

22

LANGUAGE, PEDAGOGY & SOCIAL DISCOURSE

In honour of Professor Tunde Ajiboye at 70

Editors:

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HIGHER EDUCATION LITERARY CRITICISM TEACHING APPROACHES: NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION LECTURERS ASSESSMENT

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Introduction

"Assessment", is from the word "assess". Brown (2004) defines "assess" as making a judgment of value, quality outcomes, result or size. According to *Oxford Dictionary of Current English, fourth edition* "assess" means to calculate or estimate the value, importance or quality of something or someone. Assessment is the practical and veritable means of gauging teaching and learning outcomes. It is a very important component in the system of education; it belongs to the family of measurement, examination and evaluation (Ajidagba, 2009). The assessment of lecturers in the teaching of literary criticism in higher educational level especially in the Colleges of Education, is of great necessity for the purpose of guiding and improving in teaching and learning process. Due to this, there is the need for each lecturer to examine what he/she does and explore how to perform better to ensure that the objectives of the course is achieved. The conventional approach to the teaching of Literary Criticism has done less in helping students in critical thinking thus presenting the course as a difficult and problematic type to the students, as a result, not bringing the desired goals of literary criticism.

Literature represents people, culture or language. It introduces us to new world of experience. The language of literature (literary text) can ultimately be understood through literary criticism. The study of literature is very important because it exposes students to meaningful contexts that are filled up with descriptive language and interesting characters. Reading of literature develops students' English language and enhances their critical thinking about literary elements. Literature appeals to students' imagination as well as developing their cultural awareness. Unfortunately, many higher institutions focus their attention mainly on language teaching methodology and give little guidance on how to study and interpret literature (literary criticism) as well as designing effective classroom activities. Fortunately, there are various resources for lecturers to employ to improve the literary class; as some approaches to interpretation of literature are reviewed in this study.

Effective delivery of the curriculum calls for the teachers of literature-in-English to be reflective practitioners who model the thinking and the approach they expect of their students to follow. Literary criticism, according to Lawal (2006), is one of the genres of literature and its very nature requires the reader to make judgments about the literary texts read and doing so requires a particular approach to be followed. Literary criticism is an approach to a particular view point given by a writer or author. It involves evaluating, studying, appreciating and postulating on social phenomena and realities. Literary criticism is seen as the study of particular cases which includes the reading and interpretation of a specific text and commentary on the text.

The guiding principle of literary criticism of all times is its critical engagement with a theory in order to develop it into a more inclusive medium for contemplation (Payandeh, 2009). *The free encyclopedia* states that the philosophical discussion of Literary Criticism methods and goals is the influence of literary theory. Appleman (2000) opines that literary theory is a lens through which a literary critic views a text. A literary critic on the other hand is anyone who expresses a notion about a song, drama, literature or book or movie (Lund, 1996). Paulo and Donald (1987) assert that as teachers, one should not offer only a single theory to students because such an approach to teaching is dogmatic and propagandistic. When students are offered multiple ways of viewing literature, it does more than helping to learn to interpret literary texts but also helps them to delve in their way of thinking (Perry, 1990).

An approach means to provide a frame work, or to provide sequence of operations to be used when one comes to actualities (Moody, 1971). The students' lifelong learning towards reading is determined by the approaches the teacher employs in literature teaching (Whitehead, 1968). Appleman (2009) gives his own opinion about this when he submits that no single lens can give the clear meaning of text but viewed in various perspectives. Whitehead (1968) also corroborates this by saying that one of the principles of attaining success in a literature class is that the teacher must be familiar with the various techniques and activities that can motivate and develop the interest of students and their knowledge of literature. According to Hwang and Embi (2007), there are various approaches that can be employed in the teaching of literature, these are Paraphrastic approach, Information- Based approach, Personal Response approach, language Based approach, Moral –Philosophical approach, and Stylistic approach.

Paraphrastic Approach: This is an approach where the teacher paraphrases or re-words the text by using simpler language. It is a method of paraphrasing or rewording of the story or text in a simpler language. It sometimes takes the form of translating idea into other languages. According to Rosli (1995), this approach is good for beginners of second language because it serve as a stepping stone in formulating the objectives of the work. Teacher re-tells the story or poem using simpler language is one of the activities when this approach is in use. Another is translation i.e. using mother tongues to explain the text as well as reading paraphrased version, this could be a note compiled by the teacher.

Information-Based Approach: This approach tends to be teachers centered teaching methods because the content demands a large impute from the teacher because of the history and characteristics of literary texts which students need to examine which could be social, political, historical or cultural background to the text (Lazar, 1993). It involves activities such as lecturing, reading of notes, explanation and criticism provided by teachers in the workbooks. Cater (1988) conceives information- based approach as a way of offering information to students or teaching the students' knowledge about literature.

Personal Response Approach: This approach focuses on the students' personal responses to the literary text in relation to his/her experiences in life. Rosli (1995) submits that the reason behind personal response approach is to stimulate and encourage students to read by connecting the themes of a text to his or her personal experiences in life. Hirvela (1996) corroborates that responses are personal especially being concerned with students' feelings and notions about the literature (text). An activity carried out in a classroom where such an approach is being used is

question – discussion. Activities which are interpretative in nature where views and ideal opinions are generated on the text (Hirvela, 1996), also, small group discussion, brainstorming, guided fantasy, revealing students' reaction in a short paragraph or journal writing (Lazar, 1993).

Language-Based Approach: This approach is student centered and deals with how language is used in a literary text (Carter, 1988). It's a way of seeking unification between language and literature (Hwang and Embi, 2007). Lazar (1993) asserts that this approach does not see literary text as a means of acquiring facts and information but rather to cater for language practice of the students through various activities. Activities like ranking tasks, role play, prediction, cloze, poetry recitation, discussions, debate and so on (Rosli, 1995; Cater, 1996).

Moral Philosophical Approach: This approach focuses its attention on morality since one of the roles of literature is to impact moral values through the teaching of morality (Hwang and Embi (2007). So, the approach is concerned with searching for moral values in a particular literary text. This approach helps the students understand themes in subsequent readings. Consequently, students would be able to reflect the moral values they have learnt in reading literary texts. Rosli (1995) opines that this approach proclaims the usefulness of moral and philosophical considerations behind one's reading. Activities for this approach could be students searching for values while reading the text, incorporation of the moral values searched for outside literature class, reflective sessions (Wang, 2003) and eliciting students' evaluation on what they should do or not do, based on their readings (Partwathy, 2004).

Stylistic Approach: This approach helps the students see how linguistic forms in literary text function in conveying messages to the reader (Hwang and Embi, 2007). According to Lazar (1993) stylistic approach guides students understand and appreciate the literary text with the use of linguistic analysis. He claims further that this approach has two objectives, one of which is the ability to make meaningful interpretation of the students to look into the deeper meaning of the text. The second one is that it enables students' knowledge and awareness to be expanded. Marking certain linguistic features by the students in the process of reading as well as getting students look at the language features are some of the activities of using this approach (Lazar, 1993). Carter (1996) adds extracting clues that can contribute to the meaning and interpretation of the literary text to the activities of using stylistic approach.

Teachers are the most significant agent of change and one of the critical variables in any educational transformation. Teachers matter a lot in the trend of societal transformation especially in the 21st century (Federal Ministry of Health/National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2013). Rivlin (1965) supports this view by stating that the quality of education, to a large extent depends on the quality of the teacher and that it is not likely that the students will get a superior education except when the teacher is superior. Poor quality teaching which indicates the deficiencies in the teachers teaching skills is one of the weaknesses in the academic performance of Nigeria students. Jegede (2001) opines that the central point for the successful implementation of any nation's educational development plan depends on the quantity as well as the quality of its teaching force.

Furthermore, students' academic success is greatly influenced by the type of school they attend as it sets the parameter of students' learning experience (Daniel and Felix, 2008). Okunloye

(2006) observes that public and private secondary schools differ significantly in the quantity and quality of teachers, facilities and equipment, fund, and so on. Daniel and Felix (2008) opine further that in developing countries, most private schools tend to have better chances than their public counterparts in funding and smaller sizes.

Statement of the Problem

The most commonly used method for teaching literature in English in schools is reading of the text in the class approach. Collie and Slater (1988) observe that the teacher takes the role of an importer of information in such a conventional classroom. In addition, such an approach lays emphasis on the text as a body of knowledge which is to be offered to the students in form of background to the study which is expected to be memorised and reproduced when the situation arises, usually at the period of examination (Carter & Walker, 1989). Hence, such an approach to the teaching of literature has done nothing more than little to develop the reading skills of learners in making meanings on their own. Moreover, Gurmankaur (2003), Siti (2003), Suriyakumar (2004) report that students were seen to be inactive and did not respond critically in the literature class. Payandey (2009) holds the view that the problem of teaching literary criticism stems from the prevailing undemocratic situation of the classroom which is against literary criticism by nature. Applebee (1993) reports that teachers may not be aware of the perspectives used to teach literary criticism; suggesting a deficit in their educational background.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study includes assessing:

- a. The various approaches employed by literary criticism lecturers in Kwara State colleges of education;
- b. The categories of the approaches literary criticism lecturers employ more often than others
- c. The least approach lecturers of literary criticism employed in their teaching.
- d. The influence of lecturers' qualification on the approaches to the teaching of literary criticism;
- e. The influence of school type on the approaches to teaching literary criticism.

Research Questions

The following research questions are developed to guide this study:

- a. What are the various approaches employed by the lecturers of literary criticism in teaching the subject in colleges of education?
- b. What are the most common approaches employed by literary criticism lecturers in the teaching of literary criticism?
- c. Which of the approaches is least employed by literary criticism lecturers?
- d. Is there any difference in the approaches employed by qualified and unqualified lecturers in the teaching of literary criticism?
- e. Is there a difference in the approaches to teaching literary criticism in Colleges of Education based on school type?

Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the approaches employed by qualified and unqualified lecturers of literary criticism.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in the approaches employed in the teaching of literary criticism in private and state Colleges of Education.

Methodology

A descriptive cross sectional study design was used in this study. A total of 55 respondents which are the private and state government colleges of education lecturers of English in Kwara State constituted the population and the target population since the colleges of education in the state are just a handful. All the lecturers of English in both the private and public colleges of education in the state were stratified to government and private and were then purposively sampled. Questionnaire was used to elicit data for the study and Item scales of measurement were the four point Likert scale of: Always (A)= 4points, Often (O) = 3 points, Seldom (S) = 2 points, Never (N) =1 point.

The researcher personally visited the selected schools and questionnaire was administered to the respondents. In the data analyses of the study, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were described using the percentage. The research question one, two and three were answered using mean rating. Other research questions (four and five) that have corresponding hypotheses were answered using inferential statistics. Hypotheses were tested using t-test analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: The various approaches employed by Literary Criticism teachers in teaching the subject in colleges of education

Table 1: Approaches Employed in the Teaching of Literary Criticism

S/N	Approaches
1	Personal Response
2	Language- Based
3	Paraphrastic
4	Information-Based
5	Moral Philosophical
6	Stylistic

Table 1 reveals the approaches that lecturers of Literary Criticism employed in teaching Literary Criticism as Personal Response approach, Language-Based approach, Paraphrastic approach, Information-Based approach, Moral Philosophical approach, and Stylistic approach. This implies that all these approaches are the various approaches employed by Literary Criticism lecturers in the teaching of Literary Criticism in Kwara State colleges of education.

Research question 2: The most common approaches employed in the teaching of Literary Criticism.

Table 2: Common Approaches Employed by Lecturers in the Teaching of Literary Criticism.

Approaches	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Response	9.91	1.79
Language-Based	16.78	2.51
Paraphrastic	13.40	1.98
Information-Based	13.98	1.82
Moral Philosophical	13.42	2.26
Stylistic	13.89	2.09

Table 2 reveals the mean and standard deviation of the approaches employed by Literary Criticism lecturers. Among the approaches employed by lecturers of Literary Criticism, Language-Based approach has the highest mean score of 16.78 and the standard deviation of 2.51 followed by Information-Based approach with a mean score of 13.98 and standard deviation of 1.82. Stylistic approach has the mean score of 13.89 and standard deviation of 2.09 while Moral Philosophical and Paraphrastic approaches have mean score of 13.42 and 13.40 with standard deviation of 2.26 and 1.98 respectively. Personal Response approach has the least mean score of 9.91 and 1.79 standard deviation. This implies that the most commonly employed approach in teaching literary criticism is the Language Based approach with the highest mean score of 16.78.

Research Question 3: The least approach employed by Literary Criticism lecturers. On the least approaches employed in the teaching of Literary Criticism. It could be seen on table 2 that among the approaches employed by Literary Criticism teachers, Personal Response approach is the least which has the mean score of 9.91 with standard deviation of 1.79.

Hypotheses Testing

H01: Approaches Employed by Qualified and Unqualified Lecturers of Literary Criticism

Table3: t-test Summary of the Difference in the Approaches Employed by Qualified and Unqualified Lecturers of Literary Criticism

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Qualified	30	82.33	9.034	53	.84	.006	H₀₂ Rejected
Unqualified	25	80.24	9.44				

P < 0.05

Table 3 shows the t-test calculated value is .84 with a P-value 0.006 which is significant at 0.05 alpha levels. Thus, the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant difference between approaches employed by qualified and unqualified teachers of Literary Criticism is rejected since p-value 0.006 is less than 0.05 alpha level ($0.006 < 0.05$). It implies that there is significant difference in the approaches employed by qualified and unqualified lecturers in the teaching of Literary Criticism in Kwara State. To ascertain where the significant difference lies, mean of the two groups were considered and was revealed from table 8 that qualified Literary Criticism lecturers have the mean score (82.33) with standard deviation (9.034), while unqualified Literary Criticism lecturers have the mean score (80.24) with standard deviation (9.44). Thus, this implies that qualified Literary Criticism lecturers employed approaches in teaching Literary Criticism than their unqualified counterparts.

H02: Difference in the approaches employed in the teaching of Literary Criticism in private and state colleges of education

Table 4: t-test Summary of the Difference in the Approaches Employed by Literary Criticism Lecturers in the Private and State Colleges of Education

School Type	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Private	16	83.2500	8.22598	53	.965	.339	H_{04} Accepted
Public	39	80.6154	9.55762				

P > 0.05

It is shown in table 4 above that calculated t-value is 0.965 with a P - value 0.339 at alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is therefore, accepted since the calculated P-value is greater than 0.05 alpha level ($0.339 > 0.05$). It implies that there is no significant difference in the approaches employed in the teaching of Literary Criticism in private and state colleges of education.

Discussion

Findings of this study identified the various approaches employed by Literary Criticism lecturers in teaching Literary Criticism in colleges of education. These approaches are Language Based, Paraphrastic, Stylistic, Personal Response, Information Based and Paraphrastic approach. If the various approaches are sincerely made exposed to the students, it will definitely help them interpret literary text and help them to delve in their way of thinking as Perry, (1990) opined. This study holds the view that the most common lecturer's approach in teaching Literary Criticism is Language Based approach as against Appleman (2000)'s reported that Reader-Response approach is mostly used in many classrooms because of its significance, this could be why Payandeh (2009) asserted that the implied meaning of a text could be explored and examined from other perspectives too.

And the least approach employed by Literary Criticism lecturers as discovered in this study is Personal Response. Students should be exposed to viewing literary text in various ways so that they can benefit maximally. Paulo and Donald (1987) asserted that as teachers, one should not offer only a single theory to students because such an approach to teaching is dogmatic and propagandistic.

Findings of this study show further that there is significant difference in the approaches employed by qualified and unqualified literary teachers in the teaching of Literary Criticism. This is in support of the view of the Federal Ministry of Education/National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2013 that the quality of teaching and the pupil learning is greatly affected because teachers without proper training use poor approach to teaching, as it is difficult to give what one does not have. So a teacher who is not properly equipped cannot impart relevant skills to learners.

The study outcomes also state that there is no significant difference between the approaches employed in teaching literary criticism in colleges based on school type. This is contrary to Daniel and Felix (2008)'s claim that student's academic success is greatly influenced by the type of school he/she attends as it sets the parameter of student's learning experience. They are also of the opinion that private schools have better chances than their counterparts. The result of this study is also contrary to Okunloye (2006) who observed that public and private secondary schools differ significantly in the quantity and quality of teachers, facilities and equipment, fund, and so on. By implication, private colleges of education are not better in terms of teaching and

learning processes based on lecturers' approaches employed to the teaching of literary criticism than public colleges of education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study establish that Literary Criticism lecturers of Colleges of Education have been employing various literary approaches to teach Literary Criticism. However, the most common approach they employ is Language-Based approach and the least they employ is Personal Response approach. It calls on lecturers to function more as facilitator to the students rather than being a judgemental authority, exposing the students to various approaches to the interpretation of literary text. This will enable the students to delve into the text on their own, the literary class becoming democratic and the students to seize from reproducing ready-made judgements. It is also concluded that the private Literary Criticism lecturers of colleges of education employ the same approaches with the state government lecturers therefore, one is not better than the other. Nevertheless, there are unqualified lecturers of Literary Criticism who might not be able to employ the literary approaches as a result of their deficit or inadequacy due to lack of educational background.

Recommendations

From the discussion and conclusion made for this study, it was therefore recommended that:

- a) Lecturers should employ various approaches to the teaching of Literary Criticism so that the students can benefit maximally.
- b) They are to update their knowledge in every aspect of English through adequate reading of journals, textbooks, internet, constant attendance of seminars, conferences and other academic gathering.
- c) They should employ relevant approaches that would stir up the interest of students and not to dominate in order to have a democratic class.
- d) The students of Literary Criticism should cooperate with their lecturers and be active in the class.
- e) The curriculum planners should recommend more local texts rather than imported texts as this would help the students to be more practical in the process of learning.
- f) Literature-in-English should be promoted at the secondary school education and included in the syllabus at the elementary levels as these serve as bedrock for Literary Criticism at the higher levels.
- g) The text book writers should put into consideration the developed English curriculum before writing their texts and also consider the level of learners they are writing books for.
- h) Text books should be restructured to reflect learners' background for this would enhance their critical thinking.
- i) Lecturers of English without educational background; who possessed degrees without PGDE should register for educational professional courses in order to be qualified.

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