inspired by Burke and Bruner is multifaceted: facilitator of inquiry, mediator of culture, co-narrator of meaning, and cultivator of being. In this multiple capacity, teachers create opportunities for students to move between critical deconstruction and creative reconstruction of narratives.

Literature education, as highlighted by both Burke and Bruner, is deeply embedded in cultural contexts. Teachers must therefore enable students to appreciate how texts reflect and critique cultural values, historical conditions, and ethical dilemmas. This involves designing classroom practices that situate literary narratives in relation to students'

life experiences and contemporary social issues.

Bruner (1996) underscores that education itself is a narrative act, where teachers and students collaboratively construct knowledge. Teachers, therefore, are not distant authorities but participants in the classroom narrative, sharing their own interpretations and inviting students to express alternative perspectives. In this sense, narrative pedagogy becomes a participatory approach, allowing for multiple interpretations to coexist and fostering the co-construction of learning through dialogue. Such a co-narrative role reflects the ethical dimension of teaching, in which respect for students' voices and experiences fosters an atmosphere of inclusive and transformative learning.

The teacher's role can be understood in relation to the cultivation of students' competency. Within the KDB framework, teachers are not only responsible for fostering knowledge (Know) and practice (Do), but also for shaping students' character and identity (Be). By integrating Burke's rhetorical analysis and Bruner's narrative pedagogy, teachers nurture learners who are analytically competent, empathetically attuned, and ethically grounded. Literature classrooms thus become spaces of holistic development, where teachers act as guides who silently nourish students' intellectual and emotional growth.

According to Posner's (1989) well-known formula that *Experience + Reflection = Growth*, teachers should ground themselves in their own

literature classroom practices and continuously reflect on their teaching processes and methods, thereby enhancing their professional competence and improving the quality of their pedagogy. By integrating Burke's Pentad as a structural lens and Bruner's narrative thought as a cognitive framework, teachers can scaffold reflective inquiry that enables students not only to analyze narrative actions but also to connect them with their own identities, values, and social realities. In the context of literature education, teachers serve as catalysts who prompt learners to articulate, examine, and expand their understanding.

Just as literature itself is a dialogue between text and reader, pedagogy is a dialogue between teacher and student. Teachers who adopt narrative pedagogy flexibly exemplify interpretive openness, empathy, and reflective inquiry, thereby shaping students not only as readers of literature but also as narrators of their own lives. In this sense, teachers are gardeners of literature imagination development, quietly nurturing growth in ways that may not always be immediately visible but are deeply transformative over time.

Literature education is like water, silently nourishing the hearts of students. There are no two identical leaves in the world, so it is difficult for us to determine which one is the most beautiful. Likewise, there is no uniform standard for the success of literature education, just as we cannot expect all beautiful flowers to grow in the same way. Therefore,

teachers should respect students' individual differences and be adept at recognizing their unique strengths. Some students, though possessing talents comparable to those of Leonardo da Vinci, often conceal their abilities and do not readily display them. Such students must be given sufficient time to develop, especially since literature education itself is a discipline that values continuous accumulation. The process may be compared to Antarctic penguins preparing to come ashore: before landing, they plunge headlong into the sea, diving deeply with great effort. The deeper they dive, the greater the pressure and buoyancy exerted by the water. At the appropriate depth, they strike with their feet and surge upward, shooting out of the water like an arrow and soaring into the air, before landing gracefully on shore and tracing a perfect arc. This act of diving deep is a form of preparation, seemingly cumbersome yet profoundly effective. Similarly, the growth fostered by literature education does not arise from seeing hope and then persisting; rather, it is through persistence itself that hope ultimately becomes visible.

The work of teachers lies in transforming students' bass into a climax. Teachers should let the sunlight of hope illuminate every student's heart, identifying positive factors and qualities in them, offering frequent encouragement, providing more positive evaluations, and responding to students' shortcomings and mistakes with tolerance, while emphasizing longitudinal comparisons that highlight individual progress. Teacher

expectation functions as an intangible yet powerful educational force, which shows a clear positive correlation with teaching outcomes. Particularly from the perspective of ToM (Theory of Mind) (Armstrong, 2020; Bruner, 1996), teachers should not only hold earnest expectations for their students but also effectively convey these expectations to them. In this process, students gradually develop good behavioral performance under the influence of teachers' positive expectations, while teachers themselves also derive a sense of educational achievement from observing students' positive behavioral changes. Repeated over time, this reciprocal cycle will generate a virtuous effect triggered by expectations, fostering mutual growth between teachers and students. Therefore, in the daily practice of literature education, it is essential to leverage the power of the expectation effect and ensure that it develops in an optimal direction, thereby promoting students' continuous progress.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has explored the relation of Kenneth Burke's Pentad to Jerome Bruner's narrative thought in the context of literature education. By examining the complementary relevance between Burke's dramatic analysis of human action and Bruner's emphasis on narrative as a fundamental mode of thought, the paper has shown that integrating these two perspectives provides a powerful framework for rethinking the

objectives and practices of literature pedagogy. Burke's Pentad offers a structural lens for analyzing actions in terms of act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose, while Bruner's narrative thought situates these actions within the broader processes of meaning-making, identity construction, and cultural participation.

The integration of these perspectives carries significant educational implications. Literature classrooms informed by both frameworks become spaces where students are encouraged to interpret texts critically, engage empathetically with diverse human experiences, and reflect on their own identities and values. Such an approach moves beyond the transmission of literary knowledge to cultivate imagination, moral reasoning, and intercultural competence. In addition, the pedagogical practices discussed, ranging from narrative curriculum design and spiral learning to the application of the KDB model, demonstrate how theory can be translated into effective instructional strategies that support students' holistic growth.

The teacher's role emerges as central in this process. Teachers are called to act as facilitators of inquiry, mediators of cultural understanding, and co-narrators of meaning. By embodying reflective practice and maintaining positive expectations for students, teachers help transform literary encounters into opportunities for both intellectual and personal development. As Posner's (1989) formula reminds us, growth arises

when experience is coupled with reflection. In the same spirit, literature education guided by Burke and Bruner becomes a dialogue process where knowledge, experience, and reflection converge.

Literature education may be envisioned as one cloud moving another, one soul awakening another. It is a process that silently nourishes students, guiding them to dive deeply into the sea of human experience and to rise with renewed insight, empathy, and imagination. By integrating Pentad and narrative perspectives, literature education can continue to serve as a pivotal force for personal growth, social awareness, and the cultivation of humanity in an increasingly interconnected world.

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