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The Pedagogical Ways of Tackling Stereotypes in Colonial Literature

الطرق التربوية في معالجة الصور النمطية في الأدب الاستعماري

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Abstract:

The current research aims at highlighting the place of cultural stereotypes in teaching colonial literature. Although culture teaching is considered as a necessity in teaching literary courses, it is not yet dealt with in a way that enables learners to be intercultural negociators. To examine teachers' pedagogical ways of dealing with stereotypes in teaching literary courses, the study is based on using grid observation as a method of data collection. In observing teachers'activities , questions and students' initial reactions , we come to the result that stereotypes have been ignored in foreign language classrooms . Consequently, this will hinder students intercultural understanding.

Keywords: Cultural stereotypes, colonial literature, intercultural understanding, Teaching pedagogy.

ملخص:

يهدف البحث الحالي إلى إبراز مكانة الأنماط الثقافية في تدريس الأدب الاستعماري. على الرغم من أن تدريس الثقافة يعتبر ضرورة في تدريس الدورات الأدبية ، إلا أنه لم يتم التعامل معه بعد بطريقة تمكن المتعلمين من أن يكونوا مفاوضين بين الثقافات. لفحص طرق المعلمين التربوية للتعامل مع الصور النمطية في تدريس الدورات الأدبية ، تعتمد الدراسة على استخدام الملاحظة الشبكية كوسيلة لجمع البيانات. من خلال مراقبة أنشطة المعلمين وأسئلتهم وردود أفعا ل الطلاب الأولية ، نصل إلى نتيجة أنه تم تجاهل الصور النمطية في فصول اللغة الأجنبية. وبالتالي فإن هذا سيعيق فهم الطلاب للثقافات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصور النمطية الثقافية،الادب الاستعماري،أصول التدريس، الفهم الثقافي.

1. Introduction

Teaching literature in foreign language classrooms forms a great source of learning the language ,as it provides both an authentic material in learning the language in its context and a mirror for discovering the second culture . Integrating culture while teaching literary courses pave the way for English language

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participants to understand the foreign culture and to be aware of the cultural differences that cause ,in most times, cultural misunderstanding and conflicts .Literature 's role is not confined to acquiring the linguistic and cultural knowledge or getting information, rather it can be manipulated to push students to develop critical lens of viewing the world.

Encountering cultural differences in literary texts may cause students to develop misconceptions and stereotypes about the second culture. Students can not be a part of an effective cross cultural communication unless they understand how to deal with cultural stereotypes exposed through the literary world. The teaching methodology of literary courses determines the success or failure of the cross cultural contact. Accordingly, teachers are responsible of pushing students to be active participants in a cross cultural contact by asking them questions that lead them to think , evaluate, judge and reflect and nor merely to memorise infomation.

2. Statement of the Problem

Integrating culture in teaching literary courses is a source of cultural enrichement as student will uncover different life styles, cultural traditions, and ways of thinking . Despite the necessity of viewing culture as an integtral part of teaching literature, teachers do not teach culture within an appropriate intercultural teaching framework that helps students to go beyond the literal level of interpretting literary texts. Tackling cultural stereotypes included in literary texts forms a controversial issue among scholars and researchers ,nowadays, as they are considered as unavoidable task in FLC. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to examine teacher's pedagogical ways of dealing with cultural stereotypes included in literary texts.

3. Research Questions

➢ Do students produce or just consume what included in colonial literature?

➢ How do teachers tackle the stereotypical representation in teaching literary courses?

4. Review of Literature
4.1. Teaching Literature in Foreign Language Classrooms

Literature in foreign language classrooms makes a great challenge for learners as it reflects a world with different cultural perspectives. The important role of integrating literature in teaching the language lies in many points. First, it is a good source for learning the foreign language because it is a kind of an authentic material that enhances acquiring a language in its context : « literature presents language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and role relationship are defined »[1] . Second, literary texts is viewed as a mirror of the second culture. Accordingly, the cultural elements embedded in literature can be manipulated to raise cultural awareness and understanding on the part of foreign language learners. In explaining the crucial value of literary products in overcoming cultural barriers , Mckay (1982) points out « …literature may work to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student »[2]

The great issue concerning using literature in foreign language classrooms remains how to tackle literary texts in the teaching context ? In her famous book ' *The Reader ,*

the Text, and the Poem' , Louise Rosenblatt(1978) identifies two stances of readings through which the reader interacts with the text. Reading the text for gaining information without being engaged emotionally with the text falls under the paradigm of the efferent mode of reading. The aesthetic mode of reading, on the other hand , goes beyond the level of reading to get facts and ideas. Reading a given text aesthetically involves both the emotion and the reason of the reader. Judith Langer (1990) in his article ' *Understanding Literature'* points out that the role of literature is not limited to extending the linguistic and the cultural knoweldge but it spurs students to think beyond the literal level of the text . To explain , literature pushes students to interact and view the text through critical lens as it is put by Langer (1990):

The teaching of literature is often misunderstood. Too often it is considered a way to indoctrinate students into the cultural knowledge , good taste, and elitist traditions of our

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society ,neglecting the role of literature in the developemnt of the sharp and critical mind.[3]

Langer (1990) uses the concept ' envisionment building' to explicate the the process through which the reader interacts with the text. In Langer's words , the word envisionement is employed to :

…refer to the understanding the reader has about a text – what a reader understands at a particular point in time, the

questions she has , as well as her hunches about how the piece will unfold . Envisionments develop as the reading progresses.[4]

Langer (1990) describes the meaning-making process as a component of four stances of reading. Each defines the reader-text relationship. The following chart sums up the main tenets of the meaning-making process :
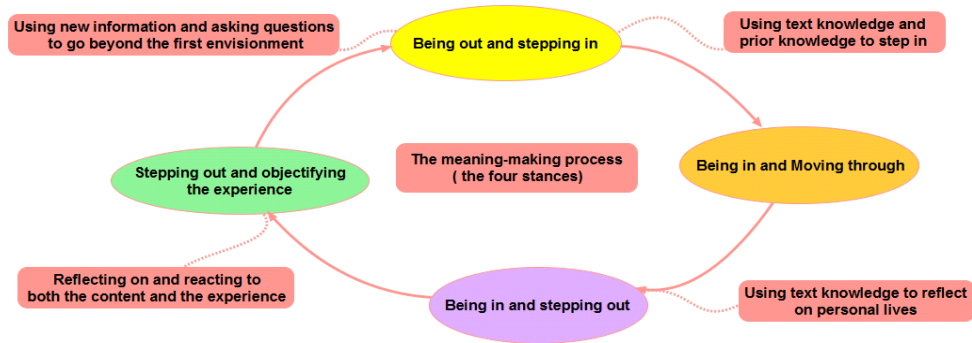

Figure 1 :The meaning making process

Rosenblatt (1995) in her famous work '*Literature as Exploration*' describes literature as ' a web of human relations' through which the reader live « …different experiences of human beings in

their diverse personal and social relations. »[5] This indicates that literary texts do not represent an empty vacuum of lively emotions feelings and thoughts. In contrast, it offers the reader a chance to live different emotional experiences . Rosenblatt (1995) adds :

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Whatever the form—poem, novel, drama, biography, essay—literature makes comprehensible the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite possibilities that life offers. And always we seek some close contact with a mind uttering its sense of life. Always too, in greater or lesser degree, the author has written out of a scheme of values, a sense of a social framework or even, perhaps, of a cosmic pattern. [6]

Rosenblatt rejects the possibility of ignoring the psychological side while dealing with literary texts . She explicates that :

The creation of vivid characters constitutes a large part of the novelist's, the dramatist's, the biographer's art. How can we read *Hamlet* or *Crime and Punishment* or *The Great Gatsby* without preoccupation with the psychology of the characters? [7]

Therefore, the reader can never achieve a full understanding of the text and interpretation of characters' actions without shedding the light on their phsyche.

4.2.Culture, Literature and the Language Classroom

Literature in foreign language classrooms offers students a door to discover different cultures and go through different life experiences. In defining the place of culture in literary products , Agustín Reyes Torres(2012) claims :

From a cultural perspective, it is unquestionable that literature also plays a relevant role bringing students closer to the way of life of a country. It is thus a vehicle to increase the learner's insight into that country's culture whose language is being learned …Through literature, students not only see people they might never have encountered or spoken with in ordinary life, they see the world through the eyes of the characters portrayed in a story. This multicultural aspect of literature can be used to teach readers to identify cultural heritages, understand psychological change, respect the values of minority groups,

raise aspirations, and expand imagination and creativity. [8]

It is a good source of cultural enrichment that represents different cultural incidents and bumbs authentically giving foreign language participants a chance to develop intercultural understanding and cultural awareness. In describing the role of literature in English language teaching, José Hernández Riwes Cruz(2010) argues :

> Literature enhances ELT through elements such as authentic material, language in use and aesthetic representation of the spoken language, as well as language and cultural enrichment. It is with this last element that literature opens the door that leads to a wider and closer look on the culture (or cultures) where the target language is spoken[9]

In encountering culture in literary texts , students are put in various cross cultural situations through which they may fail to interact with the other ,and this is what is known as ' culture-bound interaction' ; a contact where participants put their focus on the cultural differences between the first culture and the target culture. Such interaction results in developing stereotypes, misconceptions and prejudices about individuals that belong to the out-group community. They may also overcome cultural misunderstanding by being in ' a culture-free interaction' ; an interaction that is based on understanding the cultural values of different cultural behaviours and enhanced by looking for the commonalities that lie behind the cultural differences.

It is the teaching methododology of literature that determines the success or failure of the cross cultural interaction. It is the way teachers deal with literature that identify direction of the cultural communication as it is put in Torres's words(2012) :

> Through literature, students not only see people they might never have encountered or spoken with in ordinary life, they see the world through the eyes of the characters portrayed in a story. This multicultural aspect of literature can be used to teach readers to identify cultural

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heritages, understand psychological change, respect the values of minority groups, raise aspirations, and expand imagination and creativity. When literature is part of the curriculum, and when teachers know how to select the appropriate readings and to develop strategies and activities with it, they encourage students to see commonalities and value in literature different from their own culture (NORTON,2009: 2). In contrast, merely placing the literature in a classroom or a librarywithout subsequent interaction does not change attitudes and cultural views. Only close reading and class discussion of the literary works can help students think about

social, political or cultural matters with a privileged access to the thoughts and feelings of another person.[10]

It falls upon the responsibility of teachers to engage students in an active learning through the use of different strategies and activities . Class discussion and socratic seminars, for example, sounds of credible importance to enhance students' involvement . literary courses must not be restricted to questions that push students for looking for right answers. However, the teacher must encourage them to think critically about the different ideas and thoughts involved in the text.[11]

Torres(2012) identifies three types of questions that are involved in the Socratic Seminar :
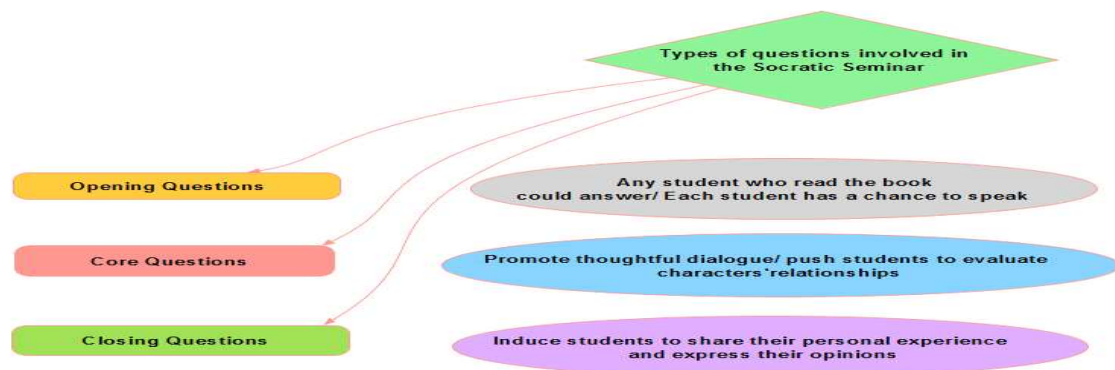
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Figure 2 : The Socratic seminar's questions

and

4.3. Stereotyping in Teaching Materials

Although text books in foreign language teaching are perceived as an imporant medium for providing learners with a chance to learn the language as well as get cultural information, they contain biased information and an exgageration in representing the other. The cultural content included in textbooks is limited to few cultural elements that would be not enough to make foreign students culturally aware.

Andrew Reimann (2009) identifies many factors that make the task of designing textbooks with biased cultural content unavoidable . He claims that designing textbooks with unbiased cultural content is time consuming as it needs more research

piloting. He went further in explaining that textbooks are designed for a specific group of teachers. Consequently, teachers must choose a textbook with a familar cultural content. In addition, students come with various goals in their heads so it would be unsuitable task to design a textbook with an assumed target culture ignoring interests, needs and goals of learners.[12]

Due to the fact that cultural content in textbooks can not cover all the aspects of the target culture , teachers must make contribution in transmitting the limited cultural content within a suitable intercultural teaching framework. The task of making students acquitaned with the foreign culture sounds of great importance for a variety of reasons as it is outlined below :
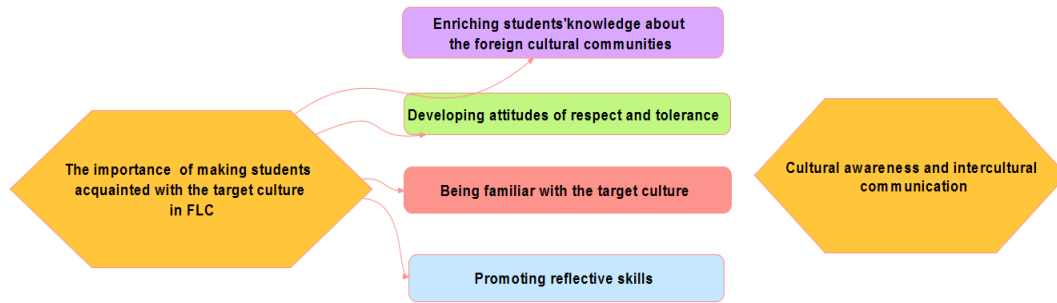
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Figure3 : Cultural awareness and intercultural communication

5. Methodology
5.1.Research method
To realize the objectives of the current research ,the qualitative research paradigm is followed. The qualitative research is an exploratory research that is based on the collection, analysis and inetrpretation of narrative data to explore a given phenomenon. DONALD ARY,et all (2010) claim that qualitative research seeks « … to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables. The goal is a holistic picture and depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data.[13]

5.2.Methods of Data Collection

The qualitative research design is chosen to uncover teachers' different ways of dealing with cultural misrepresentation and stereotypes in literary texts. Non-participant observation is selected as the main tool of collecting data. Observation technique is an important research instrument because it gives the researcher a full picture of student-teacher interaction and performance in classroom. It will be used to investigate students 'stances of reading as well as teachers' pedagogical ways of dealing with stereotypes in FLC. Data gained through this qualitative instrument will be collected mainly through written field notes.

Classroom observation is one method of collecting data in research. It is a technique of observing a specific behaviour in classroom and recording data systematically using either checklist, audio taping or video taping. This method of

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collecting data can be used to observe different phenomena in classrooms. It can be used to observe teachers'teaching methods, learner-teacher interaction , participants' verbal language,etc.

As a method of recording data ,we follow the real time observation that is based on recording data in a structured way by marking a checklist or a grid observation. Since no model was available for observing classroom response, the categories was designed by the researcher including events that are related to students' modes of interaction with the text as well as their initial reactions and responses towards the cultural representation of social actors as it is exhibited in the table below (table 1). A cassete recorder was used also to obtain a complete version of classroom discussion . Classroom observation was followed by nonstructured interviews with the teacher as well as some students to be able to get a full understanding of participants' stance of reading and mode of response.

Classroom observation was carried out to investigate to what extent students challenge the author 's views and representation included in the text. Four classes at the University of Mouloud Maameri Tizi Ouzou were observed in order to study the nature of student-text transaction, their motivation, their attitudes towards J. C's views, and their responses towards cultural stereotypes included.

The novel was introduced over many sessions in classroom in form of passages. I have attended 14 sessions .My focus was on the third passage that includes stereotypes.

In putting the fieldnotes under examination, many categories and codes are developed . The emerged categories are classified as follows : Teacher's views , Students' responses to stereotypes and teacher-student interaction.

GRID OBSERVATION
Teachers' different ways of teaching culture/cultural stereotypes
Students- teachers interaction
Students' responses and stances of reading

Why ?

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1. To study Students' stances of reading Literature
2. To observe students' initial responses towards the sstereotypical representation in colonial literature.
3. To observe teachers' teaching methods as well as their different ways of dealing with cultural stereotypes in Literature.

References and theories :

1. Reader response theory.
2. Louise Rosenblatt's theory of literary experience.
3. Langer's process of building envisionment.

How ?

1. Recording on paper : recording meaningful events, using checklists to record data.
2. Using audio records to get rich source data.
3. Grid Observation.

When / Where ?

1. During lessons- literary courses- postcolonial/colonial literature/ First semester
2. At university/ the departement of English
3. Academic year : 2019-2020

Who is observed ?

Teachers and students.

Observer : The researcher

Observation Focus :

1. Students' responses and attitudes
2. Students' subject positions.
3. Teachers-students interaction
4. Teachers' ways of tackling stereotypes in colonial literature

The observation may be followed by informal interviews with students and teachers to make links between the collected data and to set the initial step in starting the reflective analysis of data.

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Observation Grid
Teachers' pedagogical ways of dealing with cultural issues in colonial and postcolonial literature
Teachers's role in spotting students'stances of reading/responding

A.Teachers use tasks and activities that encourage:

1. Efferent reading
2. Aesthetic reading

Examples of activities and tasks given: ……………………….

B.Teachers use different types of questions (to tap the different stances of the envisionement):

1. Teachers ask questions to push students to ponder about their concerns and encourage students to share their responses.
2. Teachers ask questions to push students go beyond the initial interpretations.
3. Teachers ask questions to help students make connection between current reading and personal experience.
4. Teachers ask sts to analyse evaluate argue defend or compare this work with other works.

5. All of these
6. None of These

C.Teachers encourage students to share publicaly their emotional reactions :

    1.Yes

    2. No

    Clarification:……………………………………………………

D.Teachers use intertextual links to provide more clarification about the text.

    1.Yes

    2. No

Clarification……………………………………………………………

E.Teachers help students to have resisting norms while providing them with new lenses of knowledge

1. Yes
2. No

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Teacher's questions – complexity, types:
Students' questions, frequency/complexity:
Teaching didactic methods/approaches: - Communicative, task based, affective based, meta-cognitive, problem solving, course dialogue (questions/answers) guided research, … - other: __ - _____

Students'responses

A. Students' Positions of intellelctual developement

1. Students consider the teacher as the source of truth (dualist)
2. Students are aware of multiple perspectives (multiplist)
3. Students are challenged to provide evidence supporting their beliefs (relativist)

B. Students' responses are :

1. Descriptive
2. Reflective

C. Perspective of responding is :

1. Monologic
2. Diologic

D. Students show willingness to express their opinions and ideas (this reflect intellectual developement)

1. Yes
2. NO

E.Students show resisting attitude toward the ideological stance of the writer through :

1. Connecting past experience to the current text
2. Using intertextual links in supporting their opinions
3. Reflecting their membership to their cultural community
4. Defending their opinions using different argument

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5.3.SAMPLE

To achieve the aim of our research, Third Year students at the university were observed after reading the novella ' Heart of Darkness' by J.C. The observation was built on classroom discussion of some extracts from the narrative.

5.4. Text Selection

Joseph Conrad' s Heart of Darkness is a novel which depicts the cultural clash between the Europeans and the Africans. In describing the relationship between the two cultural communities, the writer creates a kind of binary opposition. While the British identity stands for civilization and superiority, the African one signifies savagery and cannibalism.

This chauvinistic ideas are intended to justify the British presence in Africa relying on the point that they are there for a civilizing mission to save the blacks from savagery.

The writer relies mostly on cultural generalization and stereotypical representation in depicting the life of Blacks. Over the course of the text, the reader may encounter derogative language that tends to dehuminize the African character. In experiencing the text, each reader will respond differently to the ideological stance of the writer as well as to the stereotypical description.

6. Data Analysis

The following section highlights the main points realized through the process of observation.Speaking about the first category ' Types of activities used in literary courses', we noticed that teachers base their teaching method on one activity that is the use of dialogues to discuss the content of the novel. The classroom was overwelmed by teacher talk giving little chance for students to share their own personal experiences with the events of the text or even to

discuss their opinions and thoughts. Through the types of questions given, it seems that teachers' interest was on the right answers ignoring the role of literary texts in developing reflective skills and critical lens of perceiving the world. Analyzing the type of questions used in classrooms , we can say that teachers focus mainly on the content of the text paying little attention to how students view and interpret events. Accordignly, the efferent stance of reading dominates the observed course as students are encouraged towards getting information rather than experiencing the text aesthetically. Students' stance of reading remains a debatable issue among reader response theorists. While some scholars view students as passive participants consume whatever represented in teaching materials, others claim that students are active participants with resisting norms of response. They analyze, evaluate and judge to create meaning not merely consuming the ideology found in

literary texts. Observing students' initial reactions towards the cultural description of Africans in the colonial novella as well as their attitude towards the ideological stance of the writer, we imply that participants respond differently to the cultural description of Africans in the text. Drawing on the arguments they use to justify their opinions, students do not see the text or the teacher as the source of knowledge rather they can be classified as 'relativist' because they follow their opinions with logical arguments. Students do not believe in the cultural stereotypes in the text using the argument that « …colour is not a reason to make inequality between races ». Also, they consider Joseph Conrad's description of African people as innate due to his European race. Relying on the arguments students give to defend their opinions,we can claim that they are active participants having resisting norms to what is presented in colonial narratives.

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Learners have different attitudes towards the ideological stance of the writer. While some students see the writer as adopting a Non-racist attitude in the text arguing that « He is not- racist because from the text you understand that: white men are described as devils, devils of greed » . However , other students consider him as both racist and non-racist. This is an example of verbal responses of two participants :

Participant 1 « Both because in some passages you find him <u>for</u> and in other passages you find him <u>against. »</u>

Participant 2 « He is in between, because there is sympathy that appears in some incidents, for instance, (When marlow tries to give one poor man a snack, but the guy dies right before his eyes) and racist appears in the author's exaggeration in the cultural description of Africans as savages and primitives. »

Although teachers explain the cultural values of idioms, proverbs, as well as the cultural connotations of different concepts ,

they did not highlight neither the cultural significance of cultural stereotypes not its palce in colonial discourse. In observing teachers' methods and strategies , we infer that they did not give little interest to stereotypes in teaching literary courses as they did not explain neither the cultural generalization and stereotypical representation nor its place in the colonial discourse.

Although teachers ask students to give their own interpretation of what is included in the selected passages , they are not scaffolded to think critically or to share their personal experiences while reading the narrative . Teachers show little interest in asking students to link their past experience or prior knowledge to what is studied in the text and this indicates a gap in the meaning making process that relies mainly on pushing students to view things and interpret events beyond the literal level.

As teaching literary courses is limited to one type of activity that is 'the classroom dialogue' ,

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students are not given a chance to study literature in its cultural context,i .e, they are not encouraged to compare between the C1 and C2 or even to experience the text aesthetically as most of the questions are about the content of what is written and not what is intended.

7. Results and Discussion

Reading literature is not confined to acquiring and memorising information. In reading about characters's experiences, learners tend to experience different feelings and emotions. So the reading process moves between the efferent mode of reading and the aesthetic experience. In observing teacher-student interaction in literary courses , we deduce that teachers ' questions and activities encourage the efferent mode of response ignoring the role of personal experience of participants in interpreting events and incidents included in literary texts. Being engaged emotionally in reading literary texts , students will have more chances of understanding the themes of literature. To explain, teachers had better to enhance students share their private experience in reading literature because this will help them greatly in moving beyond the literal level of understanding literature to having an aesthetic understanding of themes and issues. Rather than being overwelmed by the teacher's interpretation of literary events, students will be able to react emotionally and think critically towards the different issues raised in literary texts.

Based on students' verbal responses during literary classes, students are not passive participants who consume whatever represented in teaching materials , rather they have resisting norms to the writer's ideological stance and the stereotypical description of the African characters represented in the novella. Their resisting stance apears clearly in the arguments they give to defend their opinions. Some arguments are extracted from the text and others from their

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past experience.

Speaking about teachers' pedagogical ways of dealing with cultural stereotypes in literary texts, we come to the result that stereotypes as a concepts and as a cultural issue in colonial literature has not been included in their teaching agenda. Although there is a reference to the cultural significance of some proverbs, idioms, expressions in the novella, culture is not fully integrated while dealing with literary courses. It is not taught in a way that students will be able develop cultural awareness, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding.

Cultural stereotypes is one of the common issues that widely encountered in foreign language teaching materials. For maintaing an effective cross cultural communication, stereotypes must not be ignored or seen as threatening. Rather, they must be used as a strategy to develop understanding of the foreign culture. Dealing with stereotypes ,within a well

teaching framework, can push students to develop cultural understanding and deminish the effects of the cultural conflict. That is to say, cultural stereotypes in teaching literary course is unavoidable task dut to its nature as resisting to change. Accordingly, rather than trying to avoid or ignore them, they must be dealt with as a learning strategy to raise cultural awareness. Students must be taught how to deal with stereotypes effectively with a view to succeed in a cross cultural communication.

8. **Conclusion**

Interacting cross culturally, foreign language learners will experience different types of cultural generalization that may affect both their attitudes towards the other as well as their cultural understanding. Over-generalizing in describing the other will lead students to develop stereotypes and misconception that will immediately hinder their intercultural understanding. With a view to guarantee a successful intercultural communication,

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stereotypes and cultural generalization must not be considred as threatening and dangeous. Instead, teachers had better to make students aware of stereotypes and train them to deal with them cross culturally. Being aware of stereotypes will spur students to develop a cultural understanding of both the first and the target culture. Consequently, they will be able to understand, reflect and evaluate before making judgement. To explain, stereotypes can be manipulated in the learning context to urge students to develop reflective thinking and critical reading.

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