



Language, Literature And Culture: Extent Of Being Intermingled And Intertwined

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The English language is the window which opens up the vast prospect of human achievement. The more effective grasp of English in all its diversities of speech, vocabulary, structure and meaning, the more will be benefit personally and contribute to the growth of our country as a modern nation of the 21st century. The chairman of the University Education Commission Dr. Radhakrishnan's (1948) words on the importance of English to India needs repetition:

It (English) is a language, which is rich in literature - humanistic, scientific and technical. If, under sentimental urges we give up English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge.

In India, English is the link language, serving to connect people of various regions and diverse backgrounds. English is the lingua franca of the people from the South, North, East and West of India. English is the official language, being the language used for communication among the Central and State Governments. English has also its national importance because it is used as interstate communication language and in Centre also. In India it is used as link language so that people could express their ideas easily. It is useful for both official and private communication between many parts of the country and thus it serves as a link language in the nation itself. Pandit Nehru's words bear repetition about the invaluable linking role of English in the country and across the world:

The language link is a greater link between Us and the English speaking people than any political link or Commonwealth link or anything else ... If you push out English, does Hindi fully take its place? I hope it will. I am sure it will. But I wish to avoid the danger of one unifying factor being pushed out without another unifying factor fully taking its place. In that event there will be a gap, a hiatus. The creation of any such hiatus or gap must be avoided at all costs. It is very vital to do so in the interest of



the unity of the country. It is this that leads me to the conclusion that English is likely to have an important place in the foreseeable future.

Literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language and it need not be studied to the exclusion of other types of texts. Literature helps in increasing the reading proficiency, that is, it helps an interaction to take place between the writer and the reader. The interaction is said to take place in two levels. One is interacting with the text and decoding the language and the other comprehends the concepts presented. Literature also works to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both teacher and student. Apart from the encouragement of tolerance, it also helps in the transfer of imaginative energy from literature to student. Thus literature has an active place in teaching language. For many students literature can provide a key to motivating them to read in English. Literature is an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use and for

introducing cultural assumption which helps the students to spur their own imaginative writing. Literature is a basic component and a source of authentic texts of the language curriculum rather than an ultimate aim of English instruction. Literature can be used as a technique for teaching both basic language skills and language areas. According to Collie and Slater, there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. These are valuable 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 are some other factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context. Literature is authentic material.

The use of a novel is a beneficial technique for mastering not only linguistic system but also life in relation to the target language. In novel, characters reflect what people really perform in daily lives. Novels not only portray but also enlighten human lives. It develops oral and written language skills, presents a unique way of teaching reading by getting students involved and excited about the reading process and it motivates students to become a lifelong reader. When selecting a novel to be used in the foreign language class, the language teacher should pay attention to whether the novel has an intriguing story that will be of interest to the entire class. Themes and settings captivating their imagination and exploring the human condition should be included in the nature of the selected novels. Novel should have a powerful, fast-paced plot and interesting, well delineated, memorable characters. The content of the novel should be suitable to students' cognitive and emotional levels. Literature plays an important role in the English programs of many non-English speaking countries. However, there are some problems encountered by language teachers within the area of teaching English through literature. First, there are very few pedagogically-designed appropriate materials that can be used by language teachers in a language classroom and there is the absence of clear-cut objectives defining the role of literature in



ESL /EFL. Many instructors try to include literature in their classroom, but lack the background and training in that field. Literature helps students acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely, and concisely, and become more proficient in English as well as become creative, critical, and analytical learners. Literature is not only a tool for developing the written and oral skills of the students in the target language but also is a window opening into the culture of the target language, building up a cultural competence in students.

One of the most important issues surrounding cultural anthropology is the effect of culture on individual and collectively, social cognition. The hypothesis that culture shapes the individual's way of thinking or thought processes is reflected more explicitly with the use of language, language being the most manifest form of culture through a specific code system specifically unique to the culture. However, apart from language, there are also other precursors that develop an individual's cognitive processes. Ultimately, cognitive outcomes include differences in thought processes among individuals, create a solid or collective thought process that becomes the dominant ideology in that specific culture, or it can also translate into more concrete terms by influencing the individual's worldview and physical well-being.

These cases of cognitive outcomes are discussed thoroughly in understanding the role that culture plays in each of these cases. This paper presents three positions, based on cases presented in studies found to be relevant in discussing the issue of culture and its role in influencing cognitive outcomes. The first case presented demonstrates culture as a contributor to different cognitive processes among individuals within the same society/culture. The second case looks into the role that culture plays in affecting collective decisions on what ideology to choose, maintain, and dominate in a particular society/culture. Lastly, excessive influence of culture over the individual's thought processes lead to the development of more than just a different worldview, but translation of this worldview into the individual's physical well-being (i.e., affecting the individual's physical health).

Literature also has variety for we can find the language of law, mountaineering, medicine, bullfighting, church sermons and nursery talk and one of the great strengths of literature is its suggestive power. Even in its simplest forms, it invites us to go beyond what is said to what is implied. As it is highly suggestive and associative, literature speaks subtly different meanings to different people. Because of this is an infinite fund of interactive discussion is guaranteed since each person's perception is different. Apart from this, one of the main functions of literature is its sociolinguistic richness since language changes from one social group to another and from one geographical location to another. When selecting the literary texts to be used in language classes, the language teacher should take into account, the needs, motivation, interests, cultural background and language level of the students. However, one major factor



to take into account is whether a particular work is able to reveal the kind of personal involvement by arousing the learners' interest and eliciting strong, positive reactions from them.

Works Cited

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