



Literature Circles: a Paradigm Shift in Literature Pedagogy in the Second Language Classroom

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Abstract

Literature is taught both for its entertainment and didactic values. A proper planning and teaching of literature at the secondary school level is effective in developing students' cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, hence the way literature instruction is designed and presented to learners determines to a large extent how learners perceive, engage in and respond to the literature text. A major challenge of language arts teachers across the globe centres on designing effective instructional strategies geared towards helping students engage with the text, enjoy what they read, advance their reading skills and broaden their perspectives. Hence, there has been a paradigm shift from the traditional, teacher centred classroom literature pedagogy in which meaning construction is principally the prerogative of the teacher to a more participatory, interactive, student centred classroom that promotes student collaboration and foster a deeper understanding of text. This study examines the concept of literature circles, a small temporal literature discussion group in which students meet to read and share self selected texts, in existing literature vis-à-vis classroom practices in the teaching of literature in the Nigerian second language classroom. This study observes a total of twenty literature lessons over six weeks period in twenty different classrooms selected from twenty public secondary schools in Abeokuta metropolis, South Western Nigeria. A documentation of teachers' and students' classroom behaviour is made and analysed in line with literature circles and global best practices in literature discussion. The study also discusses the major challenges that intending second language literature circles practitioners may encounter and suggests how such challenges can be tackled to improve literature instruction in Nigeria