

TEACHING POERTY

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ABSTRACT

Teaching poetry and literary appreciation is a major challenge before teachers. The appreciation of poetry or learning of poetry in foreign language is difficult task for students. The present paper tries to find out the solutions for this challenge and finally asserts that stylistics can be used as a helpful tool. The paper tries to give definite steps for appreciation which can be successfully used by advanced learners and teachers also.

In fact poetry is a purely personal affair, both in the matter of composition and enjoyment. That is why there is difference in the approach of different poets handling the same sights, sounds and topics. The composition of a poem has its roots in the emotional and intellectual set up of the poet on one hand, and on the other hand, in his mood and mood of looking at things and the impact of scene, sound or thought. So, though same in many topic remains the poems, feeling and expression differ.

INTRODUCTION

The same thing applies to the person who reads poetry. To enjoy and appreciate a poem one needs to have and intellectual the emotional capacity of putting oneself in the and box. This emotional is relative. Intellectual capacity Because of these considerations, one sometimes feels that it is rather difficult to teach poetry. The fact is that though poetry is difficult to teach, it is not impossible. The teaching of poetry in mother tongue becomes a little easier because of learner's familiarity with the major part of vocabulary, situations and sounds. But in foreign language the task of teaching and learning poetry becomes harder and harder.

The situation This leads us to the question: How should English poetry be taught? It is important to note that poetry provides creative enjoyment, harmless and entertaining pleasure in the dullest hours of life. But as N. R. Panchal says in his, "Teaching English Language' (1984), this aspect of be learning poetry can't emphasized too much. According to him, "Poetry to be taught with a due regard for pupil's capacity, age, environment and above all, their linguistic ability." (1984: 105).

As teaching of English poetry is challenging, the 'Literary Appreciation' is the most bewildering subject to the advanced learner of English. Though the student is writing in his mother tongue and reading familiar literature, appreciation is often a difficult task. And when a student tries to engage in appreciation of literature in foreign language the task becomes more difficult. Limited: vocabulary of the student creates obstacles in the comprehension of the poem. The student does

not understand what to say about a piece of writing he has read. He may enjoy and understand the poem or prose passage but can not explain why he has enjoyed it.

Enjoyment is the key to true appreciation and it depends on the teacher's own attitude to literature in general. Good and lively reading is important and should not be considered as boring. Along with loud reading the teacher can supply the class with a little background information about the author and his work where possible. This gives added interest to the lesson and helps the class to become receptive, so that appreciation becomes a pleasure.

First of all students should be taught how to read and understand. In the case of poetry, it is very difficult to read and understand and the teacher should never allow his students to read carelessly and arrive at hasty ill-informed conclusions. The student should learn to make sense out of what he is reading. He should be taken to the author's workshop and should be taught to recognize some of the main techniques employed by the writer.

The vocabulary plays important role in understanding poetry. The vocabulary list should be given to help students. Explanations should be given for archaic expressions, especially difficult words, phrases or idioms and in places where the syntax is distorted. To inculcate interest some of the best-known poems of the greatest poets in English language should be given as samples for appreciation.

L. G. Alexander in his 'Poetry and Prose Appreciation for Overseas Students' (1967) suggests one simple test as a way of introducing students poetry appreciation. When a student reads poetry in his own language, he can enjoy a poem without fully understanding its meaning. It is possible to pay more attention to the way a poet says something rather than to what he actually has to say. Enjoyment and appreciation are different things. To gain pleasure is one thing and to explain why one liked it is quite another. Before you say why you liked a poem, it is first necessary to understand its meaning well. So the teacher can use the following simple test to serve his purpose. Ask students to read a particular poem as carefully as they can. Then ask them to write briefly on a piece of paper what they think it means. When they have finished, collect the papers. The teacher will then read aloud the answers that have been given by every member of the class. Later, the teacher may discuss the meaning of the poem.

The variety of answers received may help to explain how a single poem may have different meaning for different people. Some answers may have been quite wrong. But one strange thing is that the right answers also may not be exactly same. Still this does not mean that all poems can be interpreted in a wide variety of ways. Majority of times, poem may have simple and obvious meaning and not only deep or hidden meaning. So to understand a poem the student should read it carefully and should observe three important rules.

Do not misread the poem.

Always look for simple and obvious meaning and express it.

3) Avoid putting your own ideas and feelings into the poems and concentrate on what the poet has actually written.

M. R. Panchal in his 'Teaching of English' (1984) has given some steps for teaching poetry. These steps can also be helpful in teaching appreciation of poetry. According to him, first of all background of the poem should be introduced to the students. Teachers can use suitable devices, pictures, narration of short incidents, reading of a poem in rhythmic way to enhance student's perception. Students should be allowed to listen to the poem once, twice or thrice. Then pupils may read the poem silently with the teacher as he reads enjoying various sounds and rhythms. After that with the help of a few questions teachers should encourage the students to describe, narrate or explain the subject matter of the poem. The teacher should encourage the students to find out what effect the poet has caused on them and how the poet has become successful in causing this effect. Most of all for better and effective teaching of poetry it must be read and re-read aloud as it is easier to understand when read aloud by a teacher. This reading and re-reading can be helpful for appreciation.

Glossary is one important stage in poetry appreciation according to L. G. Alexander. After a careful reading of a poem, the student should be in a position to give its general meaning, its detailed meaning and to say something about the intentions of the writer. General meaning should be expressed in one or at least two sentences. The detailed meaning should be given stanza by stanza. It is not necessary to paraphrase the poem or interpret exact words. The detailed meaning should be expressed in simple sentences. The focus should be on the beginning, development of theme and how the poet concludes it.

After giving general and detailed meaning, it is necessary to define the intentions of the writer. A poem may affect different people in a variety of ways. So it is quite difficult to define the intention of the poet. In fact, interpretation of the poet's intention is largely a personal matter. but it should not be far-fetched. Yet it is essential to understand the intention of the poet to appreciate a poem. As it is impossible to give the meaning of the poem unless you read it carefully, it is impossible to appreciate the poem if you are unable to define the poet's intentions.

Literary appreciation is a study of what a poem says and how a poet expresses himself. Finding the meaning of a poem and the intentions of the writer are simply the means of appreciation. According to L G. Alexander, "It is hard to define exactly what a poem is and to state how it gives us pleasure". (1967: 14). It is not only the meaning or subject matter of the poem which gives delight to the reader, but the delight reader gets when reading poetry often comes from its musical qualities or from the striking way the poet uses words. Poetry does not follow hard and fast rules and every poem is unique and has special qualities of its own. If we are to appreciate poetry, it is quite necessary to learn how to recognize these 'special qualities: They are called devices and can be found when we analyse a poem. Such devices can be generally divided into three groups: structural, sense and sound. While writing an appreciation of a poem, these devices should be pointed out and explanation should be given of the effect they have and how they help the poet to fulfil his intention.

As the matter comes to explanation of how or why poem delights or impresses the reader, we can't avoid the discussion of style and stylistics. A style is a way of doing something. For example, Japanese style of flower arrangement, Sachin's style of batting. In short, style is some kind of distinction between what is done and how it is done. With reference to language the concept of style is the adaptation of language for particular purposes, occasions and content. Similarly stylistics is the systematic study of language. Stylistics, in fact is a branch of applied linguistics. Linguistics studies the relationship between the sound and meaning. Similarly stylistics is concerned with the relationship between the language of literature and the meaning of literature. Broadly speaking, we can say that stylistics studies the relationship between the medium and message. In literature, style and theme are integrally connected. Stylistic analysis throws light on the thematic aspects of literature by analyzing its language. Thus, stylistics is a very useful tool in understanding, teaching and Shrivastava, appreciating poetry. R. N. in his article, Stylistics and the Teaching of poetry published in Indian Journal of Applied Linguistic (Vol. XI No. January, 1985) says, "Stylistics being a theory of literature as well as a methodology of literary study, furnishes on the one hand, certain frame of reference to the goal of teaching poetry and on the other hand provides certain conditions for carrying on this goal."

Stylistics plays a vital role in the appreciation and teaching of poetry. The purpose of stylistics is to develop in readers interpretative procedures rather than make them dependent on the told meanings. As Widdowson has stated, stylistics provides a basis of aesthetic appreciation, otherwise the appreciation of a text would have been restricted to trained individuals only.

Thus, being a theory of literature and the intermediary between language and meaning, stylistics plays an important role in teaching of poetry as well as in appreciation of poetry. The emphasis is given on what is said by the poet (meaning of the poem) and how it is conveyed by the poet (style, language of the poet). The devices like rhyme, poetic assonance, alliteration, rhythm, imagery, metaphors are strictly studied to explain the achievement of the poetic effect. Thus stylistics is one important tool in the teaching of poetry and appreciation.

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