**Development of Language Skills through Literature**

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**Abstract**

For developing four basic language skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking, literature plays an important role in teaching. Literature can be a very good method for teaching both basic language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) and language areas (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. Nowadays, Most of the teachers use literature in their teaching as a technique to make their teaching interesting. Since translation gives students the chance to practice the lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and stylistic knowledge. Classroom work with literary works may involve pre-reading tasks, interactive work on the text and follow up activities. This makes the learning fun and effective.

Selection of appropriate literary texts is very important because it has a long-term and valuable effect upon the learners’ linguistic and extra linguistic knowledge. Studying poetry can give the learner at least two advantages: 1.The critical appreciation of the writer’s theory of poetry, which students gain by studying poems by components.2.Developing understanding of words and discoveries that may later grow into a deeper interest and greater analytical ability. Drama also helps students become familiar with grammatical structures in contexts. It also teaches them the ways to express, inform and control using the language. Dramas are usually based on social events, hence, helps learners improve their personality and behaviour. The use of a novel is a advantageous method for mastering not only linguistic system but also life in relation to the target language. Novels are really mirror of the actual daily life of the people. Novels not only portray but also enlighten human lives.

Hence, Literature not only improves oral and written skills of learners but also opens a gateway to learning a new culture of the target language, making students rich in language as well as culture.

**Full Paper**

For developing four basic language skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking, literature plays an important role in teaching. While teaching literature in a language classroom, focus should be on teaching skills in an integrated manner and not in isolation. Basic language skills are an integral part of oral and written language, hence, means for creating both referential and interactional meaning and not only for the production of words, phrases and sentences. The role of literature in the ELT classroom is a potential source of learner motivation and an effective source for students to express themselves in other languages, which has been re-assessed by many literary experts.

Literature can be a very good method for teaching both basic language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) and language areas (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. Nowadays, Most of the teachers use literature in their teaching as a technique to make their teaching interesting. So they make their students translate literary texts- drama, poetry, and short stories into their mother tongue. Since translation gives students the chance to practice the lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and stylistic knowledge. Classroom work with literary works may involve pre-reading tasks, interactive work on the text and follow up activities.

Literature makes language learning interesting and helps the students focus better and for longer duration, thus, making the process of learning, a fun.

According to Collie and Slater (1990:3), 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 and suggestive power and ambiguity are some other factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context.

Literature can be very useful in making the understanding of language simple and easy by involving personally because as the learner reads a literary text, he gets engrossed in it. Understanding lexical items or phrases become secondary to going through the story. This can be the good thing as during the process they learn about different variety of structures, ways of connecting ideas, discourse function of sentences and syntax, which enriches the learners writing ability without putting extra stress on learning things. This makes the learning fun and effective.

Selection of appropriate literary texts is very important because it has a long-term and valuable effect upon the learners’ linguistic and extra linguistic knowledge. Books should have relevant real life experiences and motivational stories which develops interest addresses learners’ needs. Also, what the students aspire to be, their cultural background and language level of students plays an important role in selections of books.

**Literature and Reading**

Teachers should adopt a dynamic and multilevel approach towards comprehending a literary work. First the discussion should be regarding facts of setting, plot and characters which can be answered regarding specific reference to text. At the second level, as the students master literal understanding, they should be encouraged to speculate and interpret regarding setting, themes and characters and draw inferences from authors’ point of view. At the third level, they do a collaborative work, where they share their personal reactions to characters, settings, plots and authors’ point of view. This stimulates their imagination about the work and develops their problem solving abilities. This lays the foundation for their oral and writing skills.

**Literature and Writing**

Literature is a powerful tool in developing good writing skills, both as a model and as subject matter. It occurs as a model when the learners’ writing becomes similar to the original work including content, organization, theme and style. However, when learner writing is creatively stimulated by the reading and reflects original thinking like interpretation or analysis, then literature serves as subject matter. There are immense varieties of themes available to write on as guided, free, controlled etc.

**Literature, Speaking, and Listening**

Although literature is mainly associated with reading and writing but it also plays an important role in teaching both speaking and listening. A work of literature may help in oral reading, improvisation, dramatization, role-playing, reenactment, pantomiming, discussion and group activities. Teachers can make pronunciation and listening comprehension interesting and motivating by playing recording or video of a literary work, or reading literature aloud themselves. Making learners read aloud improves their speaking and listening ability on one hand and improves their pronunciation on the other. Pronunciation should be the prime focus. Dramatic activities help facilitate and accelerate the development of oral skills as the students associate themselves more closely with the character and they comprehend the literature deeply and achieve a clearer comprehension of work’s plot.

**Advantages of using branches of Literature to develop 4 Skills:**

**Use of Poetry:**

Studying poetry can give the learner at least two advantages: 1.The critical appreciation of the writer’s theory of poetry, which students gain by studying poems by components. 2. Developing understanding of words and discoveries that may later grow into a deeper interest and greater analytical ability.

Saraç (2003:17-20) also explains the educational benefits of poetry as follows: Provides readers with a different viewpoint towards language use by going beyond the known usages and rules of grammar, syntax and vocabulary; triggers unmotivated readers owing to being so open to explorations and different interpretations; evokes feelings and thoughts in heart and in mind; makes students familiar with figures of speech (i.e. simile, metaphor, irony, personification, imagery, etc.) due to their being a part of daily language use.

As Çubukçu (2001:1) mentions, poetry is a rewarding and enjoyable experience with the properties of rhyming and rhythm both of which convey “love and appreciation for the sound and power of language.” At this juncture, it can be stated that students become familiar with the suprasegmental aspects of the target language, such as stress, pitch, juncture, intonation by studying poetry.

Students can also learn the semiotic elements of the language, through poetry, which also gives them cultural training.

As Hiller (1983:10) states, poems should be seen as hypersigns of which constituents, “semiotic signifiers”, come together in their common relationship and lead to the “symbolic level” and this level is the one inclined to be signified in a poem.

**Use of Drama:**

Learners should make use of drama to promote their comprehension of life experiences, reflect on particular circumstances and make sense of their extra linguistic world in a deeper way (Sarıçoban 2004:15). The educational benefits of drama, according to (Lenore 1993), are as follows: stimulates the imagination and promotes creative thinking; develops critical thinking skills; promotes language development; heightens effective listening skills; strengthens comprehension and learning retention by involving the senses as an integral part of the learning process; increases empathy and awareness of others; fosters peer respect and group cooperation; reinforces positive self-concept; provides teachers with a fresh perspective on teaching.

Some other educational benefits of using drama in a foreign language class can belisted as follows (Mengü 2002:1-4): bringing authenticity into the classroom; exposing the learners to the target culture as well as the social problems a society may be undergoing; increasing creativity, originality, sensitivity, fluency, flexibility, emotional stability, cooperation, and examination of moral attitudes, while developing communication skills and appreciation of literature; helping learners improve their level of competence with respect to their receptive and productive skills; providing a solid basis for the learners to bridge the gap between their receptive and productive skills; offering students the space and time to develop new ideas and insights in a range of contexts; enabling students to develop new understandings and forms of knowing not accessible in other more traditional ways of learning.

In simple words, drama makes language learning interesting, colourful and motivating to the students. Moreover, in today’s communication-based, student-centered approach, teachers also find use of drama very effective in language classes. Drama also helps students become familiar with grammatical structures in contexts. It also teaches them the ways to express, inform and control using the language. Dramas are usually based on social events, hence, helps learners improve their personality and behaviour.

**Use of Novel:**

The use of a novel is a advantageous method for mastering not only linguistic system but also life in relation to the target language. Novels are really mirror of the actual daily life of the people. Novels not only portray but also enlighten human lives.

Helton, C.A, J.Asamani and E.D.Thomas (1998:1-5) expounds the educational benefits of novels as follows: stimulates their imagination; helps students to identify the emotions of the characters so that they can learn how others cope with situations and problems similar to their own experiences; helps them master the skills that will enable them to acquire information, process this knowledge, identify problems, formulate alternatives, and arrive at meaningful,thoughtful,effective decisions and solutions; develops oral and written language skills; serves as a springboard for a multitude of holistic learning and critical thinking activities beginning with basic comprehension and writing; presents a unique way of teaching reading by getting students involved and excited about the reading process; 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. 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. Specific themes and concepts being developed in class should also be incorporated within the novel. When assessing comprehension, teachers may employ novel tests requiring students to develop the sub-skills of written language like spelling, handwriting, grammar, and punctuation. Essay type tests written by teachers help students to gradually improve their skills in writing and organizing material into paragraphs with acceptable sentence structure. The tests are made up of not only fact-based questions serving as a basis of evaluating comprehension but also open-ended questions developing critical thinking abilities. ( Helton, C.A, J.Asamani and E.D.Thomas 1998:1-5).

In all, novels make the process of learning simple, interesting and entertaining. If carefully selected, it can be advantageous in making learner focus for long durations and imparting knowledge with ease. Unfortunately, some students find reading novels difficult and boring, but what they don’t realize is that it can be an effective technique of vocabulary building and also improves reading skills.

Hence, Literature not only improves oral and written skills of learners but also opens a gateway to learning a new culture of the target language, making students rich in language as well as culture.

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