

TO AUGMENT LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

To Augment Language Skills through Literature

Language: A body of words, and a set of methods of combining them (called as grammar), understood by a community and used as a form of communication.

Skills: Capacity to do something well; ability; talent. Skills are usually acquired or learned as opposed to abilities.

Literature: The collected creative writing of a nation, people, group or culture. The body of all written works.

The subtheme selected for this paper is “Impact of literature on English language teaching” and it’s a vast area to be discussed. It’s well said by Jon Favreau , “ The ultimate storyteller is Shakespeare, who was able to get the ‘groundlings’ to laugh at his bawdy humor and storyline but could still be studied by scholars to this day for the complexity of his language meter and symbolism. That’s the real guy.” This shows the association between language and literature.

Literature aids the instructors to teach from different genres i.e., short stories, drama, fiction essays, poetry etc. The pedagogical elements of the language which could be taught through literature are the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing along with other language areas such as vocabulary and grammar.

Where short stories, plays and fiction improves the vocabulary and making of sentences, enhancing power of imagination, exploration and reference skills, essays provides knowledge of oral and written discourses.

Prose augments usage of parts of speech where as poetry develops figures of speech. Poetry being the most fascinating genre of literature has been selected for this paper. The selected poems are ‘Obituary’ by A.K.Ramanujan, ‘Second Coming’ by W.B.Yeats and ‘Weavers’ by Sarojini Naidu.

KEY WORDS

Augment: To develop, to increase or to supplement

Introduction

The subtheme selected for this paper is “Impact of literature on English language teaching” and it’s a vast area to be discussed. The association between language and literature could be well understood through this saying.....

“ The ultimate storyteller is Shakespeare, who was able to get the ‘groundlings’ to laugh at his bawdy humor and storyline but could still be studied by scholars to this day for the complexity of his language meter and symbolism. That’s the real guy.”Jon Favreau.

Igbo, a Nigerian community taught their children language through narration of folk stories, proverbs and oratory which is called as Igbo oral tradition.

Literature aids the instructors to teach language through different genre i.e., short stories, drama, fiction essays, poetry etc. The pedagogical elements of the language which could be taught through literature are the four language skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing along with other language aspects such as vocabulary and grammar.

The selected poem “Weavers’ by Sarojini

WEAVERS

**WEAVERS, weaving at break of day,
why do you weave a garment so gay? . . .
Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,
we weave the robes of a new-born child.**

**Weavers, weaving at fall of night,
Why do you weave a garment so bright? . . .
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,
we weave the marriage-veils of a queen.**

**Weavers, weaving solemn and still,
What do you weave in the moonlight chill? . . .
White as a feather and white as a cloud,
we weave a dead man's funeral shroud.**

Sarojini Naidu

Acquisition of language skills

Listening and reading skills

The instructor reads out the poem aloud for the learners to listen to the poem carefully without giving any clues about the poem or the poet and tests their listening by asking a few questions like.....

What is the poet talking about?

For whom do they weave?

How many colours are mentioned in the poem?

If the response is relevant it means that the listeners are listening intently thereby improving listening skills.

Later the learners are asked to read the poem aloud to enhance their reading skills e.i., .reading with expression, correct intonation, correct pronunciation with audible voice followed by silent comprehensive reading which is again tested by asking comprehensive questions like....

How many types of cloth is weaved by the weavers in the present poem?

At what time do they weave for a new born child ?

Developing Written and Oral Discourses

Students are asked to pick up the rhyming words in each stanza like.... day/gay, wild/child, night/bright and so on, and they have to frame sentences of their own using these words and they are also asked to write a small essay about all the uncommon things between day break and night fall.

Students also have to write a dialogue between two friends discussing the merits and demerits of day and night which they also has to say in front of the class thus improving speaking and writing skills.

Grammar

Passive to active vocabulary

New words are asked to noted down by the learners like.....weavers, garment/robe, veil, halcyon, solemn, funeral/shroud etc.

Parts of speech.

Students are asked to recognize the

- **Nouns:-- day, night, garment, child, queen, cloud, feather**
- **Adjectives :--gay, blue, bright, solemn**
- **Verbs :--weave**

Synonyms..... Gay/bright, solemn/still

Antonyms are also found by the students like New born/dead, gay/solemn etc.

Figures of speech

→ **Anaphora**

The deliberate repetition of the word ‘weavers’ at the starting of every stanza in order to provide an artistic effect to the poem.

→ **Similes**

Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild

Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green

White as a feather and white as a cloud

→ **Alliterations**

We/weave, wing/wild, plumes/peacock/purple, solemn/still

→ **Synecdoche**

Marriage –veils of a queen which means costumes of a bride in general

Conclusion

It's well said by Derek Walcott that "The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of the imagination. It is the property of language itself".

Language could be well explained and taught through literature and it has been proved well by the above example of the poem 'Weavers' written by Sarojini Naidu. It could be the same with any piece of literature, any genre of literature.

Since ages man has been using literary aspects to teach language, at lower level it's just words or simple sentences but at higher level comprehension passages taken from articles, biographies, short stories, essays, pamphlets, letters etc. Excerpts from novels or journals are taken as a part of syllabus.

"Language, identity, place, and home these are all of a piece – just different elements of belonging and not belonging", this is said by Jhumpa Lahiri and infact she is correct as these elements could be explored through literature.

Days are gone when people used to read poems only for entertainment or to find aesthetic sense in the poem, now poems are also analyzed and scrutinized to find all language aspects in it apart from its beauty of narration.

Stephen King says that---"And poets, in my view, and I think the view of most people, do speak God's language – It's better, it's finer, it's language on a higher plane than ordinary people speak in their daily lives.

Citation

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