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Subaltern counter-narrative pedagogy: A cross-cultural discourse framework for transformative ELT

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Abstract

The representation of marginalized voices in literary traditions offers valuable possibilities for language pedagogy. Epic and dramatic texts frequently privilege dominant perspectives, while alternative voices remain suppressed or framed negatively. This study proposes a Subaltern Counter-Narrative Pedagogy as a cross-cultural discourse framework for English Language Teaching. The research examines Valmiki's Ramayana, Anand Neelakantan's Asura: Tale of the Vanquished, Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound, and Percy Bysshe Shelley's Prometheus Unbound through qualitative comparative discourse analysis. The analysis identifies patterns of authority, resistance, and narrative inversion across Eastern and Western traditions. The findings indicate that subaltern discourse challenges hegemonic structures and reconstructs moral hierarchies. Based on this analysis, the study develops a pedagogical framework that integrates counter-narratives into ELT classrooms. The proposed model encourages critical literacy, intercultural awareness, and reflective engagement with language. The framework demonstrates that cross-cultural subaltern narratives can function as effective tools for transformative language learning. This study contributes an original pedagogical model that combines discourse analysis, comparative literature, and critical pedagogy for ELT practice.

Keywords: subaltern discourse, ELT pedagogy, cross-cultural learning, counter-narratives, critical literacy

1. Introduction

Literary traditions often preserve cultural values through narratives that foreground dominant perspectives while marginalizing alternative voices. Canonical epics and classical dramas establish moral hierarchies in which heroes embody virtue and antagonists signify disorder. These narrative structures shape collective understanding of ethics, authority, and social order. Marginal characters are frequently confined to peripheral roles, their motivations simplified or dismissed. Such representations influence both literary interpretation and pedagogical practice. Reconsidering canonical texts from the standpoint of marginalized voices allows scholars to question inherited assumptions about morality and heroism. Re-reading epics through alternative perspectives opens space for reinterpretation and invites closer attention to voices that remain obscured within traditional readings.

The notion of the subaltern addresses individuals and groups excluded from dominant systems of representation. Subaltern figures in literature often appear through narrative mediation, their perspectives shaped by authoritative voices. Narrative hierarchy assigns legitimacy to central characters and restricts interpretive agency for others. This hierarchy reinforces binary oppositions such as hero and villain, order and transgression. Counter-narratives disrupt these binaries by presenting marginalized figures as subjects rather than objects. Spivak (1988) highlights that subaltern representation is shaped by power structures that regulate discourse. When reinterpretations foreground silenced voices, narrative authority is reconfigured. Counter-narrative approaches encourage readers to reconsider moral alignment and examine ideological assumptions embedded in canonical works.

Literature has long played a significant role in English Language Teaching. Texts provide opportunities for vocabulary development, contextualized grammar learning, and exposure to cultural perspectives. Traditional approaches often prioritize comprehension and stylistic analysis. Critical literacy expands this focus by encouraging learners to interpret underlying meanings and question dominant perspectives. Learners engage with language through interpretation, discussion, and reflection. Freire (1970) emphasizes that education should foster critical awareness and dialogue. Cross-cultural literary comparison further enriches language learning. Engagement with diverse traditions encourages learners to recognize similarities in narrative patterns and differences in cultural expression. This process supports intercultural competence and deepens linguistic engagement.

Research addressing subaltern perspectives in ELT remains limited. Studies frequently concentrate on postcolonial texts or isolated cultural traditions. Comparative examination of Eastern epics and Western dramatic narratives is relatively rare. Pedagogical approaches seldom incorporate counter-narratives as structured teaching tools. Discourse-based frameworks linking subaltern theory with language pedagogy are also scarce. The absence of such models restricts the potential of literature to foster critical engagement. A systematic cross-cultural discourse approach can address this gap by integrating marginalized perspectives into language learning contexts. Such a framework would support critical interpretation while enhancing communicative competence.

This study proposes a Subaltern Counter-Narrative Pedagogy grounded in cross-cultural discourse analysis. The objectives of the study are: (1) to identify subaltern voices across selected epic and dramatic texts; (2) to examine cross-cultural patterns in counter-narrative discourse; and (3) to develop a pedagogical framework for transformative ELT practice. The research addresses the following questions: How are subaltern voices constructed in the selected texts? What common discursive patterns emerge across cultures? How can counter-narratives inform language teaching practices? The study contributes a discourse-based pedagogical model that integrates comparative literature, subaltern studies, and English Language Teaching.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Subaltern Theory

Subaltern theory examines the position of individuals and communities that remain outside dominant

structures of representation. The term refers to groups whose experiences are often mediated by authoritative voices rather than expressed directly. In literary narratives, such figures appear in marginal roles, their perspectives shaped by the ideological priorities of the text. Epic traditions frequently establish moral order by elevating central heroes and diminishing opposing characters. This narrative arrangement restricts interpretive space for those positioned as outsiders. Spivak (1988) observes that subaltern voices rarely emerge independently because discursive systems regulate who can speak and how that speech is interpreted. As a result, marginalized figures often appear through descriptive labels rather than through articulated viewpoints.

Narrative silencing operates through structural and linguistic choices. Authorial commentary, evaluative language, and selective narration define certain characters as morally inferior or socially deviant. These strategies sustain hierarchical binaries that reinforce dominant authority. Such binaries simplify complex identities and limit interpretive flexibility. Counter-hegemonic storytelling challenges this arrangement by presenting marginalized figures with agency and motivation. Reinterpretations of canonical texts often shift narrative perspective, allowing suppressed voices to reshape the moral framework. Gramsci (1971) describes hegemony as a system through which dominant groups maintain influence by shaping cultural meaning. When alternative narratives emerge, they contest this influence and introduce competing interpretations. Subaltern theory therefore provides a critical approach for examining how narrative authority is constructed and how counter-narratives disrupt established hierarchies.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis explores the relationship between language and social power. Discourse shapes interpretation by organizing meaning through linguistic and structural choices. Literary texts function as discursive spaces where authority and resistance are negotiated. Fairclough (1995) explains that discourse contributes to the production and maintenance of social relations by legitimizing particular viewpoints. In epic and dramatic narratives, descriptive patterns assign moral value to characters. Authority figures are associated with order and justice, while dissenting voices are linked with disruption. These patterns influence readers' perceptions and guide interpretive responses.

Ideological positioning in narratives becomes visible through recurring linguistic features. Metaphors, evaluative adjectives, and dialogue structures frame characters within moral hierarchies. Such strategies reinforce dominant interpretations and limit alternative readings. Comparative discourse analysis reveals that similar patterns appear across cultural traditions. Narratives from different historical contexts often employ parallel strategies to establish authority and marginalize opposition. Wodak and Meyer (2009) note that discourse analysis enables scholars to uncover ideological assumptions embedded in textual representation. Cross-cultural comparison highlights shared discursive mechanisms and demonstrates how narratives construct legitimacy. This approach supports the examination of subaltern representation and provides a methodological basis for identifying counter-discursive elements in literary texts.

2.3 Critical Pedagogy in ELT

Critical pedagogy emphasizes reflective learning and interpretive engagement. Within English Language Teaching, literature offers opportunities for exploring language through perspective and meaning. Traditional classroom practices often focus on comprehension and structural analysis. Critical literacy encourages learners to question assumptions and interpret ideological dimensions. Freire (1970) argues that learning should involve dialogue that enables students to participate in knowledge construction. When literature is approached through discussion and reflection, learners engage actively with textual perspectives and develop interpretive skills.

Dialogic learning supports collaborative meaning-making. Classroom interaction allows

learners to compare viewpoints and articulate responses. Literature-based ELT provides shared textual experiences that stimulate discussion. When learners encounter narratives containing conflicting perspectives, they negotiate meaning through language use. Cross-cultural pedagogy strengthens this process by introducing texts from diverse traditions. Kramsch (1993) emphasizes that language learning involves cultural interpretation as well as linguistic competence. Exposure to cross-cultural narratives encourages learners to examine differences in representation and narrative structure. Integrating subaltern perspectives into ELT expands interpretive possibilities and fosters critical engagement. This approach connects language learning with cultural awareness and supports the development of reflective communication skills.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach grounded in discourse analysis. The research focuses on examining narrative structures and linguistic representation across selected literary texts. A qualitative design is appropriate because the study investigates meaning, ideology, and representation rather than measurable variables. Comparative analysis enables the identification of recurring patterns across cultural traditions. Discourse analysis provides a methodological framework for examining how language constructs authority, resistance, and marginalization within narratives. Fairclough (1995) notes that discourse analysis allows the exploration of relationships between textual representation and social meaning. This perspective supports the examination of narrative hierarchy and subaltern positioning in literary texts.

The selection of texts was guided by thematic relevance and cultural diversity. The study includes Valmiki's Ramayana, Anand Neelakantan's Asura: Tale of the Vanquished, Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound, and Percy Bysshe Shelley's Prometheus Unbound. These texts represent distinct literary traditions while sharing thematic concerns related to authority, resistance, and moral hierarchy. The Ramayana offers a canonical epic narrative that establishes divine kingship and moral order. Asura provides a reinterpretation from the perspective of the defeated, which foregrounds marginalized voices within the same narrative tradition. Prometheus Bound portrays resistance against divine authority, emphasizing suffering and defiance. Prometheus Unbound reimagines this resistance through liberation and transformation. The combination of these texts allows cross-cultural comparison between Eastern epic tradition and Western dramatic literature.

Table 1 Data Corpus

Text	Author	Tradition	Period	Role in Study
Ramayana	Valmiki	Indian Epic	Ancient Sanskrit	Dominant dharma narrative; canonical authority
Asura: Tale of the Vanquished	Anand Neelakantan	Indian Fiction	2012	Counter-narrative; subaltern voice of the defeated
Prometheus Bound	Aeschylus	Greek Tragedy	c. 430 BCE	Authority & punishment discourse; resistance articulation
Prometheus Unbound	Percy Bysshe Shelley	Romantic Drama	1820	Liberation & emancipation discourse; transformation

The analytical procedure followed four stages. The first stage involved identifying dominant narrative structures in each text, examining how authority is constructed through characterization, thematic emphasis, and narrative framing. The second stage involved identifying subaltern voices; characters positioned outside dominant authority were analyzed to determine how their perspectives were represented through linguistic markers, narrative commentary, and dialogic structure. The third stage

consisted of cross-cultural comparison, in which patterns of authority, resistance, and marginalization were compared across texts to identify similarities and differences. Wodak and Meyer (2009) suggest that comparative discourse analysis enables the recognition of recurring ideological patterns across contexts. The final stage involved pedagogical modeling, translating insights from the discourse analysis into a structured pedagogical framework for English Language Teaching that emphasizes critical interpretation, discussion, and reflective language use.

4. Cross-Cultural Discourse Analysis

4.1 *Ramayana*

The narrative structure of the Ramayana is organized around the discourse of dharma, which functions as the central moral framework guiding characterization and action. Authority is constructed through alignment with duty, obedience, and divine legitimacy. Rama's role as the embodiment of righteousness is reinforced through narrative commentary and descriptive framing that emphasize his moral consistency. The discourse of dharma positions order as a collective necessity and discourages deviation. Characters who question authority are described through evaluative language that signals disorder. This discursive pattern shapes reader perception and stabilizes hierarchy. Valmiki presents Rama as the upholder of cosmic balance, linking moral conduct with divine approval (Valmiki, trans. 1987). Scholars observe that epic narratives often reinforce political and ethical legitimacy through ideological framing, where moral authority becomes inseparable from narrative structure (Pollock, 1993).

Marginalized characters appear within this framework but remain constrained by narrative authority. Figures such as Ravana and Shurpanakha are introduced primarily through descriptive judgments that foreground transgression. Their motivations are rarely explored in depth, and their perspectives serve to reinforce the moral superiority of the protagonist. The narrative voice privileges obedience and sacrifice, which limits alternative interpretation. Even Sita's voice, despite her central role, is mediated through expectations of virtue and endurance. The emphasis on moral conformity restricts discursive space for dissent. Ravana's portrayal emphasizes arrogance and desire, which consolidates the hero-villain binary (Valmiki, trans. 1987). Scholars note that epic traditions frequently marginalize opposing voices by associating them with chaos, thereby reinforcing ideological order (Richman, 1991). The discourse of dharma thus functions as both narrative authority and mechanism of silencing.

4.2 *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished*

Asura: Tale of the Vanquished reconfigures the narrative by shifting focalization to Ravana and other marginalized figures. This change disrupts the moral hierarchy established in earlier versions. Ravana is presented as a political leader shaped by exclusion, ambition, and cultural conflict. The narrative foregrounds personal reflection and socio-political context, allowing the reader to access motivations previously suppressed. Language associated with struggle and aspiration replaces moral condemnation. Neelakantan presents Ravana as a figure negotiating power structures rather than embodying inherent villainy (Neelakantan, 2012). Scholars argue that revisionist narratives often reclaim suppressed voices by challenging dominant historiography and presenting alternative subjectivities (Mukherjee, 2010).

The inversion of heroism becomes central to the discourse. Characters traditionally viewed as virtuous are examined critically, while marginalized communities gain narrative presence. The voice of the defeated emerges through collective experiences of displacement and inequality. The narrative highlights social divisions and questions the legitimacy of established authority. Ravana's reflections emphasize cultural pride and resistance to domination, reshaping moral interpretation (Neelakantan, 2012). This reorientation disrupts binary opposition and creates space for empathy toward marginalized figures. Scholars note that counter-narratives reframe antagonists as complex subjects, encouraging readers to reconsider inherited moral categories (Hutcheon, 2002). The discourse of *Asura* therefore transforms narrative authority and foregrounds subaltern agency.

4.3 *Prometheus Bound*

In *Prometheus Bound*, authority is constructed through the figure of Zeus, whose power is presented as absolute. The discourse emphasizes domination through commands, threats, and punishment. Prometheus is bound for defying divine authority, and the narrative highlights suffering as a demonstration of power. Language describing physical restraint reinforces the imbalance between ruler and rebel. Aeschylus portrays Prometheus' punishment as both retribution and warning (Aeschylus, trans. 2009). Scholars note that Greek tragedy often explores tensions between authority and dissent, revealing ideological conflicts within mythic frameworks (Goldhill, 1986).

Resistance discourse emerges through Prometheus' speech. He presents himself as a benefactor of humanity and challenges the legitimacy of Zeus' rule. The articulation of suffering becomes a form of protest. Prometheus' defiance is expressed through reasoned argument and moral conviction. His voice persists despite physical constraint, creating tension between silence and expression. The narrative allows resistance to exist within domination. Prometheus' claim that he aided humanity redefines his punishment as injustice (Aeschylus, trans. 2009). Scholars observe that tragic discourse often frames suffering as a means of exposing oppressive authority (Vernant, 1990). The drama therefore constructs resistance through endurance and speech.

4.4 *Prometheus Unbound*

Prometheus Unbound transforms the earlier narrative by shifting emphasis from punishment to liberation. Authority is no longer depicted as immutable. Prometheus rejects vengeance and embraces reconciliation. The discourse emphasizes moral and imaginative transformation. Shelley presents liberation as the outcome of inner change and collective awakening (Shelley, 1820/2008). Scholars argue that Romantic reinterpretations often replace tragic inevitability with visions of renewal and freedom (Abrams, 1971).

The theme of emancipation extends beyond individual experience. The fall of oppressive authority signals broader transformation. Language associated with light, renewal, and harmony replaces imagery of restraint. Collective voices participate in the reconstruction of social relations. Prometheus' refusal to perpetuate hatred initiates this transformation (Shelley, 1820/2008). Scholars note that Romantic drama often imagines liberation through moral evolution rather than conflict (Curran, 1986). The discourse therefore constructs emancipation as both ideological and narrative reconfiguration.

4.5 *Comparative Discussion*

The four texts reveal parallel patterns in the construction of authority and resistance. The *Ramayana* and *Prometheus Bound* emphasize hierarchical order supported by divine legitimacy. Marginal voices remain constrained within dominant frameworks. *Asura* and *Prometheus Unbound* introduce counter-discursive elements that challenge hierarchy. These texts foreground alternative perspectives and reconfigure moral interpretation. Cross-cultural comparison highlights shared strategies: authority constructed through moral language, resistance articulated through dialogue, and transformation achieved through narrative shift. Comparative studies suggest that reinterpretation of canonical narratives enables recovery of marginalized voices across traditions (Said, 1978). The analysis demonstrates that counter-narratives disrupt ideological stability and create pedagogical opportunities for critical engagement.

Table 2 Dominant Versus Counter-Narrative Discourse Across the Four Texts

Dimension	Ramayana / Prometheus Bound (Dominant)	Asura / Prometheus Unbound (Counter)	Pedagogical Implication
Moral Authority	Divine legitimacy, dharma, cosmic order	Contested, constructed, historically situated	Students question inherited moral categories
Hero Framing	Virtue, obedience, sacrifice	Ambition, resistance, complexity	Empathy development toward marginalized figures
Antagonist Framing	Arrogance, disruption, transgression	Excluded leader; cultural pride; defiance	Analysing evaluative and ideological language
Narrative Voice	Single authoritative narrator	Multiple perspectives; dialogic structure	Discourse and communicative competence
Narrative Outcome	Order restored; hierarchy affirmed	Transformation, liberation, reconciliation	Critical reflection and reinterpretation tasks

5. Subaltern Counter-Narrative Pedagogy Framework

The proposed Subaltern Counter-Narrative Pedagogy emerges from the need to integrate literary reinterpretation with language learning practice. Conventional literature-based instruction in English Language Teaching often prioritizes comprehension and thematic discussion while overlooking ideological dimensions of texts. Such approaches limit opportunities for learners to engage critically with representation and voice. A pedagogical framework grounded in subaltern discourse allows students to examine how narratives construct authority and marginalization. Critical pedagogy emphasizes that learning should encourage questioning of dominant knowledge structures and promote dialogic engagement (Freire, 1970). When learners encounter alternative perspectives, language learning shifts from passive reception to active interpretation. This framework therefore addresses both linguistic development and critical awareness.

The model is built by combining subaltern theory, discourse analysis, and cross-cultural pedagogy. Subaltern theory provides the conceptual basis for identifying marginalized voices. Discourse analysis offers tools for examining how language constructs hierarchy. Cross-cultural pedagogy supports comparative interpretation across literary traditions. Fairclough (1995) notes that discourse shapes social meaning through linguistic choices, which can be explored within classroom interaction. Integrating these perspectives results in a structured sequence of learning stages. Each stage moves from textual engagement toward language production and reflection. The framework encourages learners to analyze narratives, compare perspectives, and articulate interpretations through communicative tasks. This progression ensures that literary analysis contributes directly to language competence.

Stage 1: Dominant Narrative Identification

The first stage involves recognizing the central narrative authority within a text. Learners examine how heroes, rulers, or moral frameworks are constructed through descriptive language, dialogue patterns, and narrative commentary. This stage helps students identify how authority is legitimized. By focusing on textual evidence, learners develop analytical vocabulary and interpretive skills. Spivak (1988) emphasizes that dominant discourse often determines whose voices are heard, making this stage essential for critical awareness. Classroom activities may include identifying keywords, summarizing narrative hierarchy, and discussing character positioning.

Stage 2: Subaltern Voice Recovery

The second stage focuses on marginalized characters. Learners explore perspectives that remain underrepresented by examining motivations, silences, and alternative interpretations. Students discuss how narrative framing influences perception. Recovering subaltern voices encourages empathy and critical reflection. Learners compare descriptive patterns associated with dominant and marginal figures. This stage promotes interpretive dialogue and expands vocabulary related to perspective and evaluation. The process allows students to recognize that narrative meaning is shaped by representation.

Stage 3: Cross-Cultural Comparison

The third stage introduces comparative analysis across texts from different traditions. Learners identify similarities and differences in narrative construction. Cross-cultural comparison encourages awareness of cultural context and discourse variation. Kramsch (1993) argues that language learning involves interpreting cultural meaning, not only grammatical competence. Through comparison, students examine how authority and resistance appear in diverse narratives. Group discussion and collaborative tasks support communicative interaction. This stage strengthens both intercultural understanding and language fluency.

Stage 4: Discourse Reinterpretation

At this stage, learners reinterpret narratives from alternative perspectives. They reconstruct events from marginalized viewpoints and question established hierarchies. This activity encourages analytical writing and spoken expression. Students practice forming arguments supported by textual evidence. Reinterpretation transforms reading into an active process. Learners experiment with language structures while articulating new meanings. This stage connects discourse analysis with creative engagement.

Stage 5: Language Production

The fifth stage focuses on communicative output. Learners produce essays, dialogues, or presentations based on reinterpretation. Language production consolidates vocabulary and grammatical structures. Students articulate alternative narratives using persuasive and descriptive language. This stage links critical interpretation with communicative competence. Interaction among learners promotes collaborative meaning-making.

Stage 6: Reflective Learning

The final stage encourages reflection on both content and learning process. Learners evaluate how their perspectives changed through analysis. Reflection may involve journals, discussions, or short responses. This stage reinforces critical literacy and self-awareness. Reflection supports long-term retention and deeper engagement. The framework concludes with learners recognizing the relationship between language, power, and representation.

Table 3 Subaltern Counter-Narrative Pedagogy — Six-Stage Framework

Stage	Title	Description	Classroom Activity
1	Dominant Narrative Identification	Learners examine how authority, heroes, and moral order are constructed through descriptive language, dialogue, and narrative framing.	Keyword identification; narrative hierarchy mapping; character positioning discussion
2	Subaltern Voice Recovery	Learners explore marginalized perspectives, motivations, and silences; compare descriptive patterns across dominant and subaltern figures.	Perspective analysis; guided questioning; comparative character discussion

Stage	Title	Description	Classroom Activity
3	Cross-Cultural Comparison	Learners compare authority and resistance patterns across Eastern and Western texts and discuss cultural variation in narrative construction.	Group comparison tasks; intercultural discussion; pattern identification chart
4	Discourse Reinterpretation	Learners reconstruct events from marginalized viewpoints; form arguments supported by textual evidence.	Alternative perspective writing; analytical paragraph tasks; viewpoint presentations
5	Language Production	Learners produce essays, dialogues, or presentations; consolidate vocabulary, grammar, and persuasive language structures.	Essay writing; dialogue performance; debate presentations
6	Reflective Learning	Learners evaluate perspective change through journals and discussion; reinforce critical literacy and metacognitive awareness.	Reflective journals; guided discussion; short written responses

6. ELT Application

The Subaltern Counter-Narrative Pedagogy is designed for practical classroom use in English Language Teaching contexts where literature forms part of the curriculum. Traditional literature instruction often emphasizes comprehension questions and teacher-led explanation. Such practices provide limited opportunities for learners to explore perspective and voice. A counter-narrative approach introduces interpretive engagement that encourages learners to analyze how language constructs authority and marginalization. When students encounter multiple viewpoints, they use language to articulate interpretation, negotiate meaning, and question assumptions. This approach supports communicative competence and critical literacy simultaneously. Literature becomes a site for interaction rather than passive reading.

Group discussion serves as the initial classroom activity. Students are divided into small groups and assigned short passages that represent dominant and marginalized perspectives. Each group identifies descriptive language used to characterize authority and resistance. Learners examine how certain characters are praised while others are criticized. During discussion, students practice functional language such as expressing opinion, agreeing, disagreeing, and requesting clarification. Group discussion encourages collaborative learning and helps students become aware of discourse patterns. Interaction within groups increases confidence in speaking and supports vocabulary expansion.

Role play extends interpretation into performance. Students select marginalized characters and reconstruct events from their perspective. For example, one group may represent Ravana explaining his actions, while another portrays Prometheus defending resistance. Students prepare dialogues and perform them in class. Role play encourages creative language use and enhances fluency. Learners experiment with tone, persuasion, and emotional expression. By articulating alternative viewpoints, learners develop empathy and intercultural understanding.

Debate activities provide structured engagement with competing interpretations. Students are assigned positions such as defending dominant authority or supporting subaltern voices. They prepare arguments using textual evidence and present them in a formal debate format. This activity strengthens persuasive speaking and logical organization of ideas. Learners practice using discourse markers, justification, and counter-arguments. Debate encourages critical evaluation of narrative hierarchy and fosters confidence in participation.

Comparative writing activities integrate cross-cultural analysis with language production. Students compare characters, themes, or discursive strategies across texts. Writing tasks may include short essays, analytical paragraphs, or comparative summaries. This process encourages structured

writing and vocabulary development. Cross-cultural comparison deepens understanding of narrative variation and supports intercultural awareness. Reflective journals encourage individual engagement with learning. Students record responses to classroom activities and evaluate changes in their interpretation, developing metacognitive awareness and sustained language use.

Table 4 Classroom Activities and Learning Outcomes

Activity	Texts Used	Language Focus	Learning Outcome
Group Discussion	Ramayana & Asura selected passages	Expressing opinion, agreement, disagreement, clarification requests	Critical literacy; vocabulary expansion; narrative awareness
Role Play	Ravana monologues; Prometheus speeches	Tone, persuasion, emotional expression, character voice	Empathy; fluency development; intercultural awareness
Debate	All four texts as evidence sources	Discourse markers, counter-argument, justification, formal register	Persuasive speaking; analytical and critical thinking
Comparative Writing	Cross-cultural text pairs	Descriptive, analytical, and academic vocabulary; cohesive devices	Coherence; cohesion; academic writing competence
Reflective Journal	Whole framework sequence	Descriptive and reflective writing; first-person academic voice	Metacognition; self-evaluation; sustained language use

The framework leads to several learning outcomes. Critical thinking develops as students analyze narrative hierarchy and question dominant perspectives. Intercultural awareness emerges through comparison of texts from different traditions. Vocabulary growth occurs through exposure to analytical and descriptive language. Discourse competence improves as learners participate in discussion, debate, and writing tasks. The integration of these activities creates a balanced learning environment connecting literary analysis with communicative practice and reflective learning.

7. Discussion

The findings indicate that the inclusion of subaltern voices in literary analysis strengthens critical literacy within English Language Teaching contexts. When learners engage with marginalized perspectives, they begin to question the moral hierarchy embedded in canonical narratives. This process shifts reading from surface comprehension to interpretive inquiry. Students analyze how language shapes authority and how narrative framing influences perception. Such engagement encourages learners to recognize ideological positioning within texts. Subaltern theory emphasizes that marginalized voices reveal structures of power that remain hidden within dominant discourse (Spivak, 1988). Classroom application of counter-narratives allows learners to examine these structures and articulate alternative interpretations. This interpretive practice fosters analytical thinking and supports the development of critical literacy skills. Cross-cultural narratives further enhance learner engagement by introducing diverse cultural frameworks. The comparison of Eastern epics and Western dramatic literature allows students to identify shared patterns of authority and resistance. Learners recognize that narrative hierarchy operates across traditions, though expressed through different cultural symbols. This realization broadens interpretive awareness and encourages intercultural dialogue. Exposure to multiple perspectives also increases motivation, as students encounter unfamiliar viewpoints. Kramsch (1993) notes that language learning involves understanding cultural meaning through interaction with texts. Cross-cultural comparison promotes this understanding by encouraging learners to analyze differences in representation.

The findings also demonstrate that discourse analysis provides an effective methodological basis for integrating literature into ELT. Analysis of descriptive language, dialogue, and narrative

framing enables learners to observe how meaning is constructed. This approach transforms literary interpretation into a linguistic activity. Students identify evaluative vocabulary, examine patterns of authority, and discuss ideological implications. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse analysis reveals the relationship between language and social structure. When applied in the classroom, this perspective encourages learners to explore how language shapes representation, enhancing vocabulary development and discourse competence.

The proposed framework supports transformative learning by linking textual analysis with communicative practice. Each stage encourages learners to move from identification of narrative hierarchy to reflective engagement. Activities such as debate, role play, and comparative writing promote active participation. Learners construct meaning collaboratively and develop confidence in expression. Freire (1970) emphasizes that transformative education involves dialogue and critical reflection. The framework aligns with this principle by encouraging learners to question assumptions and articulate new perspectives. The findings therefore suggest that integrating subaltern theory, discourse analysis, and pedagogy creates a dynamic learning environment that promotes critical literacy, intercultural competence, and communicative proficiency.

8. Conclusion

This study explored the representation of subaltern voices across selected epic and dramatic narratives and examined their pedagogical relevance for English Language Teaching. The cross-cultural discourse analysis revealed that canonical texts often privilege dominant authority while limiting the articulation of marginalized perspectives. Counter-narratives reconfigure these hierarchies by foregrounding suppressed voices and reshaping moral interpretation. The comparison of the selected works demonstrated that patterns of resistance, silencing, and transformation operate across cultural traditions. These insights informed the development of the Subaltern Counter-Narrative Pedagogy, a structured model that connects literary reinterpretation with language learning practice. The findings confirm that engagement with marginalized perspectives encourages interpretive depth and fosters meaningful language use.

The study contributes to ELT scholarship by integrating subaltern theory, discourse analysis, and cross-cultural pedagogy within a unified framework. This integration extends the function of literature beyond comprehension toward critical engagement. The proposed model provides a systematic sequence of classroom activities that move from identifying narrative hierarchy to reflective learning. Such progression supports both linguistic development and analytical thinking. The comparative dimension of the framework further enriches learning by encouraging students to examine cultural variation in narrative construction. This approach promotes awareness of representation and strengthens discourse competence.

The novelty of the study lies in its emphasis on counter-narrative discourse as a central pedagogical strategy. By focusing on marginalized voices, the framework challenges conventional literature teaching practices. Learners engage with texts through discussion, debate, role play, and comparative writing, which strengthens communicative ability. This model also supports intercultural awareness by bringing together narratives from different traditions. The pedagogical design encourages learners to question assumptions and articulate alternative interpretations. Such engagement transforms literature into an interactive resource for language learning.

The implications for English Language Teaching are substantial. Teachers may employ the framework to design learner-centered activities that promote critical literacy. The approach enhances vocabulary development, discourse awareness, and interpretive skills. Cross-cultural comparison increases learner motivation and broadens cultural understanding. The model also aligns with communicative language teaching by emphasizing interaction and reflection. Future research may examine classroom implementation through empirical studies and explore adaptation in digital learning environments. Further investigation across additional literary traditions may refine the framework and expand its applicability.

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