

Breaking the Stereotype: Evaluation of Literary Theories through Application Based Questions

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an Innovative experiment of evaluating the performance of the third year special English students in Literary Criticism with the application based questions and open book examination technique. If teaching –learning and Evaluation of English literature in India is a challenge, Literary Criticism, an indispensable part of the Special English curriculum is a greater challenge. The researcher handling the discipline with the traditional lecture method and evaluating with the written examination system found it hardly outcome based. First, he applied innovative practices for the effective study of Literary Criticism (published in this journal Volume VI No.1 July Sept 2014). Then this innovative practice of open book examination with the application based questions is experimented. The experiment was successful and job satisfying. The main objective of this paper is to share the experiment and the professional pleasure among the experimenting faculties who are in search of their self –actualization.

KEYWORDS

Literary Criticism; Curriculum.

Introduction:

The researcher is frustrated at the overall standard of the study of English literature. The way the discipline is studied and evaluated is killing its charm. Handling the most creative literature in a stereotype way, keeping the learners' performance in the written examination in mind is of little significance. The system is shackled in the rote system and it is further tightening gradually.

The main objective behind pursuing the subject is to strengthen functional English skills and the pedagogy the faculties follow is purely for getting the examination grades. Pursuing literature primarily to get the degree is a mockery of study of English literature. As a result, it is time to think about the innovative teaching and evaluation skills.

Evaluation practice: performance of the learners of literary criticism is evaluated through the written examination. The questions ranging from the objective type questions with multiple choice options to short notes to broad questions are purely content based to test the memory power of the learners. They waste their quality time in guessing the questions to attempt them with the memorized answers. The examiners know that the answers are thrice removed from reality and are written in a very poor English. However the learners come out with flying colors in the most creative literary theories sans their abilities to apply the skills. The learners lose an opportunity of full understanding of the great literary theories.

The experiment:

The frustrated researcher at the performance of his learners sans any outcome decided to experiment and enrich the evaluation technique. First of all, he made the study of English Literary Criticism fully participative to make the concepts crystal clear by reading and explaining the texts. Every point was explained with the examples and student presentations were conducted. He encouraged them to prepare the notes for the stereotype written examination. After making sure the formalities of syllabus covering are covered he conducted this open book examination making it further open. It was an additional test well before the university examination. The following question paper was circulated among them. The texts he selected for evaluation are from different papers of Special English.

Preliminary Examination.BA III-
Literary Criticism, Paper IV 2014-15
(Open book Examination)

Instructions:

- *All questions are compulsory and they carry equal weight age of 10 marks each.*
- *Time: One week, last date for submission 12.20 pm, 14 Feb 2014. Results: 21st Feb 12.20 pm*
- *It is an open book examination so you are free to refer any book, notes or the reference material.*
- *Original ideas will be given full weight age in this application based test.*
- *The first three candidates reaching the expected standards will be awarded with Rs 500/- , 300/_ 200/_ cash prizes each.*

Q1) Examine any of your literary texts from the Aristotelian theory of Imitation.

Q 2) Judge anyone of the tragedies you have studied from Aristotle's theory of catharsis.

Q 3) Put any of the poems you have studied in Longinus's features of sublimity.

Q 4) Find out the elements of Coleridge's Primary and Secondary imagination in Wordsworth's poem, *Daffodils*.

Q 5) Apply I A Richards four kinds of meaning to any text of your choice.

Q 6) Write a critical appreciation of any poem of your choice with its general meaning, detailed meaning, intention, structural, sound and sense devices.

The outcome: Though curious, majority of the learners abstained from their attempt in the new type of test practice. However the three enthusiastic (a girl and two boys) attempted and the girl doing her best attempted all the questions proving the experiment rational. As decided to motivate the students, the cash prizes were distributed at the hands of the head of the department. The morale of the researcher is boosted after finding the experiment practical. The researcher tasting the taste of success is ready to fully enrich the evaluation system along with the routine university examinations from the next year.

The scope: The open book examination can be practiced for evaluation of literature by giving opportunity for full revealing. This test can be replaced for the present memory testing evaluation system for Literary Criticism.

Limitations: Application- based tests are for testing the skills so the experiment is more suitable for the skill of judging the texts from the point view of literary theories rather than evaluation of literature. The learners habituated to the rote examination practice need a lot of pursuing. The learners need full understanding of the concepts. The experiment also needs teacher-student understanding.

Conclusion:

Present academia stresses developing the critical thinking skills among the learners and Literary Criticism rich with literary theories is a gold mine. Instead of handling the discipline in rote

way the learners can be encouraged to think critically and apply their understanding. The researcher is fully convinced that it is high time that our learners of English literature are made free of memory testing content based questions. Unless we change the evaluation

techniques we will never get rid of readymade material responsible for all unfair practices in the examinations. Applying Innovative examination techniques to make the evaluation an interesting sport is the need of the hour.