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## Teaching EFL Students Poetic Texts by Applying Pedagogical Stylistics Approach

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### **Abstract**

It is seen that applying literature in EFL courses and contexts plays an essential role in promoting language skills. Literary stylistic analysis can be used as an effective tool to improve and enhance learner's ability, awareness and, perception in reading and writing. Pedagogical stylistics is a discipline that employs stylistic analysis in teaching written texts to speakers of English as a second language so as to facilitate a better understanding of the meaning of literature and to improve language acquisition.

This study investigates the application of pedagogical stylistics in teaching poetry as a device to improve and enhance students' knowledge of English language learning. Pedagogical activities in the class stimulate students' awareness and competence of how language is structured and used with exposition to the mental processes of comprehension of the meaning. The study aims to answer the following main questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between style and literature and why literary texts used in language teaching?
- 2) Is the application of pedagogical stylistics as a branch of stylistics fruitful and effective in enhancing students' awareness in English language learning?

The study has shown that pedagogical stylistics makes a real contribution to enhance and digest the realization of language learning through literary text. Also, it is revealed that students' intuition, motivation, linguistic and grammatical knowledge are increased with the pedagogical stylistic activities( before, while and after reading) especially when they are given analysis courses of stylistic devices, so they are given more chances and constant encouragement to deepen their performance and skills of learning.

Key words: pedagogical stylistics, awareness, stylistic analysis, EFL learning

### **1. Introduction**

Stylistics main goal is to make a connection between linguistic features and literary study of the text, and this will contribute to

intensifying readers' mentality and awareness of the communicative use of language. Pedagogical stylistics is essential in this regard especially, when applying new methodologies of teaching literature (various activities and drills in the classroom) and developing EFL pedagogy (Norgaard et al.,2010:38).

The present study is concerned with the investigation of pedagogical stylistics as an approach in the selected poem is carried out and how learners' skills will be improved by using stylistic analysis activities. It is hypothesized that pedagogical stylistic analysis is a significant method in improving learners' proficiency and competence. The procedures followed in this study are exploring the reasons behind using literary texts in EFL contexts and language classes especially with the application of pedagogical stylistics on the proposed poem. Furthermore, two exercises of close test and multiple choice are conducted to see how this activity works with the students.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, studies in pedagogical stylistics are uncommon. Therefore, this study is hoped to be a contribution to the field of teaching and learning the English language since it introduces a new method in reading and interpreting the text.

## **2. Pedagogical Stylistics as a Branch of Stylistics**

Pedagogical stylistics has two aspects . The first one covers the pedagogical account of stylistics for teaching the features of the language of literature ,and the other includes the role of stylistics in teaching of English language through literature. The pedagogical aim of stylistics in teaching language and how this language functions are related to readers' perspective on the text and its meanings. Stylistics can help explain how a particular use of language works within a text and how texts are interpreted and understood by the reader (Norgaard et al.,2010:34).

According to Zayngier( 2001: 380) , stylistics is an effective method that can be used in the class in the teaching of the text. She debates that a text cannot be separated from other necessary elements such as production, mediation, reception and post- processing. She shows that stylistic analysis can form new models which are perceived by the reader as an evocative linguistic designs. With these various models, readers can intensify their understanding of new meanings and possibilities which are not encountered before.

Hall (2014:240) affirms that literature can be taught by applying stylistic tools and techniques, because this can lead to understand and appreciate the creativity of the language of the text. In addition, stylistics is essential in creating awareness in the field of education of the foreign and second language and this is very clear in dealing with

stylistic devices such as foregrounding, deviation and other lexical and structural forms which are helpful in promoting learning skills.

Carter(2010:120) observes that pedagogical stylistics does not direct a certain interpretation to the text, but shows a kind of stimulation to the readers to use their knowledge and perception in the analysis. Readers should attain meaning through their cultural and linguistic experience. He adds that transformational analysis which means transforming a selected text to another genre such as a poem to a short story is the main expansion in pedagogical stylistics, because it activates reader's awareness in the process of interpretation.

Cook (2003) demonstrates that literary stylistics proved to be influential in English foreign language ,because it connects linguistic options to their

effect on the reader , and raises reader's awareness not only to literary meaning , but also to the real situational functions of words. In stylistic analysis many sentence structures and various grammatical and linguistic tools are involved systematically to enhance meaning and communicative use of language.

### **3. The Effectiveness of Literature in EFL Contexts and Language Classes**

The significance of literature in EFL contexts has been adopted by many authors who show that literature plays an active role in increasing skills of language learning. De Naples (2002) believes that when students engaged in learning fiction, they become in contact with the analysis of characters' life and this can help them developing their way of thinking and view points towards culture and communication. Nada (1993) states that studying literature is not only broadening their study of the language, but also contributes students' ability to thinking and process of reading.

Savvidou (2004) thinks that applying an integrated access in teaching literature in EFL contexts proposes learners the possibility to improve not only their linguistic and communicative skills ,but also their expertise about the foreign language in all its discourse kinds.

Zafieriadou (2001) offers a pedagogical approach to the teaching of literature relies on learner-centered approach. He shows that teaching literature in EFL contexts should stimulate students' experience and awareness to the text. Also this approach appeals to students' interest and their personal responses. This literary awareness can be performed by teaching students pedagogical stylistic techniques which are divided into pre-reading, while reading and after reading activities.

Hess (2003:19) admits that dealing with literature allows reader to be indulged with the unique opportunity to be in real contact with the text that effects passion and promotes personal involvement and

speculation. Readers of literature especially of second language learning spend a lot of time and attention with deliberate and careful processing and construction to the text, mostly a poem (Hall,2005:101). These extra efforts and attention are related to the linguistic ambiguity which are tackled by linguistic deviation(foregrounding) in the literary text (Brumfit and Carter,1986:14).This linguistic ambiguity gives increase to multiple interpretative possibilities which provides not only a unique and conscious processing to the text, but also a dynamic and massive positive language learning results (Lambrou and Stockwell,2007:185).

It is necessary to say here that studying literary texts in EFL contexts can be helpful in the sense that students' awareness and inference processes of knowledge can be motivated in relation to the various devices and forms of the text. Also, these courses of literature can offer various interpretations and enhancement of language learning skills.

#### **4. Benefits of Using Poetry in Language Learning Program**

Many authors show the importance of poetry in the process of language teaching and learning. According to Widdowson (1992:90),poetry has a pedagogical value and can be effective in conducting language awareness. His way to teach poetry is stimulating students' to read the poem and the first impression and exposition is given to them ,then the forms and linguistic features are discussed .After that, students are grouped in sections in order to give them a chance to express their views and understanding with the different linguistic and grammatical structures of the poem.

Studying poetry in the classroom as a material in learning the language is considered as a psycholinguistic situation because it guides the readers' awareness and attention to the textual features of the poem and at the same time constructing meaning( Hanauer1997),(Mackay1986) , and (Chan,1999). Ellis (1995) confirms the idea that the language of poetry can enhance the knowledge of the second language in two ways. Firstly it leads the attention of the learner to the linguistic features of the input, and thus, presents the expansion of the learner's ability. Secondly, it increases the language learners' proficiency to observe the gap between the input and output and this can intensify their ability to assess the knowledge and recognition of the language.

Poetry can facilitate the process of learning and teaching language skills in two ways. The first is related to the assessment of the writer's structures which students get by studying the effective components of poems. The second way shows the development of perceptivity of words and detection that may lead to great interest and

extension of the ability of analysis. Sarac ( 2003:20) demonstrates that educational advantages of poetry can provide readers with various viewpoints perspective towards the real use of language regardless of its rules of grammar and syntax. Also, triggers and widens the awareness and expectation of possible interpretations. Finally, it stimulates the mentality of the reader and makes him familiar to recognize different figures of speech (contrast, imagery ,metaphor, symbolism, irony, etc.) which are part of our daily life communication ( Sarac,2003:20).

To sum up, poetry is very essential genre of literature in teaching and learning foreign English language ,because it makes a link and a sense of motivation between cultural awareness and learner's personal background scheme of knowledge.

### **5. How to Create Pedagogical Stylistic Activities in the Classroom**

There are many methods and techniques to develop pedagogical stylistic activities in the class. In this regard, poems are used to illustrate the pedagogical approach ,because they raise students' proficiency in reading, vocabulary expansion, cultural knowledge and stimulate their aesthetic mentality and to be sensible to the literary language.

Clark (2007:67) draws a program to introduce some stylistic devices (teaching stylistics in the class) to the students who are exposed to two different novels from different periods of time and asked to study, read and analyze them. In her pedagogical activities program, students are firstly introduced to different stylistic techniques by weekly lectures, courses and workshops. Secondly students are arranged into groups or pairs then asked to apply and answer many questions concerning the exposition of the linguistic features and figures of speech in the two different novels.

This activity has a pedagogical significance because it gives students a good possibility and encouragement to raise their comprehension and recognition in arriving at various interpretations of meaning in stylistic analysis. Furthermore, students will be in real contact with different views of social and cultural stages, and this will intensify their literary and educational awareness especially when they compare these two novels with different styles and mode of writing.

Cavins and Hodson (2007:30) employ pedagogical stylistics in another way. They are not only teaching stylistics in the class, but also making a test of how to transfer stylistic skills to another students. They designed a scheme to help college students to be active and efficient enough to teach stylistics. Students in the first year are given the main tools of stylistics relying on beneficial and useful texts. From the first year stylistics is considered as a main subject in order to increase their practice in doing stylistic analysis and not only

memorizing rules. In the second year, students are given more elaboration, knowledge and retrospective view of the developments and changes in the field of stylistics. At the third and fourth year, students become very knowledgeable and confident to teach and convey their stylistic skills to other students especially the first year students with different genres and texts.

This pedagogical activity is very effective , because it shows the success and ability of the third year students in designing a plan of different courses to teach and classify students into groups. Also. it shows new advanced procedure of learning which is very interesting and enjoyable to increase courage and confidence and to eliminate frustration and anxiety of students in the process of learning( Ibid).

### **6.The Application of Pedagogical Stylistic Activities on the Proposed Poem**

The main point here is to apply pedagogical stylistic activities in teaching English language through literature(poetic text) in order to improve students' artistic experience and make them aware and familiar with the different linguistic features of the language and its real use in communicative and functional purposes. Students will be given courses and illustration with examples from poetry to show how stylistic devices such as deviation, foregrounding, repetition, cohesive devices , imagery, metaphor, phonological and grammatical aspects ,etc. are working and how to grasp and facilitate the process of interpretation and awareness of the language learning skills.

Zafeiriadou (2001) shows a pedagogical approach in teaching literary texts based on learner –centered process. He affirms that literary text should be appealed to students' interest , to their response, and to discover their personality and experience in performing communicative needs. Teacher should be interactive ,supportive and has responsibility to apply educational requirement in developing students' learning skills. The literary awareness can be performed by teaching students pedagogical stylistic activities which are divided into pre-reading, while reading and post reading activities.

In the following lines, these activities of Zafeiriadou's model will be applied to the selected poem entitled (the Second Coming) written by Yeats (see Appendix 1). It will be used as an example to apply pedagogical stylistic analysis and description of poetic language because the language of poetry is rich of deviation ,vocabulary, and cultural and social perspectives.

#### **● pre - Reading Activities**

In this step, a short summary and exposition of the poem will be given as the following:

This poem is about the cultural and traditional collapse and chaos as a result of the second world war, and the poet tries to create a

kind of salvation and rebirth of prophet (Christ). The first stanza describes the separation of spiritual values and suffering of innocent people because of the destruction and disgraceful acts in Europe. The second stanza is about hope and inspiration of positive results, and the second coming is symbolized as the rebirth of Christ. The poem has many themes and interpretations and full of images and stylistic techniques such as metaphor, similes, symbolism, irony, personification, repetition, allusion, alliteration, assonance and many other images (falcon, falconer, blood-dimmed, rough beast, desert, bird). After the explication and stylistic analysis of these devices, students are given opportunity to use their actual experience and prediction with intensive reading to express these approaches. In this activity, students are asked many questions to stimulate their previous knowledge about the topic and the main themes in order to make a kind of similarity and difference between their cultural tradition and the poem's culture and context.

Brumfit & Carter (1986:112) shows that this activity of pre-reading is called prediction which is very useful to fill the gaps and help students to work and discuss in pairs and groups with reference to the structural features of the text and their mental experience. This procedure can improve students' skill of speaking of the language and also stimulate their mental understanding to grasp different thematic possibilities of interpretation of the lines of the poem.

#### ● **While -Reading Activities**

In this activity students will be given enough time to read the whole poem line by line with emphasis and practice to the various stylistic devices which can be facilitative to their understanding and comprehension of the poem. Teachers will be more interactive to pose more challenging questions in order to motivate their perception and inferences, and in this regard students will be asked to paraphrase, summarize, compare, and express their view point whether with the text or against it.

This activity is complementary to the pedagogical stylistic approach because it helps develop students' comprehension skills through their performance and reading. In addition to that, students will be more independent, courageous, and confident to express themselves using different vocabularies, sentence structures, forms and their background knowledge.

#### ● **post –Reading Activities**

This activity is connected with the skills of writing, speaking and language awareness. It is a production state because students will produce and rewrite the poem in their own style using the linguistic forms and structures in the previous activity. Assumptions and intentions of the writer will be elaborated by students' sensational

awareness ,intuition and their constant ability to analyze, criticize and write paragraphs rather than only readers of the text.

After students' have completed their reading and understanding of the whole text , they will be subjected to a test examination to check their ability of learning.

The most famous techniques of pedagogical stylistic activities are cloze test, and multiple choices. They include the blanking- out of items in a syntagmatic association and requiring for students' prediction and expectation about which type of accesses fill that specific grammatical context.

Cloze test is the omission of specific words in a sequence with a point to extracting prediction about proper paradigmatic accesses. In language teaching cloze test is used as a good device to measure students learning of vocabulary because it conveys knowledge about which lexical items are applicable to the grammatical context and this can help students to supply the structural position with the right word (Simpson,2003: 85).

In stylistic analysis, cloze test is a procedure way of exposing the mediation between what is expected to occur in the text ,and what a writer does in the text. It focuses on intuition of students' ability to predict and produce interpretation with the use of lexical, grammatical and vocabulary of the text being analyzed (Ibid:86).

The second technique used in language teaching and learning is multiple choice which includes the drawing up of a limited set of items for each blanked out position in a syntagmatic level. Its importance is realized when there is a plenty of available paradigmatic accesses for each position. It specifies the extend of possible interpretations to be focused on specific aspects of the lexicon. Multiple choice is similar to cloze test can be used to inquire in practice all the subjects in lexical semantics. It is also a beneficial device to explain the connection between lexis and register. In this regard a collection of semantically related expressions can be chosen for each structural slot in accordance with the series of links (Ibid:93-94).

Giving students an opportunity to think, guess and choose the appropriate words and items is very effective assignment in the area of understanding and comprehension since it improves their grammatical and lexical knowledge of the target language. These pedagogical stylistic activities are illustrated clearly in the following figure:



Figure(1) Scheme of Pedagogical Stylistic Activities in Teaching English through Literature

To illustrate these two techniques ( close test and multiple choice), and how they work in the selected poem, some exercises will be given.

Q1/ Read the following cloze test exercise then fill in the blanks with the most appropriate words or phrases below:

( anarchy , carry out , he , collapse , of , far away , in , described )

In the first lines, Yeats shows the image of a falcon flying.....

Which can be read as a sign to the .....of social tradition. In the fourth line, the scene .....violence is .....by some words such as ..... and blood-dimmed tide, and the ceremony of innocent is drowned. In the second stanza , ..... uses the image of sphinx .....the desert as a source of inspiration to .....his belief and prediction of the second coming.

Q2/ Choose the correct answer from the following sentences:

1. According to the poet, the image of 'gyre' is used to.....

- A. express poet's emotions and love
- B. produce a sense of circling and action of movement through the repetition of turning and four repetition of 'in'.
- C. describe a sense of stability of events and morals.

2. The phrase in (line 20) 'rocking cradle' is understood and figured as.....

- A. metaphor of innocence
- B. image of the spirit of the rough beast.
- C. metaphor for social revelation and renewal.

3. The repetition of the first two lines of the second stanza means that....

- A. the poet shows a pessimistic nature towards the future.
- B. confusion and violence are spreading over the world.
- C. he is not certain and slowly tries to know and realize things.

In addition to these two exercises, many other questions might

be given for example, to write some difficult and familiar words on the blackboard and ask students to read and put them in sentences showing their grammatical position as a noun or adjective. If the text is changed into a short story, students can be asked about the title or the main themes in the story and asked to use their background knowledge to express with each other the main events and characters with a kind of description to them. Also students might be asked to make a difference between their culture, social affairs and the culture and situation of the story.

To support this work, a questionnaire is constructed on the students to see whether these techniques are beneficial to their learning or not. The following questions are posed:

A) Is teaching literary(poetic) texts helpful to their EFL learning or not?

B) Is teaching pedagogical stylistic analysis helpful in grasping different senses and concepts of meaning or not?

Most of students' responses and impressions to the questionnaire are positive and they agreed that studying and learning all these stylistic devices are useful to master their problems in understanding the meaning, linguistic and structure of language.

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- The analysis and the application of pedagogical stylistic activities (pre, while and post reading) to the discussed poem (with close test, multiple choice and other exercises) have shown that they are essential and effective procedure that contributes in enhancing and accelerating students' awareness and competence in knowledge and skills(reading, speaking and writing) of English foreign language learning. In addition, their linguistic and grammatical knowledge will be improved and intensified when they are given analysis courses of stylistic devices and techniques.

- It is seen also that students' linguistic background knowledge and perception can be increased and enhanced by applying pedagogical stylistic analysis to the literary text especially when using different stylistic devices which can teach students how language is used and interacted in real different communicative and functional contexts.

- Literature is a real and effective reflection of cultural, social and stylistic assumptions of various writers and periods of time, and this will help EFL learners to raise their expertise in different vocabularies and sentence structures. Besides, this can activate their ability to infer meaning and how to express their viewpoint of different interpretations of the text.

- It is advisable for the teachers of English language courses to apply different pedagogical stylistic methods and approaches in learning literary texts. In this regard, teachers should choose an appropriate materials that are suitable for their interest and their level of learning. Students should be given a chance to choose the most enjoyable and useful type of literature that can help improve their ability in learning.

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**Appendix (1)**

The Second Coming by William Butler Yeats  
Tuning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world;  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand  
The Second Coming ! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi  
Troubles my sight : somewhere in sand of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Real shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
And what rough beast , its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?  
( Abrams etal.,1993: 2309)

## تدريس النصوص الشعرية لمتعلمين اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية وذلك بتطبيق منهج الاسلوبية التعليمية

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### الخلاصة

لوحظ ان تطبيق الادب في دورات وسياقات اللغة الانكليزية بوصفها لغتا اجنبية يؤدي اثرا اساسيا في تعزيز المهارات اللغوية. يمكن استعمال التحليل الاسلوبي الادبي كأداة فعالة لتحسين قدرة المتعلم وتعزيز تصوره وإدراكه في القراءة والكتابة. فعلم الاسلوبية التعليمية هو تخصص يستعمل التحليل الاسلوبي الادبي في تدريس النصوص المكتوبة للمتحدثين باللغة الانكليزية لكونها لغة ثانية وذلك لإدراك فهم افضل لمعنى الادب وتحسين اكتساب اللغة.

ان الدراسة عبارة عن محاولة لتطبيق الاسلوبية التعليمية لتدريس الشعر كأداة لتحسين وتعزيز معرفة الطلاب بتعلم اللغة الانكليزية . فالأنشطة التربوية في الصف تحفز وعي الطلاب وكفاءتهم حول كيفية تنظيم اللغة واستعمالها مع عرض للعمليات الذهنية لفهم المعنى. ان الدراسة الحالية تهدف الى الاجابة على الاسئلة الرئيسية الاتية:

١. ما العلاقة بين الاسلوب والادب؟ ولماذا تستعمل النصوص الادبية في تدريس اللغة؟
٢. هل تطبيق الاسلوبية التعليمية بكونها فرعا من الاسلوبية مثمر وفعال في تعزيز وعي الطلاب في تعلم اللغة الانكليزية؟

لقد اظهرت الدراسة ان الاساليب التعليمية تسهم في تعزيز عملية تعلم اللغة واستيعابها من خلال النص الادبي. كما يرى ان حدس الطلاب ودوافعهم ومعرفتهم اللغوية والنحوية تزداد بالأنشطة التعليمية الاسلوبية (قبل واثناء وبعد القراءة) ولاسيما عند اعطائهم دورات تحليلية للأدوات الاسلوبية، وان ذلك ينجم عنة مزيد من الفرص والتشجيع المستمر لتعميق ادائهم ومهاراتهم التعليمية .

**الكلمات الافتتاحية:** الاسلوبية التعليمية ، الوعي، التحليل الاسلوبي، تعلم اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية