

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE

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Abstract

Language and Literature go together and harmonizes each other. There is no literature without a language. Use of literature in language classroom helps to develop the critical thinking skills of a learner and also develops an atmosphere in which various levels of participants can involve. Literature also provides the opportunity to the learners to use language in different contexts. Not only that, it creates lively and interactive atmosphere in the classroom. The main objective of this paper is teaching English as a second language through literature. Teaching language through literature has many benefits, which provides an opportunity to the learners to learn different genres of literature. The paper also discusses how the teacher resolves the basic methodological issues when they approach a class with literary text. It also fulfills the requirements of teaching of specific English.

Key Words: *Teaching Literature, Teaching of Language Skills, Second Language Teaching and Literary Competence.*

Introduction

Present era, the role of literature as a main component and the supplement of genuine texts of the language curriculum rather than crucial aim of English instruction have been gaining momentum. Many of the language educators were had brainstormed on how differently literature should be incorporated in EFL/ESL curriculum. Such vigorous discussion leads to the enhancement of interesting ideas, and improved learning for all. Most of the teachers consider the use of literature in language teaching is an interesting and worthy concern. Present paper throws light on the usage of literary text in language classroom, a kind of literature need to be used by the language teachers with language learners and the benefits of different genres of literature to language teaching.

Necessity of Literature:

Presently, in the field of teaching and learning literature is using as a technique to learn the four language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing has become popular within the field of foreign language learning and teaching. In addition to, in translation courses most of the language teachers make their students to translate literary texts like drama, poetry and short stories into their mother tongue. Because translation gives a chance to the students to practice lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and stylistic knowledge they have gained in other courses. Translation, as an application area covers four basic skills and as the fifth skill it emphasizes the language teaching. In further sections the usage of literary texts in foreign language classroom and the main criteria for selecting suitable literary texts in foreign language classes are given importance to make the reader familiar with required reasons and criteria for language teachers' using and selecting texts.

Reasons for Using Literary Texts in Foreign Language Classes

According to Collie and Slater(1990:3), a language teacher need to use literature in class room for four reasons they are (i) valuable authentic material, (ii) cultural enrichment, (iii) Language enrichment and (iv) personal involvement. Along with these four reasons the major reasons called universality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy, non-triviality, suggestive power and ambiguity are other factors require the literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context.

i. Valuable Authentic Material

Literature provides authentic material. Most of the literature works are not designed for the primary purpose of teaching a language. Many realistic samples of language in real-life contexts (i.e. travel timetables, city plans, forms, pamphlets, cartoons, advertisements, newspaper or magazine articles) are included in the developed course materials. Thus, in a classroom context, learners are exposed to learn actual language through samples of real life. Literature can act as a valuable complement to such materials, especially when the first "survival" level has been passed. While reading literary texts, it helps the readers to become familiar with many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings.

ii. Cultural Enrichment

Most of the language learners adopt to choose their ideal way in order to increase their understanding of verbal / nonverbal aspects of communication in the country within which that language is spoken - a visit or an extended stay - is just not probable. For such learners, literary works, like novels, plays, short stories etc. facilitate the role of understanding how communication takes place in such countries. Literature creates an imaginary world in the learners mind through a novel, play, or short story. Because it presents a complete setting in which characters from many regional and social backgrounds can be discussed. Through the

characters the reader can get complete understanding in customs, traditions, thoughts, feelings etc. They can also observe the people's behavior who lived in such era as a medium of this. A learner from a foreign land can adopt all this by the colorful created world and which will help them to shape a real society through visual literacy of semiotics. Clearly, literature also helps any foreigner learner to acquire the countries language. Also it adds more cultural grammar of the learners.

iii. Language Enrichment

A learner can develop or enrich his/her language through literature which provides learners to widen a range of individual lexical or syntactic items. Learners become well-known with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualized body of text. Students can learn about the variety of structures which are possible, can also learn about the functions of sentences and various ways of connecting ideas, through which they can develop their writing skills. They can become more adventurous and productive when they perceive the multiplicity of the language they are trying to learn and start to make use of such potentiality among themselves. Thus, they can improve their communicative and cultural competence in authentic texts.

iv. Personal Involvement

Literature fosters the language learning skills owing to the personal involvement of the reader. Once the student gets habituated to read a literary text he can understand the phrases, lexical terms more clearly and he will be able to know the significant role in pursuing the development of the story. Student can automatically develop interest in further part of the story. Student can also share the emotional responses when he feels close to such characters. At this stage the knowledge of the student is much important in the selection of a literary text in relation to the expectations, interests and needs. With this process the learner can also become an extrovert by removing the identity crisis.

The use of language differs from one social group to another. In different contexts a person can speak differently (i.e. formal, informal, casual, frozen, intimate styles speech). The usage of language changes from one profession to another even(i.e. doctors, engineers, advocates and economists use different terminology). Literature develops the learner's sociolinguistic competence in the target language and it also reflects the sociolinguistic aspects of the target language. So including literature into a foreign language teaching program has gained much importance.

Criteria for Selecting Suitable Literary Texts in Foreign Language Classes

The language teacher needs to consider the cultural background, motivation, interests and language level of the learner into an account while selecting a literary text especially in the language classes. The teacher also need to check whether the particular work is able to disclose

the kind of personal involvement by creating positive reactions and interest in the learners mind. Learners' linguistic knowledge will get improved when he is reading a literary text and can put valuable effect upon the learners' real-life experience, dreams or emotions of his great importance. The teacher should also consider the difficulty of the language. If the language of a particular text is simple, it could be easy to comprehend the idea by the reader.

Literature has a great prominence in teaching language skills, as a part of this literature plays crucial role in teaching four language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. All these should be taught in language class room through literature in an integrated manner.

Role of Literature in Reading

Teachers who are using English as a second Language or a Foreign language should adopt dynamic, student-centered approach toward comprehension of a literary work. When students start the activity with reading lesson, basic discussion starts at the literary level with direct questions of fact based on plot, characters and setting which can be answered through the reference of the text. Once they get in to master at this level they will move on to the next inferential level, where they should make some speculations and interpretations relating to the setting, characters and theme. Through which they can produce the author's point of view. Once they acquire the mentioned skills they will be ready to do collaborative work. Evaluative level is considered as the next level which stimulates the students to think imaginatively about the work and their problem solving skills.

Role of Literature in Writing

Literature can serve as a powerful and motivating source for writing in English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign language both as a model and as a subject matter. Student can also improve his style of writing through this. He/she can clearly imitates its content, organization style and theme also. However, when student writing displays original thinking like interpretation or analysis, or when it materializes from, or is creatively stimulated by, the reading, literature serves as subject matter.

Role of Literature in Speaking

Teaching literature in language class emphasizes on speaking and listening activities and also focus on reading activity too by doing oral reading, dramatization, improvisation, role-play, reenactment, discussion, and group activities may center on a work of literature.

Role of Literature in Listening

Language teachers can also create interest and motivate learners by preparing and making some interesting listening comprehension and pronunciation activities to them. If language teacher can make the student to read the text loudly contributes to developing speaking as well and listening capabilities. Such activity can also lead to improve the pronunciation skills of students.

Literature-based dramatic activities play major role in improving ESL / EFL. This activity accelerates the development of oral skills by motivating students to understand the plot, a deeper comprehension and also awareness of its characters.

Different genres of literature also provides an insightful learning of language for example using poetry, short stories, novel and drama in language teaching is beneficial to the students in many ways. Through poetry people can get rewarding and enjoyable experience. Because it contains rhyming and rhythm through which love and appreciation for the sound and power of language can be gained. By studying poetry students can become familiar with the target language like stress, pitch and intonation. Short fiction is an ultimate resource for observing language and life. Precisely we can say that it is a very helpful technique in present foreign language classes. It makes the teacher's coverage and students' reading task easier. It also develops the cognitive analytical abilities of learner. Using drama in language classroom is also one of the major resource in language teaching. Through this learners can stimulates the imagination and can develops the creative thinking skills. It also helps the students to promote their communication skills in the aspects of target language in which they are trying to master. Teachers can also create a motivating and interesting environment by make use of drama in their language classes. Students can also improve their code of behavior, and personality using this genre. The use of novel is one more technique which is beneficial in mastering at linguistic system. Novels enlighten the human life characters in reality. Novel reading creates awareness among the readers' knowledge about different cultures and different groups of people. It creates an opportunity to make use of their creativity and critical thinking skills. It also develops the students writing skills. To put it in a nut shell the use of novel is a very beneficial technique in today's foreign language classes. If selected carefully, using a novel makes the students' reading lesson motivating, interesting and entertaining

Conclusion

Literature helps the students to gain native competence in English, through which they can gain sound knowledge and ideas in good English. Though there are some problems faced by language teachers within the area of teaching English through literature, it plays an important role in English programs of many foreign language speaking countries. The reasons for which are very few pedagogically designed appropriate materials which can be used by the language teachers in a language classroom. we could find there is an absence of clear defining objectives which talk about the role of literature in ESL/EFL. Though many instructions try to incorporate literature in their classroom, they could not because of the lack in background and training in the particular area. A Teacher should take an important role in teaching English through literature. At the outset teacher should keep the aim of language teaching in relation to the needs and expectations of the student.

Literature gives enough scope to the students by allowing them to question, explore, interpret and connect. It also provides sound source of authentic material over a range of registers. The

students can effectively internalize the language at the highest level if they can access the material by developing literary competency. Especially, for students with verbal / linguistic intelligence, the language teacher's using literature in a foreign language class serves for creating a highly motivating, amusing and lively lesson. Literature is a window opening into the culture of the target language. It also acts as a tool to develop the basic skills of a student.

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