



Integrating English Literature In Foreign Language Teaching Programs

Asst. Lect. MASAR HUSAM KADHUM

Department of English/ College of Education for Humanities/ University of Thi-Qar/ Ministry of Higher Education/ Iraq
MasarHusamKadhumi@utq.edu.iq

Abstract

Teaching English literature in foreign language teaching programs has been the interest for teachers of English language and teachers of literature. There is an interesting awareness of the benefits of using literature in TEFL. In this paper, two effective pedagogic approaches to teaching narrative are presented. The Story Grammar and The Reader Response are widely used within TEFL programs. This paper presents a theoretical view and conceptualization to both approaches and how they are used in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: reader response, story grammar

دمج الادب الانجليزي في برامج تعليم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

مدرس مساعد مسار حسام كاظم

جامعة ذي قار كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي

الخلاصة

أصبح تدريس الأدب الإنجليزي في برامج تدريس اللغات الأجنبية موضع اهتمام معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومعلمي الأدب الإنجليزي. لقد كان هناك وعي متزايد بأهمية دمج الأدب في مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. هناك طريقتان فعالتان من الناحية التربوية لتدريس النصوص السردية للغة الأولى هما المنهج النحوي للقصة نظرية استجابة القارئ. الغرض من هذا البحث هو تقديم الأساس المنطقي والتصور الكامن وراء كلا النهجين وكيفية استخدامهما في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قواعد القصة، استجابة القارئ

Introduction

Since the early 1980s, there has been a renewed push to incorporate literature into EFL training, despite the fact that language educators, scholars, and theorists have long overlooked the value and effectiveness of doing so. The majority of these proponents concur that using literary texts for instruction has far more benefits than using other types of teaching resources. (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993; Duff & Maley, 1991; McRae, 1991; Widdowson, 1984; 1992). The advantage of integrating literature in language teaching programs is providing learners with exposure to the target society; that includes culture, emotions, and beliefs. But the main justification for including literature into EFL classrooms is that, when readers engage with the text and the characters on an emotional and personal level, it helps disengage them from the strictly technical process of language acquisition. Language classes can benefit from the engaging and instructive context that comes with using literature to teach a



target language.

1. Story Grammar Approach

Story Grammar approach can be used to understand a narrative text. It is a framework designed to support students in outlining a tale and aid in their analysis of the key characters, setting, issues, events, and solutions (Dimino, 1990). This reading comprehension technique uses an organizing framework to help students connect more effectively as they strive to extract the key details from the narrative.

Using Story Grammar strategy helps to comprehend the important information in the text. It serves as a guide to assist students while they read the text. Using an organizational framework, this reading comprehension approach helps students interact better to extract the key details from the narrative (Schmitt, 1986). Moreover, Story Grammar can be used to answer the questions related to the story (Dimino et. al, 1990).

There are several advantages of the Story Grammar approach. First, it can be used for all levels. Secod, this strategy improves reading comprehension. It also can enhance students' vocabulary, writing, and imagination. Then, it increases students motivation. This approach is appropriate for different classroom seating arrangements; whether students work individually, in pairs, or in groups. Finally, the information in framework based on the assignment, so it is very helpful and effective.

As we discussed the benefits of the Story Grammar strategy, we shift to the steps of applying it in language classrooms. These steps activate background knowledge, and improve learners' understanding. Teachers can develop classroom activities depending on the type of the story. He\she can use visual aids to stimulate learners' attention. The teacher can show a picture related the story and ask some questions about the topic. The teacher explains the use of Story Grammar strategy to his\her students, clarifies how this strategy can help in their comprehension to the target text. The next step is that the teacher asks the students to read a story, the story should be convenient to the students' level. Then, the teacher asks students to construct their own Story Grammar. This begins with identifying the tittle of the story, the topic, and the main characters. Then students sre asked to understand the setting and analyse its elements. At this point, students are supposed to be able to recognize the problem of the story and relate the major events. Finally, students can draw conclusions form the endings and the resolutions to eventually have a clear realisation of the theme of the story. To sum it up, students need to analyse the story tittle, setting, characters, major events, problems, endings and resolutions, and themes.



2. Reader-Response Theory (RRT)

Literature is considered as a main element in a language classroom. It is an authentic resource that can be used effectively in language classrooms with other resources. It is not only improving learners' communicative competence or cultural competence, but it enhances learners' critical thinking, creativity, and interpretive ability. One of the approaches that has been approved to be very successful in teaching literature is Reader-Response Approach.

EFL educators and theoreticians have always supported the notion of integrating literature in language teaching programs (Carter & Long, 1991; Duff & Maley, 1991; Lazar, 1993). The new methods of teaching language could not deny the role that literature can play in improving students language skills. That is why researchers encourage language educators to integrate literature and use reader-response theory into their language teaching curriculums (Khatib, 2011).

Reader-response theory started to appear in literary criticism. It supports the idea of authorial intended meaning, in identifying the meaning of texts. It asserts the role of the reader in the interpretation of the text. Selden (2005) says that it is not possible to understand the meaning of a story without the reader's own vision.

Reader Response Theory is a suitable instructional tool that has a remarkable role in teaching literature within language classrooms. Louise Rosenblatt (1995) has presented the 'transactional theory of literature'. In this approach 'The text itself... is incomplete; it needs a reader's experience to make it understood'. This can be thought of as the role that the reader can have in the interpretation of a literary text. A poem, for example, can not be understood or felt without the reader's experience to the complete image of that poem.

Culler (1982) was the first who presented RRT. He said that the reader's response to the text is part of the interpretation of that text. In other words, the reader recreates the story in the way she/he reads it. The reader version of that text determines how the text is interpreted. So, when someone provides an interpretation of a text, we are dealing with the reader and their reading process.

Reader-Response Theory proponents firmly believe that their technique offers a clear edge over more conventional methods when it comes to language learning environments. (Carlisle, 2000; Hirvela, 1996). Being used in language classrooms, the traditional methods of teaching literature have caused passive recipients. Literature is highly subjective. It is not reasonable to be discussed regardless of the role of the reader. That is why traditional methods never achieved success. Learners are not part of the literary analysis or interpretation. They do not get the opportunity to share their thoughts. In contrast, Readers are seen active contributors to the process of learning in Reader-Response



Approach. Readers' contribution to the comprehension of the text is very essential and thus, the interaction between the reader and the text is very important. That is why, in this approach to literature a variety of personal interpretations and analyses are based on not only the textual elements but also the reader's personal views, experiences and feelings (Diyanni, 2000; Padley, 2006). As a matter of fact, Students can participate and learn optimally at the same time. The reader-response approach gives students the opportunity to actively participate in class discussions and readings of texts.

Language learners who use a reader-response technique when reading literary texts in the target language may come to see literature as a delightful activity that broadens their perspectives. It was intended that this would be accomplished by utilizing the boundless possibilities of self-expression, learning about the diversity of viewpoints held by others on a given topic, and experiencing a range of touched emotions in both oneself and other people (Khatib, 2011).

2.1 Conceptual Notion

Reader-Response Approach began with Rosenblatt's conjectures on Dewey's democratic education and is rooted in literary theory and critical theory (Sinha, 2009). This approach to literature teaching is related to contemporary educators (Connell, 2000, p. 28), and is called transactional theory (Connell, 2008). Although RRT has not been well-liked by researchers for a number of decades, its framework has recently found use in a variety of language teaching scenarios. Although RRT has not been well-liked by researchers for a number of decades, its framework has recently found use in a variety of language teaching scenarios (Rosenblatt, 1978), in opposition to the notion of reading instruction that favored perspectives on text reading that are structure-oriented. Rosenblatt's RRT gained recognition over time for its significant contributions to the effectiveness of reading instruction. According to this viewpoint, the term "response" describes the readers' mental and affective responses to the literary texts. Readers of literature interact with the texts through reading experiences that help them transact their ideas. While engaging and transacting with texts. In order to make sense of the interpretation process and outcomes, readers attempt to realize their own potential through developing their interpretative skills and knowledge base. The use of RRT in the classroom gives pupils the freedom and opportunity to voice their opinions. Rosenblatt suggests that exchanging texts in a less intimidating environment may encourage democratic engagement. Naturally, democratization in the classroom takes into account the differing viewpoints of others on literacy events, which are discussed in class. In this way, response-based teaching heavily relies on cooperation and teamwork in the creation of meanings. Another educational benefit beyond the instruction is that the reading class direction that encourages collaborative reading mimics the very basic personal interactions while reading and interpreting process (Watkins,



2020). After participating in the given texts' interpretation, readers' participation in reading-writing events appears to be highly significant in (re)constructing and (re)making meaning. The process of "transacting" enables readers to generate text meaning within a cognitive and metacognitive framework. The strategy of 'efferent' is used when learners pay their attention to the text. In the present day, reading with aesthetics is essential to humanizing readers and enabling them to create environments that uphold social justice (Smith, 2017).

Reader-Response Theory gives learners a chance to practice several activities in the language class. There are basically six levels within which learners can enhance their reading experience. The first level is called 'literal understanding'. In this level learners give a summary of the events of the story. Actual comprehension of the story is not necessary; students are narrating the information in the story. The second level is referred to as 'empathy'; here, students are involved in the reading process of the story. They can identify some aspects of the story. Additionally, they exhibit imaginative sympathy for one of the story's characters, which can take the form of empathizing with the character or trying to imagine what the character is going through. The third level is 'analogy' in which, students connect characters of the story to real life people in their lives. The fourth level is called 'Interpretation'. Students create generalizations and themes from the characters and events of the story. The fifth level is 'evaluation'. Learners compare the author's values to their values; they distinguish fiction from reality; they discuss and evaluate the story and social cultural values. The sixth and final level is 'recognition' where students. They become understood their reading process and how they reach the meaning of a story. Learners are able to realize their relationship with the implied reader.

It should be taken into consideration that learners are sensitive to collaboration and cooperation as demanded in educational environment to create classroom community. Scaffolding occurs when the learners share constructive inputs or revisions to their works through ongoing drafting of the journal writing. Scaffolding, in RRT, is an effective way in the process of developing their ability to construct meaning and interact in a comprehensive way.

2.2 Critical Views

Reader-Response Theory is a strategy that encourages learners to feel free to express their opinion. The use of RRT in language classrooms can improve learners' target language in the perspectives of critical literacy. That suggests the fact that critical literacy "promotes textual engagement that emphasizes receptive skills (reading, listening, viewing), productive skills (writing, speaking, designing), and distributing texts for real-life purposes and audiences".



3. Conclusion

Literature has a major role in EFL/ESL teaching and learning. It provides authentic material to the language class, and contributes in promoting reading ability and motivation. It also enhances vocabulary and language skills. The use of literature in language teaching helps learners to upgrade their level of comprehension. Through literature, students are exposed to the target culture which plays an important role in building communicative competence. The two approaches, SG and RRT have different theoretical visions, but they both serve the purpose of improving language learning. SG strategy is preferable with beginners. Simply, because they are less likely to be able to give their own point of views. Moreover, Story Grammar approach focuses on the cognitive aspect of learning. It is more concerned with learners' ability to identify and analyse the text elements, whereas RRT deals with learners' emotions, visions and point of views.

References

- Carlisle, A. (2000). Reading logs: An application of reader-response theory in ELT. *ELT Journal*, 54, 12-19.
- Carter, R. and Long, M. N. (1991). *Teaching Literature*. Harlow: Longman
- Culler, J. (1982). *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Dimino, J., Gersten, R., Carnine, D., and Blake, G. (1990). *Story grammar: An approach for promoting at-risk secondary Students comprehension of literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Duff, A. and Maley, A. (1990). *Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hirvela, A. (1996). Reader-response theory and ELT. *ELT Journal*, 50, 127-134
- Khatib, M., Rezaei, S., & Derakhshan, A. (2011). Literature in EFL/ESL classroom. *English Language Teaching*, 4(1), 201. Retrieved: 2023-04-18
- Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McRae, J. (1991). *Literature with a Small 'l'*. London: Macmillan.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1985). 'The transactional theory of literary work: implications for research'. In C.R. Cooper (Ed.) *Researching response to literature and the teaching*



Schmidt, M. and D. O'Brien. (1986). 'Story grammars: Some cautions about the translation of research into practice'. Reading Research and Instruction, 26, 1-8.

Selden, R., Widdowson, P., and Booker P. (2005). A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory. London: Pearson Longman

Widdowson, 1983 H.G. Widdowson Talking Shop: Literature and ELT Journal, 37 (1983), pp. 30-35