

## **Teaching English Language through Literature: A Critical Study**

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### **Abstract:**

Literature in a language classroom provides enough space for the learners to comment, justify and mirror themselves. By using literary text the language class can turn out to be lively and motivating. Having formed part of traditional language teaching approaches, literature became less popular when language teaching and learning started to focus on the functional use of language. However, the role of literature in the ELT classroom has been re-assessed and many view literary texts as providing rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other languages and a potential source of learner motivation. This paper tries to analyze how literature can be used effectively for teaching English language and also tries to find out whether learning English Language is feasible through the use of Literature at all the stages of language learning.

**Key words: literature, traditional language, functional language, approaches, ELT.**

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the role of literature as a basic component and source of authentic texts of the language curriculum rather than an ultimate aim of English instruction has been gaining momentum. Among language educators, there has been a hot debate as to how, when, where, and why literature should be incorporated in ESL / EFL curriculum. Vigorous discussion of how literature and ESL / EFL instruction can work together and interact for the benefit of students and teachers has lead to the flourishing of interesting ideas, learning, and improved instruction for all. Many teachers consider the use of literature in language teaching as an interesting and

worthy concern. In this paper, why a language teacher should use literary texts in the language classroom, what sort of literature language teachers should use with language learners, literature and the teaching of language skills, and benefits of different genres of literature to language teaching will be taken into account. Thus, the place of literature as a tool rather than an end in teaching English as a second or foreign language will be unearthed.

### **Hypothesis of the study**

The present paper underscores the need and importance of literary texts for a comprehensive attainment of higher levels of language skills. It is based on the primary assumption that teaching literature or literary texts makes language acquisition more use-focused instead of form-focused. Learning literature creates many positive attitudes in learning and acquisition of English as a foreign or second language. 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. Literary texts take into account the functions of language in different realistic situations outside the conditioned atmosphere of the classrooms. The employment of such literary components such as narratives, short stories, one person acts, fables, dialogues and short social situations, will help learners to use different forms of the language in one notion of the language. It will, more importantly, motivate and inspire the learners to know more and keep his or her interest intact.

### **What do we mean by literature?**

Literature is a term used to describe written or spoken material. Broadly speaking, "literature" is used to describe anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works, but the term is most commonly used to refer to works of the creative imagination, including works of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction.

The types of literary texts that can be studied inside and outside the ELT classroom include:

- 1 Short stories
- 2 Poems
- 3 Novels
- 4 Plays

## 5 Song Lyrics

### **Literature and Teaching of Language skills:**

Literature plays an important role in teaching four basic language skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking and language areas for example vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation is very popular within the field of language learning. And when using literature in the language classroom skills should never be taught in isolation but in an integrated way. Teachers should try to teach basic language skills as an integral part of oral and written language use, as part of the means for creating both referential and interactional meaning, not merely as an aspect of the oral and written production of words, phrases and sentences. And the study of literature in a language class, though being mainly associated with reading and writing, can play an equally meaningful role in teaching both speaking and listening. Oral reading, dramatization, improvisation, role playing, reenactment, discussion, and group activities may center on a work of literature. Literature offers a wide range of language structures, which can enhance our understanding of the range of language usages. Literature work in such a situation becomes a vehicle for language learning.

### **ELT through Literature:**

Besides modern techniques and innovative approaches, Literature has also become an important phenomenon of English in current global scenario. According to Professor J. Collie, "To truly know a language, you must know something of the literature of a language". There are several benefits that a language learner can derive from the inclusion of literature for language teaching. Literature provides learners with a broad variety of individual lexical or syntactic items. Students become acquainted with many types of the written language, reading a considerable and contextualized body of text. They study about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of probable structures, and the different ways of linking ideas, which expand and improve their own writing skills. Students also become more creative and audacious when they start to observe the richness and diversity of the language they are trying to learn and commence to make use of some of that potential themselves. Thus, they improve their communicative and cultural capability in the authentic richness, sincerity of the genuine texts.

If stories poems and plays are included by the English Language teacher then certainly students may take more interest in class and can learn better English. When selecting the literary texts to be used in language classes, the language teacher should take into account needs, motivation, interests, cultural background and language level of the students. However, one major factor to take into account is whether a particular work is able to reveal the kind of personal involvement by arousing the learners' interest and eliciting strong, positive reactions from them. Reading a literary text is more likely to have a long-term and valuable effect upon the learners' linguistic and extra linguistic knowledge when it is meaningful and amusing. Choosing books relevant to the real-life experiences, emotions, or dreams of the learner is of great importance. Language complexity has to be measured as well. If the language of the literary work is easy, this may aid the clarity of the literary text but is not in itself the most crucial standard. Curiosity, demand, and significance are also important. Enjoyment, a fresh insight into issues felt to be related to the heart of people's concerns; the delight of encountering one's own thoughts or situations exemplified clearly in a work of art; the other, equal pleasure of noticing those same thoughts, feelings, emotions, or situations presented by an entirely new outlook. All these are motives serving learners to manage with the linguistic obstructions that might be considered too great in less connecting material.

Literature and Reading ESL / EFL teachers should adopt an active, student-centered approach toward understanding of a literary work. In reading lesson, conversation starts at the literal stage with straight questions of detail regarding setting, characters, and plot which can be replied by precise reference to the text. When students master literal understanding, they move to the inferential level, where they must make speculations and interpretations concerning the characters, setting, and theme, and where they produce the author's point of view. After comprehending a literary selection at the literal and inferential levels, students are ready to do a combined work. That is to state that they share their evaluations of the work and their personal reactions to its characters, its themes, and the author's opinion. This is also the appropriate time for them to share their reactions to the work's natural cultural issues and themes. The third level, the personal / evaluative level stimulates students to think imaginatively about the work and provokes their problem-solving abilities. Literature and Writing Literature can be a powerful and

motivating source for writing in ESL / EFL, both as a model and as subject matter. Literature as a model occurs when student writing becomes closely similar to the original work or clearly imitates its content, theme, organization, and /or style. However, when student writing exhibits original thinking like interpretation or analysis or when it emerges from, or is creatively stimulated by, the reading, literature serves as subject matter. Literature houses in immense variety of themes to write on in terms of guided, free, controlled and other types of writing.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that teaching English language through literature is viable at the all stages of language learning. The important point to be noted is that the literature prescribed should be interesting and understandable for the learners. If syllabus designing is taken proper care of half the battle is won. The ambience in the classroom changes dramatically with the introduction of literature. It is no surprise that the learners enjoy learning English language through literature. Literature is for all ages and never ceases to inspire the students irrespective of their age and gender.

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