



## THE APPLICATION OF PEDAGOGICAL STYLISTICS IN ELT LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE TEACHING COURSES<sup>1</sup>

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the effectiveness of pedagogical stylistics in ELT Literature and Language Teaching courses. Stylisticians maintain that integrating literature in language teaching process will improve learner's language abilities and enhance their understanding into the use of language and also improve their cultural awareness. In order to effectively integrate literature in EFL context, the application of pedagogical stylistics will empower ELT teachers to improve student teachers' language, literary, and cultural awareness. Therefore, using a pedagogical stylistic analysis will help to increase student teachers' motivation because of the satisfaction that they can gain from analyzing literary texts once they become informed of how language and culture is used in them. This paper aims to explore whether it is possible to generate stylistic-based activities from literary texts and will also provide ELT teachers with some stylistic-based activities as examples that they can use in their literature and language teaching courses.

**Key Words:** Pedagogical Stylistics, English Language, Language and Cultural Awareness

### **Introduction**

This study focuses on how stylistics techniques can enrich and enhance the literature and language teaching courses. Pedagogical stylistics analysis examines the language of literature in both sentence level and the whole texts to encourage students develop their awareness of the connection between language and literature. In addition to elaborate the theoretical background about stylistics and stylistic techniques, the study will also present sample stylistic-based activities which English language teachers can use and pursue in their language and literature courses. The prepared materials in this study will be on *Ta-Na-E-Ka* a short story written by Mary Whitebird.

Stylistics analysis will help students in comprehending how words and grammar function in literary texts. The knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical concepts of a text enables students to develop their communicative competence and cultural awareness. Stylistics-based analysis of literary or non-literary texts in language and literature classes empowers students to perform better, with increased confidence and motivation. Suhair Al-Alami summarizes the pedagogical approaches to the literary texts as:

- a) Literary texts should appeal to the students' interests, concerns and age;
- b) The teaching of literature in an EFL context should aim to elicit the students' responses to the text, and to guide them to a personal discovery;
- c) Literary texts should be approached as a resource and a fruitful opportunity for students' education and their personal growth;
- d) Literature in the language classroom should be explored in the light of a learner-centred pedagogy, and as such, teaching should focus on students' communicative needs;
- e) This global perspective of learner-centredness on language teaching is implemented through the learner-centred curriculum, which is expressed by

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the view that language education should aim to establish the conditions for autonomous learning; f) A new role and responsibilities for the teacher should be established. The teacher is not anymore the unquestionable authority in the language classroom; g) Regarding the implementation of this approach in the language classroom, this is attained through a language-based classroom practice where literary texts are explored as a resource for literary and linguistic development; h) The exploration of texts comes closer to the students' personal experiences and to what relates to their life through teaching techniques and practices, and is divided into pre-reading, while reading, and after-reading activities (Alami, 2012: 30).

### **How to Select the Appropriate Text**

It is very important to select the right text in teaching English to ELT students. Literary texts must be carefully chosen, otherwise, the students will not respond to the text enthusiastically. Linguistically difficult literary texts eliminate the students' motivation and stop them to work on the text for a long time. The topics and the themes of the selected texts should be interesting and lead students to relate them to their own lives. Among literary texts, short stories, poetry, and short drama plays are more proper to novels because their language is more difficult and needs a long time to be analyzed. The language of the chosen texts should be appropriate to students' level. The languages of non-contemporary texts are rather difficult and have lots of archaic vocabulary. Thus, it is rational to choose the most contemporary texts which have enough day language expressions and idioms.

### **How to integrate Pedagogically-oriented Stylistic Activities in Language Classes**

The main point here is the application of stylistics to the teaching of language and literature. There are many methods and techniques to develop pedagogically-oriented stylistic activities in order to teach them both the language of the literary texts and to enhance their awareness about it. According to Mick Short:

Over the last few years there has been a resurgence of interest in the use of literature in language teaching... Stylistic analysis has been of particular concern to the foreign-language learner as it has been seen as a device by which the understanding of relatively complex texts can be achieved. This, coupled with a general interest in English literature, has led to the stylistic approach becoming more and more popular in the EFL context. (Short, 1989: 6)

Thus, there is a tendency to use literature for language teaching among language teachers and learners. Pedagogically-oriented stylistics mainly focuses on the interpretive skills to such as doze procedure, paraphrasing, summarizing, and rewriting (Carter & Long, 1987). In fact, pedagogic stylistics tries to sensitize students to the use and analysis of the language in literature. It attempts to help students to be more familiar with different structures and uses of English. Utilizing pedagogically-oriented stylistic activities in language classes will help students to improve their aesthetic experience and the poetic significance.

### **Pedagogically-oriented Stylistic Activities on the Sample Short Story**

The pedagogically-oriented stylistic activities are divided into three parts; before reading, during reading and after reading activities. Pre-reading activities focus on learners' prior and background knowledge on the themes in the short story. As a before reading activity, the first step in a pedagogical stylistic analysis is giving a very short summary of the short story.



### **Before Reading Activities:**

In introducing the short story we can use a very short description of the story. The following brief summary is an example:

“Ta-Na-E-Ka” is about a Native American Kaw girl who goes through Ta-Na-E-Ka a ritual for boys and girls moving into adulthood. The girl follows her own instincts and her grandfather’s directions as she experiences this ritual. After students got some background information about the short story, we can ask some questions to awaken and sharpen their knowledge about the topic and to help them to make a connection with the main idea. For example, we can ask students to think about the similar traditions that exist in their culture, what do they think about these traditions? By activating students’ prior and background knowledge and forcing them to speech we can help them to improve their speaking skills. According to Aydinoglu “pre-reading activities aim to activate their prior knowledge, to help them make predictions, to arouse their curiosity, to enhance their motivation and introduce some lexical items and grammatical structures if necessary” (Aydinglu, 2012: 3).

### **During Reading Activities:**

In during reading part, the class altogether reads the short story for more understanding and interpretation. The teacher in this part asks students many question to check whether they have understood the text or not. Aydinoglu States that “while-reading activities aim to help students comprehend the {text}, get the meaning and practice the lexical items in the {text}, and study the literary features of the {text}” (Aydinglu, 2012: 3).

In this part, we ask students to read paragraphs one and paraphrase it or if the paragraph is too long we ask them to summarize it. This activity will help them to activate their passive vocabulary develop their spoken language. The teacher in this part may also ask many challenging questions to check whether the students understood the text or not.

### **After reading activities:**

After reading activities are mainly related to the writing, speaking and language awareness skills. After reading part is also a “production stage as it asks learners to produce by using the language items practiced in the previous stage” (Aydinglu, 2012: 3). The followings are some the most important kinds of pedagogically-oriented stylistic activities.

After students finish reading the text, we give them a few cloze tests from the linguistically rich paragraphs. Cloze tests as a language teaching tool help students to check their abilities about vocabulary items. Paul Simpson maintains that cloze tests,

attempt to impart knowledge about which lexical items are appropriate to which grammatical context, this, of all its applications, is the one that comes closest to getting students to fill in the ‘right’ term for the structural slot. To this extent, cloze test is able to shed a great deal of light on the concept of the *lexical set*. A lexical set is a bundle of semantically compatible items which are closely linked to a specific topic or register. Although synonyms (and near synonyms) are obvious candidates for inclusion in lexical sets, the concept extends



much more widely to encompass clusters of key words which correlate generally with a particular field of discourse. (Simpson, 2003: 85)

Conducting a cloze procedure in a language class will help students to predict lexical collocations which will help them to gain important information about the grammar and vocabulary of a language. When students spot which item collocates with which, they develop their language awareness about vocabulary items. According to Simpson,

Most importantly for our present purposes, there is the stylistic application of cloze procedure. In this context, cloze is a productive way of exploring the territory between what we expect to see in a text and what a writer does in a text. It also creates a new focus for interpretation, because it commits students to providing a partial analysis of the text *in advance* of actually seeing the complete version. In stylistic applications, cloze is most certainly not used as a test of language skills. On the contrary, it simply asks informants for their intuitions about a text—intuitions which can't realistically be considered 'right' or 'wrong'. (Simpson, 2003: 86)

The following cloze test activity is a linguistically rich part of the short story which can be used to sharpen students' grammar knowledge.

- Read the following cloze test carefully and fill in the blanks with the appropriate words from the box below.

reservation, handmade beaded, had, braids, spoke, younger, give up, his
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As my birthday drew closer, I ..... awful nightmares about it. I was reaching the age at which all Kaw Indians had to participate in Ta-Na-E-Ka. Well, not all Kaws. Many of the ..... families on the ..... were beginning to ..... the old customs. But my grandfather, Amos Deer Leg, was devoted to tradition. He still wore ..... moccasins instead of shoes, and kept his iron gray hair in tight ..... He could speak English, but he ..... it only with white men. With ..... family he used a Sioux dialect.

The second language teaching tool is multiple choice activities which focuses on important features of an idea. Simpson highlights that:

Multiple choice text is of particular benefit when there is an abundance of available paradigmatic entries for a given slot. It closes down the range of interpretative possibilities, allowing attention to be centered on the specific aspects of the lexicon which are the focus of study. Like cloze test, multiple choice text can be used to investigate virtually all of the topics in lexical semantics introduced in the course. Not only is it a handy tool for investigating synonymy, collocation and lexical specificity, it is also a useful apparatus for exploring the relationship between lexis and register. In this latter application, groups of semantically related terms can be drawn up for each structural slot along the chain. (Simpson, 2003: 93)

When students think about the relationship between the item and choices, they try to find the most compatible answer. This activity enhances their lexical and grammatical abilities. Multiple choice questions help students to think about the writers' choice of words. The following is an example of a well-formulated multiple choice question.



A person's *heritage* is .....

- a. the way a person looks and where he or she lives.
- b. a trial or test someone undergoes at a certain age.
- c. family history passed down through generations.
- d. family culture.

Think about the main character in the story and imagine that you are Mary. Write a letter to the grandfather telling him about your struggling life during the ritual. Use a lot of adjectives to describe the ritual and the difficulties you have encountered during the ritual. Then, read your letter to the class.

Think about the differences and similarities between your own cultures and the Indian American culture. Transform your ideas into a theatre drama play and then act it out in front of the class.

## Conclusion

The above mentioned pedagogically-oriented stylistic activities provide the necessary tools for an investigation of the authors' styles strategies in producing and fabricating a literary text. Literary awareness promotes sensitization of the reader to the effect of linguistic patterns and their contextualization, and creative writing empowers students by helping them manipulate and master the language. These activities develop students' literary awareness and awaken their personal responses to the story. As Zyngier maintains "literary awareness aims at sensitizing students to stylistic devices in a literary text so as to enable them to build justifiable and more objective textual interpretations" (Zyngier, 1994: 298). Students examine the language of the text by retrospective reading which helps them to interpret it more deeply.

The last step in which students play with language to produce their own literary pieces will empower them to improve their writing skills. Therefore, using a pedagogical stylistic analysis will help to increase student teachers' motivation because of the satisfaction that they can gain from analyzing literary texts once they become informed of how language and culture is used in them. It is possible to generate pedagogically-oriented stylistic activities from literary texts and will also provide ELT teachers with some stylistic-based activities as examples that they can use in their literature and language teaching courses

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