

Teaching and Learning of English Language through Literary Texts

Dr. Rashmi Gupta

Associate Professor & Head, Department of Humanities, COER University

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9021-3285>

Email: dr.rashmigiitr@gmail.com

Dr. Renu Rani

Assistant Professor, Teerthanker Mahaveer University, Moradabad

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4432-3613>

Email: renuchauhan1922@gmail.com

Dr. Sunita Rani

Assistant Professor & Head, Department of Humanities, COER University

Abstract

In the last few decades, English Language Teaching (ELT) has grown in popularity. Technical English has grown in popularity in our country due to the proliferation of technical institutes around the country. This research aims to examine how, through experiential learning, English may be taught effectively through literature at engineering colleges. This research paper also looks into the viability of using literature to teach English as a second language. The research has been done in light of Kolb's (1984) theory of Experiential Learning. Through the research paper, the writer will further explain how by taking two literary texts, *The Refund* and *Of Discourse* as learning material, students can be enabled to gain knowledge of the English Language.

Keywords: ELT, Experiential Learning, literary texts, *Of Discourse*, *The Refund*

1. Introduction

“Pleasure is the state of being
Brought about by what you
Learn.
Learning is the process of
Entering into the experience of this
Kind of pleasure.
No pleasure, no learning.
No learning, no pleasure.”
—Wang Ken, Song of Joy

Keeton and Tate (1978) offered this definition, “Learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied. It is contrasted with the learner who only reads about, hears about, talks about, or writes about these realities but never comes into contact with them as part of the learning process.” Experiential Learning is the process of learning by doing. By engaging students in hands-on experiences and reflection, they can better connect theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations. In India, the teaching of literature is the main component of English education. The emphasis has shifted in recent years from teaching literature to teaching language. While English language instruction often used a structural approach, literature was frequently taught as a separate topic; however, the relationship between literature and English language teaching cannot be neglected. Current possible approaches have endeavoured to re-examine the value of literature in teaching the English Language by using experimental learning. People learn best via experience, which makes experiential learning a potent and effective method of teaching and learning. According to Kolb, “A common usage of the term “experiential learning” defines it as a particular form of learning from life experience; often contrasted it with lecture and classroom learning “This approach asserts the value of literature teaching from several aspects, primarily literature as an agent for language development and improvement (innovate.cired.vt.edu).

Literature can be regarded as a rich source of authentic material. Literature is a verbal art that leads readers to welcome the beauty of language. Literature is used in English Language teaching to broaden students' horizons by showing the importance of the classics of literature, to improve students' social and cultural awareness, to encourage students' creative and literary imagination and to expand their appreciation of literature. Literary texts can be a rich source of language learning. They can help learners practice the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing and comprehend grammatical structures, and enrich new vocabulary (Kolb,11).

The Literary texts provide opportunities for multi-social classroom experiences and can appeal to learners with different learning styles. Literature is beginning to be viewed as an interesting and authentic way for language understanding and development since the focus is now on learning the language for real situations (oaji.net).

Nowadays, one finds the classroom atmosphere really mind-numbing and monotonous. From dawn till dusk, students are packed into their classrooms, with the only focus being on cramming. There is an astonishing poverty of ideas and ideals in the education system, in knowledge imparting techniques, assessments of developments of students, and the relevance of curriculum in preparing young minds for current social, cultural, ethical, and economic realities. There is a mad rush to finish the syllabus on time so that the students have time to revise and do well in the exams because of intense pressure from higher authorities and peer groups. Due to the global use of the English Language, the focus has been shifted from the study of literature to the functional usage of the English language. Literature has always been valuable because it has drawn pupils of all ages and provided them with a sense of fulfillment. Secondly, various literary works like short stories, poems, novels, plays, etc. can be used effectively in the ELT classroom to make learning a joyful experience for students.

In technical institutes, it is possible to teach English through literature. Literature needs to be revived since ELT students struggle to understand the complexities of language. The crucial element to remember is that the reading recommended for young engineers should be entertaining and intelligible. Teachers can help students comprehend the value of the fifth skill, learning culture, in addition to the four abilities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, if the curriculum is adequately designed. By Learning Literature, students will understand previous ages' culture, accepted societal norms, moral codes of conduct, etc.

2. Material (Selection of Literary Texts):

A proper selection of literary texts provides a structured framework for language and literacy development. A variety of literature can increase the range of students' vocabulary, the use of complex vocabulary, the language fluency of learners, and grammatical skills. The teaching of language is always circumscribed due to the non-availability of very few pedagogically-designed suitable materials that can be used by language teachers in a language classroom. Teachers should determine the aim of language teaching in relation to the needs and expectations of the students which means it should be student-oriented. Texts should be selected based on students' backgrounds, environments, and interests to develop a consistent level of literacy and language skills. Literature can be used by trainers or teachers in a range of meaningful, interactive, and interesting ways that improve students' soft skills and help students to develop to build their literacy skills (www.arcjournals.org).

Certain important points should be taken into consideration while selecting literary material in the English Language Training such as:

1. Literary text should have an optimistic and constructive impact on students.

2. They should support students to comprehend conversational language.
3. They should aid students in understanding the different needs of professional life.
4. Teachers should try to introduce students to a range of texts from different periods, styles, and genres.
5. These selected literary works should develop the students' powers of expression, both in oral and written communication.
6. Literary text should be chosen for students to appreciate the texts' formal, stylistic, and aesthetic qualities.
7. Students should grasp how language, culture, and context influence how meaning is produced in texts through these works.

By using literary texts, teachers can completely exploit the material by conducting brainstorming sessions, pre-reading tasks, role-playing activities etc. for the benefit of students.

3. Method (Skills' improvement through literary text)

The ambiance in the classroom can be made more interesting, which emphasizes activity-based learning. Participative learning can take the role of rote learning. Students may be encouraged to participate in skits, one-act plays, presentations, and other activities when they have mastered the required literary readings. To get the research's objective fulfilled, two literary texts such as Francis Bacon's essay *Of Discourse* and Fritz Karinthy's play *The Refund* have been taken for the study. A role-playing activity based on a very popular play *The Refund* can be conducted for the students to improve their speaking and negotiation skills. As an option, they can be allowed to keep the text of the play in their hands when they are playing the role of different characters. However, they are instructed to deliver the dialogues with the same expressions the writer uses for certain characters.

4. Discussion

The Refund is originally written by Fritz Karinthy, a Hungarian writer and journalist. This play is a satire on modern education. It serves as a reminder of the shortcomings in the Indian educational system while also providing a few laughs along the way. In this play, *The Refund* a distraught man returns to his old school, where it is said that no student ever fails. He isn't in the school to meet with his juniors; he's here on the mission to get a 'refund' for his entire education after being fired from every job he's ever had. He doesn't care about him and puts him in with his old professors to face the most ridiculous oral exams you've ever seen. In this play, we have different characters such as Mathematics teacher, History teacher, Principal, Servant and so on. These different roles are assigned to class students where they act for different characters and deliver their dialogue. This activity assists the students to improve their speaking and negotiation skills as student Wasserkopf in the play, negotiates with the principal to get his fee refunded (Karinthy, 1938)

This role-playing activity helps the students to understand the message sent by the writer for his readers. This interactive session created a congenial atmosphere for the students to understand the play well and improve their other skills such as Speaking skills, Listening skills, Reading skills, Negotiation skills etc. Later after the play all students were asked to write a paragraph on the topic "Modern Education system in India". This play helps students to improve all four skills, which are the requisites of learning the English Language. Thus, Literature can be taught to students through Role- Playing, audio-texts, music CDs, film clips, etc This will help the students understand the beauty of language without much difficulty. Experts in the field of language place a premium on four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. By paying attention to sentence structures and new terminology, kids can learn all four skills through literature.

Another example of skills' improvement through literary text is an essay *Of Discourse* written by Francis Bacon. Francis Bacon, a versatile writer is known for the practical and utilitarian wisdom which he presents in his literary writing. In this essay, *Of Discourse* he advises on the management of conversation and, more especially the one on saving the conversational skills getting dull and uninteresting is really very useful. Bacon's choice of metaphors, his imagination, and the usage of artistic tools such as figures of speech, satire, irony, and humour ease the students to enrich their vocabulary stock and help out them students understand Bacon's point of view regarding the conversation. Nowadays, students need to be equipped with employable assets such as they should know how to be an effective speaker in group discussions and how to face interview in order to be hired for a job. When Bacon says, "SOME, in their discourse, desire rather a commendation of wit, in being able to hold all arguments, than of judgment, in discerning what is true; as if it were a praise, to know what might be said, and not, what should be thought." The advice gave in the 14th century is still valuable and worth remembering for all the students who are participating in group discussions. Literary works like *Of Discourse* are very effective for students to cultivate their soft skills. The tips Francis Bacon gives in his essay as mentioned earlier for effective conversation, are very constructive for the students to improve their Group Discussion skills, Interview skills, and day-to-day conversation with their colleagues in professional life. So, canonical writers' literary texts have an immense utility for students of all ages and in all situations (Marby,151)

The crucial element to remember is that the reading recommended for young engineers should be entertaining and intelligible. In addition to the four abilities of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, students can have a deeper grasp of culture if literature is included in the curriculum. Students will love learning about a culture that they strongly

believe in and that society accepts. The ambiance in the classroom can be made more interesting, which emphasizes activity-based learning.

5. Conclusion

Thus, literature plays a paramount role in learning the English language. Nay, literature provides students valued literary material, which students can use effectively to cultivate the language at a high level by developing literary competence. Literature becomes a medium for developing the written and oral skills of the students in the particular language and reflects society like a mirror. “Furthermore, authorities must take up research to develop materials that could help teach English multi-model and multi-dimensional . That would help make English Language Teaching Classes more engaging , accessible and affordable to all.”

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