Introduction
INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Language is a means of communication. It is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. Human race has arrived at the age of globalization and global communication. The global communication is bringing nations and people together and making them a global community. Now it is obvious that English is the only effective worldwide means of communication. That is why English is being paid more attention all over the world in the present global context than ever before.

As Crystal, says: (1997)

"There was never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English."

When companies from four European countries – France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland formed a joint truck making venture called Lveco in 1977 they choose English as their working language because, as one of the founders rightly observed, "it puts us all at an equal disadvantage".

At present, English is everybody’s language. This can be seen in many variations of English that people use or speak. Fortunately, many countries how put aside the stereotype notions that English undervalues and marginalizes the indigenous culture and acknowledge the immense possibilities and potentialities of English. In short, the importance of English lies in the fact that it is needed for practical reasons, social and economic success. Thus, we can
rightly claim that whoever tries to politicize English or see it from a narrow
cultural point of view will put a rope of isolation around his neck.

The establishment of the British East India Company in 1600 A.D. paved the way for the introduction of English in India. Although, initially, the East India Company concerned itself with commerce and industry, towards the end of the colonial rule it began to influence the education in India. As early as 1835, Lord Macaulay felt that English was needed for ‘revising literature’ in India and ‘for the promotion of knowledge of sciences.’ Thus, English came to be regarded as an important language in the country.

Even after 56 years of independence in India, English continues to serve as the ‘link language’ and as a ‘window to the world’. Neither Hindi the official national language nor any of the several regional languages has risen in status yet to substitute the all-encompassing influence of the English language in the socio-economic and educational arenas. As Krishnaswamy and Sriraman put it: (1995)

“Macaulay might have thought that the knowledge of English was essential for civilizing Indians, earlier generations might have thought that English was necessary for the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic? but the present generation is convinced that English is needed for mobility and social and economic advancement. English is the language of opportunities because it
takes one outside one’s own community to places (within or outside India) where more opportunities are available for professional and economic growth. That is why there is a great demand for English, it has a lot of ‘surrender value’ and teachers might want to cash in on it”.

With India gaining independence, the role of English in education and national life became questionable. It appeared as if English could not continue to occupy the privileged position it enjoyed under the British. There was a lot of controversy over the status of English. However, over a period it was felt that the use of English should continue, since it serves a major purpose as a national link language, as an international link language and as a library language.

In 1950, the constitution of India envisaged Hindi as the official language and English was to continue for 15 years from the date of adoption of the constitution. However, this was strongly opposed by the southern states. As a result, the Official Languages Act of 1963 recommended the continued use of English for an indefinite period. The Indian Education Commission (1964-66) recommended the continuance of English in the interest of national integration and for higher academic work.

English has come to occupy extremely important functional roles in the Indian sociological, political, economic and academic contexts. Besides providing knowledge, information and communicative values, it has provided
appropriate registers for these contexts. Any language considered for substitution at the national or state level has to be equal to English. It is therefore evident that, English must continue as a national link language for some time to come.

However, the Government of India still decided that every child in the country should get primary and secondary education in his mother tongue or in the regional language, while for higher education English was the means of instruction. Due to this, the regional or vernacular language became the medium of instruction in both primary and secondary stages, and this has serious repercussions on higher education. The abrupt decision to replace English with the regional language as the medium of instruction is one of the main causes for the decline in the standards of English in India. The students who came to college/universities from regional medium schools have a great difficulty in adjusting themselves to the medium of instruction, which is English. The result was a steady deterioration of standards of the learning and teaching of English.

English has always been taught as a literary and humanistic discipline. The literature syllabus, teaching and evaluation techniques belonged to the 19th Century. The Universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras that were established in 1857 after the model of the University of London, unhesitatingly imported its syllabus. Educationists held the opinion that the study of English literature was the logical development of literary development and that it served a general educational function. As a result students of English were
introduced to some English classics. The universities did not provide for any training in English language. In spite of the serious limitations inherent in it, this system produced considerable results as long as there were enthusiastic teachers and a limited number of highly motivated students. However, after 1930, when the medium at the secondary level in most parts of the country gradually changed to the regional language the shortcomings of this system became apparent. The M.A. Courses exposed students to greater works of English literature but did not attempt to train the students for teaching English language and English literature.

If it is true that in India teaching English has always been equated with teaching of English literature (and not been conscious of English as a language) it is equally true that more teaching has led to only less learning, even of literature. I do not want to argue that literature is too dreamy or complex to be taught; but it to be said that we have taken so much pain to teach literature and made the students to work so hard at it that the students have not learned to either learn or enjoy literature. This is mainly due to the concept of literature as content and teaching of literature has been concerned with communicating literary facts, whereas literature always converts facts into symbol.

English literature had been brought to India by the British Rulers as part of their total colonization. English, they felt, was essential for the modernization of India. As far back as 1835, Macaulay had pointed out that the phenomenal development of England had been due to the study of the ancient
classics, and "what Greek and the Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India".

The purpose of teaching English Literature to the Indians, thus, was two fold.

(a) Through English literature the public would come into contact with Western Civilization, and

(b) They were to learn the language through its literature.

English literature has formed part of the college and University curriculum since the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in 1830. Through the years a division has arisen between the teaching of English language and teaching of English literature.

After Independence, the UGC felt it necessary that a committee of experts should examine the teaching of English at various levels of university education. The committee was to examine the standards and methods of teaching and learning English language and literature.

The UGC appointed a committee in 1955 – 57, to obviate the difficulties arising out of the proposed change over in the medium of instruction. The committee examined the problems connected with the medium of instruction. The committee examined the problems connected with the medium of instruction and recommended measures to ensure adequate proficiency in English at the University level. The committee submitted its report in 1957. Some of the important recommendations of the committee are as follows:
(i) The teaching of English literature should be related to the study of Indian literature, so that apart from its value for linguistic purposes, it could be an effective means of stimulating critical thinking and writing in Indian languages.

(ii) Where English is not the medium of instruction at any university, it is necessary to adopt special methods to secure an adequate knowledge of English as a second language.

(iii) For greater attention should be given to linguistics in our universities and teacher training college.

The committee said that the regional languages could not replace English as a tool of knowledge or as a medium of communication, since they were not developed enough. English would remain the language in which students would expand their knowledge through books, journals and reports.

The Education Commission appointed a study group to examine the changed position of English both as a subject of study at school and as a medium of instruction at the university stage. The Chairman of the study group was Prof. V.K. Gokak, the Director of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages. The group attempted to define the objective of the study of English at various levels. Among the measures to improve the situation, it recommended:

a) The revision of curriculum at all stages of education;

b) A linguistic approach to literary studies at the university level;
c) The expansion of facilities for teaching English language and an
effective programme for adequate training for teachers of English;
d) Training of teachers in the state institutes of English and in the modern
methods of teaching English as a second language.
e) Reforms in the structure of examinations, flexibility in testing
techniques and establishment of a central testing services
f) Use of Mass Communication media in the teaching of English and
organization of special bridge intensive courses as evolved by the
Central Institute of English, Hyderabad.

The education commission endorsed many of the recommendations of this
committee. Regarding the place of study of English in the pattern of Education,
the commission warned that the adoption of the regional language as the
medium of instruction in schools and colleges should not be interpreted to
mean understanding the importance of English in the University. The
Commission said that English would continue to be needed as a library
language for a long time.

The committee headed by Dr. Kunzru struck a note of caution by
suggesting that the change of medium of instruction from English to Hindi
should not be hastened. It also stressed the necessity to define the aims of
English language teaching at school stage and the use of special methods in
English language teaching. The committee recommended a study of linguistics
as an essential pre-requisite for ensuring adequate proficiency in English at the
University level. It was with the Kunzru Committee that the aims and objective
of the study of English were investigated for the first time. The setting up of the Central Institute of English is 1958 was a major step taken by the Government of India to meet the needs of the deteriorating situation. Since then the Institute has trained teachers and teacher trainers from all over India, in modern effective methods of English language teaching and literary interpretation. Much research has been done in the teaching of English, linguistics and phonetics. The Institute has also prepared suitable syllabus and tests in English language and literature for different levels.

However, the inadequacies at the top were soon reflected in the failing standards at the lower level. Concerned about this deterioration in standards, Kunzru committee was appointed to examine the problems connected with the medium of instruction and recommend measures to ensure proficiency at the university stage. The committee recommended that far greater attention should be given to linguistics in our universities and teacher training colleges. This was the first time emphasis was given to the necessity of the English syllabus having a linguistic content.

Senior teachers of English were also skeptical about the literature-oriented syllabuses imparting the necessary language skills to students. At the All India English Teacher’s Conference, they repeatedly drew attention to the ineffectiveness of the traditional form of English teaching and the need to distinguish between English language teaching and English literature teaching. The educational commission was the first to point out the necessity for a distinction between English language teaching and English literature teaching.
In its report the commission pointed out that the regionalization of the medium of instruction did not mean the elimination of English, which would continue to function as a ‘library language’. Since an adequate command over a library language is indispensable to a university and students, it recommended that adequate facilities should be provided in universities and colleges. For providing the students with the necessary language skills, the commission recommended:

“A distinction has to be made between the teaching of English as a skill and the teaching of English literature”.

RATIONAL FOR THE STUDY

Several experts have suggested that the teaching of literature should be closer to the study of language used in the text. It was felt that this step would ensure that students would be able to develop their language skills initially and then use the same language skills to further their critical abilities. The teaching of literature is closely connected to the formation of meaning of texts from their analysis and that is directly connected to the teaching practices in the classrooms. Since conventional teaching practices focuses on the study of critical works on literary texts instead of encouraging independent literary evaluation, the study looks at the critical framework that forms the basis of literary-critical practice.

Many teachers have observed that the teaching of English literature was not successful in imparting the required skills to the students. It was believed
that the English language teaching objectives were not being met and the students were unable to use English language effectively in their day-to-day activities. A large section of the students failed to acquire any essential language skills like reading or speaking. It was found that even the students who passed the exams lacked language skills. The conventional system of English education required the close study of the English classics which required the knowledge of the language. The conventional syllabus had minimal linguistic components. Limited attempts to introduce linguistic components in the syllabus failed, as most of the teachers were not trained to undertake linguistic teaching.

Many students in the country are found to be lacking in literary competence. Most of the teaching of English literature focuses on literary merits of the text and minimal attention is given to the study of the language. Students are unable to understand literary texts as they have no grounding in basic language skills. The problem arises due to the inability of the students to perform meaning-making process due to the lack of language skills. It is expected that the student with the required language skills would be able to look at the literary text and make connections using the language used in the text to further the knowledge of the language. For example, a student studying *Ode to West Wind* would be able to use the language of the poem to learn new words and understand the context in which they have been used. This would help to improve the knowledge of the literature as well as the language. Thus it may be said that the teaching of literature and language support one another
through the meaning-making process. For example, it can be said that the language used in *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* can be used to teach the nuances in linguistics. By observing poetry from the Elizabethan to the Romantic period, the students would be able to understand the linguistic evolution of English and use the understanding to improve their language skills.

The aim of the research is to focus on the role and use of language in the teaching of literature. Problems arise in the teaching of literature because teaching literature is generally done in the total absence of any framework or system which should impart organization to the talks daily delivered in the graduate classrooms. This dissertation is an attempt to see how best we can use language in teaching literature and what is the role of language so that B.A. English course can be made more useful and fruitful. Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) was chosen for the study since the researcher belongs to this University. Some of the important research questions that will be addressed in this study are:

1. What is the role of language in literature classroom?
2. Does students know how to interpret a literary text in the classroom?
3. What is literary language and what stylistic devices can a student use to interpret the meaning of a text?
4. What are some alternative strategies, techniques and methods for teaching literature in the classroom?
The development of a suitable approach for the teaching of literature becomes essential especially in the second language context (India) where it is never certain whether literature is being taught for its own sake, or for the teaching of language. Before starting to address the issues of developing a suitable approach it would be helpful to discuss the different viewpoints that have come forth over the years from several teachers who have recommended the study of literature at the Under Graduate level. The fact that many of these teachers have spent years teaching and understanding the problems connected with literature helps us to gain fresh perspectives into different aspects behind the teaching literature.

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

For the study it is important to formulate certain framework within which the study is to be carried out. The idea of the framework is to provide a base or a core of language learning that takes place in the classroom along with the teaching of literature. The focus is finding a solution that would make use of the resources offered by literature to examine if it can be applied in training students in language skills that are of vital importance in today’s competitive environment.

The learning process in the language classroom deals to a great extent upon the meaning making process. When the students are given a literary text, they are expected to be able to make a critical analysis of it. In this learning process several developments take place. Initially the student analyses the language while reading the literary text and then begins to examine it in the
context of the language it is composed in. After reading the text, the student begins to form a mental picture of the idea/s that is described in the text. From the reading, the learning process shifts to the construction of meaning of the text. The meaning making process is closely related to the language in which the text is composed. Thus it can be safely assumed that language learning process can make significant benefits from employing literary resources, even though they may be sometimes found wanting in grammatical or linguistic accuracy.

It is not being suggested that literature-based courses are unsuitable for teaching English language. There is no conflict between the teaching of language and the teaching of literature. The two are, in fact, complementary, but one’s needs sensitivity to language for literary appreciation and literary works are repositories of authentic language use. One has only to expand the definition of the word 'literature', make judicious selection with the teaching 'aims' in mind, and use the right methodology to exploit the materials for achieving the aims. The material for teaching does not have to belong to classical literature. According to Widdowson there may be good or bad literature but everything is literature if the discourse is dissociated from any normal social context and therefore requires the reader to create his/her own schematic information.

The focus of the framework is to develop teaching methodologies that would enable the students to develop an understanding of the text at a personal level. The framework should be able to arrive at innovative teaching solutions
that would assist the learner to analyze literary text by empowering them with the language skills that would enable the construction of meaning. For this purpose the study will make use of linguistics, the ideas of Widdowson, Umberto Eco’s work in descriptive semiotics and Halliday's ideas on language acquisition, and Reader Response theory.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

The B.A. English course offered at AMU consists of an introduction to the study and appreciation of literature, a study of English poetry from the Elizabethan to the Romantic period, study of the nineteenth century English novel, Victorian and Modern Poetry, Shakespearean Drama, Post-Shakespearean drama, twentieth century British and American novel, novels from Indian Writing in English, and other materials.

The majority of the syllabus focuses on the close study of literary texts and analyzing their literary merits by studying their criticism. Students of literature are unanimous in their view that great writers are great manipulators of the language and have made significant contribution to the making of English. An application of the method proposed by, that is stylistics, linguistic, is sure to help the student in responding better to the use of language in literature and enables the student to understand better how language is exploited by a literary artist.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The current study aims to investigate how language is used in the literature classroom and also attempts to find an answer to this question.
Literature is used to teach language; however, the faculty as well as the syllabus makers conveniently forgets that the mother tongue of the students is not English and hence they would face serious problems in understanding the language that is used in the literary text. This does not mean that the students are incompetent or are lazy to make the necessary adjustments; but rather, the ease with which a native speaker can understand and use the language (English) is different from the way an Indian, or for that matter any non-native speaker, would use the language. Hence, the idea of focusing on the English language to teach English literature needs serious consideration.

The relevance of the research also lies in reference to the present world scenario where countries of the world are coming together as a global village. The global communication is bringing nations and people together and making them a global community. At this juncture, it is obvious that English is the only effective worldwide means of communication. That is why English is being paid more attention all over the world in the present global context than ever before. For better or worse, the 21st century has witnessed a great deal of development in the role of English as a global language. It is used for wider purposes than ever before.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Much research has been done to prove the role and significance of literature in the language classroom; however, enough attention has not been paid to trace and establish the role of language in the literature classroom. Over
the years, it has been found that the teacher of literature, when confronted with a fresh piece of literature, is unable to explain it to the student, and hence leaves the student clueless. Thus, this approach tends to ignore learners’ needs and fails to fulfill the requirements of learners in a literature classroom.

This present work aims to explore how through an analysis of the language structure the teacher can help the student of literature to acquire a better understanding of works of literature.

The introductory chapter introduces the research topic and the numerous reasons as to why the thesis is being studied. The study is organized into four chapters including an introduction and a conclusion, which is followed by a bibliography.

Chapter One presents a review of the related literature dealing with evolving trends in the practices and approaches involved in the teaching of literature in the classroom. The chapter also discusses the definition and meaning of literature.

Chapter Two attempts to analyze and define the different linguistic and stylistic devices used in the literature classroom and it also delineates the research design and methodology of the study and looks at the way literature is used in the language classroom.

Chapter Three attempts to study the use of language to interpret the discourse in literature with specific reference to the text and also look at the way in which meaning is arrived at in the classroom by the use of the various approaches.
Chapter Four highlights the importance of focusing on language based activities in the modern day communicative classroom. It has three sections. The first section looks at the literature teaching background in universities and colleges. The second section move from principles to actual practice and considers the undergraduate B.A. English main syllabus at Aligarh Muslim University. The third section aims to suggest some approaches, methods, techniques suitable for the contemporary communicative classroom with focus on language to enhance the literary skills of the students.