

Within and Without the Workings of Language in Literary Text Explication: RE-reading William Blake's 'London'

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Abstract

Current trends in the teaching of Literature in English to English as a Second Language Learners show that emphasis is now on the development of the student's ability to manipulate literary texts. This paper examines factors within and without the workings of language in bringing students to the awareness that texts are malleable and that they can be manipulated in the process of meaning making. A Literature teacher who has knowledge of a wide range of possibilities of literary interpretation is better placed to carry students from a literal to an inferential level of comprehension of a text. Stylistics and literary criticism are prerequisites for the teacher's knowledge base. In the discussion, it will be made apparent that stylistics alone cannot address and exhaust literary concerns in a text but that it clears linguistic obstacles for the application of other forms of literary interpretation. „London“, a poem by William Blake (see Appendix) will be used to facilitate this discussion. In achieving the objectives of this paper, the application of literary stylistics and literary criticism on the poem chosen for this discussion should also offer a different perspective of looking at the poem. First, the paper will attempt a conceptualisation of stylistics and how it relates to literary criticism and to factors inherent in the reader in the explication and illumination of literary texts. A simple demonstration of the utility of stylistics and a discussion of its limitations will then ensue.