



APPROACHES TO TEACHING FICTION TO ADVANCED EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study on literary analysis explores the demands of a successful teaching of fiction particularly the literary genre The Novel in an EFL environment. The study stemmed from the problematic challenges observed from many teachers of English while teaching texts in Upper secondary schools in Burundi. A lot of teachers do not have in mind the pedagogical protocol that should indicate the different stages to follow while teaching a text. Lessons are prepared with much entanglement where parts are blurred; important elements that drive the meaning of a text are dropped out and the teacher only conducts the analysis of a text on less engaging points that impart superficial knowledge to the learners. In many cases, teachers do not introduce nor conclude such particular lessons due to a lack of adequate expertise in literary analysis. All that they do—they simply teach. Lessons are conducted haphazardly without a clearly defined trajectory that shall bring them to explore successfully the text message. Such teaching results in a lacunar transmission of knowledge and learners become victims. Being a qualitative exploration in all its facets, this study consisted in a methodical reflection on the tools that shall constitute an architectural structure of a lesson of literary analysis of a text. In all, the study generates a set of methods and techniques that a teacher shall mobilise while teaching to achieve a successful textual analysis.

Keywords: textual/literary analysis, narrative fiction, the Novel, literary elements, author, teacher

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Introduction

Context and Justification of the Study

This study is a qualitative reflection on the methods and principles that can be applied to support a teacher of literature to conduct successfully a lesson of textual analysis in fiction. The study was basically prompted by the weak performances observed from teachers and teacher-trainees in upper secondary schools of Burundi while teaching reading comprehension lessons. In addition, a careful examination of the available teachers' guides of English curricula in Burundi reveals a presence of incomplete and inappropriate details that have been included to guide reading comprehension lessons which are part and parcel of literary analysis. Most teachers follow verbatim those details while teaching; they end up with ineffective output that leaves incomplete learning to the learners. Other teachers observe almost no rule to guide lessons either in the preparation phase or in teaching. Such incomplete teaching has negative impact on learners to achieve efficient communicative language competences in the future.

Upon these inappropriate pedagogical proceedings observed, an idea was born to devise a teaching apparatus as a pedagogical instrument to assist teachers in the lessons of textual analysis. The reflections on the appropriate critical teaching techniques of a text did not solely limit their action on the teaching of a text at secondary school; these reflections rather went beyond locally educational boundaries to capture the comprehensive world of literary criticism with the objective to originate effective teaching techniques that are not designed to govern a particular cycle of learning but rather any given educational stage since the teaching of a language goes worldwide.

Research Problem

The teaching of fiction rises problematic at different levels of learning particularly when it comes to teach literature through an exploration of the Novel. Confusion, imprecision and doubt dominate the teacher's mind to identify an adequate methodology to follow. In many situations, teachers impart incomplete knowledge in learners who will professionally grow with inadequate communicative competences. In the long run, this inappropriate teaching jeopardizes the achievement of significant language

competences particularly in speaking and writing. Upon an identification of lacunae observed from teachers of secondary school in the teaching of fiction, this paper addresses the methodological inconsistencies experienced by teachers of English during lessons of textual analysis.

Research Objective

This study aimed at producing a teaching guide that shall empower EFL teachers to prepare efficiently and conduct successfully comprehension lessons based on textual analysis.

Research Question

How can the teaching of fiction be efficiently conducted in order to develop significantly the learners' communicative competences in English within an EFL environment?

Research Assumption

This study evolved on the premise that inadequate teaching methods and techniques lead to incomplete learning. The successful teaching of fiction contributes to success in language learning to achieve effective communicative competences in speaking and writing.

Research Methodology

From the various observations of inappropriate teaching of texts found in the visited schools, the writing of this paper was based solely on the free reflections that should be followed by a teacher to teach successfully a text. These reflections were guided by the essence and role of fiction in human education through constructive thoughts and the aims of literary criticism to generate meaning.

Fiction and Literary Analysis

The Role of the Novel in the Student's Learning Process

The Novel is *par excellence* the most important literary genre of fiction that exposes meticulously a story in efficiently developed stages with incidents that are generally built in a particular style to capture the interest of the audience. The Novel is the longest and most elaborate sort of all the literary and artistic genres of fiction. Authors write fiction generally to represent man's joys or sorrow, to celebrate life, to portray human wickedness, disappointments or frustrations, to represent humans' good and evil nature and often to paint the struggle to overcome life challenges. Readers of the Novel seek to understand the world around them, to know and learn how

to relate with the daily tests and trials that are hardening living conditions. Reading empowers the thinking capacity of the reader. It develops vocabulary and other language aptitudes to communicate fluently. Hence, the teaching of fiction plays a paramount importance in the development of learners' intellectual growth both culturally and linguistically.

The Literary Elements in Textual Analysis

Also known as *elements of fiction*, literary elements constitute the foundation upon which textual analysis rests. Literary elements in fictional and nonfictional narratives are different from narrative techniques which are stylistic devices used in a story to create a desired effect. Literary elements are the pillars that support the whole structure of a narrative. The first step for a teacher is to indicate these literary elements to learners and explain the functions they play in the construction of a story or a text under study. Going deeply into a fictional narrative, Bell (2004) outlines a number of literary elements of which the most salient are:

- Plot
- Setting
- Characterization
- Conflict
- Themes
- Narrative point of view

The plot

What is a plot?

A plot is a succession of incidents in a story where characters have to interact in communion or in opposition experiencing challenging situations that force them to take necessary action to survive or to rescue someone or something in danger. There must be a main character identified as *protagonist* against whom the whole story evolves. Putting very simply, a plot is the organization of a chain of events into a narrative that creates a meaningful story with a particular message to transfer to the targeted group of individuals identified in literature under the concept of *society* or *community*. In fiction, plot is considered the core and the foundation of a narrative; it is the heart of a story. It justifies the *raison d'être* of the author's

creation. When the plot content aches, there is no story. As a consequence, the narrative loses sense. The successful construction of a plot establishes basically *The What* and *The Why* a given novel, a play or a film was written. It also explains the reason for the writer to have engaged their time to pen the narrative.

Distinguishing a plot from a story in fiction

Students, whether of Secondary School or University, have a fuzzy understanding of story and plot. In many ways, they confuse the two concepts as synonyms; yet in reality they are different in form and in spirit. It is the duty of a teacher to clear the mist. E.M. Forster in his essay *Aspects of a Novel* (1998) highlights the dissimilarities that distinguish the two concepts:

We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then the queen died,' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief,' is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it. Or again: 'The queen died, no one knew why, until it was discovered that it was through grief of the death of her husband the king.' This is a plot with a mystery in it...' (p.27)

A story is just a free talk that does not necessarily oblige the speaker to justify why he took speech and said so—just as children do while playing or what adolescent peers do while walking in a street back home from school. However, a plot forces the speaker (character) to prove the reason why he spoke by indicating what the listener (audience) will benefit from his speech.

Consider the following illustrations:

-Paul went to the market today morning.

Such a statement cannot be regarded as a plot. It is a story—a form of news—that informs the listener what Paul did today without indicating the outcome of his journey.

However, in the sentence:

-Paul went to the market today morning and bought copybooks, pens and pencils that his children will use in September when the new School Year starts.

Such a sentence is a plot because it reflects the cause (origin) and the consequences (effect) of the reason why Paul went to the market.

Upon this illustration, a teacher has to indicate that a plot always demonstrates the reason why an action was instigated whereas in a story the speaker talks and the listener hears without a second insight he shall internalize for future development of the talk.

Plot Structure

In canonical fiction, whether it is a novel, a play, a film or a narrative poem, a plot basically has a logical construction that reflects the three main parts of a narrative: the beginning (introduction), the development (mid) and the end (denouement). Bell (2004) develops these three parts into five basic elements that are considered universal in canonical fiction. These are:

- Exposition
- Rising action
- Climax
- Falling action
- Resolution/denouement

Exposition

The *exposition* is the introduction of a plot. In a quick view, it highlights what the story will discuss and generally discloses the main characters' names, the vital locales as part of the setting and the story's mood and time that shall pervade in the narrative. The teacher has the role to tell learners that the Exposition is the novel's introduction in which the author introduces the main characters that will interact in the story to come; the setting and the initial conflict of the story are also presented in this section. The teacher here indicates learners that in some novels as it is the case for some plays and films, the Exposition is found in the prologue. Already, the reader will know *who is who*, *who does what* and *when* and *where* the narrative's world is occurring. Generally, the exposition covers the first three or four chapters of the narrative. This is because readers need to know in the fresh start of the story what the novel story shall be dealing with.

E.g. 1: Consider the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morison.

The first, second and third chapters that chronicle about Sethe and her daughter Denver's memories of their painful past at 124 Blue Stone Road in Cincinnati constitute the Exposition of the narrative. The flashbacks about the ghost of Beloved which has returned back in the family trace the origins of Sethe's anxiety in the early stages of the narrative. This enables the reader to understand from the onset what shall be the development of the story. At this stage, the reader comes to discover that Sethe is the protagonist in the story. Other characters like Denver, Beloved, Baby Suggs, Schoolteacher, Howard, Burglar...are presented to the attention of the audience. Important locales such as Sweet Home Plantations in Kentucky (the South); Ohio River; 124 Blue Stone Road in Cincinnati, Ohio (North) are introduced to the reader.

E.g. 2: Consider *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah

The early chapters of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* introduce the bleak, corrupt environment of post-independence Ghana and presents key characters like The Man, The Teacher, and Koomson, and provide insight into their struggles and relationships. This stage sets the tone for the novel, highlighting themes of decay, disillusionment, and moral struggle.

The exposition stage in the novel is characterized by:

- Vivid descriptions of filthy environments
- Introduction to The Man's daily struggles
- Glimpses into the corrupt societal structures
- Establishing the contrast between characters like The Man and The Teacher

This stage primes the reader for the exploration of themes and character journeys throughout the novel.

Rising Action

In fiction, the *rising action* is the largest part of a narrative that extends to many chapters; it covers all the events that bring the narrative to the climax. By doing so, the plot reveals the psychology of characters from what they perform and the events that generate the narrative's suspense. This is the biggest part of the story where most incidents are presented in an elaborate way. If in the Exposition, the conflict was not established, it will then be presented in the Rising action. Learners must know that *Rising action* is unquestionably the outstanding part of the narrative that puts in motion the whole machinery of the plot. Teachers have to insist on this point.

E.g. Consider *Beloved* again

After Chapter Four, the successive chapters until the revelation of Sethe's infanticide by Stamp Paid to Paul D constitute the Rising action of the plot in *Beloved*.

Climax

As the name indicates, the *climax* is the highest stage in the life of a story. It reflects the function and significant capacity that the protagonist or a main character must demonstrate to achieve his goals. The teacher has to indicate learners that any narrative without climax is a crippled fiction. The climax captures the readers' thirst and revitalizes them to ever read more just to discover further hidden developments of the story. It raises more hunger and thirst to appropriate the story. It increases greater emotions. It is actually the knot that readers were waiting. Unquestionably, the climax is the most important part of the narrative. It drives character(s) to take action of what they have to do either to survive a danger, to save something/someone in critical situation, to seize a crown or even to perish if the fate has decided so. The choice a character makes must have a significant impact on the moments to come; this shall affect the course of events in the remaining parts of the story. The teacher here tells learners that the climax comes to justify the *raison d'être* of the conflict (the problem) that has been set earlier. It is also the turning point of the rising action that has been going on across chapters to prepare the advent of such a stronger point.

E.g. Consider again the historical and horror novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison.

The climax occurs when Schoolteacher makes irruption in Sethe's home at 124 Blue Stone Road in Cincinnati, Ohio. By the time Sethe sees Schoolteacher, having psychologically been traumatized by the cruelty she endured in the South at the hand of her master Schoolteacher, she snatches all her children to a secluded room in the house and decides to kill them. *Beloved*, her baby of only two years, is already murdered before Sethe is forcibly arrested for the filicide. This event governs the whole structure of the narrative. The following developments (incidents) are connected to it in one way or another. It is the climax of the narrative's plot.

Upon this example by the teacher, learners will understand that the climax is a particular poignant point in the course of a story. It is not an elaborate part of the narrative like the rising action; it carries important weight to the study.

Falling Action

Literally, *to fall* means *to go down or lose power to act as it should be in real situation*. The *falling action* is any situation that occurs to bring a solution to the problem raised in the climax. It can extend to many chapters going up to ten for longer narratives of around 30 chapters and more. All the questions that have been raised in the narrative shall find answers in this section. Characters' social and moral transformation is also presented in this section. Importantly, the teacher has to mention that in Falling action, the writer establishes the *poetic justice*: good characters are rewarded while evil characters (villains) are punished to pay back the harm and the crimes they have inflicted on others. The reader shall feel that the story is moving toward the end; the results of the climax can be observed in this phase. The teacher must tell learners that a lot of changes in form of answers occur in this phase to prepare the end of the narrative. This is the reparation stage.

E.g. In *Beloved*, the phase of *Falling action* starts to appear from the time when the community of Cincinnati starts to console Sethe over the pain she has been enduring from the presence of the ghost Beloved in her house. Falling action also occurs since Cincinnati community stops the ostracization to which Sethe has been subjected due to the filicide she committed. The community joins Sethe and her daughter Denver for intensive prayers with the objective to exorcise the ghost of Beloved. They will keep praying until the ghost Beloved runs away from Sethe's home. This covers around the last five chapters of the narrative.

Resolution or Denouement

Denouement is the ending stage of a plot. It announces the finality and closure of a story. It is the final point where things are wrapped up; it establishes a new sense of life. In fiction, writers like to end plots with happy moments though it is not always the case. Hence, resolution can be amusing in some stories as it can be bitter, tragic and sad in other cases. The teacher must indicate that denouement appears after the conflict has been resolved to close the story unequivocally. Some writers like to establish denouement in epilogues.

E.g. In the ending pages of *Beloved*, the ghost Beloved runs away from Sethe's home forever and ever; it disappears in the wood; peace and tranquility now return in the house. As the ghost has gone for all, Sethe and Paul D now start to think about how they should marry though time and life opportunities have overtaken them.

The setting

In fiction, the concept *setting* refers to the time and place of the story. It translates the *when and where* the story occurs. It is a literary element used in all canonical genres of literature. The setting extends its field to the climate, the weather of the time, or the social and cultural surroundings. Naturally, the setting of a story keeps changing from one place to another or from one time to another to relate with the events and characters that participate in the course of actions. The environment in setting can include geographical places like: rivers, battlefields, beaches or mountains, the climate and weather, and the social or cultural aspects such as a church, cinema, school, museum, theatre, hotel, meeting, during games, club, etc.

The teacher has to tell learners that in fiction, there are three main types of setting though public knowledge generally limits its view on two. These are: time, place and environment (climate, sounds, storms, winds, thunders, onomatopoeia, light, dark, sour, bitter...). Setting is part and parcel of the story being told; it is more than the physical milieu or the date created by the author that we read with our eyes. It reveals the traditions, legacy and customs of a society at a given time (See "The South" as a setting in the American slave fictions).

A good setting that has been adequately crafted creates the mood and atmosphere related to the events presented in the story. By mood, the learners should understand the physical, mental and psychological manipulation of some elements related to time and whether. Elements describing time and physical locations like: a *foggy* morning, a *chilly* evening, *rainy* or *dry* weekend, a *shadowy* room or *blurring* lights, *desperate* visitors, *winter* or *spring*, a *peaceful* journey or *stormy* trip, *angry*, *speechless*, *too excited*...trace the state, the mood and feelings of the subject. The teacher has to emphasize that along *mood*, *sound* is also an element of the setting in a story. *Wind* that is whirling, *thunderstorms* that are making greater noise in the sky are part of the setting if they have been evoked in the story.

E.g. The setting in *Beloved* illustrates the three dimensions highlighted above.

First, the physical setting comprises a lot of locales disseminated in many areas of America. The story begins in Sweet Home Plantations, a place located in Kentucky, a slave State in the South of America. It moves in many places like Alfred Prison in Georgia where Paul D will be jailed with other prisoners for months and be subjected to oral sex. Setting then moves to the town of Cincinnati in Ohio State, North, precisely in Baby Suggs's home located at 124 Blue Stone Road where Sethe will later be arrested after killing her baby Beloved. Second, regarding the temporal setting, the story is located in 1873 during The Reconstruction period. Third, the setting in relation with mood and environment is found in the psychological reactions of characters and the strange locales of the story like "124 was *spiteful*. Full of a baby's venom" [opening sentence of *Beloved*]. The adjective *spiteful* implies a situation difficult to handle due to the complexity of the moment.

The teacher has to indicate that the setting elements in connection with the mood and environment expressed in the text are not fundamental dynamics in setting analysis. They are secondary. Though necessary during theme analysis to understand the psychological feelings and reactions of characters, mood and environment do not constitute the foundation stone of setting analysis. Only physical and temporal settings do they matter as they carry grander force to the story.

Characterization

Characterization is the process that seeks to understand a characters' behaviour [reactions] that they demonstrate in the course of the story. Both physical and psychological reactions are examined by the critic to investigate the foundation of their reactions which are often awful though positive deeds may also be noted in some cases.

The first thing a teacher must start with is to explain learners "who" the protagonist in the story is and "how" to identify him among the other characters. He must show learners that the protagonist is different from the rest of other characters since he is a charismatic figure that must dominate the course of events in the story generally from the beginning till the end surmounting a lot of hurdles. He/she is the most perceptible character in the story.

The most important consideration to analyse a character is to check what he really wants and the desires he longs to achieve. For instance, in

Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Prince Hamlet is filled with the desire to avenge his father. In *Macbeth*, General Macbeth is flamed with the desire to seize the crown of Scotland by hook or by crook; Pip in *Great Expectations* must become a gentleman; Sethe in *Beloved* must be free from the fetters of slavery. The teacher should instruct learners to observe the striking details particularly focusing first on the protagonist and then on the main characters. Guiding questions like: how does the character walk? how does s/he behave? what does s/he wear? what does s/he carry in purse, on head, on the back...? what does s/he eat or drink? what is the style of her/his hair? what is the shape of her/his nose... can be framed to assess many facets of a character.

In addition to the framed "WHAT" questions which relate to various observations from the character's body and psyche (behavior), the teacher has to instruct learners that they must sculpture the reason behind the presence of the "WHAT" state that the character under analysis discloses. By doing so, learners will be learning how to scrutinize the "WHY" state of the character [WHY this situation happens?] because the "WHY" state justifies the "WHAT" condition observed through the human eye.

Themes

After the complete background to the story has been laid to learners, the teacher now proceeds to the analysis of the narrative in question. This is the stage that has been awaited to come. It is the *raison d'être* of the study and justifies the importance of the study itself. This literary examination exposes the hidden meaning behind the fictional identity of the original text.

Characters, locales, language artistry, images, symbols, leading ideas reflected in the text through characters' actions...constitute the tasks that the teacher embarks on with learners. Themes provide the underlying reason why the narrative was penned by the writer. The teacher must be careful here. He must have in mind the whole story and how the incidents evolve. Mood that defines characters is also important to consider. This is because a character's mood may explain why a given character preys on the others, why that character is always offensive, aggressive or defensive in their deeds or why this character shows submission, mercy and gentility despite the harsh conditions they are experiencing. Themes are the main ideas expressed in a story. They are the heart and brain of the narrative's

existence. They trace *the moral lesson of the story*. All the main themes that guide the narrative must be discussed.

E.g. Consider again *Beloved* by Toni Morrison.

Some of the themes found in the text to be discussed might be:

- The Psychological impact of slavery on the black mind
- Slavery and the crisis of the abnegation of the other
- Human objectification
- Racism and social marginalization
- Memories
- The meaning of freedom
- Family disintegration
- Maternal possessiveness
- The quest for home
- Humanity and manhood
- Pain
- The claim for identity defiled
- Man's self-condemnation and self-destruction

Methodological Structure of a Lesson in Literary Analysis

The first step a teacher must start by when teaching a text is to trace the context through which a text (a story) was created. This is done through related phases.

Investigate the Author's Social and Professional Background.

Knowledge about the author—in their public, private and professional life—is very important before we embark on the analysis of a text. Learners must have preliminary information on the book (text) and the author in order to know the sociocultural and historical context of the creation of the

work. The teacher outlines all the facts available on the author and tries to explain them to the students to get a clear road map for the future analytical journey he intends to engage with the learners. Other information regarding the context can emerge from the work itself.

Some important facts the teacher can focus on are:

- When and where the author was born; where he grew to maturity.
- How were the authors' parents socially living: free union, married, divorced, polygamy, businessman, sorcerer, drunkard, political activists or religious persons, lawyer...?
- Author's marital status (Free union, single, married, divorcee, polygamous, eunuch, prostitute, slat, Casanova, LGBTQ?)
- When was the novel penned (Socio-political period of the country, of the region or the society)? Was it a period of war? peace? famine? great harvest? plagues or pandemics? Issues inside the community to which he belongs or issues inside his own family, church...are important to know.
- Professional career (Where was he working/studying?): Banker, doctor, teacher, engineer, architect, mechanic, potter, hunter, driver, political men, gangster, chef/cook, journalist, pharmacist, mason, Agriculturalist, nurse, merchant, soldier, policeman, smith, unemployed...?
- Societal markers: his/her tribe or clan, language, church, gender...
- What kind of games did he like: chess; individual games like: athletics, swimming, race, skiing, surfing...? Collective games like: wrestling, football, basketball, volleyball...?
- Personal life: drunkard, smoker, LGBTQ member or fanatic, pious, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jainist, Sikh, monotheist, polytheist, atheist...?

E.g. Consider the novel *A Grain of Wheat* by James Ngugi.

The reader first needs to know the historical past of Kenya and the writer James Ngugi (later Ngugi wa Thiong'o) to understand the characters he imagined and the actions they carry out in the narrative. Why is this

character violent while the other one is peaceful, docile, understanding, collaborative or submissive?

Introduce the Sociocultural and Economic Situation of the Society when the Novel Was Written.

Once, the German philosopher Nietzsche (1989) argued in his essay that “there is no art for art’s sake” (p.13). When a writer decides to pen down a story (novel, poem, play, film, prose, short story, song...), there must be a reason why he chooses to spend his time and intuitively his financial means to produce the work. Authors seek to educate and reform society more than entertain. The example of Shakespeare’s plays is very indicative. Laughter is less strong than the moral lessons he crafts for a better future of man and mankind that the playwright highlights in his works.

Indeed, knowledge about the sociocultural and historical situation of the society that was prevailing when the author was writing the narrative is very important to understand the roots of creation of the work and the aim it was written to fulfil. This situation can shed the direct light of the causes and motivation that drove the writer to produce the work.

E.g. Consider again *Beloved*, a novel by Toni Morrison

In the introductory remarks, the teacher must inform learners that *Beloved* is a historical novel that chronicles on the evils of slavery in America. He has to teach learners what *slavery* normally means *literally* and what it really meant in the historical context of America. The brutal deportations of Africans to the Americas through the Atlantic—a journey that has been technically called The Middle Passage—must be highlighted. The horrors the deported blacks experienced at sea and the unspeakable cruelties they saw on the American lands once arrived must also be indicated to learners in a way to impart them with an initial significant background that will clear the way to the analysis of the text in the time to come.

Stating, for instance, when slavery started in America, showing the reasons why Europeans decided to cross the Mediterranean to come to rob Africa’s children for the economic interests of America; explaining learners how the social, political, religious, economic life of America was at the moment (immigrants from Europe due to political and religious persecutions, how they claimed to be puritans), what kind of life they faced once these former Europeans reached America...are some of the important instances that can give informative insights before the novel’s discussion starts.

Give an Initial Presentation of the Important Characters Found in the Story.

After the teacher has presented the landscape of the author's life and place where he grew and produced the work, he therefore moves to an initial description of characters found in the narrative. At this stage, he does not discuss profoundly character by character, what constitutes their personality. He basically targets the protagonist and the main characters that drive the grander force of the story. The protagonist and his villain are the first characters to present. For all characters to view, the teacher should not go into details of their experience since it is an introductory phase given to learners just to get an opening idea of "who does what" and "when and where" the event/incident takes place...Only preliminary information is given to open eyes to learners in the beginning stages. Time to discuss profoundly characters' lives and their acts comes later in another section that explores significantly the narrative at large. The teacher has to know here that it is not a study of characters' behaviour at this stage; it is rather a simple acquaintance that he has the obligation to give to learners to have a vital perception of "who does what" in the story they are going to consume shortly.

E.g. Consider again the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison.

Characters like: Sethe, Denver, Beloved, Paul D, Mr. and Mrs. Garner, Schoolteacher and Baby Suggs are important to mention though superficially because they lay the foundation stone of the narrative. On the contrary, minor characters like: Stamp Paid, Burglar, Howard, Amy Denver, Halle, Sixo, Paul A, Paul F, Mr. and Mrs. Brandy Wine...do not deserve to be mentioned in this initially introductory stage of the study. This is because these characters play little function in the story; they only help to make it move in its dynamic incidents that it develops.

At this stage learners have to know that Sethe is the protagonist around whom the whole machinery of the plot evolves. Additionally, they have to know that Schoolteacher is the villain who seeks to uproot, to destroy and erase Sethe's life and her fellow slaves. The cause of the protagonist's suffering can be given by the teacher; but he should avoid going into deep matters because time to dissect the story systematically will come in further stages. While the teacher is introducing superficially the characters, he can

indicate the main locales where the story's incidents occur. Only greater places can be indicated.

For instance, in the same introduction of the novel *Beloved*, he can introduce the locale *Sweet Home Plantations* (South), revealing that it is a notorious place located in Kentucky State, South America, and where half of the story takes place. Other locales like: 124 Blue Stone Road, Cincinnati and Alfred Prison can also be mentioned.

Summarise the Story.

The teacher now attains the stage when he can summarise the narrative. In a brief talk of about one lesson, give the detailed summary of the story to learners. If the plot is very long (some novels may have more than thirty chapters or more than three hundred pages), the summary can be taught in two or three lessons depending on how large the narrative is. In this case, two successive lessons should be better planned to permit the flow of the story in the minds of learners. The summary should follow the chronological order into which the writer wrote the novel. Since it is a summary, the teacher needs to tell learners the main and secondary events (incidents) that drive the root of the plot. Of course, all the incidents cannot be told; but every incident that carries force to the narrative should be indicated. The teacher has to avoid explaining much during this session; this is because the time for deep analysis will get its turn later. He must use a simple language that facilitates quick understanding of the narrative line. The telling of this summary combines the characters' actions, reactions and locales as reflected in the narrative.

Analyse the Structure and Style Used in the Narrative.

Structure

Important elements in relation with the architecture of the story shall be explored to understand the writer's motivations to adopt the construction. First, the teacher should tell learners to consider the following observations:

- Check how the story starts, how it grows and how it ends: is it a bildungsroman? a coming-of-age story? a thriller?
- Does the story start in medias res? Does the story start with formulaic markers of folktales like "Once upon a time..."?

- Has the author assigned a prologue or an epilogue to the narrative?
- Is the novel organised in chapters? in parts? in books? or it is a mixture of all these components? Is it an undivided story from the onset to the end?
- If the story is divided, are the sections titled? Do we find dialogues in the text?
- Is it a metafiction? a historiographic metafiction?
- Is it a pastiche? If yes, what are the main constituents?

Style

The teacher shall also teach learners how to analyse the style that was adopted by the author:

-Is the title of the novel suggestive? Does it hint to something important or it has no particular link? For instance, *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernst Hemingway is a title that is very suggestive. It makes reference to the protagonist Lieutenant Frederick Henry who decides to leave the Italian army forever due to war atrocities that he cannot stand; to save life, he abandons the military and joins civil life.

-Is it an eponymous fictional work where the title was framed after a character's name? (like *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Jane Eyre*, *Beloved*); if yes, what are the qualities and vices of the title character? -Is the fiction an embedded narrative—a story within a story (like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—"The Murder of Gonzago")?

-Is the story concluded or it ends in suspense?

-Are there flashbacks or foreshadowing in the text?

-Any anecdotes used?

-Is it a historical fiction? Is it a thriller? Is it a horror story? A Feminist fiction? A Marxist novel? A Science fiction story? A fantasy? A magical realism narrative...?

-Is the novel a mixture of many genres though this phenomenon happens rarely?

-What is the kind of language used by the writer? Is it a vulgar language or a formal one (see for instance vulgar style: *The Beautiful*

Ones Are not yet Born; Arnold Wesker's play *Roots*)? If Yes, why does the writer advocate such an informal vulgar language? What is the reason behind?

-Can a reader find some particular literary usages of maxims, epigrams or proverbs in the text (see for instance Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, a novel full of proverbs; *Poor Richard's Almanac*, an essay full of epigrams by Benjamin Franklin)?

-What are the common figures of speech and literary devices used in the narrative? Particularly, the teacher should teach learners here how to explore the main figures of speech generally used by writers in fiction such as: metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, imagery, allusion, symbolism, personification, allegory.

Other important questions to facilitate success in textual analysis include:

-Who is the author of the work and what was his aim to write the novel?

-Who is the protagonist? Does he/she represent a particular social movement [like Feminism, Marxism...]?

-What does really the work discuss (the main themes involved)

-What is the intended audience regarding the content of the work?

- At which period was the novel written?

-What was the socio-cultural, political and economic situation of the author? of the society portrayed?

-When and where does the story occur? Any impressive features of the locale?

-What are the protagonist's moral traits? Interrogate the reason why the author gave him/her such a kind of personality traits. Is he a hero or a villain?

-Why does a given character behave in such a way by doing what he does? Why did the author choose to shape the character to act that way?

-Does that character entertain particular relationships with others? Why? What was the intention of the author to create such relationships?

Tenses Used in Fiction Writing and Tenses Used in Textual Analysis

Often authors prefer to write their stories using past tenses. The simple past is the most important tense used to narrate a fictional story. It is usually seconded by the past perfect and past continuous though other past tenses may take the space. While conducting literary analysis, students usually use these past tenses particularly the simple past to engage a critical study of a text. They proceed so—doing wrongly—because of ignorance: Simple past and other past tenses are normally used to report something that happened in past. They are used to report the bygone events just to narrate a historical past, to report a past event or action that is no longer existing.

Teachers have the duty to teach learners that the use of past in a critical analysis of a text leads to an incorrect procedure. Textual analysis is different from narrative description where a story is written or told just to read or listen only. Literary analysis uses the present to relate ideas and critical opinions resulting from the text. The use of the present makes the study alive; it renders the analysis dynamic and lively. In this way, the critical text that results from the analysis obtains an everlasting life that will continue to exist across generations. Teachers must insist on this point: critical analysis is different from fiction writing; the present must be widely used in textual analysis in contrast with the past that is generally adopted by authors when writing.

Conclusion

This study brought in a contribution to achieve successful teaching of literary texts. The teaching of fiction is problematic to organize. To understand the writer's motivation and purpose to have penned a book is very important to initiate a starting point that would yield successful literary analysis of the content. In all, the teacher has to have a clear knowledge about the writer's life and the society from which he got inspiration. This preliminary information shall open vistas to the teacher to delve into efficient analysis. Learners must learn from the teacher. That is why the teacher has the duty to mobilise all the tools that shall enable him to understand first the work and later be able to scrutinize the work's content to satisfy the learners' needs. In doing so, the teacher must have in mind the two global aims that a lesson of textual analysis seeks to achieve. The first aim targets the extension of vocabulary and language apparatus

that contribute significantly to language learning in an EFL environment. The second aim targets an upgrade of learners' scientific knowledge through a socio-cultural awareness of the various human societies; this awareness brings learners to discover the contribution of the great men and women who shaped the history of humanity in many fields of knowledge across the globe. Learners' attained cognizance shall enable them to understand the composites of the world around them. They will thereby get abler to locate their own lives to orient the future thanks to a multidimensional exploration of experiences from authors and thinkers of the past and present generations.

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