



LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL

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ABSTRACT



Literature exposes students to complex themes and fresh ideas, unexpected uses of language. A good novel or short story can take the students to foreign countries and fantastic worlds. A play or a poem can bring up certain dilemmas and powerful emotional responses. All this can be transposed to their real lives. It makes the student to think and come out with different objective, plans, and reach to the conclusion.

Nowadays, one finds the classroom atmosphere really out of sync with the ground reality. Students are crammed inside their classroom from early morning till dusk with emphasis solely on rote learning. Due to immense pressure from higher authorities and peer groups there is a mad rush to complete the syllabus in time, which enables the students to revise and perform well in the examinations. Though this method is highly productive in giving good results, the problem is students are not able to retain anything substantial once the exams get over.

Keywords: *Ideas, Diverse Cultures, Understand Human Emotions and Respond.*



Literature starts in delight but ends in wisdom. In other words, literature not only instructs but also delights. Literature helps students appreciate diverse cultures apart from their own cultures. Certain emotions like anger, greed, love, jealousy etc are universal. Once the students have absolute control over their emotions, it will help them in their professional lives also. In short, one can say that literature serves a dual purpose. It informs and delights at the same time.

Our definition of "literature" above implies that when determining whether or not a text is "literary" we should consider not just what is said but also how it is said. Here in lies an often-forgotten criteria of literature: form. By form we do not mean novel, poetry, short story, or play; we mean the specific conventions used within those genres to create particular effects. There are many, many texts that speak thoughtfully and insightfully about issues that matter to the masses, but that doesn't make them "literary" texts. A history book, a psychology textbook, a field guide to edible native plants...all of these may offer valuable insight into issues we care about, but they are likely not literary texts because they don't offer this insight in a way that is, itself, remarkable for the way it functions in conjunction with the ideas to create an experience that is greater than the ideas themselves. Usually, in an artistic work, the form of the presentation (the rhythm of a song, the perspective of a painting, the metaphors in a poem, etc.) works to achieve a particular effect—that is, the form works to create a special impact on the ways listeners of a song, the viewers of a painting, or the readers of a story think about, feel, understand, and relate to the ideas represented in the artistic work. The insight that literature offers is not often just mental; it is often *felt*. Literature, Ezra Pound says, "is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree," and according to literary theorist Terry Eagleton, it "transforms and intensifies ordinary language." This attention to the ways of communicating for effect and to intensify and deepen one's felt understanding is what caused writer Iris Murdoch to describe literature as "a sort of disciplined technique for arousing certain emotions."

Perfume advertisers, for example, use special techniques to emotionally impact audiences about issues of ongoing interest to the masses (e.g. beauty or love), but these advertisements usually fail to achieve the second quality above because most commercials don't offer much fresh insight into the issue or deepen our understanding of it. Usually, in fact, they accomplish just the opposite: advertisements reduce the depth of our understanding of important issues by oversimplifying them. Most established religious texts, though, are literary because they employ special techniques like metaphors (think snake, flood, whale, and apples) and they have narrative plots (think of the stories of the Buddha) and they use characters to help the readers to understand few issues like how to live a satisfying and/or moral life; the nature of good and evil; the relationship between humans and the earth and so on and so on. The messages of these religious texts can usually be boiled down to just a few pages or less that explain how people should live (think 10 commandments or the "golden rule"). But if the messages were presented as simple straightforward orders they'd be ignored. Dramatize these messages with narratives and characters and symbols and now you have something that has a unique and lasting impact. That's literature.

English teaching today has evolved around the primary emphasis on its viability as a communication skill to help acquire jobs, promote business interests or provide various forms of entertainments. Teaching language through literature Another perspective that strengthens the argument of the advocates of teaching English without any affiliation with its literature, borders on the fact that the world today needs English for Special Purposes – for the understanding of scientific or technical vocabulary specific to different subjects of interest to the learners. English has been commonly attributed to the teaching methods as used and adopted by language teachers. Our main concern as teachers and teacher trainers 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. But there is a difference between teaching about the language



and communicating in the language. But many teachers believe that teaching about the language in itself will make the learners capable of using the language for communication.

In fact, there is often 'a great ability gap' between having information and being able to use it spontaneously for communicative purposes. A great gap between knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge in terms of communication and the Manipulation of that communication. In order to bridge this gap and frame a relevant syllabus its contents should be made ease to bear a resemblance to the social contexts. And this awareness of the social context can be obtained from the world of literature which depicts society in all its hues and colors in a language as varied as it is authentic and natural. It is here that the learner might encounter his real world outside the classrooms. The syllabus should include verbal and non-verbal communication, short narratives, short stories, dialogues, conversations, and interviews. These short literary texts will help the students to come up with new ideas.

Teaching language through literature 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. And another thing is that it transforms the classrooms as the stage in which there is real practice of communicative language. And also help teachers to consider language as entailing social acceptability in other words; they can look to classroom language as carrying resemblance with the outside language. And As a result, this would raise communication to the level of a social responsibility.

The emphasis is on exploring some of the underlying issues and concerns relevant to apply literature with the language learner. A number of thoughts and ideas are raised for reflection and discussion. Some of these thoughts and ideas should help to manifest and coherent classroom decisions about why and how to use literature in language lessons. Every teaching situation is different, every literary text is different and every theory explaining literature itself or how to use it in the classroom is

different. The task for teachers is thus to draw on the range of insights available, and then to develop an approach appropriate and relevant to their students.

The knowledge of literature prepares students for effective use of English language. Literature helps learners develop their understanding of other cultures. It makes them aware of the differences in cultures as well as enable them tolerate and understand other people's cultures. Through literature universal themes, such as love, war, and loss that are not always covered in the language course books are treated. The study of literature helps the language learners achieve cultural assimilation, language competence, conflict resolution; a good liberal education and development of desire and desirable attributes. There is no doubt that a student, who is exposed to all the values of literature listed above, will be fully integrated into his culture as well as other peoples' culture. He will become fluent in language, having a wide range of vocabulary at his disposal.

Rote learning can be replaced by participative learning. Students can be encouraged to participate in skits, one act plays, presentations, etc once they have a good command over the prescribed literary texts.

Literature encourages students to reflect on their own personalexperiences, feelings and opinions. At the same time of learning English, they become more active, both intellectually and emotionally. This method is also an excellent stimulus for group work.

Once you know what poetry is, it's easy to define prose. Prose can be defined as any kind of written text that isn't poetry (which means drama, discussed below, is technically a type of prose). The most typical varieties of prose are novels and short stories, while other types include letters, diaries, journals, and non-fiction (also discussed below). Prose is written in complete sentences and organized in paragraphs. Instead of focusing on sound, which is what poetry does, prose tends to focus on plot and characters.

Drama is the one given the least time in most classrooms. And often when drama is taught, it's only read the same way you might read a novel.



Since dramas are meant to be acted out in front of an audience, it's hard to fully appreciate them when looking only at pages of text. Students respond best to dramas, and grasp their mechanics more fully, when exposed to film or theater versions or encouraged to read aloud or act out scenes during class.

Short stories are the most suitable literary genre to use in English teaching due to its shortness, is supported by Collie and Slater (1991: 196) when they list four advantages of using short stories for language teachers. First, short stories are practical as their length is long enough to cover entirely in one or two class sessions. Second, short stories are not complicated for students to work with on their own. Third, short stories have a variety of choice for different interests and tastes. Finally, short stories can be used with all levels (beginner to advance), all ages (young learners to adults) and all classes. The use of short-story in English teaching should be aimed to encourage the students to use what they have previously learnt. By doing this, the learning process will be student-centered. However, the teacher plays a great role. She/he must choose a suitable text to use in class, and should help her/his students understand the story with various activities.

Prose is so-called "ordinary writing" — made up of sentences and paragraphs, without any metrical (or rhyming) structure. If you write, "I walked about all alone over the hillsides," that's prose. If you say, "I wondered lonely as a cloud/that floats on high o'er vales and hills" that's poetry. Prose helps the students to know the grammar like meanings, paragraphs, idioms and so on.

Literature in language classroom can be used as an effective tool by the teacher. It depends on the teacher that he/she draw the attention of the learner and by which there can be new horizons to develop language skills.

CONCLUSION

According to the above information we understand that literary texts can be very useful in order to motivate students to develop three basic language skills: a) reading b) writing and c) speaking. Before tackling a literary text we should, as EFL teachers, prepare activities that will

help students advance their level in these three basic skills. Here, we are not going to expand the theme of the basic skills due to the fact that through the activities the author prepared and present in the following pages it will be obvious how literature helps students to develop their skills.

Teachers can exploit literary texts in a large number of ways in the classroom. Classroom work with literary works may involve pre-reading tasks, interactive work on the text and follow up activities.

Teachers can introduce the topic or theme of the text, pre-teach essential vocabulary items and use prediction tasks to arouse the interest and curiosity of students.

- Minimise the extent to which the teacher disturbs students' reading.
- Draw attention to stylistic peculiarity.
- Help students to appreciate the ways that writers use language to achieve particular effects.
- Provide frameworks for creative response.
- Invite learners to step into the shoes of the writer or invite them to modify, extend or add to a text.
- Make the learners to think and imagine from different perspective.
- Before making use of literary text the learner has to understand the concept.

In the rest of this section you will find ways in which you can develop your ability to use literature in the ELT classroom through reading articles and books, attending workshops and courses, visiting websites, and joining Special Interest Groups and discussion forums.

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