

## The Impact of the Genre-based Approach in the Comprehension of Literature-in-English Lessons

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**Abstract:** *This paper discusses the impact of the Genre Based Approach on comprehension in literature-in-English lessons. The research was carried out using the library research method which furnished the theoretical concepts and effects of the Genre-Based Approach in the comprehension of Literature-in-English lessons. The Genre-Based Approach is usually applied for teaching writing and it is uniquely powerful in its substance since it not only focused on the process of writing itself but also on the social context in which the writing is produced. The fundamental scope of Literature-in-English is hugely connected to language use, writing, themes, or subject matter shaped by societal concerns, hence the impact of the Genre-Based Approach at varied degrees. This Approach will make students comprehend the lesson as well as learn the language used in any social setting because the scope of the Approach was social-setting-based communication.*

**Keywords:** Genre Based Approach, Comprehension of Literature-in-English

### Introduction

Literature-in-English has a crucial part in enhancing the development of language education. However, its value has gone beyond the learning outcome; it has a great and vital role in ensuring that the learning of the English language is attained. Teaching and learning is one of the ways one can attain proficiency in the use of the English language because literary works especially those written in English make good use of the language in different ways to get meaning across (Fatimayin, 2013). Furthermore, a country like Nigeria where the English language is a second language as well as the national language. It is viewed that literature through reading provides a means for continued learning of language outside the classroom as well as serving as an important demonstration of language in use (Oyetunde & Muodumogu, 1999). Also, Williams (1990, in Fatimayin, 2013) asserts that the learner of English as a second language (L2) if exposed to literature will internalize and consciously adopt the rhythm of natural speech, economy and richness of diction, the rhetorical and organizational device from drama, poetry, and prose. In addition, Nwodo (2011) states that since the study of Literature-in-English exposes learners to varieties of usage, there is the need to expose the Nigerian learner to its study. He further suggests that even students of the sciences should study Literature-in-English to be able to express themselves well as science is written in the language. Thus depriving science, vocational and technical students the study of Literature-in-English is the missing link in the Nigerian education system.

Literature-in-English is central in achieving Nigeria's educational goals. The *National Policy on Education* (FRN, 2013) in Section 1, Subsection 6 outlines the specific goals of education in Nigeria to be the:

- development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic and effective citizen;
- total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society and the world;

- provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system;
- inculcation of national consciousness, values and national unity; and
- development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society.

It is axiomatic to say that the task of attaining the above mentioned objectives requires Literature-in-English plays a central role. Pugh (1989) in Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) buttresses the fact that literary works may transcend any particular place or time, or may link students with their immediate culture and enable them to participate in its development. Thus, since the essence of education is the development of man and his environment, Literature-in-English is hugely developmental in its goal in every lesson.

With this huge responsibility that Literature-in-English plays in the learning, development, and transformation of the society as well as proficiency in the use of the English language, its teaching in schools continues to deteriorate. It is poorly taught in Nigerian schools (Oyetunde & Muodumogu, 1999). The pedagogical approach to the teaching/learning of Literature-in-English from the teachers and students makes the students' performance in the subject very poor. On many occasions, the teaching of Literature-in-English is more of rote learning. The students cannot interact meaningfully with selected texts, critiquing becomes difficult and poor. Thus, a look into the methodology and approach to its teaching is required to ensure the precarious condition is ameliorated or salvaged for the sustainable development of education for national growth.

### Statement of the Problem

There is no gainsaying the fact that Literature-in-English is poorly taught in Nigerian schools. The approach is basically the one where the teacher makes the student to only read aloud in the class the literary piece while he/she explains certain portions of the text. Uwaifo (1979, cited in Oyetunde & Muodumogu, 1999) notes that the teacher stops at intervals to explain new words while teaching Literature-in-English, which reduces the subject to teaching vocabulary development and then posits based on research into the teaching of prose in Nigerian schools that: (1) Apart from reading, and answering questions, students are not engaged in other activities and (2) Students are neither encouraged enough to talk nor think for themselves; the act of individual response to the work of art is almost absent. Thus, questioning and discussion which are essential features of an active literature lesson are absent (Oyetunde & Muodumogu 1999).

The teaching of Literature-in-English in Nigerian schools as observed by Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) promotes rote learning and dependent study and thus it promotes rehearsed and learned responses. This poor teaching of literature has produce student that cannot interpret what is read, recall, internalize or applying it, it is appalling that comprehension is not enhanced through this approach and due to lack of comprehension we continue to witness mass failure in public examinations. The fact that this approach of teaching Literature-in-English discourages personal reaction and critical reasoning, the students in a way to seek for remedy to help them pass exams resort to model answers or ready-made opinions.

### Conceptual Framework

Genre-Based Approach is a method of teaching language that surfaced due to do genre analysis. Genre analysis considers the way a language is used within a particular setting (Swales, 1990), and one that probes into how language is used meaningfully, or how its use is linked to meaning (Bhatia, 1993). However, the genre approach places a greater emphasis on the social context in which writing is produced (Rusinovci, 2015). Furthermore, Paltridge (2001) states that the framework involves investigating the

texts and contexts of students target situations, encouraging reflection on writing practices, exploiting texts from different types of genre, and creating mixed genre portfolios. According to Vygotsky (1978), the underpinning theory of such a pedagogical approach, as cited by Hyland (2003) in Rusinovci (2015), is an emphasis on the interactive collaboration between teacher and student, with the teacher taking an authoritative role to scaffold or support learners as they move towards their potential level of performance. In doing the scaffolding activity, students are usually given models to observe, and are asked to discuss and analyse their language and structure. This element will gradually lighten as the learners independently produce a text parallel to the model. Then, the teacher's role is transformed from explicit instructor to facilitator and the students are expected to gain the targeted autonomy.

If this is viewed in relation to the paradigm of teaching writing itself, there are two prevalent approaches underlying its implementation. They range into the process approach and product approach. The former portrays the conduct where the teacher trains students to build, improve, and maintain their writing skills so that the learning process deals with a variety of classroom activities (Brown, 1994 in Morganna, 2017).

Also, the approach focuses on the teacher giving the student a learning environment which is capable of birthing a creative and critical thinking end product of writing by virtue of comprehension. The linguistic context is taken into consideration with the social view of the student thus making the student to feel a deep sense of ownership in producing a piece of writing. Hammond (1992) in Morganna (2017) emphasizes the teaching outcome of the Genre-Based Approach:

1. Modeling where the teacher introduces students to the social function of genre which is being learned, the text features and linguistic features required to promote the genre to be communicative, and the knowledge of the text itself.
2. Joint negotiation in which the teacher guides students to utilize what they have known and comprehended from the modeling phase to write the text simultaneously as a particular genre that is learnt in progress. Here, the learning activities engaged in are the interactions of teacher and students and that among students.
3. Independent construction in that the students are instructed to individually write a text as they learned while using all relevant knowledge they have got in modeling phase and all experiences they have undergone in the second phase, joint negotiation.

From the above submission, it is clear that the Genre-Based Approach accommodates the Product and Process approaches of teaching writing. Thus, the Genre-Based Approach according to Morganna (2017) is a language teaching method which develops classroom learning activities that represent the use of language within a particular setting, social function, and the focus of meaning orientation.

### Relevance of Comprehension in Literature in English Lessons

Comprehension is the essence of any meaningful lesson and it is linked to reading. Thus, it is the essence of any meaningful reading exercise (Nwogu & Nwoke, 2010). The core of every learning outcome is comprehension. It is comprehension that measures the success of the teaching learning process, the reliability of any method and the validity of any curriculum. Comprehension entails finding meaning in the text; and it being able to retell, to analyze or to interpret the studied text. It also enables personal reaction from the student thus reiterating and applying what has been read.

In a Literature lesson, the success of the lesson hugely depends on the comprehension of the text or the poem, themes, the subject matter, the setting, the plot, and the literary devices which all give meaning to the text. If the students find it difficult to comprehend the text, then learning will be difficult to take place as comprehension is the drive of learning. Moore (2016, p.1) asserts that "Comprehension is an interactive process that occurs not only while a student is reading the text but afterwards, as well. It

consists of the ability to make inferences from a passage and use critical thinking skills to answer questions related to the text". Moore then concludes that students with well-developed comprehension skills are able to understand both the main idea and the details of any given text, and they are able to identify the different components of the text as well (Moore, 2016).

It is therefore evident that the measure of a successful lesson is comprehension which goes beyond the recognition of letters; rather it must lead to making inference and personal reaction from the learner. So it is with any Literature-in-English lesson. Without the students comprehending the lesson through the method (s) used by the teacher in facilitating the teaching and learning process, the entire process will be a mere exercise in futility and the danger is that, the goal of education, which is ensuring a permanent change in behaviour of the learner, will be a mirage.

The overall aim of teaching Literature is to produce readers who are able to discuss their literary experience insightfully and constructively (Oyetunde & Muodumogu 1999); and this cannot be achieved without the students having adequate comprehension of the text to be able to relate it to their experiences and to retell or rewrite the text in their own words. The art of discussing themes and subject matter that are utterly based on shared experience of the learner will not be possible if comprehension is lacking. Thus the place of comprehension in a Literature-in-English lesson can be likened to the place of sunshine in the sky, without it, everywhere remains dark, hence without comprehension, the students will be in the dark and learning will not take place. Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) further suggest that the teacher in Literature-in-English lesson should, therefore, be sensitive to the classroom practices that are essential in fostering independent reading abilities of their students.

### Effect of the Genre-Based Approach on Comprehension of Text

As established earlier, the Genre-Based Approach places a greater emphasis on the social context in which writing is produced (Rusinovci, 2015), it then portends that its role in ensuring comprehension is certain. The social context here takes into consideration the underpinning fact of Literature as the mirror of the society, or the recreation of the society. The social context connects the writing or the book with the society, the content and the structure which the students and the teacher must all comprehend in order to achieve the three basic goals and responses of Literature study (Cognitive, Affective and Aesthetic responses).

Also, the Genre-Based Approach reveals the progress in students' level of comprehension of the text and motivation for reading it (Montero-Arévalo, 2019). This gives the student some sense of connection with the written text which ensures comprehension is attained because of the deeper understanding the students have achieved.

Also, the Genre-Based Approach influences comprehension and its process enables the teacher to work in alliance with the students to pave the way for autonomy. It really guides the students to write from the very simple or dependent steps to independent steps. It also promotes and facilitates independent learning (Dirgeyasa, 2016 in Montero-Arévalo 2019) and critical thinking in the students.

When the text reflects the reality and social milieu of the students, it makes comprehension certain because the students have discovered their identity and social construct in the text; making comprehension and writing independent outside opinion. Pugh (1989) in Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999) further confirms that literary works may transcend any particular place or time or may link students with their immediate culture and enable them to participate in its development which in both cases, students are finding their identities as members of a community (local or world) with shared values rather than as separate individuals with only their own problems to solve.

It is axiomatic to claim that the effect of the Genre-Based Approach on comprehension will sustain the learning interest of the student of Literature-in-English. The situation where few students enrol in the

class with be addressed. However, the teacher must be patient in adopting this Approach in the lesson because the learner is the centre of attraction in every lesson. Undoubtedly, the effect of the Genre-Based Approach on comprehension is unprecedented and cannot be over emphasized because the social milieu is connected with the literary piece being studied in the lesson.

## Conclusion

Teaching method or approach is a fundamental aspect of the learning process as much as the learner. Without the right approach adopted or employed by the teacher, the teaching-learning process will be an exercise in futility. The entire process of the teaching art must be considered to make the learning receptive to the learner.

The teaching of Literature over time is poorly done in Nigerian schools and deliberate steps must be taken to bring this anomaly to an end. The shameful low or poor exams grades must be stopped. The situation where learners depend on an already made opinion of someone collected in a book form becomes the escape route for many a student who want to pass the Literature-in-English exams, where the sense of ownership or autonomy or independence is lost due to poor methodology.

A Literature lesson is expected to have a great effect on learning and the learner. The Genre-Based Approach should be seen as a panacea to the challenge of student's low level of comprehension of texts in Literature-in-English lessons. It is strongly suggested for adoption in Literature-in-English lessons to make learning not only effective but also develop the students' critical thinking skill.

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