

Instructional Strategies to Enhance Learners' Motivation towards Learning Literature

Ahmed Mehdaoui

The English Department of Saida University, Algeria

Email: merveste@gmail.com

Abstract

There is no doubt about the role of literature in motivating learners towards learning foreign languages. Nevertheless, based on several observations and experiences, it is found that the methods of teaching literature at the English Departments in the Algerian Universities and may be elsewhere are not highly motivating, and are not appropriate for students to read and therefore appreciate literature. To bridge the gap, this article attempts to highlight some effective instructional strategies for teaching literature.

Key words: literature group discussion, literature circles, feedback and guided lecture, film adaptation.

1. Introduction

There is no doubt about the role of literature for EFL students. Welters of benefits have been expressed by several authors and specialists in the field of teaching language (MacKay, 1982; Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Maley, 1989; Carter&Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993). It is believed that literature play a big role in promoting language acquisition and promoting cultural understanding, and most importantly enhance students motivation. However, experience and observation at the English department at Saida University show that students find difficulty in reading and understanding literature and they do not know how to appreciate literature accordingly.

In addition, most of the students find literature as a difficult subject to maintain their personal intrinsic motivation. Teachers' way of teaching might be one of the reasons. The teaching approach used by the teachers is mainly lecture-based in which the teacher's role is basically that of instructor and knowledge transmitter. Because of this, there are very few classroom activities that are learner-centred.

So, to help foster critical reading and create motivation in adult learners and help transform students in their learning styles, the researcher proposes some instructional strategies that have been found to be effective in promoting language acquisition and enhancing learners' motivation.

2. Presentation of Literature Studies at the Algerian EFL Departments

The course of literature has been one of the main subjects at Algerian EFL departments since the introduction of English at the Algerian universities. As an important area of study, this course starts initially from the first year consisting of an initiation to the American and British literature which encompasses its different genres and trends in order to help student acquire the basic knowledge that lead them to deal with the details of such a subject in the following year. In the second year, Anglo-Saxon literature course is concerned with the study of different literary genres notably poetry, prose and drama of different American and British writers from different periods and eras. After these two years wherein the students are supposed to become more acquainted with literature, they will have the opportunity to carry on their third year of graduation being specialised in literature and civilisation.

Because of the importance of this area of study, this course is accumulated a significant coefficient and number of credits. However, the time allocated to this one of the most important area of study in the programme is limited to only one hour and half per a week. This number seems to be far from being enough for a module that concerns the study of both, American and British literature and deals with a myriad of elements that literature study comprises. In lieu, the target literary texts are rarely read and studied in their entirety. Teachers due to time constraints frequently recourse to some selected chapters of the whole literary work.

Some researchers state that when students receive very few hours of study, the teacher can pay special attention to raising their motivation by using other teaching methods and materials that interest students. However, it sounds that teachers, for various reasons, tend to resist any changes. The reason is that most teachers fear of authority loss.

This may explain why most teachers use lecturing as a favourite method of teaching literature. This teaching method is described by some researchers as the most easy and enjoyable for lecturer, but most difficult for listeners. They argue that teaching through pages of text is not only to pour information to students, but also to help them contrast meaning and involve them in the learning process. It seems inappropriate for teachers to control all the teaching process and not involve the students. The text is not a text without the reader (Stanley 1980).

3. Teaching and Learning Strategies

Below follows a number of strategies that may enhance teaching in large classes: student-centred learning model, interactive/ active learning, feedback and guided lecture, collaborative learning, cooperative learning and case study method.

3.1. Literature Group Discussion: Literature Circles/Collaborative learning

Whatever is called, literature circles, literature collaborative learning, or conversations surrounding texts, literature group discussion encourages participation of students, and engage them in interactive learning situation. It is a method in which the teacher and a group of students consider a topic, issue, or problem and exchange information, experiences, ideas, opinions, reactions, and conclusions with one another. The discussions can be about characters, setting, plot, and/or about other literary elements (Daniels, 2006; Schlick-Noe, 2004). Other researchers (Allington, 2001; Keene & Zimmerman, 2007) suggest that discussion should include other literary elements such as textual meaning, personal connections, character motives, and other open-ended topics. The teacher has to break the class into smaller groups in a way that enable more students to participate and say something about the text. Students read a selected text or a chapter from a novel in a specific time assigned by the teacher, and try to take notes while reading. After reading, students share their findings with other members of their group. The role of the teacher is to initiate questions and give further information and interpretation from time to time. He should act as a facilitator rather than a controller of the learning process.

After a period of four to five weeks, students will be able to read and understand the whole story. They will also be able to have different interpretations of the text rather than the only one used to be provided by the teacher.

3.2. Feedback and guided lecture

A feedback and guided lecture is a teaching technique that combines lecturing with students' interactions and feedback. What's great about using this method is engaging learners' into active learning environment instead of being passive all the time. Wilkinson (2004) describes a way how this method can be used. In a guided lecture students are required to listen to a presentation of a 20 to 30 minute by the teachers without taking notes. The students then write a list of everything they remember about the content of the lecture, and then they pair up with a partner to share their lists and add anything they missed. The teacher may repeat the process with another 5-10 minutes of lecturing.

3.3. The Use of Film Adaptation

One of the most challenging tasks in teaching literature is to make student to even read a book. Under this situation, we feel that it is high time to use an innovative way to teach literature which is epitomized in the use of film adaptations. According to Margan (2009) "*The days of teaching literature based on the literary text alone are coming to an end*" (2009:105).

Today, most of students' ideologies and the way they see the world comes directly from what it is seen on television. This kind of media therefore cannot be dismissed. Working on an adaptation of a literary work in cinema is a means to guide students' thinking to initiate debates. Bo (2008) states that watching film is worthwhile since it can vividly show interactions, settings, people, and other elements in a much more realistic way than reading a text. A film is like a story, every element that builds the film affects the way of telling this story. Like the book, the director or the film's author or writer, is passing by means of plans, sequences, a number of ideas, thoughts and emotions.

While students read a novel, they imagine the characters, setting, and action taking place. This lesson allows students to use their imaginations in the form of a storyboard. Students first read a book that has a complementary film adaptation. They then learn about adaptation by writing short paragraphs and adapting them for film using storyboards. Once they have evaluated the adaptations, the students will create their visions of the books and compare them to the film.

4. Conclusion

Teaching literature is not an easy task, for no subject can be more bewildering to students than literature which remains inaccessible for many of them. The reasons are numerous: cultural strangeness of literary texts, the students' low linguistic competencies, and the like. EFL students' passivity to read and their inability to actively respond to literary texts is a serious issue. Faced with these challenges together, teachers are more than ever before required to critically revise their teaching practices, their pedagogical architecture and strategies so as to meet the requirements of the new educational exigencies. Teaching practices could be and should aim to be a means of empowerment. For this reason, literature teachers should make the teaching of literature compatible with students' needs and the necessity and the pedagogical value of developing students' motivation so that they become active readers of literary texts and not passive accumulators of whatever is being taught to them.

References

- . Allington, R. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. New York: Longman.
- . Bo, B. (2008). *The Differences Between Novels and Films--Enhance Literature Teaching by Using Films*. US-China Education Review. 5(7). 58-61. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- . Brumfit, C. & Carter, R. (1986). *Literature in the Language Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . Carter, R. and Long (1991). *Teaching Literature. Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers*. New York: Longman.
- . Daniels, H. (2006) *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups*. York ME: Stenhouse.
- . Duff, A. and A. Maley. (1990). *Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . Fang, X., & Warschauer, M. 2004, 'Technology and curricular reform in China: A case study', *TESOL Quarterly*, vol.38, no.2, pp. 301-321.
- . Keene, E. & Zimmerman, S. (2007). *Mosaic of thought: The power of comprehension strategy instruction*. NH: Heinemann.
- . Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. *Learning Science. Studies in Science Education*. 42: 125-184.
- . MacKay, S. (1982). *Literature in the ESL Classroom*. *TESOL Quarterly* 16 (4): 529.
- . Maley, A. (1989). *A comeback for literature? Practical English Teacher*, 10, 59.
- . Margan, C. (2009). *Internet Resources in Teaching Literature*. *Revista de Informatica Sociala* 5 (12) .105.
- . Schlick Noe, K. (2004). *Literature circles resource center: Information and resources for teachers and students in elementary and middle school*. Retrieved from <http://www.litcircles.org/index.html>.
- . Stanley, F. (1980). *Is There a Text in This Class.?* London: Harvard University Press.
- . Wilkinson, A.C. (2004). *Effective Learning Facilitation – Reader 1 for HOS722 module*. Bloemfontein: centre for higher education studies, University of the Free State.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

