USE OF POETRY FOR EFL PURPOSES

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ÖZET

Edebiyat öğretiminde çeşitli yollar vardır fakat ihmal edilen hep şiir olmuştur. Bu makalede şiir öğretimi ve öğrencilerin şiiri sevmesinin sağlanması hedef alınmıştır. Farklı teknikler basitten daha zora gidecek şekilde ele alınmış ve uygulaması yapılmıştır.

ABSTRACT

There are a lot of ways to teach literature.But one genre which is considered to be a step-child is poetry. Here in this paper the focus is on the approaches to teach poetry and to make students enjoy the poetry analysis. Different techniques are employed to show how to go from the simple to themore complex in the analysis of poems.

Key words: poetry, deconstruction, approach, intertextual comparison.

Anahtar Kelimeler. Şiir, yapı çözücülük, yaklaşım, pasajlar arası karşılaştırma.

When we teach literature , we have a tendency prioritise novel, short story, and play but we exclude poetry, that is why poetry has turned to be a step child in the hands of the language and literature teachers. This paper is aimed to give some insight into how to teach poetry.

Before starting how to teach poetry, let me tell you why I like poetry. Let me count the ways: poetry can be a rewarding and joyful experience. Poetry appeals to the near universal fondness children have for rhyme and rhythm. It nurtures love and appreciation for the sound and power of language. Poetry can help us see differently, understand ourselves and others, and validate our human experience. It is a genre especially suited to the struggling or unmotivated readers. Poetry easily finds a home in all areas of the curriculum , enhances thinking skills, and promotes personal connections to the content area subjects.

The playfulness or poignancy of words, the ability of language to hold us almost captive in its intensity, beauty, or genius is particularly apparent in poetry. Its sparely carefully chosen language compels us to pause and to wonder. One of the poet's skills is to help us see things in new ways. Poetry helps broaden our experiences with new concepts and provides fresh outlooks on the ordinary things that surround them. Teachers can help students see the fundamental truth that poetry like all art, is grounded in the everydayness of experience. This everydayness where we live out our lives in families, in neighbourhood, and within ourselves, is the very place where we need a voice to claim and name the events we live through no matter how awesome or ordinary they are.

Because it speaks so often of our common human condition and experiences, poetry is a bridge between ourselves and the poet and between ourselves and the others. It can validate our feelings and help us make sense of the events of our lives.

Nearly fifty years ago when Louis Ginsberg (Jerome Smiley:1998:140) was asked why it was important to teach poetry, he maintained that in our modern times of tension and anxiety when material values seem most important, we tend to lose sight of higher values which make life all the more worth living. The gap between our technological and material advancement and our sociological lag is so yawning that we need better, higher goals. In other words we have magnificent rich means (machines, gadgets, electronic devices) but our ends are shabby. In our democratic civilisation the dignity of man , the worth of the individual, the inner adjustment and contentment- all these are ignored by the material, mechanical and financial world. But poetry reveals to us the deep springs of human action, poetry makes vivid images, and brings home to us higher values which the spirit of man yearns for. In poetry, we find these spiritual values rescued, vivified and made beautifully enduring and vitally significant. A material life without the spiritual life makes one a clod. Poetry thus lifts man to a higher plane and to higher and happier goals.

All these things are important first for teachers to believe in poetry . Once they have been convinced that poetry really helps and that they feel certain of themselves, they are ready to teach. The

main problem which alienates teachers, Micheal Benton contends (1998:112) is that they feel most uncertain of their knowledge, most comfortable about their methods and most guilty about both. In mediating poetry to students, teachers need, as a minimum, to be active users of language themselves as well as having attitudes sympathetic to students and poetry. Because of this uncertainty, teachers are more likely to misjudge the concerns of their pupils, for example by insisting upon analysis rather than response. A group of students have ranked the most important criteria in a piece of poetry, they chose the emotional impact of the work and the poet's. On the other hand teachers have rated form, style, symbols and metaphors dealing with human qualities. Teachers may wish to explore forms and meanings but the cognitive process will not advance happily unless there is also affective response. Barrie Wade (1990:75) claims that teachers lack confidence and are uneasy as to how to manage poetry. Many are wary because there seems to be no right answers and because feelings are likely to be exposed. Poetry is a problem area in school, mainly because teachers either dislike it or feel ill at ease with it. One third has even said that reading poetry, writing poetry and teaching poetry are not important in their teaching.

After teachers grasp the importance of poems, they can feel ready to teach them. Some times it is really relaxing and motivating to set the scene by bringing historical materials and telling an anecdote or a story which shows some close affinities with the poem. Works o fart are not the product of a single person, but are in fact created by an interactive process involving the author, the cultural context, the publisher, the editor, and the reader creating " a laced network of linguistic and biographical codes". The idea behind is to give students access to as much of this network, to juxtapose text and context. Then, it is best to start analysing poetry by reminding students that a poem is a speech. So we need to ask ourselves these questions: who is the speaker?, why is he speaking out? what is the speaker saying, thinking and feeling about the subject? At the beginning, denotative meanings are discussed then the focus can be given on the connotative meanings. In responding the above questions we discuss the speaker's personality, his situation, his relationship to the audience (intimate, distant, casual, and formal) and his relation to his subject (past or present, close or distant . . .)

A poem is an artful weave of words since the choice of words is so crucial. Furthermore, a poem is a musical work of art too. The form of the poem, rhythm, meter, line length and line breaks, . . . point to specific details or moments in the poem and help clarifying the poem better. It is important that students be able to recognise images, rhythm, and meter, but the focus should not be on them at the first stages. **An image** is language that speaks to our senses, recording a sensuous experience. Poetry abounds in visual images directed to the sense of sight like "white birds" or tactile images such as "cut the heat", the images of smell such as " the acric odour of maple" and auditory images such as " the sweep of easy wind". **Meter** is a count of syllables in the lines. Meter is numbers or counting whereas rhythm is an approximate recurrence or repetition in the pacing. Rhythm is fast or slow, staccoto or flowing. Some types of feet are iambic (unstressed + stressed : despair), trochaic (stressed syllable +unstressed syllable: happy) , dactylic (stressed +unstressed + unstressed: changeable) , anapestia (unstressed + unstressed + stressed: in the house). In each line the number of the stressed syllables determines the length of line such as monometer : one foot, dimeter: two feet, trimeter: three feet, tetrameter: four feet, pentameter: five feet, hexameter: six feet.

The first thing to let students know is that poetry, in common with all art, necessarily challenges the adequacy of the established order. But this is not to replace it with a competing social orthodoxy, for with poetry there is no fixity. Rather it reveals that there is a reality which conventions cannot accomodate. Reading requires the adoption of the different ways of reading and thinking for its realisation. Some critics including Richard Andrews (1991:34) and Jackson (1986:25)) contend that the form should be given importance in teaching poetry. Concentration should be on the technique and this is the way a good poetry reveals itself. Students should know how to read the poetry and as writers they need the benefit of clear and frank appraisal, an expectation that they will rework ideas in sections of their writing and plenty of time and encouragement to do so. However, in this paper, both form and content are focused. Represented meaning is unstable, elusive of its nature, held in precarious prose within the patterns of verse. All poems contain within their design the potential for multiple significance. It is because they express realities which cannot be brought within the bounds of social convention that they are relevant.

Representation of the poem depends upon the pattern. If the patterns change, the representation changes. The grammatical categories of tense and aspect are realigned to provoke the reading of poetry as representation. The principle of realignment or reassembly of linguistic encodings in poetry operates across all levels.

Apart from the form and the tenor of poetry , there is an intertextual interpretation as well. But not everybody can do it. Some people may be attuned to hear the echoes of some poems and how their meaning can be apprehended by others who are not attuned. Widdowson (1992:55) holds that people with different linguistic and literary experience will read different meanings into a text. It is true that the wider the range of our experience of contextual uses of language and of literary texts is, the more scope there will be for reverberant associations, but this does not validate one response and invalidate another. There can be no definitive interpretation. The point of poetry should not impose authority in the name of critical expertise. This is not to say that literary criticism has nothing to offer, but its contribution has to do not with the provision of interpretations but with the process of interpreting. The essential point about poetry is that no matter how unbounded and elusive the meanings are that it relaxes, these do not randomly disperse but are somehow contained and made coherent within its patterns of language.

Techniques

Just after a warm-up and introduction of the background , the selected poem is given to the students.
1. *Composing poetic text:* students are asked to compose the poem. This activity can be made less demanding by providing parts of poem as a frame within which the remaining lines are to be assembled. It can be made more demanding by including distractors, lines which do not belong to the poem. So we need to look at what clues to composition there might be in other dependencies. The point is not to suppress alternative readings and versions , but to encourage students to support them with reference to the text and subject them to discussion so that consensus is taken as far as it will go. Students may be asked which lines do not go well with the poem. Below are the first, second , and third stanzas written by Cecilia Rossi (Martin Bates :1999:42) and the last stanza by Riita Venola (Martin Bates: 1999:16).

May Poem
May buried me in silence
With its early dusks and first frosts
Today it begins to stir, questions-

If the River's breeze spoke
Would I not hear it?

When I was a child
One language sufficed
Like bread

Words sound good, taste good,
Look good, feel good.
Words are exciting and surprising.

2. *Completing poetic text:* Students are asked to fill in the blanks with what they judge to be the appropriate word: teachers leave out whole lines or just the occasional word..In the following poem students can be asked to fill in the lines.

I said :

I told you:

I promised :

What more do you want?

Or another version can be supplied:

I said:

     I was ......

I told you :

     I'd pay it........

I promised:

     Never to ....

What more do you want?

3. *Intertextual comparison:* One way of making students aware of the way meanings are exclusively yet elusively represented through the particular patterns of language in poetry, while necessarily at the same time developing their sensitivity to the subtleties of language, in general, is to present them with an alternative text in parallel. To discuss the issues of convergence and divergence, another poem, or the derived version or the similar one with different range of words can be given to students, which allows for a wider range of interpretation. Furthermore, we can transpose the lines and make relatively minor adjustment to the syntax. In general, the smaller the differences between the original and its derivation, the more demands are made on the students' critical perception to discover their significance.

4. *Comparison with prose:* Comparisons can also be made between passages of prose and poems which represent the same or the similar propositional content. Even the prose can be taken from the encyclopedias. This intertextual comparison can help to bring home to students the differences in general between conventional and poetic modes of meaning:

5. *Deriving poems from prose sources:* Such derivation can help students to appreciate the distinctive nature of poetry and the kind of reading that it calls for in the interpretation of its significance. We can set different conditions on composition and these will be constraints for some students , which will make the task more problematic and guidance for others, which will make the task easier. Teachers could require regularity of pattern in metrical rhythm and rhyme scheme or alternatively free verse. We could provide framework: the outline pattern of the verse form with opening lines are provided or with the rhyming words. After students struggle , the original poem is presented or the students's versions are studied.

Students could be asked to write their own version after reading the following excerpt. Then the original poem could be given.

Mirage:

The journey was tedious and I was looking listlessly out of the bus window. Time went by, we passed the school, the sea, the beaches. Then we arrived in a town, grey and grimy. We went through the forests of oak, pine, plane , birch and yew trees. And then at the bus station there he was: a radiant stranger standing and waiting . He was not aware of me , he was there with greenish blue eyes looking full of life and ready to explore the unknown. He did not see me looking at him. I thought to myself:" Do I dare to go and talk to him?". I was tongue-tied and could not move. The wheels moved and the moment was gone. If only I had gotten off the bus. If only I had talked to him.

These activities of textual recasting and comparison are intended to sharpen student perception of the ways. Language can be used to express different aspects of reality. Two awareness that students should take into account generally emerge from these activities. Firstly, there is the awareness that different formulations of propositional content express different realities, even the slightest of changes has potential significance for interpretation..

Secondly, different realities that poetry represents are both unchanging and fugitive. They are fugitive since each person can find something related to himself. They are unchanging as well, held in the order established by the patterning of language.

6. *Different versions.* A prose text, the original poem and the derived version altogether can be given and students are asked which one is the genuine. The original should be identified at the end.

OZYMANDIAS:

Text 1.
A traveller from an antique land once told me that in the desert there stand two vast legs of stone. There is no body, but near those legs, half buried in the sand there is a shattered face of stone, with a frown and wrinkled lip, a kind of cold, commanding sneer. And these words appear on the pedestal: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings. Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair. " Nothing remains beside the ruin. Boundless and bare, round the decay of that colossal wreck, the lonely level sands stretch far away into the distance. Nothing is left of Ozymandias and his works but this ruin. This might make us despair, but for another reason, perhaps the, than the one he himself had in mind.

Then the other forms are given , the following poems are taken from Widdowson (1992:208-209):
Text 2.
I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said:: two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert......Near then on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Text 3
Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert, in the sand
Half sunk, a shattered face with frown
And wrinkled lip of cold command.

And on the stone these words appear:
"Ozymandias, king of kings.
Look on my works and then despair!"
Nothing remains but ruined things.

Around the wreck that 's lying there
Nothing remains. Round the decay
Of ruin, lonely, boundless, bare
The level sands stretch far away.

7. Through drama

Creating drama with poetry is an exciting language experience. The technique employs a multi-sensory approach to language involving learners physically, emotionally, and cognitively . The use of poetry as drama enables students to explore the linguistic and conceptual aspects of the written text without concentrating on the mechanics of language. Students are able to develop a sense awareness of self in the mainstream culture through the dramatic interpretations of the poems. Internalising works better when learners are placed in situations that seem real. They experiment with nonverbal communicative aspects of language as well as verbal aspects while interpreting the poems.

Some poems are mini dramas, often written in dialogue form and are suitable for dramatisation because they are short and usually have one simple but strong emotional theme. "Poems which express strong emotions, attitudes, feelings , opinions a or ideas are usually more productive than those which are

gentle, descriptive or neutral. Students become engaged in free flowing extemporaneous conversations as they interact with one another prior to the dramatisations. The students compare and contrast cultural behaviours and attitudes, analyse and explore the linguistic and conceptual differences between the written and spoken word and interact cooperatively to orchestrate the dramatisations and improvisations.

It is the responsibility of the teacher to guide the poetry teaching process by:
--- modeling pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm and oral expression.
---facilitating comprehension of vocabulary, idioms, cultural aspects and plot.
---stimulating interest and conversation and interacting with students.
---establishing an acting workshop experience.
---creating a student participatory process.

The teacher provides students with the background to the poem and introduces difficult or unusual vocabulary. The teacher reads the poem aloud to the students. The class discusses it together and then students may read the poem .Then they dramatise the poem by selecting character roles and discussing scenery, props, lightning and costumes. They rehearse the dramatisation of the poem and do an improvisation based on the poem.

Poetry rich in dialogue provides students with a dramatic script. Drama places learners in situations where they reflect their own affective insights of the poem.

8. Through Deconstruction: Deconstruction is reading a text in such a way to show that there are multiple meaningful responses to the text. It encourages plural responses, since it contends that language is slippery and sliding and there is no univocal and authoritative reading of the text. It is against interpretive closure. The goal of the is reading is to open up the text through some strategies:
Self-referentiality
Reading from a different position
Binary opposition
Figurative language
Intertextuality

Self-referentiality requires such questions :
how often do the readers identify the speaker in the text?
Does "I " refer to the author, the speaker, another character, or the reader?
What is the relationship between the world of the text and the empirical world?
In what ways is the text like a mirror or the photographer?
Can you trust the objectivity of the text?

Reading from different positions has a series of questions too.
What do events look like from their perspectives?
What is the responsibility of the speaker?
What positions are available for the readers?
What is the connection between truth and fiction?
How reliable is the narrator?
How might the text be narrated by the others?

Binary positions such as light/dark, love/hate, good/evil, presence/ absence, strength / weakness .... involve a value-laden hierarchy with one element given priority to the other.
If the readers think for a minute and stop seeing everything from the dominant idea and to see the binary opposition, different meanings can emerge.

Figurative language means the text has similes, metaphors, and some other tropes. Deconstruction reverses this approach and questions and juxtaposes the literal and figurative language. Moreover, deconstruction is a systematic attempt to reveal the negativity of a text : its ambiguities, aporias and polysemies. Peter Zima (1999:146) contends that deconstructionalism is thought to draw on that the meaning of word is infinite application and indefinite referral of the signifier, :foregrounding certain semantic and phonetic associations or anagrams on indeterminacy is a good way to deconstruct a text .This view actually is derived from Nietzsche's figure of ambivalence (1980:440) which makes the literary even the philosophical text appear as irreducibly polysemic and plurivocal. In fact this approach

requires volumes but in poetry it is possible to use it superficially and to focus on the multiple meanings of the text.

Intertextuality assumes that each text is related to the other, it suggests the ways how a text overlaps with the other texts. Every text bears traces of other texts: citations, references, structural codes, allusions, phrases, images, generic conventions and themes.

9. Personalization

Activities involving personalization can be used with any poem, short story, novel or play. The key is to provide a forum for the students to react to a work from their own unique perspective and to provide them with the opportunity to engage in in-depth and thought-provoking dialogue with their peers and teachers..

The personalization is predicated on the idea that each reader comes to a piece of literature with a rich background of worldly experience and a broad knowledge base in different subjects. This goes counter to those who perceive literary works as having a single "correct" meaning or that the only way to understand a literary work is by studying its symbolic structure, motifs and language.

For a reader to get the most part of literature, he must bring personal insights, acknowledge base, and past experiences. Proponents contend that the reading experience is more powerful and revelatory when it involves discussions and debates with others. The text's meaning is considered to reside in the "transaction" between the reader and the text, not from the text alone.

---To begin the activity, the teacher first projects the poem .
---In a letter students are asked to write what they like or dislike about the poem, or probe questions about the poet or poem.
---Students are grouped, each group reads the letters and discusses them.
---A member of each group jots down the most important points
---Concomitantly through discussion, students can come to an understanding of various aspects of the poem.
---Students should be provided with the opportunities to identify a poem's relevance to their lives. Encouraging the student to generate his or her own questions about the text.
---English courses can be organised around particular kinds of inquiry instead of a literary genre. Problem solving and reflection techniques should be applied. First students recall their own experiences, describe it and compare and contrast the sentences and the poet's thought with theirs.

To sum up, the activities proposed in this paper are aimed to demystify poetry, to encourage students to analyse poems, read their own interpretation in to them, to learn by discovery and to recognise the poetic form. Different perspectives on poetry show the expressive possibilities of language and it is possible to present the students with the fact that things might mean beyond the limits of explanation. Whether we intend or not , we read words, sentences and lines and we look for patterns and develop interpretive hypotheses simultaneously. We select senses, try to disambiguate words, decide what particular words are chosen and what they refer to, how the lines differ from the prose version, how the poet uses syntax to achieve his aim and try to understand who is speaking, when and where in the poem. Such aspects of reading stated above suggest a model different from simply comprehending the poem. While we are making sense of various aspects of a language such as sounds, images , rhythm, and literary devices, we continuously construct possible models of the text's social and historical context, on the basis of our own views of the world. There are certainly so many ways and strategies that can be used in analysing poems such as stylistics, structuralism, formalism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, etc but the ones listed in this article are aimed at helping students not be scared of poetry, enabling them to express their opinions through self-discovery, and leading them to see how poetry is different from the other genres.

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