

LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE: AN EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR THE NEW LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract: *There is strong relationship between literature and language. This bond is a reciprocal one: language is promoted through the works of literature and literature is enriched by using the words and their construction that exist in the structure of a language. The history of English literature and language clearly shows how theirs this reciprocal relationship has lent us a great variety of works. We enjoy reading these works of English literature, and in a way learn a lot how and in what way English language is used to express the given idea. Since English is a foreign language for us, it poses some difficulties in learning it. The rules and regulations are there to learn it thoroughly, but this method may not create that entire effect wherein the words of language achieve their highest value in the true sense of the term. The process of language learning in its normal course may prove itself to be a mechanical one, so we need to make it somewhat more interesting. The students, especially from the rural areas of our Indian sub-continent, are very poor regarding the knowledge of English language. English is a hard nut to crack for them. English, being the need of today, is essential for them. Literature can be a better tool in language learning since it can create their interest in it. And in another way will make them true human beings as, while reading the works of great authors, they experience the human values on their own. My attempt, in this paper, is to reveal how much beneficial this blend of literature and language can be for a new learner.*

Key Words: *Literature, Language, Learning, Relation, Comparison, Humanism.*

To learn a foreign language is always a difficult task. By the word 'learning' I mean 'a complete knowledge' regarding reading, writing, listening and speaking. And above them all is the question 'where to start from?' It is of great importance to choose the right beginning. And so is the case with learning English language in India. Our universities are running various programmes to simplify the process of learning English language. No doubt, these programmes are helpful in one way or the other. The students start learning with much enthusiasm, but gradually, not all, but many of them suffer the boredom in learning mechanically. This results in acquiring a little knowledge which, according to Alexander Pope, is a very "dangerous thing." So this is our responsibility to wipe out this boredom and apply something interesting in language learning. Literature can be that interesting option for us since it is not just about words. It is all about 'expression' in the best possible way incorporating the emotion, tone, time, and place along with culture.

The first step in this direction should be in the selection of literary texts which can meet the demand as per the need. These literary texts should have both high moral values and an aesthetic appeal. The blend of these two will create a healthy interest into them which, in turn, enables the students to learn English language easily and to develop humanistic values as well.

There are various genres in English literature like: drama, poetry, novel, short story, and essay. Each has its own way to express the theme with which they deal. They project various situations which have clear connotations with real life. It is a unanimous truth that literature is all about life. So, when students experience life through them, they will feel a kind of affinity with them. They will mark how the particular situation is being projected using what type of words (vocabulary); what type of tone (pronunciation); and what type of sentence construction (grammar). Literature uses language dexterously.

However it will not be possible to fathom out each jewel that lies lurking into the deep and vast oceanic territory of literature. Let us deal with some of the remarkable extracts from drama and poetry for the purpose.

Drama is one of the oldest genres in English literature beginning with Mystery, Miracle and Morality Plays. The action in drama develops through dialogue delivery. The students should notice how they give an outlet to their own thoughts in the particular situation. Attention should be given to the pronunciation of the words and to the tone of sentence as a whole. If one does not listen carefully, his own pronunciation will falter. This problem of pronunciation is raised by Dr. Higgins in Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1916) when, listening what Eliza speaks, he says: "Listen to this, Pickering this is what we pay for as elementary education this unfortunate animal has been locked up for nine years to speak and read the language . . . and the result is Ahyee, BƏ yee, CƏ yee, DƏ yee." (41)

As a classroom activity we can choose students to play the role of characters after giving them an imitation reading of the dialogues. We should also instruct them about the use of punctuation marks in the text and the necessary pause they demand, so that they can apply it in their reading and writing skill. Let us discuss an extract from *All My Sons* (1947) where the character Chris uses words as weapons to wake the human inside us up. This is superb for its rhetorical language and the use of pause. Even the silence, where we pause, speaks a lot. Talking about his dead fiends in army, he says:

It takes a little time to toss that off. Because they weren't just men. For instance, one time it'd been raining several days and this kid came to me, and gave me his last pair of dry socks. Put them in my pocket. That's only a little things but . . . that's the kind of guys I had. They didn't die; they killed themselves for each other. I mean that exactly; a little more selfish and they'd've been here today. And I got an idea watching them go down. Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to me that one new thing was made. A kind of responsibility. Man for man. You understand me? . . . I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the refrigerator. I mean you can take those things out of a war, but when you drive that car you've got to know that it came out of the love a man can have for a man, you've got to be a little better because of that. Otherwise what you have is really loot, and there's blood on it. (36-37)

The above given passage is very rich both in its form and content. From the point of view of language we can discuss: the use of phrasal verb 'toss off' and its meaning; the correct use of tense throughout; the use of passive voice in sentences like 'Everything was being destroyed' and 'one new thing was made' in order to show the object of emphasis; the use of adjectives and adverbs; the use of unfulfilled condition in 'a little more selfish and they'd've been here'; use of present participle in 'watching them go down'; use of conjunctions like and, but, otherwise, and because; use of comparative degree in the word 'better'; use of tone to make the affirmative sentence an interrogative one as in 'You understand me?'; the use of punctuation marks in the whole passage; and above all how the character succeeds in developing his argument step by step and leading towards a thought provoking conclusion.

Poetry is the rhythmic representation of the language in use. Its rhythm has such a mesmerizing effect that the listener's soul remain nothing but captive to it. We can remember a piece of verse easily than that of a prose. The words in poetry mean much more than what they say. The use of various figures of speech enriches the language of poetry. So, poems can play a strong role in language learning. By imbibing the new coinage words and figures of speech we can render an epigrammatic quality to our language. Here are some lines from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in Country Churchyard" (1750):

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the Poor. (89)

.....
 The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
 Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave. (89)

.....
 Can storied urn or animated bust
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
 Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
 Or Flattery sooth the dull cold ear of Death? (91)

The universal appeal of these lines has profound meaning. Each word leaves an unforgettable experience. The same words in their normal use cannot create such a lofty impression. The use of 'personification' in 'Ambition,' 'Grandeur,' 'Honour,' 'Flattery,' and 'Death' is remarkable in the first stanza. What Gray suggests us, in the second stanza, is the ultimate truth. And the third stanza uses few powerful rhetorical questions to point out what is permanent in this world.

A new learner of English language will come in contact with the figurative language, its use and the meaning it suggests; perfect words for the things; and what a rhetorical question is along with its purpose. With each new line, certainly, he will learn something new. Learning through poetry is like getting maximum output with least efforts because, on the one hand, the new coinage words and sublime expressions enrich our vocabulary and language respectively, whereas on the other, our interest makes it easier to memorize them. Who can forget P.B. Shelley when, in his "Ode to Skylark" (1820), he says:

We look before and after,
 And Pine for what is not:
 Our sincerest laughter
 With some pain is fraught:
 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought. (136)

Thought is given here. The poet has used his own words to express that. But the thing is these four or five lines mean much more. Each individual has his own thinking and language. Now, we can ask our students to explain what they understood by these lines. Obviously, while doing that, they will need words matching with their thinking. And if they do not find, they will look them up in a dictionary. Their curiosity will lead them to new vocabulary. The meaning of new words found in this way can be remembered through their context. There will be little chance to forget them. In this way other forms of literature like novels, short stories and essays can be used for the purpose of language learning.

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