

Language Through Literature

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Abstract: We often wonder what is English. When it crops up in educational contexts, might be supplied with an answer more accurate than the one which is daily assumed in that part of public education called the teaching and examining of English. One has been brainwashed by the educational system in order to confuse with what is studied and English is not an exemption. The language that the English speaking people Listen, Speak, Read and Writes always use to live with. On the other hand, there is English that the teachers and examiners of English say that people ought to speak and write and most probably, use to live with. The importance of English is widely recognized in India even though there have been well concerted attempts to replace English as the official languages.

The best ideas in the world are useless unless they can be communicated to others. By the word 'communication' I mean that there's not only reception, but understanding of the information conveyed..."

-Richard W.Oliver.

In today's fast paced environment everyone is being asked to do more with less result. People are torn between managing the frustration and stress of the added responsibilities and maintaining the positive mental attitude. The result is more tension that actually undermines their performance. If you've ever had a miscommunication then you know that words mean different things to different people and that there is a science to our words.

Learning language through literature trains people to listen, understand and apply. Learning how to apply is the key to accurate and respectful ways of communicating that prevents costly miscommunication and time-consuming misunderstanding.

Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which members of society interact with one another. Literature is a pathway to perceive the world. It opens up an awareness of society and culture. It is the best way to learn a language. For example:

'Reading Aloud', strategy helps to enhance the pronunciation skills. Literature therefore has a big role to play in language learning process. One of the most important reasons for teaching literature is to make the teaching of the basic language skills sustaining and elevating. So it should be a part of curriculum that provides a meaningful interaction with the language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Every language in this world undergoes the process of evolution. During the process, some languages gain supremacy over the other languages and some survey and a few become extinct. The reasons for the extension of a language are invasion of a foreign language, inflexible characteristic of the particular language, lack of practice by the native people and the paucity of literary works creator in the language. When the writer is successful in conveying his ideas to his readers, his works are memorable and they are assets to the language in which they have written. The writer

and his works occupy a dominant place in the canon of literature. Thus literature contributes a lot to the growth of a language. To create a literary work the writer should have a command over the language and have an eagle eye on the day today events in life.

Literature is the best method to master our language. When the reader reads a piece of literature, he actively participates in the story and he questions, wonders, gets angry, cries during the process of reading. All this feelings exemplify the reader's participation. Similarly, a conscious reader should allow his heart to go for details and his mind to collect the usage of his language.

A great deal of mastery of English language comes from mastery of English grammar. This is one school of opinion which contains undeniable truth. One survey in this modern world is; it becomes easily visible to see that there are several kinds of incapability and incapacity in learning English. One reason for this sorry spectacle is that there is a fall in the knowledge acquisition process itself. This gets indirectly reflected in the learning of English language also. This obstacle can be removed if one is thoughtful and equally creative enough to suggest constructive and aesthetically interesting methods of learning English. This proposal brings a pressure on a teacher to depend more on literature to teach the language skills.

Teaching literature at the college and university level mostly involves analyzing the text in terms of its symbolic or philosophic meaning. This task should be comparatively easy for those, whose Language 1 is English. Their mother tongue needn't necessarily be English but they need to have studied English as a first language in school. Further, if the target students have already acquired the same kind of literary competence in their own language, just a little guidance from the teacher will help them to transfer these skills to English Literature.

Introducing Literature early in the curriculum offers many benefits: classes will be more exiting since professors will be teaching the literature that they love; students will probably catch some of that enthusiasm and may choose to take literature electives after they have fulfilled their language requirement. By giving students a taste of some of our favorite works of literature, we may stimulate an interest in language study that will lead them to opt for literature electives.

Literature depicts the ways and styles of life. Language is taught through literature. When it is performed a learner can learn language and understand literature effectively. Instead of teaching a poem or prose directly to the learners it can be easily done by introducing words, their meanings, synonym and antonym, and grammar exercises. It will be helpful for the learners to enrich vocabulary and understand literature. The learner can learn more and inculcate the habit of reading.

The aim of teaching language through literature is to make the learner understand the words and pronunciations how to substitute certain words, to write the opposites, to know more words related to the given words, to practice grammar exercises, to acquire language competencies and appreciate literature.

Pre-reading activities such as brainstorming, word association, and role-playing lay the foundation for in-depth reading probes. Students working in small groups tackle a new text directly in class, skimming, scanning, analyzing idioms, and guessing possible outcomes. Post-reading activities, designed for three different levels of proficiency, range from dramatic recitations to the writing of stories, poems, and imaginary sequels.

II. LITERARY LANGUAGE

Though literature is believed to involve an exceptionally special use of language, question often arises as to what is so characteristic about the language of literature. Given a set of

literary text it will be rather difficult to identify, which text is truly literary and which is not there being no specialized literary language, literature does not constitute a distinct type of language, which can be fractioned, put in isolation and analyzed in the way the language of jurisprudence can be. But every literature contains certain linguistics feature which can be isolated and analyzed. But in literary texts they combined together and make cohesion and consistency extremely effectively. It is this quality which reinforces the message of the text. But all students may not excel in the task of exploring the different levels of meaning in a text-a literary text to be precise. They often need guidance and direction. We need to provide them appropriate devices and techniques as required for dealing with literary text.

III. LITERARY COMPETENCE

Although our aim as the language teacher at the school level is to language and not literature in real sense, it is still necessary and important for our students to acquire certain amount of competence to understand and interrupt a text on their own at a latter stage. The primary object of teaching English therefore is general comprehension and he teacher has to find ways of generating the necessary competence in the students that is the basic literary competence which will help them to unravel the varied meanings in a given text.

IV. ADOPTING COMMUNICATION STRATERGIES THROUGH LITERATURE

With the view to keeping pace with the changing trends and adopting the simplest modes of imparting communication skills, in most of the states, the curriculum designers have given up the inclusion of literature in the syllabi.

Gone to those days, when students used to read at least two Shakespearean plays and many other literary pieces inclusive of prose and poetry by eminent writers besides some short stories as part of their English curriculum. Now a days, four or five short poems as well as prose pieces, supplemented by communication component comprising conversations for practice, have found place as substitute for the whole of the syllabus that was in vogue in the past. This substitution has sought justification in the remark that despite the reading of Shakespeare, Milton, and others, most of the students are unable to make few utterances on their own and their written communication is also equally bad.

It is not masquerading of the truth that a student of C.B.S.E. is more exposed to literature than a student of 10+2+3 level in some states. For instance, in some states like Andhra Pradesh, separate textbooks are prescribed for students of English and Telugu media respectively up to tenth class. But the same text book is prescribed for the students of both media at 10th, +2 level and similar is the case even at 10th, +2, +3 level. This precipitates the imbalances further in the heterogeneous groups. The extent of literature included in the syllabus at this level and also the resourcefulness of the teacher tap it for the exploration of imparting the skills to the learners are vital at this juncture.

The sublimity of the English teacher is put to as a test in these circumstances. How sublime is the English teacher is to overcome these predicaments in another aspect. The crux of the problem lies here and owes to the ill-equipped methodologies of English teachers; not to mention the few exceptions. The data collection, as the part of research product work is entitled “suitable and sustainable English teaching methodologies for the undergraduates in the wake of globalization in the country”, reveals that most of the English teachers are not fully equipped with the required strategies to exploit any text for the LSRW skills. Most of them do not have any specialized training. Some of them are with mere basic qualification and in some cases; mere possession of research degrees is of not much avail when comes to the class room teaching.

However, the Directorate of Higher Education has launched programmes like Train the Trainer, and Faculty Development Programmes as such, to familiarize its staff with the latest trends. A lot more can be done in this direction. The traditional approach of lecturing method is vague in some places. It is also not an exaggeration that some teachers are happy – go – lucky type, confining themselves to the meticulous coverage of the academic plan, devoid of any innovative method to reach the learners.

It is great irony that Literature is understated, ignoring its vital lineage to the language study and its essential components. In fact, both language and Literature are inseparable. Language study done through literature is more comprehensible and easier also. Enriching one’s vocabulary through the study of words in isolation is not as effective as it is through any literary text. Basing on the resourcefulness of the teacher or the facilitator, the text can be used for dealing with the tense, voice, speech, degrees of comparison, analysis of sentences and even with the parts of speech, article, prepositions etc.

The significance of grammar cannot be dispensed with the acquisition of communication skills. Though, fluency and expression are more desirable than the accuracy in the changed scenario, expression without accuracy is a kind of corruption. What harm is there in knowing about “written forms” before receiving the “spoken forms”? Is it not possible to exploit various “patterns” for communication? Can’t we use direct questions and indirect questions on a communicative mode? Why not we assign different roles from the literary texts to the learners in group activities and develop communication skills?

For instance, an extract from any Shakespearean tragedy or comedy serves as the material for devising a lesson in communication. A poem by Nissim Ezekiel, characteristic of Indian English can be used to understand the ‘tense’ aspect of the verb. Likewise, any literary text can be tapped for any aspect of grammar as well as the prospects of rich communication; subject to the resourcefulness of the concerned.

V. TACTICS IN LEARNING A LITERARY WORK:

“Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree”

-Ezra Pound

The study of literature is not confined to a branch of aesthetics but expands with the scope of any linguistic or stylistic investigation. The texts of literature create an aesthetic pleasure and also provide the reading material and exercises for practicing various skills and language elements.

VI. PROSE IN ENHANCING THE LANGUAGE SKILLS

Prose, collection of interesting and informative passages, expands knowledge, enriches vocabulary and develops reading skills. Linguistic complexity, length, interest level are certain factors to be glued to before choosing a prose text. Interesting introduction, guiding questions, anecdotes, introducing new words motivates the students.

VII. THE ESSENCE OF READING POETRY

“A poet is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds”

- .B.Shelly.

The aim of a poetry lesson is to learn the art of appreciation and enjoyment. Teaching and learning a poetry must be a lively, stimulating and challenging and participatory activity. Aristotle defines poetry as ‘a speaking picture’ and its main aim is ‘to teach and delight’. The art of appreciation can be acquired by feeling a pleasure in reciting a poem or in listening to it. The share of enjoyment, the joy and pleasure is an outcome of appreciation. While analyzing poems, one’s concept of form is confined to such things as image, symbol, rhythm, rhyme and stanza. But a study can be made on a meaning of the grammar, that is, grammatical meaning of poetry.

A poem should give pleasure and it indirectly manipulates one’s language skills. A poem calls attention to itself, it is ‘self-referential’, and it is ‘autonomous’. Coleridge, rightly puts, it as ‘the best words in best order’ and that makes it a very singular piece. It is doubtless, that a piece of literary work provides pleasure and also guides one to imbibe the skills of a language.

VIII. MAKING STORIES WITH YOUR STUDENTS:

The students will have to practice using a range of drama techniques for creating stories in an experimental way. This approach, an active and interactive, student centered, personalized approach to create stories as a basis for language or literature work. The following are the tips to be followed:

- ✓ Practicing storytelling
- ✓ Attending various workshops from well known practitioners
- ✓ Leading sessions on story telling for teaching
- ✓ Using drama in and out of the classroom

The Indian high school and college system has changed quite a bit over the last few years and most autonomous colleges now have communicative language learning as part of the syllabus. This is slowly coming in alongside the traditional

literature-based language learning, though it is still quite new to most students (and many teachers).

Literature highlights the important of working on motivation levels for young adults and demonstrates some practical ideas for contextualizing and personalizing skills practice in the language class room. This includes looking at what kind of topics could be relevant (rock music, hit movies, local celebrities, friends, sports etc)

IX. EFFECTIVE USE OF LANGUAGE

Learn English through literature but never venture to learn literature through English is a popular adage. It is of course true. Literature stimulates and impulse the readers to think and consequently enthalls them by intellectual understanding of the context. Later on, it enables them to analyze the context from various angles so as to learn the language it also relaxes and entertains the minds of the reader.

Engineering graduates are expected to all round personalities. They ought to be competent in technical acumen and be proficient in English language speaking. Hence, English has become indispensable for engineering graduates so as to take their career to the pinnacle. Whereas in Arts and Science College in India communication skills in English are taught through prose, poetry, drama, short story and letters etc. in short they still practice English language through English literature. On the contrary in most of the Engineering Colleges in India very same communication skills are taught in different manner. This practice of English teaching is like a curate's egg, it has both good and bad aspects. Engineering students are able to understand the content better. This is an encouraging aspect. On the other hand, they are unable to apply their mastery in the understanding of conduct in real life situation this is because most of the Engineering Colleges in India have switched over to many other ways of teaching English language rather than the traditional methods of teaching the same through English literature. On the contrary, if the educational theorists are very careful in teaching the items in English literature, the learners will gain competence in the use of English language.

X. TRANSLATION OF A LITERARY PASSAGE

Students translate a reading passage from a target language into their native language. The reading passage then provides the focus for several classes; vocabulary and grammatical structures in the passage are studied in subsequent lessons. The passage may be excerpted from some work from the target language literature, or a teacher may write a passage, which is carefully designed to include particular grammar rules and vocabulary the translation may be written or spoken or both. Student should not translate idioms literally, but rather in a way that they understand their meaning.

XI. READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Students answers questions in the target language based on their understanding of the reading passage. Often the questions are sequenced, so that the first group of questions asks for information's contained within the reading passage. In order to answer the second group of questions students will have to make inferences based on their understanding of the passage. This means they will have to answer questions about the passage even though the answers are not contained in the passage itself. The third group of questions require students to relate the passage in their own experiences.

XII. ANTONYMS / SYNONYMS

Literary language is considered superior to spoken language and is therefore the language students study. Students are given one set of words and are asked to find out antonyms in the reading passage. A similar exercise could be done by asking student to find synonym for a particular set of words. Or students might be asked to defile a set of words based on their understanding of them as they occur in the reading passage.

XIII. RELATIONSHIP OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The English teaching community has contently been trying to adopt novel methods to heave the four language skills from time to time to improvise the teaching and learning. Language can be defined as a tool for communication, but literature is writing, which have withstood the test because of its inherent artistry.

Language is indispensable for life but literature is not so. Language is independent of literature, where as literature has no existence without language. If language is of primary importance, literature is secondary. Learning language through literature is a blessing in disguise and it dispenses with everyday expressions and as a result the interest in teaching and learning can be sustained to be a great extent.

Literature is a thoroughfare to teach language. Selection of befitting literature in terms of grammatical items, comprehension and concept etc is of utmost importance. The prescribed text should include a number of piquet situations from literary texts or interesting stories capable of stimulating the imagination of the students. After each lesson the attention of the students can be invited to the linguistic aspects encouraging them to find out the language item that is to be taught from the lesson. Demonstrations must be made with a couple of examples. In a Nutshell, teaching of language through literature will be a rewarding experience as it yields pleasure, passion and knowledge simultaneously. The importance of literature, as a method, though sounds a little old cannot be dispensed with. The value as well as the pleasure using strain – free learning, cultural values, better creativity, additional knowledge and high level of involvement. The language teaching fraternity and the other authorities at the portals of school and collegiate education

have to consider this so that this method would continue to stay and fulfill its real purpose.

XIV. CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

The primary objective of teaching English in schools is to teach language and not literature. But it is essential for the young learners to develop the required competence to be able to read and understand a poem, a one act play or any other text apart from performing well in the test at the year end. This competence has to be well developed at the school level so that latter a student will be able to use literature as a resource for handling different types of text effectively on their own. This might also demand prospective language teachers to promote productive language activities where literary text are used not for mere interpretation but for generating critical thinking which demand the application of higher mental process along with the task of developing the ability to use the language correctly and meaningfully.

XV. CONCLUSION

The selection and preparation of appropriate learning materials to be used in classrooms, poses a real challenge for all the prospective teachers. But to get the best of language class a bit of literature is indispensable. Success in the global

market and the business environment depends on developing language skills. Professionals and technocrats realize that communication is fundamental for wholesome social and professional relationships.

The language, one uses act as an index to understand the personality of an individual. English language skills are gate way to global employment chance of success. Language is one of the most important elements in the communication process. The effective use of language consists in selecting the words and pattern of sentences while communicating. Most important are the gestures, tone and the facial expression. Literature is the record of best thought in best words.

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