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الاصليـــة تالفـــة

Cairo University
Fayoum Branch - Faculty of Education -
Curriculum & Methodology
Department

USING THE READER RESPONSE APPROACH IN TEACHING ENGLISH PROSE FICTION AT THE SECONDARY STAGE
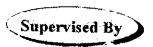
A Dissertation

Submitted for the Ph. D. Degree
in Education

(Curricula and Methods of teaching English)

By

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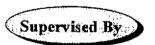in Education

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM
AND ITS
SIGNIFICANCE

- Introduction.

- Statement of the Problem.

- Significance of the Research.

- Hypotheses.

- Limitations of the Study.

- Definition of Terms.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

The progress of any society is measured by its ability to develop and invest man's intellectual powers. The society seeks to achieve this goal through its educational system which plays an effective role in this respect. No other goal is more important and nobler than that of training man in thinking and helping him acquire higher-order thinking skills.

Educational research and development have brought increased recognition of the fact that higher-order thinking skills can be taught and that man fundamentally prefers to learn in creative ways through creative and problem-solving activities. Teachers generally have insisted that it is more economical to learn by authority. But, now, a great deal of what is to be learnt, though not all, can be presented more effectively and economically in creative ways rather than by authority. Learning creatively takes place in the process of becoming sensitive to or aware of problems, deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, missing elements, disharmonies, and so on, bringing together in new relationships available existing information, defining the difficulty of identifying the missing elements, searching for solutions, making guesses or formulating hypotheses about the problems or deficiencies, testing and re-testing these hypotheses and modifying and re-testing them; perfecting them, and finally, communicating the results. This is a natural healthy human process with strong human motivations involved at each stage (83:1-3).*

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* The first number refers to the reference in the bibliography and the second number refers to the page in the reference.

Guilford (1962) identifies four prominent features of divergent thinking:

- **Fluency** which is introduced as the ability to generate ideas easily. He also recognizes three types of fluency: ideational fluency, expressional fluency and associational fluency.

- **Flexibility** which is defined as the ability to come up with various approaches to solve a problem and to generate various ideas about them.

- **Originality** which is presented as the ability to generate uncommon solutions and ideas. ·

- **Elaboration** which is regarded as the production of details related to a particular subject (36: 151-168)

So, the researcher finds it extremely important to develop the creative thinking skills of students especially at the secondary stage. It is at this age that students start perceiving the world around them in a more mature way. They also start constructing their own principles, beliefs and opinions. Developing their creative thinking skills at this age will help them accomplish all these necessities in a more realistic way and this is one of the most important roles of the educational system in any society.

This is why developing students' thinking skills should be one of the objectives that the system of education in Egypt seeks to achieve. Foreign language instruction at the secondary stage should have a very crucial role in achieving this objective in addition to the other objectives set for presenting a foreign language at this stage. English prose fiction is presented at this stage in the form of simplified novels in English and should aim at achieving all these objectives especially developing the students' thinking skills. Langer (1992) asserts that the need to reexamine the role of literature in the educational experience of young people is

particularly acute at this time, when we are attempting to redefine our educational goals and objectives. Although the various reform movements have had many dimensions, one central theme has been the need to develop students' thinking abilities -the complex ways of approaching issues that underlie disciplined and reasoned thought (47:35).

A true literature syllabus should not simply aim at using literary texts for advanced language purposes, but at developing or extending literary competence (16:106). This does not mean that literary and linguistic competence can be separated, for one will always be dependent on the other and an appropriate level of proficiency is required before a text is read (18:6).

Duff and **Maley** (1990) provide three reasons for drawing more attention to the teaching of literary texts: linguistic, methodological and motivational.

a-In terms of the language, literary texts offer genuine samples of a very wide range of styles,. registers, and text-types at many levels of difficulty.

b-The fact that literary texts are, by their very essence, open to multiple interpretations means that only rarely will two readers' understanding of or reaction to a given text be identical. This ready-made opinion gap between one individual's interpretation and another's can be bridged by genuine interaction..

c-Literary texts are non-trivial in the sense that they deal with matters which concerned the writer enough to make him or her write about them. In this they are unlike many other forms of language teaching inputs, which frequently trivialize experience in the service of pedagogy. This "genuine feel" of literary texts is a powerful motivator, especially when

allied to the fact that literary texts so often touch on themes to which learners can bring a personal response from their own experience (26:6-8).

Literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied body of material which is "important" in the sense that it says something about fundamental human issues and which is enduring rather than ephemeral. It is true of course that the "world" of a novel, play, or short story is a created one, yet it offers a full and vivid context in which characters from many social backgrounds can be depicted. A reader can discover their thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave behind closed doors (21:3-4).

Gardner believes:

In great fiction, the dream engages us, heart and soul; we not only respond to imaginary things- sights, sounds, smells- as though they were real, we respond to fictional problems as though they were real: we sympathize, think, and judge. We act out, vicariously, the trials of the characters and learn from the failures and successes of particular modes of action, particular attitudes, opinions, assertions, and beliefs exactly as we learn from life. Thus, the value of great fiction is not just that it entertains or distracts us from our troubles, not just that it broadens our knowledge of people and places, but also that it helps us to know what we believe, reinforces those qualities that are noblest in us, leads us to feel uneasy about our faults and limitations (32:31).

So, fiction as previously indicated, is a vessel of culture. Literature, both oral and written, incorporated in poetry, novel and drama, embodies the society's cultural values through the social relations between

characters, and exercises a direct impact on people's consciousness. This impact is exercised through a specific language which is an objectification of a specific mode of thinking and a specific style of life (1:81).

One important fact that should also be taken into consideration in this respect is that the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict in the new world, as **Huntington (1993)** hypothesizes, will be not primarily ideological or economic but cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle of the future and conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world (40:22). He also asserts that it will require an effort to identify elements of commonalty between different civilizations. For the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization, but instead a world of different civilizations each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others (4o:49).

Huntington's · hypothesis affirms the viewpoint of **Abousenna (1986)** who states that starting with the assumption that cultural development is the essential basis for material development, the issue of cultures in conflict or in dialogue is to be tackled through a civilizational perspective. This is done through literature since this civilizational perspective views human civilization as having evolved through man's potential drive to understand, control and appropriate nature through two contradictory, yet complimentary, activities of the human mind, namely, mythos and logos (1:83).