

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LITERATURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Choosing appropriate texts is the first step of Teaching English in the ESL/EFL classroom. All Language teachers desire to provide their students with material inspiring them to speak- up, to seek- out answers to questions, to voice their questions and to read widely as well as deeply. An important goal of education is equipping learners with materials to improve their standard of living and become contributing members of their society, rather than burden on society and others. English Language Teachers are absolutely aware of this goal. Therefore, they attempt to create such a situation for students of English language by selecting materials which lead to the improvement of students' lives which in turn leads to the overall improvement of their societies. A vast part of this material comes from Literature.

II. CONCEPT OF LITERATURE

The term "Literature" is used basically in two different senses. First, it is used to refer to any written material on a subject. In the second sense, the word 'literature' refers to the deviated use of language which gives rise to creative works of art like, drama, poetry, novels and many other literary genres.

According to ONUKOWSKI, "Literature is any imaginative and beautiful creation in words whether oral or written, which explores man as he struggles to survive in his existential position and which provides entertainment, information, education and excitement to its audience"

This is to say that Language is the basic raw material with which Literature is manufactured. It is based on this view that it is usually said that "Literature is Language in practice". That is to say that Language theories, concepts and styles are put into function in the creation of literary texts. Therefore, if one must interpret and analysis a literary text, one must be competent in the language of the text and conversely if one must be competent in language, one should be sufficiently exposed to the literature of the language in question.

III. FUNCTIONS OF LITERATURE

There are some significant functions, literature performs. Put differently, the whole essence of developing Literature as a school subject is for the students to derive some benefits. Ayo (2003) describes the benefits as the general utilities of Literature.

According to him, "the utilities of literature could be educational, cultural, moral, recreational and socio-political. Literature helps to develop the learners linguistic performance because it arouses and keeps in them an

even- ready inclination to read. Moreover, it helps the learners to develop fluency and ability to comprehend what is read”.

Collie and Slater (1987) support the inclusion of literature in the language classroom, because it provides valuable authentic material, develops personal involvement and help contribute to readers cultural as well as language enrichment.

Still on the utilities of literature, Lazar (1993) provides five reasons for using literature in ELT to include:

- 1) Motivating materials.
- 2) Encouraging language acquisition.
- 3) Expanding student’s language awareness.
- 4) Developing student’s interpretative abilities.
- 5) Educating the whole person.

IV.RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Literature and language are not only intertwined but also inter-related. Literature pre-supposes language because it is with the instrument of language that literature is concertized. Therefore, it sounds absurd to study literature without language at the centre stage or to study language without Literature playing a prominent role. It is based on this view that relationship between literature and language is best described as symbiotic.

The symbiotic relationship between literature and language is summed up in words of Willmott (1979):

A work of literature for all reading ages –is an organization of language to which linguistic awareness must be applied if it is to be understood and appreciated. In the process the pupil learns much of practical value both about language and the use of language. In his literary studies he meets language in its most varied and powerful forms, and learns to examine the writer’s use of it in the context of all the linguistic resources available to him. Thus, literature demonstrates language at work. But it also helps the pupil to use language; it offers good models and stimulates linguistic responses of various kinds. English teachers’ not only present literature, they also exploit it, because it can generate language as well as exemplify it.

- Literature is rooted in Language and language gets life through Literature. So literature and language are closely inter-connected. According to Lazar (1993), Literature should be used with students because it is a motivating stimulus for language acquisition, students enjoy it, and it is a fun, it is found in many syllabuses and the like. Literature, a convenient source of content for a course in foreign language, provides motivation materials for language teaching.
- Carter and Long (1991) equally agree that literature is a legitimate and valuable resources for language teaching.
- Omojiuwa (1997) agrees that reading and writing skills are actually closely related and could most often be regarded as one unified skill with reading acting as a stimulant for writing and vice versa. The author contends that people read in order to obtain information, develop vocabulary, make inferences, classify, observe, analyse, criticize, identify relationships, differentiate styles, draw conclusion and make generalization.

V.CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have strived to establish the fact that there is a symbiotic relationship between Literature and Language. It is our opinion that if this relationship is well harnessed in the teaching and learning of literature and English Language at secondary level, it would go a long way in addressing lack of proficiency in the English on the part of regional students at all levels of education and by extension minimize high rate of failure in English language in public examination.

Therefore, the government, the curriculum designers, the school as well as the teachers of Literature and English Language should work hand in glove to ensure that this suggested innovation in the teaching of Literature and English Language in our schools and colleges is effectively implemented.