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### ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES, TECHNIQUES AND METHODS FOR TEACHING LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM

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The aim of this research paper is to critically observe the role and use of language in the literature classroom at the under graduate level, and to specify some of the skills which are required by such a course, and to add a few methodological guidelines which might lead to a more effective learner response within the existing syllabus. As such, pedagogic viewpoints have been discussed rather than those of purely literary theory which would have been beyond the scope of this thesis.

Several experts have suggested that the teaching of literature should be closer to the study of language used in the text. It was felt that this step would ensure that students would be able to develop their language skills initially and then use the same language skills to further their critical abilities. The teaching of literature is closely connected to the formation of meaning of texts from their analysis and that is directly connected to the teaching practices in the classrooms. Since conventional teaching practices focuses on the study of critical works on literary texts instead of encouraging independent literary evaluation, the study looks at the critical framework that forms the basis of literary-critical practice.

Many teachers have observed that the teaching of English literature has not successful in imparting the required skills to the students. It is believed that the English language teaching objectives are not being met and the students are unable to use English language effectively in their day-to-day activities. A large section of the students fail to acquire any essential language skills like reading or speaking. It is found that even the students who passed the exams lacked language skills. The conventional system of English education requires close study of the English classics which in turn require the knowledge of the language. The conventional syllabus however, has a minimum linguistic component. Limited attempts to introduce linguistic components in the syllabus have failed, as most of the teachers are not trained to undertake linguistic teaching.

Many students in the country are found to be lacking in literary competence. Most of the teaching of English literature focuses on literary merits of the text and minimal attention is given to the study of the language. Students are unable to understand literary texts as they have no grounding in basic language skills. The problem arises due to the inability of the students to perform meaning-making process due to the lack of language skills. It is expected that the student with the required language skills would be able to look at the literary text and make connections using the language used in the text to further the knowledge of the language. For example, a student studying Ode to West Wind would be able to use the language of the poem to learn new words and the context in which they have been used. This would help to improve the knowledge of the literature as well as the language. Thus it may be said that the teaching of literature and languages support one another through the meaning-making process. For example, it can be said that the language used in 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' can be used to teach the nuances in linguistics.

By observing poetry from the E.H.Elizabethan to the Romantic period, the students would be able to understand the linguistic evolution of English and use the understanding to improve their language skills.

The aim of the research is to focus on the role and use of language in the teaching of literature. Problems arise in the teaching of literature because teaching literature is generally done in the total absence

of any framework or system which should impart organization to the talks daily delivered in the graduate classrooms.

Some of the important research questions that will be addressed in this study are:

1. What is the role of language in literature classroom?
2. Do students know how to interpret literary text in the classroom?
3. What is literary language and what stylistic devices can a student use to interpret the meaning of a text?
4. What are some alternative strategies, techniques and methods for teaching literature in the classroom?

The development of a suitable approach for the teaching of literature becomes essential especially in the second language context (India) where it is never certain whether literature is being taught for its own sake, or for the teaching of language.

Before starting to address the issues of developing a suitable approach it would be helpful to discuss the different viewpoints that have come forth over the years from several teachers who have recommended the study of literature at the Under Graduate level. The fact that many of these teachers have spent years teaching and understanding the problems connected with literature helps us to gain fresh perspectives into different aspects behind the teaching literature.

It is not being suggested that literature-based courses are unsuitable for teaching English language. There is no conflict between the teachings of language and the teaching of literature. The two are, in fact, complementary. One needs sensitivity to language for literary appreciation and literary works are repositories of authentic language use. One has only to expand the definition of the word 'literature', made judicious selection with the teaching 'aims' in mind, and use the right methodology to exploit the materials for achieving the aims. The material for teaching does not have to belong to classical literature.

According to Widdowson there may be good or bad literature but everything is literature if the discourse is dissociated from any normal social context and therefore requires the reader to create his/her own schematic information.

The focus of the framework is to develop teaching methodologies that would enable the students to develop an understanding of the text at a personal level. The framework should be able to arrive at innovative teaching solutions that would assist the learner to analyze literary text by empowering them with the language skills that would enable the construction of meaning and through arrive at different layers of interpretation which is demanded of them at the Degree level. For this purpose the study will make use of linguistics, ideas of Widdowson, and Umberto Eco's work in descriptive semiotics, Holiday's ideas on language acquisition, and Reader Response theory.

The B.A. English course offered at AMU consists of an introduction to the study and appreciation of literature, a study of English poetry from the Elizabethan to the Romantic period, study of the nineteenth century English novel, Victorian and Modern Poetry, Shakespearean Drama, Post-Shakespearean drama, twentieth century British and American novel, novels from Indian Writing in English, and other materials.

Most of the syllabus focuses on the close study of literary texts and analyzing their literary merits by studying their criticism. Students of literature are unanimous in their view that great writers are great manipulators of the language and have made significant contribution to the making of English. A study of linguistics, which shows a greater awareness of language in a student, is sure to help the student in responding better to the use of language in literature and enables the student to understand better how language is exploited by a literary artist.

We need not necessarily change the syllabus altogether- but we at least need to check out the way in which it is being used. There is no need for a drastic change or even the complete removal of literature from a language classroom, but we need to think about the way it is being used in the classroom. The current study stresses to do this in the context of how language is used in literature classroom and also attempts to find an answer to this question. Literature is used to teach language; however, more often than, the faculty as well as the syllabus makers conveniently forgets that the mother tongue of the students is not English and hence they would face serious problems in understanding the language that is used in the literary text. This does not mean that the students are incompetent or are lazy to make the necessary adjustments; but rather, the ease

with which a native speaker can understand and use the language (English) is different from the way an Indian, or for that matter any non-native speaker, would use the language. Hence, the idea of using English language to teach English literature needs serious thinking as well as tinkering in AMU.

Today, English is a global, universal language. This can be seen in many variations of English which people use or speak. Fortunately, many countries have put aside the stereotype notions that English undervalues and marginalizes the indigenous culture and acknowledged the immense possibilities and potentialities of English. In short, the importance of English lies in the fact that it is needed for practical reasons, social and economic success. Thus we can rightly claim that whoever tries to politicize English or see it from a narrow cultural point of view will put a rope of isolation around one's neck.

My work on role and use of language in teaching of literature arises not because literature teaching is something new or difficult that it is not possible to perform unless it is guided by a book of instructions for the purpose, but because literature teaching is generally done in the total absence of any framework or system, which should impart organization to the talks daily delivered in the graduate classrooms. This provides the reason and the rationale for the current study.

The reaction to the earlier approach gave importance to language or the mode of communication because literature is primarily a linguistic artifact, but here again there is a problem, because the language of literature is distinguished from the language of ordinary communication

**To quote Widdowson,**

‘What else literature may be, we will agree that its effects are achieved through the medium of language. And here we encounter our first difficulty. The term is ambiguous. On the one hand it may refer to the underlying system of common knowledge, langue and on the other to particular realization of this knowledge as instances of behavior parole’ {The Deviant Language of Poetry, 7).

Therefore, it seems generally difficult to have a fair assessment of what the students already know about the language and literature and what they are going to learn.

However, my work is an attempt to build a framework for the undergraduate students to teach them the role and use of language in literature. For example, a football match will mean much more to a person who understands the rules and regulations under which the game is played, than to a person who has a vague idea of well-built youth hustling each other on a field trying to run towards opposite ends with a ball. In other words, the spectator who gets the most has a set of concepts to guide his experience. A literary study should also make the student aware of the heightened form in which language is used in literary works.

Through such a study the student learns much about language and the language used in literature. The relevance of the research also has in reference to the present world scenario where countries of the world are coming together as a global village. The global communication is bringing nations and people together and making them a global community. At this juncture, it is obvious that English is the only effective worldwide means of communication. That is why English is being paid more attention all over the world in the present global context than ever before. For better or worse, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a great deal of development in the role of English as a global language. It is used for wider purposes than ever before.

Much research has been done to prove the role and significance of literature in the language classroom; however, enough attention has not been paid to trace and establish the role of language in literature classroom. Over the years, the teacher of literature, when confronted with a fresh piece of literature, is unable to explain it to the student, and hence leaves the student clueless. Thus, this approach tends to ignore learners' needs and fails to fulfill some of the requirements of learners in a literature classroom. This present work aims to explore how through analysis of language structure the teacher can help the student of literature to acquire a better understanding of works of literature.

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