

Language Acquisition Through Literature Promotes Creativity and Thinking Skill

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Teachers often regard literature as inappropriate to the language classroom. Often the views are reflected that historic separation between the study of language and the study of literature has led to the limited role of literature in the language classroom. It cannot be denied that the use of literary texts can be a powerful pedagogic tool. In the present paper the study is also to be made of various approaches to teaching literature which provides a rationale in the language classroom (LCR) based on the premise that literature is language and language can indeed be literary.

The main concern of English teachers should be to help learners acquire communicative competence, as it is more than acquiring mastery of structure and form. It also involves acquiring the ability to interpret discourse in its entire social and cultural context. It is undebatable that the use of literature in the EFL classroom can provide a powerful pedagogic tool in learner's linguistic development or linguistic accuracy. It is also apparent that EFL speakers still have difficulties in comprehending the nuances, creativity and versatility which characterize even standard and transaction forms of English.

The distinct differences between literary and non-literary discourses and suggested through the various types of discourse or the classification of discourse types. This reflects a historic divergence between language and literature which is referred by **Short (1996)** as a border dispute over territory between linguists and literary critics. The emergence of teaching two subjects as 'disconnected pedagogic practices' has been the outcome of this divergence (**Carter and McRae, 1996: xxiv**). **Carter and Nash (1990)** have also suggested to consider the variety of text types along a continuum with some being more literary than others. Perceiving literary discourse as separate and remote from non-literary discourse is not advisable. The underlying fact is that the separation of literature from language is a false dualism since literature is language and language can indeed be literary. It is not difficult to find instances of standard transactional forms of discourse which make use of a whole array of literary devices. Headlines and advertisements are common example of discourse which exports literary language. The explicit use of stylistic devices like imagery, alliteration, register, ellipsis and rhythm are commonly associated with literature than with standard transactional language.

Widdowson (1970) has rightly stated that the procedures which are used to interpret literary discourse are essentially the same for interpreting any type of discourse.

Approaches to teaching literature: - No doubt, integrating literature into the EFL or ESL or LT is beneficial to the learners' linguistic as well as communication development, the need is felt to select an approach which best serves the needs of EFL, ESL learners and the syllabus. (**Carter and Long 1991**) describes the rationale for the use of the three main approaches to the teaching of literature.

Let us say that teaching language not through but within history is beneficial. Identification and recognition of literature in language should be observed.

1. **The Cultural Model** representing the traditional approach requires learners to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text. It helps to reveal the universality of such thoughts and idea but encourages learners to understand different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own. But being teacher-centered and little opportunity for extended language work, it is largely rejected.

2. **The language model** or the language based approach as referred by **Carter and Long (1991)** enables learners to access a text in a systematic and methodical way in order to exemplify specific linguistic features, e.g. literal and figurative language, direct and indirect speech. This approach involves the language teaching strategies - prediction exercises, jumbled sentences, summary writing, creative writing, role play, etc. by the teachers to deconstruct literary texts serving specific linguistic goals. This model is described as a 'reductive' approach to literature by **Carter and McRae (1996)**. These activities only serve the purpose of purely linguistic practice leaving aside literature in a purposeless and mechanical way.

3. **The Personal Growth Model** attempts to bridge the cultural model and the language model by focusing on the particular use of language in a text, as well as placing it in a specific cultural context. Learners are encouraged to express their opinions, feelings and opinions and make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in text. Another aspect of this model is that it helps learners develop knowledge of ideas and language - content and formal schemata through different themes and topics. This function relates to theories of reading (**Goodman 1970**) which emphasize the interaction of the reader with the text. As **Cadorath and Harris** point out (1998: 188) "text itself has no meaning it only provides direction for the reader to construct meaning from the reader's own experience". Thus, learning is said to take place when readers are able to interpret text and construct meaning on the basis of their own experience.

These three approaches to teaching literature differ in terms of their focus on the text: Firstly, the text is seen as a cultural artifact; secondly the text is used as a focus for grammatical and structural analysis and thirdly, the text is the stimulus for personal growth activities. Such an approach to teaching literature in the EFL classroom is needed with attempts to integrate these elements in a way that makes literature accessible to learners and beneficial for their linguistic development.

Rationale for an integrated model for teaching literature

According to **Duff and Maley (1990)** the main reasons for integrating these elements are linguistic, methodological and motivational.

Linguistically, by using a wide range of authentic texts we introduce learners to a variety of types and difficulties of English language.

Methodologically, literary discourse sensitizes readers to the processes of reading for e.g. : intensive and texts priorities, the enjoyment of reading, as **Short and Candlin** assert (**1986**), if literature is worth teaching then it seems axiomatic that it is the response to literature itself which is important. Interpretation of texts by learners can bring about personal responses from readers by touching on significant and engaging themes. An integrated model is a linguistic approach which utilizes some of the strategies texts, literary and non literary, from the perspective of style and its relationship to context and form. With the careful selection of the text, it can be adopted for all levels by

undergoing the stages of preparation, focusing, and preliminary response, working at it and interpretation and personal response.

Keeping the above in view, the activities can be conducted based on: -

- a) **Memory:** the recall or recognition of information) which is the simplest and lowest level of thinking plays an important role in the learning process.
- b) **Translation:** (Changing information into a -----, form or language) the term translation differs from normal ELT usage. It refers to the kind of mental processing involved and is a higher level of thinking than memory. Sharing a fundamental similarity, they both involve thinking, within the given information.
- c) **Interpretation:** The discovery of relationships among facts, generalizations, definitions, values and skills are facilitated through it.
- d) **Application:** - It solves a lifelike problem that requires the identification of the issue and the selection and use of appropriate generalizations and skills - one needs to go beyond the given information.
- e) **Analysis:** Facilitates solving a problem in the light of conscious knowledge of the parts and forms of thinking.
- f) **Synthesis :** Helps in solving a problem that requires creative thinking also enhances the level of thinking involved in attempting to put knowledge into practice once again so as to solve any problem rather into a novel one - more creative type of applied learning is required involving a higher level of thinking which is beyond the information.
- g) **Evaluation:** It helps in making a judgment- good or bad - right or wrong according to standards designated by the student.

After having discussed the various activities facilitating the language learning, the role of literature has to be assessed in its teaching. Teaching of literature as a means and tool in a second or foreign language teaching programme is significantly different from teaching of literature which aims at developing the aesthetic sensibilities of the learner.

In the present scenario, there is a special significance of pondering over the questions like whether or not to use literature in language teaching and to what extent would be the choice of the literary texts. In the words of **Prof. R.N. Shrivastava**, "Teaching of literature to a foreign student for aesthetic sensibility is one thing. While making literature as a means and tool for teaching a foreign language is entirely a different thing".

The language teacher has to be very particular about the meaning of literature while he talks about using it in FLT. It has to be spelt out the kind of literature to be included in a language teaching program as well as the stages at which this ought to be introduced.

In this connection, **the syllabus followed in some NITs should be revised because the language study of two semesters out of eight, is not sufficient for imparting the communicative skills to the learners (e.g. , engineering students) so that they may be able to interpret literature texts from third semester onwards. It is also known that literary texts are not even used in the first two semesters the fact, here cannot be ignored that literary text can help the learner to develop their varied kinds of thinking skills.** Such texts serve the useful purpose of developing the aesthetic sensibility of the learner but only after the learner has mastered the basic communicative skills of the language. It also means in turn that the learner has acquired a passive knowledge of the rules of the communicative competence.

In 1991, John McRae of the University of Nottingham, listed, several reasons for "covering literature in English Language Teaching" (as summarized by John Corbett of the University of Glasgow.) ----- 'language learning, linguistic confidence, language description and awareness, language practice, memory, active involvement, classroom, interaction post-lesson stimuli, production, enthusiasm, receptively, related world knowledge, personal satisfaction, cultural awareness, linguistic or aesthetic curiosity, critical evaluation, grammatical structural, or functional reinforcement information, and constructive enjoyment. They both agreed with the view that to teach the English language, teachers should use literary texts.

It cannot be denied that introducing literature early in the curriculum would offer many benefits: classes will be more exciting, students, out of enthusiasm may chose to take literature electives after having fulfilled their language requirement. It would also stimulate their interest in language study that will lead them to opt for literature electives.

Scalone, in the introduction to **Distant Thunder**, notes "the study of literature must be a social experience in which students are given numerous opportunities to share their written and spoken responses with the teacher and with each other. (P-3)

While discussing about certain challenges, the first among all is that the language, taught without the context of the target culture is not truly representative of the actual use of the language. Secondly, it is a challenge to eliminate student – to - student, student – to - teacher, and teacher-to- student communication barriers that might be harmful to the learning process.

However, the fact remains that there are several benefits that a language learner can derive from the inclusion of literature in the educational curriculum for language learning. Our main concern as teacher is not to teach about language but to develop learners' abilities to make them capable of using the language for a variety of communicative purposes. **There is a difference between teaching about the language and communication in the language.** In the fact there is often a great ability gap between having information and being able to use it spontaneously for communicative purposes. In order to bridge this gap and frame a relevant syllabus, its contents should be made to bear a resemblance to the social contexts. This awareness of the social context can be had from the world of literature which depicts society. The syllabus should include verbal and non verbal communication, short narratives, short stories, dialogues, conversation, and interviews. These short literary texts will---

- help teachers first to acquaint themselves with language use, to develop their own competence and understand language as a social phenomenon, and not as an exclusive branch of learning.

- transform the classrooms as the stage in which there is real practice of communicative language.

- help teachers to consider language as entailing social acceptability. In other words, they can take to classroom language as carrying resemblance with the outside language. As a result this would raise communication to the level of a social responsibility.

- develop the intellectual ability of the learners and expose them to a variety of linguistic and literary expressions and communicative functions of language.

- contextualize the language to help the learner to acquire grammar implicitly.

- incorporate linguistic competence into communicative competence by putting language into use in different social situations.

The primary assumption is that teaching literature or literary texts make language acquisition more use-focused instead of form-focused. Learning literature creates many positive attitudes in learning and acquisition of English as FL or SL.

This paper tries to touch the benefits of the inclusion of literature or literary texts in EFL curriculum at all the stages of language learning in general and at the primary stage in particulars.

Books relating to the methodologies of language teaching have focused in detail on the attitude of individual teacher towards the changes that have taken place and his role in the spread of innovative modes of teaching.

Widdowson rightly remarks "Language teachers have the responsibility to mediate changes in pedagogic practice so as to increase the effectiveness of language teaching".

It is undeniable fact that the resources of language can be fully utilized by taking recourse to literature as an important aspect of language learning. For great skill and effectiveness, **literature is necessary for language learning. W.R. Lee** in his editorial in the journal - **English Language Teaching** says, ".....literature is rooted so far as the foreign language learner is concerned, in the oral basis of language learning rooted in lively and meaningful oral drills, in spoken and acted dialogues, in simple dramatization of stories indeed in those very procedures which make for successful, and interested learning of the languages (p-4)

Literary texts provide with a lot of opportunity to learn effectively to use words in different context.

Both language and literature teaching involve the development of a feeling for language or responses to texts. The current innovations in the teaching approaches and syllabus design focus on the communication purposes of language teaching and learning.

Literature plays a vital role in developing language learning abilities by training learners to infer meaning through different language..... Literary discourse offers perspective, which inspires learners to think and use language in a sensible and effective way. Language is power and power can not be asserted and impressed if it is not effectual. On the other hand, literature provides the subject matter that motivates the learners. Language learning is effective when it inspires to develop responses and reinforce messages. The more varied the response the richer language learning becomes. Literature offers a wide range of language structures which can enhance our understanding of the range of language usages. This undertaking has a direct impact on the learners' ability to learn and use language for the expression and response of those thoughts and ideas. **Literary work, in such a situation, becomes a vehicle for language learning.**

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