

## TEACHING LITERATURE FOR DEVELOPING RACIE SKILLS: A PEDAGOGIC MODEL

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### **Abstract**

The scenario of teaching literature at Graduate and Post Graduate level is quite ominous. The one-sided, teacher-fronted presentations done in the name of teaching make the entire process as sheer transmission of information about a piece of literature rather than an active, lively and dynamic process wherein the learners get themselves engaged in RAICE (Review, Appreciation, Criticism, Interpretation and Evaluation) of literature. This calls for a novel approach of teaching literature following the principles of participative pedagogy. The theories of co-operative learning and recent approaches like constructivism advocate the active role of the learner in the learning process. There is a wide demand of incorporating such theories in practice. But Higher Education seems to be banging head against a brick wall by utilising the age old, traditional methodology of teaching in the classrooms.

Keeping these trends in mind the authors of this paper have developed some facilitative and participative tasks for teaching literature at Higher Education level. For the tasks, a novella titled "Siddhartha" written by Hermann Hesse was selected. The focus of the task was the extent to which the learners get the chance to get involved in higher order thinking skills for comprehending, appreciating, reviewing and evaluating the text under study. The discussion on the sample tasks given in the paper is targeted to explain further the learning outcomes from pedagogic point of view. A table has been devised to explain the productivity of the mental activities to be carried out on the part of the learners. This

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discussion, in the paper, ultimately leads the authors of the paper to design a model of teaching novel for higher education.

Thus, the paper encloses the need of participative pedagogy for literature and enumerates how it could be actualised. The participative pedagogy developed in this paper for teaching literature is in the form of a ready to implement model.

**Key words:** Teaching Literature, Task Based Teaching, Pedagogy

## 1.0 Introduction

Excellence in teaching is at the core of national and international discourse across the globe. The need for developing a shared understanding of what constitutes “**teaching excellence**” is reflected in recent policies, frameworks of various kinds and researches. A report titled as “The Path to Quality Teaching in Higher Education” (Henard and Ringuet, 2008) delineates that quality teaching is necessarily student-centered, participative and constructive. This anticipates pedagogic skills on the part of the teacher and learning generative environment in the classrooms. To make this happen Higher Education (HE) policy makers, researchers and practitioners are continually exploring ways to enhance university students’ learning experience (Cahill et al., 2010). This is applicable to all the subjects taught at HE level.

The classes where literature is taught is not an exemption from this. Love for good literature can never be taught, but caught. The didactic methodology of teaching literature has failed in developing and nurturing love for literature among students. The TAUGHT perspective of the teachers of literature emphasises that good literature are to be introduced to the students. The recent advancement in pedagogy and research have laid emphasis on “COUGHT” perspective. This implies that active, participative and constructive role of the students who get themselves engaged in the very act of reviewing, appreciating, criticising, interpreting and evaluating literature can gradually develop love and taste for literature. As

pointed out by Donn taste in literature can be developed by three types of abilities. They are;

1. Abilities needed for imaginative entry into work of literature
2. Abilities for perception of meaning
3. Abilities for perception of artistic unity and significance

The first type of abilities refer to skill of reviewing and appreciating literature, the second deals with criticising literature and the third deals with interpreting and evaluating literature. A teacher concerned with these skills is aware of the positive co-relation and engagement between students and a literary work instead of making the students passive listeners. Directing students to review and appreciate a literary work, disciplining his/her perception to critique it, and to sharpen his/her interpretation and evaluation skills, we need to move to participative and active endeavours. There is an urgent need of putting our heads together to find effective models and facilitating forms of reflective and collaborative enquiry as a means of empowering students within learning contexts. (McWhaw et al., 2003; Gillies and Ashman, 2003; Johnson and Johnson, 2003; Shachar, 2003).

## 2.0 Scenario of Teaching Literature at HE

In many parts of the world the teaching of language and literature has traditionally been a teacher-centred process. It is also seen that students are not stimulated to develop their own judgments and opinions and sometimes, worse than this, teachers impose meanings on them saying 'correct' instead of 'valid'. The teaching of literature and language is being crushed under the encounter of infectious manner of presentation of the 'set-text' and the learners become silent-sufferers.

The 'explanation' of text that seems at first sight not at all objectionable as there is a dialogue between teacher and learners. But then it becomes dreadful when the class spends a lot of time worrying and agonizing about a single word which may have no great significance in an

appreciation of the whole work. And even if it is not so, in case of meaning, all rights are reserved by teachers and once again learners have to become listeners.

Literary competence is not a matter of information or memorization. It calls for 'doing' something. Active learning is a way to deal with RACIE of a literary text. The scenario of teaching of literature suggests a telling need for 'rescuing' students from the rut of lectures. Lectures are irrelevant for developing some competences or abilities pertaining to learning literature.

### 3.0 Defining RACIE with Observable Behavioural Indicators

In any learning, it is the process which matters and not the product. In learning of literature too, it is the process which ultimately leads to the development of taste and love for literature. Learning of literature assumes the students get involved in sequential stages of reviewing, appreciating, criticising, interpreting and evaluating a literary work. It is important to know the meaning of these stages, process involved in each stage and behavioural indicators on the part of the students in each stage. The meaning of each of these stages, the process involved in the skills are given the following table. Moreover from the meaning and the process, the derived behavioural indicators point out to the expected behaviour on the part of the students to take place in literature classes.

Stages	Etymology and Meaning	Process	Observable Behavioural Indicators
Reviewing	<p>Sanskrit: <i>av+lok+an</i> (अव+लोक+न)(to see things from close quarters (not from distance)            Latin :revidere, from re- "again" (see re-) + videre "to see"</p> <p><b>Meaning :</b>            To see something minutely            To go in to the detail of what is liked            Sense of "process of going over again            A retrospective survey"            Examining again</p>	To emphasise the important points/details through revision and frequent observation of the literary work	Express likings, present minute Observation , Explain: <i>What is</i> and <i>What could be</i> , Synthesise details with references

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Appreciating</b></p>	<p>Sanskrit : Aa + Swaad (आ+ स्वाद्)(To take interest from the senses) Latin : appretiāt Meaning: Theactofestimatingthequalitiesofthingsa ndgivingthemtheirpropervalue Clearperceptionorreognition,especially ofaestheticquality</p>	<p>To judge the literary work with reference to its aesthetic appeal : <i>What and How</i></p>	<p>Indicate points of aesthetic beauty, demonstrating the proportion of Aesthetic beauty, To derive the details obstructing aesthetic appeal, To recognise the quality of the literary work.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Criticising</b></p>	<p>Sanskrit: Sam+Iksha ( सम+ईक्षा) (Check rigorously using affect and intellect) Greek:κριτικός (judging, able to discern”)  Meaning: Tomakejudgmentsastomeritsandfaults Topassjudgmentonsomething</p>	<p>Apply emotions and intellect and yet be objective to check a literary work using approaches as yardsticks which results in directing why something is what. This enables to derive the merits and demerits of a literary work.</p>	<p>Explain in context of an approach of criticism, Proving something, Indicating characteristic, merits and demerits</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Interpreting</b></p>	<p>Sanskrit: Ghat+ an* (अर्थ+ घट+ अन्) (Determining meaning) Latin:interpretionem (“to explain, expound, interpret”) Ancient Greekφράζειν (phrázein, “to point out, show, explain, declare, speak”)  Meaing: To Apply general principles to explanation, to show by illustrativerpresentation To explain or tell the meaning of..., To expound</p>	<p>To determine a particular meaning of the latent idea or ambiguous word / truth / mystical elements/ mythological element /moral values or to reach to particular belief by being subjective and objective.</p>	<p>Selecting ambiguous constructs (words, sentences, Ideas and text part) loaded with latent meaning, Determining the complexity and ambiguity of the constructs, To determine how far the root meaning has been employed in the literary work, To determine how important the constructs are with reference to the aesthetic appeal of the literary work. To search for contradictory meanings inherent in constructs.</p>

<b>Evaluating</b>	<p>Sanskrit: muly+ ank+ an (मूल्य + अङ्क+ अन्) ( Determining value)</p> <p>French: évaluer "to find the value of," from é-"out"(see ex-) + valuer (see value).</p> <p>Meaning: To draw conclusions from examining; To assess To determine the value of Examine judiciously, To sit in judgement of</p>	<p>Deriving the characteristics of literary work In context of the objectives set of the criteria like aesthetic beauty, philosophy, literary form and literary phenomena.</p>	<p>Determining criteria for judging value Fixing components of the criteria for evaluation Searching the characteristics from the literary work as per the components of the selected criteria</p>
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#### 4.0 Sample Tasks From Novella : *Siddhartha*

Following the meaning of the each stage precisely, here sample tasks are designed on the novella: *Siddhartha* written by Hermann Hesse. The sample tasks indicate the pedagogic understanding augmented in designing them for facilitating the desired behaviour to take place on the part of the learners.

##### Stage 1 Review

**Task 1:** Read the following abstract:

*Were the gods not creations, created like me and you, subject to time, mortal? Was it therefore good, was it right, was it meaningful and the highest occupation to make offerings to the gods? ..... And where was Atman to be found, where did He reside, where did his eternal heartbeat, where else but in one's own self, in its innermost part, in its indestructible part, which everyone had in himself? But where, where was this self, this innermost part, this ultimate part..... which was worthwhile looking for?*

List at least 10 questions aroused in the mind of *Siddhartha* throughout the novella.

How did *Siddhartha* get the answer of the questions. Tickmark appropriate options:

- From Nature
- From indulgence in experiences
- From somebody who provided readymade solutions
- Got no answers.

**Task 2** *Siddhartha* abandons many things and accepts new things to achieve the meaning of

his life. Categorise the following details in “IN” and “OUT” boxes.

*Routine life, planned life, authority, obedience, rules, reflection, real experiences, preaching, elf-education, worldly bondage, thinking, logic, Dissatisfaction, search of aatma, responsibilities of the society, creation of values*

In	Out

### Stage 2 Appreciation

**Task 1** :Siddhartha passes through the journey of giving meaning to his life. Some of the minor characters play role of the facilitator in his journey. Analyse the characters of Kamala and Vaasudeva in this context.

Character Analysis:

Kamala:

- Importance of the character in the Novella
- Meaningful and touching dialogues spoken by the character
- Role as a facilitator in the life of Siddhartha

Vaasudeva:

- Importance of the character in the Novella
- Meaningful and touching dialogues spoken by the character
- Role as a facilitator in the life of Siddhartha

**Task 2** :The minor character Govinda does not become facilitator of Siddhartha. Instead Siddhartha becomes facilitator in his spiritual journey. Analyse Govinda’s Character in light of the following points.

- Importance of the character in the Novella
- Meaningful and touching dialogues spoken by the character
- Siddhartha’s Role as a facilitator in the life of Govinda

**Stage 3 Criticise**

**Task 1** Unlearning the learnt things is the locus of life. In each chapter of the novella, Siddhartha unlearns something, to learn something new. Write down the chain of unlearning-learning in the table.

Chapter No	Unlearning	Learning
1	Rituals are meaningless. Through rituals, meaning of life is never obtained.	To get to know everything, one must get to know one's real self
2		
3		

**Task 2** Read the dialogues between Gotama and Siddhartha. The dialogues point out that by becoming somebody's disciple, one cannot attain meaning of life.

*Govinda said . . . Have you not discovered certain knowledge yourself that has helped you to live? It would give me great pleasure if you would tell me something about this?*

*Siddhartha said . . . Wisdom is not communicable. The wisdom which a wise man tries to communicate always sounds foolish. . . . Knowledge can be communicated but not wisdom. One can find it, live it, be fortified by it, do wonders through it, but one cannot communicate and teach it*

Do you agree with this? Present your arguments in light of your own experiences.

**Stage 4 : Interpretation**

**Task 1 :** Read the descriptions of the river given in the novel. One is given here.

*When the day began, Siddhartha asked his host, the ferryman, to get him across the river. The ferryman got him across the river on his bamboo-raft, the wide water shimmered reddishly in the light of the morning.*

*"This is a beautiful river," he said to his companion.*



*"Yes," said the ferryman, "a very beautiful river, I love it more than anything. Often I have listened to it, often I have looked into its eyes, and always I have learned from it. Much can be learned from a river."*

The river emerges as a prominent symbol throughout the novella. List the references of the river depicted at various times in the novella.

Example: Siddhartha watching his own reflection in the river while departing from the Shamanaas.

Explain the importance of such references of the river.

**Task 2:** Siddhartha's biggest strength was :

"I can Think, I can wait and I can fast"

How do you think these qualities helped him attain the meaning of his life. Explain with illustrations.

- Thinking:
- Waiting:
- Fasting:

**Stage 5 :Evaluation:**

**Task 1** Hermann Hesse says; "*Every man has a potential to become a Buddha, but not by becoming a disciple of Buddha. Achievement is not life. Life is a constant project*"

Do you think the author could integrate this thought in his work successfully? Discuss with illustrations.

**Task 2:** Due to the philosophical load interwoven in the novella, this work appears more as a Character-Centred Essay than a novella. Do You agree with this statement? Explain with illustrations.

### 5.0 Pedagogic Model For Teaching Novella

The five stages in learning literature are hierarchical in nature. The act of reviewing comes first which prepares foundation for the act of appreciating literature. Evaluation is the highest point which is aimed at while learning literature which is based on the acts of all the four acts aimed at in learning literature. The hierarchical order of these stages are given in the following figure. The hierarchy has been decided keeping in mind the degree of mental processes, students have to get involved in.



Figure 1. Hierarchical stages in learning Literature

In each of these stages, to make the students get involved in the mental processes a teacher has to go beyond lecturing. The stage wise details given below delineates the teacher’s role and the role of the students to make the entire process participative and constructive. Here are the stage wise roles of teachers and students along with the mode of transaction in the classroom.

Stages	Teacher’s Role	Role of the Students	Mode

Review	Giving selected extracts	Comprehending the selected input, Underlining touching parts	Group work/ individual work
	Presenting factual questions	Detailing core points	
	Giving scaffolding	Meaning making of the details and synthesising them with references within their experiences or with other work of art.	
Appreciating	Giving hints/samples of aesthetic beauty	Identifying points of aesthetic beauty	Group work/ individual work
	Presenting questions, Giving scaffoldings	Checking the proportion of aesthetic characteristics	
	Prompting group discussion	Recognising aesthetic quality	
	Presenting inferential questions	Making interconnections between the parts and understand integrity	
	Initiate appreciation	Expressing appreciation in own language	
Criticising	Providing the approach	Searching the representative elements of the approach from the text.	Group work
	Providing approach based sample	Preparing critical note following the points of approach. Deriving characteristics and demerits of the work.	
Interpreting	Providing samples of constructs for interpretation.	Selecting and searching constructs for interpretations.	Individual work
	Providing explanation of complexity or ambiguity of constructs.	Comprehending the given material on basic discipline.	
	Providing support material of basic discipline	Applying the understanding of the basic discipline to interpretation.	
	Explaining the process of interpretation.  Directing to a particular approach, if applicable.	Checking the proportion of the basic discipline employed by the author and checking its appropriateness.	
	Providing samples of established critical wright-ups on the text.	Comparing and contrasting the prepared critical note and the established critical notes.	

	Prompting new interpretations	Deriving new interpretations objectively.	
Evaluation	Explaining objectives of evaluating text. Explaining criteria (Aesthetics/literary form/ literary phenomena/ philosophy)	Searching the samples as per the components of criteria	Individual and group work
	Recalling components of approaches/ criteria	Deriving characteristics of the text applying selected criteria.	
	Providing sample judgement	Giving judgement	
	Confirming/correcting judgements	Cross checking other's judgement	

The above model has its foundation on the following assumptions.

- Teacher is the input/sample provider, directing the learners to interact with the text, with co-learners and with one's own self.
- Students are the independent creators of the meaning in each stage. The process of meaning making is discussion, reflection and thinking based.
- The interaction between the students and teacher follows principles of constructivism, co-operative learning theories and other student centred approaches.

Based on the above mentioned assumptions, to facilitate each stage of literature learning, the teacher provides inputs in the form of sample extracts, sample critical write-ups, explanation of form and approaches. Moreover, the explanation of the mental processes to be undergone in each stage is a must. The students are expected to comprehend the input and find more samples from the text and based on that enter in to the process of reviewing, appreciating, criticising, interpreting and evaluating the task.

In each of the stages, the expected behaviour of the students are in the form of the thinking they apply for arriving at a particular outcome. The verbs written in the column "Students' Role" suggest that they are expected to be engaged in mental processes. In review stage, the very acts of underlining, detailing and synthesising involve thinking skills. As we go to a step ahead, i.e., in appreciation stage, the students are expected to get involved

in the acts of checking, interconnecting, expressing, deriving and creating which demand higher order thinking skills than the previous stage. In the same way, as we reach the last stage- evaluation, the thinking skills needed to accomplish the task demand the highest level of thinking as new judgements and prepare interpretative write-ups. This proves that this model supports development of Higher Order Thinking Skills.

## 6.0 Conclusion

Conventional pedagogic approaches position the teacher as the designer of every aspect of the learning, including what will be learned, when and how. This teacher-centred approach locates the learner in a largely passive and submissive role, fostering dependency on the tutor rather than learner autonomy. This model are attempting to move from teacher-centred modes of learning to more student centred modes, where learning takes place through a variety of tasks and activities and not just teacher-focused curricula. Moving toward more learner-centred approaches to T&L should be given weight as graduates are now routinely required to evidence high levels of skills and proficiency along with other 'cognitive Let us shoulder the responsibility to promote T&L approaches that strive to develop self-motivated, independent and autonomous learners.

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