Kang Jeungsan's Edification through Literature: A Reinterpretation of Jeungsan's Edification Cases through a Multidisciplinary Theoretical Framework

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Abstract

This study offers an in-depth analysis—through literary theory and multidisciplinary methodologies—of how Kang Jeungsan (姜甑山, 1871–1909) employed literary media to disseminate religious teachings and edify the populace. Jeungsan's edification transcended simple knowledge transmission; it fostered an integrated theory of edification that moved the heart to internalize the knowledge (知) attained and to practice it actively in everyday life. Drawing on Thomas Groome's religious-educational model of Shared Christian Praxis, Jeong Un-chae's narrative theory in bibliotherapy, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and conscientization, reception aesthetics, and language-arts pedagogy, this research systematically illuminates Jeungsan's edification process. Jeungsan conveyed his teachings in compressed and symbolic forms across diverse literary genres—classical Chinese poetry (漢詩), *Donghak gasa* (didactic verse), and incantatory formulae (*jumun*)—and implemented tailored edification adapted to the individual characteristics of his disciples. His literary mode of edification sought a conscientization oriented simultaneously toward personal inner transformation and the transformation of society at large, maintaining nonviolent pacifism on the foundation of haewon-sangsaeng (Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence). This research offers significant theoretical and practical implications across modern pedagogy, religious studies, and bibliotherapy, providing valuable insights for overcoming the fragmentation of contemporary education and for realizing holistic education.

Keywords: Kang Jeungsan; theory of edification; classical Chinese poetry; *Donghak gasa*; *jumun* (incantation); critical pedagogy; reception aesthetics; bibliotherapy

Introduction

Religious teachings are essentially transmitted through language and are deeply intertwined with literary expression. In particular, the religious movements that emerged during Korea's modern transformations left significant marks on literary history, often employing literary forms to achieve the purpose of edification.

Scriptures are the embodiment of metaphysical value systems shaped by religion, clothed in the garments of language; thus, it is impossible to conceive of a religion without scriptures. These scriptures fully employ the linguistic structures of literature, while literature itself has often unconsciously borrowed from religious value systems (Choi 1991, 94). Legendary tales of founders' lives emerged spontaneously, spreading widely through traditional archetypes that anticipated the advent of sages or heroes. Compiling such legends into vernacular scriptures represented a radical literary transformation, bringing religious movements deeply into the domain of literature and leaving enduring traces in its history (Cho 2005, 11–12).

Kang Jeungsan (姜甑山, 1871–1909) was a great religious thinker who lived at the turn of the 20th century, when Korea opened its doors to foreign powers and just before the nation's annexation by Japan. Within a Joseon society dominated by Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian feudal order, Kang synthesized the essence of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Western religions. He then introduced a new philosophy suited for the Later World (後天), centered on the principles of *Gaebyeok* (開闢, Great Opening) and *Sangsaeng* (相生, Mutual Beneficence), which he named the Heavenly and Earthly Great Dao (天地大道). His philosophy followed the cosmological cycle of conceiving and bearing (胞胎), Nurturing and cultivating (養生), and bathing and dressing (浴帶), culminating in the era of maturing and prospering (冠旺). As the completion of "True Donghak," his teachings overcame the problems and failures of the original Donghak movement and were transmitted to the people as a transformative religious model.

Before embarking on his great salvific mission, Kang Jeungsan expressed his educational will and sense of duty by founding two village schools (*Acts* 1:20, *Acts* 2: 1), where he taught young pupils eager to learn. After completing his studies at Daewonsa Temple on Mount Moak, he continued to nurture the intellectual curiosity of his followers, grounding his instruction in human transformation and emotional cultivation. These activities transcended mere pedagogy, elevating him into a religious figure of reverence and eventually divinization. His teachings did not merely convey knowledge but sought to move hearts, inspiring awe and elevating the essential emotions and rational faculties of human beings. His journey of the Great Itineration (大巡) thus reflects his effort to pioneer such a religious and literary path.

In line with the age of *Gwanwang* (冠旺), Kang Jeungsan stressed that teachings must not remain at the cognitive level of philosophy. Instead, acquired knowledge must be internalized, emotionally absorbed, and actively practiced in daily life. Consequently, his edification employed diverse methods, and this article investigates such aspects of

his transformative teachings.

Previous research on Kang Jeungsan, particularly regarding his use of literature, has often been limited to fragmentary studies of classical Chinese poetry or incantations (Kim 1994), lacking an integrated theoretical framework. This study seeks to overcome these limitations by adopting a multidisciplinary perspective and proposing a comprehensive interpretive framework. By doing so, it clarifies how Kang Jeungsan employed literature as a vehicle to open the age of *Injon* (人尊, The nobility of Humanity) and the principle of *Seongsa Jaein* (成事在人, "Heaven will contrive and man will achieve"). Moreover, it examines how literature functioned in the methods and significance of his nine-year-long Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (天地公事).

Edification as the Core of Jeungsan's Thought and its Methodological Diversity

To understand Jeungsan's (Kang Jeungsan's) thought, edification (敎化 *Kr. gyohwa*) is a central concept. Before embarking on his mission to "renew the world," Jeungsan worked as an educator, founding village schools to teach young pupils. After completing his studies at Daewonsa Temple, he turned to his followers, not merely transmitting intellectual knowledge but cultivating practical edification through the transformation of the heart. This process was embodied in the nine-year-long *Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth* (天地公事 *Kr. Cheonji Gongsa*), which sought to establish the Heavenly and Earthly Great Dao (天地大道) in the universe. It unfolded through a progressive sequence—from Dao (道) to virtue (德), then to transformation and nurture (化育蒼生)—and employed literary means such as classical Chinese poetry (漢詩 *Kr. hansi*), *Donghak Gasa* (Eastern Learning Songs), and incantations (*jumun*). Grounded in the principle of resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence (解冤相生 *Kr. haewon sangsaeng*) and in nonviolent pacifism, his pedagogy was personalized to each disciple's character, emphasizing not external form but the inner spiritual force of Sincerity, Respectfulness, and Faithfulness (誠敬信 *Kr. Seong-gyeong-sin*). In harmony with nature, Jeungsan guided his followers toward spiritual cultivation and awakened to the interrelation between the divine and the human—a truly holistic edification. Jeungsan was deeply critical of the educational realities of late Joseon society. He declared:

> The purpose of teaching people by founding schools all over the world is to resolve grievances of both divine beings and human beings. This is done by perfecting the Three Realms and greatly enlightening the world. However, the present schooling makes learners bend solely upon the desire for fame or wealth. Therefore, I made the realization of the Dao something that is to be completed outside of the present frame" (*Progress of the Order* 1:17)

Here Jeungsan identifies the problem of contemporary schooling: it trapped students in the pursuit of fame and profit. Education, he argued, must begin with human nature and moral cultivation, followed by professional training appropriate to one's talents. Since the true purpose of schools was to contribute to the civilization of the world—grounded in resolving divine grievances, education must integrate spiritual and material dimensions. Instead, late Joseon schools had lapsed into an excessive focus on material civilization and utilitarian training. Thus Jeungsan emphasized that education must go beyond instruction (敎 *Kr.gyo*) to include transformation (化 *Kr.hwa*), inspiring learners to embody the Dao.

Accordingly, Jeungsan insisted that both Eastern and Western learning shared the same ultimate purpose: edification. As he stated:

> There was a great sage in the West, His teachings are called 'Western Learning';
> There was a great sage in the East, His teachings are called 'Eastern Learning.'
> They both intended to edify people. (*Acts* 5:38)

Here Jeungsan underscores that beyond regional distinctions, the essential aim of learning was always edification, guiding people toward righteousness.

He further articulated a systematic process of edification:

> It is said that there is the Dao (曰有道);
> As there was the Dao, there came to be virtue(道有德);
> As there was virtue, there came to be transformation(德有化);
> As there was transformation, there came to be nurture(化有育);
> As there was nurture, there came to be creatures(育有蒼生);
> As there were creatures, there came to be a myriad(蒼生有億兆);
> As there was a myriad, there came to be the wish for coronation(億兆有願戴);
> As there was the wish for coronation, there came to be Tang Yao.(願戴有唐堯)
> (*Progress of the Order* 1:66)

This passage shows Jeungsan's vision that Dao must generate virtue, which in turn enables the transformation and nurturing of beings. By recalling Emperor Yao of ancient China, he emphasized how true governance educates and harmonizes the people in both spiritual and material terms, achieving a balance of yin and yang. Just as the ancient people revered Yao, so too could a politics of *muwiyihwa* (無爲而化, The way of changing without need for action) bring about peace and justify the existence of schools today.

For Jeungsan, to recover the Dao (有道 *Kr. yudo*) was to align with righteousness and human ethics. He stressed:

> When the Dao has been recovered, serious illnesses are naturally cured without any medicine, and minor illnesses are naturally cured without any medicine as well. (得其有道 則大病勿藥自效 小病勿藥自效) (*Acts* 5: 38)

And he warned:

> He who forgets morality for his parents is without the Dao;
> He who forgets morality for his sovereign is without the Dao;
> He who forgets morality for his teacher is without the Dao.
> As there is no filial piety, no loyalty, and no fidelity in this world, The whole world is ailing.(*Progress of the Order* 1:66)

Thus Jeungsan connected Dao with ethical life. Edification, for him, meant not only intellectual teaching but inspiring learners to absorb knowledge emotionally and practice it actively in their daily lives. His concept of *gamhwa* (感化, to impress and inspire other people by emotional transformation) encompassed not only cognitive but also affective and spiritual dimensions, elevating the essential sentiments and rational faculties of humanity.

Jeungsan's methods of edification exhibit distinctive characteristics: (1) the use of diverse literary genres; (2) personalized strategies of teaching; (3) a multi-layered communicative structure; and (4) the transformative power of language. He employed classical poetry to deliver compressed symbolic teachings, conveying cosmic insights, prophetic warnings, and moral cultivation. He cited and reinterpreted Donghak Gasa, granting new meanings attuned to his age and highlighting the primacy of "perfected heart" (眞心). He also used incantations (*jumun*), whose performative linguistic force expressed the bond between gods and humans, serving as literary instruments of spiritual transformation. Moreover, Jeungsan tailored his teachings to the unique capacities and personalities of his disciples—anticipating principles of individualized education now emphasized in modern pedagogy. Finally, his literary forms invited active reinterpretation, demonstrating that language possesses transformative power to shape and reconfigure worldviews.

Background and Theoretical Features of the Multidisciplinary Approach

This study adopts a multidisciplinary set of theories in order to systematically analyze Jeungsan's literary pedagogy of edification. The necessity of this approach lies in the fact that Jeungsan's edification was not a mere transmission of religious doctrines, but rather an integrated process encompassing cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions. His pedagogical method already embodied in the late nineteenth century the ideal of holistic education now pursued across many fields of modern pedagogy. To analyze such a complex character within a single theoretical framework risks reducing or distorting its

essence.

In order to understand the multilayered structure of Jeungsan's edification, one must first recognize its composite nature. His edification was at once a literary act of creation and a religious proclamation, an instance of personal counseling and a mode of social intervention, an inheritance of tradition and an innovative creation. Symbolic edification through classical poetry (*han-si*) must be illuminated from the perspective of literary theory; dialogical processes with disciples must be examined from the standpoint of pedagogy; and conscientization aimed at social transformation must be interpreted through critical theory. Only through such multidimensional approaches can the full picture of Jeungsan's pedagogy of edification be drawn and its modern significance accurately evaluated.

In pursuit of the research aims—clarifying the therapeutic function of literature, understanding education as social transformation, analyzing the process of active interpretation, uncovering the literary embodiment of the Haewon-Sangsaeng (Resolution of Grievances and Mutual Beneficence) principle, and identifying the originality of Jeungsan's methods—a systematic application of multidisciplinary theories was employed. Each theory elucidates a particular dimension of Jeungsan's edification while simultaneously revealing its true meaning within an integrated whole. This does not amount to a mechanical application of theories; rather, it represents a creative dialogue in which Jeungsan's practical cases complement the limits of each theory and yield new insights.

To analyze Jeungsan's literary edification from multiple perspectives, this study develops an original methodology that integrates six core theories in a step-by-step fashion. Designed to overcome fragmented approaches, this integrated methodology captures the dynamic totality of Jeungsan's pedagogy. The four-stage process—textual analysis → reception process analysis → edification effect analysis → derivation of social significance—allows for a systematic tracing of Jeungsan's edification as it moves from literary creation through personal transformation to social change.

The theoretical foundation of this four-stage methodology may be located in the cyclical structure of curriculum theory and the concept of the hermeneutic circle. The process of moving from the text, through the responses of the recipients, to concrete transformation is closely related to Gadamer's idea of hermeneutic dialogue as well as Dewey's theory of experiential learning. Each stage is both independent and interconnected, structured to reach deeper levels of understanding through cyclical feedback.

Textual Analysis: The Ontological Power of Language and Symbolic Systems

Theoretical Background and Application of Symbolist Literary Theory

Symbolist literary theory, which emerged in late nineteenth-century France around Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, was a literary movement that sought to

express inner truth and transcendent reality not through direct description or explanation, but through suggestion and symbolism. At its core lies the recognition that language functions not merely as an instrument of communication but as a medium that reveals invisible spiritual and metaphysical realities(Peyre 1985, 1–17).

Symbolists sought the possibility of a "pure language" that transcended the limits of everyday speech. Through symbolic images and metaphorical expression, they aimed to elicit intuitive understanding and inner awakening in the reader. Mallarmé's declaration that "poetry names nothing but suggests everything," (Peyre 1985, 68–69) and Baudelaire's theory of correspondances (Peyre 1985, 33–34), which posits mysterious linkages among all beings, both reflect the conviction that such connections can be disclosed through language.

This Symbolist aesthetic shows striking parallels with Jeungsan's composition and use of han-shi (classical poetry). His choice of words and construction of imagery transcend surface meaning, embodying a multilayered structure that intimates cosmological order and ontological truth. In particular, his poetic use of the triadic structure of Heaven (天), Earth (地), and Humanity (人) illustrates a Symbolist technique that expands individual experience into a cosmic framework.

Moreover, Jeungsan's symbolic system did not remain at the level of literary technique but functioned as "performative language" that catalyzed real change. This exemplifies the "magical power of language" sought by Symbolism, here realized in a religious context, and also resonates with modern linguistic philosophy, particularly speech act theory. The fact that Jeungsan's prophetic verses were believed to have influenced historical developments attests to the Symbolist insight into the ontological power of language being tested and verified in lived reality.

The Development and Applicability of Contemporary Language Arts Pedagogy

Contemporary language arts pedagogy, shaped in the latter half of the twentieth century under the influence of postmodern educational theory, views language not merely as a tool of communication but as a force that shapes worldviews and transforms existence. Philosophical foundations include Wittgenstein's theory of language games, Heidegger's ontology of language, and Bakhtin's dialogism (Kim 1990, 299–305; Jo 2019, 170–174).

One of its central assumptions is that the use of language not only conveys information but also constitutes and reconstitutes the identities of speaker and listener. Poetic language and metaphorical expression, in particular, dismantle existing frameworks of perception and open new horizons of meaning. From this perspective, language education is understood as a holistic process that goes beyond communicative competence to cultivate imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and reflective consciousness (Kayser 1999, 330–331).

Jeungsan's combined use of classical poetry and ritual incantations (ju-mun) may be interpreted as a comprehensive employment of the aesthetic, spiritual, and

transformative functions of language. The repetitive sound structures of incantations such as the Tae-eul-ju exemplify linguistic performativity that induces altered states of consciousness, while the condensed imagery of his han-shi stimulates disciples' imagination and intuition, leading them toward new modes of self-understanding.

A particularly notable example is Jeungsan's practice of reciting together both Li Bai's Preface to the Peach and Plum Garden (Tao Li Yuan Xu) and sacred incantations. This demonstrates an original integration of literary language that cultivates aesthetic sensitivity and religious language that intensifies spiritual concentration. Such practice exemplifies the multifunctional use of language and the principle of holistic development sought by modern language arts pedagogy, offering an alternative model to the compartmentalized approaches of contemporary education.

Reception Process Analysis: Hermeneutic Dialogue and the Dynamics of Meaning-Making

Hans Robert Jauss's Aesthetics of Reception

Hans Robert Jauss's aesthetics of reception, developed in Germany during the 1960s, is a literary theory grounded in the recognition that the meaning of a text is not determined solely by the author's intention but is completed through the reader's active interpretive process. Central to Jauss's approach is the concept of the horizon of expectations (Erwartungshorizont), which emphasizes that a reader's prior understanding and cultural context play a decisive role in the generation of meaning.(Jauss 1983, 199–204)

In Jauss's theory, literary history is reconstructed not as the history of production but as the history of reception. A single text can be interpreted differently across times and cultures, and these shifting interpretations themselves constitute the true history of literature. The "transformation of the horizon of expectations" explains the process by which readers transcend prior interpretive frameworks and discover new meanings.

This reception-aesthetic perspective is particularly useful for understanding Jeungsan's strategy of reinterpreting Donghak lyrics. His reinterpretation of Choe Su-un's verse was not a mere textual alteration but a deliberate act aimed at fundamentally transforming his disciples' horizon of expectations. What is significant here is that Jeungsan did not discard the existing text but instead creatively reinterpreted it, thereby allowing his disciples to preserve their cultural identity while simultaneously cultivating a new consciousness. This concretely exemplifies what Jauss described as the "dialectic of tradition and innovation," demonstrating an educational wisdom that achieved both cultural continuity and transformative renewal.

Wolfgang Iser's Reader-Response Theory and Interpretive Community

Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory further developed Jauss's aesthetics of reception by focusing on the interactive process between text and reader. Iser argued

that meaning is generated as readers actively fill in the "gaps" (Leerstelle) inherent in a text, thus transforming themselves from passive receivers of meaning into co-creators of meaning(Iser 1993, 236–238).

Key concepts in Iser's theory include the "implied reader" and the "interpretive community." The implied reader refers to the ideal reader presupposed by the text, and actual readers form their interpretations through an ongoing dialogue with this implied reader. The interpretive community, in turn, consists of groups of readers who share similar cultural backgrounds and interpretive frameworks, explaining how individual interpretations develop into communal meaning.(Iser 1993, 141–142)

The principles of Iser's theory are vividly illustrated in Jeungsan's poetic pedagogy. Examining the verse he composed for his disciple reveals important insights. Although the poem itself employs relatively simple antithesis, its impact was magnified when joined with Kim's personal circumstances of poverty and low self-esteem, producing a profound therapeutic effect.

Even more importantly, the poem extended beyond his disciple's individual experience to form an interpretive community among the disciples. As they witnessed his disciple's transformation, the disciples collectively arrived at a shared interpretation—"inner virtue outweighs external conditions." This demonstrates the dynamic process in which individual experience and communal validation reinforce one another. The formation of such interpretive communities explains how Jeungsan's edification transcended the personal level to engender shifts in collective consciousness.

Analysis of the Effects of Edification: Existential Transformation and Narrative Healing

The Theoretical Background of Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis Model

Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis model of religious education, developed in the 1980s within Catholic religious pedagogy, critiques traditional, didactic modes of instruction and advances a participatory approach grounded in the learner's lived experience and concrete reality. This model is built upon the philosophical foundations of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, and Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic dialogue. (Groome 1983, 260–266)

The term shared praxis refers to "shared practical wisdom" and designates a dialogical process in which personal experience and communal tradition interact to generate new meaning and practice. Groome systematized this process into five stages: (Groome 1991, 146–148)

1) Present Praxis—recognizing the learner's concrete situation and lived experience
2) Critical Reflection—critically analyzing one's present reality
3) Dialogue with the Christian Tradition—engaging inherited wisdom and values

4) Transformative Vision—imagining new possibilities for life and community
5) Practical Decision—making concrete commitments to action.

At its core, this model affirms that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but an integrative process that unites life and faith. The concept of praxis highlights the dialectical unity of theory and practice, underscoring that the goal of education extends from knowing to existential transformation. (Groome 2021)

Jeungsan's edification of his disciple Kim Hyeong-Ryeol offers a vivid realization of this model. Jeungsan first grasped Kim's concrete reality—poverty and lack of self-esteem (Stage 1). Instead of imposing direct admonition, he employed poetic questioning to prompt self-reflection (Stage 2). He then engaged traditional values in dialogue, offering an alternative framework of meaning (Stage 3). On this basis, he provided a transformative vision that emphasized the superiority of inner values over external conditions (Stage 4). Finally, Kim was guided to enact genuine changes in his life orientation and demeanor (Stage 5).

Jeong Un-chae's Literary Therapy: Narrative Identity and the Mechanism of Healing

Jeong Un-chae's theory of literary therapy, developed in Korea in the late 1990s, is an original framework grounded in the recognition that human life is essentially narrated and expressed through stories. According to this theory, human identity is constructed as narrative identity, and psychological problems or existential crises originate from being trapped within a "problematic narrative"(Jeong 2006, 304–307; Cho 2015, 17–28).

The central premise of literary therapy is that human beings can achieve fundamental healing by recognizing their inner narratives through language and reconstructing them in a healthier direction. This goes beyond the passive reading or appreciation of literary works; it refers to the active process of restructuring one's own life narrative by engaging with the structures and functions of literary language.

Jeong describes the process of literary therapy in three stages:

1) Recognition of the Problematic Narrative—becoming aware of the negativenarrative patterns one inhabits
2) Exploration of Alternative Narratives—discovering new narrative models through literary works or the experiences of others
3) Internalization of a Healthy Narrative—applying the new narrative to one's own life and reconstructing one's identity.

Jeungsan's prophetic poems concerning the Donghak Peasant Revolution exemplify this therapeutic process. At a time when the people were imprisoned in the destructive narrative that "violent revolution is the only solution," Jeungsan's prophetic verse prompted recognition of the limitations and dangers of that narrative. He then presented a new structure—"violent resistance→inevitable failure→greater suffering"—that

fundamentally reconfigured the disciples' narrative of action.

What is particularly noteworthy is that Jeungsan did not merely negate the existing narrative but affirmed its intent while pointing out its methodological limits. This allowed his disciples to shift their narratives without losing self-respect. In this way, Jeungsan's pedagogy illustrates what Jeong calls the strengthening of narrative immunity—the cultivation of inner resilience that enables individuals to sustain a healthy narrative even in the face of external shocks.

Deriving Social Significance: Critical Consciousness and Liberative Pedagogy

Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy and the Theory of Conscientization

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, developed in the context of adult literacy education in Brazil during the 1960s, fundamentally critiques the "banking model of education," which regards education as the mere "depositing" of knowledge into passive learners. Freire argued that such a traditional model reduces learners to inert objects, thereby reproducing existing structures of social oppression. As an alternative, he proposed problem-posing education, which fosters active engagement and transformation.(Freire 2018, 101–108)

The central concept in Freire's theory is conscientization (conscientização), the process by which individuals critically perceive the social realities that shape their lives and develop the agency to transform those realities. This is not merely an intellectual awakening but a holistic transformation that culminates in concrete action and praxis. Freire describes three stages of this process:

1) Magical Consciousness—a passive state in which reality is accepted as fate
2) Naïve Consciousness—an awareness of problems without recognition of their structural causes
3) Critical Consciousness—the recognition of structural contradictions and the awakening of agency to enact change.

A cornerstone of Freire's educational philosophy is dialogue. True education, he maintained, occurs not in hierarchical, vertical relationships between teacher and student, but in horizontal, reciprocal encounters where both become co-learners. In such dialogical education, the teacher becomes one who poses problems, and the learner becomes one who thinks critically. Furthermore, the content of education must not consist of abstract knowledge detached from lived experience, but of generative words directly rooted in the learner's life-world (Kim et al. 2017, 22–28).

Jeungsan's pedagogical practice displays striking parallels to these principles of Freire's critical pedagogy. His critique of contemporary schooling—that it led students to "fall only into base pursuits such as official salaries and petty profit"—corresponds exactly to Freire's denunciation of the banking model of education. Likewise, Jeungsan's

practice of posing questions to his disciples rather than providing them with ready-made answers, stands as a quintessential example of problem-posing education.

Socio-Transformative Education and Liberative Praxis

The ultimate goal of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy is the transformation of social structures through the awakening of individual consciousness. This perspective stands in opposition to liberal views of education as a politically neutral act. Instead, Freire argued that education is inherently political, always serving either to maintain existing structures or to bring about their transformation. From this perspective, genuine education must take the form of cultural action. Cultural action is not the passive transmission of inherited traditions, but rather the dismantling of oppressive cultural forms and the creative construction of liberative alternatives.

Jeungsan's pedagogy strongly embodies the character of such cultural action. He rejected both the rigid Confucian order and the uncritical reception of Western modernity, instead offering a creative synthesis of the strengths of East and West as the foundation for a new cultural paradigm. Particularly notable is his reinterpretation of the *Donghak gasa* (Hymns of the Eastern Learning), through which he dismantled religious authoritarianism and highlighted the agency of common people. In doing so, Jeungsan sought to reconfigure cultural hegemony itself, opening the possibility for an emancipatory reorientation of society.

Codification and Decodification: Pedagogical Methodologies of Critical Awareness

Freire proposed *codification* and *decodification* as the central methodological tools of conscientization. Codification is the process of compressing learners' existential situations into symbolic images or problem-posing scenarios. Decodification, in turn, is the critical analysis of those codes to reveal the contradictions and possibilities hidden within them. (Kim et al. 2017, 122–124)

For codification to be effective, the situation presented must be familiar enough to resonate with learners, while simultaneously offering a new perspective. Such codified representations allow learners to objectify their own lived experience, thereby creating critical distance and enabling reflective insight. In the process of decodification, learners collectively engage in dialogue to analyze their situation from multiple angles and explore pathways toward transformation.

Jeungsan's poetry offers refined examples of such codification. Through symbolic verses, he presented disciples with reframed visions of their own reality, enabling them to see beyond fatalistic resignation. This process led disciples to recognize their own capacity for agency and transformation. It stands as a quintessential instance of conscientization in Freire's sense—where individual awakening expands into collective solidarity and ultimately into social praxis.

The Synergistic Effects and Limitations of the Integrated Methodology

The six theoretical frameworks examined above were not applied to Jeungsan's pedagogy in a merely parallel fashion but instead achieved an organic integration. Symbolism and the theory of language arts education elucidated the linguistic features of Jeungsan's texts; reception aesthetics traced the disciples' active processes of interpretation; shared praxis and literary therapy analyzed the transformative effects of his pedagogy; and critical pedagogy evaluated its broader social significance.

The greatest strength of this integrated approach is that it enables a multidimensional understanding of the layered structure of Jeungsan's edification. It allows us to grasp comprehensively the complex nature of his pedagogy—literary and religious, personal and social, traditional and innovative—which could not be adequately captured by any single theoretical framework. Furthermore, the shortcomings of one theory were compensated for by the strengths of others, resulting in a richer and more accurate analysis.

Nevertheless, this multidisciplinary approach is not without its limitations. Above all, in the process of integrating theories developed within disparate academic traditions, there is a risk of overlooking the unique contexts or subtle nuances inherent in each theory. Moreover, applying modern Western theoretical frameworks to the specific circumstances of late nineteenth-century Korea carries the possibility of interpretive distortion due to temporal and cultural differences.

To overcome these limitations, continuous reflection and supplementation are required. In particular, it is necessary to deepen the dialogue between Eastern intellectual traditions and Western theoretical systems, and to maintain a balanced approach that does not reduce the originality of Jeungsan's pedagogy to existing theories, while still evaluating its modern significance with precision. Through such methodological reflection, research on Jeungsan's edification can yield more refined and persuasive results.

Textual Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification

Symbolist Literary Theory and Jeungsan's Poetic Symbolism

In Symbolist literary theory, a symbol is defined as "a means of implicitly expressing metaphysical or mystical content." Jeungsan's Chinese poetry (han-shi) embodies this aesthetic with remarkable precision.

> Heaven is not known above in Heaven, Earth is not known down upon the Earth,and humanity is not known among humanity. To where should I return?
> 天上無知天 地下無知地 人中無知人 何處歸 (*Acts* 3: 42)

This verse reflects Jeungsan's profound spiritual insight through the triad of Heaven

(天 *Kr.Cheon*), Earth (地 *Kr. Ji*), and Humanity (人 *Kr. In*). It laments that there is no true understanding of Heaven, Earth, or Humanity, and in doing so expresses the Sangje's own transcendent perspective. In this poem, Heaven, Earth, and Humanity bear multilayered meanings: Heaven signifies transcendent order, Earth the realm of historical reality, and Humanity the creative agent who fulfills cosmic order through self-realization.

Jeungsan's symbolic use of language also extended to prophetic discourse. When Jeon Bong-jun (全琫準), outraged by government oppression, rallied Donghak followers into an armed uprising, the social climate grew increasingly turbulent as anger spread and the movement intensified. At that moment, Jeungsan foresaw the futility of their endeavor. One summer day, he had his disciples memorize the following prophetic verse:

> As the moon falls dark and wild geese fly high, Chanyu will flee during the night.
> As the swift cavalry is about to chase after him, heavy snow will cover both the bows and the swords
> (月黑雁飛高 單于夜遁逃 欲將輕騎逐 大雪滿弓刀)(*Acts* 1:23)

Through this prophetic poem, Jeungsan revealed that the Donghak armies would meet defeat in the winter snows and warned his disciples not to join. Indeed, later that winter, the Donghak forces were decisively crushed by government troops, while those who followed Jeungsan's counsel were spared from calamity.

Symbolically, the imagery unfolds across several layers: *"dark moon"* (月黑) represents the chaotic turmoil of the age; "*geese flying high*" (雁飛高) signifies intuitive responses to danger; and *"the enemy chief fleeing by night"* (單于夜遁逃) symbolizes the disintegration of the established power structure. Through this symbolic structure, Jeungsan offered more than mere prediction—he conveyed profound insights into the essence of history and the governing principles of human action.

The Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894 (*Gabo Year*) shook late Joseon society with its calls to "eradicate oppression and save the people" (除暴救民 *Kr. je-pok-gu-min*), "support the nation and comfort the people" (輔國安民 *Kr.bo-guk-an-min*), and "expel the West and repel Japan" (斥洋斥倭 *Kr.cheok-yang-cheok-wae*). Yet despite its just cause, the movement did not unfold peacefully. Its escalation provoked the intervention of Japan and Qing China, culminating in the Sino-Japanese War and plunging Korea into deeper turmoil. In contrast, Jeungsan consistently upheld a pacifist orientation, seeking to resolve both domestic and international crises on the foundation of *haewon sangsaeng* (解冤相生, resolving grievances and fostering mutual life). Thus, while acknowledging the noble intentions of the Donghak movement, Jeungsan guided his disciples away from participation, employing the symbolic language of prophecy as a means of edification.

Contemporary Theories of Language-Arts Pedagogy and Jeungsan's Transformative Use of Language

Contemporary theories of language arts education hold that language is not merely a tool of communication but an ontological force that shapes and transforms worldviews. Jeungsan's use of *ju-mun* (incantations or sacred chants) provides a pioneering example of such a conception of language. The *ju-mun* that he composed or employed often appear as significant elements within his *Cheonji Gongsa* (天地公事, Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth), functioning as a distinct literary genre with transformative power. Jeungsan himself clarified the efficacy of *ju-mun* in one of his teachings:

> One day, Sangje told His two disciples, Ryu Chan-Myeong and Kim Ja-Hyeon, to stand before Him, and ordered each to propagate His virtuous teachings to 100,000 people. Chan-Myeong accepted His order, but Ja-Hyeon did not answer until Sangje urged him again. In the end, Ja-Hyeon obeyed His order. Then Sangje said, "I will subjugate and pacify the world and you shall rule it. Fifty Year Holy Works will be needed for your rule. All devotees should each propagate My virtuous teachings to six people. I already tested the Tae-eul Mantra and the Wunjang Mantra. I resolved Kim Byeong-Wuk's calamity through the Tae-eul Mantra and Jang Hyo-Sun's rampage through the Wunjang Mantra."(*Acts* 3: 31)

Another record relates:

> Hwang Eung-Jong offered Sangje a yellowish chicken. Sangje had Hyeong-Ryeol slaughter the chicken and boil it at night, and He shared it with Kim Hyeong-Ryeol, Han Gong-Suk, Ryu Chan-Myeong, Kim Ja-Hyeon, Kim Gap-Chil, Kim Song-Hwan, Kim Gwang-Chan, and Hwang Eung-Jong. He wrote the Wunjang Mantra, having them memorize it all at once. This is the Wunjang Mantra as it was known at that time: cheon-ha-yeong-wung Gwan-wun-jang ui-mak-cheo geun-cheong-cheon-ji-pal-wi-je-jang yuk-jeong-yuk-gab yuk-byeong-yuk-eul so-sol-je-jang il-byeol-byeong-yeong sa-gui-eum-eum geup-geup-yeo-ryul-ryeong-sa-ba-ah
> [天下英雄關雲長 依幕處 近聽天地八位諸將 六丁六甲六丙六乙所率諸將 一別屛營 邪鬼唵唵唸唸如律令娑婆啊 The great hero under Heaven, Guan Yunchang who resides in his command-tent, I politely pray that you have the Eight Directional Generals of Heaven and Earth, Six Jeong, Six Gab, Six Byeong, Six Eul, all your generals and special forces exorcise demons fast. Om om promptly comply with this divine command saba-ah]. (*Progress of the Order* 1: 22)

From this, we can see that Jeungsan composed the *Unjang ju* in connection with the deity Guan Yu, invoking his aid through the medium of sacred chant. Its purpose was not only ritual but also practical: to draw upon divine power to resolve crises in the human realm. Jeungsan employed such *ju-mun* repeatedly, demonstrating their versatility in addressing both personal misfortunes and collective upheavals. The ritualistic nature of these incantations illustrates his pedagogy of *sin-in sanggwanseong*

(神人相關性), the principle of divine–human interrelation, in which the human world cannot be separated from the realm of spirits. In this sense, *ju-mun* served both as religious instruction and as affective edification.

The *Tae-eul ju*, for instance, operated on two levels: on the auditory level, its repetitive rhythm heightened concentration; on the semantic level, its invocation of *Tae-eul Cheonsang Wongun* (太乙天上元君), a cosmic being, fostered a sense of communion with the universe. Jeungsan thus emphasized that *ju-mun* were not merely prayers but "language that creates new realities." In practice, he often combined the chanting of classical Chinese poetry—such as Li Bai's *Prologue to the Peach and Plum Garden* (桃李園序 *Kr. Doriwonseo*)—with *ju-mun*. This integration cultivated disciples' aesthetic sensibilities through poetry while simultaneously deepening their spiritual focus through chant. In this way, Jeungsan's approach exemplified the transformative dimension of language arts: uniting beauty and spirituality, literature and ritual, to effect both inner renewal and cosmic harmony.

Reception Process Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification: Reception Aesthetics and Jeungsan's Reader-Response Edification

Hans Robert Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectation" (*Erwartungshorizont*) provides a crucial key to understanding Jeungsan's literary edification strategies. A striking example is his reinterpretation of Choi Su-un's *Donghak kasa*.

> In The Songs of Suwun, there is a saying, "If the energy of the Dao is maintained for a long time, wickedness cannot enter [道氣長存邪不入]." However, I say, "If a perfected heart is adamantly guarded, blessings will come first [眞心堅守福先來]." (*Dharma* 2: 3)

This reframing marked a decisive shift in the horizon of expectation. In Su-un's time, the prevailing horizon placed emphasis on reliance upon a transcendent force (道氣 *Kr.do-gi*, the energy of the Way), cultivating a dependence on external safeguards with only limited acknowledgment of individual agency. Jeungsan, however, transformed this horizon by foregrounding true heart (眞心 *Kr. jinshim*) as an inner human capacity. In doing so, he repositioned the locus of religious efficacy from the external to the internal, from passive waiting for supernatural protection to active cultivation of sincerity as the generative source of blessing.

The effect of this reception-aesthetic strategy was profound. Disciples moved from a self-understanding of *"I am a passive being who awaits help from beyond"* to *"My perfected heart itself is the driving force of transformation."* In other words, Jeungsan's reinterpretation reoriented their agency, creating an entirely new horizon in which human subjectivity and ethical volition became central.

Wolfgang Iser's notion of the "interpretive community" further illuminates Jeungsan's

practice. His poetry did not simply address isolated individuals but forged a shared interpretive space among disciples. A notable example is the poem he composed for Kim Hyeong-Ryeol. On the surface, it offered Kim personal comfort and encouragement, helping him recover self-respect despite poverty and social humiliation. Yet this poem also functioned collectively: other disciples who witnessed Kim's transformation drew a common interpretive conclusion—*"What matters most is not external conditions but inner integrity and sincerity."*

Thus, Jeungsan's poetry catalyzed a multi-layered reader-response process. The first-order reader, Kim Hyeong-Ryeol, received the poem as direct consolation and reorientation of his self-understanding. The second-order readers, the wider disciple community, confirmed the poem's efficacy by observing Kim's change and reinterpreting the message for themselves. Out of this dynamic emerged an interpretive community in which individual experience and collective affirmation mutually reinforced one another.

The result was not merely aesthetic appreciation but a unique fusion of literary emotion and religious awakening. Jeungsan's poetic language created a participatory horizon of meaning, enabling disciples to experience both literary resonance and spiritual transformation as an integrated process.

Edification Effect Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification

Groome's Shared Praxis Model and the Case of Kim Hyeong-Ryeol

Jeungsan's edification can be concretely illustrated through the case of his disciple Kim Hyŏng-ryŏl, which aligns precisely with the fivefold stages of Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis model: naming present praxis, critical reflection, dialogue with tradition, vision for transformation, and decision for action.

Jeungsan first discerned Kim's outward conditions—poverty and shabby appearance—as well as his inner state—lack of self-esteem and despair. This corresponds to Groome's emphasis on "a deep understanding of the learner's life context." Rather than offering direct admonition, Jeungsan posed an implicit question: *"Does your present appearance truly define who you are?"*—a question that compelled Kim to reflect upon his own situation.

Jeungsan then reinforced this reflective process with a symbolic poem:

> Filthy, worn clothing is safer than metal armor;
> A crumbling house and overgrown fence seems an impenetrable castle.
> [弊衣多垢勝金甲 頹屋無垣似鐵城] (*Acts* 3: 48)

This verse, composed specifically for Kim, conveys that even if one's clothing is worn and stained, the inner posture of Sincerity, Respectfulness and Faithfulness (誠敬信 *Kr seong-gyeong-sin*) can prevail over material strength; likewise, a crumbling house may embody greater security than a fortress if supported by inner resolve. Thus, the poem

teaches that external appearance is secondary to the inner moral and spiritual strength of the individual.

Through this, Jeungsan engaged with the Confucian tradition of intrinsic value but simultaneously transcended it by proposing a new value system grounded in sincerity and spiritual resilience (LEE 2022, 121–131). For Kim, this was not merely consolation but a call to ontological transformation. The result was a tangible change in his attitude: he no longer succumbed to external conditions but cultivated inner strength.

This case represents both an individual embodiment of the *haewon-sangsaeng* narrative (from grievance, i.e., inferiority, to mutual beneficence, i.e., restored dignity) and a concrete instance of the conscientization process emphasized in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. Kim's transformation illustrates the movement from the resolution of personal grievance (overcoming inferiority) to the establishment of mutual beneficence (recovering self-respect), thereby exemplifying Jeungsan's method of literary edification as a practice of inner renewal with wider social implications.

Jung Un-Chae's Literary Therapy and Jeungsan's Narrative Healing

Jung Un-Chae's theory of literary therapy holds that fundamental healing occurs when individuals transform their "problematic narratives" into "healthy narratives." Jeungsan's methods of edification provide a sophisticated example of such narrative transformation. At a time when the populace was trapped in the narrative that "violent revolution is the only solution for social change," Jeungsan redirected this discourse through prophetic poetry related to the Donghak Peasant Movement:

> As the moon falls dark and wild geese fly high, Chanyu will flee during the night.
> As the swift cavalry is about to chase after him, heavy snow will cover both the bows and the swords
> [月黑雁飛高 單于夜遁逃 欲將輕騎逐 大雪滿弓刀] (*Acts* 1: 23)

The Donghak Peasant Uprising of 1894 was a watershed moment in late Joseon, launched under slogans such as *"expel the corrupt and save the people"* (*Kr.je-pok-gu-min*), *"support the nation and bring peace to the people"* (*Kr.bo guk an min*), and *"expel the Westerners and the Japanese"* (*Kr.cheok-yang-cheok-wae*). While its intent was to repel foreign powers and rescue the Korean people, the movement soon entangled the nation in greater chaos, including foreign interventions and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. In this turbulent context, Jeungsan rejected violent resistance, adhering instead to a nonviolent, pacifist path, grounded in *haewon* (resolution of grievances) and *sangsaeng* (mutual beneficence). Through the prophetic verse above, he warned his followers that although the aims of Donghak were noble, joining the armed revolt would ultimately lead to ruin.

This poem effectively restructured his disciples' narrative framework from one of "violent resistance → inevitable defeat → greater suffering" into an alternative vision that

disarmed despair and instilled confidence in a different path. When the Donghak forces were indeed defeated, Jeungsan's disciples did not collapse into hopelessness but instead affirmed, *"We are following another way."* This resilience corresponds to what Jung describes as "narrative immunity"—the capacity to withstand despair through an alternative, healthier story.

Jeungsan also employed introspective poetry to heal individual narratives. A verse he composed at the age of seven illustrates this:

> Heaven is not known above in Heaven, Earth is not known down upon the Earth, and humanity is not known among humanity. To where should I return? [天上無知天 地下無知地 人中無知人 何處歸] (*Acts* 3: 42)

Here, Jeungsan articulates the absence of true understanding of heaven, earth, and humanity, lamenting the lack of wisdom and simultaneously expressing his own expansive vision. Through this poem, he guided his disciples away from the complacent narrative—*"I already know enough"*—toward a growth-oriented narrative: *"I am still on the journey of discovering my true self."*

Such transformations exemplify how Jeungsan's pedagogy shifted narratives from one of resentment and violent struggle to one of peaceful transformation and mutual flourishing. Furthermore, these narrative shifts expanded from the personal to the collective level, linking individual healing with social renewal. This dynamic illustrates Jung Un-Chae's central claim that literary therapy enables narrative transformations which transcend private recovery and encompass broader social healing.

Edification Effect Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification: Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Jeungsan's Ethical Edification

The convergence between Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Jeungsan's approach to ethical edification (人倫敎化 *Kr.inryun gyohwa*) can be discerned in three major aspects. First, Freire's critique of the "banking model of education" aligns precisely with Jeungsan's criticism of contemporary schooling. Jeungsan declared:

> Sangje said, "The purpose of teaching people by founding schools all over the world is to resolve grievances of both divine beings and human beings. This is done by perfecting the Three Realms and greatly enlightening the world. However, the present schooling makes learners bend solely upon the desire for fame or wealth. Therefore, I made the realization of the Dao something that is to be completed outside of the present frame." (*Progress of the Order* 1:17)

Here, Jeungsan diagnoses the fundamental flaw of his time: education had been reduced to the pursuit of status and material benefit. He emphasized that true education should be rooted in *human nature* (人性 *Kr.in-seong*) as its foundation, upon which

vocational or practical training could be built. The purpose of schooling, he argued, was to advance civilization through a balance of spiritual and material education. But in reality, vocational and utilitarian concerns dominated, resulting in systemic corruption. For Jeungsan, education was not simply the imparting of knowledge (敎 *Kr.gyo*) but also the cultivation of transformation (化 *Kr.hwa*)—an education that inspires moral and emotional influence rather than mere technical competence.

Second, Jeungsan adopted what Freire calls a *problem-posing* method of education, encouraging disciples to arrive at critical consciousness (*conscientização*) through reflection rather than by passively receiving completed answers. For example, he once asked:

> "What are the three essential abilities a person must cultivate in this new age?"
> He then quoted the *Donghak kasa* (Donghak hymns):
> Sangje said, "There is a saying that for words, there was Su Qin and Zhang Yi, for knowledge, there was Shao Kangjie, and for writing, there was Li Tai-Bai and Du Zimei. In The Songs of the Eastern Learning, these three energies are embedded. Contemplate this deeply."(*Dharma* 2:42)

This teaching highlights not only the traditional Confucian "Six Arts" (*li, yue, she, yu, shu, shu*) but also a new triad of rhetorical, intellectual, and literary abilities suited to the modern world. Jeungsan's emphasis on *munjang* (literary composition), especially in the refined form of classical poetry, shows that he viewed literature as the essential artistic capacity for the coming age. In this way, he employed poetry not merely as ornament but as a medium of edification, preparing his disciples for a broader cultural and spiritual transformation.

Third, Jeungsan's use of poetry resonates strongly with Freire's concept of *codification*. Codification is the process of distilling an abstract idea into a concrete image or symbol that evokes critical reflection. A verse Jeungsan composed at the age of seven illustrates this dynamic:

> Taking a great stride, I hope that I do not demolish the Earth. Shouting with a big roar, I worry I may frighten Heaven [遠步恐地坼　大呼恐天驚].(*Acts* 1: 12)

This childhood poem condensed the abstract concept of the "power of the true self" into vivid imagery. For his disciples, it became a catalyst for critical reflection: *"Why did our teacher portray himself as such a vast being? Could we not also possess this hidden potential? Are our diminished lives the result of social or civilizational conditions? What must we do to realize our true power?"*

Through such poetic codifications, Jeungsan guided his followers into a process of critical awakening that was not simply intellectual but existential. His pedagogy demanded a reorientation of identity—from passive recipients of external authority to active subjects discovering their latent capacities.

Thus, Jeungsan's ethical edification harmonizes with Freire's critical pedagogy: both reject rote transmission, both privilege dialogical reflection, and both insist that education must lead to a transformation of consciousness and life.

The Completion of an Integrated Theory of Edification: Dialectical Unity of Theory and Practice

The multidisciplinary theories analyzed above converge organically within Jeungsan's theory of edification. Groome's Shared Praxis, Freire's conscientization, Jeong Un-chae's narrative therapy, reception aesthetics, language arts pedagogy, and symbolism functioned in a sequentially integrated manner. This integration can be observed through three illustrative cases.

First, a comprehensive reinterpretation of Kim Hyeong-Ryeol's edification case reveals a process of fundamental human transformation. At the outset, Jeungsan diagnosed the internalized oppressive consciousness expressed in the belief, *"Because I am poor, I am a worthless being,"* and identified the fatalistic, passive narrative structure that reinforced the notion, *"The poor must forever remain miserable."* Through symbolic intervention in the form of a classical poem—"Even tattered hempen clothes outshine golden armor; a collapsing house with a rough fence stands like an iron fortress"—he overturned the value system from *"poverty = inferiority"* to *"simplicity = superiority."* By employing the elevated cultural form of Chinese poetry, he endowed his disciple with a new identity, guiding the formation of critical awareness: *"I need not be confined by socially imposed values."* Ultimately, this led to the construction of a new narrative: *"One who knows true value can live with dignity beyond external conditions."*

Second, the integration of collective narrative therapy and conscientizing education is evident in Jeungsan's use of prophetic poetry during the Donghak Peasant Movement. At the time, the people were trapped within a destructive narrative: *"Armed struggle is the only way to achieve social transformation."* Jeungsan accurately diagnosed this limitation and, through poetic expression and probing questions, fostered their awareness of reality. By applying Freire's problem-posing education, he encouraged the people to critically reflect on their actions and narratives. From the perspective of literary therapy, the new narrative structure he offered made explicit that *"violent resistance inevitably results in failure and greater suffering."* This reconfiguration of narrative healed destructive trajectories and instilled in his disciples a confidence in pursuing "a better way," thereby strengthening the collective's narrative immunity. At the same time, the application of symbolism and reception aesthetics reinforced their internal strength and sense of subjective identity through the layered symbols embedded in the prophetic verse. Moreover, the repetitive use of incantatory language—integrating language arts pedagogy—enhanced the community's spiritual cohesion and motivation for practice.

Third, the integration of personal narrative therapy and dialogical education emerges in Jeungsan's *Poem of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.* He discerned that his disciples

were confined within a fixed identity narrative of *"I already know enough."* Applying Groome's Shared Praxis model and Freire's problem-posing method, he raised the existential question, *"Where shall one return?"* to provoke profound self-awareness. Here, Jeong Un-chae's narrative therapy framework enabled disciples to shift from problematic narratives to growth-oriented ones grounded in self-inquiry. Through Freire's dialogical pedagogy, Jeungsan reinterpreted Donghak lyrics, rejecting authoritative cultural interpretation and creatively reconstructing the people's cultural heritage to suit the new era, thereby fostering communal reflection and wisdom. Furthermore, the integrated use of incantations and Chinese poetry, combining language arts pedagogy with symbolism, elevated individual spiritual concentration and imagination, while the cosmological symbols of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity articulated a profound ontological vision of self-realization and the completion of cosmic order.

This integrated theory of edification thus offers a vital alternative model that transcends the fragmentation of modern education and orients toward holistic human transformation.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Kang Jeungsan's use of literature as a means of edification exhibits remarkable convergences with a wide range of modern theories in education and literary studies. More importantly, these theories are not applied externally but are seen to operate organically within Jeungsan's concrete practices. His pedagogy should therefore not be regarded merely as a particular religious phenomenon of late nineteenth-century Korea, but rather as a pioneering example of a universal educational model that simultaneously seeks holistic human growth and social transformation.

As such, Kang Jeungsan's integrated theory of edification offers significant theoretical and practical implications for diverse fields, including contemporary pedagogy, religious studies, and literary therapy. It provides critical insight into overcoming the limitations of fragmented modern education and realizing true holistic education (全人敎育 *Kr* jeonin gyoyuk).

In conclusion, Jeungsan's literary edification must not be treated as a relic of the past. Instead, it should be re-evaluated as a living resource that points toward the future direction of education—one that unites intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions in the service of both personal renewal and collective transformation.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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