



Judicious Exploitation of Literature in Language Teaching

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Abstract: Literature, a mode of communication and one of the manifestations of language, has been described as a content –rich material and a model of creative language in use. It is linguistically rich, culturally embedded, and pedagogically useful material. However, the use of literature in language teaching has ever remained debated whether it could contribute for both language development and aesthetic purpose. Realizing the very issue, this study presents how literature contributes in teaching and learning of different language skills and how it is used to teach for aesthetic purpose. To address the issue, various theoretical and empirical literatures were reviewed and analysed to draw the conclusions. The findings of the study show that literature is supportive for language development, for example enhancing different language skills. Moreover, it is found to be an object for aesthetic purpose, for example, responding to the literary text using different lenses. Further, the study suggests that the existing views and essence of using literature (i.e. teaching language through literature and study of literature from language point of view) should be extended to teaching literature for the sake of aesthetics. It is the judicious teaching of literature that acknowledges literature as an instrument as well as an object. The teaching of literature can expose students to interact with the messages existed in literary texts along with perceiving the textual information. While reading literature, students can have interaction with different characters, their roles, their psychological status, and the way how these characters perceive this world, as a result, students by

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using the diverse perspectives can identify the realities and describe them. In this sense, the teaching of literature is found to be quite relevant for aesthetic purpose.

Key Words: The teaching of literature, using literature as a resource, language development, literary skills, literary appreciation, aesthetic purpose

General Background

Literature includes the genres: poetry, drama, essay, fiction etc. and is mostly a written work of artistic as well as intellectual value. However, literature nowadays can be extended to film/ movie, television drama and other media. To quote Kernan (as cited in Beauty, Booth, Hunter & Mays, 2002, p. xxx), literature has become “only...one among many...modes, print, television, radio, VCR cassette, record and CD, by which information can be assembled, organized and transmitted effectively.” Whatever the mode of expression is, the theme and language existed in literary texts is the centre of our concern. Literature as a discourse can display the variety of language use through its genres. Hanaur (2001) describes it as a source of content- rich reading material; a model of creative language in use; a way to introduce vocabulary in context; a way to focus readers’ attention on literary features, for example, metaphor, simile, personification, oxymoron, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm ...etc. Language can be manifested in different ways and literary language is one of them. The language of literature is not just words, structures and idioms, but it is lively and versatile means of communication. The reading of literature can offer an excellent opportunity for developing students’ oral performance. According to Zalta (2006) literature can involve readers actively in the text, present the language in context and help them build confidence as well as skills in group dynamics. Similarly, Collie and Slater (1987) support the inclusion of literature in the language classroom:

Literature provides valuable authentic materials, develops personal involvement and helps contribute to readers’ cultural as well as language engagement. These advantages, they move on to assert, can be achieved through the use of activities that promote involvement, reader responses and solid integration between language teaching and literature. (p. 4)

There are the views that the language of literature, mainly of poetry, follows the deviated patterns and is different from the language of our daily communication. Therefore, language of literature, because of its unusual or rearranged patterns, can have nominal contribution in language teaching and learning. Gautam (2001), consulting some texts of literature, raises the question on the reading of lofty works of Shakespeare and Milton to develop communicative competence in learners when they are unable to speak or write even simple English correctly.

As we observe some works about the inclusion of literature in language teaching, we find several arguments at the front of debate from history to date. For example, Tutas (2006) argues that responding aesthetically to literature facilitates

students' enjoyment and engagement with literature. For him, literature can foster students' communicative competence although literary mode of communication is different from a usual pattern of communication. Supporting this view and pointing to the successful teaching of literature, Hirvela (1996) argues that the meaning created during reading literary texts is produced through a transaction between the learner and the text. The texts of literature in classroom can provide teachers with the opportunities to lead students to read between the lines in order to describe a character's point of view in terms of what that character says, thinks and performs the allocated activities. Tully (2009) further claims that such literary texts can prepare students to improve their critical thinking skills in academic tasks by increasing students' confidence, self-awareness and autonomy. In addition, literary texts provide students an opportunity to talk with their parents and other adult learners, as a result, it increases reading and language use at home. Students read and show their responses on the issues they find in the literary texts and the themes that have been drawn. To quote Collins (2009) literary texts, mainly the stories, can be an excellent and resourceful objects for the teaching of vocabulary and students after reading such fiction can narrate not only the events of these texts but also assimilate the themes of such texts with their life experiences. Although several views have indicated that literature as resourceful authentic material serves a potential in language teaching, little attention has been given to the discussion how literature supports in the teaching of language skills (i.e. literature for language development), and how literature can be taught for the purpose of aesthetics. Using literature as a resource to teach language and regarding literature as a study to teach aesthetics can be two different stances of reading but not poles apart. Instead, they can be two sides of the same coin. Literature can serve both as a resource (a means for language development) and a study (an object to teach for aesthetic purpose), which I mean as the judicious exploitation. Thus, this paper presents how far literature is ancillary to teach language skills, and how it works as an object to teach for the sake of aesthetics.

Theoretical Bases of Teaching Literature

The earlier section presents different views on the use of literature as a resource to teach language skills and as an object to teach aesthetics. This section presents some theoretical bases regarding the exploitation of literature in language teaching. To quote McRae (1996) and Maley (1989), the exploitation of literature in (language) classroom is for language growth and development (i.e, language as a point of entry to greater literary understanding and appreciation); the study of literature involves a considerable baggage of critical concepts and responses to the issues raised in literary texts.

Using Literature as a Resource

It talks about the way in which literary uses of language can contribute to the effective teaching of language. It tries to justify the use of literature in language teaching is supportive and one sees literature as ancillary to language teaching. Literary texts can have the authentic use of language and can serve as resourceful materials to teach language skills; and different aspects of language like vocabulary, function, sounds and grammar. Literature, which accepts language as its raw materials, provides language teacher with a ground to handle tons of activities. Jha (1993) writes that there is no other way of acquiring a sophisticated command of language except through assiduous study of its literature. Literature is treated as language use and can have literary quality, presents language in a meaningful context. Lohani and Nissani (2008) write, "The best road to language proficiency lies in its literature; nothing is so emotionally gripping that it is remembered for a long time" (p. 10).

Following the same trend, Carter and Long (1991) attempt to justify the use of literature in the teaching of language. 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. Literature is an expression of a culture and is therefore significant in the development of language skills. Learners can learn language through different cultures and it fosters their possession of attitudes, skills and competence. Extending the views and essence of learning language, Premendiknas (as cited in prawira 2013) is of the opinion that learning language by reading literature is expected to help learners get to know them not only their own culture but also the culture of others, express ideas and feelings and use analytical as well as creative abilities that exist within them. The second model is the 'Language Model' and it emphasizes the fact that language is the literary medium and that literature could be seen as an instrument to teach specific vocabulary as well as structures. Last, their 'Personal Growth Model' entails students engaging with the reading of literary texts, appreciating and evaluating them and, in broad terms, the understanding of our society, culture and ourselves as we function within that social matrix. The ultimate goal of these three models in integration is to develop proficiency of skills in learners.

Teaching Literature for Aesthetic Purpose

In the field of teaching and learning language how literature can contribute is a crucial question. Since the early nineteen eighties, there has been an upsurge of interest in how literature is employed in the context of language teaching (Lazar, 1993). It has been argued that the interface between the study of language and literature together can be mutually complimentary and beneficial. Maley (1989) clearly states that literature in language teaching can contribute in two different ways, for example, the study of literature as an object and the use of literature as a resource. More recently, Maley (2001) has expanded this view and explained that literature as an 'object' looks

at literary texts as an object of study, “they are studied for their literary qualities, and can have aesthetic motivation “, while literature as a resource means it is employed “as just one among many other kinds of texts “that can be used to teach language. Supporting this view, Kelliney (1993) writes, “Literature nourishes not only language development, but also fosters cultural awareness and tolerance, stimulates personal involvement by encouraging independent and enjoyable reading as well as provides the grounds for literary appreciation” (p. 115).

Literature is not only a mode of communication and tactfully arranged patterns of language nor is language learning through literature merely perceiving skills in training. Further, we take it broadly and think that teaching of literature contributes something to aesthetic purpose. “Literature appears with its humanizing influence, its relation of the hidden significance of everyday life, indeed, as the expression of the glory, jest, and riddle of the world of exultations, agonies, love and man’s unconquerable mind” (Widdowson, 1984, p. 161). The teaching of literature can arise students’ interest in finding out what aesthetic experience or perception of reality as messages the literary text is attempting to convey than only looking at literature as a means/vehicle of language teaching. Using literature as a source to teach language skills and aspects of language is not a complete phenomenon nor is the judicious teaching of literature.

The teaching of literature doesn’t mean only to describe the linguistic elements that occur in a piece of literary writing and the meaning they convey. Along with this, the task is to analyze the message it conveys in terms of social and human values, to synthesize it, to advance interaction with the messages or themes and to assimilate them with our life experiences. Halliday as cited in Widdowson (1984) views that literary analysis from linguistic origin and its exploitation for the purpose of language teaching from the seminal angle is an account of how literature manifests language or how a part of language system is exemplified in the text and just is a part of analysis not a complete work (p. 17).

Methodology

The study was based on descriptive and analytical research design. In order to answer the issues raised in objectives of the study, the views of English language teaching experts from different books : Widdowson (1975), Lohani and Nissani (2008), Carter and McRae (1996), Brumfit (1993), Rosenblatt (1978), Hall (2005), Paran (2008), Maley (1989), Maley and Duff (1989), Maley (2001), Bassnett and Grundy (1993), Carter and Long (1987), Carter and Long (1991), Collie and Slater (1987), Lazar (1993); research journals : English Teaching Forum (2009), The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching (2012), International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English literature (2018) and research reports : Dhanapal (2008), Boardman (2015), Kim (2009), Stavik (2015), Choo (2012), Baba (2008), Loudermilk (2002) were used for discussion. Only the secondary sources had been adopted and analysed.

Discussion

There are ordinary texts, for example, newspaper headlines, advertisements, editorials and the texts of non-fiction (general essays). Language in such texts is manifested directly and they can be used as easy materials to teach language. They can be supportive in language teaching because of their easy nature and they can fulfill the purpose of learning, i. e, to develop occupational and academic skills. There are some arguments against the inclusion of literature in language teaching. Literature is a potentially disruptive, complex and can lead language teaching nowhere and it can violate the principle of language teaching: the principle of correctness. Hudson (1966) points out that the use of literature in language teaching can have nominal contribution since literature has no practical uses and will be of no earthly use to students who are doing the courses of practical utility and language development. "Second half of twentieth century witnessed some resentment in the use of literature in English as Second Language or English as Foreign Language classrooms. Following the advent of linguistics, particularly the structural linguistics in 1960s, the use of literature as a tool of language teaching confronted with an enormous amount of disputes "(Giri, 2001, p. 36). In this context, the issue for discussion is whether literature contributes significantly in language teaching as a result it occupies an important place or not. Do literature and language teaching form two separate coins or are they two parts of the same coin? Are they two separate entities or are they poles apart? It has been the issue to be discussed in this section. In the context of second language learning, literary texts can serve as language models to help expand vocabulary, to structure sentences and to understand the use of stylistic devices. Reading literature in classroom is important for several reasons. Reading literature and responding to it can develop learners' proficiency.

Literature, which has served the teaching and learning of language almost everywhere in the world, has a long history as a source of teaching materials. It is equally significant at present day. We language teachers do not find any justification for ignoring the use of literature in the language class. We can say that literary texts are not made of supernatural elements nor of ethereal matter though some might think; literary texts are made up of language. "Literature is a high point of language usage; arguably it marks the greatest skills a language user can demonstrate. Anyone who wants to acquire a profound knowledge of language that goes beyond the utilitarian will read literary texts in that language" (Bassnett and Grundy, 1993, p. vii). Following the seminal view, Lazar (1993) summarizes that literature, a motivating and resourceful authentic material, fosters learner's acquisition; and develops their interpretative abilities, the skill of free and creative writing. Literature is a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching. Literary texts can be treated as if they are also written for language teaching (Carter and Long, 1991). Apart from the literary canons written particularly by renowned British and American authors, nowadays the teaching of literature includes wider varieties of reading materials on contemporary

issues: globalization, women, human condition, art and music, development and economics, literature and education, etc. Such texts, in the words of McRae (1991), stand as resources in the classroom for language growth and development and on language as a point of entry to greater literary understanding and appreciation. This process can be extended to the development of high-level intellectual skills, for example, critical thinking skills.

The second issue to be discussed here is whether the teaching of literature means using literature for language development or more than this. What does teaching literature include: the study of literature from linguistic orientation and teaching literature to develop language skills, to support the teaching of different aspects of language or there are some other aspects it should include? Can literature be taught for the purpose of aesthetics? Do the aforementioned views attempt to look at literature from this perspective in the field of language teaching and learning? It is obvious that neither the aforementioned views discuss nor are they complete about teaching literature for aesthetic purpose. If literature in language classroom is not taught to develop learners' literary skills and for aesthetic purpose, we teachers, language teaching experts, and researchers will be deviated from one of the main streams of teaching literature, nor can it be a judicious vision and task. Teaching literature for language development only can be incomplete and less logical task ignoring the aesthetic value that a literary text can carry. It is neither critical nor strongly logical since literature is a multi-faced object. There are the views that the teaching of literature should be limited to the teaching of language skills and aspects (i.e. grammar, sound, vocabulary, and language function). Kacmaz (2017) argues that everybody can be interested in literature as long as it is very well organized and included in the curriculum. In reality, it is not the literature that we are dealing with but it is the language itself. The attitude towards the integration of literature in language teaching particularly for language development seemed to be more encouraging in the early eighties and many publications were devoted to the interface between language and literature. Baba (2008) further declares that the work of Widdowson (1975) was a foundation stone of this view and his work was central in exploring the fundamental issues of using literature in the teaching of English and these issues have been expanded by other prominent researchers such as Brumfit and Carter (1986), Carter and Long (1987), Carter and Mc Rae (1996), Lazar (1993), Collie and Slater (1987) Maley and Duff (1989). The conclusion of their study was language development through the teaching of literature. Since then very few works in this field have been carried out, literature for language development was at the center of realization and had been the only established concept (Widdowson, 1984). However, the teaching of literature nowadays includes not only the works of established writers or what people would like to say of main stream but also the wider varieties of reading materials dealing with the burning issues of present day world. These can be the texts of great aesthetic value and provide wider space for discussion. Besides, using the printed forms of literature in language teaching for both linguistic or/ and aesthetic purpose, films/movies in the era of modern information and communication are coordinated with

technology. A great deal of literary works is adapted into films as audiovisual materials and used in language classroom. Keles (2015) argues that the usage of both adaptation films and documentary films (in which the text is literature) have been useful to teach language. Students can encounter with literary texts through films/movies and can sharpen their language skills as well as expand the horizon of their knowledge. For Bazilewich (2009), film as unquestionably a prominent artistic genre can sharpen students' critical thinking skills and connect the themes of literary texts to lived experiences of them.

Aesthetics fundamentally is dealing with perceptions that are particularly beautiful or sublime. Barnett (2018) defines aesthetics in general as the study of and/or reflection on objects of perception. Such perceptions can wield an influence over one's life, drawing one to this or to that end. In general, understanding literature as a human product, readers perceive the sense of beauty in the language of literature, and it is the aesthetics of literary language. But here aesthetics of literature is considered as a kind of literary and intellectual interaction between the literary texts and the readers or the message of the texts and readers. To quote Ganda (2001) aesthetic value of literature consists of both positive and negative poles of literary texts and ability of them to pose an aesthetic experience. Cox and Batstone (1997) argue that reading and responding literature for aesthetic purpose can invite students to approach literature to enjoy, can focus their attention to culture, life experiences and in classroom it provides opportunities for discussion and exchange of different points of view on the given topic (s). As a result, literature can be treated both as a subject to study and as an object to exchange meaning with one another. Ryan (2017) has mentioned three types of literary texts: stories, novels and poems respectively and discussed how such texts are beneficial to create aesthetic effects to readers. While reading them, the readers can have the interaction with different characters, their roles, their psychological status, their perception of this world. They can conceive the art of creating stories particularly by engaging their interest through effects: suspense, curiosity, and through a dramatic contour of rise and fall in tension. The readers by using the diverse perspectives can identify the realities and describe them accordingly. Prawira (2013) concludes that literature can extensively be exploited for aesthetic purpose for example, analyzing and judging its positive and negative impacts in the sense of message and understanding of aesthetics in literature becomes true through literary appreciation, a conscious process. Aesthetic responses depend on the cultural background of the reader, the age s/he belongs to and his/her mind set or psychological distance etc.

The teaching of literature involves learners fostering the ability to interpret discourse in all its social and cultural contexts. Literary explorations in language teaching can be beneficial for aesthetic purpose. Reading and responding to literature is a kind of transaction. As students have transactions with the issues raised in the texts, they are having an aesthetic response. Such response occurs when the learners broaden their attention and association with the issues raised in the text as well as the author. Rosenblatt (1978) concludes that a reader will always be conscious with the

ideas expressed in the texts, S/he will have a sense of communication and sometimes of communion with the ideas, thoughts or the essence. In aesthetic process, the learners and the texts are not necessarily separate entities but instead interact with each other and stand as participating elements. It is different from reading a text to gain information or particular knowledge about a subject nor is similar to reading text for the sake of mere pleasure. It is beyond having knowledge about literature nor is captivated only to be familiar with literary language. The teaching of literature for aesthetic purpose refers to the development of awareness, judgment and appreciative skills of learners. Boardman (2015) further discusses that literature in teaching and learning can provide the stakeholders with opportunities for a systematic attempt to explore and understand human feelings as well as the value of life in a meaningful way.

Literature can primarily serve as language models to expand vocabulary, and to understand the use of stylistic devices. In addition, it is widely used to broaden the learners' horizon of knowledge, to express imagination and creativity. Further, the reading of literature gives insight into the various aspects of human condition. Such wider range of objectives related to the teaching of literature may not be pursued at a time, however they open up multiple possibilities in language teaching. One of them is literature can be used to teach aesthetic value related to human life. Arnold as cited in Widdowson (1999) discusses about the use of literature, mainly, poetry to interpret the value of human life by presenting literature superior to science, philosophy, religion. The aforementioned views in nutshell conclude that literature should be used as resourceful materials (i.e. using literature as an instrument) to teach language skills as well as a means of producing output (i.e. literature as an object). To quote Candline (1996) every act in the teaching of language is not only linguistic, a use of the potential of the language system, but it is also social and cultural, an expression of who we are and what we give value to (as cited in Hall, 2005). It is not enough just to insinuate or include the texts of literature for the sake of inclusion to show the brand of literature in language course but should come with certain academic purpose, for example, to make the learners sensitive readers and respond to the issues raised in the texts. It is relevant to quote Rodger that our task as teachers of literature is not to handover predigested meanings, but to teach our students how to read and interpret for themselves, not to indoctrinate them with an academically hall-marked and guaranteed set of received opinions...but to be reasonably skilled and sensitive readers, able to feel and judge for themselves, with fidelity to the textual facts (as cited in Moody, 1983).

Conclusion

Literature, a mode of communication; one of the manifestations of language and a construct having tactfully arranged patterns of language, is universally acknowledged as content-rich reading material, and a model of creative language in use. It has

occupied an important space in language teaching. The texts of literature, for example, poetry, essay, fiction, drama as well as currently perceived extended literary texts like in film/movie, television and other media are motivating and resourceful materials to teach language skills along with the aspects of language teaching. Such view, i.e., the teaching of literature for language development, as mentioned in Widdowson (1984), is still at the centre of realization and has been like the only established concept. It shows that at the centre, the teaching of literature is to perceive information from the literary texts using literature as a vehicle of language teaching and learning. The aforementioned discussion shows that such view cannot present the judicious teaching of literature in language classroom as a complete phenomenon of teaching literature.

The next side of the above discussion reveals that literature can be taught for aesthetic purpose. Reading and responding to literature means to describe the linguistic elements that occur in a literary texts as well as to answer the issues raised in these texts. It is an aesthetic, critical and literary transaction that aims at developing students' skills of literary appreciation, critical commentary as well as the skill to analyze literary texts using different critical lenses. Reading literature can draw the attention of students to the message exists in literary texts along with the appearance of usual and rearranged patterns of language. As a result, students not only perceive the information but also respond to the message exists in such texts, assimilate these messages with their life experiences. The teaching of literature in our context provides a wider space for literary and academic discourse. In this sense, literature can be taught for aesthetic purpose.

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