

**Title: A Guide In Teaching English Literature for University Learners:
Case Study: The Glass Menagerie for Tennessee Williams**

دليل تعليم الأدب الانجليزي للطلاب الجامعيين-عينة البحث -مجموعة الحيوانات الزجاجية لتنسى وويليامز

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Abstract:

This article introduces two interrelated didactical approaches that university teachers of literature can follow to help their students carry out Academic literary analyses. The first approach is based on The Implied Reader Theory (I.R.T) for the Indian Professor of Literature Gayatri shakravotri Spivak. The second is based on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The aim is to help students move naturally and easily from simply summarizing works of literature to critically studying literary texts. These applications to literary knowledge represent the first step. The second step is argumentation and analysis. The last but not the least would be the acute and sophisticated use of language and expression along with the right structures and the clean grammar. These approaches can be particularly useful if applied properly within the L.M.D system. A system based primarily on the logic of Competence.

Key words: (I.R.T), (S.F.G) ,literary knowledge, argument, analysis, right structures, clean grammar, competence

الملخص:

هذا المقال يعرف على طريقتين تعليميتين مترابطين حيث يمكن للأساتذة الجامعيين للأدب الانجليزي إتباعهما لمساعدة طلابهم على كتابة التحليل النقدي الأكاديمي. الخطوة الأولى تعتمد على نظرية القارئ المحتوى بروفيسور قياتري شاكرافورتى سبيفاك. الخطوة الثانية تعتمد نظرية النحو الفعال. الهدف هو مساعدة الطلبة على الخروج طبيعيا وبسهولة من مجرد تلخيص الأعمال الأدبية إلى الدراسة النقدية لهذه النصوص. هذه التطبيقات على العمل الأدبي تمثل الخطوة الأولى. الخطوة الثانية هي الدراسة والتحليل. الخطوة الأخيرة لكن ليست الأخيرة سوف تكون الاستعمال الدقيق و المتطور للغة و التعبير مع عبارات صحيحة ونحو نظيف. هذه الطرق يمكنها ان تكون مفيدة اذا طبقت بطريقة صحيحة ضمن نظام ل. م. د. نظام تعليم يعتمد بالضرورة على منطق الكفاءة

كلمات مفتاحية: نظرية القارئ المحتوى-نظرية النحو الفعال-معرفة ادبية-مناقشة-تحليل-عبارات صحيحة - نحو

نظيف - كفاءة

Introduction:

What do we know of the English literature? And then, the teaching methods of its texts, literary canons and genres?

As an art, literature symbolizes different models and eras, the rationalist philosopher in the profit of the individual and collective genius, romanticism, individualism, liberalism, nationalism, naturalism, humanism, and existentialism from Geoffrey Chaucer to William Shakespeare, then from V. Woolf, James Joyce, T.S Eliot, to William Butler Yeats, from modernism to postmodernism. Hence, literature has always been loaded with mystical inspirations collaborating and resourcing the national and popular tradition that is why literature is about and for people.

1. The Implied Reader Theory(for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak)

In this article, we suggest a way to actively flee the burden of English theory. This idea advanced by the Indian writer Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak ¹, who used it, in the meaning of “new orientalism” ². In the two chief senses of the term she proposed, she meant it first as the content of a song or account. Second, as a singular load to carry, in a special way ³. This raises oodles of questions, the least one is: what is the basic difference between teaching English as a foreign language, to be a means of communication and teaching the same language so that our students can appreciate literature? The difference is pretty clear ⁴ and simple; the first is a classroom language dealing with the different uses and mechanics of the language. The latter is a literature language meant to shape the student’s mind so that he can understand, figure out, and incarnate the parallel standards of the implied reader of the text, even though it is historically and culturally a distanced fiction.

So, the goal would be to make of an Algerian student an ideal student of British, American or else English literature, capable to internalize this play of cultural self representation, relate and identify to the text. Therefore, this epistemic transformation to an imagined implied reader is considerably helpful and important. It enables the student to make sense of what is written or spoken as if it were destined to him/her in so far as implication is assumed. This argument does not come from scratch as my personal experience of a previous student of English in the Algerian university (Abdel Hamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem). This practice is not new in our courses of British/American/ African literature. As a hungry mind, and an open, attentive learner of English, my exceptional teacher of

British and American literature (P. Abbes Bahous), introduced us to the phenomenon, literally and figuratively, with success.

This process of manipulation and negotiation that an implied reader gives to literature is not merely reasonable indeed perhaps optional. Many examples of texts, where the Algerian family and its members become the type case from British and American literary texts. Written into a cultural case, it is a direct challenge to the hegemonic notion of the family's lot in despair, with its conventions coming via influential figures such as T.S Eliot, D.H Lawrence "Heart of Darkness", Virginia Woolf "Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?", Tennessee Williams "Glass Menagerie", James Joyce "Dubliners" Etc.. In novels, short stories and plays, the implied reader theory is not a tacit consent to its judgements but a delightful reading of a story that teaches alien cultures and different attitudes. As an implied reader, one occupies different positions within his self cultural representation⁵.

To emphasize my point, my first example is a text where the Algerian family is the type-case. Written into a cultural text, *the play "Glass Menagerie" for Tennessee Williams*⁶ is a joyful piece to read. Although many of us have read it or seen it acted in the Algerian theater, translated into everyday Algerian language. The point here is to illustrate how the implied reader is drawn into patterns of cultural value as he/she assents to a text and says "yes" to its judgments, in other words, as we read it with pleasure⁷. When we teach our students to read with pleasure texts, where the implied reader is culturally foreign, the consent might bring a degree of alienation.

In this play, Tom Wingfield steps onstage dressed as a merchant sailor and speaks directly to the audience. According to the stage directions, Tom "takes whatever license with dramatic convention is convenient to his purposes." He explains the social and historical background of the play: the time is the late 1930s, when the American working classes are still reeling from the effects of the Great Depression. The civil war in Spain has just led to a massacre of civilians at Guernica. Tom also describes his role in the play and describes the other characters. One character, Tom's father, does not appear onstage: he abandoned the family years ago and, except for a terse postcard from Mexico, has not been heard from since⁸.

However, a picture of him hangs in the living room. Tom enters the apartment's dining room, where Amanda, his mother, and Laura, his sister, are

eating. Amanda calls Tom to the dinner table and, once he sits down, repeatedly tells him to chew his food. Laura rises to fetch something, but Amanda insists that she sit down and keep herself fresh for gentlemen callers. Amanda then launches into what is clearly an oft-recited account of the Sunday afternoon when she entertained seventeen gentlemen callers in her home in Blue Mountain, Mississippi. At Laura's urging, Tom listens attentively and asks his mother what appear to be habitual questions. Oblivious to his condescending tone, Amanda catalogues the men and their subsequent fates, how much money they left their widows, and how one suitor died carrying her picture⁹.

Laura explains that no gentlemen callers come for her, since she is not as popular as her mother once was. Tom groans. Laura tells Tom that their mother is afraid that Laura will end up an old maid. The lights dim as what the stage directions term "the 'Glass Menagerie' music". Now, the implied reader starts his cultural self-representation, negotiating the different meanings and manipulating the themes of the play, and enjoying at the same time reading by learning extensively from it.

The reader of that play can become an excellent implied reader especially if he acts it or works on its major themes like **Escape**, Tom wishes to escape from his life, just as the magician escaped from the coffin. He is most impressed by the magician's ability to escape without destroying the box or removing a single nail, and he marvels that anyone can accomplish such a feat. Tom's goal is to likewise extricate himself from his life without damage to the coffin that is his family – Amanda and Laura make him feel buried alive – but in the end this turns out to be impossible. Tom escapes, but he remains haunted by the memory, a bent nail forever poking at his conscience. Laura and Amanda, on the other hand, have no possibility of escape - they are both trapped in that coffin by financial insecurity and lack of social opportunity, but Amanda feels it most acutely because it is she who has known and can imagine the outside world. Ultimately, Tom realizes that escape cannot come without an internal price - that there is no such thing as freedom without a terrible cost¹⁰.

Also, the theme of **Responsibility to family that** is the principal tension in the Wingfield family who is accountable for, and to whom. Tom struggles the most with his role as the breadwinner and caretaker of the family, as it keeps him from expressing himself and living his own life. But Amanda also feels the strain of having a daughter that she will always have to care for, and this is the fear that motivates her desperate search for a husband on which to foist Laura. Mr. Wingfield escapes his responsibility by running away without a

trace, while Laura, on the other side of the spectrum, is responsible only for her little glass animals, leaving Tom and Amanda to carry the weight. Try as Tom might, this responsibility is not something easily shirked. Although he ceases to be responsible for his family when he leaves them, he never stops feeling responsible to them¹¹.

In addition, Each member of the Wingfield family has experienced **abandonment**¹². As a unit, they were all abandoned by Mr. Wingfield when he left the family, but this especially applies to Amanda – for her, being abandoned by her husband meant being abandoned by her childhood understanding of men and the world. Laura has been abandoned by the world at large, falling into her own quiet little rhythm outside the perimeter of everyday society. Jim, her one entrance into the real world, also deserts her, pushing her farther back into a hermetic existence. Finally, Tom fears being abandoned by his dreams and goals, and chooses instead to abandon his family the way his father did – becoming another looming absence in the Wingfield family, tantamount to the man whose portrait hovers over the sitting room.

What's more, Laura's high school nickname (Blue Roses) symbolizes her outcast status – delicate and beautiful as a rose, but of an impossible, non-existent form. This symbolism contrasts with her mother's connection to jonquils, or daffodils – a beautiful yet commonplace flower. Laura, the blue rose, is a misfit, something that can't exist in the real world, no matter how lovely it is as an idea. This symbol also extends to the glass unicorn, a figure that is also beautiful and impossible, and easily broken. Laura, however, is impossibly passive, as well, unable to fit into or take initiative in the normal world. No matter how beautiful or delicate she is, the world rejects her and ultimately will leave her all alone, unappreciated¹³.

Then we come to Amanda, she is caught up in the **illusion** of her genteel old Southern upbringing, which has taught her that a man will support a woman and that there are certain foolproof rules for snagging one. Her experience, however, proves this to the contrary - specifically, when her husband runs out on the family and leaves her to fend for herself, and later when Laura's shyness prevents her from normal socialization. Still, Amanda never stops believing that a gentleman will soon call upon her and make everything right. At the same time, she inflicts these illusions and reality on her children - insisting that if Tom finds a husband for Laura, it will take care of all their problems. The idea that Tom can solve all their

problems with a replacement is itself an illusion, one that's quickly eradicated by reality once he brings home a caller for Laura¹⁴.

The Glass Menagerie is a memory play, and Tom makes it clear from the beginning that we are seeing events through the lens of his memories, heightening emotions and drawing out significances as memories do. We are also privy, however, to memories within memories – the recollections of Amanda as she speaks of her girlhood, and her futile attempts to relive it. Even Jim is trapped in a cycle of memory, as he yearns to recapture the glory days of his high school career and becomes attached to those who remember him from that time. In the end, however, we are left with the haunting image of Tom's last memories, as he describes the figure of Laura following him through the rest of his guilt-stricken life¹⁵.

Here we come to the **symbol** of shattering glass that is used in two contrasting yet prominent ways in Williams' script. The first time a glass animal is broken corresponds to the shattering of illusions – Tom's angry speech about where he goes at night, and the Wingfields' first realization that he will inevitably leave them. But when the unicorn breaks, it is in a moment of rare confidence for Laura, as she is dancing with Jim. In that case, the breaking of the glass is a breaking of the shell that holds her in – and the piercing of a hole in her defenses that welcomes a great amount of pain. In the end, Tom reveals in his final recollections that he will forever associate his sister with bits of colored glass behind shop windows – glass hidden (protected?) behind more glass, something too delicate to touch the outside world¹⁶.

Now let's study the crucial idea of the play which is the essence of whole plot: the gentleman caller, which, in the text, appears 19 times. The word “gentleman” always creates the image of a courteous man who escorts a lady, who opens the door and pulls the seat for a lady... In a word, there are lots of gentlemanlike behaviors. Just as the gentlemen Amanda recollects she once entertained when she was young:

“There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice-president of the Delta Planters Bank. Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds...” (Scene One)

All of them were rich and enjoyed a relatively carefree life. But remember, gentleman is for a lady, who is culturally cultivated, witty and graceful.

Now let's examine the word “caller”, it has at the back the social manners of people's dealings with one another: to call on one's house and be entertained, usually for a short time. So the caller is the person who pays a short visit. In our common sense, if a person calls at

someone's house, it's natural for him/her to have some particular purpose in mind. And this does not necessarily always become visible in our mind. For Amanda, she only cares one aspect in "the gentleman caller": to pursue her daughter and it would be better that the pursuit ends up in marriage. She puts all her hope on a *gentleman caller* who would fall in love with Laura and take care of her. She wants Laura to be well prepared and in her good condition for a gentleman caller.

"Resume your seat, little sister—I want you to stay fresh and pretty—for gentleman callers" (**Scene One**)!

She saved money to let Laura learn typewriting so that her daughter could have a skill to support herself. Unfortunately, Laura got sick and left the school without telling her. After that, Amanda is more desperate and more obsessed with the idea of finding a gentleman for her.

"After the fiasco at Rubicam's Business College, the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura began to play a more and more important part in Mother's calculations" (**Scene Two**).

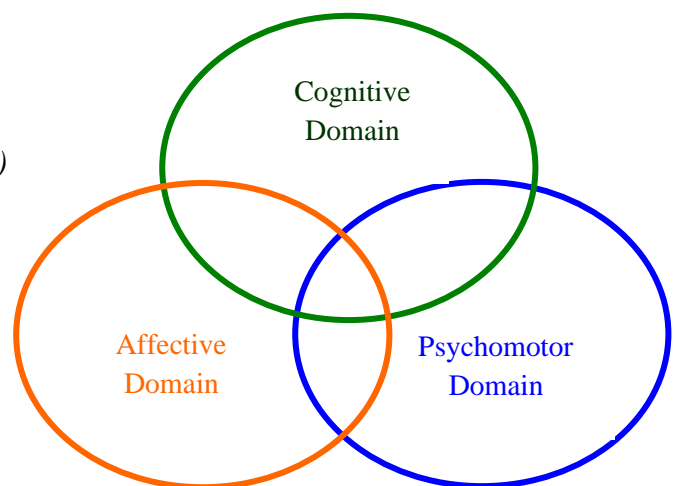
"Like some archetype of the universal unconscious, the image of the gentleman caller haunted our small apartment" (**Scene Three**).

But there are some things that she ignores: that the time has changed and the society is undergoing some changes, and that her daughter Laura is not a lady in its proper sense: she is not eloquent, she is not gracious and she is not even healthy both physically and mentally. The disability of Laura gives her a little chance to have a gentleman pursuing her. Thus, the phrase seems to be a bad sign that even one comes; he would not stay long, just as it turns out in **Scene Seven** *"The gentleman caller has made an early departure."* Jim, the supposed savior for Laura has already engaged to another girl and takes an early departure when realizing the purpose of the dinner.

My second and last example is the short story "Eveline" in "Dubliners" by the Irish writer James Joyce, an interesting story of a girl, Eveline, a prisoner and victim of the patriarchal system of the society. As an implied reader, the student would enjoy reading only within his/her self cultural representation especially female readers¹⁷.

According to Benjamin Bloom taxonomy¹⁸, there is more than one type of learning. Benjamin Bloom identified three domains of educational activities that we find very helpful in our teaching of English literature within the implied reader context:

1. Cognitive Domain : Mental skills (*Knowledge*)
2. Affective Domain: Growth in feelings or emotional areas (*Attitude*)
3. Psychomotor Domain: Manual or physical skills (*Skills*)



In higher education, the words tend to be a little bigger than we normally use. Literature Domain can be thought of as categories. Trainers often refer to these three domains as KSA (Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude)¹⁹. This taxonomy of learning behaviors can be thought of as "the goals of the training process." That is, after the training session, the learner should have acquired new skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes. By following Bloom's taxonomy point we can organize our course of literature successfully ***but our students should read first!*** In order to benefit from applying Bloom's Taxonomy and come rightly to the first step that is of acquiring **Knowledge**²⁰. some brain actions should be done like:

- remembering;
- memorizing;
- recognizing;
- recalling identification and
- recall of information
 - Who, what, when, where, how ...?
 - Describe
 - Summarize

Therefore, it is necessary to underline and center attention on **the Reading Competence**. The practicality of the whole matter is in the logical answer to this question: To whom is assigned the responsibility of organizing the process? In fact, reading is the responsibility of both the teacher and the student. How? Indeed, it can be overwhelming to read and analyze an entire book with long pages for both teacher and student. Hence, the teacher is asked to select key passages of the literary text and help his/her students move

ahead and focus on the narrator's intentions about characters, their own verbal communication and conversations, then finally come to character analysis. I call this **the competence of Deduction and assumption** For example: Scene 1

Amanda: one Sunday afternoon in blue mountain- your mother received- seventeen-gentleman callers! Why, sometimes ther weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

Also in **Scene 5**

Amanda: No, I don't have secrets 'I'll tell you what I wished for on the moon. Success and happiness for my precious children! I wish for that whenever there's a moon, and when there isn't a moon, I wish for it too.

Also in **Scene 4**

Amanda: that's what frightened me so, that you'd be drinking! Eat a bowl of Purina!

Tom: No, No mother, just coffee

Amanda: you can't put in a day's work on an empty stomach. You've got ten minutes- don't gulp! Drinking too-hot liquids makes cancer of the stomach. Put cream in

Tom: no, thank you

Amanda: To cool it.

Tom: no, no, thank you, I want it black

A thoughtful and careful reading would lead us to obviously deduce that

- ✓ *Amanda is not realist, and lives in the illusions of her past*
- ✓ *Superstitious even though she is a good Christian*
- ✓ *Caring*
- ✓ *Convoyed with time and medicine*
- ✓ *Modern (coffee with cream cooling it, is named today cappuccino!), etc...*

The characteristics of characters are many and can be deduced easily along the different scenes). Deduction competence can be acquired successfully thanks to Comprehension²¹ that is observed in

- a) Interpreting;
- b) Translating From One Medium To Another;
- c) Describing In One's Own Words through adjectives;
- d) Organization And Selection Of Facts And Ideas
- e) Retell...

Creating a unique, original product in verbal form is not a mean task. The combination of ideas to form a new whole is a real proof of creativity and that is our chief competence: **The Competence of Creativity**²²

2. Systemic Functional Grammar:

University teachers of literature are expected to help students determine the right meanings of a literary text in order to be able to analyze ideas' meaning. First introduced by Halliday (1961; 1985)²³, Systemic Functional Grammar opts to connect a text's grammar and meaning. This theory emphasizes how people construe their realities, communicate, and establish relationships. It had been pointed out by Downing and Locke²⁴, called **the ideational or Experiential metafunction** which in their words "*permits us to encode, both semantically and syntactically, our mental picture of the physical world and the worlds of our imagination*"²⁵.

In practical terms, this perspective is an important tool to carry out an analysis by using grammatical processes like verb phrases, participants, adjectives, adverbials, etc...we use -be and have- to describe, whereas we use action verbs to recount(tell, report or detail)¹. Useful verbs can be used like explain, interpret, outline, discuss, distinguish predict, restate, translate, compare, and describe, etc... creativity as a competence can be achieved through making value decisions about issues, resolving controversies or differences of opinion, development of opinions, and making judgments about the value of ideas and the material at hand perse.

As language users interact to create relationships, modality can be a source, which Thompson (2014) explains clearly:

*If the commodity being exchanged is information, we can refer to the utterance as a **proposition**. In such cases, the modality relates to*

*how valid the information is being presented as in terms of **probability** (how likely it is to be true) or **usuality** (how frequently it is true)...if, on the other hand, the commodity is goods-&-services,we can call the utterance a **proposal**; and then the modality relates to how confident the speaker can appear to be in the eventual success of the exchange. In commands, this concerns the degree of **obligation** on the other person to carry out the command (the scale for the demanded goods & services includes: (**permissible/ advisable/ obligatory**) while in offers it concerns the degree of willingness or inclination of the speaker to fulfill the offer (the speaker may signal: **ability/willingness/determination** ’’²⁶*

Besides the evidence available in the **Interpersonal Metafunction**, the **Textual Metafunction** constructs particular meanings too that help develop possible critical literacy skills. Note that studying the language of the literary text is undoubtedly studying the text linguistically and technically providing students with useful writing skills that enhance their ability to argue and analyze better literary text. As Halliday (2004) states: “*students are learning language, learning through language, and learning about language simultaneously*”²⁷

Conclusion:

This article suggested possible ways for assisting students with literary texts analysis through two theories: the implied reader theory and Systemic functional grammar theory. We provided clues to character analysis and a systematic way to acquire literary competences like the reading competence, the deduction/ Assumption competence and Creativity competence. Once these methods are applied, our students will work on writing their argumentative academic essays smoothly.

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