CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER FOUR

LITERATURE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

4.1 Language/Literature as Resource: A Synoptic View

English as a discipline, when introduced via Macaulay's 1835 Minute into India's educational system was not pedagogically sensitive to the divide between 'language' and 'literature'. However, at the turn of the 1950s, such a divide occurred, resulting in the establishment of two pedagogical disciplines: 'literature teaching' deriving its inspiration from literary criticism, and 'language teaching' supported by insights from linguistics. Following this divide, a blaze of controversy arose between those who defended the traditional 'unified' approach to English and those who called for a split between language and literature teaching. The pro-split argument was that the average ESL student, lacking near native competence in the language, would not be able to appreciate literary classics in English. Pratt (1982) voices his concern for the ESL students and says that "their general level of English is weak and they seldom have the necessary reading background to cope with undiluted specialized courses." The force of

this argument prompted course designers to banish 'literature' from the language curriculum.

The last several decades have seen the development of language curriculum sans literature. But in recent years new insights have emerged which favour the return of literature in language teaching. That being so, the significance of literature needs to be viewed afresh and the justification of its re-introduction into the language curriculum needs to be rationalized. It would, therefore, be important to look in some detail at the role of literature in ESL pedagogy. However, before we venture into exploring the significance of literature and rationalizing the justification of its use, it is important to have a clear view about the nature of literary discourse. This is possible by considering questions like—what is literature? Whether or not literary language is especially different from other language varieties, that is, the difference between literary and non-literary text; and what role does literature play in language teaching, that is, the usefulness and effectiveness of literature for the purpose of language teaching.

4.2 Literariness: Towards Defining Literature

Probably we all know what literature is but when it comes to defining it, we find it difficult. That no
single answer to this vexed question is possible was demonstrated by the answers in response to this question posed by the New Literary Journal (1973). This scholarly journal devoted its Autumn issue to the question of 'What is literature?' and the majority of contributors agreed that "no abstract, formal definition could be arrived at." The theoretical inertia set in with regard to the absence of any formal definition and this was given a philosophical dimension when literature was likened with Wittgenstein's "game". Some philosophers believe that 'literature', like Wittgenstein's "game", is a family resemblance concept "the members of the family being linked by a network of overlapping similarities none of which is common to all of them." 

According to Tzvetan Todorov the definitions of literature have been of two types- one, which labels it as language used for imitation as in fiction and the other where language is used for aesthetic pleasure. To look at both as being separate entities is difficult, for, unlike Todorov, David Lodge maintains that there is a connection

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3. Ibid p.1
between these two. He argues that if we take language as being used for imitation it would be difficult to account for literature which is not fiction and fiction which is not literature.

The second definition takes cues from classical rhetoric and has found pioneers in formalistic criticism as well. It associates literature with tropes and figures but this is refuted by Ruqaiya Hasan, who states that: "it is highly doubtful if the frequency of such recognized devices in longer prose works is significantly different from that in, say, a feature article in a quality newspaper." The New Critics' attempt at defining literariness as possessing some rhetorical device have also not been without criticism. It probably needs a different approach altogether.

The Czech school of structuralists have broached this subject and view literature as one which uses language in peculiar ways. Jakobsan believes that literature

5. Hasan, R. "Rime and Reason in Literature", in Lodge op. cit, 1977: 2
represents an organized violence committed on ordinary speech. The symbolist doctrines were rejected in favour of more utilitarian ones where the focus of attention shifted to that of the material reality of the literary text itself and where literature was viewed not in terms of any other discipline but as a "particular organization of language." Being an application of linguistics to the study of language they reversed the order of form and content. Far from seeing form as the expression of content they stood the relationship on its head. Content, therefore, was viewed as the motivation of form, an occasion or convenience of a particular kind of formal exercise. Literary work was viewed as an "arbitrary assemblage of devices" in order to achieve a "defamiliarizing effect". It was the effect of ordinary language made strange which rendered unfamiliarity to the everyday world. And this made literature force its reader into "a dramatic awareness of language" thereby refreshing the "habitual responses" and rendering it "perceptible." 

Literary language was, therefore, viewed as deviation and literature as a special use of language. It was systematic foregrounding which characterized literary

7. Ibid
discourse. Foregrounding was defined by Ian Mukarovsky, the Czech theorist, as "the aesthetically intentional distortion of linguistic components." Any item in discourse which was not merely used for the purpose of information, but as an item by itself was considered foregrounded. It depends upon the 'background' of 'automatized' components for, what may be automatized in one may be foregrounded in another. What distinguished literary from non-literary discourse, therefore, is not just the frequency of the foregrounded elements but the relationship between the background and the foregrounded elements which are aesthetically relevant. The background of a literary discourse, therefore, comprises an ordinary language, the literary tradition and the linguistic norms. Paul Garvin states that "In poetic language foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the objective of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication, but in order to place in the foreground the act of expression, the act of speech itself."  


Although Prague school’s definition of foregrounding is a sufficient criterion for literariness, Ruqaiya Hasan believes that literary foregrounding requires some ‘motivation’ to explain it. According to her, literary foregrounding can be found in the unity of literary texts. She talks of two levels of symbolization where the code of the language is used to symbolize certain events, processes and situations which in turn symbolize some theme. This, however, has been questioned, for the reader is in a position to interpret and construe more information from a text than the sender or writer was conscious of putting into it, and this can be, as stated by Roland Barthes, discovered in journalism or advertisement. Recent work in linguistics and cultural studies too support Barthes’ contention that all discourse is open to the same kind of interpretation as suggested by Hasan. Lodge (1977), while resolving this complexity and reinforcing Hasan’s theory, suggests that the "...literary text invites this kind of interpretation, and indeed requires it for its completion, whereas the non-literary text does not invite it, and is in effect destroyed by it." 10

While trying to draw some connection between the fictional and the rhetorical definition of literature,

10. Lodge op cit 1977: 4
Mukarovsky stated that "the question of truthfulness does not apply in regard to the subject matter of a work of poetry, nor does it even make sense...the question has no bearing on the aesthetic value of the work; it can only serve to determine the extent to which the work has documentary value." The referential component does not hold much importance in the Prague school, rather it is the regularizing principle which is dominant and which sets in motion, and gives direction to the relationship of all the other components. In fact, a typology of utterances as proposed by Roman Jakobson, mark the dominance of this principle.

Mukarovsky's and Jakobson's definition of the literary text has been viewed as being biased towards deviances in literature and of being unable to account for literature in which referential and communicative element appears to be central (for example, realistic fiction or autobiography). According to this viewpoint, "the subject matter of a work of literature is merely a pretext for bringing certain verbal devices into play." 12

11. Lodge op cit, 1977: 5

12. Ibid, p.6
Stanley Fish believes that the preeminence given to the verbal patterns by Jakobson makes the literature "message-minus" in which "the separation of literature from the normative centre of ordinary language is celebrated." He subsequently rejects Jakobson's "message-minus" definition of literature, although he is equally critical of "message-plus" definition that presents literature as "a more effective conveyor of the messages ordinary language transmits." He believes that both "message-minus" and "message-plus" definitions of literature are unacceptable as they bring a distinction between ordinary language and literary language. Literature, according to Fish "...is an open category, not definable by fictionality, or by a disregard of propositional truth, or by a statistical predominance of tropes and figures, but simply by what we decide to put into it." Infact, both Todorov and Fish hold the no distinction view in literature where the dichotomy between ordinary language, literary language and

13. Fish, S. IS THERE A TEXT IN THIS CLASS? THE AUTHORITY OF INTERPRETIVE COMMUNITIES, 1980: 103
14. Ibid, p.103
15. Ibid, p.109
16. Lodge, op cit, 1977:6
non-literary language does not exist. To quote Fish, "...there is no such thing as ordinary language, at least in the naive sense often intended by that term...[T]he alternative view would be one in which the purposes and needs of human communication inform language and are constituent of its structure." 17 This denial of dichotomy, however, blurs the distinction between form and content in literature. H.G. Widdowson distinguishes between form and content as 'text' and 'discourse' and observes that "although literature need not be deviant as text it must of its nature be deviant as discourse." 18

David Lodge's suggestion of "fictionality, in its most elastic sense" as the best alternative term for deviance is rather convincing. He further suggests that it is the "systematic foregrounding" which makes literary discourse "either self-evidently fictional or may be read as such" 19 in tune with its elasticity. As Widdowson has observed, "what distinguishes our understanding of literary discourse is that it depends upon our recognizing patterns of linguistic organization which are superimposed as it were

17. Fish, op cit, 1980:106
19. Lodge, op cit 1977: 6
on those which the code requires, and our inferring the special values that linguistic terms contract as elements in these created patterns." 20

A similar kind of observation may be discerned from the writings of Brumfit and Carter (1987). They pointed out that "...what is literary is a matter of relative degree, with some textual features of language signalling a greater literariness than other." 21 Both these observations demand a word of caution as there is the possibility of equating literature with 'good literature' by implication. In view of the fact that there exists a continuum of the category of 'literature' with a range of perceptions from viewing literature as something given 22 (in terms of intrinsic qualities) or made 23 (in terms of historicity and mystification) to the radical stance of complete refusal 24 of literature as such, it would be more pragmatic and relevant to talk of 'literariness' rather than literary language.

20. Widdowson, op cit 1984: 46
23. Ibid, p.139
24. Eagleton, op cit, 1983
4.3 Literary and Non-Literary Text

A number of scholars have attempted to draw out the difference between literary and non-literary text. It needs to be seen as to what characterizes the literary aspect of a text. The wide ranging subject matter of a literary sphere cannot be easily definable. Moody (1983) refers to this when he says, 'By `literature' we refer to constructions, or artefacts, in language, which may be designed for any of the whole range of human communication needs, private or public, oral or written, for which language is used' and, therefore, the "conventional academic classifications of literary genres (poetry, drama, prose, etc.) are woefully insufficient to describe the great gamut of verbal artefacts which constitute the literature of any language." 25

The issue revolves around one group of scholars proclaiming literary texts as having certain special characteristics and the other group denying it. Bateson (1971), whose critical stance towards a linguist may be seen from this personal remark "...I must admit that I would much

prefer not to have a linguist in the family',\textsuperscript{26} considers the language of literature to be special and outside the purview of linguistic analysis. He views literary language in terms of phenomenon of speech (parole) and not the speech system (langue). This view, however, has been questioned by Widdowson who considers literary language as an amalgam of both, for it is a violation of the accepted rules and creation of its own norms as well, which are acceptable within their own context. It is a "kind of converse reality, a different existential order in another dimension of experience, a figurative paradox held for a moment outside ordinary time and space."\textsuperscript{27}

Short (1983)\textsuperscript{28}, while commenting on the nature of literary and non-literary language, proposes a "no distinction" view. According to him creativity is not the domain of literary writers and 'sensitive' readers alone and this in turn implies that an E.S.L. learner has an equal

\textsuperscript{26} Bateson, F.W. 1971 "Language and Literature", in Asim Ali LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH LITERATURE, 1988: 6

\textsuperscript{27} Widdowson, H.G. "The Deviant Language of Poetry" cited in Brumfit (ed), \textit{op.cit}, 1983:16

\textsuperscript{28} Short, M.H. "Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature," cited in Brumfit (ed), \textit{Ibid}, p.68
access to literature. Brumfit and Carter (1987), rejecting the notion of literary language, say that "when we say this, we mean that we find it impossible to isolate any single or special property of language which is exclusive to a literary work. It does not mean we deny that language is used in ways which can be distinguished as literary."^{29}

What had previously been associated with literary language was to be found in abundance in the language of advertising as well. Short and Candlin have viewed certain functional similarities between poetry and advertisement and have said that both are memorable and have an emotional impact on the reader.^{30}

Short argues that there is no essential distinction between literary and non-literary language in linguistic terms. He thinks that the features often associated with literary or poetic language do recur in other forms of language as well. Taking the case of metaphors in literature, he states that this is not the prerogative of literary texts alone but abounds in daily discourses as well: "... the examination of other kinds

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of language, e.g. advertising, political speeches, belies this distinction; even casual conversation in the coffee bar can produce new metaphors."31 Brumfit and Carter (1987) while agreeing with the above view, state that, "Infact, it requires only a little linguistic introspection to see that metaphor is pervasive in our daily discourse and, as a property of language, is not in any way unique. Metaphors are not found only in Shakespeare or Donne. The world of discussion and debate, parliamentary, journalistic, academic or otherwise, is impregnated with metaphors..."32

While Short advocates the 'no-distinction' view in very clear terms, others like Brumfit and Carter (1987), Fowler and Moody (1983) have reservations despite their strong sympathy for this view. Fowler (1971) seems to be equally concerned about the "extra linguistic features which condition the distinctive style of a literary word,"33 which is otherwise nothing but language. Brumfit and Carter, while holding the view that there is no such thing as literary language, still feel that literary language has certain special properties. However, they believe that it is difficult to really pinpoint or isolate any single or special one.

31. Short op cit 1983:67
32. Brumfit and Carter (eds) op cit 1987: 6
Some features of commonality which exist in literary and non-literary language are viewed to be present at the phonological level. The semantic density of language especially associated with literary language too, can be found in ordinary language, for example, in jokes or in certain word combinations.

Although the distinction between literary and non-literary is mostly blurred, this does not mean that all language is literary. As Brumfit and Carter put it, "In case it is thought that we are saying that all language is literary and that all language users are as creative and imaginative as each other, we are not." Their view of poetry as having a number of linguistic features across the text for producing unity can be compared to the non-linguistic text where the 'layering' is not very evident.

The question which then comes up is the nature of literary language. A literary text "is not a language variety" in the same way as "the language of newspaper headlines, or legal language, or the language variety of weather forecasting". In fact, it can be better understood as a 'context' where "different varieties of language can be

34. Brumfit and Carter (eds), op.cit, 1987: 7
35. Ibid, p.8
mixed and still admitted" unlike those in legal document where "[a]ny deviation from norms of lexis and syntax...[is] inadmissible"\textsuperscript{36} but not in poems or in fiction.

Rogers (1983) discusses the difference between the artistic and the non-artistic discourse and points out that though literary communication differs from the domains of non-literary communication, it is still dependent on it. Although literary messages use the same basic language system as that used in other different kinds of non-literary discourse, they both differ in terms of 'function'. As Rogers has pointed out that "literary messages differ from non-literary ones in function i.e. in their communicative purposes, creative writers have to signal the fact of the literariness of their messages by inventing special conventions of poetic, novelistic and dramatic communication which would not work in ordinary practical discourse, and by using the language system itself in ways which are unorthodox, thought-provoking and striking. The result is that creative writers produce linguistic messages which, by their very nature, stand out prominently against the reader's background awareness of what is both communicatively conventional and linguistically normal non-

\textsuperscript{36} Brumfit and Carter (eds) op cit, 1987: 8-9
literary discourse i.e. both appropriate to the social purpose...as well as dramatically intelligible in terms of syntax and vocabulary."  

This unusual arrangement of linguistic items in a literary writing makes it deviant from other texts. The features of both, radical deviation as well as adherence to the norm of 'ordinary' language are visible here. However, the question of norm is a complicated one and would require much elaboration, for, as rightly pointed out by Eagleton, what may be a norm for one may be a deviance for the other. The patterning of linguistic features in a literary writing leads towards the emergence of different genres. However, it can be observed that the patterning devices would differ from genre to genre. Widdowson's (1983) comment deserves attention when he says, "The phonology of English, for example, requires no alliteration, assonance, rhyme or metric measure in message forms but these sound patterns are used in poems to fashion a design of sounds which combines with syntactic and lexical arrangements to create a code for the occasion."  

38. Eagleton, op.cit 1983  
39. Widdowson, op.cit 1983:10
Deviance is again achieved at the level of foregrounding. Leech comments that, "Foregrounding, or motivated deviation from linguistic or other socially accepted norms, has been claimed to be a basic principle of aesthetic communication. Whether or not the concept is applicable to any great extent to other art forms, it is certainly valuable, if not essential, for the study of poetic language. The norms of the language are in this dimension of analysis regarded as a 'background' against which features which are prominent because of their abnormality are placed in focus."

Literary text, therefore, can be looked at as language in context to which the reader could respond directly. It provides ample examples of language resources being used leading to the process of exploring the work. Its essential character would be a kind of a deviant discourse and could be understood in the background of conventional language use. The extraordinariness is achieved to some extent by its "uncommon use, its special context and particular communicative purpose". By leaving things unclear in a literary text, it encourages the reader to draw


out meanings which can be "inferred by procedural activity." It is this which then leads to the development of significant language learning abilities. The students' interest could be captivated by concentrating on the literary texts themselves, which not only enable them to perceive the precision and vitality of the language employed by the author, but also helps them clarify their meaning. This leads to a deeper understanding of the language.

4.4 Language and Literature Alliance

The question whether literature should be viewed as a rival to language teaching or as its strong ally had captivated the interest of pedagogues for quite some time. Linguistic insights infused fresh thinking about language learning and response to literature, thus generating a controversy between language and literature with a move towards the reconsideration of literature in language teaching.

Charles Blatchford (1972) states that "the study of English literature is a luxury that cannot be indulged

during the limited amount of time allocated to English." He supports his arguments on three grounds. First, he says, the primary aim of ESL departments in Asia should be teaching the pragmatic and utilitarian use of language where the development of skill should take place. A person needs to be able to handle language in his daily tasks and, therefore, the emphasis should be on the functional command of language where the requirement of the four skills would be called forth to deal with everyday situations. Secondly, the teachers' inadequacy in dealing with the foreign language classroom. He believes that owing to the inaccessibility of literary texts and dearth of resources for teacher-training facilities in Asia, the teachers teaching literature in the foreign language classroom are ill equipped. Lastly, he talks about the current trend of the ESOL which seems to be towards understanding language in relation to society. In this connection, the guidelines for teacher training set up by TESOL would be useful. Instead of putting emphasis on literature which, in fact, "does not contribute to the student's ability to function in the

society,"\textsuperscript{44} these guidelines stress on the sociolinguistic and sociocultural aspects for the teacher.

Peter D. Strevens (1974) bemoans the spurt of demand for English for special purposes for people with very limited knowledge of the language. Talking about the situation twenty years back, he says that "The teaching of English was automatically assumed to be part of a general education on the humanities, the arts side, with the tacit assumption that the very best students would go forward and study English literature."\textsuperscript{45} The demand, therefore, was for English as a practical communication skill and this came in the wake of their independent status.

Muhammad R. Zughoul (1985)\textsuperscript{46} in his discussion for a set of objectives for the English department in the Arab world has noted that there is not enough emphasis on the applied side of linguistics. It is further stated that these departments have failed to bring out competent

\textsuperscript{44} Harckwardt, op cit, 1978: 5

\textsuperscript{45} Strevens, P.D. 1974 "Recent Developments in the Teaching of English" \textit{Ibid}, p.6

\textsuperscript{46} Zughoul, M.R. "Formulating Objectives for the English Departments in Arab Universities: Rationale and Assessment" \textit{DIRASAT}, XII, 3, 1985: 98
students, which is the reason for labelling it as "astronomical failure" (Jawad, 1983).47

The ESL situation provides an imbalance in its approach thereby producing graduates with very little mastery on the language. Daswani (1982) maintains that those who have acquired mastery in English have done so outside the formal structure of education. He says that, "British educators, in their attempt to create brown English men in India, did not pay any serious attention to systematic instruction in the language. Instead, they sought to replicate the English school and university systems where English as a language needed little attention. Even literature teachers have either refused to acknowledge the fall of standards or disclaimed responsibility for the improvements of standards."48

Pratt (1982) expresses similar beliefs when he says about the Third World student that, "their general

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47. Jawad, T. "Some Reconsiderations of the Role Played by the English Departments at Arab Universities" in Dahiyat and Ibrahim (eds.) PAPER FROM THE FIRST CONFERENCE ON THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT ARAB UNIVERSITIES, 1983: 44

level of English is weak and they seldom have the necessary reading background to cope with undiluted specialized courses." Gilroy Scott (1983:1-2) echoes that the "emphasis on literary knowledge disguised poor language attainments in most cases".  

It has further been viewed that the reason for the Third World student studying English is more instrumental than integrative in nature. It is the utilitarian aspect of English which motivates him rather than a desire for any other thing. Research shows that the motivation is instrumental. Studies on Arab students by Zughoul et al (1986), Zughoul and Taminian (1984), Salih (1980),

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Harrison et al. (1974)\(^{54}\) have confirmed this view. For example, Ibrahim (1983)\(^{55}\) feels that in the Third World countries, a knowledge of English is important in social, economic power and stratification. Lewis and Massad (1975)\(^{56}\) in IAEEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) from ten countries say that based on utility one can discern motivating factors.

Shaw's (1983) attitudinal survey based on three Third World Countries focussed on the need of the students. The countries were Singapore where the student surveyed were 170, India where the number was 324 and Thailand where it was 313. He found out that "the most striking...reasons are the ones generally associated with the instrumental type of motivation."


\(^{55}\) Ibrahim, H.H. "The Role of English Departments in Arab Universities" cited in Dahiyat and Ibrahim (eds) op cit 1983


The traditional view maintains that literature broadens mental horizons and provides a necessary resource for the use of language. As Lee (1970) has pointed out that "The substance of the English language, however, has been shaped by literature. It is in literature that the resources of the language are most fully and most skillfully used. It seems to follow that literature should enter into the language-study of those who are to use the language with the greatest possible skill and effect." Talking further on the same lines he says that literature in foreign language learning is "rooted in lively and meaningful oral drills, in spoken and acted dialogues, in simple dramatisation of stories, indeed in those very procedures which make for successful and interested learning of the language." 

The teaching of literature, according to the traditional view, is defended vehemently on grounds related to its intrinsic values. Such a view has a resounding resemblance with the view held by Arnold. In the Arnoldian


59. Ibid p.8
sense literature, which has been called "the greatest power in Education" is "not just a subject for academic study, but one of the chief temples of the human spirit, in which all should worship". Viewed from this perspective both Bennet and Leavis have strongly defended the teaching of English literature. According to Bennet "The aim of literary studies is not to amuse the hours of leisure, it is to awake one's self, it is to be alive, to intensify one's capacity for pleasure, for sympathy and for comprehension... An understanding appreciation of literature means an understanding appreciation of the world...".

Leavis believes that literature teaching is essential and irreplaceable as "It trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence...". He further believed that in an age where human values and qualities are in the process of extinction and where there in an overwhelming

debased and brutalized culture, literature, particularly the cultivation of poetry, may provide an effective means to retrieve the loss of values and bring about civilization.

These comments of Leavis' and others in support of literature have sharply been criticised by Widdowson, who says that these justifications "resemble propaganda rather than a reasoned set of proposals." He believes that these claims could be made by any other discipline in order to promote itself, as these effects can come about "through a heightened awareness of the way language can be used to explore and express realities other than which is communally accepted as the most socially convenient."

Widdowson (1984) then goes on to state that literature is narrowed down to the study for either a cultural purpose or for a linguistic purpose. If studied for the cultural purpose, literature would "...acquaint students with ways of looking at the world which characterize the cultures of the English-speaking people." However, as a linguistic subject it would enable students to see how the

63. Widdowson, op. cit. 1984: 73
64. Ibid p.74
65. Ibid p.77
language system is used for communication because it provides the learner with the "widest variety of syntax, the richest variation of vocabulary discrimination." However, he issues a warning that literature is misrepresented if used to teach something else. In either case the purpose of literature would be defeated and its literary nature lost.

This view has been received with mixed response and a compromise seems to have been made in some cases as when Povey (1967) and Arthur (1968) state that in order for literature to aid language learning, it is important that it succeeds just as a literary experience.

Widdowson's views have found support from many. Daswani (1982) while discussing the language teaching situation in India, says, 'Given the situation, the university departments of English would have to reform their


67. Povey, J.F. 1967 "Literature in the TESOL Programs: The Language and the Culture" cited in Ruth Spack "Literature, Reading, Writing and E.S.L.: Bridging the Gap" TESOL QUARTERLY 19.4, 1985: 705

curricula to meet the changing demands of the society. As more learners come to the universities, traditional English literature course would have to give way to more realistic courses in English as a language of intergroup and intercountry communication."\(^{69}\) Strevens says that earlier the student was taught English language for the sheer appreciation of English literature. A stronger reason for the study which has now emerged is the "usefulness and practicality of the language."\(^{70}\) Rodgers says that literature does have a special place in linguistic communication. Talking about literary and non-literary communication, he says that both use signals for their message but the creative writer uses certain signals to mark the literary quality of their messages against "linguistically normal non-literary discourse".\(^{71}\) The ESL learner, therefore, needs to be able to understand these signals and to view how they operate in conveying the

\(^{69}\) Daswani cited in Zughoul \textit{op.cit.}, 1987: 229


\(^{71}\) Rogers, \textit{op.cit.}, 1983:39
meaning. The skills needed by the student here are "communication awareness" and "language consciousness".72

Moody (1983) expands this notion further by talking of two dimensions namely, extrinsic and intrinsic, where the former would deal with the biographical, historical and aesthetic qualities of a work, and the latter with the internal structural features at the grammatical, lexical levels.73

Munro too believes that the study of language and literature are inseparable and the main concern of the teacher is to "concentrate on the literary text themselves, clarifying their meaning and assisting students to perceive the precision and vitality of the language the author has employed."74 It is only after the understanding of these aspects that the student would have a deeper understanding of the English language - his language competence. Literary texts help in developing the literary competence of a student and it is the literary competence that provides

72. Rogers, op. cit. 1983
73. Moody, H.L. op. cit. 1983
74. Munro, J. "The decline and fall...and elevation of the man of letters in the teaching of English", in Dahiyat and Ibrahim, (eds) op. cit. 1983: 61
reinforcement to the language competence. Considering the relation of dependence between language competence and literary competence, it has been observed that, unlike native speakers, for the ESL learners the acquisition of literary competence is a valuable reinforcement and development of language competence.

Deeper understanding of language does not mean teaching the grammar of language. This is the viewpoint of the protagonists of the language. In fact, a common argument against using literature of these protagonists is that since the main goal of an ESL teacher is to teach the grammar of the language, literature due to its structural complexity and its unique use of language, does little to contribute to this goal. Certainly, we all share the objective of promoting our students' awareness of the structure of the language. In this context we need to look at whether a literary text can contribute towards achieving this objective. The answer to this question can be obtained if we view a literature from discourse perspective.

4.5 Literature as a Discourse

Literature as a discourse can be viewed at the level of language use. This idea of use is associated with Widdowson. Widdowson refers to the two levels at which the linguistic knowledge may be talked about - the level of "use"
and the level of "usage".75 "Usage" would mean the knowledge of linguistic rules and "use" in the actual communication that takes place, i.e. it entails knowing how to use these rules for effective communication. Literature had up till late focussed on the level of usage and rarely on the level of use. Most present day literary texts focus on the particular grammatical points that are salient to the text or deal with vocabulary expansion by paying attention to word forms and common expressions. Povey (1972), summarizing the aims of using literature in the ESL classes, argues that "...literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax."76 Although it remains to be seen whether a literary text can contribute towards either, the level of use would certainly signify the language use in discourse.

If the study of language is to empower students to operate at the level of use, discourse would provide a tool for achieving this. How then would a discourse help

75. Widdowson, H.G. TEACHING LANGUAGE AS COMMUNICATION 1979: 3

in achieving this? Language in discourse defines the parameters of setting and role relationship. As Hilary Janks (1991) has pointed out that "...discourse, language as social practice, is always constructed. Speakers and writers select particular words and grammatical construction from a range of possible options and these selections, deliberate or unconscious, then appear in the discourse. The only basis that listeners and readers have for understanding what was not selected but might have been, is their knowledge of the language. Of course, speakers also make selections in terms of content, and listeners have to use their knowledge of the world to consider what was said in the light of what might have been said. The meaning of discourse is conveyed by its silences as well as by its content." 77 This, therefore, is a basis for determining why a particular form of language is used, and literature therefore, becomes ideal for developing an awareness of language use.

Widdowson suggests that if literature is viewed as discourse, rather than a study of culture or of language, and, if the study of literature is viewed as an "inquiry" into the way a language is used to express a reality other than that expressed by conventional means" 78 then it

78. Widdowson, op cit, 1984: 80
would help in solving the vexed problem of deviance in literature. Voices raised against the deviance in literature as a source of difficulty for the native speakers have been countered by Widdowson who says that "...ungrammatical sentences in literary writing do make sense and a poem which deviates from grammatical rules as text is nevertheless interpretable as discourse."\textsuperscript{79} Therefore, if looked at from discourse perspective literature would help develop "a sharper awareness of the communicative resources of the language being learned."\textsuperscript{80} Thus literature as a discourse would contribute significantly to both the process and purpose of language learning—the process entails setting up situation for reader for meaning manipulation and the purpose entails representing language in use. Along the way to looking at literature as a resource, there is also a need to look at the issues pertaining to response to literature.

4.6 Writing Literary Response

Literary response theorists in their recent studies have now questioned the basis of individualness in

\textsuperscript{79} Widdowson, \textit{op cit}, 1984:27

\textsuperscript{80} Widdowson, \textit{Ibid}, 1984:83
the individual literary response. They argue that insofar as people read within a variety of social context and interpretive communities the claim of individual based literary response becomes questionable. As discussed earlier, the meaning of the text results from the interaction between the reader and the writer. This is achieved by infusing one's own needs, values and expectations with the text which vary from individual to individual. In the interplay of characterization, values and themes, the writer falls back upon certain conventions and the reader recognizes some and assimilates the meaning in relation to his experiences.

This perspective of reading presupposes a reader's ability and his motivation to enter into a negotiation with the text. Gaies (1979) points out that "since the reading process...is the interaction of a reader and a text, we stand in equal need of more research on the affective, attitudinal and experimental variables which would differentiate individual or groups of learners in terms of


82. cf Chapter II (2.4) for response to literature
their willingness and ability to decode written input in a second language.  

Personal involvement is, therefore, achieved by asking students to react to the text. Rosenblatt (1976, 1978) and Britton (1970) have supported this. Rosenblatt describes literature as 'a performing act' not a passive one. A reader has to be personally involved in order for it to be meaningful. Reading then becomes a creative act for the reader as is for the writer. Britton (1970), in support, talks about the shaping and forming functions of written language which are part of a manifestation of the response of the reader. He says that every time a child writes there are two things which happen simultaneously: "First, he has improved his chances of doing ...and secondly, he has interpreted, shaped and coped with some bit of experience." Asking students to write in response to literature encourages students to examine it closely and to become involved in it. This would lead towards strengthening their writing and their ability to relate to literature.


The interpretive procedures which are useful for the reader can be applied to "a range of language use, both literary and non-literary, which they encounter inside and outside the formal learning situation" (Widdowson 1984). By interpreting texts and considering alternative interpretations, the reader comes to understand the way meaning is created through the reading of the text. This understanding of reading makes the reader aware of the different strategies which writers employ in order to engage the reader's consciousness. The writer anticipates the reader's needs and meets his expectations in creating a text. The concern for the reader calls for looking into the intentionality or the integrity of the writer. An active exploration of author-intention relationship is essential as the writer has a definite reader in his mind. He has a determinate world of readership and there is always an address to a "constituency" "audience" "opponents" and "community."  

Concomitant to the integrity of the writer is the integrity of the text since both "the writer's intention and text's structural features play a powerful role in shaping

85. Widdowson, op cit, 1984: 84

reader's interpretations of what they read."\(^{87}\) This has also led to viewing the role of literature in composing programs.

4.7 Literature and Composition

Artificial separation marks the characteristics of the teaching of literature and composition. These two disciplines were so far taught separately, but now there has been a demand to reintegrate the study of composition with that of literature. Recent research on composing has pointed out that merely fitting phrased ideas does not lead to composition but "it is a recursive series of complex intellectual and cognitive processes in which the writer uses language to explore and communicate ideas."\(^{88}\) Krashen's review reveals that a writer's ability does not stem from the knowledge of the writing at the competence level but is the ability to use the knowledge at the performance level through practice that leads to an improvement in composing processes. This regular practice of writing and rewriting enables students not only to interact with the text, but also to learn the process of writing. As a result of this process-centred approach, it is now the concern for meaning which has dominated emphasis in contrast to grammatical competence.

\(^{87}\) Spack, \textit{op cit}, 1985: 706

\(^{88}\) Spack, \textit{op cit}, 1985: 708
The act of composing which had been separated from the reading act is now seen to be linked to the teaching of literature. The writing process could be a means to the reading process for writing about reading helps the student to "unravel their transactions so that we can see how they understand." Writing process can, therefore, help the process of reading.

By studying literature, ESL students learn the composing strategies many of which they share with the native language students. These strategies establish connection between literature and composition. The write-before-you-read technique, which was applied by Ruth Spack in her classroom, serves as a link between the literary text and the composing process. It was felt that this technique was worth while because "efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge." The students are able to trust their own ideas, because some of them have a place in the text. It stimulates their interest, for they are able to compare their work with the author's. Petrosky, while agreeing with this technique, states that "in order to help students

89. Petrosky, A. "From Story to Essay: Reading and Writing", COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION, 33.1, 1982: 24

understand the texts they read and their response, we need to ask them to write about the text they read."^91 In this connection, Bleich's 'response heuristics', which produce a structured response, could be a good starting point for teaching students how to represent their comprehension in writing. Besides, certain focussed free writing and some invention strategies could also be helpful to students in arriving at the meaning of the text. In addition to these techniques for responding to literature, literary journal also proves to be beneficial for ESL students, for it "enables them to risk expressing their ideas without fear...and to trust their own instincts about what they have read."^92.

Literature and composition are not rivals but allies in the classroom. Statements on comprehension are most compelling, for they make connections between knower and the known, text and reader, reading and context. All these help increase the linguistic and intellectual repertoire of a reader.

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92. Spack, *op cit.*, 1985:718
4.8 Role of Culture

The arguments for the inclusion of literature in the ESL have until now revolved around certain issues which state its usefulness in terms of providing interesting or relevant models or helping in the development of interpretive strategies. The other aspect which needs to be taken up is the role of culture. Although literature deals with certain common elements and universalities of mankind's experience, there are certain events which are culture specific, for example, aspects of emotion, values, feelings or events, points of view, etc. All these aspects form the cultural schemata of the ESL learner which differ from the presupposed cultural schemata of the text and that of the writer and, therefore, may not necessarily be shared by the ESL learner. It is also argued that the teacher who is not a product of the learner's culture may not consider it important or necessary to delineate those artefacts which are peculiar to learner's cultural schemata, thus leading to confusion and breakdown of communication among students. As Marckwardt has pointed out "To teach literature is, in effect, to teach that part of the culture upon which the writing is based. It is a by-product rather than the principal purpose; the latter being that of sharing the literary experience. Nevertheless, culture has an important
role to play.' The need is, therefore, to look into the role of culture in all its ramifications.

4.8.1 Culture and Learning

Culture and learning have traditionally been studied as separate disciplines. It has been defined variously by different scholars. Notions of culture as that which is shared has been studied by the anthropologist, whereas the educational psychologists' focus has been on the psychological and individual processes through which learning takes place. Williams (1965: 56) refers to it in his definition in the following words: "There are three general categories in the definition of culture. There is, first, the 'ideal' in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain universal values...Then, second, there is the 'documentary' in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the activity of criticism... Finally, third, there is a 'social' definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art of

93. Marckwardt, op cit. 1978:47
learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour."\textsuperscript{94} Goodenough’s (1964: 36) definition states that "A society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a natural phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people’s behaviour or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models of perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them."\textsuperscript{95}

Culture is viewed as knowledge which is shared, which is expressed in artefacts and is formulated as rules or norms. Taylor (1971)\textsuperscript{96} argues that there is a range of meanings which are more than shared and are part of social reality. Shared meanings can be described in terms of descriptive rules of how people agree on shared meanings. In the context of foreign language teaching it is the sharedness of meaning which leads to a sense of community. It is this "subjective culture" which Triandis (1972:3) refers to when he says "By subjective culture we mean a cultural group’s characteristic way of perceiving its social

\textsuperscript{94} Williams, 1985 cited in Michael Byram CULTURAL STUDIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION, 1989: 80

\textsuperscript{95} Goodenough 1964 cited in Byram op cit, 1989: 81-82

\textsuperscript{96} Taylor 1971 cited in Ibid, p.82
environment... Subjective culture refers to variables that are attributes of the cognitive structure of groups of people. A number of variables which can be shared are common here. These are attitudes, beliefs, expectations, opinions, values etc.

What remains to be seen is how far a person who is a product of another culture is able to translate the experiences of a foreign culture. He is bound to find some sameness as well as differences in the cultural and linguistic meanings. In order to understand the differences he will have to evolve certain techniques and will use certain interpretations in order to take the "imaginative leap." Interpretation and its usefulness would depend on the explicitness, orderliness and its closeness to the semantics of the interpreter's dialect.

At this point it may be mentioned that knowledge of language based merely on rules would not provide a real language awareness. What is needed for this is overcoming the barrier of 'cultural otherness'. Fries (1955) says that "the culture and life of people is not just an adjunct of a

97. Triandis 1972 cited in Byram op. cit., pp.86-87
particular language course, something alien and apart from its main purpose, to be added or not as time and convenience may allow, but an essential feature of every stage of language learning." Lado (1964) similarly maintains that "there can be no real learning of a language without understanding something of the patterns and values of the culture of which it is a part." 

The nature of the role of culture implies bilingualism for a considerable number of people. The question raised by Marckwardt is whether competence in a particular language should be associated with the acquisition of culture as well. However, there is a distinction between the perception of a culture and being actually governed by it. The attitude, as well as the perception of the other culture, has a bearing on the kind of literature prescribed and in the learning of a language. Thelma Kintanar (1978), who views literature and language as touching at certain points, says: "An important focus of culture learning is the learning of languages not only because language is an important part of culture and an


100. Lado, R. LANGUAGE TEACHING: A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH, 1964: 149
indispensable tool of culture learning but because language learning provides analogies to culture learning.\textsuperscript{101}

Kintanar’s concern is upon man’s awareness of his culture and on how literature by being an expression of universal human and cultural values provides a tool for understanding. Blatchford relates this trend of viewing language in relation to society and literature as being related to the features of bilingualism and biculturalism in ENL countries. However, it may be mentioned that bilingualism and biculturalism are not sufficient for living and participating in today’s independent world. English is an international language and English teaching as a global profession are natural media. Traditional objective of educational activity had been to broaden students’ horizon. The need is to go beyond it by taking interest in global education. Finocchiaro in this context has rightly pointed out that “It is our responsibility to prepare learners to cope not only with the world’s universal problems and behaviours, but with its many ethnic and cultural systems”.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{101} Kintanar, T. "The Role of Literature in Culture Learning", cited in Marckwardt, \textit{op cit}, 1978:5

4.8.2 Cultural Mismatches

Experience within a culture influences the perception of the other culture and this can be explained in psychological terms through the help of schemas which help us to perceive, organize and interpret social events. The mismatches, on the other hand, may be due to the cultural misunderstandings between people of different cultures.

4.8.3 Remedying Mismatches

The various reasons which lead to communication breakdown between two culturally diverse groups may be remedied to some extent by trying to increase the knowledge of the other culture. This may mean learning or being more conscious of the varied ways in which people structure information, the different meanings and nuances associated with their speech. The different programmes may benefit if closer attention is paid to these aspects and the "effective cross cultural understanding as a two-way process has particular implications for bilingual, second language and foreign language programs." 103 The two-way perspective of this programme would imply viewing cultural differences not just of the target language but also their own. "Clearly, learning about cultural differences in speech conventions,

ways of structuring arguments, cultural assumptions and interaction patterns has an important role to play in programs aimed at developing positive cross cultural communication. 104

The need for the language teachers is to respond to the cultural diversity of the learners. Finnocchiaro (1958, 1969) had stated that "gaining insight into the linguistic and cultural background of their pupils" and "studying the educational and cultural backgrounds of their students" were important skills for the ESL teachers. 105

4.8.4 What to Teach

It is significant for the ESL teacher to be aware of the need for presenting cultural information along with language. In looking at culture as content the important questions asked would be what to teach and how to teach. Inasmuch as cultural differences may lead to communication breakdown, it is important that in addition to the teaching of grammar and pronunciation, certain cultural

104. Robinson op cit, 1985: 62

ingredients are also taught. The task of the ESL teacher, therefore, increases in view of the above statement and the need for improved training in intercultural communication is felt. The teacher needs to consider variables like the setting, learner characteristics and language teacher's familiarity with the learner's background, etc. when it comes to dealing with the question of what to teach. Besides these variables, another important consideration is the selection of literary texts. Literary works chosen in ELT are often those written in native or standard variety of English. Words written in non-native varieties are rarely chosen. This selective exclusivity is carried out with a belief that if literary works are used they should "acquaint learners with the 'best' English". However, changing perspective in the objective of educational activity has forced ELT researchers to believe that non-native variety of English has a potential to serve wider functions. By using the Singaporean writer Catherine Lim's "The Taximan's Story" as an example, Talib has suggested that non-literary texts can be used not only for the betterment of the students' command of the standard language itself but also to enhance "the students' socio-cultural awareness, sense of self-

106. Cook, G. "Texts, Extracts and Stylistic texture" in Brumfit and Carter (eds) op cit 1987: 150
identity, and communicative competence within the community they live". 107

Viewing the study of language, literature and culture as being inter-connected helps the reader to develop certain aesthetic awareness and certain cultural values. As rightly pointed by Brod (1982) "first language study (is) for one's self, one's mind and one's humanity; second language study (is) for one's perception of the 'other' society, and thus, ultimately of all humanity." 108

Although the role of literature as resource and the effect of culture have been identified as the two principal influences in the ESL pedagogy and comprehension, there are other factors as well which must be taken into consideration. The possible impact of these in particular merits some discussion: the problem posed by the English lexicon, the question about the use of simple text, role of translation and the availability of English literature translated into the native language. Discussion on these factors will be taken up in turn as subsections in the next chapter.

107. Talib, I.B.S. "Why not teach non native English Literature?" ELT JOURNAL 46.1, 1992: 51