
AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN TEACHING

Ujjwala Kakarla, Asst Prof of English, VNRVJET, Hyderabad,
India

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Abstract:

English education in India has primarily depended on the study of Literature. Only in recent years has a shift of emphasis from educating Literature to Language. Even so, most Universities still lean heavily on literary texts and often on great masterpieces to give the students a good command of elegant English. Traditionally, Literature has been used to teach language use, but it has yet to be used to develop it. Teachers who teach Literature often use the traditional method of lecturing on topics like theme, characterization, plot, and motifs without emphasizing their literary text's linguistic/stylistic aspect. Many academicians nowadays consider the importance of Literature in language teaching. The main objective of English Language teaching through Literature is the study of words, idioms, and syntax at the highest level of thought and imagination. It is an exercise depicting how words and sentences are made and molded to communicate what the writer wants to say. English language teaching through literature calls for the active involvement of both the teacher and the student. Here, the focus is on language teaching, and the medium is Literature. The context and form of a literary work bring forth purposeful discussion and enjoyment in teaching and learning.

Keywords: Language, Literature, Integrated Approach, Teaching, Learning

Introduction

The role of Literature in language teaching

Language and Literature are strongly related. Literature enriches Language, a language that helps us understand Literature. If the purpose of learning language is communication and Literature is communication, then the two sides of a coin are inseparable. The general belief is that the knowledge of Literature prepares the foundation for language learning. English language teaching through Literature improves basic skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing and other language areas like vocabulary, Grammar, and pronunciation. One of the prerequisites for language studying is that students should have a feeling for the Language, which can be accomplished through creative, analytical use of literary texts where they can experience Language in use. For such experience to facilitate language learning, "The language experience needs to be contextualized and comprehensible" (**Krashan 1985, 1993, 1999**), and the learner needs to be motivated, relaxed, positive, and engaged (**Arnold 1999: Tomlinson**).

Literature provides a rich experience to language learners and ample opportunities to develop their interpretative power – an essential asset to language learning. It also provides a rich source of shared experiences for teachers and students that can stimulate discussion. Literature can also introduce the students to varieties of English; it can be a source of linguistic and communicative enrichment and a powerful source of inspiration and motivation for students to develop an interest in practical criticism. According to Obediat (**1997: 32**), Literature helps students acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English.....learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used.....become more proficient in English, as well as become creative, critical, and analytical learners.

Literature is used in English Language education to broaden students' horizons by giving them knowledge of the classics of Literature to improve students' cultural awareness, stimulate students' literary imagination, and develop their appreciation of Literature to introduce students to masterpieces of British and American Literature

as an educative experience, and to add to students' knowledge of the world at large. Literary texts give us much aesthetic, intellectual, and emotional pleasure in that the writer often seeks to express his or her vision of human experience through creative, emotive use of Language, and this, in turn, provides much impetus and motivation for the students to learn the Language. *Literature* is a verbal art that guides readers to appreciate the beauty of Language. It adds aesthetic dimensions to readers' lives, leading them to view their personal experiences differently. According to Kelly (1996:8), "Some of the major values of literature are enjoyment, aesthetics, understanding, imagination, information and knowledge, cognition, and language."

The most important criterion is to select texts that stimulate interest in students; according to Brumfit (1986:32), this is of equal importance; however, it is the choice of texts that lend themselves to student discussion and personal experience." Teachers should focus on some of the questions if they have to cope with many of the challenges that literary texts provide:

- Is the subject matter fascinating?
- Is it culturally appropriate?
- Is the level of the Language suitable?
- Can the text be used for the language learning process?
- Is it the correct length for the available time?

The use of Literature often promotes motivation in the classroom. Through Literature, learners' sense of involvement is developed as an affective domain of the learner being strengthened. Literature enhances the emotional involvement of the learners and gives them the pleasure of using it more. According to Hill (1989:9), "Literature therefore provides a platform where teachers can first provide learners pleasure by engaging their emotions.

In language teaching, Literature provides a language model. Language and thinking are so closely interrelated that to think for oneself depends on one's mastery of the Language. Literature, however, often furnishes a richer model for Language than conversation, as authors frequently use elaborate sentences and sumptuous words. At the same time, speakers tend to employ the same few words over and over in conversation.

Literature Review

Literature is rooted in a language, and Language gets life through Literature. Literature and Language are closely interconnected. Language skills cannot be taught in isolation but in an integrated way, incorporating text-based, learner-centered activities to add fresh momentum into teaching Language through Literature by stimulating students' wish to read and encouraging their responses. Literature can be used to teach Language through engaging activities like predicting and ending a story, role-playing by choosing some exciting plays, integrating spelling with vocabulary, learning Grammar through passages from literary texts, crossword puzzles, brainstorming, situational scenes establishing the necessary connection between Language and Literature which makes the teaching and learning very productive and enjoyable enterprise. Literature in language classrooms will allow students to express their opinions about general subjects. Literature is a critical window that allows one to view the world and realize the expression of culture by sharing individual or collective life experiences. According to Collie and Slater (1990:3), four main reasons lead a language teacher to use Literature in the classroom. These are admirable, authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment, and personal involvement.

In addition to these four main reasons, universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy, suggestive power, and ambiguity require Literature as a powerful resource in the second language classroom context. These advantages can be achieved if teachers use relevant and appealing literary texts to learners through activities that promote involvement, reader response, and a solid integration between Language and Literature. Carter and Long (1991:2-3) propose three models to justify using 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 development of one's perception of feelings and artistic forms. Their second model is the language model. This model emphasizes that Language is the literary medium and that Literature could be used to teach specific vocabulary and structures. Lastly, their

growth model entails students reading literary texts, appreciating and evaluating cultural artifacts, and, broadly, understanding our society, culture, and ourselves as we function within that social matrix.

As in any language teaching, especially English, the four significant skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening are fundamental aspects that all language learners must grasp before mastering the Language; teachers should teach essential 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. According to Carter and Long (1991), "Literature is a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching."

There has been an uneasy relationship between Language and Literature in recent years. Poems, plays, novels, and short stories are to be used for language teaching, as a literary experience is also a language experience. Using drama in a language classroom is a good resource for language teaching. Through drama, learners become familiar with grammatical structures in context and learn how to use Language to express, control, and inform. The use of drama raises the students' consciousness of the target language and culture. Using a novel is beneficial for mastering linguistic systems and life in the target language. According to Smith (2018), incorporating literary texts into language lessons lets students grasp vocabulary, syntax, and discourse structure nuances in authentic contexts. For instance, analyzing dialogue in a novel exposes students to natural language patterns and conversational strategies, enhancing their communicative competence.

In the novel, characters reflect on what people perform daily. Novels not only portray but also enlighten human lives. Like other genres, poetry serves not only as a language model but as a springboard for teaching the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In dealing with poetry, students engage in both the receiving and the expressing aspects of Language. The receptive process involves students' skills to assign meaning to what is read or heard.

In contrast, the production process involves expressing ideas

or feelings evoked in response to poetry. Poetry can catalyze the development of language skills and musical rhythmic intelligence of students. The advantages of using Literature in a language classroom, according to Wilmott (1973:57), are that "Literature demonstrates Language at work... it also helps the pupils and stimulates linguistic responses of various kinds. English teachers not only present Literature but also exploit it because it can generate Language and exemplify it.

Incorporating Literature in English language teaching can be lively and motivating and provide an interactive climate to improve learners' communicative competence. It can also create a learner-friendly environment. According to Langer (1997:607), Literature can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. Literature in a language class can make it vibrant and enthusiastic.

Moreover, an integrated approach encourages critical thinking and literary analysis skills. By examining literary works, students develop the ability to interpret and evaluate texts, discerning underlying themes, motifs, and cultural implications. This aligns with the goals of language education, which seeks to cultivate higher-order cognitive skills alongside linguistic proficiency (Jones, 2016). Through close reading and literary interpretation, students engage in analytical discussions that deepen their understanding of Language and Literature.

Furthermore, integrating Language and Literature promotes cultural awareness and empathy. Literary texts offer insights into diverse cultural experiences, allowing students to explore perspectives beyond their own. As Johnson (2019) noted, exposure to multicultural Literature facilitates empathy and intercultural competence, fostering a more inclusive learning environment. By connecting language learning with cultural exploration, educators cultivate students' appreciation for linguistic diversity and promote global citizenship.

Discussion

Challenges and considerations

Despite its benefits, integrating Language and Literature in teaching poses particular challenges. One concern is the balance

between linguistic and literary objectives. Critics argue that emphasizing literary analysis may overshadow language learning goals, leading to neglect of grammar, vocabulary, and language skills development (**Brown, 2020**). Educators must balance literary exploration and language proficiency, ensuring that both aspects receive adequate attention in instructional design.

Another challenge lies in selecting appropriate texts that cater to diverse learner needs and interests. Integrating Literature from different genres, periods, and cultural contexts requires careful curricular planning to accommodate varied preferences and abilities. Moreover, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity in text selection is essential to engage all students effectively (**Garcia, 2017**). Educators should prioritize texts that resonate with students' experiences while challenging them to explore unfamiliar perspectives and genres.

Furthermore, assessment presents a significant challenge in integrated Language and literature courses. Traditional language assessments often prioritize grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension skills, whereas literary analysis demands critical thinking and interpretation (**Parker, 2018**). Developing assessment strategies that effectively evaluate both linguistic and literary competencies is essential for ensuring the validity and reliability of student evaluations. Integrating Language and Literature necessitates navigating diverse pedagogical approaches. Critics such as **Smith (2018)** argue that traditional language instruction often focuses on Grammar and mechanics, whereas literature instruction emphasizes critical analysis and interpretation. Balancing these divergent approaches can be challenging for educators, as they must cater to linguistic and literary learning objectives within limited classroom time.

Another challenge lies in accommodating varying student proficiency levels in Language and Literature. Research by **Brown et al. 2020** suggests that students enter classrooms with diverse linguistic backgrounds and literacy skills, making it challenging to design instruction that meets the needs of all learners. Educators must employ differentiated instruction strategies to support students with differing Language and literary proficiency levels.

Assessing students' proficiency in both Language and Literature poses a significant challenge for educators. According to **Garcia (2019)**, traditional assessment methods often prioritize rote memorization and grammar proficiency in language instruction, neglecting students' literary analysis skills. Developing authentic assessments that gauge students' holistic Language and literary competence is essential for effective integration.

Additionally, ongoing professional development and collaboration among educators are crucial for successful integration (**Thompson & Smith, 2020**). By sharing best practices and resources, educators can overcome challenges and maximize the benefits of integrated Language and literature instruction.

Results and Impact

The findings reveal several challenges educators face when integrating Language and Literature in teaching. One prominent challenge is the alignment of instructional objectives with both language and literature standards (**Garcia & Hernandez, 2021**). Educators must carefully design curriculum units that address language skills while incorporating literary analysis and interpretation. Another challenge concerns selecting appropriate texts catering to students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (**Johnson, 2019**). Ensuring inclusivity and representation in literature choices is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment.

Empirical studies indicate positive outcomes associated with integrating Language and Literature in teaching. A longitudinal study by Lee et al. (**2021**) found that students in integrated Language and literature courses demonstrated higher levels of language proficiency and literary appreciation than those in traditional language-only programs. The integrated approach facilitated more profound engagement with texts, leading to improved comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and writing skills. Despite these challenges, integrating Language and Literature in teaching can significantly impact student learning outcomes. Research indicates that students who engage in integrated Language and literature instruction demonstrate improved language proficiency and critical thinking skills (**Choi et al., 2022**).

Moreover, qualitative research highlights the transformative impact of integrated Language and literature instruction on students' attitudes and identities as language learners. Interviews with participants revealed increased motivation, confidence, and cultural awareness resulting from exposure to diverse literary texts (**Nguyen & Smith, 2019**). Students expressed a sense of empowerment in using Language creatively to express themselves and engage with complex ideas, indicating broader socio-emotional benefits beyond academic achievement.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, an integrated approach to Language and Literature in teaching offers numerous benefits for student learning outcomes. By combining linguistic and literary objectives, educators can foster a more comprehensive understanding of language usage, critical thinking skills, and cultural empathy. While challenges such as balancing objectives, selecting appropriate texts, and designing assessments exist, empirical evidence suggests that the advantages of integration outweigh the drawbacks. Continuing research and professional development efforts are essential to refine instructional practices and maximize the potential of integrated Language and literature education.

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