

Literature and Teaching

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Why teaching literature is one of the questions with no answers encountered by instructors. There are as many answers as there are teacher and teaching aims and approaches or learners and learning styles. It is prerequisite that literature teachers Implement new Implications in more supportive and collaborative environment in the classroom

The introduction to literary analysis of texts in three major literary genres : fiction, poetry and drama requires a very serious linguistic scrutiny. For it is believed that linguistic contributes a great deal to the learning of a given language.

Grammar, which a part of linguistics, is interested, above all , in the good and adequate usage of language, and formulates rules permitting the learner of a given language (English in this case) to write and speak correctly. Grammar, according to Guelpa Patrick, « elle s'occupe du bonne usage et édicte des règles à respecter » (1997).

Linguistics is not interested only in grammar, in rules of good usage, but in all the other phenomenon intervening in the usage of language : pronunciation, phonology, accent, etymology, pragmatics, level language (registers), history of language, the mistakes made by learner, etc. the linguistic study of a given literary work helps a great deal in the learning process.

It is not easy to solve the problem of teaching of foreign languages in the Algerian universities and this has not so far been solved. If it attributed to the so called absence of communication between individuals, it would be necessary to deal with the relationship existing between individuals. The individual, society and languages inter in a very didactic relationship which makes part of the rules guiding the human communication. Therefore the teaching of foreign languages can not be examined, but as a form of communicational exchange. Speaking different languages is not the center of the issue; the teaching learning/ problem is, undoubtedly, due to the adequate what, the thorough how and the practical why. Communication in the didactic field, explains Pierre Martine, is « un système de systèmes, une interaction entre des personnes, des contenus, un contexte social... »(1996 :9)

The relationship between teaching and learning (a foreign language), what and how teachers teach, and how and what learners learn has become a subject of controversy. The focus would be then on the objectives of teaching. the purpose of teaching is to ensure that those taught acquire a prescribed body of knowledge and set of values. Both knowledge and values are taken to reflect a society's selection of what it most wants to transmit to its future citizens and requires its future workforce to be able to do.

What lead- par excellence – to the failure of the academic system is undoubtedly the redefinition of objectives from studying a foreign language. Politics and economics have therefore an important impact on academic reflection the raison why some people prefer to major in business, or computer science but not English. In this sense, it is easy to imagine great universities without English departments; on the other hand, every one knows that they are the center or the spine of the institution. People recognize that the English curriculum is important, but they often don't know why it is important. These questions are gravitating around the source / origin of the problem which is certainly owing to the non-ability of handling the language (foreign language : English). Teaching, as J.L. Martinand explains, is an art. It requires a skill some ingredients and the love of the learners (Jacqueline Biard et Frédérique Denis, 1993 :09). C. Hadji adds that. « l'enseignement est une action systématique ayant pour objet d'aider à s'approprier des outils intellectuels, dont ces outils privilégiés que sont les connaissances »(1989 : 86).

Getting intellectual tools requires the knowing of the target language (English) and not the science which deals with (linguistics). Certainly linguistics does not provides the learner with language, but with a particular knowledge about language and language use. Grammar (part of linguistics)

dictates rules to be respected in language use. It is primordial to know a language. In this perspective, the teaching of literature seems of paramount importance. One may ask why ?

Alan Maley says that traditionally literature has tended to be thought of as the « best » writing produced in a given language or society, and this collection of approved works has constituted the literary canon deemed by authority to be fit to study. (Ronald Carter, 2001 : 181-182)

Literature has been a subject of study in many countries at a different levels (secondary or tertiary). Recently, it has attracted more interest among teachers and has been given much emphasis in the EFL classroom. Many questions have been asked over the nature of literature. Among the broader explanations of literature is that literary texts are products that reflect different aspects of society. They are cultural documents which offer a deeper understanding of a country or countries. Eagleton says that there is no inherent quality to a literary text that makes a literary text, rather it is the interpretation that the reader gives to the text (1983). This explains why literature is only literature if it is considered.

What is meant by the teaching of literature ?ⁱ A. Maley answers that literature is used and studied in many ways and different contexts. The following are the most common emphasis :

- Focus on teaching language vs focus on teaching literature.
- Language learning purpose (pragmatic focus) vs academic/analytical purpose (intellectual focus).
- Linguistic orientation (stylistics) vs literary critical orientation (the new criticism, post modernist).
- Learning how to study literature vs studying literature. (Op.cit)
- Why literature is used in the classroom?

There are many good reasons for using literature in the classroom among these raisons

Literature is authentic material. To expose learners to this source of unmodified language in the classroom is important for the acquire skills in dealing with difficult or unknown language can be used outside the class.

Literature encourages interaction. Literary texts are often rich is multiple layers of meaning, and can be effectively mined for discussions and sharing feelings or opinions.

Literature expands language awareness. According to Widdowson, asking learners to examine sophisticated or non standard examples of language (which can occur in literary texts) makes them more aware of the norms of language use (1975).

Literature stands as education. Through the examining values in literary texts, learners become able to develop attitudes towards them. These values and attitudes relate to the world outside the classroom (develop a certain way of conduct).

How the teacher will use a literary text depends on the model he chooses, for the different models of teaching literature in class has its effect on the learning process. The cultural model for instance views a literary text as a product, i.e., it is treated as a source of information about the target culture. This model will examine the social, political and historical background of the text, literary movements and genres. There is no specific language work done on a text. This is quite teacher-centred. approach .

The other model is the language model where the text is may be used as an example of certain types of patterns and structure. This model tends to be more learner-centred approach. Here the learner can proceed through a text paying in that attention to the way language is used. They get to grips with the meaning and increase their general awareness of English. This suggests the focus on general grammar and vocabulary as well as stylistic analysis. Stylistic analysis involves the close study of the linguistic features of the text to enable students to make meaningful interpretations of the text – it aims to help learners read and study literature more competently.

The personal growth model is also a process-based approach and tries to be more learner-centred. This model encourages learners to draw on their own opinions, feelings and personal experiences. It aims for interaction between the text and the reader in English, helping make the language more memorable. Learners are encouraged to “make the text their own”.

Why do we teach literature ? Albeit the question is answered, in the choice of the approaches, there is a point that deserves being dealt with. It is the choice of the literary genre and its Importance. Here are two lessons which draw on a combination of the language approach and the personal growth approach. Both are based on short texts: either extracts or poems. However, there are very good reasons for encouraging learners to read books. Extensive reading is an excellent way of improving English, and it can be very motivating to finish an entire book in another language.

Drama has been taught in the Algerian universities for many years. I believe that the drama taught today differs greatly from the drama which used to be taught decades ago, at least, as far as teachers' choice is concerned. For I believe as well that the syllabus is the same since the independence. The problem is not in selecting the type of the play, for my task as teacher of literature I not to teach history, sociology, psychology, etc. though they are ineluctably dealt with. The form /language and the writing in the play are undoubtedly capital in the learning process.

The student ought first of all to read the play as pleasure, then read it again with his mind upon the characters and the plot, and lastly to read it for meanings, grammar, etc. The major educational goal is to increase the students' maximum growth as individuals and as members of today's society. It is to have the students increase their creative and aesthetic development. This unit is to improve their ability to think critically. One/teacher needs to see improvement in their social growth and in their ability to live and work cooperatively with their peers and elders. The students will have a chance to improve their communication skills, and they will develop a better understanding of drama and theater arts.

To emphasize reading, the teacher has to include one act plays, regular full length plays, radio and television plays.

The students are called to read before coming to the classroom a play, thereafter, students will write a great deal. In this sense. they will be asked to write reviews of the play they have read and rewrite scenes from their own perspectives. They will research and write about all aspects of the theater. These will include short paragraphs on the roles of the author, director, the stage manager. They will write about the importance of scenery, properties, costumes, blocking and special effects lighting. The objective is then spelling and vocabulary tests, along with word games based on theatrical terms. Through their writing the teacher would hope to accomplish the following goals :

The development of good sentence structure and good paragraph structure. They will work on selecting and developing a theme and working it through to conclusion. The concentration would be on punctuation and correct spelling.

Since this is a unit on drama, the teacher will stress oral communication and listening skills. The class will spend a great deal of time reading plays aloud. The teacher involves the entire class as members of the class take different roles; he divides the class into four or five small groups

(Small Group Headings) and incites them to study different actions of the play. The groups will then come together for the reading of the play and for group discussions on how each section approached their task. The teacher reads alone and asks the class for their interpretations of the readings. The class will be asked thereafter to commit to memory certain passages from the plays we read as well. The second point is to invite the learners to act within the target language since any language is full of human behaviour.

To understand the language, the students must know terms and key words and phrases commonly found in works on dramatic literature, dramatic theory and the history of the theater. They will learn this language by writing these words and phrases, speaking them, and memorizing them as part of spelling and vocabulary lists. They will be used in word games and will be posted on bulletin boards throughout the room. What really seems as a new thing is the introduction of games in teaching languages. Games include crossword puzzles. Jack Vaughn shows that The objectives from these games are the following :

To release student tensions.

To lessen the distance between student intentions and achievements.

To train students to use their bodies and minds in the stage roles they will play.

To make the non-acting student aware of the various means the actor uses to rehearse and perform. (1978)

Concerning the acting skills, Clive Barker argues that the work of an actor falls into five main areas:

He exhibits real physical and vocal skills.

He exhibits mimetic skills.

He imaginatively explores situations of time, space and character that are not real to him.

He exhibits patterns of human behavior which are not natural to him.

He interacts with other human beings.(1977)

To read a play, a novel, or a poem it is to reach the same objective. : the mastery of language. Yet what makes difference between the these literary genres is the advantages one may get from each. However being acquainted with the author's mind implies the understanding of his language and writing style. The pragmatic levels of discourse.

The teaching of literature seems then important and it is important to encourage the teaching of this subject and devote much time to the teaching

of literature as it seems prerequisite to introduce other disciplines in addition to the classical ones : English, American and African Literature(s) : why not Canadian literature or Australian literature or even Algerian literature (in English), for I have already mentioned that the first and foremost objective is the language and not culture.

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ⁱ For further information about the meaning of the teaching of literature see Ronald Carter and David Nunan's the Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to speakers of Other Languages, CUP, London, 2001: 182