The Annual Seminar on ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES

Bringing Up an Issue of Shaping New Trend in English Language Studies, Linguistics, Literature, Education, and Culture

Aula Mattulada UNHAS
December 20, 2016

Editors
Burhanuddin Arafah
Fathu Rahman

Postgraduate Program
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From the Chairman of S2ELS

Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University

Welcome to the Annual Seminar on English Language Studies (ELS) 2016! This event is being held in honor of the 15th Anniversary of the English Language Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. The main objectives of the seminar are to discuss the current trends in English language teaching and to share ideas and experiences among educators and learners. The seminar aims to encourage and promote the development of English language skills among students and educators.

The seminar will feature a variety of presentations and workshops covering topics such as English language teaching strategies, language acquisition, and multicultural perspectives in language education. We invite all participants to engage in discussions and share their insights on the importance of English language education in today's globalized world.

We hope that you will find the seminar informative and enjoyable. Thank you for your participation in this event.
THE STRATEGY OF TEACHING LITERATURE THROUGH LANGUAGE-BASED METHOD: A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

This paper aims at emphasizing the use of literary text for teaching literature for literary appreciation. This study is a language-based method. The reasons for using this method; the learners are expected to improve their English while discussing literary work. The main criteria for selecting suitable literary texts are stressed on the underlying reasons and criteria for the level of the learners appropriately. Moreover, literature and the teaching of language skills can contribute each other. The selection of teaching materials and teaching preparation are very important to apply for this method. Likewise, the teachers with understand literature and stylistic are taken into account. In fact, the application of this method is more appropriate given to learners at the intermediate level. With a background at the intermediate level and so the communicative approach can be applied.

Keywords: teaching, literature, language-based, communicative approach

1. Introduction

This article aims to pinpoint the relevant role of teaching literature for improving learners’ appreciation. The literary text is written in English where the teacher and learners are non-native speakers. So it is in a foreign language context. As a foreign language, learners of English like in Indonesia presumably run into problems when faced literary text. This does not only happen in Indonesia but it is occurred at all countries where English as a foreign language.

The discussion will focus on the use of literary text, The Road Not Taken (by Robert Frost). The discussion is based on the poem. The teacher leads the discussion in English in order to help learners...
more appreciate a literary work and in the same time to improve learners' proficiency in English.

Literature supplies many linguistic opportunities to the learner and allows the teacher to design activities that are “based on material capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement” than many other non-literate, informative texts (Carter and Long 1991: 3). The aim of these activities should be focused on the form and content of the text at stake, and to provide the stimulus for interaction to take place between the learners among them, and with the teacher (Duff and Maley, 1990: 4). The form and content of the text cover linguistic frame and semantic (meaning).

The objectives of this article are 1) to demonstrate the teaching technique by using literary text as learning sources in one side and to improve learners' English in the other side, and 2) to implement the communicative approach through the teaching literary text in English. They are of course framed within the communicative approach to language teaching. This implies that the development of communicative competence should be the last aim of any language activity.

2. Why Language-based Method

The learning materials of English have many source, one of them is literary works. Thus the teaching literature to the foreign learners needs some strategies. Here literary text is not only as a lesson but a source of learning to improve learners' English proficiency. Literary text as learning source has many advantages, among others;

1. learners will have an ability to understand literature
2. learners will understand literary stylistics
3. learners will learn denotative and connotative meaning
4. learners will identify the specific expression from the literary works which may not be found in other subjects
5. learners appreciate literary works
6. learners learn literature while learning English and vice versa

Principally, teaching literature: transmits messages. It is a way of communication between the author and the reader. On the other hand, literature pays special attention to form, and this helps the learners reflect about language, another principle and goal of the communicative method. It is important that the learners develop their linguistic competence by learning how to express meanings in English, but they also develop their communicative competence; allow them to transmit messages, to use the language to interact, to communicate with other people, which in the end, it is the basic function of language.

The use of literature as a teaching tool is legitimated by the facts mentioned above. The literary text chosen in this study, the writer believes, it provides with authentic linguistic (also sociolinguistic) and cultural material, and so it may motivate the learners to interact. In order to demonstrate this method, the writer chooses The Road Not Taken (by Robert Frost) as object of the study. It can be claimed that this poem is very much adequate for teaching due to its high pedagogic potential both as regards its content and its form. The modernist ideas and philosophy underlying the poem result of an extremely high interest for learners, who may very well feel identified with the poet or narrator of the poem.

This article is divided into three main parts. The first one is theoretical concept and explaining the teaching of literature in English for non-native speaker. The second section deals with the examination of the reasons why the poem, The Road Not Taken, is thought to be appropriate for such an approach. The final section is practical way and preparing a number of classroom activities to be carried out with the poem to enhance language learning process as well as literary awareness.

3. Literature and Language Teaching

3.1. Historical Evolution

Literature is a medium of literary works. Literature and language are closely related to each other. And this is a fact none can deny. Literature is constituted by language and it represents one of the most recurrent uses of language. Language and linguistic analysis can also be employed to access literature from the learner's point of view. Brumfit and Carter (1986: 1) already emphasized the role of literature as “an ally of language”. This technique is by no means novel, since literature has been a widely used as a teaching tool in different language teaching methods. However, here the
perspective changes giving more relevance to the literary text as a work of art. First of all, let us go over the changing role of literature in the tradition of second/foreign language teaching to end with an account of its current situation within the communicative approach.

For the structural approaches to language teaching, literature is discredited as a tool, because it represents the old tradition. The functional-notional method ignored literature, because in this method the importance lies on communication and they present authentic language samples. Literature is not considered either to have a communicative function or to be authentic example of language use. Nonetheless, in the last decade or so the interest in literature as one of the most valuable language teaching resources available has revived remarkably (Duff and Maley 1990: 3).

Literature reading is, no doubt, a communicative activity and literary texts become authentic examples of language use. Many authors, among them Brumfit and Carter (1986) and Lazar (1993), reject the idea of the existence of a specific literary language and claim that the language used in literary texts is common language with a high concentration of linguistic features like metaphors, similes, poetic lexis, unusual syntactic patterns, etc. (see Lazar 1993: 7) for a more detailed account of the characteristics of the literary use of language. These are not literature specific since these features also appear in ordinary language use and also in nursery rhymes, proverbs or publicity slogans, just to cite a few examples; however, in literature these show a higher incidence.

3.2. The Reasons for Using Literature in the Language Classroom

We could argue that there are three main criteria that justify the use of literature as a second language teaching tool (Duff and Maley 1990: 6). In the first place, the linguistic criterion defends that literature should be used in language teaching, because it provides the learners with genuine, authentic samples of language, and also with real samples of a wide range of styles, text types and registers. It is extremely important for foreign language learners to be trained in a variety of registers, styles and genres and to be able to discern the function of each of them. The second criterion is methodological and refers to the fact that a literary text has multiple interpretations, these generate different opinions among the learners and this leads to real, motivated interaction with the text, with the fellow students and with the teacher (Widdowson 1983). Interaction is one of the bases of the communicative approach which defends that it is by interacting, by communicating, that the language is learned.

From the methodological point of view, further aspects that favour the use of literature in the language classroom are the active role of the learner and the literary text as the central focus of attention. Learners become active, autonomous, and central to the learning process. One aspect of special importance within the communicative approach, and that is magnificently reflected in the poem at stake, is the idea of literature supplying the learner with cultural information about the country whose language they are learning (Lazar 1993: 16). Poetry is fictional and, therefore, we must be very careful when treating this point in the classroom, for sometimes its relation to the real world is rather lax. Our response to the cultural aspect as reflected in literature should be critical (Lazar 1993: 17).

Finally, the motivational criterion is of great relevance because the literary text shows the real feelings of the writer and this generates a powerful motivation in the learner. With the literary text the student accesses this personal experience, if she is touched by the theme and provoked, she will be able to relate what she is reading to her world, to what she knows and feels. Designing stimulating activities that motivate the learners is the greatest challenge for language teachers, and literature has a strong motivating power due to its calling on to personal experience.

3.3. Reading as an Aid for Language Development

Proposing the claim to using literature to develop linguistic and communicative competence is the assumption that reading is one of the best ways of learning a language. Both consciously and unconsciously, reading helps the second language learner acquire not only more vocabulary and more meanings and uses of the words already known (lexical competence), but it also contributes to develop syntactic knowledge (Brumfit and Carter 1986). Krashen (1989) and Coady (1997) argues that it is through extensive reading, that learners acquire most of their vocabulary, and that instruction plays a rather insignificant role as the number of words learned is
concerned. Therefore, reading literature is positive in several ways. It presents with authentic and varied language material, it provides with contextualized communicative situations, real patterns of social interaction, and use of language (Collie and Slater 1987: 2), it highlights the central role of the learner in the learning process and stirs up interaction in the classroom, it motivates learners by allowing them to relate what is being read to their own experience since it calls on emotional responses (Collie and Slater 1987: 2), and it contributes largely to develop further reading skills like “deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items”, “understanding the communicative value (function) of sentences and utterances”, “recognizing the script of a language”, etc. (Grellet 1981: 4-5). Using literature to teach language not only contributes to a better linguistic understanding, a development of creative skills, and higher language proficiency, but it also makes an important contribution to literary appreciation (Ramsaran 1983: 42).

4. Teaching Poetry in Foreign Language

For a practical exercise, among the literary genres used in language teaching, poetry is one of frequent appearance. Due to their short length, perfectly suitable for a single classroom lesson, their peculiar structure, characteristic linguistic features (unusual syntactic patterns, polysemy of words, alliteration, etc.) poems become favorite tools for language teachers. The evocative character of poetry, its imagery, its appeal to feelings and personal experience make it very interesting and enjoyable for the second language learner. Especially, poetry can lead to a desirable creative expression in the foreign language and they usually evoke a strong response from the reader which will motivate further reading (Collie and Slater 1987: 226).

The importance of poetry and its usefulness in language classroom lies in the fact that poetry deviates from normal language in that it has some unusual ways of ordering words, or it attributes particular, imaginative meanings to words or combines sounds in a musical, non-ordinary way (phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and style deviation (Ramsaran 1983: 36). The language teacher should exploit the deviances of the poetic language in order to raise the language awareness of the learners towards the way in which language can be adapted or changed to fulfill different communicative purposes.

4.1. Reasons for Using Communicative Approach in Teaching Literary Texts

According to Collie and Slater (1990: 3), there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. These are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. In addition to these four main reasons, universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power and ambiguity are some other factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context.

4.1.1 Valuable Authentic Material

In a broad sense, literature is an authentic material. Most works of literature are not created for the primary purpose of teaching a language. Literature can act as a beneficial complement to such materials, particularly when the first "survival" level has been passed. In reading literary texts, learners have also to cope with language intended for native speakers, they become familiar with many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings.

4.1.2 Cultural Enrichment

Reading literature is to learn aspect of culture. Literary work like poem presents world view, culture and moral aspect. It presents something that is common in life. By reading literary readers will hone the sharpness of his instincts in dealing with this life.

4.1.3. Language Enrichment

Literature provides learners with a wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items. Learners become familiar with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualized text. They learn about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and different ways of connecting ideas, which develop and enrich their own writing skills. Learners also become more productive and adventurous when they begin to perceive the richness and diversity of the language they are trying
to use in expressing their feeling and though. Thus, they improve their communicative competence and cultural sense in the authentic richness, naturalness of the authentic texts.

4.1.4. Personal Involvement

Literature can be useful in the language learning process owing to the personal involvement it fosters in the reader. Once the learner reads a literary text, he begins to inhabit the text. He is drawn into the text. Understanding the meanings of lexical items or phrases becomes less significant than pursuing the development of the poem. The learner becomes enthusiastic to find out what happens as events unfold via the climax; he feels close to setting and shares their emotional responses. This may have beneficial effects upon the whole language learning process.

5. The Road Not Taken: An Experiment

The experiment is now to present the poem by Robert Frost entitled 'The Road Not Taken'. This poem offers great pedagogical opportunities for its magnificent language and language use, and as literary text, it may have a controversial meaning. The form and content are as follows;

5.1 Form

Form of a poem is a structure of the poem itself. It is about the shape physically. First, look at the shape of the poem: four stanzas of five lines each; all lines are capitalized, flush left, and of approximately the same length. The rhyme scheme is A B A B. There are four beats per line, mostly iambic (though it is hypermetric by one beat--there are nine syllables per line instead of the strict eight required for tetrameter) with interesting use of anapests.

The strict form makes it clear that the author is very concerned with form, with regularity. This formal style is totally Frost, who once said that writing free verse was “like playing tennis without a net.” Look at the following the complete work of Frost:

**The Road Not Taken**

A Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

B Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

C And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

D I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

(taken from Carter and Long, 1991: 72)

The Road Not Taken is a narrative poem consisting of four stanzas of five lines each in iambic tetrameter and is one of Frost's most popular works. Besides being among the best known poems, some claim that it is one of the most misunderstood one.

Unlike his contemporaries, Frost chose not to experiment with new verse forms but to employ traditional patterns or as he said, he chose the old-fashioned way to be new. Despite the surface cheerfulness and descriptive accuracy of his poems, he often presents a dark, sober vision of the world and there is a decidedly thoughtful quality to his work.

5.2. Content

On first reading, the content of The Road Not Taken also seems formal, moralistic, and American:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
These three lines wrap the poem up and are its most famous lines. Independence, iconoclasm, self-reliance—their merits are great American virtues. But just as Frost’s life was not the pure agrarian philosopher’s we imagine, so the poem is also more than a panegyric for rebelling in the American grain.

The Road Not Taken is one of Frost’s most familiar and most popular poems. The popularity of the poem is largely a result of the simplicity of its symbolism: The poet must choose between diverging paths in a wood, and he sees that choice as a metaphor for choosing between different directions in life. Nevertheless, for such a seemingly simple poem, it has been subject to very different interpretations of how the speaker feels about his situation and how the reader is to view the speaker. In 1961, Frost himself commented that The Road Not Taken is “a tricky poem, very tricky.”

In the first stanza of the poem, the speaker, while walking on an autumn day in a forest where the leaves have changed to yellow, must choose between two paths that head in different directions. He regrets that he cannot follow both roads, but since that is not possible, he pauses for a long while to consider his choice. In the first stanza and the beginning of the second, one road seems preferable; however, by the beginning of the third stanza he has decided that the paths are roughly equivalent. Later in the third stanza, he tries to cheer himself up by reassuring himself that he will return someday and walk the other road.

At the end of the third stanza and in the fourth, however, the speaker resumes his initial tone of sorrow and regret. He realizes that he probably will never return to walk the alternate path, and in the fourth stanza he considers how the choice he must make now will look to him in the future. The speaker believes that when he looks back years later, he will see that he had actually chosen the “less traveled” road. He also thinks that he will later realize what a large difference this choice has made in his life. Two important details suggest that the speaker believes that he will later regret having followed his chosen road: One is the idea that he will “sigh” as he tells this story, and the other is that the poem implies that he will never stop thinking about the other path he might have followed.

What makes Frost’s poem so effective is that it consists of a single elaborate metaphor and the reader is caught inside that

three-dimensional metaphor. We know from the start that the poem is a metaphor, but the metaphor is so realistic that we feel we are actually standing there. We can feel the crispness of the atmosphere and perhaps even hear the rustling of the yellow leaves on the trees. We might even feel that this event is actually happening to us. This ostensibly simple metaphor is only saying that the traveler came to a place where two roads figuratively diverged and he had to choose one or the other. However, Frost makes the reader see and feel that setting by his detailed description. For example:

And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth

The totally imaginary setting not only has the two dimensions of height and width, but Frost intentionally gives it a third dimension of depth with those lines. And yet there is really no such place; it is just a metaphor. He is really only talking about having had to make a difficult and very important career decision. So the setting is both, rather uncannily, a metaphor and a real place. By making the setting so vivid and so real, Frost emphasizes the importance of that particular event in his life.

In the last stanza the speaker has left the fork in life’s journey and is looking back on it. The metaphor is no longer a real place with real roads and real trees. It has become a simple metaphor again. Nobody knows where the road not taken might have led, but I think we can all be glad the poet didn’t take it.

6. The Activities in classroom for Students exercises

For managing the class, the activities are directed into the guiding outline to the work with The Road Not Taken. In relation to the class discussion, Maley (1996) suggested to divide the exercises into four main sections: responding, analyzing, writing, and experiment further. Class activities can be divided into three steps. They are as follows:

Step 1
a. Pre-reading can be a brainstorming, finding difficulties words, and introducing the author biography.
b. Explaining about the form of the poem and in turn, discussing the content.
7. Conclusion

This article has examined and shown a possible application of the poem The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost to be discussed for appreciation. It is a double function; to exercise the appreciation and improve learners speaking ability. After having stated the increasingly popular use of literature in the foreign language teaching, it is a justification of the selection of the poem, as the learning source.

The Road Not Taken is a good example for the case study. Both culturally and thematically, it is an interesting poem, its strong motivational power cannot be denied, the poem also displays real current language, which is, from the point of view of the methodological approach communicating approach extremely important.

Turning these materials extremely depend on the readiness of teachers preparing lessons, motivating learners, and the selection of appropriate materials. One thing to be concerned that the learners should have language skills at an intermediate level.

The poem is thematically, culturally, historically and literary relevant, for which its use in English classroom. Furthermore, the poem is an enjoyable piece of literature, which learners will be pleased to read. With the proposal of activities, it has been seen that the working on such a poem, not only literary competence can be developed, but also lexical linguistic competence, and social communicative competence. If the activities and their implementation are appropriate. The poem can be a useful tool for improving the communicative competence development of the learners of English as a foreign language.
References


The Annual Seminar on English Language Studies

The Annual Seminar on English Language Studies in 2016 is the first activity initiated by English Language Studies (ELS) of Faculty of Cultural Sciences of Hasanuddin University. It is expected to become an annual event. There are four areas of study namely Linguistics, Literature, Education, and Culture. This annual seminar besides giving opportunities to students and Alumni of S2 ELS Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University to present papers, it also opens the opportunity for other interested participants.

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