CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world today there is a strong demand for English as a language of international communication and of higher education. In India, in the past and even today there has been a tendency to meet this demand by offering/imposing traditional type of English courses at graduate/post graduate level that centre upon literary texts, from say Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Charles Dickens, Aurobindo, Tagore, Emily Dickinson, Nissim Ezekiel etc., without much thought as to how such studies can be used in developing communicative competency among the learners.

In the last decade particularly, there has been an upsurge of interest in how literature can be used in the language classroom. Craig Dicker affirms,

One of the newest trends in teaching English as a foreign language is the literature-based syllabus design. People are beginning to seriously consider the role of literature in language teaching and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the role of language in literature teaching. This would clearly be a healthy relationship, and the implications may be profound. Many others have already begun to explore new ways of approaching a literary text aimed at second language learning. Most of these writings, like those of Henry Widdowson on stylistics, concentrate on the poetic medium.

Any language teacher in India who wishes to explore the practical ways of using literature in the classroom aims to help learner to achieve proficiency in
English. But many teachers are unsure of why and how of using literature in the language classroom.

Craig further argues that

Literature can also be used to teach any area of language study. Although certain literary texts lend themselves to certain areas of language study, all literary texts can, to some extent, be exploited from a linguistic perspective. 

At the tertiary and higher levels, the learners are expected to appreciate literary texts, form critical judgments and they are also expected to arrive spontaneously at an appreciation of literary qualities, without any explicit guidance as to how this is to be done.

In the context of the communication explosion today, there is a great need to study the importance of linguistic stylistics for the productive purposes of script writing, film appreciation, public speech making and even editing for the media. With the help of style-study the literature student can update and enrich his productive skills. It is the literature student who is called upon and is expected to be fluent and accurate in the present scenario. Unfortunately it seems to be failure to a great extent in the context of learning English as a second / foreign language that many students have the tendency towards parrot-like memorization at the cost of reason and intelligence, instead of generating their own ideas and sentences.

Well known teacher trainer Wilga Rivers observes:

"Many college and university students with four, five even six or more years of study of another language behind them are still unable to express themselves in a clear, correct and comprehensible manner in writing".
Expressing about literary texts in English as a second or foreign language has been a difficult skill to develop among the students as quoted above.

In spite of the fact that much effort has been made by teachers at the tertiary and higher levels to improve the situation, students face problems in developing their communicative competency.

David Ian observes:

It is not uncommon to hear complaints from students that they are unable to express their feelings or experiences about a text they are studying. It is not uncommon for the teachers either - formalizing the feelings one has about a text requires both confidence and the vocabulary. Interpretation processes are notoriously difficult to articulate, but whether you are a literary critique or a stylistician, the job at hand is to try and lift the texts and your response as a reader, from the obscurity of those feelings to a position where you are able to talk about your reactions and what they mean in terms of the world and words of the fiction and the world and words of your own reality.

This is the dilemma expressed by Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations when he says:

"When I read a poem or a narrative with feeling, surely something goes on in me which does not go on when I merely skim the lines for information (cited by Norris (1976: 95). It is that something which goes on which is of interest to anyone studying literature for whatever scholarly or pedagogical reason, and our starting point has to be the language of the text. There is no other entrance. This, for the most part, is not an issue to be contended between say, literary criticism and the hybrid art of stylistics.

There is not enough research done on how to prepare students to cope with their institutional expectations in ESL situations.
Currently, the traditional approach to teaching of literature prevails in the classrooms. Therefore, this study investigates whether teaching of literature using pedagogic stylistic approach at advanced/higher/tertiary level can be an alternative approach to develop communicative competence among the learners.

The teaching of literature in ESL situation needs to deal first with the study of poetry, because literary language in this form is complex. It means, there are obstacles to the enjoyment of poetry. Deviant structures with archaic spellings, familiar words used in unexpected contexts, obscure references, unfamiliar comparisons, nonsensical statements, chaotic sentences are just a few of the features which are bound to make teacher-learner co-operation difficult.

More importantly limited input (of poetry) can offer scope of greater output. In teaching-learning situations the teaching of poetry presents difficulties and we must briefly consider the reason for this, in ESL situation. Moreover, the field of poetry seems to be extraordinarily complex, for there are lyrical poems, epic, narrative and satirical poems and the technical expression such as metaphysical poetry, impressionistic poetry, symbolism, imagery, hyperbolic, meter and many other things. How is the teacher of literature to steer his students safely through all these difficulties?

The Central Concern of the Thesis

The teaching of poetry using pedagogic stylistic approach focuses mainly on activities such as understanding and articulating the learners' appreciation, selecting, generating, and combining ideas, paraphrasing sentences and integrating on the learners' productive side. This approach may extend activities which are essential for academic writing at advanced levels.

Grabe and Kaplan state:
"the advanced writer is also often concerned with analyzing and interpreting information critically, synthesizing, creating information arguing alternative perspectives, and presenting and alternative perspectives, presenting and promoting research\textsuperscript{a}."

In India, English as a medium of instruction starts from grade five. Its use within the school is limited to classroom instruction. Consequently, the sociolinguistic environment is important for language development, which is not available because it is not spoken by the people in any of their every day activities. Concerning to approaches of teaching English, there is not clearly stated approach.

I would like to argue that better results might be obtained by teaching literature using Pedagogic-Stylistic approach as an alternative approach to the current-traditional approach.

The primary reason why I would like to argue against the traditional approach to teaching of literature is this approach does not prepare the students to produce effective articulation and appreciation of literary texts, interpreting information, preparing notes for study etc.

Literature has a definite place in any university level language programs, but students are not sure of the role of literature in developing their communication skills and often teachers are unsure of how to approach it because they often do not realize where the true difficulty lies.

In the teaching of literature, traditional practical criticism has relied on the intuition of the reader to form critical judgments. Students are presented with a text and expected to arrive spontaneously at an appreciation of its literary qualities, without any explicit guidance as to how this is to be done. The difficulty with this approach is that the language learners’ intuition about the language may be quite different from those of the native speaker, since their linguistic, cultural and literary backgrounds are likely to be different.
At the same time, such an approach seems to imply that understanding or appreciating literature is the result of a kind of mystic revelation, which is not available to everyone. Being expected to appreciate a text, therefore, without being given a clear strategy for doing so, might only make students feel bored, mystified or demotivated.

What is needed, instead, is a way of enabling students to reach an aesthetic appreciation of text which connects its specific linguistic features with intuitions about its meanings. One way of doing this is by making use of pedagogic stylistics – a method which ‘uses the apparatus of linguistic description’.

Widdowson has described such a method as a mediating discipline between linguistics and literary criticism in the following words:

Linguists are largely interested in the codes which transmit particular messages, but not really in the messages themselves. The literary critic, on the other hand, is concerned with the interpretation and evaluation of literary works. Stylistics provides a link between the two in that it uses linguistic analysis to understand how messages are conveyed.

**Stylistics in this study**

In this section, we need to focus on a method which can guide students towards a more sensitive understanding and appreciation of the literary text itself.

Stylistics, which involves the close study of the literary text itself, has two main objectives: firstly, to enable students to make meaningful interpretations of the text itself, secondly, to expand students’ knowledge and awareness of the language in general. Although the aim of using stylistics is to help students to read and study literature more competently, it also provides them with excellent language practice.
In addition to activities and tasks which can be used with a literary text to promote interesting and motivating language practice, we need to focus on a method which can guide students towards a more sensitive understanding and appreciation of the literary text itself.

Literary language often deviates from everyday language. Foregrounding, for example, has two internal meanings: On the one hand, it involves bringing forward literary usages against the background of expectations about ordinary usage. On the other hand, certain features are made prominent or foregrounded within a text.

For the language learner, stylistics has the advantage of illustrating how particular linguistic forms function to convey specific messages. It uses terminology and a set of procedures reasonably similar to students to reach and justify literary intuitions. In this way it not only helps students to use their existing knowledge of the language to understand and appreciate literary texts, it also deepens their knowledge of the language itself.

One of the claims has already made in this study is that stylistic study of the literary text is practical and to that extent useful to the classroom teacher. Regarding literature Dylan Thomas says:

"The Mystery of having been moved by words is what literature is all about."^8

The job of the language teacher is to unravel this mystery and bring it to the level of learners’ comprehension.

In this study, my aim is to show how Ezekiel’s poems are useful in increasing the teachers’ awareness of style and the improvement of his competence to teach literature in a foreign language situation and also to help the
students appreciate the artistic use of language and enhance his own communicative competence. I will discuss this point in Chapter 4.

Stylistic analysis can also provide a way of comparing different types of texts (whether literary or non-literary) in order to ascertain how they fulfill different social functions. The teaching of literature can thus be integrated more fully into the classroom, since literary texts can be studied alongside other kinds of texts. This study is an attempt to suggest / discuss stylistic approach for the teaching of literature in the undergraduate classes in India.

Kelly observes that:

Language teaching has served three major aims. Language for communication, language for artistic and cultural appreciation, and language for linguistic analysis.

These aims have been emphasized to varying degrees in different periods in history. Still, a major distinction can be recognized in the early part of the twentieth century with the communicative ability of the learners particularly aimed at in second language teaching, and the literary, linguistic, or cultural aspects emphasized in the first language instruction. This has naturally led to subordinating the literary aims in second language teaching and taking the learners’ communicative skill for granted in their mother-tongue instruction. Strevens documented this changing trend as a ‘new orientation’ in second language teaching:

There has been a major change in recent years, away from the earlier assumption of language teaching as a handmaiden of literary studies... towards a conception of teaching and learning the practical command of a language, unrelated to aspects of culture...
Along with this, the role of literature in second language teaching programmes has set off a debate regarding its usefulness and relevance in it. It is significant to note that literary texts were the very staple of foreign language teaching when the Grammar-Translation Method (1830-1880) was in vogue. Literary texts were exemplified as models of good writing and used for illustrating the grammatical rules of language. However, during the period of structural dominance (1960s), literature was sidelined; it was difficult to fit the use of literary texts in a structural frame where the control and grading of vocabulary and structures held sway. The formal properties of language were emphasized through the use of short, specially constructed second language narratives. Even the communicative movement of the 1970s, with its emphasis on utilitarian and effective communication in everyday life, has ignored literature and the teaching of literature.

According to Maley, in more recent times, however, there has been a renewed interest in literature as one source of input to language learning. This gradual rehabilitation of literature and its value for language teaching is attributed to “the spread of parallel notions such as emotional intelligence” and to the redefining of the concept of literature with the scrupulous avoidance of classical literary texts burdened with linguistic, historical and cultural baggage.

Indian universities offer English both as an optional subject and as part of the general requirement for the completion of a course at the under-graduate level. English is also offered as partial or universal medium of instruction for other subjects in the curriculum. Thus English, which is basically a foreign language, is treated in India as a second language. Whereas a second language is learnt worldwide for its practical and communicative skills and with the help of specially designed second language narratives; in India, English is taught mainly with the help of literary texts and with the assumption that the study of great works in
English literature will automatically and imperceptibly provide for proficiency in the language.

The English teachers of Indian universities are thus called upon to confer on their learners practical language skills in the normal mode of communications with the help of learning materials that represent the literary mode of communication. It becomes their predicament how to relate the two modes of communication in the classroom. The focus is expected to be primarily on the development of language ability for the Indian context represents a typical ESL (English as a second Languages) situation; at the same time, the essential nature of communication the literary texts embody should be honoured for they constitute the resource materials. The teachers are thus faced with a daunting task: they should treat a literary text be it a poem, a story or a play differently from a conventional substitution table or a comprehension passage and yet be able to help reinforce language teaching. Identification of an approach to the teaching of literature that can bring out linguistic benefits without violating the basic character of literature and a feasible methodology for its practical application in the ESL classrooms in India, therefore, becomes crucial.

Having identified the predicament existing in India’s undergraduate ESL classes, the approach adopted in this investigation is not to reject straight away the Indian practice of using literary texts as unscientific and out dated but to search for ways to adapt it to the proclaimed linguistic objectives of a second language course.

It is with this objective that the investigation is taken up and the adaptability of stylistic approach as a pedagogical tool in the teaching of literature analyzed.

Since Stylistics is the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation, it has the potential to mediate between Linguistics and Literary
Criticism on the one hand and between English Language and English Literature on the other hand. However, it is the function of stylistics as a means of relating English Language and English Literature as subjects that is relevant to this study and qualifies it as a pedagogical tool in the ESL situation.

It is presumed that in the context of teaching literature, stylistics could be of special value for the ESL learners in India. It encourages their intensive and close reading of texts with concentrated attention paid to the language. It familiarizes them with the way language is used in literary discourse as opposed to that in ordinary kinds of communication. This will serve to extend their knowledge of the language system to the practice of putting it to use in different communicative situations. By developing in the learners an awareness of how literature functions as discourse, stylistic approach can also give them some access to the means of interpretation in literary texts. The students can go on with the independent appreciation of texts without getting bogged down in ready-made critical judgments. However, it should be noted that the claim is not that stylistic analysis can replace literary criticism but that it can prepare the way for it to operate more effectively. Stylistics by defining literary studies as a linguistic subject thus provides a way of integrating the two subjects, English Language and English Literature, which are commonly taught in isolation.

Although the question of how to teach languages has been debated for over centuries, the conceptualization of language teaching in terms of teaching methods has evolved particularly over the last hundred years (Kelly). Even then the significance attached to methods has had a fluctuating reputation (Mackey). While some language educators considered the method as all important, and the cause of success or failure in language learning, at the other extreme, methods were assigned little importance and considered merely as instruments in the hands of teachers or as inconsequent beside the quality of the learners. To worsen the situation further, the names of methods have been applied
in a "consistent and unambiguous way" (Stern). Often, the methods did not correspond to clearly specified characteristics. Even the generic term ‘method’ was not unequivocal, and the distinction between the terms ‘approach’, ‘method’, and ‘technique’ remained blurred. This prompted Anthony to refer to the field as “the undergrowth of overlapping terminology” and offer a discussion on the differences between ‘approach’, ‘method’, and ‘technique’. Approach to him constitutes the axiomatic or theoretical bases of language teaching. Method is procedural and includes “some sort of selection, some sort of gradation, some sort of presentation and some sort of repetition” (Mackey) of the learning materials. Within one approach, there can be more than one method, but each method must be based upon the selected approach. Technique is implementational and is described as “a particular, trick, stratagem, or contrivance” used in the classroom. It must harmonize with a method and consequently also with ‘the underlying approach. Anthony recognizes a hierarchical relationship among the three terms: “techniques carry out a method which is consistent with an approach.” As these definitions have been found very helpful in sorting out the distinction between theoretical assumptions (approach), teaching strategies (methods), and specific classroom activities (techniques), they are followed in this investigation whenever these terms come up for discussion.

The investigation is confined, ideally, to the undergraduate classes alone. Linguistically, the undergraduate level represents a transitional phase. The learners, having already mastered the language system including its vocabulary and structures, are in the process of learning how to use this system in the actual business of communication. This encourages them, more than the learners for whom English is their mother tongue, to approach literary communication critically from the standpoint of conventional language use and acquire in the process an insight into the communicative potential of the language they are actively engaged in learning. At the higher secondary level, the learners are still
struggling to get a feeling for the basic workings of the language and mastery over its structures.

As for the post graduate level, where the subjects English Language and English Literature approximate to their respective disciplines Linguistics and Literary Criticism, it can be assumed that the learners have assumed both the language system and its use and developed the skill to appreciate literary message intuitively. A practical methodology based on stylistic approach may lose its attraction and relevance at this stage.

As for the reference to 'literature', this dissertation is concerned wholly with English Literature and the discussion about the text incorporates exclusively for illustration. However, although the focus is on the teaching of English Language and Literature, much of what it says might have some bearing on the problems of teaching language and literature in general.

Finally, this investigation does not relate specifically to any one particular classroom, university or state in India. Since English retains more or less the same status as a second language across different states and universities in India, what is true of a selected sample should be representative of the whole population.

Nissim Ezekiel’s poems in this study

Ezekiel was primarily a teacher both in life and poetry. Gieve Patel comments:

..........when he writes his poetry he teaches, this time largely himself. In all these contexts the pedagogic bone is relieved, even subverted by self directed irony, subdued passion, and simple, direct concern for what is at hand\textsuperscript{17}.
I have selected Ezekiel's representative poems such as “Night of the Scorpion” “Railway Clerk” “Goodbye Party for Miss. Pushpa T.S”, “Prayer’ and so on.

**The criteria for selecting Ezekiel’s Poems are:**

1. Ezekiel is the first Indo-English poet to bring the idiom of poetry closer to the spoken language. He claims to have written much simpler poetry than others; and in this connection he has said:

   “Even the most complex of my poems is relatively simple and direct, judged by the norms of difficult poetry. . .”

   Using Ezekiel’s poems (as they are at once easy and challenging, and there is a scope for study under pedagogic perspectives). I shall examine the nature of literary communication and literary understanding, as there are good numbers of “response inviting structures”.

2. **Pedagogical values in Ezekiel’s Poems**

   My selection of Ezekiel’s poems, I feel, is linguistically appropriate because, while estimating the suitability of Ezekiel’s poems as texts, I have considered not only vocabulary and sentence structures in isolation but at the whole range of linguistic concepts and situations.

   Ezekiel’s poems have certain implications for the approach we adapt to using his poems in the language classroom. The following problems can be focused on:

   1. How far structures in Ezekiel’s poems deviate from ordinary language?
   2. To what extent will they confuse or mislead by being deviant rather than language?
3. What should we do to help students unravel different meanings in his poem?

4. Metaleanguage

5. Opportunities for learners to express their personal meanings, reaction and feelings while teaching-learning.

In this thesis, my overall aim is a practical one; it is to find ways of using literature, which will help learners to improve their English. Literature itself has been greatly enriched by recent developments in the field of critical theory. Structuralism, deconstruction, reader response theory, feminist and Marxist criticism are just some of the branches of critical theory, which have been challenging the ways in which we read and understand literature. In the present day scenario, we need to explore the hows and whys of using literature in the language classroom.

Even if the language teachers have a background in literary studies, many of them are uncertain of how to use literature when teaching a language. On the other hand, the teachers may have sound practical experience in teaching or training, but are not familiar with literature. Whatever our past experience or interests, we need to find practical ways of using literary texts in the language classroom.

Prof. Pramod Talgeri, the Ex-Vice Chancellor of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, in his address in the seminar on recent trends and movements in Indian writing in English held at Osmania University (2000), mentioned that “this seminar I think will be incomplete if we don’t suggest how these discussions will help our students in the language classroom”.

15
Here, what Prof. Talgeri wants to ask the teaching community is which Approach, Method and Techniques will they use while dealing with literary texts in the classrooms. It is very significant that we need to find a thoughtful and principled approach to using literature in the language classroom.

The emphasis in this chapter is mainly exploring some of those underlying issues and concerns relevant to using literature with the language learner. In this thesis, I will try to raise a number of questions and ideas for reflection and discussion. Some of these thoughts and ideas should help in making more principled and good classroom decisions about why and how to use literature in language lessons. However, ideas generated in this chapter will not help to pinpoint the definitive, right or correct way to teach or use literature. This is because every teaching situation is different, every literary text is different. The task for teachers is thus to draw on the range of insights available, and then to develop an approach appropriate and relevant to the students.

One of our main aims in the classroom should be to teach our students to read literature using the appropriate literary strategies. Particularly in analyzing a text in terms of what it might mean symbolically and philosophically and also we need to help them to transfer if they have acquired receptive and productive skills, otherwise, we need to find ways of engendering the necessary competence.

Our main task in the classroom is to pinpoint how far literary language deviates from ordinary language. In this context the language teacher should not only be familiar with phonology, morphology and syntax but also with teaching methodology. This will help us in teaching-learning context to know to what extent the learners will be confused or misled by studying deviant rather than normal language and how far this is useful activity for them (such examples are available in Ezekiel's poetry.).
Literary texts have a powerful function in raising moral and ethical concerns in the classroom. The tasks and activities we devise concern and connect them with the struggle for a better society.

The texts traditionally prescribed for classroom use may generally be accorded high status, but often seem remote from and irrelevant to the interests and concerns of the students. In fact, being made to read texts so alien to their own experience and background may only increase students’ sense of frustration, inferiority and even powerlessness. We therefore need to select texts for classroom use which may not be part of the traditional literary canon, but which reflect the lives and interests of the learners.

Our main aim when using literature in the language classroom should be to help them unravel different meanings available in a text. Students often need guidance when exploring these multiple levels of meaning in the literary text therefore we need to devise materials and tasks, which help them in developing their communicative skills.

Literature provides source material for eliciting strong emotional responses from learners. Using literature in the classroom is a fruitful way of involving the learner as a whole person, and provides excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinion, reaction and feelings. Literature could be said to be a sort of discipline technique for arousing certain emotions.

And we should use the text as the basis for generating discussion, controversy and critical thinking in the classroom. Some teachers expect their students to reach definitive interpretation of a literary text. This, I think is the most dangerous attitude in developing communicative competency among the learners, as they are deprived from critical thinking, therefore we need to change this attitude.
What is distinctive about the language of literature?

One of the views of literature teaching is that literature involves a special, or unusual, use of language. In this section we explore this idea further and consider any classroom implications arising from it.

Since literary language is not completely different or separate from other kinds of language, studying literary texts can help to improve students overall knowledge of English. By contrasting literary texts with other forms of discourse, students can be sensitized to the wide range of styles in English and the different purpose for which they can be used. Reading literary texts will help our students and appreciate multiple levels of meaning, metaphors and phonological patterning in many other types of texts.

In order to appreciate literary texts, students will certainly need some assistance of the teacher in understanding and analyzing.

The linguistic features make up a text and therefore, in this context I would like to discuss the stylistic features, and the use of Linguistics in literature teaching, particularly teaching of poetry.

The focus in this dissertation would be on practical analysis of poems, not theoretical discussions. But, certain theoretical questions need to be answered before we reach the actual text of Ezekiel's poems. Some rudimentary information about style and stylistics must be given in order to clear the ground for analysis. The rest of this chapter has therefore been dedicated to that purpose, and to answer some fundamental questions about the discussions on stylistics in pedagogical perspectives.
Summary

Language teachers still focus on teaching poetry in detail through paraphrasing, summarizing, and translating (traditional practice). They stress on getting the right answers and rarely tolerate errors. The classroom interaction is under their control. About 75% of the classroom time is devoted to explanation from teacher's side and student's interaction is restricted to give answers to teacher's questions. The language output of the students is limited to the utterance of the single words and phrases. The factor which negatively influences the implementation has to be observed. The fact that most English language teachers are not trained about new methodology. The course objectives are not clear. The speaking and listening skills are not tested. Moreover, the nature of the examination is a serious impediment and it is focused mainly on written English.

Therefore, this study focuses on teacher’s classroom practices with special reference to teacher’s responses to the pedagogical approach to teaching of poetry to see whether the teacher makes attempts in developing the learners listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities (receptive and productive skills).

Although, a great deal has been written about communicative language teaching methodology, in many institutions in India, it has not been effectively used in the classroom. This means that while teaching of literature or dealing with literary communication we should not forget that the focus of much second or foreign language teaching today is on the development of speaking skills: The ability to ask for, give and receive information, and to share one’s thoughts; feelings and ideas with others.

One of the possible approaches to teaching literature is to make literature itself the content of the course. This would clearly be a healthy relationship and the implications may be profound.
Literature can also be used to teach any area of language study. Although certain literary texts lend themselves to certain areas of language study, all literary texts can, to some extent be exploited from a linguistic perspective.
Chapter -1

Introduction

Notes


2. Ibid 10-11


