

INVESTIGATING THE QUALITY LEVEL OF TEACHING ABSURD LITERATURE IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN IRAN

Mobin SHABANI

Department of English Literature, Faculty of Human Sciences, Guilan University, Rasht, Iran.

Email: mn_shabani@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Educational system as one of the important and essential institutions of a society and as an educational organization has many functions and many educational impacts in the society. One of these basic functions is educating the specialists in the areas required by a country, so that they can implement the process of learning and teaching on students in its best possible way. The objective of this research was to examine the absurd literature approach in educational institutions. For this reason, it was necessary to gain knowledge and information on the nature and areas of this concept. Absurd literature is one of the contemporary literary movements influenced by the political, social and philosophical factors based on the belief that life, being and mankind are meaningless. The modern life disturbances have caused contemporary humans to remain confused among traditions of the past and the crises of their time and suffer from frustration, pessimism, identity crisis and self-alienation. The presence of such features has caused the revelation of absurd literature's manifestations and components in published literary works of modern times.

Keywords: *Absurd literature, Educational institutions, Teaching method.*

INTRODUCTION

The education of learners in every education system is realized through the cycle of teaching and learning process (Ebrahimi et al., 2017), so that it is expected that the maximal degree of learning and behavioral changes occurs during teaching under the influence of traditional thinking in universities and higher education institutions. Although the complexity of teaching might work as a result of action and reaction of various and distinct variables such as interest, abilities, background and expectations, the cultural conditions and features of the learners and the nature of the content of the courses, it can be stated that "situational" or "sensitivity to context" makes teaching activities indeterminable because of the set of these characteristic variables. Accordingly, teaching will be a function of the temporal and spatial conditions and the situation in which it is implemented (Asadi, 2012).

Pendelbury (1990) considers three main characteristics for teaching. First, teaching is a mutual process changing over time that confronts the learners with new conditions, and ignoring it would be a barrier for instructor activities. Second, teaching is an "indeterminable" process, since practical issues, questions and challenges related to the particular context of teaching are created during teaching, which requires responding to these factors in accordance with the particular conditions. Finally, the third characteristic of teaching is "particularity", which includes the combination of two previously stated characteristics. Situational or contextual features of teaching make great differences among the university

professors in terms of implementing teaching activities in line with performing professional responsibilities, and consequently, improving the learning life of learners (Gholami, 2011).

Given the importance of universities and higher education institutions in countries for educating specialists needed for any country and the creation of conditions for development and progress in the countries, it is essential to consider these issues seriously. One of the important elements of higher education, which should be considered by the authorities, is the effective teaching and learning strategies and their application in the learning-teaching process. Absurd literature is a style which can be used to improve students' learning in higher education. Accordingly, research on the evaluation and recognition of this method by the faculty members is essential due to the fact that it can provide a fundamental basis for enriching the learning-teaching process. Hence, the further information on this style would be discussed.

Types of teaching programs

Eisner argues that the curriculum is a set of educational events designed to achieve educational outcomes for one or more students (Paufler & Amrein-Beardsley, 2015). Based on these definitions and other definitions, the curriculum as a content, experience and plan for identifying and introducing types of curricula, is not deniable. These thinkers have given different names to different types of curriculum, and in some cases, they have used different terms for one type of curriculum (Rezaei and Yamani, 2017). Different classifications have been presented for the types of curriculum. For example, a number of classifications presented by various experts are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of curricula (Rezaei and Yamani, 2017)

row	Researcher name	Types of curricula
1	Goodled-Su	1- Social curriculum 2- Institutional Curriculum 3- Instructional Curriculum 4- Experiential Curriculum
2	Francis Cline	1-Academic or ideal curriculum 2- Social curriculum 3- Official curriculum 4- Institutional Curriculum 5- Instructional Curriculum 6- Operational curriculum 7- Experiential Curriculum
3	Posner	1-Official curriculum 2- Operational curriculum 3- Hidden curriculum 4-Null curriculum 5- Extra curriculum
4	Robert Zayce	1- Null curriculum 2- Operational curriculum
5	Gelaturan	1- Recommended curriculum 2- Written or intended curriculum 4- Hidden or non-intended curriculum 4- Excluded curriculum 5- Supported curriculum 6- Tested or measured curriculum 7- Taught curriculum 8- Learned curriculum
6	Nelson	1- Explicit curriculum 2- Operational curriculum 3- Experienced curriculum
7	Coles	1- Curriculum on paper, 2 - Curriculum in action, 3 – Experienced Curriculum
8	Ayzener	1- Explicit or official curriculum 2- Hidden or implicit curriculum 3- Null curriculum
9	Newlove	1- Pragmatic curriculum 2- Non-official curriculum 3- Hidden curriculum 4- Explicit curriculum 5- implicit curriculum 6- Social curriculum 7- Implicit curriculum

10	Porter	1- Operational curriculum 2- Intended curriculum 3-Assessed curriculum 4- Learned curriculum
11	Fathi	1-Prescribed or intended curriculum 2-Taught curriculum 3- Tested curriculum 4- Reported curriculum 5- Hidden curriculum 6- Neglected curriculum 7- External curriculum 8- Learned curriculum

Absurd Literature

The term "Absurd" in dictionary means unreasonable, stupid, meaningless, vulgar, and ridiculous (Haghshenas et al., 2014). In the American encyclopedia, Absurdism is a term used to violate the rules of logic. It reflects the failure of traditional values in meeting the spiritual and emotional needs of human beings (Bennett, 2015). Absurd literature tries to reflect the realities of life and the world, and provide knowledge on bitter and null realities of life for human. Moreover, it criticizes the hypocritical and non-human society. Death, life, isolation, and inability to communicate are the main subjects of this genre of literature. (Hinchliffe, 2017). The term "Absurd literature" was first used by Martin Essline in a book entitled "Absurd Literature". Essline Slim used this term to describe the works of some of the 1950s playwrights who displayed man as a lonely creature incapable of establishing communication with his or her fellows. He also believed that the writers of these plays apply play elements such as plot and dialogue so strangely that their audiences feel amazed and astonished to emphasize the alienation of modern-day human from their philosophical and cultural origins. Later, this term was extended to fictional literature and developed a style called Absurd Literature, in which absurdity and futility and human life in a meaningless world was displayed (Cornwell, 2016). Absurd literature is a term which refers to most of the works of a group of active dramatists in the 1950s, including Adamov, Beckett, Genet, Ionesco, and Camus. This trend emphasizes that seeking meaning in this world is useless and the result of human endeavor in giving meaning to existence encounters failures. It also reflects the failure of traditional values in meeting the spiritual and emotional needs of human beings (Bennett, 2015).

Effective methods in absurd literature expression

In general, Hinchliffe describes the features of Absurd literature as follows: external displacement with internal perspective, lack a clear distinction between imagination and reality, a free attitude to time, as it may be extended and contracted based on mental requirements, a fluid environment in which mentalities are in the form of visual metaphors, and the high precision of language and structure that is one's defense shield against the chaos of life's experience (Hinchliffe, 2017). Absurd literature, like modern literature, tends to use literary and linguistic techniques such as ridiculous imitation of language, breaking and changing the language, emphasis on rhythm through increasing and decreasing the volume of dialogue and the speed of dialogue, the combination of time and precision of speech and movement, and the gradual increase in general rhythm of the work (Mohebi, 2011).

Feeling metaphysical anxiety due to futility of human condition is one of the main themes of the works of Absurd literature writers. The same meaning of the meaninglessness of life, the inevitable negligence of ideals, purity, and goal is seen in most of the works of writers such as Ionesco, Genet, Sartre and Camus. They presented their recognition of the unreasonable human condition in a completely clear form and with completely reasonable arguments (Shamsaei, 2012). One of the most important features of Absurd literature regards the distance from realistic spaces and characters.



The drama occurs in an unknown time and place, and characters are often anonymous and have no specific identity. They are constantly engaged in conversations or events that are completely irrational and disturbed. The events of the drama are so irregular which seem to be nightmarish and surreal. However, behind this meaningless appearance, themes such as loneliness and isolation, the inability of humans to achieve a meaningful relationship with each other, and the meaninglessness of life and death are recognized (Galens, 2009).

Absurd literature components

- ***Identity crisis***

In the pre-modern era, human beings did not seek to discover their nature. Most people were following their native tradition and acted the traditional customs without questions. In these traditional frameworks, people did not need to define life and other concepts, and they believed that they had to follow the lifestyle of their ancestors. However, rationalism was developed and extended gradually and caused people to think about questions that they had never before expressed or even thought of them, including the nature of human, life, and death. Modern life has caused human beings to act as others do in the society, otherwise, they will not be accepted in the society and will be rejected. This is the culmination of self-alienation, because identity also becomes a product of commodity exchange. For this reason, humans feel alienation and loneliness (Ahmadi, 2017).

- ***Nihilism***

Increasing the expansion of machine and industry in human life is one of the most important factors in their tendency to absurdity. The machines have gradually restricted the human beings' status and have diminished their role in life. This has made humans feel that their value and importance have been lost. Extreme rationalism in modernity which is merely based on reason and logic gradually caused the humans to be entangled in some stages of life, and it was very difficult for them to overcome it. (Camus, 2013).

- ***Fear and anxiety***

The concepts of fear and anxiety are not the only product of modernity, but they have been with human in all periods of time and they are in fact the main cause of human beings' survival in the world. Anxiety is the mind reaction against the danger which helps one to protect themselves against these dangers. However, this concept is not manifested only when human feels danger in the life in modern era. It has become a daily and routine issue. Revolutions and wars have played major roles in the loss of feeling security, especially the first and the second world war. They have encountered people with the worst events of their lives every day and caused people view the life unsecure and bitter. (McHale, 2017, Translated by Payandeh).

- ***Thinking of death***

Death is undoubtedly one of the most anxious events that a person constantly thinks about. There is no answer to this question, perhaps die to the fact that nobody has yet been able to explain his experience of dying. However, everybody knows that death is their final destiny, and everyone would experience it once. The most important factor that causes the fear of death is the thought that death is the same as non-existence (Mobahi, 2016).

Hopelessness and disappointment

Human beings always have the hope and motivation to survive and advance their goals. When human being lives with the hope of a better life, salvation and transformation, his life would



continue with joyfulness and vitality and he would be less affected by hopelessness and disappointment. The growth of hope in humans affects the current conditions in the society. The hopelessness and disappointment increased dramatically after World War I. In addition to the industrialization crisis of society, autarchy, poverty and unemployment are also other important factors that have contributed to the formation of hopelessness in humans after modernity (Fromm, 2011).

The influence of absurd literature on the literature after itself

The new novel is one of the most significant literary trends after World War II. The stylistic indicators of this type of novel were defined in the transition from modern aesthetics to postmodernism. McHale believes that the contribution of the absurd dramatic transformations cannot be ignored in this transition (McHale, 2017, translated by Payandeh). In this regard, Marguerite Duras, who had considerable dramatic experiences, paved the way for influencing the operation effects of the Absurd literature on the literature of the second half of the twentieth century. However, it cannot be argued that the interaction between fictional literature and Absurd literature has always been equal. Although modern stories influenced the absurd drama of language in terms of their literary and narrative functions, they have changed the absurd experience of the storytelling language. In other words, it can be said that a tendency toward "operationalization" is seen in most of the stories of this period (Mohebi and Yousefian, 2011).

Table 2 summarizes the general areas of Absurd literature influence on the fictional literature after itself. In this table, new indicators have been introduced; each has gradually acquired literary value and found a special representation in novels after this period. Some of these indicators, such as confined enclosed space, stagnation, and emphasis on the body were often first manifested in absurd operational experiences and then entered the literary structures of the novel. Some others, like operational aspects, are considered a fixed part of the language of theater.



Table 2: Indicators of Absurd literature influencing the modern novel (Mohebi & Yousefian, 2011)

indicator	Function	Absurd literature examples
Body (centeredness)	The emphasis on the body as an intermediate or instrument with the effect of the teachings of "Artois"	Physical Violence Representation: Works by Arbal, Genet, and Peter Weiss Beckett and Ionesco emphasis on human organs: lesson (Ionesco) and oh! Good days (Beckett)
Operation (centeredness)	Provide operational aspects and emphasis on movements	Literature as operational art
Spatial confinement	Tendency to close and confined spaces	Inside or outside world, Threatening Factors: Mild Pain and Caretaker (Pinter) The Inability to Quit Closed Spaces: Endgame and Happy Days (Beckett) Forced to stay: Machine servant (Pinter)
Anachronism	Overcoming time in transition from time	Rejecting Time Differences: Beckett's Works Leveling the Time: Albi Works

Dialogue (centeredness)	The use of dialogue and dominant context of work	The key role of dialogue in Beckett and Pinter
Passivity	Tendency toward passivity and reducing the external actions	Failure to move, forced to stay and lack of response to external stimuli in Beckett and Pinter works

CONCLUSION

The education of learners in every educational system is realized in the cycle of teaching and learning process, so that the highest rate of learning and behavioral change are expected to occur during teaching. The objective of this paper was to investigate the level of quality of Absurd literature teaching in educational institutions of Iran. For this reason, it was necessary to describe the concepts related to it. As seen, the prevalence of absurdity and absurd thought began since World War II and continued until after the war. The most important reason for this prevalence could have been the massive massacre and bloodshed caused by World War II throughout Europe. Thus, absurd literature is an approach rooted in the late 1940s. This style strongly relies on existential philosophy and reflects the belief that the existence of human being is meaningless and purposeless and all communication would fail in a world without God whose definite result is "silence". The main themes of Absurd literature include meaningfulness, violence, and fruitlessness. Absurd literature means that the world and life have lost their meaning in the human's eye, rational decisions are impossible in this world, and any action is meaningless and useless.

References

- Ahmadi, B, 2017, the Concept of Modernity. 10th edition, Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz Publications
- Asadi, M, 2012, Teaching in Higher Education: A Case Study of Effective Teaching of Fundamentals in Kurdistan University. Master's thesis of Kurdistan University, Faculty of Literature and Humanities.
- Bennett, M. Y. (2015). *The Cambridge introduction to theatre and literature of the absurd*. Cambridge University Press.
- Camus, A. (2013). *The myth of Sisyphus*. Penguin UK.
- Cornwell, N. (2016). The absurd in literature.
- Ebrahimi, P., Chamanzamin, M. R., Roohbakhsh, N., Shaygan, J. (2017). Transformational and transactional leadership: Which one is more effective in the education of employees' creativity? Considering the moderating role of learning orientation and leader gender. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 6(1), 137-156.

- Fromm, E. (2011). *The revolution of hope*. Lantern Books.
- Galens, D. (2009). *Literary movements for students: presenting analysis, context, and criticism on literary movements*. Second Edition, Ira Mark Milne.
- Gholami, K. (2011). Moral care and caring pedagogy: two dimensions of teachers' praxis. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 19(1), 133-151.
- Hagh Shenas, AM, Samei, H, Entekhabi, N, 2014, English - Persian Millennium contemporary culture. Eighth Edition, Tehran: Farhang-e Moaser Publications
- Hinchliffe, A. P. (2017). *The absurd*. Routledge.
- McHale, B, 2017, Modernism and Postmodernism in the novel. Translated by Hossein Payandeh, Third Edition, Tehran: Niloufar Publications.
- Mobahi, S, 2016, Analysis of the Meaningfulness in the Selected Works of Sadegh Hedayat and José Saramago. Master's thesis at Tarbiat Modares University, Faculty of Humanities.
- Mohebi, P, 2011, Interaction between Modern Fiction Literature and the Absurd Theater. Theater, issue 44, pp. 127-144.
- Paufler, N. A., & Amrein-Beardsley, A. (2015). In Memoriam: Elliot Eisner From Inside the Academy. *Studies in Art Education*, 56(2), 183-186.
- Rezaei, Hand Yamani, N, 2017, Null curriculum: neglected or ineffective? Education in Medical Sciences, Volume 17, Issue 60, pp. 561-570.
- Shamsaei, R, 2012, The Meaningfulness of Contemporary Novel, A Comparative Study of the Meaningfulness Concept in Albert Camus's "Alien" and Hedayat's "Three Drops of Blood". Master's thesis, University of Ghilan, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences.

