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Module: Written Comprehension
and Expression (Tutorial)
Level: third year (all groups)

The literary response (Reading report)

A literary response is defined as a kind of reading report that is oriented towards framing a structured reaction to a literary piece of writing. Actually, teachers are obliged, in foreign language classes, to confess the need to consider reference to literature in the form of significant reading that might play a crucial role in advancing literacy.

While compiling a reading report, it is unavoidable to make reference to the reader's personal as well as sociocultural background. Without doubt the personal and social record that the reader has accumulated throughout his life will have a weight on his reconstruction of the literary text content. "Readers experiences and perceptions, which are rooted in their culture, interact with the text, which has social and cultural origins itself. When the culture of the text is similar to the culture of the reader, the reader is apt to have a more involving and engaging reading experience" (Roscoe & Al-Mahrooqi, 2012:25). The origin of the idea that the reader is apt to tissue the story line and to construe meaning is traced back to the ideas of John Dewey and his calls for the need to engage the learners in doing things by themselves; a theory which is compatible with the current competency-based approaches applied worldwide.

Dewey's assumptions lay emphasis on the total potential transactions between readers and texts, readers and the material at hand. This standpoint relies on the readers' amount of a priori knowledge, the active role of readers and the type of collaborative interaction that is created between the reader and the text.

In connection with Dewey's enthusiastic explanation, Rosenblatt's theory comes to complement the gap ushering to the primal role the reader's response might play in responding to the literary text. Actually, a reading report that is founded on the reader's sense of aesthetic familiarity works towards enhancing the reader's higher order thinking skills necessary both for professional as well as personal development.

Re-assembling meaning out of a piece of writing requires filtering and considering the readers' expectations about the story characters. Yet, in some cases when the characters'

behaviour does not coincide with the sociocultural contour of the reader it might create some difficulties to cope with the scene and consequently to provide the convenient reaction. A response can also be stimulated by a resistance to the sociocultural features of the story plot. Hence, the reader can create his own version with reference to his own.

According to Kramsch (1993), one way of facilitating the coping with the text is by encouraging students (as readers) to adopt a third sphere from which to generate a new edition of the text. This middling stance is a place where both cultures meet and communicate in harmony. Through reading various literary genres, EFL students enter into a process of learning that is mediated by cultural means. Responding and reporting about a text is the fruit of knowing about the different sociocultural practices, including the readers' ones, plus taking part in interpretative groups that practise using acquired experience in shaping their identities.

In line with , reporting about a literary text reading includes the following notes:

- Defining and framing one's character.
- Classifying and categorising the other objectively.
- Weaving connections with the other.
- Taking profit from others' beliefs and actions.
- Reflecting one's sociocultural systems and institutions.
- Reflecting loyalty to certain basic pillars.
- Adapting oneself to the difference.
- Connecting to rituals and considering them from a middling stance.
- Communicating one's knowledge with others and profiting from others' knowledge in return.

The above are guideline that serve as a path map to understand characters' comportments and consequently to cope with an intercultural dialogue necessary to proffer a literary report.

Within the current competency-based approaches applied worldwide, students are welcome to participate in the construction of the course including their perspectives of the literary text they read. A literary reading report shepherds the reader to comment upon what the manuscript offers in terms of various types of information. This can be historical, social, cultural, anthropological...etc. The report must be constructed in such a way as to picture the impression of a detailed reading of the text, the reader might even state the page number of an event that left an imprint in his mind. It is possible as well for the reader to refer to his own opinions about a given extract not to the extent of judging but just trying an evaluation. The report is compiled in the form of an essay that would exhibit what the reader adopts or so far

learns from the book or the literary extract; saying so the response compiled that way articulates the reader's personal reaction to what he is reading.

On the other hand, the literary response or the literary report is not an impressionistic re-vomiting of the work. Many students might confuse a mere summary with a structured response. A detailed literary report encompasses formulating one's reaction in the form of a response.

A literary report in the form of response does not resemble a research paper for when looking for backing up what he is writing, the reader might refer to other resources around the same topic. The reader can notably refer to what he has already read in his mother tongue or in any other language that relates to the theme of the literary extract. Most importantly, a well framed reading report does not call for the correctness or otherwise inaccuracy of interpretation. It is simply an opportunity for the reader to work on his higher order thinking skills and develop his sense of critical evaluation while telling what the literary extract means to him.

To realize a good reading report, the reader can refer to reading logs to get off the ground of his reading comprehension skills. While responding to the literary text (novel, short story, novella, play, or any other work of art), the reader is manifestly displacing himself to shift beyond the suggestive linguistic code used in the text and to embrace the depictive sphere of language (Delarriva & Basabe, 2016).

While responding to the work, the reader can rely continually on organizing his ideas and impressions about the text in such a way as to make manifest his creative and pensive intellectual capacities. In this regard, he assumes a third place sphere from which to observe both cultures (the native and the foreign language one) not to the extent of judging but just linking and relating without comparing. Hence, the interpretation of a specific event in the text becomes not related to the native language culture but can have explanations stemmed from different sources not obligatorily the foreign language sociocultural artefacts. The resulted meaning is self-built consequently multiple versions of the same work are potentially generated.

In the EFL context, exposure to literature is necessary for students to shift their thinking from the mastery of mere grammatical knowledge to the intercultural appreciation of the FL material. One theory that can be exploited in the formulation of a reading report is Rosenblatt's reader response theory. Reading a text and responding to its content becomes rather a process of exploring the possible editions of the same text. The reading response should be based on the principle that the reading is first and foremost a transactional act

where the reader holds a prestigious position with the load of his personal experience, history, sociocultural background and previous readings. In the course of writing one's report, students are meant to interpret the text considering it as a rumination of the reader together with what is being read. This dynamism of reading facilitates for readers acting in response to the extract considering one's feelings, emotions, and thoughts.

Homework: Consider a reading report based on the above notes for Gayle Forman's "if I stay". With reference to the method that has been used in class for the previous readings.

N.B: Selections of the best responses are going to be discussed in class with a special consideration of the evaluative measures and writing style that is applied by students. A mark is allocated for the reading report to be checked after vacation.

The reading report is an obligation and not a choice.

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