

Towards an Understanding of the Efferent Reading Stance of Hausa Popular Romance Novels

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Abstract

Reading romance novels is an activity engaged by most people especially young readers. The aim of this study was to understand the effects of efferent reading stances of female readers of Hausa popular romance novels. A total of six female readers were selected from book clubs to participate in the study. Face-face interviews were used to collect the data. In analysing the interview data, the Transactional Reader-Response Theory of Rosenblatt (1978) was used as a tool for the analysis. Two themes emerged in relation to efferent reading stances gained by the female readers after reading the novels: (i) Female Empowerment and (ii) Challenging the Traditional Marriage System.

Keywords: Hausa romance novels, Female readers, Efferent reading stance, Transactional Reader-Response Theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kano market literature or Hausa popular romance genre is a term used to show the popular novellas writing which are published and sold in the commercial city of Kano in northern, Nigeria (Malumfashi, 1998, 2011; Whitsitt, 2003). The novels

are written by young male and female writers intended especially for female readers or those who have completed secondary school. The romance novels cover a range of genres such as thrillers, adventure, fantasy, horror, advocacy for women and social justice (Adamu, 2007; Furniss, 2000, 2005; Larkin, 2002; Mukhtar, 1990).

Many studies have been conducted on efferent and aesthetic reading stances. According to Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response Theory (1978), there are two types of reading effect: efferent and aesthetic reading stances. Efferent reading stance refers to "the primary concern of the reader is what he (she) will carry away from the reading" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p.24). However, aesthetic reading stance refers to reading in the transactional sense that "emphasises the relationship with, and continuing awareness of, the text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 29).

There are numerous studies which applied the Reader-Response Theory in teaching and learning English language in the classroom context. A study by Wiseman and Many (1991) examined the effects of efferent and aesthetic teaching approaches on undergraduate students' responses to English literature works. The participants consisted of students from two classes who were attending an intensive training on Rosenblatt's concept of efferent and aesthetic reading stances for one semester. The training helped the students to respond to numerous literary works efferently and aesthetically based on their individual experiences and ideas. The results revealed that there were divergence of ideas and feelings in oral and written responses on aesthetics reading stances compared to efferent feelings among the participants. Cox and Many (1992) also examined childrens' responses to a literary work using Rosenblatt's Reader- Response Theory perspective. The data were drawn from the written responses of 38 fifth-grade children to nine works of realistic literature and film which were developed and characterized into different stances on

efferent to aesthetic feelings. The study found that majority of the responses were written from an aesthetic stance which focused on higher expectations of understanding through the lived-through experiences of the work they read. Pilonieta and Hancock (2012) also explored how urban first grade children shared their English literary reading experiences in the classroom context in terms of their individual feelings and viewpoints. It was found that the aesthetic stances by the students enhanced their reading comprehension during reading alouds interactions among themselves and the application of the Transactional Theory helped them to obtain higher grades on comprehension.

In conclusion, the studies reviewed focused on aesthetic and efferent stances in English works. However, the literature shows lack of investigation on the application of Reader-Response Theory in Hausa language and also on popular romance genre exploring female readers on efferent reading stances. Therefore, the aim of this study was to understand the effects of efferent reading stances of female readers of Hausa popular romance novels through the application of Reader-Response Theory.

2. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative research approach to identify the female readers' efferent reading stances of Hausa popular romance novels. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews in order to understand "the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). Therefore, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews about three to four times with each participant to gain insight into the nature of efferent reading stances experienced by them. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed (Ang, 1995; Creswell, 2010; Patton, 1990). The data for this research were collected

from June until August, 2016 in Jigawa State, the northern part of Nigeria.

The participants of this study consisted of six female readers who had reading experiences ranged from 2-5 years. Most of the them have a minimum teaching qualification, that is, the National Certificate in Education (NCE) and a few have Diploma in History/Social studies and high school certificate. The researcher used pseudonym to explain the readers' experiences. Table 1 shows the profile of each participant using pseudonym.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

S/N	Readers	Qualification	Years of Reading Experience
1.	Surayya	Diploma	5
2.	Maimunat	High school	3
3.	Amatullah	NCE	2
4.	Zakiyya	High School	3
5.	Zulaihat	Diploma	4
6.	Ummulkhair	NCE	2

This study was guided by Rosenblatt's Transactional Reader-Response Theory (1978). The theory focuses on understanding the nature of literary response which shows the active role of the reader as not only encountering but also creating the literary work, that is, what Rosenblatt (1986) calls as the object of interpretation, appreciation, analysis, criticism, evaluation and the evocation lived through by the readers' interaction with literary texts.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following excerpts are the themes that emerged from the interviews with the six female readers which show their literary appreciation and understanding on the efferent reading stances of the romance novels. The first theme is Female Empowerment.

Surayya expressed her view on the efferent reading stance of the romance novels as:

Romance reading part of my life if I came back from Islamic extra moral class in the evening. I took a rest for an hour, then I will take a novel to read for at least 2-3 hours. I gain an information and upholding patriarchal values empowering. I retained and evoke messages from the story during the reading process.

Surayya commented that although her community follow the patriarchal lines, she kept her memory of empowering females portrayed in the novels. She retained useful information of valuing her gender identity as a female.

Similar to Surayya, Maimunat learnt about female empowerment from the novels she read.

Maimunat said:

Well, as a reader of these novels if you selected 3- 5 novels at first page you will come across with an important information in regards to good advice for young ladies to acquire both Islamic and Western education. I learn a lot from these novels e.g, marital life and women empowerment.

In addition, Maimunat acquired good advice from Islamic and Western education and also about marital life. Amatullah also retained information about female empowerment from the novels she read. Amatullah responded:

Well, to me as a reader of these romance novels what I found from the novels really help me to learn so many things, for instance, there are themes written on woman life, such as empowerment, reading these romance novels help me to enhance my reading culture and broaden my knowledge about the social-cultural aspects of women status, obedience to parents.

To be more specific, Amatullah learnt from the novels about women empowerment, her culture, socio-cultural aspects of women and how to be obedient to parents.

Another participant, Ummulkhair also commented on female empowerment:

As a reader of this romance novels if it is written on the issue of female empowerment on how to encourage the female to acquire Western education to reduce illiteracy from the society. So I gained a useful information after reading the story. I challenged the notions of some literary critics who underate the novels and its readers, I don't care about their criticisms. It help me alot.

Ummulkhair also pointed out the ideas of acquiring Western education to reduce illiteracy in order to empower females.

The next theme that emerged from the data focused on Challenging the Traditional Marriage System. Zulaihat expressed her concern on the forced marriage being practiced in her culture. She commented:

As matter of fact, I have been reading these romance novels for number of years in our romance literature clubs, I know there are a lot of accusations and condemnation against the reading the novels and its readers but, I didn't care about it, I am a reader I know the benefit of reading it. For examples, resistance against force marriage to the young girls which causes a lot of social instability, such as family violence, marriage break down of our marriage institutions.

Zulaihat highlighted the negative effects of forced marriage, family violence and break down of the marriage institutions which she gained from reading the novels.

Similarly, Zakiyya learnt about the traditional marriage system from the novels. Zakiyya responded:

Well, as reader of Hausa romance novels there are certain areas that the stories covered which help their readers to learn a lesson, for example, a novel written on patience, resistance of primitive cultures, force marriage in our society and other stories that discussed on a lifespan of women right from her childhood up to the adult period. To me, reading the stories

shaped my mind and I understand of my life on social roles, how to respect my parents and our elders in the society.

Zakiyya stressed about information gained from reading novels and challenges in womens' life such as forced marriage in northern Nigerian culture. This view shows that the female readers acknowledged the benefits of their reading practices which corroborate with Dugger (2014) who asserted that romance reading is important because it portrays the readers' culture and identity.

The findings of this study on efferent reading stances are similar to Rosenblatt's (1988) suggestion that reading literature on efferent stances requires readers to retain certain information from the text that has been read at a particular time and context (Beach and Hynds, 1991; Maley, 2001). In addition, the findings of this study can be considered as authentic discovery of individual views, ideas and thoughts from the readers of Hausa romance novels (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Howard, 2011; Rabiee, 2004).

4.CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the six female readers were found to experience efferent reading stance of retaining information from reading the novels. Four of the participants, that is Surayya, Maimunat, Amatullah and Ummulkhair retained their memory on female empowerment from the novels they read. On the other hand, two of the participants, that is, Zakiyyat and Zulaihat expressed efferent stance in reading the novels in relation to challenging the traditional marriage system. The present study shows that the female readers obtained information from the novels which involve self-identification, self-construction, and self-awareness, all of which aided them in the transition of their spaces to facilitate efferent reading stances. The findings of this study go along with the Reader-

Response Theory of Rosenblatt (1978) which suggests that readers focus their attention to the referential meaning of words such as feelings and information retained that evoked from literary texts they have read. Future research can be conducted by interviewing more female participants to gain more responses/views on the efferent reading stances of other romance novels across the globe.

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