

Appreciating Poetry: The Teaching-Learning Analysis

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Abstract - Just how should poetry be taught in the literature classroom in a way that students would appreciate it? This study sought to find out the teaching – learning approaches and activities in teaching poetry. It also looked into the psychomotor, cognitive and affective competencies achieved on the whole lesson cycle. It was found out that paraphrastic approach to teaching poetry dominated all of the other approaches and was seen in all of the classes under study. Another favorite approach is the stylistic approach wherein teachers guided students in the discovery of the linguistic features of the text. Personal-response approach, language-based approach, and information-based approaches occurred once or twice in the sessions observed while moral approach was not seen in any of the classes observed. It was also found out that the poetry lessons focuses mainly on the cognitive level. The cognitive tasks of analyzing tone, mood, meter, rhyme, and meaning took precedence over affective and psychomotor domains. Integrations of the affective and psychomotor skills in relation to poetry were sporadically detected but are not common in all poetry classes. Analysis of students' feedbacks made it clear that a personal-response approach to a text made the poetry encounter more relevant and more meaningful. Once comprehension of the various intricacies of symbolisms and figurative language has been achieved, beyond reading activities that target the affect should also be allotted time and was taken into consideration in the design of the instructional modules in poetry. While it is important to develop the mental skills of the students in the elements of poetry, the ultimate aim of literature especially poetry is to humanize and sensitize the learners; hence, poetry lessons must also integrate activities that go beyond the formalists' way of text scrutiny.

Keywords: Poetry Appreciation, Teaching Poetry, Learning Poetry, Poetry in the Classroom

I. INTRODUCTION

Poetry is mysteriously magical Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed: it marries exultation and horror; grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes: its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms (Shelley, 1840).

That poetry is beautiful, that poetry is magical, that poetry arouses and brings forth all sorts of emotions that lay unawake in the recesses of human heart is sadly not a belief everyone in close encounters of poetry shares. Unfortunately, not everybody sees poetry in this light. There is much power,

emotion, and beauty in poetry that it cannot not be taught in the literature classroom. However, too often than not, the very purpose of why it is taught is lost in the process of "studying the text".

In spite of the beauty of poetry, many people are threatened by the apparent difficulty of understanding it. However, poetry can be understood and appreciated if one knows its nature. According to Alternbernd, and Lewis , poetry is more concrete and specific than some kinds of prose. It communicates, experiences, emotions, attitudes and propositions by dealing with a particular situation or event that implicitly embodies abstract generalization. Poetry often uses an imagined dramatic situation which can be defined by the answers to some of all of these questions: Who is speaking? What is the speaker's attitude toward his subject matter? Toward his audience? Poetry usually has some elements of narrative; this story, overt or implied may be the matter of chief interest in the poem, or it may be the means of conveying the attitude or proposition. Poetry communicates in many ways at once. The several means of communications interact with each other.... and may reinforce, qualify, or counteract each other.... to produce a net effect which is greater than the several components taken separately.

Poetry evokes feelings and provokes thoughts about complex social issues. Poetry is more than a vehicle for expression; it is also a way of knowing. Poetry both requires and facilitates a concentration of mind or sustained attention to which hectic lives make it unfamiliar. The linking of the strange with the familiar through the image or even through well-placed line breaks is perhaps what makes poetry so powerful. Poetry transforms the way one sees the commonplace through new perspectives.

A poem is appreciated as one sees in it a representation, or interpretation, of life, of our own life, - of ones intellectual, sensuous, and emotional experience; one fails to appreciate as the poem offers a representation, or interpretation, of intellectual, sensuous, or emotional states which lie outside one's experience. This thesis does not mean that to be appreciated, the poem must be a transcript of one's own life, nor yet merely that experience brings with it a deeper and broader mental and spiritual being. It means something less than the former and more than the latter. That one may really appreciate and enjoy a work of literary art, this work must present a situation or emotion capable of reproducing in us a mental or spiritual state which is already known. The poem becomes a mirror wherein one sees reflected one's own life, not indeed in its details – most of these, spiritually, may be accidental – but in its essence. Thus one can form objectively a sort of spiritual memory image.

The objectives of teaching poetry have important role and they should be clear and appropriate to the level of the

students. The success of teaching poetry is measured by how far the objectives of teaching can be reached. Tiwari (qtd. in Hammidin 2) proposes the objectives of teaching poetry basically is to increase students' appreciation of poems which are drawn into several points. The general objectives of teaching poetry are (a) to enable students to appreciate the beauty, rhyme and style of the poems, (b) to enable students to read aloud the poem with proper stress rhythm and intonation, (c) to develop a taste for reading and writing poems, (d) to develop the aesthetic sense of students, (e) to encourage students to love English literature, and (f) to develop the imagination power of students. In addition, the objectives of teaching poetry are to address the students to be able to understand, appreciate, and analyze the literary works deeply in order to increase the student's comprehension and other achievement such as critical thinking, cultural competence, personal pleasure, and language competence.

Three writers who defined the relationship between cognitive and affective behaviors in appreciation were Carroll, Pooley, and Early. Carroll divided appreciation into three sub-categories: (1) a sensitivity to style, (2) an ability to appreciate intellectually the deeper meanings of a literary work, and (3) an emotional capacity to respond to the fine shades of meaning in the best writers. He did not however, feel that a student would necessarily be equally strong in all three areas of appreciation. Carroll's three sub-categories do not appear to be entirely discrete; the first and third, for example, seem to overlap somewhat. Nevertheless it is clear that Carroll felt that appreciation consisted of a cognitive behavior – intellectual understanding, and an affective behavior, - emotional response.

Pooley developed Carroll's distinction between the two aspects of appreciation when he divided appreciation into two processes which he labeled "fundamental recognition" and "secondary response." A fundamental recognition he defined as an emotional response to the techniques of literature such as one might find in a child's reaction to a nursery rhyme: the child enjoys it without really knowing why. According to Pooley, this response is "largely unidentified, unapprehended, and non-communicable in words." It is, however, an essential prerequisite for the secondary response which "arises from an intellectual apprehension of the technical skill of the artist and the content of the selections." Pooley's fundamental recognition is obviously an affective behavior, and the secondary response has, at least , a large cognitive component. Pooley went further than Carroll, however, in insisting that the affective response had to precede the cognitive response.

While appreciation consists, as could be seen in both and affective and a cognitive component, the primary and more important component is the affective. For appreciation to exist at all the acts of reading must be a pleasurable experience, one that involves or engages the reader. Pooley, Early, Purves and Squire all stressed the fundamental importance of the affective response at any level of appreciation. Even though a cognitive response, in the form of an intellectual understanding of the techniques used by writers to achieve their effects, become increasingly important as one's ability to appreciate develops, the affective response remains paramount (Sanderson 11).

This study was conducted to analyze the process of teaching and learning poetry on the basis of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) standard competencies in teaching poetry. Specifically, the study sought to find out what teaching-learning activities occur on the pre-lesson, lesson proper, and post lessons? Secondly, how are the competencies in the teaching and learning competencies achieved on the pre-lesson, lesson proper, and post lessons? Third, what are the students' feedbacks regarding the teaching-learning process?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the qualitative method with data analysis as the technique. The researcher observed each class twice. Classroom observation field notes were also compiled. Each observation was summarized and compared in order to draw appropriate conclusions and interpretations. Interview of students through a Focused Group Discussion was also done. The interview transcripts were grouped, coded verbatim from the transcripts and quoted to strengthen the basis of argument.

III. FINDINGS

The findings are as follows:

1. Although teachers of poetry all utilized an eclectic approach to teaching poetry, the paraphrastic approach dominated all other approaches. This stems from the need to translate into simpler language the symbolisms and figurative language that are ever present in poetry. A close second was the use of stylistic approach in that the teacher guided the students to discover the linguistic features of the text and how they are used to achieve the poet's purpose. Another popular approach was the personal-response approach where the teacher drew out similarities of the characters' experiences with that of the student's experiences. The language-based approach was also evident particularly in the drawing out of meanings. Information-based approach occurred once or twice when the teacher gave information on the content of the text while moral approach was not seen in any of the classes observed.

2. Based on CHED's minimum learning competencies, it was found out that the poetry lessons focus mainly on the cognitive level. The cognitive tasks of analyzing tone, mood, meter, rhyme, and meaning took precedence over affective and psychomotor domains and was recurrent in every session observed. Integrations of the affective and psychomotor skills in relation to poetry were sporadically detected but are not common in all poetry classes.

3. Analysis of students' feedbacks made it clear that a personal-response approach to a text made the poetry encounter more relevant and more meaningful. Careful selection of a piece to be studied in class coupled with the appropriate methodology was crucial to keeping the interest of the students that led to poetry appreciation.

4. Poems whose themes do not go far with that of the cultural background and experiences of the students should be a criteria in the selection of literary texts to be utilized in class. Once comprehension of the various intricacies of symbolisms and figurative language has been achieved,

beyond reading activities that target the affective domain should also be given consideration. .

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the teaching-learning process was primarily focused on the cognitive domain. While it is important to develop the mental skills of the students in the elements of poetry, appreciation of the verses is best achieve once we go beyond the formalist's approach and find that binding connection between these verses and that of our lives.

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