EXPLORING APPROACHES FOR TEACHING POETRY IN ESL CLASSROOMS: A STUDY FROM HAZARA DIVISION, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The aim of the present research is to identify the approaches that teachers employ to teach poetry to the undergraduate level ESL class of Hazara Division, Pakistan. Twelve classes of poetry were taught and information was gathered regarding approaches employed by teachers when teaching poetry. The study was carried out in three colleges and one university of Hazara. Some of these colleges are situated in Abbottabad and Mansehra which are in the Province of kp Pakistan. The sample comprised twelve ESL-trained teachers for teaching English poetry. Research found out that teachers employed different approaches in teaching poetry in a class. The study revealed that the most employed approach was information-based approach succeeded by the paraphrastic approach, stylistics approach, moral-philosophical approach, and personal response approach. They assisted the students in passing and scoring better grades in examinations. Other approaches were employed at a moderate level. Teachers offered contextual information about the poet, the country and the text to the learners. The second favored approach was the paraphrastic approach. In this case, teachers employed less complex words when defining complex words in poems.
Keywords: Teaching Poetry,ESL Classrooms, Hazara Division, Information-Based Approach ,Paraphrastic Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the most significant field of study that embodies human culture, knowledge, and wisdom. Since it is a linguistic art form, it is intimately linked to both

language and linguistics. It is divided into two primary types, Poetry and Prose. Poetry is the branch of literature through which we develop our sense of appreciation and enjoy reading. Poetry is most ideal way to teach vocabulary to students with rhythm. In poetry, different topics and subjects are described decently. Poetry also creates imaginative power among students. Sarac (2003) defined the advantages of teaching and learning poems in EFL classes. According to him, poetry gives learners an alternate perspective on language and principles of sentence structure, punctuation, and vocabulary. It triggers unmotivated learners to understand different themes. It is a fact that for foreign learners' understanding, a foreign language is a difficult job and the language of poetry is certainly very difficult. This is because the language of a poem is very different from the language of prose and day-to-day life. There is a wide variety of English learning materials for students. They have newspapers, short stories, novels, plays, magazines, and daily paper articles. In any case, the teaching of poetry is not considered an appropriate method for learning the English language. It is viewed as an irregular kind of old literature because of the utilization of metaphorical language. Poetry is considered one of the most complex types of literature because of its mysterious and puzzling language (Ayanniyi, 2009). In the classroom, it is an exceptionally difficult responsibility to make students read poem who don't have any interest to read and appreciate it. English poetry is being taught in various countries. Since the creation of Pakistan English has been a part of our education framework. How do students respond to poetry in the classroom? This is a fundamental issue that needs to be explored for a better comprehension of Literature. Indeed, even teachers feel issues while teaching poetry. The truth of the matter is that native learners also feel issues in learning poetry. Studies have been conducted in different countries on teaching approaches used in teaching English Poetry but no research is conducted on this topic in Pakistan.The present study aims to explore the approaches used by teachers for instructing poetry to the undergraduate students in Hazara Division, KP, Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been carried out to document the impact of applying poetry's approaches in teaching literature in several countries, which depict how the poetry is taught in various ESL contexts and the impact of these approaches on learners. As stated by Savvidou (2006), Carter &Long (1991) have identified three models, which are used to teach poetry: The Cultural Model, The Language Model, and The Personal Growth Model. Cultural Model is about the social and political context of a country. The Language Model is based on the language analysis of the text whereas the Personal Growth Model ensures involvement of the learners in the learning process. The students of Pakistan are experiencing some issues with the content of poems, its language, and the approach of their teachers. Hirvela and Boyle

(1988) conducted a survey among Chinese students in Hong Kong regarding various types of literature. This indicated that only 6% preferred poetry and 74% of the students preferred other forms of literature. Thus, the low interest of students in poetry, as stated by Khatib (2011), stems from the approaches employed by teachers. He stated that there are many ways and approaches that a teacher can employ to ensure that his poetry class is interesting to the students. Another study was done by Rashid et al. (2010) using less proficient students from 18 secondary schools in Kelantan. The most frequently used method by the teachers was established to be the information based approach. This is because the student lacks the understanding of the English language which makes the teachers to explain everything in detail apart from the use of the mother language as the medium of instruction. This may somehow result to failure in developing students language and thinking skills. In the same regards, Fakeye& Amao (2013) investigate the impact of direction in stylistic approaches on students' performance in poetry. Considering findings, it was suggested that for the purpose of teaching poetry in particular and literature in general, teachers should adopt a stylistic approach. According to another researchers, Yunus (2013), teachers were asked to opine on the use of visual aids in form of recorded activities, illustrations, movies and projectors as a motivational tool towards enhancing students' interest in reading literature. In the study, the researchers targeted 52 teachers as participants. Subsequently, five teachers from the identified sample were employed for interview purposes. The results indicated that majority of the teachers had a good perception on the application of the visual guides which seems to facilitate the students' creative and elementary speculative skills. In the same way, Yunus & Suliman (2014) noted in their study that students enjoyed learning Literature in English despite the fact that it is one of the most difficult and complex to master. On the other side however, they also stated that the teachers in their study were still heavily employing traditional practices in the teaching of Literature including writing down notes, offering explanations during the lecture, and question and answer sessions. Some of the other research done on the strategies employed by teachers to teach poetry include; Lim & Omar (2007). The survey research studied forty-five English language teachers who taught the literature content to the secondary students. Moral philosophical approach was the preferred approach out of the three while the stylistic approach was the least preferred. According to Parmar & Barot (2009), the researchers was trying to understand the difficulties faced by the teachers of level 9th in teaching poetry in Gujarati Medium schools located in Vadodara City of India. The population consisted of 30 teachers who filled in the questionnaire and had an interview. They used only reading and explaining technique

and the research revealed that a majority of teachers face problems in reading poetry for their students.

The interest of researchers in teaching poetry to Pakistani students urged them to find out the teaching approaches to teach English poetry. The supporters of the traditional approaches dealing with teaching literature consider students as empty boxes to be filled by the information presented by the learned teacher. The experts of these approaches ordinarily fill students' minds with data about the author, politics, religion, and philosophical thoughts described in the text but they (students) don't know about other elements of poetry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The goal of the study was to establish the approaches that teachers employ in the teaching-learning process of poetry to the undergraduate level students in the ESL class of Hazara Division, KP, Pakistan. To this end, the researchers adopted a survey method and classroom observation as research instrument for this research study. In classroom observation, checklists were used by in order to check on approaches to teaching the English poetry. The checklists entailed the experiences of the strategies and processes employed in the teaching of poetry by the teachers. Observation is a research method of data collection through the act of observing the behavior and occurrence of events. According to Alnaqeeb (2012), it can be described as a research data collection tool in which the researchers observes the sample being investigated taking notes or recording specific behavior. Essentially, the main focus of this tool is to find out what actually goes on in the classroom. In this research, there were twelve cases of classroom teaching of poetry and information was gathered on practices adopted by teachers when teaching poetry. The research was carried out in three colleges and one university of Hazara. Some of them are situated in Abbottabad and in Mansehra which is in the Province of KP in Pakistan. The sample population includes 12 ESL-trained teachers for teaching English poetry. In conclusion, all the classroom observations were utilised for research purposes. The checklists included the identification of the strategies and methods employed by the teachers in teaching poetry. The researchers observed the poetry classes in three colleges and one university: These colleges and university include Government Post Graduate College No I Abbottabad, Government Post Graduate College No 2 Abbottabad, Government Post Graduate College Mansehra, and Hazara University. Then the given checklists were combined, compared and justified to identify the principal Approaches employed by each teacher. When data were collected then SPSS statistical software was used to find the frequencies and percentages of approaches.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework for this study consists of approaches used for teaching literature These Approaches are proposed by Carter and Long (1991) which can be

divided into three models. These models are considered the origin of teaching Approaches (Bagherkazemi&Alemi, 2010, Khatib, Rezaei &Derakhshan, 2011) and are divided into different teaching approaches as shown in the table:

S.No.	Model	Approaches
1)	*Cultural Model*	a) Information Based Approach
2)	*The Language Model*	a) ParaphrasticApproach b) Stylistics Approach c) Language-Based Approach
3)	*The Personal Growth Model*	a) Personal Response Approach b) MoralPhilosophical Approach

1) Cultural Model

The Cultural Model is the cultural way of teaching literature where the learners are supposed to analyze and even predict the social, political, literary and historical aspect of a certain text. It shows that there are thoughts and ideas in different cultures in the world and learners are encouraged to embrace other cultures and politics of their own. This model sees literature as a collection of facts and this model is teacher oriented where the teacher has all the information that he/she imparts to the learners. Cultural model can be associated with Information Based Approach as suggested by Thunnithet (2011).

*a) **Information Based Approach** is a method of imparting knowledge about literature wherein literature is perceived as providing information to the students about the literary pieces (Carter 1988; Rashid, Vethamani & Rahman 2010). Thus, Lazar (1993) notes that the emphasis on the content would impose to students such tasks as, for instance, analysis of the cultural, social, political, and historical context of a text, and, thus, would mean a large burden for the teacher.*

2) Language Model

The Language Model consists of Paraphrastic Approach, Stylistic Approach and Language Based Approach. It provides a learner with a chance to engage with a certain text in a rather systematic and planned manner. Language and literature is combined in that it can enhance a student's language skill as he or she learns the language through it (Hwang &Embi, 2007).

*a) **Paraphrastic Approach** is basically paraphrasing and rewritng what is said in simple language or translating it into another language. Teachers write the words in plain English or fewer numbers of new terms compared to the original text (Divsar, 2014). It is teacher-centered and does not bring many interesting activities to*

students (Hwang & Embi, 2007). It addresses the literal interpretation of the text

*b)**The Stylistics Approach** enables the students to be directed towards the understanding and appreciation of the literary text itself through the integrated use of the language analysis and literary evaluation (Lazar, 1993). This means students are taught to understand how the forms that language takes in a literary text work in passing messages to the reader.*

*c) **The language Approach** is aimed at assisting the students to develop their language proficiency. This is done by exposing the students with the target language and its features. The vital feature of this Approach is "to employ literature primarily for interesting language activities" (Maley& Duff, 1990). As for the Language Based Approaches, the center shifted to the learner, reading process and language awareness in learners (Wei Keong, 2007).*

3) Personal Growth Model

According to the Personal Growth Model, emotion and characteristics of the student are taken into consideration in the development process. It mandates the students to relate and respond with the themes and issues by connecting them to their life experiences. It is conditioned by the cultural model and the linguistic model, where essential emphasis is made on the specific use of language in a text in a particular cultural setting. The two approaches included in this model are the Personal Response Approach and the moral philosophical Approach.

*a) **The Personal Response Approach** focuses on the students getting personal responses and the development of their persona. It is centered on the learner's reaction to the poet. According to Rosli (1995), it helps motivate and encourage students to read and make the connection between the themes that are being taught in school and the actual life experience.*

*b) **The Moral Philosophical Approach** asserts that literature has moral lessons as well: these are the moral messages passed on by the writer in the work. These values are somewhat like rules to be followed by the learners, in their life. This enables the students to understand concepts in subjects based on their familiarities with these values. Thus, students would be able to take one or several assignments and consider what they have grasped from them other than readings of a particular literary work. This Approach affirms that there is a value of good and philosophical thoughts that one can derive from his or her reading (Rosli, 1995).*

These six frameworks outlined above by Carter and Long (1991) under the three models described above form the basis for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For classroom observations, a checklist was developed, where four key activities of each approach were mentioned against them. When classes were observed it was seen that teachers were using mixtures of activities of approaches even in a

single class. The researchers were observing and coding data. Once data were gathered, SPSS software was used to analyze data. For analyzing data,the activities of each approach were actual data. No single approach was used for the teaching of poetry. Almost all six approaches were used in teaching poetry but which one is the most and which one is the least? It was very important, that two categories of teachers were made.

1) *Teachers who used more than two activities of an approach.*
2) *Teachers who used two or less than two activities of an approach.*

Teachers who used more than two activities of approaches means those approaches are mostly used by them and teachers who used two or less than two activities of approaches are those teachers who used that approach average level or very less.

Table: 1 Information Based Approach

Observations	Frequency	Percent
Teachers who used every activity of this Approach	11	91.7.0%
Teachers who less used activities of this Approach	1	8.3%
Total	12	100.0%

There were twelve teachers in the sample; among them, all teachers were found they be using this approach, in the class while teaching poetry. Every teacher provided background knowledge about text and poetry in class. This approach is 91.7% used in class.

Table: 2 ParaphrasticApproach

Observations	Frequency	Per cent
Teachers who used more than two activities of this Approach	7	58.3%
Teachers who used two or less than two activities of this Approach	5	41.7%
Total	12	100%

It was observed that seven teachers out of twelve used the paraphrastic approach and the other five teachers used this approach very less. Overall this Approach is 58.3% used.

TABLE: 3 STYLISTICS APPROACH

Observations	Frequency	Percent
Teachers who used more than two activities of this Approach	7	58.3%
Teachers who used two or less than two activities of this Approach	5	41.7%
Total	12	100%

The Stylistics approach was also used by seven teachers and it was observed that this approach is up to 58.3% used.

TABLE: 4 LANGUAGE BASED APPROACH

Observation	Frequency	Percent
Teachers who used more than two activities of this Approach	3	25.0%
Teachers who used two or less than two activities of this Approach	9	75.0%
Total	12	100.0%

Through classroom observations, it was observed that the language-based approach is the least commonly used. This approach has such activities which need enough time to perform in the class. Teachers used this approach only 25.0% used.

TABLE: 5 PERSONAL RESPONSE APPROACH

Observation	Frequency	Percent
Teachers who used more than two activities of this Approach	3	25.0%
Teachers who used two or less than two activities of this Approach	9	75.0%
Total	12	100%

The personal Response Approach is also similar; like Language Based Approach. This approach needs enough time for its activities. Teachers can't perform each activity of this Approach in the limited time of class. This approach is only used to the extent of 25%.

TABLE: 6 MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

Observation	Frequency	Percent
Teachers who practiced more than two activities of this Approach	5	41.0%
Teachers who practiced two or less than two activities of this Approach	7	59.0%
Total	12	100.0%

Poems contain moral lessons which need to be discussed in the class. Teachers use this approach according to the needs and requirements of students but some activities of this approach are not possible to be continuously used in a short time of class. The moral philosophical approach is used only 41.0%.

TABLE: 7 RESULTS FROM CLASSROOM ROOM OBSERVATIONS

S.No.	Approaches	Percent
1	Information Based Approach	91.7%
2	ParaphrasticApproach	58.3%
3	Stylistics Approach	58.3%
4	Language-Based Approach	25%
5	Personal Response Approach	25%
6	Moral Philosophical Approach	41%

It is observed that the information-based approach is mostly used in teaching poetry by teachers. This approach is practiced by 91.7%, followed by the paraphrastic and stylistics approach having a percentage of 58.3%. In the third position moral philosophical approach having 41% is used. The least common approaches are language-based and personal–response approaches having 25%.

Classroom observations and surveys showed that these three approaches as information-based approach, the paraphrastic approach, and the stylistics approach were mostly used by teachers.When they started teaching, first they gave valuable information about the text and author to students, and then read the text of the poem. This shows that they used an information-based approach first in the class, with all its activities. Then they explained difficult words in class. They sometimes also used their first language Urdu to explain text to students and then asked students to find out

hidden meanings of words in text. This was all observed in the first class. Next class, they taught another poem. For that poem again used an information-based approach and a paraphrastic approach but that day they described moral values in class from the poem.After that time was over it was found, that day they used information-based, paraphrastic, and moral philosophical approaches. When the third time class was observed again information-based approach and paraphrastic approach were used but this time they asked to students make groups and describe a summary of the poem in their own words. This shows that they used almost every Approach with their one or two activities. Three approaches that they used mostly were information-based approaches and paraphrastic approach and the stylistics approach.

However, Moral philosophical, personal-response approach and language-based approaches were least used by teachers. They used these approaches but very less. Even among these three language-based approach was least used by them. The above table shows that it was observed that the information-based approach was used in 91.7% of the teaching of poetry by teachers. The table also showed that paraphrastic and stylistic approaches were the second favored approaches by teachers. It was observed that moral philosophical, personal response, and language-based approaches were less used by teachers.In the end, it was concluded that the information-based approach was more used in colleges and universities of the Hazara Division of KP in Pakistan than the paraphrastic, stylistic, and moral philosophical approach. Results also showed that language-based and personal response approaches were least practiced in the Hazara division of KP in Pakistan.

The result of this study is similar to the result of earlier studies conducted by Ab. Rashid et al (2010)which showed that Information Based Approach was mostly used by teachers in teaching literature component. The outcomes of this study is also matched with result of Hwang &Embi (2007) who found that Paraphrastic Approach was highly used by teachers flowed by Information Based Approach. Parmar&Barot (2009) also preferred Paraphrastic Approach in their study. Paraphrastic Approach was followed by Stylistics Approach according to Fakeye&Amao (2013) who concluded that Stylistics Approach was most used by teachers but Lim and& Omar (2007) said it was least used Approach. Furthermore this study also has resemblance with result of Ghazali (2009) & Hismanoglu (2005) that Language Based Approach was least used by teachers.

CONCLUSION

This study was used to find out the approaches used by teachers in teaching English poetry. Studies showed that teachers used different approaches in teaching poetry in a single class. All approaches were not used in the same class. Results showed that Information was mostly used by teachers followed by the paraphrastic approach, stylistics approach, moral philosophical approach, and personal response

approach. These approaches also helped students to pass and get good scores in exams. Other approaches were used at an average level. Teachers provided background information about the poet, country, and text to students. The second favored approach was the paraphrastic approach. By using this approach teachers used less difficult words to explain difficult words in poems. Teachers sometimes also used their first language Urdu to explain difficult words and terms of the poem in class, which helped students understand the poem. After using these approaches with a mixture of the other four approaches, students explained the poem in their own words.

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