



CULTURAL APPROACH: A POTENTIAL PEDAGOGY FOR PROMOTING LEARNERS' INSIGHTS INTO CULTURAL ASPECTS IN LITERARY WORKS

Au Xuan Sam¹, Truong Thi Kim Lien² and Thai Cong Dan³

¹Basic Sciences Faculty, Can Tho University of Medicine-Pharmacy, Vietnam

²Department of English Language & Cultures, School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Vietnam

³School of Social Sciences & Humanities, Can Tho University, Vietnam

Article info.

Received date: 23/09/2015

Accepted date: 30/11/2016

Keywords

Cultural approach, culture, literature, literary works, pedagogy, EFL learners

ABSTRACT

*This study would attempt to ascertain the truly inseparable relation between culture (Hofstede, 1997) and literature (Nguyen, 2001) and investigate a potential pedagogy to promote learners' insights into cultural aspects found in literary works. It is a kind of descriptive research which comprises a variety of authors' viewpoints about the relation of culture and literature, what the cultural approach or New Historicism (Dobie, 2001) is, and the analysis of the three selected American stories namely Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853), William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily* (1930) and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1921), based on cultural lenses. This study can also encourage the application of a cultural approach as a potential pedagogy (Pham and Nguyen, 2001). The research would inspire teachers to conduct further research to test both the effectiveness of this approach in teaching literature and the students' attitudes towards it.*

Cited as: Sam, A.X., Lien, T.T.K. and Dan, T.C., 2016. Cultural approach: A potential pedagogy for promoting learners' insights into cultural aspects in literary works. *Can Tho University Journal of Science*. Vol 4: 114-127.

1 INTRODUCTION

We all know the usefulness to gain knowledge of cross cultures. In fact, understanding various cultures is necessary for one to avoid culture shock and misunderstanding in communication and to know more about the world beyond his or her own from the aspects of lifestyles to thinking. Moreover, when globalization makes the earth become smaller, the lack of knowledge of culture is very dangerous. Especially, for ones who have learnt a foreign language, how to get insights into the culture of the language they are studying is the problem that they should take into account because culture is considered as one of the indispensable factors to master a language.

As a result of that, people pay more attention to study culture. At many foreign language faculties, cultural studies indeed become the main subject in the syllabus. There are a lot of valuable suggestions contributing effectiveness of learning culture. As teachers, we would also like to know different methods. Ideally, it is wonderful to go abroad to visit the foreign country you like and absorb its culture directly. However, it is not easy to do so because most of the learners cannot afford the living expenses. Until now, the most prevalent learning way is studying culture with textbooks. However, is it really the only effective way? The students sometimes complain that after a short time, they nearly forget most cultural details presented in the textbooks because textbooks cannot give them the lively imagination in which these events were

put into contexts with the specific characters and places.

The authors had the opportunity to learn and teach the course called “*Introduction to Literature*”. The following years, the authors continued to work with “*English literature and American literature course*”. They realize that literature is really culture bound. Besides helping us improve our language skills and personal growth, it gives us a cultural enrichment. Furthermore, many scholars confirmed the relationship between literature and culture in particular. These findings above pushed us to conduct this research to find out the answers to two following *research questions*: (1) Are culture and literature inseparable? And (2) Is there a potential pedagogy for promoting learners’ insights into cultural aspects in literary works? The research aims at two goals; firstly, it aims to find out the relationship between culture and literature. Secondly, it aims at investigating a potential pedagogy for promoting learners’ insights into cultural aspects in literature. Thereby, we hope to propose a useful pedagogy implication in teaching literature.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Culture?

Culture can be understood through the following definitions:

- Culture is knowledge, beliefs, behavior shared by a group of people.
- Culture is a shared system of perceptions and values, or a group of people who shared a certain system of perceptions and values.
- Culture is the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings transmitted from one generation to another.
- Culture is an identifiable group with shared beliefs, and experiences, feelings of worth and value attached to those experienced and shared interest in a common historical background.

According to Hofstede (1997), every person carries within him or her patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting, which were learned throughout their lifetime. Such patterns are called mental programs or “software of the mind”. ‘Culture’ is a catchword for all those patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. In most Western languages ‘culture’ commonly means ‘civilization’ or ‘refinement of the mind’ and in particular the results of such refinement, like education, art, and literature. It is culture in the narrow sense; that Hofstede sometimes calls it ‘culture one’. However, there is another word which is broader used among social anthropologists: this is ‘culture two’. ‘Culture two’

includes not only those activities supposed to refine the mind but also the ordinary things in life: greeting, eating, showing or not showing feelings, keeping a certain physical distance from others or maintaining body hygiene and what one does with these feelings, how one expresses fear, joy, observations, and so on is modified by culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one’s social environment, not from one’s genes.

2.2 The relationship between culture and language

Language and culture is a bilateral relationship with many subtle aspects. This inseparable relationship between culture and language is clearly stated by many scholars. Whorf (1995) viewed it in the same manner “*Language is culture. Culture is controlled by and control language*”. Do (2002), the teacher at Ha Noi University of Foreign Studies, Vietnam, presented many persuasive ideas in his article English Teaching to Vietnamese through American Culture in the proceedings of Contemporary Approaches to American Culture:

It is also understood that language is the principle means by which we conduct our social lives. When it is used in the context of communication, it intersects with culture in multiple and complex ways.

Language expresses cultural reality

When people talk, they produce words that refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. Words also reflect their author’s attitude and beliefs, point of view, and also those of others.

Language embodies cultural reality

People do not only use language to express experience. They use it to create new ones. They give meaning to experience through the medium they choose to communicate with one another. For example, it is speaking on the phone or face-to-face, writing a letter or sending an e-mail message. The way in which people use the spoken, written, or visual medium itself creates meanings that are understandable between them, through a speaker’s tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions, for example.

Language symbolizes cultural reality

Language is a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language. They view their language as a symbol of their social identity”

2.3 What is literature?

Traditionally set apart from other kinds of discourse, literature has been defined by the Webster's Universal Unabridged Dictionary (1994) as all writings in prose or verse, especially those of an imaginative or critical character. Although this definition still is incomplete, it does highlight the presence of two major features of literature: its language and its imaginative character. When these two elements are combined, they produce a fictional world that reflects and evokes reality (Gillespie *et al.*, 1994).

2.4 The relationship between culture and literature

For the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (n.d), the function of literature is to search for the meaning of life and to speculate about the role of human beings in the world. With this statement, it is obvious that by reading many literary works, besides knowing the beauty of the language and its power, we can know different cultures of different countries, the lifestyle of all kinds of people, and have a deeper understanding of other ways of life, even our own lives. In fact, literature itself is deeply rooted in the culture of a nation. It provides a common knowledge by which people can talk, share information and experiences. Thereby, it is the reason why for a long time literature is considered as a means to announce and flaunt one's culture. When we read the anthologies, we can travel to the world beyond our own, engage in a conversation among cultures, explore unfamiliar traditions, and evaluate human relationships. These things gave us better understanding of the meanings of community our own pluralistic society and the multicultural society (Gillespie *et al.*, 1994). Having the same idea, Dobie (2001) confirmed that readers can perceive another way of life, another culture when they position texts on the background of social and political information of the times, in which they were produced or in the context of biography. With regard to the relationship between the literature and culture, Anh (2001) also recognized that literature is perhaps best seen as a complement to other materials used to increase the foreign learner's insight into the country whose language is being learnt. Clearly, if we are good readers, we can find in literature social significance outside given texts since the effective readers of a literary text can interpret the literature in relation to their own knowledge of themselves and of the world they inhabit. Many educators have encouraged the use of literary works as a means to provide context for teaching cultural aspects. Dobie

(2001) expressed, "literature is a particularly productive means by which a culture can call attention to itself and assert its significance and worth". Basinet and Mounfold (1993) stated, "Literary texts are cultural documents, which offer a deeper understanding of a country or countries", clearly, studying of literature is seen as an opportunity for a better understanding of the culture, which it embodies, or for better intellectual experiences. Thus, in order to have a complete view about the world, we cannot ignore the importance of literature.

Literature reflects the country's cultural values as well as different aspects of society through setting, characters, story plot, and symbolic meanings. It is true that the world of a novel, play, or short story is a created one, but it offers a full and vivid context in which characters from many social backgrounds can be depicted. A reader can discover not only the characters' thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions but also what the characters buy, believe in, fear, enjoy and how the characters speak and behave. Huong (2001) stated "A story reflects a writer's a vision about life. Life is brought into stories through the way that writers conceive of life. Life, thus, can be represented differently through different writers' way of looking at life". Besides, Anh (2001) gave a persuasive argument, in which she said this vividly imagined world can quickly give the foreign reader an access to the codes and preoccupations that structure a real society. Also, Gillespie *et al.* (1994) showed, "atmosphere and imagery provide insights into events that we have not experienced directly". In this sense, literature can be defined as a vehicle that will help us broaden our experience and discover more about ourselves as well as the meaning of life.

2.5 The possibility of studying culture by means of literary works

Gillespie *et al.* (1994) pointed out that reading these literary works is a good way to gain more knowledge about culture for they are social documents that reflect the local of their origins, reflect and affect the world that produces them. Also, writer and critic Robert Scholes used to emphasize that "learning to read books-or pictures or films-is not just a matter of learning to read, it is a matter of learning to read or write a texts of our lives". In summary, after devoting time to read stories, it seems to be clear that readers can participate in the writers' experiences, in life, which is reproduced in the literary works, and "increase their insight and awareness of life" (Nguyen, 2001). Thus, we can strongly believe that finding culture enrichment in literary works is within our reach.

Moreover, reading the literary works is very interesting because those works fascinate us. We are intrigued by the way the language recreates world and allows us to see the familiar world in impressive ways. In addition, not only can it bring a good impression to us but it also affects us emotionally for "Literature makes us think and it makes us feel" (Pham and Nguyen, 2001). Besides, to a certain extent, literature can serve as a tool to express a feeling and emotion, especially when the works is written by a good writer. It fosters the personal involvement in readers, which is one of the factors that make cultural features presented through literature more vividly. Many teachers believe that it makes the course more stimulating and promote students' critical thinking. As the result of that, we can have right to hope that studying cultural aspects through literary works will motivate the students and they will study it effectively when recognizing that the carefully chosen materials which they work with in particular and what they do in literature class in general are relevant and meaningful in their own lives (Nguyen, 2001).

In short, language is culture and literature is a well-used language. Therefore, it is possible to study culture in literature for the fact that language, literature and culture are truly inseparable. Gillespie *et al.* (1994) strongly believe that through language, especially through a person's word, we can understand people of other cultures, creeds, or races. From the same point of view, in his article "Text Before Context: Teaching Literature Anonymously", Ulf Dantanus (n.d) also figured out that literature is a part of culture that comes with the language you are studying.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research questions

The followings are our research questions: (1) Are culture and literature inseparable? And (2) Is there a potential pedagogy for promoting learners' insights into cultural aspects in literary works?

3.2 Research aims

The research, *first*, intends to find out the relationship between culture and literature. *Second*, it aims at investigating a potential pedagogy for promoting learners' insights into cultural aspects in literature. Thereby, the authors hope to propose a useful pedagogy implication in teaching literature.

3.3 Materials

Critical essays, books, journals, websites and three American literary works: Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1853), William Faulkner's A

Rose for Emily (1930) and Kate Chopin's The Awakening (1921).

3.4 Procedure of the study

The descriptive research was conducted. The essays, writings, journals, articles and websites related to this topic, mainly from books and on the Internet, were carefully chosen, thoughtfully consulted and critically analyzed to provide the persuasive answers for the research questions.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 A potential pedagogy: Cultural Approach to Literature

That the previous section proves the truly inseparable relationship between culture and literature confirms the background for a cultural approach to literature, the potential pedagogy for promoting learners' insights into cultural aspects in literary works. Besides, we can study cultural features by means of literary works effectively by reading the texts through literary theory, namely New Historicism.

4.1.1 Investigation into an approach to study culture through literature

In order to discover cultural features in literature effectively, at first we should choose the appropriate works and see the texts through the appropriate literary lenses. How can we read effectively? Barnett and Cain (2003) stated that the professional critics often read texts through the lens of a particular theory. It is also important to remember that works of literature are highly varied and that we read them for various purposes, so it is best to respond to each text in the way that the text seems to require rather than to read all texts according to a single formula. In fact, on the basis of the literary criticism, we can read the works in a more effective, thoughtful, prepared, and memorable way. Critical approaches to literature reveal how or why a particular work is constructed and what its social and cultural implications are. Understanding critical perspectives would help us, readers, to see and appreciate a literary work as a multilayer construct of meaning. Reading literary criticism would inspire us to reread, rethink, and respond so as to become a full participant in an endless and enriching conversation about literature. Also, Dobie (2001) pointed out that when we make our way through the schools of criticism discuss here, we will be dealing with complex ways of reading, analyzing, and interpreting literature that ask us to think long and deeply. And if we approach them with a willingness to master their principles, to apply their strategies, to make informed choices

about their validity and effectiveness, they will help us discover the inexhaustible richness of reading critically.

4.1.2 Introduction to New historicism: culture as context

At present, new historicism or “cultural lens” is getting particular notice. Basing on this critical mode, we can take a broad view of human communities in literature.

What is New Historicism?

The new historicism developed during the 1980s. New historicists, like formalists and their critics, acknowledge the importance of the literary text, but they also analyze the text with an eye to history. Hence they are unlikely to suggest that a literary text has a single or easily identifiable historical context. New Historicism is an approach to *literary criticism* and literary theory based on the premise that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place, and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation of genius. New Historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through its historical context and to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature, which documented the new discipline of the history of ideas. One of the recurring themes of New Historical theory is that we cannot divide the world into texts in the foreground and history in the background, because they're always mixed up with one another

The principle of New Historicism

(1) New historicists argued that we cannot know texts that separate from their historical context. In fact, it is part of the record of human experience that was formed by the cultural conditions at a particular time and place. Work of literature is no longer read as an autonomous entity.

(2) Each text is only one example of many types of discourses that reveal history, and help us understand culture.

(3) New historicists insisted that there is no "objective" history. In order to maintain pure objectivity in the examination of history, the new historicist would want to hear all the stories, recognize all the voices; even they are obligated to acknowledge the biases that are likely to color their interpretation.

(4) History is an intersection of discourses that establish a dominant ideology. It is by hearing the repressed discourse as well as the dominant ones that the historian is able to discover complex relationships among ideologies that eventually provide

an interpretation of what the stories of the past mean.

(5) Culture is dynamic, with unstable, changing concepts of what is good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable. This approach treats literature as a participant in a dynamic, changeable culture.

(6) The new historicists also challenge the existence of what is referred to as “the spirit of an age”. Recognizing that any culture is made up of many disparate and conflicting strands, they denied that there is ever a single, unified worldview operating a given period. There was not, and there is never a single history or a single worldview. Instead, many discourses come together in a complex cultural interaction.

(7) Literature becomes one of many interactive discourses. To best understand a text, one should look at all sorts of other texts of the time, including social practice (as a kind of text). Reading any single one renders an incomplete picture; understanding multiple documents requires piecing them together to produce an interpretation

Methods

(1) Literary interpretation involves acknowledging all the social concerns that surround a text. It looks to a greater variety of "discourses": social features, customs, institution, political, religious, and artistic aspects to help explain the text, and (2) New Historicists investigate: the life of the author, social rules found within the text the manner in which the text reveals an historical situation, and the ways in which other historical texts can help us understand the texts. And (3) Criticisms of this approach: (a) Since the true center of analysis is history, New Historical critics sometimes do not pay close attention to the actual text, (b) Some historians criticized the limited sampling of texts used to explain/elucidate the text. Some New Historicists can be accused of hasty generalizations. As a result, interpretations made from a cultural studies perspective tend to be open-ended and continue to evolve as they are affected by new information. New Historicists considered everything to be text, and hence everything is open to criticism.

The analysis of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *A Rose for Emily* and *The Awakening* for exploring cultural features in 19th century American literature

American literature reflects vividly the diversity of its culture with plenty of great works. These three literary works are chosen because they depict a lot of cultural aspects of American society during the important periods in American history.

Pre- Civil War and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

In his book called "A Nation of Immigrants", John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, pointed out, "Every American who ever lived... was either an immigrant himself or a descendant of immigrants". They came from everywhere. In addition to their skills, "immigrants brought their native customs and beliefs – political and social theories, religions, academic traditions, holidays, festivals, sports, arts, hobbies, foods- and by doing so, they greatly enriched American culture" (Ethel and Tiersky, 2001). That Americans have adopted many of the customs and ideas of the immigrants as their own made the American culture diversified. In a colorful picture made of many different pieces, the African Americans play an important role, although in the past, they came to the U.S "not as willing immigrants, but against their will"¹. Let's consider their life by reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a famous story that we learnt in the American literature course.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is the great works written "with the heart's blood". Harriet Beecher Stowe received the idea of the novel-in a vision of an old, ragged slave being beaten-as she participated in a church service. Though Stowe absorbed a great deal of information about slavery during her Cincinnati years, she nonetheless conducted extensive research before writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She wrote to Frederick Douglass² and others for help in creating a realistic picture of slavery in the Deep South. Her black cook and household servants also helped by telling her stories of their slave day. Stowe reported that she has been inspired by God to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In this works, she continually emphasizes the importance of Christian love in eradicating oppression. So, with the cultural lens, the readers find useful information.

THE BLACK AMERICAN- PAST AND PRESENT

The story made a sketch of a scene of the particular period of American history. An outstanding feature in that period was the appearance of slavery. One can easily see that at the same space and

time, life between the Black and the White was extremely different. One lived "under a brilliant sky, the stripes and stars of free America waving and fluttering over head"³. The other was in the sad plight. Their slavery life opened with a long tiring journey to different plantations where they had to work exhaustedly. Conditions on ships bring slaves were very bad. People were packed in tightly and there was little to eat and drink. Many died during the trip. "...Haley, pushing his three purchases together, and producing a bundle of handcuffs, which he proceeded to put on their wrists; fastening each handcuff to a long chain, he drove them before him to the jail...(they) were stored, with other freight, on the lower deck"⁴. They were put up for sale and buyers had a chance to look at them and feel them as if they were animals. "Haley here forced his way into the group, walked up to the old man, pulled his mouth open and looked in, felt of his teeth, made him stand and straighten himself, bend his back, and perform various evolutions to show his muscles; and then pass on to the next, and put him through the same trial. Walking up last to the boy, he felt of his arms, straightened his hands, and looked at his fingers, and made him jump, to show his agility"⁵.

At that time, the worst situation was to be sold further down the Mississippi River. So, the word "the South" was their horror nightmare. The expression to sell somebody down the river means to betray his or her trust and leave him or her in difficulties. The threat that terrifies more than whipping or torture of any kind is the threat of being sent down river and working on the cotton plantations of the Deep South means "work for long hours in the fields and received insufficient food, clothing, and shelter... From the earliest dawn of the day, they had been in the field, presses to work under the driving lash of the overseers; for it was now in the very heat and hurry of the seasons;"⁶. In deed, Stowe brought a strong impression to the readers and touched their heart when writing these such moving lines.

¹ Falk R.(1993). *Spotlight on the USA*. New York: Oxford University Press

² Former slave, impassioned abolitionist, brilliant writer, newspaper editors and eloquent orator whose speeches fired the abolitionist cause, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) led an astounding life. Physical abuse, deprivation and tragedy plagued his early years, yet through sheer force of character he was able to overcome these obstacles to become a leading spokesman for his people.

³ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among The Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (The Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 198.

⁴ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among The Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (The Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 198.

⁵ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among The Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (The Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 195.

⁶ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among The Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (The Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 494.

Moreover, besides physical suffering, Stowe “focuses even more dramatically on the emotional horrors inflicted on slaves” (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/christn/chhp.html>). Clearly, the most dreadful part of slavery is the separating of families”. The slave owners often separated Negro families by selling a slave’s husband, wife, or child to different masters and they never see each other again. This famous novel about slavery, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, emphasized these evils. “I saw my mother put up at sheriff’s sale, with her seven children. They were sold before her eyes, one by one, all to different masters; and I was the youngest. She came and kneeled down before old Mas’r, and begged him to buy her with me, that she might have at least one child with her; and he kicked her away with his heavy boot. I saw him do it; and the last that I heard was her moans and screams, when I was tied to his horse’s neck, to be carried off to his place. I grew up, -long years and years, - no father, no mother, no sister, not a living soul that cared for me more than a dog; nothing but whipping, scolding, starving. Why, sir, I’ve been so hungry that I have glad to take the bones they threw to their dogs; and yet, when I was a little fellow, and laid awake whole nights and cried, it wasn’t the hunger, it wasn’t the whipping, I cried for. No, sir, it was for my mother and my sisters, -it was because I hadn’t a friend to love me on earth”. One of the miserable consequences of that is some mothers killed her children rather than allowed people to sell them apart “...last summer, down on Red river, I got a gal on me, with a likely lookin’ child enough, and his eyes looked as bright as yourn; but, come to look, I found him stone blind... and I’ got him nicely swapped off for a keg o’ whiskey; but come to get him away from the gal, she was jest like a tiger...she do but ups on a cotton-bale, like a cat, ketches a knife from one of the deck hands, and I tell ye, she made all fly for a minit, till she saw’t wan’t no use, and she jest turns around; and pitches head first, young un and all, into the river, - went down plump, and never ris”⁷. The women’s sins were presented here as illustrating slavery’s evil influence.

The White thought that they had right to control over what happened to their slaves. In their opinion, two races were different, and so treatment that would not be good for Whites was all right for Blacks. In the 19th century, the Blacks were not offered protection. “...Where you going to get witnesses? -how you going to prove it? -Come, now!”

⁷ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or Life Among The Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (The Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 125.

George saw, at once, the force of this defiance. There was not a white person on the place; and, in all southern courts, the testimony of colored blood is nothing...⁸. So, the image of the master, mistress or overseer beating a slave occurs often, even they were beaten to die.

No one can deny that the Blacks also have the family sentiment, intelligence, bravery, and spiritual strength. Despite their low social position, black American slaves were often proud and strong-willed, rarely admitting defeat or asking for pity. Their hearts were broken when their family was separated. Their tears came as naturally as the tears of a white man. And, people who had a progressive outlook recognized this segregation. Therefore, the opposition to slavery grew. They made real effort to free slaves in particular and end slavery in general. Harriet Beecher Stowe reported “the reaction of the first “readers” of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, her own two sons, to whom she read the scene aloud: “Oh! Mamma, slavery is the most cursed thing in the world!” (<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/christn/chhp.html>). So, “...as the law considers all these human beings, with beating hearts and living affections, only as so many things belonging to a master, - so long as the failure, or misfortune, or imprudence, or death of the kindest owner, may cause them any day to exchange a life of kind protection and indulgence for one of hopeless misery and toil – so long it is impossible to make anything beautiful or desirable in the best regulated administration of slavery”⁹. Stowe was one of the writers who contributed effectively in the abolition movement by this great novel. Many historians have credited the novel with contributing to the outbreak of the Civil War. When she was introduced to president Lincoln, he said, “So, this is the little lady who made this big war”.

Post- Civil War in William Faulkner’s *A Rose for Emily*

In 1865, the Civil War between the Union and the Confederacy ended. Since then, many changes have pressed on the South. The “old South’ no longer existed. Slavery was erased. So, people could not own slaves as they had in the past. “The South’s outdated plantation economy, based so long upon slave labor, was devastated by emancipation” (<http://www.enotes.com/rose-emily/7079>).

⁸ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or Life Among The Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (The Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 592.

⁹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin or Life Among The Lowly*, ed. Ann Douglas (The Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 51.

They could not survive anymore simply by belonging to a family with an august name. "Some Southern aristocrats found themselves working the land alongside tenant farmers and former slaves" (<http://www.enotes.com/rose-emily/7079>). However, such a great change did not happen overnight. While people gradually forget the past, some retrospective survivors of the Old South still resist these changes, even they "deny changing the customs and the passage of time" (http://www.andover.edu/library/AcadInteg/rose_emily.htm). In William Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily*, we are shown the transition from the Old South to New South as it takes place in the little town of Jefferson.

The South after the Civil War

Jefferson was part of the Confederacy where many well-off families who were members of the Old South's aristocratic class inhabited, and fought to preserve the tradition of slavery. The racial discrimination still existed. In particular, Colonel Sartoris, "a character we assume was a veteran of the Civil War" (<http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/c7750.htm>), enforced his edict upon Negro woman. They had to appear on the streets with an apron. We can see the remains of the Old South through its reconstruction. The house was a big, squarish frame one that "had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most selected street". It was left, "*lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps*". The dust covered the house, which like the dust of tradition. The last true living legacy was Miss Emily Grierson. She had rejected the truth in order to retain her world of the past. She kept a black servant, Tobe, who did everything for her such as gardened, cooked, did chores, etc as if he was a slave. The new generation, with modern ideas, wanted to treat her the same way as all the others, so they asked her for taxes. She simply told the authority "*I have no taxes in Jefferson*" and asked them repeatedly to see Colonel Sartoris, even though he "*had been dead for almost ten year*". Clearly, Emily's world was already in the past. She didn't like change and believed "she still held the same place in society as she did in her early days" (<http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/b1390.htm>).

While the town was going through a lot of changes and being developed such as they paved the sidewalks, got free postal delivery, especially everyone was fastened the metal numbers above their door and attached a mail box to it, Miss Emily alone refused to do this. Also, when people started renovating and rebuilding their houses, Miss Emily of

course did not do a single thing that she did not accept that whoever was the new sheriff was another indication of Emily's living in the past. Besides, it is said that members of the Old South had a slower lifestyle. They were very honorable, graceful and above all, dignified. They had great respect for each other and for each other's feeling, and were quick to help one another whenever possible. In deed, dignity was so essential to Miss Emily. She used to be a woman of high social status in her town. Her father kept up appearances as if they were wealthy. When he died, she did the same, and hardly to accept the fact that she was poor and her social status started to decline. "*She carried her head high enough - even when we believed that she was fallen*". Colonel Sartoris and the eighty-year-old mayor, Judge Stevens, also represented the Old South. They protected Emily for she was "*a tradition, a duty, and a care, a sort of hereditary obligation*" of Jefferson. He remitted her taxes because such an aristocratic woman like Miss Emily could not lower herself to accept charity. When a smell developed around Miss Emily's house, the member of the rising generation suggested that "*it is simple enough ...send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don't...*" But for the Judge dealing with the situation, it was not so simple. At that time, Judge Steven irately asked, "*Will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?*" In general, in "A Rose for Emily", Faulkner contrasted the past with the present era. The past was represented in Emily herself, in Colonel Sartoris, in the old Negro servant, and in the Board of Alderman who accepted the Colonel's attitude toward Emily and rescinded her taxes. The present was expressed chiefly through the words of the unnamed narrator, the new Board of Aldermen, Homer Barron, and in what is called "the next generation with its more modern ideas" (Norton Anthology, 2044).

That the government of the old South protected her, and the government of the new South was against her reflected the conflict between the old and the new South, the past and the present, the different view between two generations. The climax of the story is the appearance of Homer Barron. She faced many negative public opinions. At first, the ladies of the town said, "*of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northern*", and the older people, "*said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige-without calling it noblesse oblige*". Then, they began to say it was a disgrace to the town, a bad example to the young people. At last, they "*forced the Baptist minister.... to call upon her*" and the following day, "*the minister's wife wrote to Miss*

Emily's relations in Alabama". Briefly, the whole town considered her behavior bad, and judged her harshly. As a result of that, in order to keep Homer for her forever and maintain her dignity, she killed him. His death helped Emily preserve her pride, honor in particular and kept the Old South alive in general. The story is ended with the death of Emily. When she died, she did so in dignity, "*in a heavy walnut bed with a curtain, her gray head propped on a pillow*". Emily represented a decayed class full of pride in the South after the Civil War. That she died meant a monument, old traditions, and affluent upper class position collapsed. Her death freed to be. Also, with her death, Emily, a symbol of a whole town, carried with her the old South, leaving behind the old men-some in their brushed Confederate uniforms and their respectful affection for a fallen monument. That the men were in the Civil war uniforms was a completely evident, which reflected that they had not forsaken its tradition. Like Emily, they carried on that tradition for a long time. Clearly, any change needs time and takes many years to occur.

We can realize another cultural feature in "A Rose for Emily". It is about the women's roles in American society in the 19th century. Like the orient countries, "at one time in American society, women were not permitted to own property, were discouraged from seeking higher education and were relegated to home and hearth. Men were hunter and women were gatherers" (<http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/c1398.htm>). In fact, they were oppressed and usually controlled by men. American traditional woman living in a patriarchal society depended absolutely on their fathers or husbands for almost everything. And, "Emily was the perfect example of a woman alienated by a society and by men who make trouble for her instead of helping her" (<http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/a9844.htm>). In particular, when she was young, she could not choose a lover for herself because of her father's arrogance. He drove all young man away from her for he thought, "*none of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such*". After her father's death, she still had not enough power to control her life. When she fell in love with Harmer, she found it extremely difficult to face social barriers. The townspeople thought she could not marry Homer who is social inferior, "a daily labor". Clearly, we should sympathize with such women who had to suffer the pressure from the society in the past.

Creole women in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*

The U.S is a nation of immigrants. Immigrants from all over the world come to this country and bring their native customs, traditions, and living style to America. This is a reason why a homesick immigrant from anywhere can probably find a place in the U.S. that is similar to his or her native land. We often hear that California have large Vietnamese populations, Chinese live in the Chinatown in San Francisco, New York, Boston and in many other states in the North of American, and Mexicans become major in Los Angeles, etc. By reading Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, we will know other settlements in New Orleans, that is, the Creoles and their culture.

Creole Women

Who are Creoles? They are the descendants of French or Spanish, born in Louisiana. "The first white settlers of Louisiana were French, usually the second born sons of aristocrats who left France to seek adventure in the New World. They brought their traditional style of cooking from the continent, and being rich aristocrats, they also brought along their chef as well! These Frenchmen came to be called Creoles, and made up the upper crust of New Orleans. Their descendents can still be found in the French Quarter today" (<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/Louisiana/creole.htm>). They are carefree and live with an easy-going attitude. They love to dance, gamble, fish, and attend feasts. Especially, "the Creoles women are artistic by nature, they paint and play and sing. They talk well and are good at repartee"¹⁰. Like other immigrants, they usually speak two languages, French being their mother tongue. So, it is not surprising when recognizing that the Creoles' speak is mixture of English and French. In *The Awakening*, on almost every page, we can see that the Creoles cut in from time to time with many French words in their speech. Until now, it is said that Creoles still possess what money cannot buy-the chivalry of their men and the grace and beauty of their women. According to Mary L. Shaffter, "there live no lovelier girls than those one meets in Creole society in New Orleans. Such figures, little yet full, such shapely heads, with crowns of glossy black hair, such a clear olive complexion, and great dark eyes, which speak before the arched red lips, - who can condemn the heart that is taken captive by the bewitching beauty of la belle Creole?"¹¹. In fact, in her works, Kate Chopin describes the beau-

¹⁰ Mary L. Shaffter, *The Awakening* – Kate Chopin, ed. Margo Culley, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.137.

¹¹ Mary L. Shaffter, *The Awakening* – Kate Chopin, ed. Margo Culley, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.137.

ty of Madame Adele Ratignolle, a Creole woman, using vibrant adjectives and lucid images, which make a strong impression and create a very poetic feeling and sound picture in the reader's mind. "Many of them were delicious in the role; one of them was the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm. If her husband did not adore her, he was a brute, deserving of death by slow torture. Her name was Adele Ratignolle....There was nothing subtle or hidden about her charms; her beauty was all there, flaming and apparent: the spun-gold hair that comb nor confining pin could restrain; the blue eyes that were like nothing but sapphires; two lips that pouted, that were so red one could only think of cherries or some other delicious crimson fruit in looking at them."¹² When Edna come to Adele's house, she feel that "Madame Ratignolle looked more beautiful than ever there at home in a negligee which left her arms almost wholly bare and exposed the rich, melting curves of her white throat"¹³.

What are Creole women's characteristics like? They are very committed wives, and tender, loving mothers. They care for the health and beauty of their children. They center their life at home and spend days caring for their children, performing their domestic duties and ensuring the happiness of their husband. The Creole women can devote themselves exclusively to her husbands and children. Moreover, "She (the Creole woman) should marry once, and, once married, she should be a devoted and dutiful wife even though her husband and her life in general may prove anything but ideal"¹⁴. Mary L. Shaffter (n.d) said that Creole women, as a rule, are good housekeepers, are economical and industrious. In the story, one can easily see that Adele always takes her sewing with her. Also, "It was easy to know them (the Creole women), fluttering about with extended protecting wings when any harm, real or imaginary, threatened their precious brood. They were women who idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angles"¹⁵.

In addition, it is said that Creole culture has many interesting things so that most observers were chiefly impressed with notable differences from their own environments. They, the Creole women, were very conservative; perhaps the most con-

servative group in the nation. However, they were frank and open in discussing their marriages and children. "A characteristic which distinguished them and which impressed Mrs. Pontellier most forcibly was their entire absence of prudery. Their freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible to her..."¹⁶ Adele is the epitome of this type of woman. We can see her free manner of speech. "Never would Edna Pontellier forget the shock with which she heard Madame Ratignolle relating to old Monsieur Farival the harrowing story of one of her accouchement withholding no intimate details. She was growing accustomed to like shocks, but she could not keep the mounting color back from her cheeks. Oftener than once her coming had interrupted the droll story with which Robert was entertaining some amused group of married women"¹⁷. It can be interpreted that Adele and her fellow Creole women could do so because they are so clearly chaste and irreproachably moral, so that society allows them to speak openly on such matters as pregnancy, undergarments, and romantic gossip. Their very moral nature "with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable"¹⁸ did not allow doubt about their dignity.

One can easily see that in a country like the U.S where there is a settlement of many immigrants, cultural exchanges will occur. They exchange cultural values which integrate their own culture into local community in order to establish a mutual affection. However, sometimes they could not understand each other because the cultural pattern is too different. The Awakening in some ways reflects the clash of two cultures, and Edna is a fine example of this common phenomenon. She is not a Creole woman. She is a Kentucky Protestant by birth and "an American woman, with a small infusion of French which seemed to have been lost in dilution"¹⁹. The Creole culture was very different from hers. Clearly, Edna has been thrown into a very strange culture by virtue of her marriage to Leonce Pontellier. Therefore, due to different background, Creole lifestyle at first surprises her much. In particular, Edna initially finds it difficult to participate in the easy intimacy of the Creoles and did many things with profound astonishment. Their entire absence of prudery impressed her. She at first feel incomprehensible with their freedom of expression, then shock when hearing Madame Ratignolle relating to old Monsieur Farival the harrowing story of

¹² The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter IV.

¹³ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter XVIII.

¹⁴ Marie Fletcher, *The Awakening* – Kate Chopin, ed. Margo Culley, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.195.

¹⁵ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter IV .

¹⁶ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter IV.

¹⁷ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter IV.

¹⁸ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter IV.

¹⁹ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter II.

one of her accouchement withholding no intimate details. Even when she was growing accustomed to like shocks, but she could not keep the mounting color back from her cheeks. "A book had gone the rounds of the pension. When it came to her turn to read it, she did so with profound astonishment. She felt moved to read the book in secret and solitude, though none of the others had done so – to hide it from the view at the sound of approaching footsteps."²⁰ Even the simplest gestures of affection seem to be foreign to her and she becomes confused when Madame Ratignolle touches her hand during a conversation. "Madame Ratignolle laid her hand over that of Mrs. Pontellier, which was near her. Seeing that the hand was not withdrawn, she clasped firmly and warmly. She even stroked it a little, fondly, with the other hand, murmuring in an undertone, "Pauvre Cherie".

Edna is not like "the Creole women in being able to continue as a long suffering, self-sacrificing, faithful, and loyal wife and mother when love is gone"²¹. Besides, in a role of a mother, Edna's view is also different. Her husband always reproaches Edna with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. She is not concerned about winter garments for her sons, in order not to appear unamiable; she cuts a pattern for their drawers. "If one of the little Pontellier boys took a tumble whilst at play, he was not apt to rush crying to his mother's arms for comfort: he would more likely pick himself up, wipe the water out of his eyes and the sand out of his mouth, and go on playing"²². She is only willing to give her time and money but not her inner self to her family. Listen to the "heated argument" between Edna and Adele!

Edna tried to appease her friend, to explain

"I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I would not give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me"

"I don't know what you would call the essential, or what you mean by the unessential," said Madame Ratignolle, cheerfully; "but a woman who would give her life for her children could do more than that."²³

In fact, "the two women did not appear to understand each other or to be talking the same lan-

guage". Next, let's continue with another social aspect. Edna's awakening begins with the flirtation of Robert Lebrun. "It is apparent that this, too, is a part of the society in which Edna finds herself. No one is surprised that Robert is attentive to her-in fact, it is expected, even by Edna's husband. When Edna leaves Mass and goes to Madame Antoine's with Robert, she says, upon the awakening from her snap, 'I wonder if Leonce will be uneasy!' And Robert replies, 'of course not, he knows you are with me'. When Robert leaves for Mexico, everyone seemed to take for that she missed him, even her husband. When Leonce came down the Saturday following Robert's departure, expressed regret that Robert had gone 'How do you get on without him, Edna?' he asked, 'It's very dull without him.' She admitted"²⁴. Kate Chopin has told us that "the Creole husband is never jealous; with him the gangrene passion is one which has been dwarfed by disuse"²⁵. Clearly, the Creole society and its rules allow Robert to flirt with Edna. "Edna's awakening to sensuality- in which Chopin includes music, color, and food- occurs as a direct result of exposure to a society which valued these pleasures much more openly and unashamedly than did the one Edna had been reared in"²⁶. She gradually adapts herself into the circumstances. However, this society also has other rules; that is, they never go beyond the limits. Realizing that the situation could get out of the acceptable boundaries,

Adele warns Robert: "She is not one of us; she is not like us. She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously"²⁷. Unfortunately, this warning is late. It is too hard for her to understand that Robert's care is only the spontaneous caresses of the Creoles. So, again, it is social rules that force Robert to leave. At this time, Edna could not accept that truth. She cannot adapt herself to the reality. Ironically, Edna's nature awakened in the open surroundings of Creole Louisiana, and she is encouraged to develop her sense of freedom in enjoyment. She does so; however, it results in the damage to her marriage and eventually leads to her death. In deed, that Edna has to commit suicide reflects that Edna cannot overcome by herself the strength of the social and its conventions. The sea which at first spoke sensuously to Edna of freedom has become finally the symbol of her liberation-but, also, ironically, of her complete withdrawal

²⁰ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter V.

²¹ Marie Fletcher, The Awakening – Kate Chopin, ed. Margo Culley, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.194.

²² The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter IV.

²³ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter XVI.

²⁴ Nancy Walker, The Awakening – Kate Chopin, ed.

Margo Culley, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.254.

²⁵ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter V.

²⁶ Nancy Walker, The Awakening – Kate Chopin, ed.

Margo Culley, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.256.

²⁷ The Awakening – Kate Chopin, Chapter VIII.

from society, her total isolation.”²⁸ . “Her suicide is the last in a series of rebellions which structure her life, give it pathos, and make of the novel a study in contrasting cultures”²⁹. In fact, now it seems to be difficult for a modern reader to understand the actual limits imposed by the Creole environment and the restraint of the city. To be honest, it is only when I look at the bathing suit for women in these days, I really discern the significance of Edna’s action before she went out into the sea, and at the same time, I can figure out the symbolic meaning of Edna’s swimming suit as well as the challenges the women in late 19th century had to deal with to obtain their personal freedom. “Edna is fully dressed when first introduced; slowly over the course of the novel she removes her clothes. This symbolizes the shedding of the societal rules in her life and her growing awakening and stresses her physical and external self.” (<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/eng384/symbols.htm>). So, once again, it is right to say that this novel is important as an examination of cultural patterns, and especially the collision of two cultures.

The Awakening is also best read with an eye to its historical context. In fact, by considering the era in which the novel is written, we discover that like most of the Orient, women in the Western society also had to suffer much from the social conventions, and unfair treatment. In the Awakening, we also find many details that reflect the fact in the Creole family which help us get some insights into male dominance in the family in 19th century American society where “the father was dominant. His word was law. If he was a planter, he ruled his estate like a king. In general, the men expected their wives to be passive and innocent lovers” (<http://nutrias.org/~nopl/monthly/july97/july97.htm>). ‘You are burnt beyond recognition,’ he added, looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage’³⁰. Mrs. Chopin has shown earlier how the husband uses the children and the mother’s presumed duties toward them as a mean of control and subjugation of the woman. “If it was not a mother’s place to look after children, who’s on earth was it?”³¹ In general, in the society in general and in the family in particular, their roles were not appreciated. What were the duties of the wife? Let’s consider such duties and observances as pertain to her:

They especially devolve the privilege and pleasure of rendering home happy and avoid all causes for complaint. Never let your husband have cause to complain that you are more agreeable abroad than at home; nor permit him to see in you an object of admiration as respects your dress and manners, when in company, while you are negligent of both in the domestic circle. Many an unhappy marriage has been occasioned by neglect in these particulars. Nothing can be more senseless than the conduct of a young woman, who seeks to be admired in general society for her politeness and engaging manners, or skill in music, when at the same time at home, she makes no effort to render her home attractive; and yet that home whether a place or a cottage, is the very centre of her being- the nucleus around which her affections should revolve, and beyond which she has comparatively small concern.

(Chopin and Kate, The Awakening. Ed. Margo Cully. New York: Norton and Co., 1994)

Besides, they were pregnant frequently due to the restrictions on birth control. “Madame Rationale had been married seven years. About every two year she had a baby. At that time she had three babies and was beginning to think of the fourth one.”³² In practice, Kate Chopin is not an exception. She was also constantly pregnant. Needless to say, they had few opportunities for individual expression. Expected to complete their household chores, they are nearly prevented from seeking the satisfaction of their own wants and needs. “It seems to me the utmost folly for a woman at the head of a household, and the mother of children, to spend in an atelier days with would be better employed contriving for the comfort of her family”³³. Finally, they did not have right to do many things because of a simple reason; that is, they are women. In the Awakening, we realize that in Creole eyes, women who break the female behavioral rules are dangerous or mad. Pontellier wonders if his wife’s neglect of household management indicates she is “growing a little unbalanced mentally”. Her husband sees her as “not herself”; Victor Lebrun remarks that she looks “ravishing” and “doesn’t seem like the same woman”. Similarly, with the biographical approach, we can see a severe look, which the society imposed on the women at Kate Chopin time. “Kate Chopin shocked the longtime residents. She would lift her skirts too high, deliberately revealing her ankles, when she crossed the town’s one street; she smoked Cuban

²⁸ John R.May, *The Awakening – Kate Chopin*, ed. Margo Cully, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.212.

²⁹ Marie Fletcher, *The Awakening – Kate Chopin*, ed. Margo Cully, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.194.

³⁰ *The Awakening- Kate Chopin*, Chapter I.

³¹ *The Awakening- Kate Chopin*, Chapter III.

³² *The Awakening- Kate Chopin*, Chapter IV.

³³ *The Awakening- Kate Chopin*, Chapter XIX .

cigarettes and wore fancy riding habits from New Orleans, and many local people tut-tutted”³⁴. It is important to note that “Louisiana was the only state in the nation that operates under a different legal system. The feminist movement of the late nineteenth century did not have much hope in the state. Under the Louisiana Code, patterned after the Napoleonic code of France, a woman belonged to her husband. Therefore, it is easy to understand why the Awakening received the negative reaction for its open discussion of the emotion and sexual needs of women. To a certain extent, everyone agrees the reception The Awakening received indicates the climate of the time. Therefore, it is the reason why it is agreed that in many ways The Awakening encapsulates this struggle and speaks to the painful process that was in store for the country and its women.

In short, Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* is a fruitful example of how a literary work can inspire the students to discover the diversity of the cultural and social contexts of the novel. The novel raises these questions in the readers’ mind “Who are the Creoles?” “What was the role of women in Louisiana in the late 19th century?”, “What were the duties of the wife at home?” etc. Moreover, after reading it, that the characters engraved on the students’ mind will make them still curious and continue to explore more information about the Creoles, and their region. For example, some interesting pictures about their dresses at that time is attached to this writing. Clearly, no one can deny the fact that literature is culture bound and that the literary texts are full of cultural illusions to society and history

5 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Our research has pointed out that culture and literature is truly inseparable. In fact, many authors and educators of different countries proved their reciprocal relation in general and consider the studying of literature as the ideal way to deepen their understanding of culture in particular. As the result of that, the scholars have developed the approach to study literary works in terms of cultural perspective; that is, New Historicism. Hopefully, being equipped with this critical lens, students can get insights into cultural aspects in the literary works they study.

Last but not least, the exciting atmosphere gained from the teachers’ varied methods also activates the learners very much. It makes their study become interesting. It helps students memorize their lessons longer and use them more fruitfully in the real life. Therefore, we hope what has been presented in our research paper will be a very useful reference contributing to the teaching and learning of culture.

5.2 Suggestions

From our research, we are interested in the idea of proposing a useful pedagogy to teach literature in terms of cultural perspective that is the cultural approach. In this method, a literary text is treated as a source of information about the target cultural aspects. Since literary texts are full of cultural illusions to society, politics, and history, the teachers of culture can introduce students to some literary works whose content related to their culture lessons. This method requires the students to read as much as possible. The students’ enthusiasm in joining in the discussion is very important. Moreover, even the teachers must work harder to have a deep knowledge of both culture lessons and literary works. It is because a teacher can set up a successful class only when she or he knows thoroughly what to do with their students and help them employ what this combination offers. Maybe, many difficulties occur at the first, so the English teachers are expected to be patient to gain more experience from the teaching periods in real situations. It is obvious that a successful culture class is made up of great efforts of both the teachers and the students.

Moreover, that the research finding ascertains the possibility of learning culture through literature into consideration some ideas: (1) whether learning selected literary works enhance students’ knowledge of culture; (2) To what extent students get insight into cultural aspects in the literary works they are studying. These will enhance further research to measure the effectiveness of learning culture through literary texts. Besides, the impact of learning selected literary works on students’ knowledge of culture will promote the cultural approach to literature education. Especially, it will raise the awareness for curriculum developers in the two disciplines of cultural studies and English studies. They might take into account some interdisciplinary courses in which literature and culture are combined in a certain class. Therefore, both the teachers of culture and the teachers of literature should work together to design the syllabuses which can benefit students.

³⁴ Biographical and Historical contexts, *The Awakening* – Kate Chopin, ed. Margo Culley, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), p.117.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would, first, like to express their sincere thanks to all the lecturers of English at Can Tho University (CTU) and Can Tho University of Medicine-Pharmacy (CTUMP), Vietnam for their teaching and documents to the thesis. Second, their great thanks would come to administrators, teachers, and students at English Department, School of Social Sciences & Humanities (SSSH), School of Foreign Languages (SFL), CTU, and Basic Sciences Faculty, CTUMP, Vietnam for their encouragements and kind co operations in interviews to the research. And last but not least, their deep thanks would go to Can Tho University Journal Board and peer-reviewers for their supporting this article to be published in order to bring this paper to those interested in Vietnamese education, especially to those interested in literature and cultural issues and teaching and learning English in Vietnamese higher education context as well.

REFERENCES

- "A Rose For Emily" (n.d). Retrieved February 7, 2014, from, <http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/b1390.htm>
- Alvarez, J., 1992. How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents. New York: Penguin Group.
- Christianity and Uncle Tom's Cabin (n.d). Retrieved February 1, 2014, from <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/christn/chhp.html>
- Crowther, J., Kavanagh, K., 1999. Guide to British and American Culture for learners of English. New York: Oxford University Press
- Definition of the New Historicism (n.d). Retrieved March 20, 2014, from, http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/virtualit/poetry/critical_define/crit_newhist.
- Dinh, T.M.H., 1999. American Literature. Education Publishing House
- Dobie, A.B., 2001. Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism. Boston: Thomson Heinle.
- Ethel, T., Tiersky, M., 2001. The USA- Customs and Institution (Dang N.D.T. ed). NXB Tre.
- Falk, R., 1993. Spotlight on the USA. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gillespie, S., Fonseca, T., Sanger, C., 1994. Literature Across Culture. New York: Simon & Scuster, Inc.
- Grierson's house (n.d). Retrieved February 25, 2014, from, <http://vccslitonline.cc.va.us/EmilyForum/Grierson.htm>
- Harriet Beecher Stowe. 1986. Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life among the Lowly (Douglas, A. ed.). New York: Penguin Group Penguin Books USA, Inc.
- History of Ides, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (n.d). Retrieved March 16, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_ideas
- History of the Creoles in Louisiana (n.d). Retrieved February 23, 2014, from, <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/louisiana/creole.htm>
- Hofstede, G., 1997. Cultures and organizations- Software of the mind. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc
- Images of the Month July 1997(n.d). Retrieved February 9, 2014, from, <http://nutrias.org/~nopl/monthly/july97/july97.htm>
- Isolation And Emily Grierson- A Deadly Combination (n.d). Retrieved February 20, 2014, from <http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/a9844.htm>
- Kaston, A., Ephraim, M., Murfin, R., Ray, M.S., Wald, M., 2014. Retrieved March 13, 2014, from, <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.Com/virtualit/poetry/critical.html>
- Kate Chopin. 1994. The Awakening (Culley, M. ed.). New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc.
- Lynch, J. (n.d). New Historicism. Retrieved March 18, 2014, from, <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~jlynch/Terms/Temp/newhist.html>
- New Historicism, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (n.d). Retrieved March 25, 2014, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_historicism
- Nguyen T.V.A., 2001. An Introduction to literature in English. Can Tho University.
- Nguyen, L., Auerbach, J., 2001. Contemporary Approaches to American Culture. NXB Van Hoa - Thong Tin, Vietnam
- Nguyen, T.H., 2001. An Introduction to English Literature. Cantho University.
- Obeidat, M., 1996. The Culture Context of American Literature : American Barrier or a Bridge to Understanding, from, <http://www.bilkent.edu.tr/~jast/Number4/Obeidat.dtml>
- Pham, T., Vu, L.H., Nguyen, N.H., 2001. An Introduction to English literature. NXB Giao Duc, Vietnam
- Plagiarist, P., 2014. An analysis of "A Rose for Emily". Retrieved February 7, 2014, from, http://www.andover.edu/library/AcadInteg/rose_emily.htm
- Smith, P., Appelbaum, S., 1995. Frederick Douglass- Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.
- The Importance Of Gender Conflicts Literature To Society Past And Present(n.d). Retrieved February 14, 2013, from <http://www.digitaltermpapers.com/c1398.htm>
- The South after the Civil War (n.d). Retrieved February 26, 2014, from <http://www.enotes.com/rose-emily/7079>
- Vanspanckeren, K., 1994. Outline of American Literature. The United States Department of State.
- Wyatt, N., 1995. Historical and Cultural Background of The Awakening. Retrieved February 10, 2014, from, <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/eng384/katetime.htm>