Chapter-1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The teaching of English in India can be traced back to the seventeenth century, starting with the work carried out by avid Christian missionaries eager to spread the Gospel. British East India Company initiated the systematic and institutionalized teaching of English in 1700 AD. By virtue of its connection with the British Parliament, the Company was made responsible for starting and running schools for Indians under its jurisdiction. The first official action in this regard was the passing of the Charter Act of 1813, which directed the company to set a system to formally educate Indians. The move was favoured by the Company shareholders as the entire setup promised to create a cheap source of clerical staff for carrying out company activities. The process of producing English-knowing bilinguals in India began with the Minute of 1835, which officially endorsed T.B. Macaulay's goal of forming "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Kachru 1983, p. 22).

Initially, when India achieved her independence there was a lot of controversy over the use of English language. For some time it appeared as though the English language would not continue to occupy the privileged position it enjoyed under British colonial. However, over a period of time, the advantages of learning and using the English language was gauged. In 1950, the constitution of India envisaged Hindi as the official language and the English was to continue for 15 years from the date adoption of the constitution.
However, this was strongly opposed by the southern states as a result of which the official language act of 1963 recommended the continued use of English for an indefinite period. Moreover, the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) recommended the continuance of English in the interest of national integration and for higher academic work. By early twentieth century; English became the official and academic language of India. However, there was an important distinction between English and the vernacular languages. While English was reserved for the upper social sections, the lower sections used vernacular languages.

While there is no denying the fact that English will continue as a national link language for some time to come, it is not completely free from problems. While the constitution urged the government to provide free and compulsory primary and secondary education, it decided to use vernacular medium and reserve English as a medium of instruction for higher education. The government's decisions led to widespread impact on the educational situation in the country. The differences in the medium of instruction led to further aggravation of the existing social and economical differences. The reasons are not far to seek as students who had access to schools with English as a medium of instruction were able to perform better while competing for technical or professional education as well as jobs in comparison to students educated in the vernacular medium as higher education used English as a medium of instruction in pursuance of governmental policy. As a result of these developments, students from regional medium schools faced considerable problems with learning English and the quality of English teaching has also suffered greatly. It would be appropriate to examine closely the nature of
English teaching in India since its inception to understand the problems associated with ELT and its dismal performance in the country even though the process began way back in the nineteenth century.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

With the advancement and new researches in linguistics and literary criticism, teaching of language and literature has been subjected to new perspectives. Many theories have been formulated regarding the nature of language and literature and questions have been raised as to whether literature can be used in the language classroom. Over the past few decades, the language-literature controversy has assumed a greater dimension particularly in the backdrop of ever developing ELT approaches. In the recent past, the teaching of English language has been pulled in two different directions by this controversy. Literary texts have been prescribed for language classes where non-native speakers learn English as a foreign language. It has to be seen whether such courses have proved successful in achieving their target. In some other instances only language texts have been strictly adhered to. In this case as well as the affectivity of such courses remains to be explored and evaluated.

The main controversy is whether we can use literature in language classroom. There was a time when literature was accorded a high prestige in language study and it was assumed that the actual process of learning would be facilitated by the presentation of poems, plays, and prose fictions. But today, literature hardly figures in language teaching programmes. On the other hand it can be argued that literature contributes nothing useful to the objectives of
language learning. Literature has no practical uses and so it is useless and hence what is the point of teaching it to learners who are learning the language only to meet academic and occupational needs? Students of history, engineering etc. will not benefit by reading poems like Paradise Lost. Therefore, there is no need of literature in courses designed to meet the demands of practical utility. Scholars who question the feasibility of such courses are Donald M Topping (1968) Chris Kennedy (1980) Blatchford (1974) Peter D Strevens (1978) and Keith Morrow (1977). They feel that the language of literature is a potentially disrupting language.

The purpose of the present study is to take into consideration the major issues around which language literature controversy hinges. Some of these research issues are:

(1) How far is literature being used to teach language?
(2) How far does literature facilitate language learning process?
(3) Are literature and language essentially divorced and incompatible or could there be meeting ground?
(4) What kind of material is more suitable for English language classroom?

The main aim of this work, therefore, is to focus on language – literature controversy and the use of literature in language teaching. An attempt will be also made to empirically assess the use of literature at senior secondary level at Aligarh Muslim University, (AMU) Aligarh.

1.3 Framework of the Study

The study explores the possibility of a coalition between language and literature teaching in the context of an Indian ESL
classroom. The study looks at the possibility of establishing a bridge between the two different aspects of English teaching by looking for a theoretical hypothesis. An objective analysis of the issue or controversy will indicate that both the sides are basically targeted towards improving the language skills of the students. On the basis of these postulations, it might be possible to hypothesize that if the two are combined it might be possible to arrive at a fusion of the two approaches. The new approach arising out of the combination of the two distinct approaches would be one that would have the best of both the methods; a perfect synthesis of thesis and antithesis. The meeting of the two would be able to bring out a more learner-centered teaching technique that would be able to help students better. The resultant fusion would enable the teacher to haul up the rich language resources offered by literature and at the same time ensure that the linguistic components are in place. In addition, the combination would be able to capture the attention of the learners and inspire them to a more active interest in their language classes, which become more than just grammar classes.

The study analyzes the present day scenario in Aligarh Muslim University and examines if there has been any changes in the standards of English teaching in the country after the language-literature controversy. The main objective of the different study groups, research committees, and scholarly works has been to improve the teaching and learning processes that take place in the ESL classroom.

The study explores the findings of a study of the use of literature in language teaching in schools and higher education
institutions in Aligarh Muslim University. To find answers of the study, a variety of data collection methods were utilized. The study articulates pedagogical issues with regard to the use of literature in the language classroom. With responses from both the learners and the teachers, this study yields definitive answers, which offers insights worthy of our attention.

1.4 Research Procedure and Tools Technique

The teaching of language has largely been carried out through the study of literature. This approach was later changed due to the change in the needs of learners and because of the changing scenarios across the world for language teaching. Educators have been arguing as to whether literature actually helps in the teaching of language. The result was a rift between language and literature, which snowballed into a crisis that threatened to eliminate literature completely from language teaching process. It must be noted that the controversy led to the development of new critical approaches to literature teaching, which in turn helped generate a greater interest in English literature in the ELT classroom.

Thus it may be argued that by combining the language skills and the linguistic resources of literature, a better approach can be found to develop language skills in ESL students. The teaching of literature in the ESL classroom plays an important role in making the learning process an effective one. On the other hand, the supporters of conventional teaching practices argue otherwise. Literary critics' objection is that linguistics makes use of literature as data for making sociological, anthropological, and political statements and not for aesthetic appreciation of literature, which is the basic purpose of
literature. The supporters of conventional literature teaching also point to a serious defect in the procedures of stylistics. They say that the absence of any constraint on the way in which one moves from description to interpretation of the text results in a situation where any interpretation one puts forward is arbitrary. By making use of the language resources of literary texts, academicians like Widdowson tried to analyze the situation by taking into account the needs of the present day. If the study of literature were to be seen as a discourse with language use, as defined by Widdowson, the teaching of English language becomes more learner-oriented and based on the students' needs-analysis.

The next question that arises is how the notion of literature as a discourse can be used as a tool for achieving the ESL objectives. For this purpose, it is imperative to determine the basic aim of an ESL program. The prime aim of ESL should be remembered so as to enable the student to acquire the level of proficiency that is necessary to function at different levels in the present day scenario.

The study aims to formulate an ESL program keeping in mind the above-mentioned problems when setting up educational systems, planning curriculum, designing materials, and setting examinations. It also must be remembered that the teachers must understand how to present literature so that it's potential can be fully realized.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Today, with globalization and an increased emphasis on communication skills, a large number of people want to learn English as a functional language. However, today in contrast to the learners
who undertook to learn English by studying literature, the same group of learners want to be able to use English as a language to carry out day-to-day activities and not just to read literary classics. Thus, in the light of the above developments, it becomes increasingly important to come up with a way of learning English effectively.

1.6 Relevance of the Study

The study analyzes the problems associated with ESL scenario in the country. The students are expected to acquire a working knowledge of English that could be used at the time of the intermediate examinations within a period of six years of the high school course. During the high school course the students are required to acquire a working knowledge of English that consists of just 2,500 essential words and later at the university level the same students are required to go through different literary texts ranging from Shakespeare to Lamb's essays and taking in Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth and a few other major poets.

The study attempts to identify the approach that is taken to learn English and at the same time understand the problems at hand. The Indian schools and colleges come across two types of students - students who come from established English medium schools and those who come from the vernacular medium. The texts that these students study is not suitable for teaching language skills as the textbook contains passages which are selected for their contest and not primarily selected for teaching language skills like development of reading skills and are devoid of text-based remedial language exercises. Moreover, it is not just the textbooks which are of concern. The teacher who teaches in the classroom is usually one who has
studied for an M.A. in literature, which solely trains him for teaching English literature and the teacher remains largely unprepared to teach language. As a result, the teacher prefers to use the medium of lecture to that of dialogue for pedagogic purposes. With these drawbacks in mind, the teacher remains uninterested in preparing any kind of language-teaching materials, as the teacher has no formal training in this area.

English literature teaching was considered to be same as English language teaching. But this is no more a valid approach in today's world where the needs of the students are different from those of the students in the past. In the past, it was felt that the learning of English literature would prepare the students for a career in the government sector. But with the passage of time the needs of the students have changed with that of the nation. Now more and more people are interested in learning the language as a means to conduct their daily activities. In the light of these developments, today, it is necessary for people from different jobs to be able to use English language for carrying out their work and research.

1.7 The Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the problem statement, describes the specific problem addressed in the study as well as design components, and provides a brief history on English Language Teaching in India. In this chapter, a discussion of the present scenario with reference to the language versus literature debate has been made along with the exploration of possible meeting grounds between Language and literature. It also explores the use of literature in the language classroom. Chapter Two presents a review
of literature and relevant research associated with the problem addressed in this study. It also provides the theoretical background relevant to the study. This chapter also delves into the historical aspect of English language teaching. Chapter Three attempts to define what literature and language is the relationship between them, the role of literature in the language classroom. It also viewed the historic separation between the study of language and the study of literature, which eventually led to the use of literary texts in the language classroom. Chapter Four contains an analysis of the data and presentation of the results and explores the findings of a survey of the use of literature in language teaching in schools and higher education institutions in Aligarh Muslim University. The conclusion or Chapter Five offers a summary and discussion of the researcher's findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

REFERENCE: