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An investigation to developing teaching literature in EFL classrooms through stylistic approach

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Abstract

Literature is a serious task for not only for the students but also for the teachers. Furthermore teaching literature makes some students bored with learning literature because it is commonly assumed that learning literature is a complicated, time-consuming, as well as idle task. There are many ways to teach literature but for the students, learning literature is a tiring work to comprehend the literary texts which they have to learn. This paper has an attempt to design the procedures for effective teaching literature through stylistic approach as a small-scale research. The aim of doing this research is to plan the lessons for the effectiveness of teaching poetry to the students by using stylistic approach. Forty second year English specialization students from Patheingyi University were chosen as participants. It took one month. As the research tools, the pre-test and post-test related to teaching poems were used. This research was conducted with stylistic approach. Data were collected with qualitative research method. In brief, lesson plans for teaching poems in this research will be supportive for teaching literature in the EFL lessons effectively.

Keywords: literature, poetry, poems, stylistic approach

1. Introduction

In this section, there are three main parts: background of the study, scope of the study and the limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the study

Studying literature means studying the language used in writing literature. Of course, language is the blood and the flesh of literature. It is clear to say that linguistics and literary criticism play an essential role in teaching literature. Stylistics is a connecting link between these two areas. Stylistics is the study of varieties of language. It includes the particular choice made by individuals and social groups in their use of language - the use of dialogue, regional accents, people's dialects and the use of grammar. Stylistics is helpful in the investigation of language items used in the text at the same time because it develops interpretative procedures in readers' minds. Its coordination with linguistics can be suitably used for literary analysis. Hence, it is supportive to teach literature by means of stylistic approach. There are some previous research papers that did the study of the use of stylistic approach in teaching literature. By adapting these papers, the researcher has an attempt to do the research "An Investigation to developing Teaching Literature in EFL classrooms through Stylistic Approach" as a small-scale research. The aim of doing this research is to investigate the effectiveness of teaching literature to the students by using stylistic approach. This research was conducted with the qualitative research method. Findings from this research will be seen in next sections.

1.1.2 Aim and Objectives

Aim

The aim of doing this research is to investigate the effectiveness of teaching poetry to the students by using stylistic approach.

Objectives of the Study

To make the students easier in studying poetry by using stylistic approach
To adapt this knowledge in the study of other literary texts such as short stories, play and so

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on.

1.1.3 Research questions for doing this research are as follows

1. How can students understand the stylistic approach?
2. How can students apply the stylistic approach in studying poetry effectively?
3. How can students adapt this knowledge in the study of other literary texts such as short stories, play and so on?

1.2 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on teaching poetry, the class of the literature comprising poems by using stylistic approach to three fourth year English Specialization students attending Pathein University.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

It is convenient for choosing a few poems for teaching literature by using stylistic approach because of some limitations of the study including time limitation and other necessary materials for doing research.

2. Literature Review

In this section, there are two parts: terms of literature, terms of poetry, terms of stylistics, functions of stylistics, and the related literature of previous research papers.

2.1 Terms of literature

According to Oxford.Dictionary.com, Literature is the body of all written works and it is the collected creative writing of a nation, people, group or culture. Literature is the written fiction of a high standard.

2.1.1 Terms of poetry

According to Oxford.Dictionary.com, Poetry means the class of literature comprising poems. It is the composition in verse or language exhibiting conscious attention to patterns.

2.1.2 Terms of Stylistics

According to Widdowson, H.G. (1975), Stylistics is the study of varieties of language. It tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individuals and social groups in their use of language.

A variety, in this sense, is a situationally distinctive use of language. For illustration, the language of advertising, politics, religion, individual authors, etc. or the language of a particular period in time, all are used distinctively and belong in a particular situation. In other words, they all have 'place' or are said to use a particular 'style'

According to Widdowson, H.G. (1975), Stylistics is a branch of linguistics, which deals with the study of varieties of language, its properties, and principles behind choice, dialogue, accent, length and register. It also attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular choice dialogue, accent, length and register.

It also attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular choice contexts such as John Milton's 'grand style', the 'prose style' of Henry James, the 'Epic and Ballad style' of classical Greek literature etc.

According to Van, T. M. T. (2009), Stylistics is a distinctive term that may be used to determine the connections between the form and the effects within a particular variety of language. Therefore, stylistics looks at

what is 'going on' within the language, what the linguistic associations are that style of language reveals.

2.1.3. Functions of stylistics

Stylistics plays a vital role in teaching of literature. Really, the purpose of stylistics is to develop readers' interpretative procedures rather than make them dependent on the told meanings.

According to Widdowson, H.G. (1975), "Stylistics provides a basis of aesthetic appreciation by bringing it to the level of conscious awareness, features of the text otherwise will be assessable only to trained individuals".

The use of language acquires two kinds of knowledge: Knowledge of the rules of the code and, knowledge of conventions which regulate the usage of words in the production of message. The first is grammatically and the second is socially or conventionally appropriate. Together they make language creative. The writer makes a very special use of the rules of the code and there by communicates its meaning. Stylistics is concerned with unusual messages or communication. Its purpose is to discover what linguistic units count as imparted in communication. And how the effects of different conversations reveal themselves through the messages contained in the text. Thus, the aim of stylistics is to characterize text as a piece of communication.

There are two reasons for the concern that stylistics shows towards a literary text. They are : (i)methodological, which relates to the nature of literature , and (ii) pedagogical, which relates to the values that stylistic analysis has for teaching purposes. This fact brings us to consider how far stylistics is helpful in the investigation of language items used in the text and how it develops interpretative procedures in readers' minds.

The interpretation of any text depends on two types of relations: (i) extra –textual relation between language items derived from the code, and (ii) intra- textual ones between language items which are derived from the context and conventions. In addition, the patterns in the text also convey the meanings. Thus, stylistics has typical purpose of function.

Widdowson has beautifully explained the facts with the help of stylistic analysis of Wilfred Owen's poem entitled, "Futility". He explains how interpretative procedures can be adopted by readers to get the final message. In this poem, Owen concentrates upon some patterns of language which convey the reality of the message. The message is to be picked up on some unusual features of the text of this poem. Then only its significance can be correctly explored.

In this poem, the word 'sun' is used. It is an inanimate thing in the code but it has been treated as animate in the context, It is taken as someone to teach the living sleeper to wake him up and whisper in the ears. The human qualities of the sun again occur in the line: "The kind old sun will know". But this old sun at the same time retells the quality of lifelessness which we get from the code. The pronouns used for the sun are such as "it; it's". So the code and the context (extra- textual and intra – textual) relations overlap here. The sun is human as well as non-human at the same time. Thus, readers are no longer dependent on the told meaning of the word "sun".

Similarly, there are some unusual patterns in this poem. It begins with an imperative and it is matched by another in

the second line. Synthetically, the two lines are equivalent on one level, but semantically they are different lines. The first is an order while the second is an appeal. Similarly, the last three lines of the poem are interrogative in structure. Synthetically, therefore they are equivalent. But semantically they are different. The first is a question and the second is a challenge or an accusation. The last interrogative is different from other two. In it, the futility of time is fully realized.

Thus, stylistics combines Linguistics and Literary Criticism together and is also different from the two. It aims at developing interpretative procedures rather than the given or told meanings. Stylistics really plays a vital role in the teaching of Literature effectively. The teacher can teach literature to sensitize the students to freshness, richness and novelty of language. It also becomes clear that the insights from linguistics help the teacher of literature to do his work competently.

2.1.4 Levels of Stylistic Analysis

Phonetic Level: It involves analysis of sound. It helps to analyze functions of sound in a given work and how words are structured to produce certain sounds and what function that sound is serving.

Phonological Level: Basically this level deals with the study of sound patterns of a given language, rules of pronunciation, the rhyming scheme and utterance of the word in the sentence.

Lexical Level: Lexical level involves the study of individual words and idioms in varied context of linguistics. It also includes study of word formation, morphology and semantics.

Grammatical Level: The main point of this level is to analyze the words, the internal structure of sentences and to study how they are formed. To trace out foregrounding and the deviation, phrases, clauses, words, nouns and verbs and other parts of speech are to be distinguished.

Semantic Level: Semantic level helps to find out meaning in a language or piece of work. Meanings are analyzed through study of individual and social points of view, context, structure, word formation and discourse analysis.

2.2 Related literature of previous research papers

Concerning teaching literature, there were two previous research papers. The first research paper was "Stylistic Approach to Teaching Poetry in ESL Classrooms". It was done by Leila Tahmasebi, Lebanese French University, Iraq. The aim of doing this research is to illustrate the importance of stylistic approach in teaching literature in general and poetry in particular. The paper is aimed towards a practical exploration of the topic, hence, ESL classroom analysis procedure and levels of the procedure are depicted. The second research paper was "Stylistic Approach to the Teaching of Literature". It was done by Dr. V.A. Rankhambe, Associate Professor and Research Guide, BVDU, Yashwantrao Mohite College, Pune and Dr. P. F. Patil, Former Principal, Arts, Commerce & Science College, Lasalgaon. This paper is aimed to assist in the investigation of language items used in the text at the same time and develop interpretative procedures in readers' minds.

3. Research Methodology

In this section, there are two parts: research design and research procedure.

Research Design

In this section, there are altogether four parts as follows:

Participants

The researcher selected thirty second year English specialization students from Pathein University as participants.

Research Method

To do this research, the qualitative research method was used.

Research Period

It took six weeks. Each week took a day lasting 30 minutes. There were altogether 180 minutes to complete the training period.

Research Tools

As the research tools, pre-test and post-test were used.

Research Procedure

In this section, there are altogether three parts. They are as follow:

Giving the students the necessary pre-test relating to poems
In this section, teacher asked the students to read the questions related to pre-test relating to poems. The teacher chose the two poems extracted from Grade XI English Textbook named "Leisure" and "The Bridges". These two poems have been familiar with these students, especially the nature of these two poems. It might be easy for them to paraphrase these two poems. But in the pre-test, they were asked to analyze the styles of the poems and this time they had no experience in analyzing poems. Teacher should say the students to have the comfort in taking this test. Then teacher asked the students to make five groups including six students in each group. There were two poems to analyze and they were given to take 30 minutes to finish this test. All students were difficult to complete this test.

Giving feedback with the language input according to the lesson plan

In this section, the teacher gave the feedback on the answers of the students required language input to the students by explain the nature of stylistic approach and the ways to analyze two poems by using some examples. Teacher revised the knowledge related to figure of speech and stylistic approach. Then students were delivered handouts in which two extra exercises were given to analyze the poem titled "The Blind Boy" and "The Daffodils".

Giving the students the necessary post-test relating to poems
In this section, the teacher gave the question to analyze the two poems and these two poems have been familiar with the students. The teacher used the same poems which students have been experienced in analyzing in pre-test. But students had the great chance in analyzing these two poems in their own ways.

Table 1: Actual Lesson Plan

Students' Name	Week	Day	Time	Title	Remark
S1-S3	1	1	30 mins	Reading two selected poems	Group
S4-S6	2	2	30 mins	Giving pre-test related to these two poems (20 marks)	Individual
S7-S9	3	3	30 mins	Giving feedback with this test	Group
S10-S12	4	4	30 mins	Giving knowledge about stylistic approach by using a poem	Group
S13-S15	5	5	30 mins	Giving knowledge about stylistic approach by using another poem	Group
S16-S18	6	6	30 mins	Giving post-test related to two same poems (20marks)	Individual

Sample questions: Analyze your two favourite poems by using stylistic approach. (pre-test) How do you analyze your

two selected poems in stylistic approach? (post-test) Data collection

Table 2: Scores for individual students from pre-test and post-test

Students' Name	Pre-Test				Post-Test				
	Given Marks	%	Obtained Marks	%	Given Marks	%	Obtained Marks	%	% (diff)
S1-2	15	100	3	20%	15	100	9	60%	40%
S3-S4	15	100	3	20%	15	100	8	53%	33%
S5-S7	15	100	4	27%	15	100	10	67%	40%
S8-S9	15	100	3	20%	15	100	8	53%	33%
S10-S11	15	100	4	27%	15	100	9	60%	33%
S12-S13	15	100	4	27%	15	100	9	60%	33%
S14-S15	15	100	4	27%	15	100	9	60%	33%
S16-S18	15	100	4	27%	15	100	10	67%	40%

Data analysis

According to data collection, the results of the students obtained from pre-test and post-test were different totally. In the pre-test, the students got 4 marks out of 15 in 27% at most, in the same way, they got only 3 marks out of 15 in 20% at least. Their results were under the normal grading. This was because students had to answer the given question in their own ways and they had no knowledge in analyzing the poem by using stylistic approach at all. But in the post-test, the scores of the students actually changed. The best scores they got were 10 marks out of 15 in 67% and the worst ones were 8 marks out of 15 in 53% at least. This was because they were well-trained with two poems in analyzing the poems by using stylistic approach. Teacher took three weeks to train these students in order to analyze the poems in stylistic ways.

Findings and Discussion

Due to data collected from this research, students were more interested in knowing how to analyze the literary texts very well. First, they had no knowledge in analyzing the poems at all. Though students were second year English specialization students, they had the general knowledge in paraphrasing the poems. Before giving language input, students were given the pre-test giving a poem titled "Leisure" and "Bridges". Then they were taught the ways of analyzing the poems with stylistic approach. Students were trained with necessary exercises based on two poems titled "The Blind Boy" and "The Daffodils. Then students were given the post-test again, but teacher asked the students the same question in order to know the systematic way of analyzing the poems in stylistic approach. In pre-test, the scores of the students were very poor but in post-test, their scores were over the normal grading. This was shown that students became more realized in analyzing the poems than before. Besides, they were more interested in analyzing the poems in stylistic approach and it is considered that students

can apply the stylistic approach to study the poems effectively. Moreover, it can be said that stylistic approach is very effective to teach the students the poems and it can be adapted to teach other literary texts such as short stories and plays and so on.

Conclusion

It is common that studying literary texts is quite difficult for students, especially in paraphrasing. In this research, teacher tried to introduce the stylistic ways in analyzing the poems. Teacher let the students choose their favourite two poems from Grade XI themselves so that they were able to paraphrase themselves. According to the lesson plan, teacher asked the students to analyze their two favourite poems in pre-test in stylistic approach, but students had no exposure in stylistic approach in analyzing the poems. As a result, the scores of the students were too bad in this test. Then teacher took three weeks to train the students how to analyze the poems in stylistic ways. Hence, in post-test, teacher gave the same question including two poems so that they were able to analyze the poems. In this test, all students managed to analyze these two poems in stylistic approach very well and all of them got the better scores. To sum up, teaching stylistic approach is very supportive for students to understand the poems and it can be adapted to train the students in analyzing other literary texts including poems in classrooms. Furthermore, all findings from this research will be beneficial for other researches related to teaching literary texts in stylistic approach.

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