



TEACHING LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE

English

Dr.S.Hemalatha

Assistant Professor(Sl.Gr) & Head, Department of English, Velalar College of Engineering and Technology, Thindal-12, Erode, Tamil Nadu, India.

ABSTRACT

It is necessary to understand the importance of teaching English language through literature in order to make language learning an enriching experience for students. Literature is the mirror of society. Literature gives permanent happiness to anyone who reads with diligence and passion. Literature starts in delight but ends in wisdom. In other words, literature not only instructs but also delights. Literature helps the learners appreciate diverse cultures apart from their own cultures. Certain emotions like anger, greed, love, jealousy etc are universal. Once the learners 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. This paper tries to find out whether learning English Language is feasible through the use of Literature.

KEYWORDS:

Literature, English Language Teaching, Language Learning, Literary texts, Language skills.

Introduction

The rise of ELT led to the gradual sidelining of Literature, as focus shifted to functional use of language. Various genres of literature like short stories, poems, novels, plays etc can be used effectively in the ELT classroom to make learning a joyful experience for the language learners. Literature can be taught to students through audio-texts, music CDs, film clips etc which will help the language learners to understand the beauty of language without much difficulty. ELT experts lay emphasis on four skills- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Through Literature, the learners can be taught all the four skills by paying attention to sentence structures and new vocabulary.

Language teaching is incomplete without literature. The earlier generations had solid foundation in language, because they learnt classics written by literary writers like Shakespeare, Wordsworth etc. Unfortunately, the modern generation does not have any exposure to classics. This severely hampers not only their intellectual growth but also emotional growth. Technical education is not complete, if one does not pay any attention to values, character building, soft skills etc. All the above mentioned things can be easily and effectively inculcated in students through literature.

Literary texts may be selected based on interest and relevance to language learners. The level of the language learners should be checked thoroughly before prescribing any literary texts. It is suggested that the texts be slightly shorter so that the language learners make optimum use of them before the stipulated time. Meticulous planning is necessary to ensure that the learners get literary texts that are culturally appropriate. Literary texts will expose students to use the appropriate language according to the situation and condition. Care should be taken in selecting appropriate texts which instill the right cultural values in students. Once the learners get good command over the language doing well in campus interviews, group discussions etc. will become a cakewalk.

Teaching language through literature help teachers first to acquaint them 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.

Means of 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.

Literature Is Useful in Language Learning

Teaching Language Through Literature to use of literature as a technique for teaching both basic language skills example for reading, writing, listening, and speaking and language areas example for vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation is very popular within the field of foreign language learning and teaching nowadays and in translation courses, many language teachers make their students translate literary texts like drama, poetry and short stories into the mother tongue. Literature is used in different context. Literature offers a wide range of language structures, which can enhance our understanding of the range of language usages. This understanding a direct impact on the learner's ability to learn and use language not for mechanical responses but for the expression and response of those thoughts and ideas which would have stifled in the brain in the absence of rich language resources. Literature work in such a situation becomes a vehicle for language learning.

Using Literary Texts in Foreign Language Classes

Four Main Reasons Which Lead a Language Teacher to Use Literature in the Classroom.

i) Valuable Authentic Material

Literature is authentic material and most works of literature are not created for the primary purpose of teaching a language. But many authentic samples of language in real-life contexts example for newspaper or magazine and articles are included within recently developed course materials. Thus, in a classroom context, learners are exposed to actual language samples of real life and real life like settings. And students have also to cope with language intended for native speakers, they become familiar with many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings.

ii) Cultural Enrichment

For many language learners. The ideal way to increase their understanding of Verbal and non-verbal 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 as novels, plays, or short stories etc. a novel, play, or short story is an imaginary and it presents a full and colorful setting in which characters from many social and regional backgrounds can be described. The way the characters in such literary works see the world outside example for their thoughts, feelings, customs, traditions, possessions. Literature is perhaps best regarded as a complement to other materials used to develop the foreign learner's understanding into the country whose language is being learned. And Also literature adds a lot to the cultural grammar of the learners.

iii) Language Enrichment

Literature provides Learners with a wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items. Students become familiar with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualized body of text. And they learn about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas, which develop and enrich their own writing skills. They improve their communicative and cultural competence in the

authentic richness, naturalness of the authentic texts.

iv) Personal Involvement.

Literature can be useful in the language learning process owing to the personal involvement it fosters in the reader. Once the student reads a literary text, he begins to inhabit the text. He is drawn into the text. And Understanding the meanings of lexical items or phrases becomes less significant than pursuing the development of the story. And also the student becomes enthusiastic to find out what happens as events unfold via the climax. And he feels close to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. This can have beneficial effects upon the whole language learning process. At this juncture, the prominence of the selection of a literary text in relation to the needs, expectations, and interests, language level of the students is evident. In this process, he can remove the identity crisis and develop into an extrovert. Some of the other reasons for regarding literature as a potent resource in the language classroom.

Personal Relevance

Since it deals with ideas, things, sensations and events which either constitutes part of the reader's experience or which they can enter into imaginatively, they are able to relate it to their own lives.

Variety

Literature includes within it all possible varieties of subject matter. And it is in fact a battery of topics to use in ELT. Within literature, We can find the language of law and of mountaineering, of medicine and of bull-fighting, of church sermons and nursery talk.

Interest

Literature deals with themes and topics which are intrinsically interesting, because part of the human experience, and treats them in ways designed to engage the reader's attention.

Universality

Because we are all human beings and the themes literature deals with are common to all cultures despite their different way of treatment example for like Death, Love, Separation, Belief, Nature ... the list is familiar. These experiences all happen to human beings.

Non – Triviality

Many of the more familiar forms of language teaching inputs tend to trivialize texts or experience. Literature does not trivialize or talk down. It is about things which mattered to the author when he wrote them. It may offer genuine as well as merely "authentic" inputs.

Economy and suggestive power

One of the great strengths of literature is its suggestive power. Even in its simplest forms, it invites us to go beyond what is said to what is implied. Since it suggests many ideas with few words, literature is ideal for generating language discussion. Maximum output can often be derived from minimum input.

Ambiguity

And at last ambiguity it is highly suggestive and associative, literature speaks subtly different meanings to different people. It is rare for two readers to react identically to any given text. And in teaching, this has two advantages. And the first advantage is that each learner's interpretation has validity within limits. The second advantage is that an almost infinite fund of interactive discussion is guaranteed since each person's perception is different and that no two readers will have a completely convergent interpretation establishes the tension that is necessary for a genuine exchange of ideas.

Literature and the Teaching of Language skills

Teaching Language through Literature a Literature plays an important role in teaching four basic language skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking. 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, pantomiming, re-enactment, discussion, and group activities may centre on a work of

literature.

Different models of teaching literature in class

There have been different models suggested on the teaching of literature to ESL/EFL students. How the teacher will use a literary text depends on the model they choose. The cultural model views a literary text as a product. This means that it is treated as a source of information about the target culture. It is the most traditional approach, often used in university courses on literature. The cultural model will examine the social, political and historical background to a text, literary movements and genres. There is no specific language work done on a text. This approach tends to be quite teacher-centred.

The language model aims to be more learner-centred. As learners proceed through a text, they pay attention to the way language is used. They come to grips with the meaning and increase their general awareness of English. Within this model of studying literature, the teacher can choose to focus on general grammar and vocabulary (in the same way that these are presented in course books for example) or use stylistic analysis. Stylistic analysis involves the close study of the linguistic features of the text to enable students to make meaningful interpretations of the text – it aims to help learners read and study literature more competently.

The personal growth model is also a process-based approach and tries to be more learner-centred. This model encourages learners to draw on their own opinions, feelings and personal experiences. It aims for interaction between the text and the reader in English, helping make the language more memorable. Learners are encouraged to "make the text their own". This model recognises the immense power that literature can have to move people and attempts to use that in the classroom.

Conclusion

Literature is for all ages and never ceases to inspire the students irrespective of their age and gender. There is no doubt that literature will help the learners to get good command over the language. If literature is made part of the curriculum in education, language learning will become a really enriching experience for the learners. The important point to be noted is that the literature prescribed should be interesting and understandable for young learners. In other words, language is something that has to be caught and not taught. In conclusion, teaching language through literature is an indispensable activity which promotes the basic virtues of literature which blossom with 'beauty' and 'pleasure'.

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