

Teaching Literature as Discourse A Critical Pedagogy Approach

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Abstract

Over the past four decades, the need for more critically-oriented classrooms has become exceedingly urgent, where analytical and critical thinking, both become pivotal themes in higher education teaching context. The core belief of Critical Pedagogy is the necessity to develop in learners a new skill which is 'Critical Thinking'; considering that it is the most essential skill to enable the learners to think individually. This necessitates a shift from the 'Banking Model of education' towards the Problem-Posing Model which would contribute into raising 'Consciousness'. Recourse to an interdisciplinary teaching of literature, through the incorporation of methods and techniques advocated in discourse analysis, along with Critical Thinking would contribute into developing the learners' criticality by being exposed to a 'Language of Possibilities'. The present paper intends to consider the main concepts cited above starting with the notion of discourse so as to evade the traditional aim of literary studies, i.e, knowledge about literature. Henceforth, literature as discourse will become the focus of the following part to demonstrate that interaction and interpretation in context would eventually lead to a better teaching activity in literature classes. What becomes at stake here is to conditionally investigate the feasibility of our claim in the Algerian context.

Key words: Teaching Literature, Discourse, Dialogical thinking, Critical Pedagogy

ملخص

على مدى العقود الأربعة الماضية، أصبحت الحاجة إلى مزيد من الفصول الدراسية ذات المنحى النقدي أمراً ملحاً للغاية، حيث أن كل من التفكير التحليلي والتفكير النقدي، أصبحا من المحاور الأساسية في سياق التعليم العالي. أساس البيداغوجيا النقدية يكمن في ضرورة تطوير مهارات جديدة لدى المتعلمين ألا وهي "التفكير النقدي"؛ مع الأخذ بالاعتبار أنها من أهم المهارات التي تمكن المتعلمين من التفكير بشكل فردي. وهذا يستلزم الانتقال من نموذج "التعليم البنكي" إلى النموذج الذي يحتوي على إشكالية، والذي من شأنه أن يساهم في زيادة الوعي. ومن شأن اللجوء إلى تدريس الأدب الانجليزي عن طريق دمج التخصصات، وذلك من خلال إدماج الأساليب والتقنيات التي ينادي بها تخصص تحليل الخطاب، جنباً إلى جنب مع التفكير النقدي، أن يساهم في تطوير مهارة التفكير النقدي لدى المتعلمين من خلال التعرض لـ "لغة الإمكانات". ويتطرق هذا المقال إلى النظر في المفاهيم الرئيسية المذكورة أعلاه، بدءاً بمفهوم الخطاب من أجل نقادي الهدف التقليدي للدراسات الأدبية والذي يتركز على المعرفة حول الأدب. لذلك، يتمحور الجزء التالي حول الأدب كخطاب لإظهار أن التفاعل والتفسير في السياق سيؤدي في نهاية المطاف إلى نشاط تعليمي أفضل في فصول الأدب الانجليزي. ما يتحتم هنا هو طرح قابلية تطبيق هذا البيان العلمي في سياق التعليم العالي بالجزائر.

Introduction

Over the past four decades it has been witnessed in the sphere of education a sense of urgency, concerning the need for more critically oriented classrooms, as opposed to a hegemonic education based on the passive absorption of a selected set of knowledge. This sense of urgency spread among educators who consider the necessity to sharpen their students' analytical skills and critical thinking considering that they are key factors in the teaching learning process. In this perspective, it becomes apparent that certain teaching methods in which the teachers are the depository of knowledge and the students just mere receivers have become outdated, and therefore to be supplanted by a whole new pedagogical approach, which would be more participatory oriented and more motivational for students as they would be actively involved in generating meaning out of their educational process. The core belief of Critical Pedagogy is developing the student's analytical skills and critical thinking; as such, it emphasizes the necessity to shift from the 'Banking Model of education' towards the Problem-Posing Model in order to develop the student's sense of criticality. However, it turns out to be a sensitive task for a teacher to be able to maintain a balance between the requirements and the objectives of Critical pedagogy in teaching literature. It is hypothesized that the recourse to an interdisciplinary teaching of literature, through the incorporation of methods and techniques advocated by discourse analysis, would contribute into developing their criticality by being exposed to a 'Language of Possibilities'. As such the main emphasis of this paper is the teaching of literature as a discourse in order to motivate the learners to be actively involved in the analytical process and ultimately develop their critical thinking.

1-The Banking Model of Education in Teaching Literature

One of the most popularized approach in teaching literature in an EFL context is the one crafted by Carter and Long (1991). Carter and Long (1991:2-3) propose three models to justify the use of Literature. The first model is the cultural model, which illustrates how literature could contribute into the understanding of different cultures and ideologies. Their second model is the language model, which emphasizes that literature could be viewed as an instrument to teach specific vocabulary and structures. The third model is the personal growth model which is more difficult to achieve since it requires both motivation to read as well as a developed sense of criticality in order to understand the society's culture and the ideology escorting a literary work. This would ultimately bring the learners to a better analysis of their own society and culture. The last model could be viewed as the culminating point of the previous two, yet it is impossible to achieve without critical thinking on behalf of the students. In fact, the absence of the later the teaching of literature remains in the form of the Banking model of teaching which does not allow any personal growth.

It is generally assumed that the lack of critical thinking of our students in a literary class is attributed to the lack of readings, which is an undeniable fact. Yet, it is also a shared responsibility between the learner and the teacher, considering the objectives of teaching which are limited to knowledge about the subject without incorporating analytical and critical thinking on behalf of the student. This teaching model of literature resembles the *modus operandi* of the 'Banking model of teaching' which is suppressive of analytical skills.

In the customary teaching methods of literature, the students are presented with a specific corpus, they are expected to read understand and supposedly analyze the given corpus from the angle they are assigned, such as themes, characters, plot, or writing techniques, and to be able to do so they are required to refer to readymade analysis related to their corpus, and the great of students would refer to certain websites specialized in literary analysis, and would simply use rote-learning. The students in this context are not required to critically analyse the

novel they are presented with in order to attempt to dissect or connect various elements surrounding the corpus. As such, we may suppose that the current way of teaching literature is a perfect illustration of the *modus operandi*, of the banking model System, which is repressive of the student's sense of criticality, and consequently demotivational; as it suppresses the innate predisposition to yearn for answers. In this context, 'The Banking Model' has to be supplanted by a new form of teaching, which is the major claim of Critical Pedagogy.

This Progressive pedagogy positions itself against this form of hegemonic Education, as equipping students with analytical skills and critical thinking is its core belief. This progressive and radical educational stance highlights the ethical purpose of education. This drastic pedagogy has the firm belief that education has the power to change social inequality by educating a generation equipped with sharp analytical skills and a developed critical thinking. Thus, it maybe hypothesized that the incorporation of critical pedagogy in literature teaching would trigger the student's motivation to further their reading for a better analysis and understanding of a literary discourse. It is not, however, an easy task to do in a classroom setting considering that this pedagogy is more of a philosophy of education than a perspective set of methods (Freire, 2005).

2-Critical Pedagogy: A Philosophy of Education

Critical Pedagogy is best described as a philosophy of education guided by the vocation to help learners develop a higher form of awareness, and develop their consciousness through sharpening their analytical skills. It is not a prescriptive set of practices, it is rather an ongoing process that enables learners to develop as individuals first then as members of society. The prime motivation of the education process becomes to bring the students to what Abraham Maslow referred to as 'a self-actualization'. And in society it aims at bringing the learners to distinguish the origins of 'False Consciousness' as it deals with how a system of beliefs becomes unquestioned and internalized to the extent where any form of change becomes a mythical quest. It seeks to provide the learners with new lens to scrutinize society, and enables them to understand that with knowledge is the power that can bring positive and constructive action (Freire, 2005).

The teacher becomes what Douglass Brown referred to as "An Agent for Change". That is to say that the teacher's role evolves from merely language teaching to become a source of inspiration and in the best case scenario a trigger to bring the learners to the threshold of taking constructive actions and become themselves 'Agents of Change' which only possible through equipping the learners with 'Critical Thinking', because it is the most essential skill in order to enable the learners to think individually. Hence, students thinking individually and critically would be encouraged to reach their full potential as such they are cognitively motivated to move up higher in the Hierarchy of Needs (Brown, 2001).

Concretely, Critical Pedagogy was first described by Paulo Freire. He argues in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed that the educational process is far from being neutral. He considered the liberation of the mind as the core subjects for his pedagogy, and this liberation of the mind is attainable through empowering learners to develop Criticality. Freire (2005) advocates that 'Humanization' is the key for the liberation of the mind which is the ultimate goal of critical pedagogy. The concept of 'Humanization' could be analogous of the final stages in the hierarchy of needs which are first 'Self-Esteem' and ultimately 'Self Actualization'.

3-Problem-Posing Education

Paulo Freire (2005) criticizes the banking model of instruction, in which education “becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor”. In place of the banking model, Freire suggests that deposit making must be replaced by **“Problem-Posing Education”**, in order to break with the vertical pattern of the Banking Model, in which the learner is actively involved in the learning process, and the learning environment becomes a space for collective learning through asking questions, discussions and dialogues:

Whereas Banking education anesthetizes and inhibit creative power, problem posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality. (Freire, 2005, p. 26)

Freire argued that this method would challenge and involve students in the learning process and would bring the students to relate a given problem to a larger context. As such, a new form of comprehension is jointly constructed; this new form of comprehension would call for new challenges.

4-Consciousness –Dialogical Thinking–Praxis

Freire(2005) suggests three pivotal elements for the Problem Posing instruction: Consciousness-Dialogical Thinking- Praxis. The first elements that Freire emphasized on is ‘Concientization’ i.e. ‘critical consciousness’ which could be described as a high form of awareness, of both the self and the broader context where the individual is positioned in. He also suggested that the task of a critical pedagogue is to trigger his learner’s ‘critical consciousness. That is to say to allow students to be aware of their learning and their individual understanding of a topic, the students would reach a level of criticality where they can distinguish between the knowledge at the level of the Doxa which is a matter of opinion, and knowledge at the level of the logos which is reason and wisdom. Knowledge at the level of the Doxa is not necessarily objective or accurate; thus, instead of a real awareness, the students would be still plunged in ‘false consciousnesses’. Therefore, Freire (2005) argues that ‘The Problem Posing Model’ would be beneficial to unveil hidden realities, and enable students to relate micro elements to macro ones with the purpose to extract awareness or ‘Consciousness. Henceforth, the role of the teacher in this setting is: ‘to create together with the students the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the DOXA is superseded by true knowledge at the level of the LOGOS’(Freire, 2005, p.26).

The Second element emphasized in critical pedagogy is Dialogism. Freire (2005) argues that dialogue is an existential necessity as it is an encounter of ideas. However, dialogism is at risk to be transformed into a Banking Model of teaching if it is reduced to the mere act of one person depositing ideas in another. In order to preserve the beneficial properties related to ‘Dialogism’ Freire (ibid) emphasized that a teacher must foster ‘respect’, ‘love’, and ‘humility’. Respect of the student’s thoughts and their perspectives, love of the subject taught and the learners, and least but not last humility as a teacher is what creates a reassuring atmosphere to allow dialogism to occur. Thus, it is through humility that a teacher could possibly create the stage of belonging and acceptance that precedes ‘Self Actualization’ in the hierarchy of needs.

Keeping in line with the ultimate objective of this practice which is liberating consciousness through 'critical thinking', Freire (ibid) claims that the final phase of Critical Pedagogy is Praxis. It is the know-how and know-what, which are only possible if the students are endowed with a developed sense of criticality and consciousness to bring a positive change as an individual and as a member of the society. Thus, Praxis could be viewed as the ultimate goal of higher education to bring into the society genuine intellectuals endowed with a well-developed 'Critical Thinking'.

Ironically, the major criticism of this pedagogy emanates from the perspective of critical thinking. The foundation of critical thinking is empirically demonstrable facts; while critical pedagogy has recourse to dialogical thinking; thus, in an attempt to foster critical thinking through dialogism, we are at risk of reproducing the same pattern used by the Banking Model education. Hence, the first difficulty that faces the teacher in the application of Critical Pedagogy in teaching literature is that the 'Conscientization' that Freire (ibid) suggested is at risk to be transformed from an 'epiphany' to a 'false consciousness'. The second difficulty that faces teachers in the context of critical pedagogy comes from the preconceived notion among many teachers as well as students that critical pedagogy would be easily applicable in an ideal world, but in the "real world" of structured and standardized learning, it is quite impossible to achieve due to the lack of time and to the large number of students in a classroom. The challenge for a critical pedagogue in this context becomes to maintain first the right balance between the goals of critical pedagogy to develop his student's analytical skills without manipulating their critical thinking, and second to keep in line with the requirement of the teaching of the module of literature in an Algerian Education Context..

5-Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Literature

What is hypothesized at this level is that an interdisciplinary approach to teaching literature would foster criticality and would ultimately develop the student's consciousness. It is hypothesized that tackling a literary text as a discourse would get the students actively in the process of decoding the discourse embedded within a literary text. The teaching of a literary text as a discourse would enable the shift from the 'Banking Model' to the 'Problem Posing'. Henceforth, we may assume that the teaching of literature through the lens of Discourse analysis, would contribute into sharpening the student's analytical skills and critical thinking.

6-Literature as a Discourse

In his essay *Discourse In The Novel*, Bakhtin (1981) suggests to overcome the separation between an 'abstract formal' approach and 'an abstract ideological approach' because form and content in discourse are one. He argues that instead of taking language as a system of abstract grammatical categories, we rather conceive language as ideological, a world view, or a concrete opinion. Henceforth, approaching a literary text as a discourse would expose the students to a language of possibilities, considering the large variety of discourses literature provides. Likewise, tackling literature from the perspective of discourse analysis would also ensure the shift from the banking model of educations towards a problem posing and participatory approach.

On the other hand, the analysis of a literary discourse would require the analyst to fight on two fronts. The first being the existing literary studies and the second would be field of discourse analysis which is not an easy task because there is always a dominance of one or the other. The Branch of stylistics is often used to reconcile and accommodate these two disciplines.

In Stylistics two main stylistic approaches can be distinguished, the *Atomistic approach* and the *Organic approach*. The first aims at analyzing the way the author manage to create an effect on his audience, the effect achieved through a careful linguistic use which involves juggling between ‘implicatures’ and ‘inferences’ in the text. The second stylistic approach is characterized as ‘Organic’, unlike the previous one; it has a loose connection to linguistics, because a literary style cannot be analyzed only from the perspective of the specific use of language. Accordingly, in this approach literary works are considered as a projection of the world from the author’s perspective.

7-A Socially Oriented Analysis of Discourse

In Textual Analysis for Social research Fairclough (2003) combines the two approaches already in use by stylistics to present an interdisciplinary approach to text. He argued that discourse analysis has to be used in conjunction with other forms of analysis. He suggests an interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis; that is to say, to link discourse to social theories. As such, he proposes to develop a socially oriented analysis of discourse, an analysis which can draw upon both the atomic approach as well as the organic approach and spread to a larger context to include the social and historical context that accommodate both.

The approach to discourse analysis suggested by Fairclough (ibid) consists of distinguishing a social research theme, which he termed as a general theme containing a number of sub-themes, the same approach is also presented in critical pedagogy where the general themes are referred to as ‘Thematic Universe’, and the sub-themes are referred to as ‘Generative themes’ which is quite similar to what Carter and Long (1991) describe as the cultural model in teaching literature. It requires the student to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text. But in the absence of analytical skills this model would be transformed into a mere absorption of the content.

8-Texturing and Overdetermination

In *Textual Analysis for Social Research* Fairclough (ibid) presents a process that goes through two phases for the social analysis of the discourse. The first phase involves texturing the text and the second involves ‘overdetermination’. The concept of texturing the text could be considered as a linguistic approach to the discourse. Texturing the text is attributed by Fairclough to ‘the social agents’ or the ‘Managers’ involved in the creation of the discourse. These agents even though subjected to various constraints still have a great deal of freedom in ‘Texturing of a semantic relation of metonymy’ (Fairclough, 23). The process of texturing belongs to the producer of the discourse, but if we tackle a literary text as a discourse then we may use texturing as a tool for the analysis of the literary discourse.

The texturing phase is quite similar to atomistic approach in stylistics, or the language model suggested by Carter and Long (1991). It is a language based approach which requires a systematic and methodical approach to the text in order to distinguish specific linguistic features. In the Initial phase the students are required to analyse the literary discourse through Texturing and perform a ‘Metonymy’ of their own, that is to say that even though there is no clear semantic relation between the vocabulary used and the meaning encoded within the discourse, the students would still be able to distinguish words, expressions, tones, recurring motifs, which are carefully used by the author to create an effect on the readers. However, it is a mechanistic and a reductive approach to teaching literature; it may transform into a purely structural approach to the literary discourse. Therefore, Fairclough suggests a second phase for the social analysis of discourse .

The next phase of the social analysis of the discourse is 'Overdetermination'. Fairclough argues that language not only is considered an irreducible part of social life but is also overdetermined by social elements. Since texts are elements of social events and not simply a linguistic production, the text becomes an order of discourse which illustrates social practices and social organisation. Thus, in the second phase of the analysis the students would extract from the text the social effect, and considering that a text is a holder of a discourse it can be also viewed as a projection of the schemata inside the mind of the author.

As such the process of 'Texturing' the text followed by 'Overdetermination', could also lead to decoding the ideologies within a discourse, and that brings to the final stage in teaching literature as a discourse which is to connect the outcomes of 'Texturing' to 'Overdetermination' to understand the socio-historical context and the ideologies that influenced the discourse in the first place. That is to say in Marxist terms to connect the literary work to the Superstructure of the society. It is in a sense linking a micro element which is the literary text, to the macro element which is the general historical and social context in which the text was produced. This final stage is similar to the personal growth model suggested by Carter and Long (1991) which the converging phase between the cultural and the language model. The students are using both previous models to reach a third phase which is to express their opinions, feelings and make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in the text.

9-Conclusion

Fairclough suggests the possibility to a social analysis of the discourse by means of texturing and Overdetermination. If we tackle a literary text as a discourse we may be able to use the literary text as a social analysis of the context surrounding the literary production. The understanding of how the text was textured by its author would require a close scrutiny of the linguistic structure, which requires the learners to be actively involved in the analysis process. Thus the students would attempt to texturize the text not as authors but as critical readers. Following the texturing the students would progress towards 'Overdetermination' i.e., to link the discourse to its social context and in the final stage following their analysis the students could use critical thinking when approaching a literary text as a discourse and link a literary work to the 'Superstructure'

The approach suggested by Fairclough is a bottom up approach to the analysis of a literary discourse, as it requires the student's active involvement in the process of analysis to reach the general context, Henceforth, it could be considered as 'the Problem-Posing' model that Freire suggests to develop critical thinking. So starting from this common ground between literature as a reflection of society and Discourse Analysis from the social perspective, we could formulate, or design a framework to teach literature through discourse analysis with the prime objective to encourage student's Critical Thinking which is the core belief of Critical Pedagogy.

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