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Haileleul Zeleke
The Pedagogic Relevance of Stylistic Practices in Teaching Ethiopian Poetry in English in a Tertiary Context

Abstract

The major purpose of this research has been to find out the pedagogic relevance of stylistic practices in teaching Ethiopian poetry in English in a tertiary context. The study has been pursued with the conviction that Ethiopian literature in English can be brought to the level of tertiary scholarship and advanced learning in the context where canonical literature dominates research and higher learning. Ethiopian students study either American or British canonical literature. Reversing the trend, students were taught the poetic texts of aboriginal writers in Adama University for the first time. Ethiopian writers chosen for this research work include: Tsegaye Gebremedhin, Be’alu Girma, Solomon Deressa, Tekola Hagos, Fekade Azeze, Lulit Kebede and Wossen Mulatu. The works of these writers were taught with the objective of developing the linguistic, functional, creative and pragmatic competencies of EFL students.

The research was carried out on the basis of an experimental research design. A total of 190 students (63.3%) were selected from the population of 300 students in various programs of the Department of English and Other Languages at Adama University through a systematic sampling procedure. These students were again classified into experimental groups (95) and control groups (95) following systematic sampling method. The students in the experimental group took five modules through five stylistics methods. Active learning methods were also integrated into the stylistic framework so that the students could vigorously dominate the learning and teaching process. The stylistic modules constructed for the group include: formalist stylistics, functionalist stylistics, cognitive stylistics, pragmatic stylistics and feminist stylistics. However, the students in the comparison group took the same content with a traditional teaching method. Notes and lectures on themes, techniques, figures of speech and literary criticism were given. The teacher (the researcher himself) often dominated the teaching and learning process.
Each group was given similar five pre and five post-tests designed specifically for this research purpose. Before the classroom experiment was carried out, a pilot study was conducted in seven universities which included: Mekele University, Gondar University, Bahir Dar University, Jimma University, Hawassa University, Haremaya University and Arba Minch University. The selection of the poems and the revision of the tests was finalized after the pilot study was completed in these universities. Lecturers of literature in these universities critically reviewed the tests.

A summary of the total mean gain score (out of 100%) shows an interesting result. The experimental mean pre-test score which is 55.06 is a little higher than the control mean score of 53.09. The existence of mean difference of 1.96842 is not statistically significant. Similarly, the t-test shows that the p-value of all stylistic pre-tests is 0.064 which is greater than 0.05. This result is not statistically significant. On the other hand, the experimental mean post test score is 76.43, which is higher than the control mean score of 56.20. The t-test result shows that the existence of mean difference of 20.23158 with the p-value of 0.000 and 188 degree of freedom at significance level of 0.05 is statistically significant. Therefore, stylistic method of teaching poetry does contribute to the development of the over all communicative competencies of EEL learners of poetry. All in all, all the post tests proved that stylistic practices are pedagogically relevant in teaching Ethiopian poetry in English in tertiary contexts. Students in the experimental group developed their linguistic, functional, cognitive and pragmatic competencies much faster and better than the control group due to the new stylistic method of teaching. They also used more elaborate and appropriate gender free language expressions than the control group of students did. For them, language is highly context dependent. As the exit performance of these students shows, Ethiopian poetry is also relevant in developing the linguistic, functional, pragmatic and critical competence of EFL learners. Pedagogical stylistics opens doors in EFL contexts.
Key Words:

Linguistic competence, functional competence, creative skill, pragmatic competence, gender free language use, pedagogical stylistics, ELT, EFL and aboriginal literature in English.

N.B:

Following the instruction from the Department of English at Panjab University, the entire thesis follows MLA style (with some adjustments).