TEACHING LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

PRESHNEV S.
Department of English
Assistant Professor
Adhiyamaan College of Engineering
(Autonomous) Dr. MGR Nagar
Hosur – 635109 **(TN) INDIA**

RAMESH R.
Department of English
Assistant Professor
Adhiyamaan College of Engineering
(Autonomous) Dr. MGR Nagar
Hosur – 635109 **(TN) INDIA**

ABSTRACT

Language is placed in our life as an essential need like food, dress and dwell. In countries like our India, we feel proud of unity in diversion on the basis of culture and language. At the same time we face some problems because of multilingual society. To rectify these problems, the second language system has been introduced. In most of the countries, throughout the world English has become the second language, because, it is considered as universal language.

INTRODUCTION

It is a very interesting task, but, at the same time we face difficulties in introducing English as a second language to the people who speak their native language. To make the teaching learning process of English language an interesting one, we can travel through literature. It will make our journey a smooth and memorable one.

The majority of the teaching community categorizes literature as an irrelevant subject matter that has no important role in language teaching. But, it is not true. A language learner can become an extraordinary eccentric in his language skill by having literature as a tool for his/her learning. This paper tries to find ways to introduce an interesting Language learning system through literature. Literary discourse offers perspective that inspires learners to enjoy it and to use the language in an effective manner. Literature on the other hand provides subject matter, that has the power to motivate the learners to learn new words and invoke them to use the words, they have learned in their academic and in their personal life.

There are so many definitions and illustrations of literature in various dimensions. But, in the digital era, modernized media, newspapers, modern gadgets for teaching also can be considered as literature. Literature is divided on the basis of periods and writers and also in the basis of themes. In this way today literature shows it's another face through media and modern equipment for teaching. Especially newspaper is considered as a form of literature and it can be used as medium or source for teaching language.

In most of the times, English language teachers follow conventional methods to teach grammar and vocabulary. This can be done through newspaper because there are so many words coined everyday. Newspaper is the only prominent source to know that new words. Like that, for grammar teaching also newspaper would be the better source.

Collie and Slater (1987: 3-6) support the inclusion of literature in the language classroom as it offers valuable reliable material, develops personal involvement and help contribute to readers' cultural as well as language improvement. These advantages, they move on to assert, can be achieved provided teachers use relevant and attractive material to learners through the use of activities that support involvement, reader response and a solid assimilation between language and literature.

Literature itself contributes by giving direct impact to the learner to learn it and literature trains the particular learner to use the language not mechanically but as the expression of their original thought and feelings. Literature speaks real life where one character meets and interacts with others. This expression and the language in this interaction must be noted by the reader. In this situation the teacher should motivate the learner to learn more vocabulary.
The main aim of the teacher here is not to teach literature, but, to teach language. So, they should get the idea of teaching language through literature as follows. By reading a piece of literature a learner can learn the usage of words phrases , phrasal verbs, multiple meanings of idioms etc .This accessibility of sources in a single place reduces the strain of the learner. Learner cannot limit their studies in a small round if they need to face the native speaker they face difficulties to understand and to respond.

The use of literature in the English Language Teaching classroom is enjoying a revival for a number of reasons. 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 English Language Teaching classroom has been re-assessed and literary texts have been viewed as providing rich linguistic input, effective motivations for students to express themselves in other languages and a potential source of learner motivation.

Carter and Long (1991:2-3) propose three models to justify the use of Literature. The first model in their discussion is the Cultural Model which represents the possibility Literature brings into the picture as regards the understanding and appreciation of different cultures and ideologies together with the developing of one's perception of feelings and artistic forms. Their second model is the Language Model. This model highlights the fact that language is the literary medium and that literature could be seen as an instrument to teach specific vocabulary and structures. Last, their Personal Growth Model entails students engaging with the reading of literary texts, appreciating and evaluating cultural relics and, in broad terms, the understanding of our society, culture and ourselves as we function within that social matrix.

Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000; 9-11) add that it provides a good model for good writing; it is memorable, non-trivial and challenging, and it also helps assimilate the rhythms of a language; therefore facilitating intelligence and sensibility training.

Last, it is further claimed that literature helps enhance the psycholinguistic aspect of language learning as it focuses on form and discourse processing skills and improves vocabulary expansion and reading skills. Literature, in addition, has experienced a revival with the advent of communicative approach in language teaching as it provides learners with authentic, pleasurable and cultural material (**Hall, 2005:47-57).**

Literary texts can be studied in their original forms or in simplified or abridged versions. An increasing number of stories in English are written specifically for learners of other languages. The types of literary texts that can be studied inside and outside the English Language Teaching classroom include: Short stories, Poems, Novels, Plays and Lyrics. Though we have so many materials to teach and learn language, using literary texts could be the most appropriate one to acquire language skills based on the following grounds.

Literary texts provide opportunities for multi-sensorial classroom experiences and can appeal to learners with different learning styles. Texts can be supplemented by audio-texts, music CDs, film clips, pod casts, all of which enhance even further the richness of the sensory input that students receive.

Literary texts offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners to practice the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing - in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary.

Literature can help learners develop their understanding of other cultures, awareness of 'difference' and to develop tolerance and understanding. At the same time literary texts can deal with universal themes such as love, war and loss that are not always covered in course books.

Literary texts are representational rather than referential (**McRae, 1994**). Referential language communicates at only one level and tends to be informational. The representational language of literary texts involves the learners and engages their emotions, as well as their cognitive faculties. Literary works help learners to use their imagination, enhance their empathy for others and lead them to develop their own creativity.

Literature can lead to public displays of student output through posters of student creations e.g. poems, stories or through performances of plays. So for a variety of linguistic, cultural and personal growth reasons, literary texts can be more motivating than the referential ones often used in classrooms.

According to **Lazar (1990: 204-205)**, when using a novel, teachers should look at both possible drawbacks and educational as well as linguistic opportunities. First, a novel provides a more involving motivational source for pedagogic activities, and it also engages learners intellectually, emotionally and linguistically. Furthermore, it provides a picture of another culture, though some cultural background is deemed essential.

Although we have so much of positive aspects of using literature texts as a tool to learn language, there are some of the challenges to be faced when using literature in the classroom. Literary texts can present teachers and learners with a number of difficulties.

The following are some of the difficulties to be faced by the teachers in the class room.

1. The literary texts must carefully be chosen which have relevance and interest to learners.
2. At the same time the selected texts should be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension to avoid linguistic difficulty of the students.
3. Length of the text also plays a prominent role. Shorter texts may be easier to use within the class time available, but longer texts provide more contextual details, and development of character and plot.
4. Cultural difficulty - texts should not be so culturally intense that strangers feel expelled from understanding essential meaning.

Duff and Maley (2007) stress that teachers can manage with many of the challenges that literary texts present, if they ask a series of questions to assess the appropriateness of texts for any particular group of learners. The following set of questions would be more helpful to select the suitable texts.

1. Is the subject matter likely to interest this group?
2. Is the language level appropriate?
3. Is it the right length for the time available?
4. Does it require much cultural or literary background knowledge?
5. Is it culturally offensive in any way?
6. Can it be easily exploited for language learning purposes?

CONCLUSION

Today Language acquisition occupies the majority of the teaching learning process. At the same time it can't be done mechanically. This process should be done with an aesthetic sense to prove that language teaching is a part of humanities. Both literature and language teaching involve the development of feeling for language or spontaneous responses to the literary texts. Reading and interpreting literary texts help the learners to retain in memory useful quotations and phrases which they can use in their everyday speech. Moreover, the literary texts put together linguistic competence with communicative competence by putting language into use in different social situations. There is no doubt, a close relationship between educational goals and literary texts that are selected for study. The educationists should make an appropriate selection from literature to meet the learner's needs, stage, ability and interests at all stages. For example, for the primary learners, simple verses, sayings, one-act plays and games would be fun for them. Generally, young learners acquire a useful contextualized language and keep by heart simple wisdoms, songs, proverbs and short stories.

Beginners are generally provoked and willing to know a foreign language, so these literary texts will help them to acquire the language as a means of communication. This selected literature would make them native-like speakers because grammar is acquired implicitly, therefore, the stage is very important for making teaching English as use and function-focus. Teachers of language should try to understand that the importance and effectiveness of teaching language lies in its spontaneous and impressive use by the learners. There is no rejecting the fact, the studies made in this paper and the suggestions found here, that literature plays a vital and interesting role in the acquisition of language in an appropriate and fundamental sense. We can safely bring to a close that literary texts can play a very important role in developing language skills among the non-native learners of English and helping them to use language for communicative purposes in the existent world.

REFERENCES :

Carter, R. and M. Long (1991) Teaching Literature. Harlow: Longman.

Collie, J. and S. Slater (1987) Literature in the Language Classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duff, A & Maley, A (2007) Literature (Resource Books for Teachers), Oxford University Press.

Hall, G. (2005) Literature in Language Education. New York: Palgrave.

Lazar, G. (1990) "Using novels in the language-learning classroom." English Language Teaching 44/3: 204-214.

McRae, J (1994) Literature with a small 'l', Macmillan Education.

Parkinson, B. and H. Reid Thomas (2000) Teaching Literature in a Second Language. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.