

Literature Circles in the University Language Classroom: Assessment and Marking

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Literature Circles

- ◆ “small peer-based discussion groups, involved in reading the same piece of literature, and who come together on a regular programmed basis to share interpretations of what they have read”
(Shelton-Strong, 214)
- ◆ See: Daniels (2002), Kim (2004), Shelton-Strong (2012).

Literature Circles in Japan

- ◆ Potential to develop skills in:
 - ◆ Communication
 - ◆ Critical thinking
 - ◆ Personal growth
- ◆ See Brown (2008), Furr (2003), Kusanagi (2015), Williams (2011).

Approaches to assessment

- ◆ Assessing student growth in literature circles
 - ◆ Alternative assessment
 - ◆ Rubric/ observation sheets (performance)
 - ◆ Portfolio
 - ◆ Book projects
 - ◇ Artworks
 - ◇ Theatrical performance

Components in language testing and assessment

What we are trying to measure and how it should/ could be done
(Shohamy and Hornberger, xiii)

The washback

◆ The impact of language testing on teaching and learning

“(…) it is important to collect cumulative evidence of the process of ongoing engagement *with* literature rather than collect summative evidence of knowledge *about* literature”
(Paran, 2010 161-162).

◆ “the way in which testing and teaching are interconnected should not mean ‘that classroom procedures should be modelled by the test; but rather that test procedures should be reshaped by the strategies and goals of the classroom’”

(Spiro, 1991: 29, quoted in Paran (2010))

◆ “language can never cease to be at the centre of literary (or any other) reading”

(Hall, 114)

“Flight from the text” by Short and Candlin (1986)

◆ “(…) a flight from the text as a formal, linguistic, and aesthetic artefact, into the text as a sequence of events, a series of facts, or a set of behaviours” (Carter and Long, 215)

“Classroom strategies and activities using Jane Eyre” by Saito

「いずれにしても、この授業の中で、学生はまず英語の勉強をすることになる。(…) 英語学習と文学研究を明確に分けないところが重要な点である。」

(Saito, 2017: 38)

Carter and Long (1990) on exercises and tests

“(exercises and tests should) reunite students to the text and its uses of language as the originating centre of their experiences”

(Carter and Long, 220-221)

“Let’s Read and Discuss”

◆ September 2017 to January 2018

◆ An Elective option for 1st year undergraduates: “Language and Communication/ Intermediate English”

◆ 13 weeks (105 minutes per week)

◆ 30 students (23 males; 7 females)

◆ 19 Arts and Humanities; 11 Science

◆ The Embassy of Cambodia (2013) by Z Smith

Tasks and questions for assessment

- ◆ Group presentation
 - ◆ Presenting findings in English
 - ◆ 40 min. per group (including Q & A)
 - ◆ Opportunity for self expression in target language
- A list of evaluation criteria given in advance (performance)
- Literature circles role sheets (contents)
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- ◆ End-of-semester examination
- General comprehension
- ◆ Language-based questions: vocabulary; composition; translation
- Personal response
- ◆ Essay-type question
 - ◆ Previously unseen text; response in approx. 200 words in English
 - ◆ Making connections between the text and real world

In lieu of a conclusion...

- ◆ Language proficiency and reading proficiency are inextricably linked
- ◆ Meaningful social interaction would presupposes this premise

Maley (2001) said...

“It may seem anomalous in a market-oriented world of supply and demand and cost-benefit calculation that there is still a place for literature. Perhaps the growing interest in literature is one manifestation of the spread of parallel notions such as “emotional intelligence.”

(Maley, 185)

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