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ENHANCEMENT OF LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract: Language is a means of communication and Literature is a record of writings or works by scholars in a language. Literature not only represents the culture and tradition of the society but also depicts the everlasting ethical values. Certainly, language helps one to gather and grasp knowledge from technical subjects and to acquire character and conduct from literary sources. Moreover, Literature is a peculiar source, which aims at the reformation of it's readers as it equips them with a sense, which is beyond perception and comprehension. It has such a tremendous power and potential. "When all other voices fail, the voice of conscience, the voice of Literature and the wise prevail". It sublimates the basic instincts of a human being and makes him a normal person. Thus, literature has become an indispensable element of education, which moulds a person into a humane personality.

Introduction

Nowadays, if we view the contents of English in some technical English courses, prescribed for Engineering students; they seem to be dry, vague and shallow. The students are not provided with any profound knowledge on the topics chosen

for them. This type of course material has been introduced with a view to make the students to be aware of all these current issues through media. Coming to the very purpose of technical English, i.e. to impart to the students the skills that they need in their academic and later in their professional pursuits, the intention is beneficial. Regarding this, in the course, they opined that the old course materials comprising of anthologies or prose selections based on old methodology, i.e. classroom lectures are not conducive to the development of study skills and the communicative competence in the students. Hence, they thought that there is a need to develop an appropriate course in English for the technical students and to adopt an innovative approach to English language teaching and learning. As so all the contents in the course are related to current viz.. energy, computers, pollution etc. They try to make the students to get fluency in the language to get fluency in the language by providing them with various communicative activities, which in turn improve the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. But it is well established that language can be mostly acquired through under going literary



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texts. It is of not much benefit to use technical contents for the purpose of language learning. It does not create either interest or scope for the improvement of the language.

Otherside, if we go on following this type of course material, the significance and aim of English language and literature will be lost. The students of the future generations will be ignorant of either epics or literary works. With the influence of the present course material, they will become mechanical and materialistic. They may not be aware of the importance of the ethical and social values preached by epics or the way of life taught by the literary works. This may result in non-humanistic society, which in turn effects disastrous attitudes and incidents. “If the quality of the human beings degrades, no economic model, no skill, no educational policy works.” Our educationalists are thinking that it is enough for the students to learn about moral values or social values at primary and intermediate levels. But at that age, they are unable to realize the essence of these values and their impact on the society, which makes us to lead a peaceful life. Actually, under - graduate level is the right stage for any person to comprehend the old cherished values and their purpose. Eventually, this leads us to have humane surroundings. Also it is necessary to introduce such a subject to the professional students, as there is no scope for them to learn

about ethics, literary texts or their culture, in their course of technical education. Otherwise, they may think and behave monotonously and mechanically without having any humanitarian feelings or attitudes.

“The purpose of literature in language education therefore, has to be rightly understood. Literature tries to do for the experience of feelings where the sciences try to do for the experience of facts. The aesthetic aspect of the literary pieces widens the concentration, broadens the vision and helps to create a philosophy of life because it essentially involves a total personal response of body sensation, feeling and idea.” (P.Reena Frances)

As Anand Mahanand says, Literature does have an important role in language teaching and learning. It can motivate students to learn language. It can also serve as a vehicle for developing language skills and also for literary appreciation. Moreover, Literature is the only one source for promoting language learning, and in order for a literary course to be maximally beneficial, it should be conducted in such a way that it becomes neither language course for practical skills nor a pure Literature course with a view to have specialization in Literature; it should serve to develop both literary awareness and language competence. Hence, such an introduction of literary course material in English is on the part of the academics.



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When we trace the history back, it becomes evident that inculcation of human values like tolerance, understanding, co-operation, fellow feeling, sympathy, empathy, patriotism etc. has been a thrust area in all styles and modes of education; starting from the very “Gurukulam” style to the formal style of schooling. Hence, we should aim at making our students to be aware of all those moral and ethical values for which our forefathers struggled through out their lives. These will become extinct, if we don’t recollect them. If we don’t take a step now, certainly it is difficult to find the next generation, with an awareness of either these great legends or the values imparted by them.

If really our attitude is to improve the communicative ability of the students, we can achieve the same by prescribing the epics and literary works in the syllabus; and follow the innovative approach of the technical English i.e. training the students in language through various practical activities namely oral practice, language focus, language development etc.

Anand Mahanand and M.R.Viswanadhan aptly mentioned that, Literature provides the student with abundant examples of subtle and complex uses of the grammar and vocabulary of English; the learner develops a better feel for the language and improves his or her overall proficiency in it through reading literary text and therefore , Literature can be used effectively to produce

language awareness. Massive exposure to Literature can compensate for the deficiencies of the linguistic approach in the areas of grammar, idiom, vocabulary and syntax and can enhance the student’s competence in English.

The reading and interpretation of literary texts makes the learners to sharpen, their reading as well as their writing and speaking skills. In understanding these texts of different authors and genres, the learner can get familiarity with numerous features of writing the language, variety of language structures and their usage and different ways of co-relating ideas. This broadens and enriches the learner’s language skills. As the learner has to predict from the context, one can improve one’s grammar and vocabulary in the target language.

Also, students will be habituated to develop speaking skills with regular practice on interpretation of texts through debate and group discussion. Finally, they themselves participate in the learning process as they are drawn into the texts. As the personal involvement leads to self-motivation, they can acquire better communication skills.

“We all know the tremendous power and potential of Literature. Literature is a source of transformation not only in the personality of it’s reader but also that of the whole society. One function that literature performs and that



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interests people is sublimation of instincts. It makes one a normal humanbeing. (A.D.N.Bajpai)

As Bajpai remarks, “With the growing popularity of convent education, a very common phenomenon among young Indians is that the richness of our ancient knowledge often startles them. They know Nancy drew series of detective stories and every detail of Harry Potter’s stories but fail to grasp the utter practicability of Kautilya’s Arthasashtra or attraction of Kathasagar. He is true to say “Translation is the one medium that can connect these rootless generations to our soil and brings about national integration. The depth and magnanimity of Tamil, Marathi, Konkani, Oriya, and all other Indian literatures can be brought into mainstream by the effective use of translation.”

We are searching the world without knowing our own intellectual wealth. Also we can serve the purpose of a language through translation of our native or regional literature into English. As we have discussed the efficacy of using literary texts in class, we have to think of what type of text is to be chosen for a class. There are different forms of Literature such as stories, poems, one-act play, biography, autobiography, travelogue and novel. All these genres fulfil the

criteria of being the suitable material for language classroom; As they incorporate not just language and grammar but a whole world of ideas, creativity, imagination and imagery that can be explored profitably and purposefully.

Personal Experience:

When I was dealing with final B.Tech students of our college with regards to communication skills, I have tried this approach, which brought out amazing response and result, I gave them the books of their interest like poetry, epics, short stories, biographies, sports magazines etc. in order to elicit both their attention and attitude. Not only they enjoyed the themes which reflect the sustained values but also they learnt the linguistic aspects of grammar, idiom, phrase, vocabulary and syntax. This non-conventional, non- time-bound and non-curriculum- oriented approach has resulted in an immense love towards language study in the students and helped them to develop an inherent competence in communication.

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