Chapter 3

Language Literature Controversy and the Possible Meeting Grounds

Macaulay in 1835 recommended English as "the language of government, education and advancement". Thus the entry of English in India's political and educational system sidelined the value of other languages such as Persian and Urdu which hitherto enjoyed the privilege of being the languages of the noblemen and courts. However the entry of English in educational system of India via Macaulay's Minute did not lead to the bifurcation of English subject into 'English language' and 'English literature' as separate disciplines. According to Leech (1969) the 'Art of the Rhetoric' and 'Art of Poesy' were used "to teach self expression and literary composition through precept and the observation of the practice of great orators and writers". It was thought that teaching English literature would not only train the learners in the skillful use of rhetoric but also improve their language skills. Continuing with the tradition English was taught through literary texts for almost a century and two decades in India with the hope of achieving the ELT objective. However around 1950's Imtiaz (2000) recalls a divide occurred "resulting in the establishment of two
pedagogical disciplines"\(^3\), literature teaching based on the principles of literary criticism and language teaching supported by linguistic insights. Thus, a heated controversy arose whether the traditional unified approach of teaching English should be followed or literature teaching and language teaching should be taught as two segregated pedagogical disciplines.

Scholars like Joanne Collie, Stephan Slater, Susan Bassnett, Peter Grundy, N. Brooks and Prof. Albert H. Marckwardt favoured the traditional unified approach of teaching English while ELT experts like Peter D. Stevens, Keith Morrow, Professor Blatchford, Usha Nagpal and Chris Kennedy propagated the idea of using ESP texts for the ELT purpose.

In support of the tendentious preachers who advise the use of only language texts for language teaching purpose the Education - Commission (1964-66) stated that "a distinction has to be made between teaching of English as a skill and the teaching of literature".\(^4\) So, the Commission (1964-66) too recommended the use of language texts for ELT purpose and in doing so it widened the rift between language and literature. A shift from literature paradigm occurred which led to the birth of ESP materials.
The focus shifted from literary composition and critical appreciation to, to quote Professor Peter D. Stevens (1978) "the demand for English for special purposes, that is to say,... to meet the needs of scientists, engineers, lawyers, and other people with very special though somewhat limited linguistic requirements". Literary texts gradually came to be considered unfit for achieving the ELT objective with special reference to those who needed very limited knowledge of English language. To quote Kennedy (1980), ESP has tried to suggest ways in which "problems of motivation, materials and methods" can be solved, still ESP has not been able to cope up with the problems that English language teachers have long been facing. Moreover it has not at all been successful in overcoming all these problems related to ELT objectives completely.

By over emphasizing the authenticity of ESP materials, people like Morrow question the authenticity of literary texts when used for the ELT purpose. Morrow strongly believes that ESP materials are authentic texts while the literary texts are not authentic when used for the ELT purpose. Favouring the ESP texts Morrow (1977) says, "An authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some
sort. In other words, it is not a made up text produced by an imaginary speaker or written for an imaginary audience and designed to practice specific language points rather than to convey real information. But authenticity of such texts becomes doubtful, because they are useful in a very limited sense and their utility becomes redundant after point of time. While literature is timeless; for instance Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Wordsworth etc are remembered and read with same vigour till date. Because in India literary texts constantly feature in English course books designed for English Language Teaching purpose.

Collie and Slater (1987) say, "Recent course materials have 'authentic' samples of language – for example travel timetables, city plans, forms, pamphlets, cartoons, advertisements, newspaper or magazine articles. Learners are thus exposed to language that is as genuine and undistorted as can be managed in the classroom context". They feel such materials are useful in a language class because they can be easily managed in the class. Collie and Slater (1987) feel such authentic samples can be used for main teaching in the class while literary texts can be employed to compliment such materials. But it should be noted that literature as an academic
entity exists by itself in that it displays different unorthodox and creative ways language can be used in.

Contrary to the view of Collie and Slater (1987), McKay (1986) feels literature does not need to play a second fiddle to language samples as "Literature does have a place in the ESL curriculum. For many students, literature can provide a key to motivating them to read in English. For all students, literature is an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use". Literature does work miracles in motivating the language learners while language samples like timetables and city plans becomes boring after being used for some time. ESP mainly focuses on enabling the students to learn English for work. As their "study and the reference sources are mostly in English, so pressures on listening, reading and writing skills in English are enormous. And while motivation is usually high at first it drops off quickly." ESP learners are very enthusiastic in the early stages of their learning sessions but soon they start losing enthusiasm because the kind of improvement they seek in the competency level of their language skills seems to be far out of their reach.

In 1961 William Moulton, an American linguist, prepared a report for the 9th International Congress of Linguistics. In his report he declared the principles on which language teaching
should be based. In it he mentioned "Language is speech not writing.... Teach the language, not about the language." Such refusal of written discourse, especially literature, is commonplace nowadays. Ansari (1978) too feels that literary approach to language teaching is often rejected because it is believed "That speech and not written language is primary. That usage—current one is more reliable than the perspective formal standards of written works of the masters." At times writing is considered to have primacy over speaking. Bassnett and Grundy (1993) throw light on the elevated status of writing over speaking. They strongly feel that speaking cannot have primacy over writing or exclusively over 'Creative writing'; "because to make this claim is to misunderstand the nature of 'writing' as writing turns up in both literate and non-literate societies. Yet the poet of the Iliad and the Odyssey was not literate and his (or her) poems had to wait several centuries before they were written down. All societies have a wide variety of non-literate or poetic language uses, and in non-literate societies those are not, for obvious reasons, ever written down... In literate societies then, we tend to think of writing as representing speech, which of course it sometimes does, just as speech can represent writing." It is a hollow claim that language is primarily what is spoken as "it
had been widely assumed that language existed principally as symbols written on paper, and that spoken language was an imperfect realization of pure writing version. Emphasizing the importance of literature in being used for the ELT purpose Bassnett and Grundy (1993) say “This perspective on ‘writing’ that it is a natural, creative, original and perhaps primary use of language surely argues for the importance of literature in the language classroom.”

There is no profit in continuing here with the debate on the primacy of ‘speech’ over ‘written language’ or vice-versa. However, it is important to note that mastery of the skill of writing is one of the major needs of the language learners. As Ansari (1978) had pointed out earlier, literature is often rejected on the grounds that creative works of the great masters of literature would be incomprehensible to the students studying compulsory English. Though Milton’s poetic texts like ‘Paradise Lost’ or Eliot’s famous poem ‘The Wasteland’ have the variety of language, still they are inappropriate from the perspective of teaching compulsory English to intermediate class students. But, the reason behind the incompatibility of such texts is the learner’s level of difficulty. At an advanced stage even such complex texts may offer improvement alongside aesthetic enjoyment. Therefore, if
literary texts chosen for ELT purposes are in tune with the difficulty level of language learners they can be used for imparting the lessons of language to the students of intermediate classes. Our fault at selection and gradation shouldn’t count for incompatibility of a literary text.

To quote Boyle (1986) "Commonwealth countries, where the students who choose to do a degree in English must study a great deal of literature. However, their language ability is often not too good, particularly in countries where English is being spoken less and less and the mother tongue is taking over. There is a tendency in such circumstances to play down the relevance of literature teaching." In such circumstances ESP materials are taking over the literary texts. Because it is believed that literary texts deal with general or to be more precise universal themes such as war, love death etc. And according to the ELT experts the generalities of literature do not at all suit the practical sensibilities of science or commerce students. Their scepticism about the technical use of English language is so high that they rate the language of scientific texts as 'purpose-specific language'. ELT experts believe that language of literature is so unorthodox and innovative that it cannot be taught to the learners studying "purpose-specific language of other disciplines-science, medicine,
engineering." Hence, for such students ESP materials are better than literary texts as they are useful for teaching the purpose-specific language of science texts. Such rigid views of the ELT world can be counterbalanced by saying that prospect of studying the unorthodox language of literary texts for the ELT purpose would be a welcome change for the students of science, and it would motivate them to emotionally get engrossed in studying the literary texts and thus be interested in the English language as such.

ESP aims at solving the problems of language learners and teachers alike. But learners are not the only ones who face the problems, the ESP teachers too sometimes find themselves in situations which are complex to deal with. For instance an EST teacher must have a sound knowledge of science. Though he is well qualified to teach English he is also supposed “to prompt a certain amount of science teaching, and this he is not qualified to do”. To expect an English language teacher to prompt science or commerce teaching would indeed be an illogical assumption. In addition, it is expected from the English language teacher to be first an expert in his field just as “with medicine, the specialist must first be an expert in his or her general field. And with language that general field is human nature in action - the realm of literature.” Just as a doctor is
supposed to have full knowledge of human anatomy before specializing in a specific area such as neurology, ophthalmology and cardiology. Similarly, it is often taken for granted that a language teacher would be an expert in literature, because literature is the use of language in all possible forms. If literature and language are taken to be two separate disciplines, this kind of expertise in literature shouldn’t be expected of an ELT expert. But because general field of language is considered to be the realm of literature it is prudent to include suitable literary texts in the curriculum for achieving the ELT objective. Since the English language (ESP/EAP) teachers are not trained in technical subjects - such as computers, mathematics or biology and ESP texts demand certain level of minimal knowledge of these subjects from ELT teachers which they generally lack. As a result, they have to seek help from subject experts like chemistry expert or statistics expert who “are friendly and cooperative but allergic to English teaching”. Such subject experts feel helping English language teachers with ESP texts is a sheer wastage of time. Therefore, it would be more sensible to use literary texts for ELT purpose, mainly because a language teacher would be able to handle them single handedly.
EAP teachers, also face time constraints. T.F Johns (1981) had collected questionnaires from 100 EAP teachers. And one of them had complained that "English has to fit in during hours 'left over' by the main subject teachers."^21 Probably because after having classes in their main subjects like physics, computers or geography from morning till afternoon the learners are so worn out in 'the afternoon' that they neither have the time nor inclination to take any keen interest in learning the English language. However, to think that a mere change in the time - table would make the EAP texts interesting would be a false hope to harp on.

Professor Blatchford feels that "the study of English literature is a luxury that cannot be indulged during the limited time allotted to English."^22 But when the literary texts are not taught for sheer pleasure and they help the learners to inculcate language skills teaching English literature does not remain a luxury. It becomes a necessity.

It is hard to agree with Nagpal's (1995) view when she says that 'language in literature is decontextualised'\,^23 because not only are literary texts contextualized but meaning completely depends on the context in which language is being used. Brumfit and Carter (1986) therefore hold a contrary view and declare that "a literary text is authentic text, real language
in context in which exploration and discussion of context (which if appropriately selected can be an important motivation for study) leads on naturally to examination of language." So, it can be said that literary texts do emerge out of specific contexts.

While the exponents of literature have a different story to tell about the supremacy of literary texts over ESP materials. They are adamant about the supremacy of English literature over the language and claim that literature has "cultural aim or value". Brumfit and Carter (1986) are slightly hesitant "Challenging this view of literary education as the development of taste". Though the cultural aim was over emphasized by Macaulay, nowadays "it is hardly in evidence save in the most advanced stages of specialized University courses". The need of the hour is merely to get working knowledge of the skills of English language and so the main thrust these days is on the functional use of English rather than literary appreciation.

Marckwardt (1978) gives a lot of importance "to the role that translations of English literature can play in the development and determination of the literary curriculum and in modifying classroom procedures a matter that has rarely been explored in treatments of foreign language or second language
teaching." It can be said that according to Marckwardt (1978) the use of translation method is important for ELT especially with reference to second language learners. Translations help in determining the taste of readers. It is important to notice that "in a particular country Sinclair Lewi's Babbitt has been translated but not his Arrow smith would seem to suggest something about the nature of the life problems and literary themes which will interest the reading public there." Hence, it can be said that translation of literary texts help in determining the taste of the readers and in this way translated works lead to the enhancement of the reading skill. Marckwardt's argument has a tacit implication that ESP texts cannot provide any suggestion about the themes that interest the reading public of a particular place.

Frye (1963) thinks the main aim of teaching literature is to invoke the power of imagination amongst those who have the talent to create literature. To quote him, "The ultimate purpose of teaching literature is not understanding, but transferring of the imaginative habit of mind... the vision and the power to construct." Frye (1963) thinks that "the ultimate purpose of teaching literature is not to lay too much emphasis on the appreciation of literary text but to evoke the instinct of innovation amongst those who have the power to create a new
form instead of idolizing an old one." It is very difficult to agree with Frye's view because not many people have the ability to create a new form of literature. This kind of talent is mostly God-gifted, and to think that literature should lead to innovation of a 'new form' would restrict the purpose of literature teaching. Moreover, this kind of an extremist view creates a wide chasm between language and literature.

In opposition to the exponents of literature, ELT experts continue to consider literature unfit for achieving the ELT objective. Professor Blatchford declares with authority that "the classroom emphasis should be on the functional use of the language, not on literature."

Dogmatic views like those of Professor Blatchford and Frye create a wide chasm between literature and language. Such rigid views lead to animosity between pro-literature and pro-language camps and widen the gap between the two. This leads to the only consequence that the great ELT effectivity found in literature is laid off and the learners remain deprived of the wealth of language which is there in literature in multiple forms and shades.

However, it is important to note that "Both language and literature are parts of the verbal symbolization of experience
we call discourse, and whoever teaches in these areas must see their basic oneness." ELT experts and literary critics essentially falter in rejecting the views of each other straight away. At this juncture it becomes necessary to review the language literature controversy and see whether a point of compromise can be reached between the two or not.

Brooks (1960) asks a very simple question "why literature in a language class at all?" Brumfit and Carter (1985) spontaneously answer literature "is taught because it always has been taught." The very quality of sustenance that literary texts have shown in being present in the syllabuses designed for ELT purposes goes on to show that literature has stood the test of time. Sawant (1999) says, "English Education in India has largely depended on the teaching of literature." Literary texts continue being used as a part of compulsory/graded language courses in India after facing all sorts of critical remarks from ELT experts and it is so because, they enliven the language learning process. In the words of Widdowson (1984) "Dissociation of language for literary purposes leads to discourse which represent language as essentially a matter of creating meaning by procedures for making sense. This is its central relevance to language teaching." Just as under natural circumstances the listener concentrates on the
utterances of the speaker and finally infers from those utterances what the speaker actually meant. Literature also motivates the learner to focus on the information provided by the language of the text. The reader not only reads the lines but at times also reads in between the lines to engage, himself/herself in the meaning making process which is similar to the meaning making process in real life situations. It leads to the only conclusion that literature has full ELT relevance in India.

Outright refusal of literature is illogical as the use of ESP materials also cannot always ensure proper language learning. If literature has failed to enable language learners to master the four skills there are multifarious reasons behind its failure ranging from faulty system of examinations to bad text books, incompetent teachers, lack of self-access materials, disparity in India's policy of English teaching etc. Though compulsory English is taught in most of the states in India yet there is a lot of disparity in the standard from which it's teaching starts in different parts of India and it varies from state to state. To quote Kohli (1970), "In the Union Territory of Chandigarh, for example the teaching of English is started from the 3rd class. In Punjab and Haryana, its study is commenced from the 6th class, but in Gujarat the teaching of English is delayed up to
the 8th class so far as the government schools are concerned. So the language learning capabilities of the language learners too vary from state to state.

Many language experts, such as Kohli (1970), believe that "English literature should be read by choice by those people who have an adequate command of the language." This amounts to saying that literature can be used to complement non-literary texts only when the learners become competent enough to pass the survival level. But it is an accepted fact that children like nursery rhymes. Mehta (1950) argues that "There are innumerable poems about simple and jolly things which fascinate and gladden the young heart." On the basis of Mehta's argument it can be concluded that literary text has a magic and attraction of its own which an ESP text may lack and which may be a language resource for an ELT class.

Language enables "the individual to communicate his thoughts to others." Similarly, literary texts also engage the reader to read the text and engross himself/herself in the meaning making process by drawing inferences from the literary texts. Therefore, a literary text also communicates the thoughts of a poet/novelist or a character in a specific literary piece to the reader through its language. As a result, if
language is used for communicative purpose then literature too can be used as a communication act but "literature as a communication act, relies on expectation and norms forming an important element in the channel of communication between writer and the reader, and the teacher of literature needs to help students to acquire requisite literary competence."^42

Hence, the literary texts communicate with the reader inviting him to respond to the aesthetic use of language. Pushpa (1982) rejects the view that "langue and parole cannot really be studied together,"^43 and a resolution between the two — langue (ordinary speech system) and parole (phenomena of literary language) is unthinkable. Ali (1988) resolves the problem by quoting Widdowson who considers literary artefact to be a double structure, of parole which is also langue and langue which is also parole. In his opinion, "it is a peculiar amalgam of both, as it violates the accepted rules of language and creates its own rules which are not considered non-language within their context."^44 Without doubt it can be concluded that features of common language usage are found in literature and similarly literary qualities too can be traced in language of everyday usage. So, to see an unbridgeable gap between the two is a mistake. This naturally establishes the advantage of literary texts for the ELT purpose.
Brumfit and Carter (1986) find it “impossible to isolate any single or special property of language which is exclusive to literary work.” In that case, all the features of ordinary language can be found at some point of time in one or another literary work. In compliance with Brumfit and Carter’s (1986) view even the use of 'figures of speech' is not just a prerogative of literature. The 'figures of speech' for instance oxymoron, hyperbole, simile, metaphor, and synecdoche are common features of English language. Similies like 'as black as soot', as ‘blind as a bat’ etc are expressions of common idiomatic usage. Chapman (1984) makes the point more clear by saying that “such figures are common enough in everyday usage; whether they derive from literary use or whether the common use preceded literary record is not important.” To argue whether literature preceded or language would be equivalent to asking the question of endless debate and discussion “which came first the chick or the egg?” However, it is important to note just as the chick and the egg are interdependent for continuing their cycle of existence, similarly literature completely depends for its existence on the vast resources of language which it deeply assimilates and language in turn gets nourished and enriched by imaginative literary experimentation. Thus, they complement each other.
Leech (1969) also says that semantic unorthodoxy can be crudely characterized as 'playing with the meaning of the words.' Such semantic unorthodoxy is a common feature of linguistic jokes and literary devices like metaphor and paradox. For instance the riddle:

Q: What has wheels and flies?

Ans: A garbage truck.

Thus, it can be said that such playing with words, (or double sidedness) of language is not an exclusive feature of literature. Language and literature are not essentially different. It is just that literature is the most aesthetic and proficient use of language.

In the words of W.R.Lee, "The substance of the English language ... has been shaped by literature. It is in literature that resources of the language are most skillfully used." The skillful use of language in literature exposes the reader to the variety of uses that language can be possibly put to. It is true that teaching language through literary texts can lead to the enhancement of learners' knowledge of language. Carter (1982) too believes that language of a literary text can enhance "our appreciation of aspects of the different systems of language organization." Since, literature includes and
absorbs all kinds of systems of language organization whether it is scientific language, medical language, rhetoric language or simple language it is present in all shades and forms in literature.

'Language' and 'Literature' contrast each other in their mode of negotiation. In 'langue' (ordinary speech system) the negotiation is mostly overt while in 'parole' (phenomenon of speech in literary language) negotiation can be covert. A literary artist uses words in a manner "by which words are challenging to yield their utmost complexity of meaning". Though literary texts can be covert owing to the subtleties of innovation, yet "literary language derives from the experiments which the writers have made within the agreed code." Hence the reconciliation of the paradox inherent in the approaches to two subjects, language and literature, can be achieved. The two varieties of language (language and literary texts) present a contrast and the specific characteristic of one can better be appreciated and assimilated if contrasted with the other. This also necessitates the exposure of the ELT learners to the literary texts.

Widdowson (1983) in an interview with Rossner said "As soon as you engage in conventional discourse, you immediately have a set of expectations, when you're talking to
somebody else or writing to someone else or reading what somebody else has written you're seeking to get some kind of convergence of these 'schemata these frames of reference'.\footnote{52} Thus, every kind of verbal or textual interaction leads to convergence. Literature too provides the reader with the information of these 'frames of reference' that contribute to his understanding of the meaning of a text. Hence, it is relevant to an ELT class.

"When we are engaged in ordinary conversation, we have a number of linguistic 'accidents' which... form part of the deliberate usage of a literary writer."\footnote{53} Violations of the lexical norms are dealt with such expertise that they enhance the aesthetic effect in a literary text. So, it can be said that a literary writer makes good use of the linguistic accidents. And an explication of the same is bound to offer a wealth of language to an ELT class.

Literature draws out all its raw material from language through unorthodox ways of innovation and excellence of execution. Hence, literature becomes a complex yet elevated use of ordinary language which can be used for the purpose of teaching language as it is "wholly and inevitably rooted in language."\footnote{54}
The language found in literature includes language from all professions and aspects in life. To quote Ali (1988), “the language of literature is not a variety of language as ‘legal language’ or ‘medical language’. The former is all-inclusive, whereas the latter consists of only relevant vocabulary to the exclusion of the rest... So literary language is not essentially different from ordinary discourse; as a variety or as special type of language.” As a result, literary texts can be used to enhance learners' knowledge of English language.

The skillful use of language in literature instructs the reader to innumerable functional uses of language. Linguistic insights can be drawn out from literary texts to enhance the skills of reading and writing.

It's a common fallacy that a loud reading of a literary text followed by the general paraphrasing of the text would help the learners learn English language. But with this kind of morbid approach the entire purpose of language teaching through literature is lost.

The analysis of literary text should be done by focusing on language items rather than indulging in aesthetic or philosophical interpretation. It is only then that literature would definitely be successful in achieving the ELT objective.
Marckwardt (1978) quotes Lee that, "Lyrics are to be heard and not merely seen, plays are to be seen and heard. Literature is rooted, so far as the foreign language learner is concerned in the oral basis of language learning: rooted in lively and meaningful oral drills, in spoken and acted dialogues, in simple dramatizations of stories; indeed in those very procedures which make for successful and interested learning of the language." In agreement with Lee's view it can be justifiably asserted that effective ELT can take place through literature.

Literature is basically language and therefore it can be used as effectively for the purpose of ELT as any other form of language. After identification of the elements of language in literary text the next step for us will be to see how these 'patterns of language' can be exploited to their fullest advantage for achieving the ELT objectives. All these possibilities of using literary texts for ELT purpose in practical terms will be explored in next three chapters focusing on the three different genres: ELT through Poetry, ELT through Prose and ELT through Drama.
References:


17. Ibid.


21. Ibid.


29. Ibid., p. 44.

31. Ibid.


34. Ibid., p. 98.


51. Ibid., p. 17.


