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ELTWeekly

India's first weekly ELT eNewsletter

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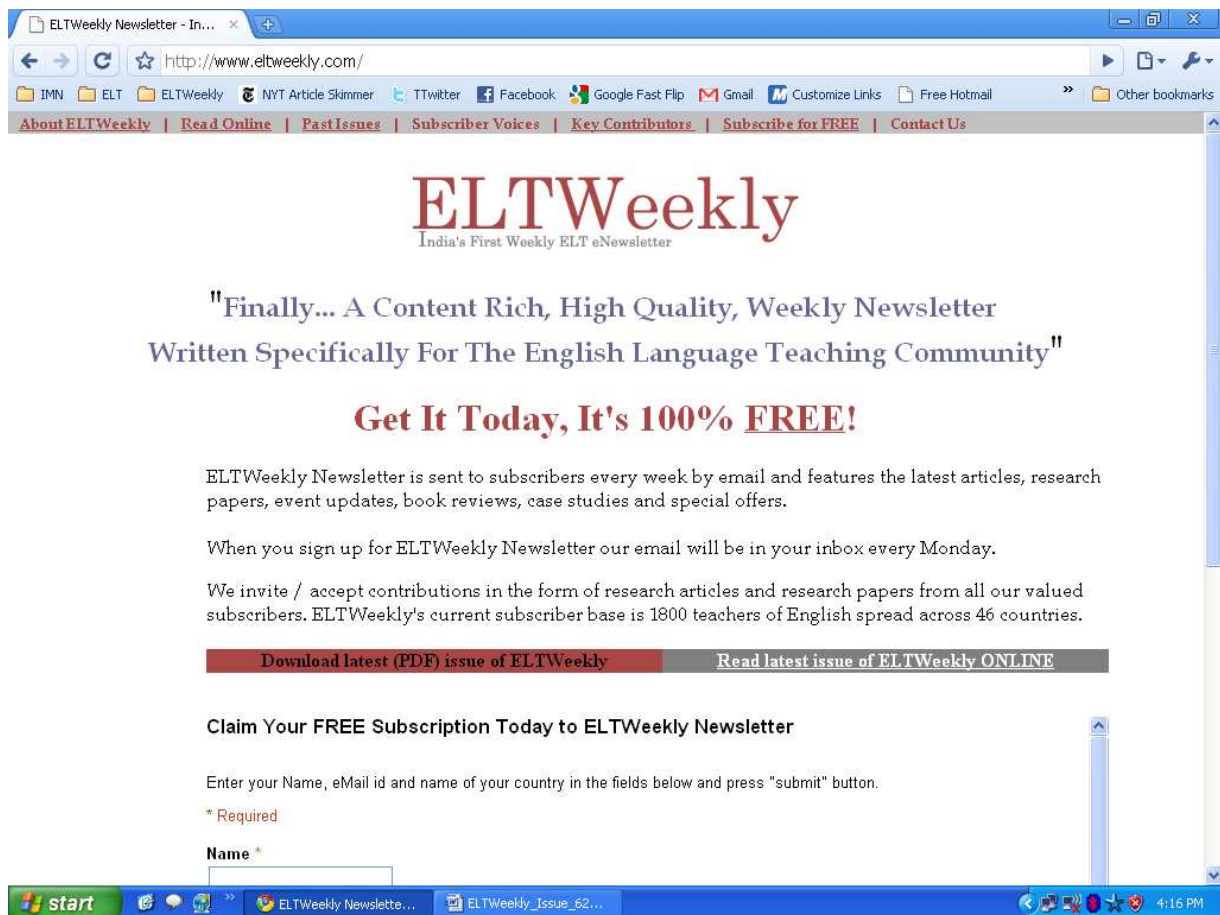
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British Council EAQUALS curriculum

This project may be of interest to anyone involved in curriculum development. The downloadable leaflet gives a sample of the work completed thus far on a British Council project to create a core curriculum based, in part, on the CEFR. The British Council and EAQUALS have joined together to create a core curriculum inventory for the English language based around key language points for each level, including grammar, vocabulary, discourse markers and functions. A fuller version of the inventory will be available by the end of 2010.

Get more details from <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/62-british-council-eaquals-curriculum/>

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News: 1,300 ways to say the same thing

An online archive is collecting English accents to help academics and actors. Could you add yours?

“Please call Stella. Ask her to bring these things with her from the store: six spoons of fresh snow peas, five thick slabs of blue cheese, and maybe a snack for her brother Bob. We also need a small plastic snake and a big toy frog for the kids. She can scoop these things into three red bags, and we will go meet her Wednesday at the train station.”

You can hear these words recited 1,300 times at the online speech accent archive at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia – and every one is different.

Read the complete story at <http://www.elweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/62-news-1300-ways-to-say-the-same-thing/>

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Video-1: Future of English Language Teaching

In the present video Rod Bolitho, Guest on the teachingenglish.org.uk site talks about how he sees the future of English language teaching.

Watch the video at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/62-video-1-future-of-english-language-teaching/>

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Video-2: Pronunciation and Teaching Techniques

BridgeTEFL's English Language Teaching In Action is a comprehensive 5-DVD set packed with 70 videos on essential topics in English language instruction. With lively games, fail-proof lessons, insightful classroom management tips, and much more, this collection has everything you need to make your teaching more effective!

Contents of Disc 5: Pronunciation and Teaching Techniques

Pronunciation

1. Teaching Sentence Stress with Jazz Chants
2. Teaching Word Stress with a Stress Maze
3. Practicing Vowel to Vowel Linking
4. Teaching Pronunciation: Word Stress
5. Using Poems to Teach Sentence Stress

Teaching Techniques

1. How to Deal with Disruptive Students
2. Tips for Remembering Students' Names
3. Breaking Bad Teaching Habits
4. Effective Error Correction Techniques
5. Tips for Identifying Lesson Aims

Watch the video at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/62-video-2-pronunciation-and-teaching-techniques/>

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Article: 'Pronunciation: what is the ideal goal?' by Nick Shepherd

(This article is submitted by Nick Shepherd, OBE, FRSA, MA, Language Editor.)

The other month I was sitting at the back of a classroom in York, listening to six Russian women and a Turkish girl trying to get their tongues around the following:

"If we'd gone by train, it'd've been quicker."

(Actually, to be completely truthful, the teacher was saying "If we'd've gone by train...", which is a very common speech pattern in the UK today, but more of that another time). They and the teacher struggled and struggled, but they were making very heavy weather of it, and I began to ask myself whether this was a useful exercise. Were they ever going to get it? Was there much point in their getting it? Was there **any** point in their getting it? The way they said it was perfectly clear, it just wasn't very English. They started off saying:

"If we had gone by train, it would have been quicker."

If I were able to say that in German or Italian, or whatever language I happened to be learning, I'd be a pretty happy bunny, but sadly those seven women ended up saying some kind of halfway house between the teacher's swiftly spoken, compressed version, and their own original. I wasn't sure that it was an improvement on where they had started. Pronunciation touches very deep chords in the mind. Big implications lie behind weak forms, stress, intonation, rhythm, elision and so on: you can't produce native-speaker-like forms unless you have surrendered in some way to the culture behind the language. You can get three quarters of the way there without much difficulty, so for an English person to say "Bonjour, comment ca va?" with French sounds but an English intonation and stress, is easy. To say it as one French person would say it to another implies a degree of commitment which few language learners – if they understood what they were committing themselves to – would be prepared to make. It touches you in your deep place, where your identity lies. To really sound like a French person you have to think like a French person; most of us are not willing to go that far, though a few of us are.

An easy way to demonstrate this is to note how few (post-puberty¹) language learners achieve really native-like pronunciation. They can achieve everything else – good grammar,

good vocabulary, good communication, excellent writing, even quite good idiomatic expressions -, but not the native sound of the language. Joseph Conrad and Arthur Koestler, two magnificent novelists in English, both had thick foreign accents all their lives (I know this because John Galsworthy, a fine English novelist, tells us about Conrad, and I have personally heard Koestler speak).

Oh, people will say they are willing, but once they begin to appreciate, if only subconsciously, the depth of commitment required, most will shy away from it. Some truly want to: a Spanish student once said to me, with passion: “I want to make the English language my own!” She did, too, and ended up sounding like a native speaker. In various parts of the world, including Latin America, you sometimes find students with a rather weak commitment to their own culture, which they see as being a pale imitation of somewhere else – Europe; the United States -; such students often turn to a foreign language with a hunger to make it, and the culture behind it, their own. But most people don’t.

Think about English people abroad. I can think of a young man in a small town in Catalonia who had truly “gone native”; I felt in him a rejection of things English, and a longing (which he was well on the way to achieving) to identify with Catalan ways. His wife is Catalan; he speaks to his children in Catalan; his mind is ‘moving over’ so to speak, to the new culture. But most people living abroad don’t get within a mile of that, because deep down they don’t want to. They want to remain English – or Turkish, or French, or Peruvian, or Bangladeshi. They say they would like to learn the local language, but deep down they don’t. A few of them are honest enough to say so. George was a retired mailman from California whom I met in a bar in Veracruz, Mexico. He heard me address the barman in reasonable Spanish, and asked me how long I had been there. A year. “Well I been here seven years”, he told me with some contempt in his voice, “and I’m proud to say I don’t speak a word of this goddam language”.

A redneck? An ignorant, prejudiced man? Yes, but deep down was he much different from the first secretary at the British Embassy who said to me with barely concealed distaste, “Gosh, you speak this language jolly well, don’t you”.

But to return to our students after this long digression: my view is that we should be helping them to speak in the way that is most comfortable to them. That will involve speaking with a foreign accent in most cases, and why not? Unlike Brian Sewell, I do not believe in unaccented English; everybody has an accent. The goal for our students, surely, must not be to sound like native speakers, but rather to communicate effectively on all the subjects they want to communicate about. If in that process they reveal that they are from Argentina, or Japan, or Scandinavia, that is as it should be, except for that tiny minority who really want to ‘make the move’ from one culture to another.

There is also the question of who the students will be communicating with. There was a time when the Anglo-Saxons believed that all anyone wanted to do was talk to them (us, I have to say). However, it is now clear that that assumption was just unthinking arrogance, and actually English is becoming, or has already become, a global lingua franca, which is more widely used to enable Argentinians to talk to Koreans, or Russians to talk to Malaysians, than it is to enable anybody to talk to the Anglo-Saxons. In fact this has been the case for many years: questionnaires to advanced students of English from as long ago as the seventies show that they are not primarily interested in English-speaking people and their ways, but rather in communicating globally on all the subjects that interest them: work, study, travel, interests and more. They wanted to talk to the whole world – but not particularly to the English!

What follows from this? The proponents of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) are strongly and rightly aware of this, and have drawn a number of conclusions. They believe we should be teaching a lot less grammar, and taking a much less prescriptive approach to grammatical error where it does not impede communication. I am not sure about this, and think we should make every effort to help students get the grammar right. It's not that difficult, and advanced students regularly do get the grammar right, in fact they are often more accurate in their use of grammar than the native speakers, who can be lazy and sloppy in their speech, or just plain ignorant.

But where I do think the ELF proponents have a strong point is in pronunciation. It's a frustrating business, and most post-puberty learners never achieve native speaker levels of pronunciation. But why would they want to? There is no generally accepted agreement on pronunciation, as there is with grammar and vocabulary. There are thousands of speech variations, depending on where you live, how old you are, what schools you went to, what you do for a living, who you mix with, and more. In fact so much more that every single speaker has their own idiolect². Think of a friend you haven't seen for 10 years. The phone rings one day, you answer, and within about five seconds you know who it is. That would never happen with a piece of writing. The way you speak is utterly distinctive, indeed unique. Your accent tells a lot about you, and it should never be seen as something to be ashamed of. Mine will say that I come from the south London suburbs, with a few overlays from other places where I have lived, studied and worked; another's will say Scotland; another's will say Mumbai. Greater and greater exposure will cause greater and greater adjustment, so that if the woman from Mumbai stays in the UK for five years doing post-graduate studies, her accent will keep moving over. The reason? Her mind is moving over. But even then, there will always be a flavour of Mumbai in her speech, and I celebrate that. What is wrong with being yourself? We don't need cheap imitation native speakers, as Paul Davies used to say; what we need are students who are confident in their use of language,

able to communicate effectively, and happy that their speech will reveal their origins. What could be better?

¹A note on pre-puberty learning

It is often said that before puberty people are more flexible, less fixed in their speech patterns, and therefore better able to take on board fully the accent of another language. I think the truth lies deeper than that: the children have not yet committed themselves fully to the tribe they were born into, and are therefore still open to the speech patterns of other tribes. It's partly about the tongue and the vocal chords, but mostly it's about the mind.

²Idiolect

A *language* is a discrete collection of words and rules. Speakers of different languages cannot normally understand each other.

A *dialect* is a version of a language. This is usually distinguished by pronunciation, but also often containing word differences, and occasionally grammatical differences. Speakers of different dialects can normally understand each other, though there may be difficulties.

An *idiolect* is the way one individual uses language, usually distinguished by pronunciation, but there will be other distinguishing features too. Speakers of the same language can normally understand each other's idiolects without difficulty.

Research Article: 'A Review of studies on Alternative Assessment in EFL Language' by Sara Vali and Parnaz Kianiparsa

This article is submitted by Sara Vali and Parnaz Kianiparsa, lecturers at Payame Noor University, Iran (Damavand Center).

Abstract

As everyone knows, assessment becomes an indicative tool for analyzing the success of the teaching methods. Additionally, it helps students to recognize that they are making progress in foreign language development, which can motivate them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and encourage autonomy and independent learning skills. However, a teacher's role is one of the significant elements in teaching process. Nowadays, a variety of alternative assessments have become popular. It has been suggested that unlike traditional assessment methods, alternative assessment techniques promote a trustful atmosphere so that students that are influenced by evaluation become engaged in its process. They are provoked to communicate freely and are more able to involve in self-criticism and rethinking. Students' involvement in their own evaluation assists them in reaching maturity and responsibility in succeeding in language learning.

This paper aims to have a short review on the so-called "movement of alternative assessment" (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001) that has recently used in the field of language testing and assessment. In other words, this study tries to introduce new methods of assessment in the second or foreign language acquisition.

Introduction

These days, there has been an increasing interest in the use of assessment procedures that are completely different from conventional methods of assessment. More reliable forms of assessment, such as portfolios, interviews, journals, project works, and self- or peer-assessment have become more and more common in the second and foreign language classrooms.

These alternative forms of testing or assessment are more student-centered as they involve students in their learning, so that they can control their own language learning. Furthermore, these kinds of assessment—called alternative assessment—can help teachers to

get enough information for developing their instructional plans and practices. Table below can indicate the obvious differences which exist between the traditional and alternative forms of assessment (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Old forms	New forms
1. Focus on language	1. Focus on communication
2. Teacher-centered	2. Learner-centered
3. Isolated skills	3. Integrated skills
4. Emphasis on product	4. Emphasis on process
5. One answer, one-way correctness	5. Open-ended, multiple solutions
6. Tests that test	6. Tests that teach

The aim of the present paper is to review some studies which have conducted on examining these new forms of assessment, and express their findings and their researchers' beliefs about the usefulness of these kinds of testing in EFL/ESL classrooms.

Review of the related literature

Before 1990's our testing and assessment were based on behaviorist views of cognition and improvement, but after 1990's it was suggested that some alternative ways of testing are needed to evaluate a person's performance (Hancock, 1994). Studies have revealed that innovative individuals do not have unique mental sections, but they use what they have in more well-organized and flexible ways. Such individuals are enormously thoughtful about their activities, their use of time, and the quality of their products (Gardner, 1993). Thus, a need for a new assessment process was needed to test the learners.

Alternative assessment includes a variety of instruments that can be modified in varying situations. According to the literature (e.g. Anthony, Johnson, Mikelson, & Peerce, 1991; Goodman, 1991; Holt; 1994), these instruments include, for example, the use of checklists of student behavior, products, journals, reading logs, videos of role plays, audio tapes of discussion, self-evaluation questionnaires, work samples, and teacher observations or anecdotal records.

In her article on alternative assessment, Huerta-Macias (1995) claimed that although traditional forms of assessment can provide somehow suitable measures of students' performance, they often fail to give information about what the students can do in their second language. Because of this, a new method of assessment has been suggested in recent years which is called alternative assessment, authentic assessment, or informal assessment. The focus of this new method is on assessing learners' ability to use language holistically in real-life situations and is usually carried out constantly over a period of time.

As Miriam and Fran (1995) said in their article about ESL learners' assessment, assessment is difficult for adult ESL educators. Finding a means that can measure learner achievements and program success to institutions, display improvement in English proficiency and literacy skills to learners, and clarify for the educators themselves what has been learned and what has not is not an easy task. Dissatisfaction with accessible tools has been widespread, and many teachers can not find some methods to evaluate learner gains in a way that helps teaching and learning. Today, it seems that using a combination of available and program-developed alternative assessment instruments can be helpful for assessment.

Alternative assessment is a flexible way to gather enough information about learners and evaluate what has been taught in class. "Learner portfolios,"—collections of individual work—are common examples of alternative assessment. Portfolios can include such items as reports on books read, notes from learner/teacher interviews, learners' reflections on their progress, writing samples, data from performance-based assessments, and scores on commercially available tests (Fingeret, 1993; Wrigley, 1992).

Grosvenor (1993: 14-15) defined portfolio as a list of three basic models as follows:

- 1- Showcase model, consisting of work samples chosen by the student.
- 2- Descriptive model, consisting of representative work of the student, with no attempt at evaluation.
- 3- Evaluative model, consisting of representative products that have been evaluated by criteria.

DeFina (1992: 13-16) listed the following assumptions about portfolio assessment:

- "Portfolios are systematic, purposeful, and meaningful collections of students' works in one or more subject areas.
- Students of any age or grade level can learn not only to select pieces to be placed into their portfolios but can also learn to establish criteria for their selections.
- Portfolio collections may include input by teachers, parents, peers, and school administrators.
- In all cases, portfolios should reflect the actual day-to-day learning activities of students.
- Portfolios should be ongoing so that they show the students' efforts, progress, and achievements over a period of time.
- Portfolios may contain several compartments, or subfolders.
- Selected works in portfolios may be in a variety of media and may be multidimensional."

Polakowski (1993) has talked about the benefits of the portfolio, and has said that portfolios are a striking alternative to more traditional assessment approaches for teaching children. He enumerated the benefits of portfolio as follows:

- 1- It complements such developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction as whole language, hands-on approaches, and process mathematics.
- 2- It also allows them to assess children's individual learning styles.
- 3- It enhances their ability to communicate with parents about children's learning.
- 4- It helps to fulfill professional requirements of school and community accountability.

In his article about alternative assessment and social studies, Pat (1993) stated that assessment should be separated from instruction. Student evaluation is most authentic and reasonable when it is based upon the ideas, processes, and products. The criteria of judgment and the expected results should be determined for the students clearly at first.

Both the teacher and student are responsible for each student's success. Thus, the social studies classroom becomes a model of the real world in which social and public responsibility and participation is an ongoing process, uninterrupted by time-outs for the strangeness of formal testing.

In an article on authentic assessment and writing assessment, Chapman (1990) suggested that due to the role of writing in people's academic, social, and personal lives, the improvement of students' ability to write is a main concern in every society. Since educators can use writing to assess students' higher-order thinking skills—such as the ability to make reasonable connections, to compare and contrast solutions to problems, and to sufficiently support arguments and conclusions—authentic assessment seems to provide excellent criteria for teaching and evaluating writing. He suggested a design for authentic writing assessment that can be crucial to teaching and testing writing skill. He believed that an authentic writing assessment should reveal various types of writing as well as levels of difficulty related to the task. For example, a writing assessment assignment can be:

- * totally open-ended, where the student is asked to construct an essay either requiring or not requiring certain background knowledge
- * limited to specific components of the writing process, such as planning, outlining, or even revising
- * used for short answers which may be either a part of planning or an abbreviated check for a basic understanding of key points

Yap (1993) reported the results of a research project involving thirty-five adult basic (ABE) and English as a second language (ESL) programs. Writing assessment, portfolio assessment,

and classroom assessment were shown to be suitable approaches to the type of authentic assessment called for within the profession. Pierce, Swain, and Hart (1993) reported on a study of 500 eighth-grade students, signifying that self-assessment was an applicable and reliable measure of language proficiency. Pavis (1988) indicated similar results for college students learning French based on a journal writing project in which students checked their own learning and recognized problems encountered as well as achievements over the course of the term. Allwright (1988) has argued that the quality of learning can improve by controlling what happens in the mind of the learner. Based on studies such as these, alternative assessment that involves the learner in self-assessment is recommended, regardless of possible claims of subjectivity as a negative factor in their use.

Hancock (1994) believed that one of the advantages of alternative assessment is that it gives enough opportunities for the learners to discover that they can complete the tasks successfully. He said those language programs that focus on alternative assessment are apt to help the learners to evaluate what they learn both in and outside of the language class in a real life situation.

One of the alternative ways of assessment which is used as alternative to norm-referenced tests as Elliott (1995) said is performance assessment. Teachers can use performance assessment to get a much richer and more comprehensive picture of what students know and can do.

As defined by the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) (1992, as cited by Elliot, 1995), performance assessments are those “testing methods that require students to create an answer or product that demonstrates their knowledge and skills” which can have different forms, such as conducting experiments, writing extended essay, and doing mathematical computations.

Performance assessment is a continuum of assessment formats ranging from the simplest student-constructed answers to comprehensive expressions or collections of work over time. By choosing good assessment tasks, sharing the scoring criteria with students, motivating students to do the tasks, and understand their performances, teachers can direct instruction to its appropriate destination with performance assessment.

Although performance assessment is very useful for both teachers and students it has some disadvantages in terms of the concept of fairness. Although consistency to assure fairness in performance assessment increases the ease of administration it decreases the task’s meaningfulness and creates some biases.

Conclusion

Although alternative assessment procedures are less formal than traditional testing and have valuable washback effects according to the literature, they have some drawbacks which make them difficult to be used. Using these kinds of procedures is very time consuming for both learners and teachers. The cultural factors and educational backgrounds of the learners may result in some problems in use of this assessment. Moreover, it is hard to measure the outcomes without using some standardized test. Owing to these issues, ESL programs often use a combination of commercially available and program-developed assessment instruments to evaluate literacy and language proficiency.

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Research Paper: 'Reader Response and Its Relevance for Communicative Language Teaching in the Context of EFL Learners' by Dr. Prashant Mishra

This paper is submitted by Dr. Prashant Mishra, Professor and Head, Department of English Govt. S.V.P.G. College Neemuch (MP) 458 441.

ABSTRACT

Structuralism and modernism endeavour to explore the core and the central meaning of a text. They regard an author as God and elevated a text to the heights of canonical status. On the other hand, Postmodernism celebrates indeterminacy, open-endedness, marginality, individualism and polysemy. Deconstruction opened the door for the multiple signification of a text by regarding meaning as slippery. Reader-Response theory further contributed to Postmodern poetics and pedagogy by regarding interpretation of literature as something which is related to the experience and background of the individual readers. It believes that a text cannot mean the same to all the individual readers who have different backgrounds, tastes, traits, experiences and knowledge and therefore, interpretation of a text is bound to differ from one reader to another. Since the reader-response assigns central role to a reader, the approach will be more useful to students in Indian context who are taught literature as a means to facilitate them to acquire competence in the use of English. Reader-Response will change the passive learner into active one. By providing opportunities to the learners in the process of the interpretation of a text, it will also provide them opportunities to participate in a number of activities based on their personal experience, opinions, background knowledge, and interests and will ultimately lead the learners towards autonomous learning and sharpen their creative and critical faculties.

Key words: Reader-Response, Communicative competence, Schemata, indeterminacy

Introduction

Reader-Response criticism that earned recognition as a separate critical movement in 1970s frees teaching of literature from the narrow restrictions imposed by the traditional teaching methodology keeping the writer and the text in the centre. Earlier schools of criticism by keeping the writer and the text in the centre left no scope for learners to participate in the

reading process. Structuralism and modernism endeavour to explore the core and the central meaning of a text. These approaches regarded author as God and elevated text to a canonical status. On the contrary, Postmodernism celebrates indeterminacy, open-endedness, marginality, individualism and polysemy by regarding meaning as slippery and contingent. Reader Response theory further contributed to postmodern poetics and pedagogy by regarding interpretation of a text as something which is related to the experience and background of the individual readers. It believes that a text cannot mean the same to all the individual readers whose backgrounds, tastes, traits, experience and knowledge differ and therefore, interpretation of a text is bound to differ from one reader to another. According to Stanley Fish(1980), “The place where sense is made or not made is the reader’s mind rather than the printed page or the space between the covers of a book”(Fish 1974:397). Wolfgang Iser believes that the author leaves the ‘gaps’ which the readers are expected to fill. He writes, “These gaps have a different effect on the virtual dimension, for they may be filled in different ways. For this reason, one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities, as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled”(Iser1989:79). Since the reader-response assigns central role to a reader, this approach will be more useful to students in Indian context who are taught literature as a means to facilitate them to acquire competence in the use of English. By providing opportunities to the learners to participate in the process of the interpretation of a text, it will ensure their participation in a number of class room activities based on their personal experiences, opinions, interests, creativity and knowledge and will ultimately lead the learners towards autonomous learning. The present paper attempts to explore the communicative potential of reader-response for EFL learners.

Reader Response and Its Relevance for CLT

One of the main aims of communicative language teaching is to aid the learner to participate in dialogues, debates, discussions, language activities and tasks in the class room to provide them sufficient exposure to acquire communicative competence. A judicious and planned use of reader-response can fruitfully use a text for communicative activities. Different genres of literature – prose, poetry, drama, fiction, speeches and epistles if skillfully used by a teacher to provide exposure in the four skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking will contribute to the communicative competence of the students. A few implications of reader-response for CLT are as follows:

- Initiates Individual responses form students.
- It is learner-centered and contributes to autonomous learning. Ensures the participation of the learners.

- Individualizes the learning of the students.
- Initiates discussions and debates in the class room.
- Rather than take refuge in ready made and stereotyped views of the critics, reader-response encourages students to express their view points. It allows the students to use their background knowledge to comprehend and extend the meaning of a text.

Provides Interpretative Freedom and Make Students Active Learners

One of the main aims of teaching literature to the EFL students is to make them competent in the use of language. A reader-response class room that permits students to participate in the reading process becomes vibrant with communicative activities. Students are provided interpretative freedom to make individual readings of a text. The class room no longer remains a dictatorial pulpit where stereotyped and frozen interpretations are prescribed and dictated to the students who remain mute spectators. Reader-response invites the responses from the individual students and makes them active responders who by providing fresh and individual interpretations expand the meaning of a text and fill the gap left by the writer. The text now becomes an open-ended entity and class room a democratic, dynamic, flexible and pluralistic platform where the meaning goes on expanding with every new response coming from a student. Students on getting chance to voice their views gain confidence as their experience, knowledge and imagination are relied on by the teacher in reading a text. This boost of confidence in EFL learners plays the most important role in learning English as a very large number of students give up their attempt to learn English due to inhibition, phobia and sometimes by prescriptive approach used by the school teachers who make the learners passive receptors and not active responders.

Individualizes Learning

Reader-Response by initiating the process of individual responses to a text individualizes the learning experience of the learners. By ensuring the participation of the learners in the interpretation of a text, it leads them on the path of autonomous learning. It exposes students to listening, reading, writing and speaking activities through the acts of reading a text aloud or through providing freedom to students to voice what they think about a text or asking them to pen down their reading experience of a text. Here the role of a teacher is that of a facilitator who supervises the responses of the students and helps them to use their prior knowledge and experience in the interpretation of a text. Sometimes students may come out with irrelevant interpretations which do not have any relation with a text. Here the teacher has to intervene to keep the responses within the context and theme of the text and to save them from irrelevant digressions. The aim of Reader-Response for EFL learners will be to create discussions and debates in the class room so that maximum communication takes place in a class room and teaching no longer remains a teacher-centered activity.

Triggers Creative and Critical Faculty of the Students

Application of Reader-Response in an EFL class room initiates individual response from the students. Different students who participate in the reading process come out with their own readings of a text. A teacher should ask the students to provide fresh and innovative interpretations of a text and not to repeat the views discussed in the class earlier. This exercise will sharpen the creative and critical faculty of the students which otherwise remains in inert state. Use of reader-response in an EFL class room has double advantage. The text students read provide them content and the theme to be discussed and debated in the class room. The opportunity to interpret a text and to discuss its content makes them think and express themselves in a foreign language. It makes them use a language responding to the familiar content imaginatively and creatively. The interaction that takes place in a class room when students argue in favour or against the topic also improves their logical and reasoning capacity and ultimately contributes to their communicative competence.

Encourages Critical and Creative Reading Habits among Students

Using reader-response as a pedagogical tool in the class room makes the students active learners. It encourages individual and subjective responses to a text. Instead of providing stereotyped responses and interpretations of text, reader-response endeavours to elicit individual responses from readers by triggering their background and experiential knowledge. By providing opportunities to students to participate in the discussion in the class room, it makes a text an open-ended entity which is open to multiple interpretations. Individual responses of the students will add new perspectives to the reading of a text. Earlier approaches, whether biographical or historical, looked at a text from only one perspective or yardstick and so completely banned the involvement of readers in the interpretation of a text. The interpretation of text was regarded as the sole responsibility of erudite scholars or critics. Consequently only a few interpretations of a text come out from learned critics and scholars. Reader-Response by making a text open to multiple responses and signification encourages critical and creative activities among students. Students may look into their own experience and background knowledge into a text. By using their own schemata to comprehend and interpret literature, students will become active learners. In this way, instead of regarding students only receptors of ready-made interpretations of a text, reader-response will initiate the process of critical and creative reading habits among the students.

Participation of the Learners in the Class Room Activities

To use reader-response effectively in an EFL class room for communicative purposes, a teacher should create some communicative activities based on the content of the text.

However, he should be careful in the selection of the teaching material. The material which is conducive to the background knowledge and experience of the students and that can trigger imaginative responses from the students should be preferred. For example poems like “Night of the Scorpion” can be selected for teaching English to the rural students. As scorpion and snake bites are common in villages, most of the rural students have background knowledge about them and therefore can comfortably participate in the discussion in the class room. A few activities which can be conducted in a reader-response class-room and can be effectively used to improve the fluency of the students are listed below:

1. While teaching a text, a teacher may ask students to select few lines from a text and connect them to their own personal lives, experience, environment and occupations.
2. Students may be asked to read a text or a passage from it aloud and then asked to share their meaning with their class mates or work in pairs or small groups to arrive at a consensus meaning and then participate in a whole class discussion.
3. The teacher underlines some important words from a poem and then asks students to summarize the poem or provide its central idea using the underlined words.
4. While teaching a text, a teacher may select a parallel topic of contemporary relevance and interest of the students and initiate a debate or a discussion on it so that students will get chance to express their creative ideas.
5. While teaching a play, a teacher may select some interesting scenes from it and prepare students to perform them in the class room.
6. A teacher may ask students, turn by turn, to read various passages of a text aloud and then ask one of them to give their opinions on the main idea of the text.
7. A teacher may select a particular situation from a text and then ask the students to enact the roles given in the situation.
8. A teacher may select the role of a particular character while teaching drama, novel or a story and then ask the students to come out with their individual interpretation of the same type of character that they have come across in a movie or a play or a novel or a story.
9. While reading a text, we come across various themes, situations, roles etc. A teacher may ask his students to create some parallel imaginary themes, situations and roles based on the ones that they have read in the class room.

In this way, reader-response theory can be fruitfully used by a teacher to make EFL class room congenial for communicative activities. A teacher, while teaching prose, poetry, drama and other genres, can create such situations in the class room which initiate dialogues, discussions and conversational exchanges.

Reader-Response and the Choice of Text for EFL Learners

Advocates of reader-response (Bleich1975) suggest using the student's background knowledge to encourage them to participate in the reading process and to instil confidence in them to come out with their individual interpretations. Here choice of texts also becomes important. The texts which relate to the socio-cultural setting and experiential and occupational background of the learners shall be preferred than the ones that are remote from the native environment and culture of the students. When the reading material is related to the lives, background and experience of the students, they will be full of joy and enthusiasm to participate in the learning process. The text and the background knowledge or experience of the participants will become complementary to each other. Reading of text will stimulate the students and activate their background and experiential knowledge to interpret it and respond to it in the class room. Reader-Response will be used fruitfully in the class room only when a text is comprehensible and students will be able to respond to it. Incomprehensible and texts alien to the experience of the students will discourage and repel them.

Limitations of the Reader-Response

Students may face problems in the reader-response class room as the application of the reader-response in the EFL class room is not without limitations. Firstly, EFL learners may face language problems as so many of them do not have linguistic competence needed for the understanding of a literary text. Therefore, it cannot be used effectively at the initial stages in EFL class room. Secondly, use of alien textual material and alien cultural context may also impede the comprehension of a text. Therefore learning material that is relative and congenial to the environment and experience of the students should be preferred so that their background knowledge and experience can be used in eliciting responses from the students. Thirdly, all the students do not possess required literary competence to respond to a literary text and as a result some of them may indulge in irrelevant responses. Here the role of a teacher becomes very important. Teacher may provide few hints to the students so that they produce relevant and right responses and abstain from irrelevancies and absurdities.

Conclusion

Teaching and learning through reader-response may have some limitations but its use in an EFL class optimizes the communication. As mentioned in the paper, reader-response can be fruitfully used in creating so many communicative situations in the class room that contribute to the communicative competence of the learners. Eliciting individual responses from the students, use of summation, performance of scenes, parallel discussion of texts, pair work or group work reading of a text, role play are some of the activities which a teacher can direct to activate fluency in his learners. These activities will involve the learners in expressing meaning and improve the comprehending and communicative faculties of the learners. Besides, reader-response triggers learners' schemata in reading a text and leads them on the path of self-learning through their participation in various reader-response activities. To conclude, all the essentials of communicative language teaching can be synthesized with reader-response in an EFL class room.

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