Literary competence and rhetorical tropes
Within efl context

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ملخــــــص

يتميز الأسلوب الأدبي باستخدام محسنات بديعية مثل الاستعارة و التشبيه بغية تمييز الخطاب الأدبي عـن الخطــاب اللغوي ومن ثم خلق مؤثرات خاصة تجعل القارئ يلتمس جمالا و ذوقا مؤثرا عند قراءة رواية أو قصيدة. لكن غالبا ما تقـف هذه المحسنات عائقا أمام القارئ في فهم مضمون النص و مفاهيمه تحديدا في الأدب الأجنبي المدرج في مجال تدريس اللغات الأجنبية. و يرجع كثيرا من الباحثين في مجال تدريس الأدب الأجنبي هذه الظاهرة إلى مصطلحات اللغة المجازية ودلالاتها و يؤكدون أن التمكن من المصطلحات المستعملة في لغة الأدب يساعد في فهم و تأويل النص الأدبي. إن هـذا المقــال يتنـــاول بالتفصيل بعض المصطلحات الأدبية على مستوى البنية للجملة مصحوبا بأمثلة من نصوص أدبية مختلفة تساعد القارئ علــى ترسيخ و تعميم هذه المفاهيم.

Key Words: rhetoric, tropes, EFL, literary competence, pragmatic competence, discourse, figurative language

Introduction

In the context of foreign language teaching, literature has become an essential subject as long as it provides considerable opportunities to foreign language learners to deal with authentic materials and hence exposes them plainly to literary discourse. The tendency of imparting literary discourse into foreign language classes actually comes as a reaction against the artificiality and superficiality noted in texts that have been simplified or specifically written for language learners. Moreover, simplified language as noticed by several educationists does not allow learners to use language appropriately as it is hoped to be used by native speakers. Thus, incorporating literary discourse in English language teaching programmes aims primary to enhance learners' pragmatic competence, i.e., providing learners with literary insights to help them grasp as well as assimilate fictional and artistic components within literary texts and then use them appropriately in due contexts. Zafeiriadon (2004, 3-4) asserts that "In reading literary texts, students have also to cope with language intended for native speakers and thus they gain additional familiarity with many different linguistic uses". This shows that the more learners are exposed to artistic texts the better socially and culturally, and eventually pragmatic competent will be in the target language and culture.

Literary Competence

Literary competence as contrasted to linguistic competence implies equipping learners with the necessary literary devices, techniques, and forms to enable them read and process literary text systematically within its set of rules and techniques. This in return develops their pragmatic competence, in other words, an ability that will help them to tackle and process literary texts differently than any other kind of text (Savvidou, 2004; Han, 2005).

Literary texts actually invite learners to view and observe a nation's culture, its history, its speculations, its present, and its future perspectives, though it portrays them subjectively. The experiences gained from literary texts offer learners precious opportunity to check their own values and exchange their restricted points of view. This will help them to interact with the native speakers of the target language culturally and if not at least aesthetically; the process which has become called "intercultural competence".

Alderson (2000) pinpoints that literature discourse is characterised by the use of formal devices like deviation and of figurative language such as metaphor in order to defamiliarize language and hence raising special effects, and make learners use more personal associations according to their socio-cultural knowledge of the text. This process, actually, requires them to manipulate figurative and rhetorical devices of the target language.

Lazer (2000:12) argues that:

> Effective readers of a literary text possess 'literary competence', in that they have an implicit understanding of, and familiarity with, certain conventions which allow them to take the words on page of a play or other literary work and convert them into literary meaning.

Within literary discourse, the learner is often confronted with a language that uses metaphorical and symbolic meanings which include figures of speech, metaphor, simile, etc. Teachers of literature thus have to familiarize their students with such language use and should encourage them to process any marked deviations from ordinary grammar and language.

Pragmatic Competence

Literary texts expose learners to realistic cultural stands which represent and portray realistically the culture of the language in use. They also help learners to be familiar with a real and authentic milieu of the cultural and social context of the language they are studying, the matter which will reinforce their pragmatic competence (Willis, 1994). Martinez (2002) cites some advantages of literary materials in the classroom; here are some:

1) Students are exposed to real discourse.
2) Authentic materials including literary ones keep students informed about what is happening in the world, so they have an intrinsic educational value.
3) They contain a wide variety of text types, language styles not easily found in conventional teaching materials.

4) They encourage reading for pleasure, because they are likely to contain topics of interest to learners.

Before involving learners in literary discourse, a literature teacher has to consider the characteristics of language of literature and how it comes to be distinguished from the other types of uses. Brumfit & Carter (1986) assert that literary discourse has a number of features which distinguishes it from the other non–literary; being a specialized language, it cannot be analyzed in the same way as a discourse of specific fields (Lazar, 2000, p. 6). Brumfit & Carter (op. cit) report that:

> *There are a number of features of literary language which can be isolated. Many of those futures occur in other forms of discourse as well but in many literary texts they combine to form a high unified and consistent effect, which strongly reinforces the message of the text. (p. 8)*

> *Linguistic features which distinguish literary discourse may be divided into two groups. These are precisely, **rhetorical schemes** which are concerned with the arrangement of sounds, arrangement of words, and structuring of sentences, while the **rhetorical tropes** represent a deviation from the common significance of a word or phrase, or which may have specific appeals to the audience, i.e., pragmatic figures (Lethbridge & Mildorf, 2003). On the whole, literary linguistic features, also called rhetorical devices (Lethbridge & Mildorf, ibid) can fall under two groups schemes which include phonological, morphological, syntactic features, and rhetorical tropes which include semantic and pragmatic figures.*

As noticed here, the term 'pragmatic figures' is coined to refer to figures of speech which include metaphorical language or simply figurative language. As it is claimed by Selden (1989), Cudden (1991), and Samaan (1987), figurative language is crucial for communication as long as it is not used to express man's ideas, thoughts, and preoccupations, but also his feelings, emotions, and aspirations. This second function of literary discourse was named by the philosopher Nietzsche in the 1900's "ethical beliefs". In contemporary literary criticism, however, figures of speech have been called "rhetorical devices" and in linguistics and applied linguistics disciplines, the term "parasites" is often coined.

All in all, pragmatic competence in literary discourse implies the firm manipulation and command of rhetorical devices so that the reader would comprehend and interpret artistic text properly and eventually extend artistic and aesthetic devices to his real life when expressing not only his ideas but also his personal impressions, depressions, mood, humour, and emotions.

Here below, the most frequent rhetorical devices with definitions and examples adapted from Abrams (1981); Corbett (1971); Cuddon (1991); Harman (1992); Preminger (1993) will be presented. Though these devices must be known by any literature teacher and learner, the focus will be on **rhetorical tropes** because they are necessary tools in written discourse related to semantics and meaning, which allow teachers and learners distinguish fictional language from factual language in order to comprehend and interpret literary materials appropriately. Rhetorical schemes which are concerned with the arrangement of sounds, arrangement of words and structuring of sentences will be discussed in other places.

On the whole, once the ***rhetorical tropes*** are manipulated, they will help learners to develop their literary pragmatic competence and eventually allow them to deal with literary discourse appropriately.

Basic Rhetorical Tropes

Basic rhetorical tropes are cited below with short definitions and examples to facilitate its implication and its use either in reading or in composing. Examples given below with the definitions of tropes may contain old archaic English; it is because most of them are taken from classics and English literature masterpieces. They are also used to familiarise students of English as a foreign language with one aspect of many language uses that they are expected to manipulate when dealing with artistic language which makes part of realistic language used by native speakers in different saturations.

1-Antithesis

It is very common in rhetoric and frequently used in prose. It is a technique which means opposition. It is contrasting ideas in parallel construction of different meanings, as in:

"Less wit than mimic, more a wit than wise",

"With Oaths affirmed, with dying vows deny'd."

"Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more",

"Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has no pleasures".

2.Apostrophe:

It is a figure of speech in which the speaker addressed directly to something nonhuman, a dead or absent persons as if present or capable of understanding, such as,

" Milton, thou shouldn't be living at this hour",

" Busy old fool, unruly sun,"

" Why dot thou thus,"

" Through windows, and through curtains" "Call on us?" .

3-Euphemism

It is a figure of speech through which some mild words or phrases substitute others which would be, harsh, undesirable, too direct, unpleasant, or offensive, as in:

"A man is helping the police with their inquires/ a suspected criminal is detained by the police and probably under close arrest."

"One particular lady, whose lord is more than suspected of laying his umbrella on her as an instrument of correction,."

4-Hyperbole

It is a figure of speech which pretends an obvious exaggeration for emphasis or for rhetorical effect, such as "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from hand? "My hand will rather make the multitudinous seas in the world the green ones red",

"I haven't seen you for ages",

"As old as the hills",

"All the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten this little hand."

5-Irony

It is saying or supposing something, but meaning something else. This implies that what is said does not always mean exactly the literal words or ideas of the speaker or writer. It takes three forms verbal, irony of situation, and dramatic. In irony of situation, the result or outcome of actions is the contrary of what the actor expected. In dramatic irony, the audience generally knows or predicts something that characters themselves do not. In verbal irony what is said by someone is contrary to what it is meant, such as when one says, "How clever I am" when he makes a stupidity. So, sarcasm is a form of verbal irony.

6-Metaphor

It is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared without using the connectors: such, as, like. This comparison is meant to add a new dimension of meaning to the original and thus creates special effect.

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together;"

"There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm and big with thunder;"

"The lion was deceivably shot by his enemy;"

"My love for you is an all consuming flame".

7-Metonymy

A figure of speech in which a word or the name of an attribute or a thing is substituted for the thing itself, such as:

"A herd of fifty cows, fifty head of cattle";

"The crown may represent the monarchy."

8- Oxymoron

It is a combination of contradictory terms or verbal units. It is a paradoxical utterance that correlates two terms which are contrary in meaning in ordinary usage, as in

"Why then, brawling love, O loving hate!";

"O heavy lightness, serious vanity";

"I will complain, yet praise";

"I will bewail, approve";

"And all my sour – sweet days";

"I will lament and love."

9-Paradox

It is a statement that seems contradictory, but which on closer examination and understanding proves to have truth and thus not contradictory, as in
"Dark with excessive bright;"

"Snail-paced in a hurry";

"That I may rise, and stand, o'er throw me;"

"War is peace, freedom is slavery, Ignorance is strength".

10-Paronomasia

It is also called "pun". It is a figure of speech which implies playing with words. It is using words of the same written form or of a similar pronunciation, but not necessarily with the same meaning. This technique is used for special effects, esp., for creating humour, as in "Some folk were, wise, and some are otherwise";

"They went and told the sexton, and the sexton toll'd the bell."

11-Personification

It is known as prosopoeia. It is to attribute some human qualities to inanimate objects. It also implies addressing to objects or dead people as if they hear and reply, as in

" Stormy, husky, brawling";

"City of the big shoulders:"

"On the brow of Dombey, Time";

" His brother care had set some mark.";

"Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,/ Who is already sick and pale with grief.";

" My feet, give me a lift".

"Oh Lincoln! If only you are here".

12-Simile

It is an explicit comparison in which two different qualities are compared by the use of a connecting device such as "like ",

"as". As in "the wolf with its belly stitched full of big pebbles, Nibelung wolves barbed like black pine forest";

"Clear as frost on the grass – bade".

"My heart is like a singing bird";

"Youth like summer morn, age like winter weather."

13-Synaesthesia

It means perceiving together or mixing sensations to appeal to more than one sense. Like the description of sound in terms of colour, or the description of colour in terms of sound, as in " The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue";

"To conceive, not his heart to report, what my dream was."

Synaesthesia is frequently used in our daily conversations and everyday speech like: A cold eye, soft wind , a heavy silence , a hard voice , a black look , a black day , a severe look , a white heart".

14 -Understatement

It is a figure of speech in which an expression or a statement is to minimize the importance of what is meant, it is the opposite of hyperbole. It is very frequent in everyday speech", such as:

"It is a little warm today: the temperature is 50";

"Blood hath been shed ere now: understates the number of people who have been murdered in Macbeth."

Though these are not all devices, they represent the most commonly used in literary discourse that may be encountered by students in their treatment of literary materials.

Conclusion

On the whole, learners should be trained to acquire a literary competence which seeks learners to go beyond linguistic and formally conventional components of discourse in order to enable them deal with literary discourse appropriately and then interact properly with native speakers in situations where language is used artistically. This involves exposing them to literary genres since each genre requires some specific figurative interpretation on the part of learners. Thus, reading a novel or a short story would imply readers to concentrate more on figures, such as irony, metaphor, simile, personification, tone and so forth while reading a poem would activate the readers' prosodic schemata together with figurative interpretation such as rhyme, meter, rhythm, alliteration and images. Prosodic schemata, or necessary pre-concepts and knowledge related mainly to poetry will be however elaborated in other papers.

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