CHAPTER-V
DEVELOPING LITERARY COMPETENCE
In the previous chapters we examined the present day conditions of the Kashmir University with respect to the teaching of literature at the undergraduate level and it was observed that the situation was far from satisfactory.

In the present chapter the skills necessary for a learner of literature are stated and discussed.

It is essential for the student of literature to have, in addition to the linguistic skills, advanced proficiency in the language concerned. This might be a competence he shares with other professional groups: journalists, editors, copywriters, linguists, and translators. For the student of literature, it is imperative to possess, in addition to the general proficiency skills, certain other skills more specifically literary in nature which others may or may not share with him. These are the 'skills', therefore, which may be expected to be developed by a literature course. To quote Culler,

Any one lacking this knowledge, any one wholly unacquainted with literature and unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read, would, for example, be quite baffled if presented with a poem. His knowledge of the language would enable him to understand phrases and sentences. but he would
not know, quite literally, what to make of this strange concatenation of phrases. He would be unable to read it as literature.... because he lacks the complex ‘literary competence’ which enables others to proceed. He has not internalized the ‘grammar’ of literature which would permit him to convert linguistic sequences into literary structures and meanings (1975:114).

And literature according to Moody (1971), does not signify only the literary work. It is an ‘umbrella’ term covering a number of activities. It is a branch of human activity in which certain people in every community of the world have exerted themselves to produce and which many more have striven to ‘consume’, whether by listening personally or by reading. The significance of literature in society is predominantly determined by the audience-reader participation or response it evokes. The artist through his work solves an inner conflict, and “rids himself of the neurotic symptoms by turning it outward” (Goodman, 1954:10). The audience shares it deeply with him, experiencing it vicariously. This is ‘recreation’ in isolation from his ordinary affairs, and responding with simple awareness and identification. A work of art, therefore, demands cooperation or ‘empathy’ on the part of the spectator-reader. Read (1970) feels this is a mode of aesthetic perception, by which the spectator-reader discovers elements of feeling in the work itself, and then identifies his own feelings with them.

Ingarden (1973:xvi) conceives of a literary work as a complex stratified object, depending for its existence on the intentional acts of the author and the receiver, but not identical with these acts. Iser views a literary work as being artistic and aesthetic. According to him “..... the artistic pole is the author’s text and the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader” (Iser, 1978: 21). Iser emphasizes that the worth of the response is not in what it contains, but in what it does to the reader.
Thus the reading of every literary work depends on the interaction between its structure and its recipient. The study of a literary work, therefore, concerns not only with the text but also with the actions involved in responding to the text. This response to the literary work is a creative response, unique to each reader and part of the same process as imaginative writing. This, in other words, is the literary appreciation which demands the learner to approach the text in a particular way. Since the learner is not acquainted with the norms involved in responding to a literary text the teacher is expected here to guide the learner and to ensure his unique response to the particular piece of literature.

The purpose of this response is "to foster what is individual in each human being, at the same time harmonizing this individuality with the organic unity of the social group to which the human being belongs (Read, 1970:8). Education is the fostering of growth. Apart from physical maturation, mental and spiritual developments are apparent in that 'expression' in which artists are proficient. It is the objective of education to teach the perception of this expression, how to 'respond' to Art, of which Music, Painting and Literature play a major part in general education. One of the most important objectives of Humanistic education should be the student's aesthetic experiencing or responding abilities.

The learner thus, in order to become a 'mature reader', aware of the various complexities of human experience, which will enrich his own experience and personality, has to be capable of appreciating literature and responding to it. The humanistic education should enable him to achieve this object.

Education being a process of development, literature plays a unique role in this process. Literature, by possessing a discipline of its own, demands not only 'feeling' and 'training of emotions', but also a controlled intellectual
and logical approach. This implies the development of certain skills among the students. In order to ensure individual response to literature, guidance or mediation by the teacher is essential.

**Literary Appreciation as Part of the Formal Educative Process**

Literary appreciation is the spontaneous response a student produces when he comes into contact with a work of art. Theoreticians and teachers agree alike that a work of art demands a primal mode of perception, to an extent, this art of perception can be regarded as a competence and, thus, should be possible to impart as well as acquire. Bloom (1968) in his paper on “Learning for Mastery” states that, “given time, maturation and assistance, 95 percent of students can achieve mastery of any subject” (1971:17). And the teacher, as Creber (1970) points out, is fortunate in teaching youthful minds, “because their prejudices have not yet become incorrigibly ossified ... so we are aiming, whilst our pupil’s minds are still open, to help the development of their imagination (1970:18). This imagination has been described by Mill as “the faculty by which one mind understands a mind different from itself and throws itself into the feelings of that other mind” (Quoted Ibid). And this ‘throwing itself into the feelings of that other mind’ is the response to literature, which as Purves states, “is a learned behaviour. It is modified by what the student reads and it is affected by his culture. Response to literature might be said to be a ‘cognitive style’ – a way of thinking about literary experience, a way of ordering that thinking for discourse” (1973:315).

While confronting a literary text, a student finds it difficult to respond to it. The teacher can point out the signals responsible for such response and the relevance and significance of such signals where they occur. The learner can thus proceed from one literary piece to another, learning to decipher signals occurring within them. He will ultimately gain the competence to respond spontaneously to any piece of literature he is confronted with.
Literary Competence – The Specification of the Skills

A work of literature is the result of the joint efforts of the author as an imaginative verbal artist or 'composer' and the reader as verbal interpreter or 'performer' (See Rodger, 1983:46). While reading a piece of literature the reader is expected to realize or imaginatively reconstruct the highly idiosyncratic version of that world created by the author's language. It is in this sense that he has to 'perform' the work sensitively if his reading experience is to be equal to the interpretative demands the writer's language makes upon him. The author creates a unified literary discourse by his use of the language. And the students' response to the work is decided by his 'reading' which brings the work into 'existence' as a mental or psychological event.

The students should thus be taught to discover literary significance for themselves in the very art of reading. This must be done by methods which will enable them to extrapolate, i.e., carry over and apply the interpretative principles and procedures learnt in reading one set of texts to the interpretation of others, in the same genres, which are new and unfamiliar. This implies guidance and control by the teacher which in turn implies 'dialogue' between the teacher and student. The student needs to be instructed to acquire the 'specific skills' which will enable him to interpret and identify literary procedures and stylistic devices.

Having thus established that the appreciation of literature is a competence which can be taught and learnt as part of a formal educative process, it is necessary now to specify the nature and function of those skills that lead to the acquisition of such a competence. In this regard, some of the theories of teaching and reading of literature and the requisite skills for these activities have been included.
The Theories of the Critics and Scholars of Literature

F. R. Leavis holds the view that literature “trains” an intelligence that integrates as well as analyses. He consistently pleads for the disciplined study of literature which involves critical training of intelligence, sensitivity, sensibility and precision of response. According to him,

The essential discipline of an English school is the literary-critical. It is a true discipline. It trains in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating a sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence – intelligence that integrates as well as analyses and must have pertinacity and staying power as well as delicacy (1948:34).

L. C. Knight points out the existence of three basic activities or aspects of the same activity. He categorizes these as Attention, Collaboration and Realization, respectively. According to him, these three aspects make up “the critical, the fully engaged response to literature”. Knight advocates personal judgement and the training of sensibility to be the basis for understanding a piece of literature. He further advocates, for developing the skills of literary appreciation, wide and voracious reading, the ability to concentrate ‘all one’s powers’ for a period and to retain the capacity for relaxed absorption even while concentrating (For details see. Knight, 1961).

According to Chapman, “Literature, the product of imagination yet draws on life for its subjects. It touches life in the real world at all points; indeed, one of the criteria of literary greatness is the author’s power to enter a wide range of experience and extend through language our understanding of the human situation” (1982:30). Literature is as much an expression of universal man, of eternal ‘verities’ as it is the manifold stages of the life of a society or nation. A concern with man’s inner life – his passions, his feelings, his thoughts – is the distinguishing character of literature.
Literature thus explores, recreates and seeks meaning in human experience. A student should thus be trained to appreciate the many ways in which literary imagination explores human experience – ways that range from the directly literal and moralistic to the oblique or apparently irrelevant (Hoggart, 1963:247). Rosenblatt (1970), in a list of literary activities, includes firstly, the enjoyment of literature – the idea that literature is primarily a form of art; then, literary experience, comprising artistic sensitivity and human understanding; finally, exploration, which involves intense and personal experience.

The interpretation and appreciation of all literature depends on reading of works of literature. The kind of reading that is expected of a literature student is different from any other act of reading (i.e. reading of non-literary texts).

Fowler (1965) stipulates three steps which lead to better reading, namely, comprehension of the written word, critical and analytical reading and finally, the development of aesthetic appreciation. According to Bateson, an English syllabus should not deny to an undergraduate the right to enjoy great literature. The university’s essential function, he argues, is to guide and encourage the literary undergraduate’s new reading habits – from unconscious to conscious, from a slipshod rapidity of reading to an alert and leisurely response that may ‘require a return to the earlier passage to confirm or refuse the plausibility of a freshly realized potential interpretation’ (1969:22).

Hill (1966) holds the view that the criticism of any literary work is a three-fold process, comprising description, analysis and evaluation of the literary work. In Hill’s mode of analysis, the intelligent reader should raise questions with regard to meaning of terms, sentence structures, distinction between literal and figurative expression, different types of style used, etc. Like Purves (1970), Hill also feels that the reader should question the
structure, the relation of the part to the whole, the parts being characters, plot and sub-plots, style, etc. He should think about the completeness of the book, and his own subjective reaction to it, and even about the reason why the author chose the particular subject he did.

Logan, Logan and Patterson in their “Creative Communication and Teaching the Language Arts” regard reading not as a unitary skill, but as a process involving several phases. These are Perception, Recognition (of words and meaning), Comprehension (of words, sentences, Paragraphs, interlinking of ideas, etc.), Interpretation (accurate analysis of the material read), Evaluation (determining the judicious use of words and the adequacy of ideas). Interpretation and Critical Reading are considered specialized skills which involve the learner in the evaluation of the work. The final stage is that of the creative reading, which in its turn, goes beyond critical reading. This involves more than the ability to judge what one reads both in terms of content and manner of presentation. It involves the activation of the reader’s imagination. “Creative reading is concerned with the projection of new ideas. the development of new insight, fresh approaches and original construct.

Adams (1977) approaches comprehension development at three levels: literal, critical and affective. Literal comprehension is the most basic level of understanding; critical comprehension is the ability to discriminate between fact and fiction, to recognize an author’s intention, to make critical judgements, and to use past experiences to evaluate what is read; affective comprehension is an awareness of, and a personal aesthetic reaction to style, technique and quality in writing.

Adam regards training in imaginative literature as vital and, as such, holds the achievement of ‘versatility’ in reading as the primary goal of a literature course. This reading versatility has been clarified by McDonald in the words,
Reading versatility is intended to describe the ability on the part of the reader to utilize those patterns of processing reading inputs which are appropriate for the style, difficulty level, content and theme of the reading material at hand, while also being consonant with achieving the reading purpose(s) to the optimum level of his physiological and psychological performance. In our view, reading versatility is an essential goal of reading instruction (1971:169).

The various aspects of the skills which characterize a mature reader fall under four categories namely,

a) Perception
b) Comprehension
c) Interpretation
d) Evaluation

a) **Perception:** As a skill it is related to the literal meaning level.

b) **Comprehension:** This category involves global comprehension and comprehension of parts.

Global comprehension is related to identification of themes and sub-themes in a discourse and the recognition of linguistic and rhetorical devices.

Comprehension of parts is associated with details, locating of arguments, generalization and conclusion.

c) **Interpretation:** Interpretation depends on:

i) Synthesizing the parts to draw interpretation. The sub-skills under this heading are:
   - to make interpretations
   - to draw inferences
   - to make generalization
   - to be able to anticipate outcomes
   - to make comparisons
to sense motive
to discover new relationships.

ii) To respond to the tone, attitude and personality of the writer
grasping suggestions and implications.

iii) To respond to the features of language through which the artistic
expression had been achieved.

iv) To grasp the structure of the language.

d) **Evaluation:** Evaluation involves the sub-skills like:

i) the ability to read critically and evaluate the writer’s success in
affecting the reader; the techniques used; the vision of
philosophy of life of the author

ii) the ability to express a pattern of preference

iii) the ability of creative writing which activates the reader’s own
imagination.

Reading is the most autonomous and individualized ability in language
work, and literature is a rich and widely appealing source of material for
reading. For a reader of literature, the meaning of a literary text is always
subject to negotiation for it results from the relationship between him and the
writer. The codes applied for understanding these texts depends on both the
knowledge of linguistics and the interplay of event with event, relationships
between characters, exploitation of ideas and value systems, formal structure
in terms of a genre or other literary convention and relationship between any
of these and the world outside literature itself. “A good reader recognizes
such conventions and interprets them in relation to the world of other
experience — which literature must in some sense imitate or comment on
(Brumfit, 1985:106). Work in literature follows from integrative activities in
reading, in which understanding of the text is derived from discussion by
students of questions which force them to see the text as a coherent piece of
discourse.

Any work of literature is a language act which exploits the resources of
time and place in which it is written. Developing the ability to read literature
well must rely on increasing students’ awareness of the context of any
particular text on both these axes.

**The Theories of Teachers of Literature**

In the words of Bloom et al., “the main task of the education process is
to change the learners in desirable ways, and that it is the primary object of
teachers and curriculum-makers to specify in precise terms the ways in which
students will be altered in the learning process” (1971:17). In the light of these
assertions the Cognitive Domain was divided into two broad, but contrasting
areas:

a) the intellectual processes
b) knowledge as a process.

a) The intellectual processes involve intellectual abilities and skills of a
higher order, the learner being required to re-order material and combine it
with other material or ideas. The intellectual process begins with
“comprehension”, which involves understanding or perceiving. Understanding
depends on translation, interpretation and extrapolation. Translation is the
change from one form into another. Interpretation is elucidation or
clarification of meaning while in extrapolation a reader is bound to go beyond
the information given.

The next step is Application, which involves using something in a
specific manner, thus including relevancy, close attention to details, as well as
deligence and effort on the learner’s part. Knowledge and comprehension are
pre-requisites to application. Application is followed by ‘Analysis’ which involves the breaking down of a whole into its component parts.

In order to form a coherent whole a number of elements are combined together. This involves logical deduction, as well as creativity, as synthesizing or combining elements. Consequently, it also involves doing something in a unique or original way.

Evaluation represents the final and the highest level in the taxonomy. It includes a combination of all the five categories mentioned above. It is concerned with making judgement about value. According to Bloom et al.

Evaluation involves divergent thinking, which means that an answer to a problem cannot be fixed in advance, and each learner may be expected to come up with a unique response. The teacher’s or evaluator’s task would be to determine the merits of responses in terms of the process exhibited, the quality of the product, or the quality of evidence and arguments supporting the synthetic work (1971:194).

The Affective Domain is concerned with “feeling, tone, emotion and varying degrees of acceptance and rejection. It is attitudinal in character and should be viewed as yet another facet of curriculum of which the cognitive is only part (Davies, 1976:151). The Affective Domain is not really a taxonomy rather, a single continuum along which various attitudes are represented in increasing intensity. Bloom et al., (1964) identify five major classes of objectives here – receiving (i.e. attending), responding, valuing, organisation, characterization by a complex set of values.

It should be pointed out that the objectives in the Cognitive Domain are more deliberate in character, and people are usually aware of the level at which they are operating. In the case of the Affective Domain, however, there is a much lower level of awareness “and while the focus is still on the
individual, there is rarely anything completely deliberate about the effects themselves" (Davies, 1976:156).

In measuring students' response to literary works, Alan C. Purves (1970) expresses his opinion in terms of behaviours in the literary curricula. These include Knowledge (recognition and recall), Application. Response (signifying active involvement on the Reader's Part) - reading, thinking, acting and feeling in some relation to the literary work. While Purves admits this last behaviour to be the most important one to be cultivated in the study of literature, he concedes that a part of it is probably unteachable. The fourth behaviour listed by Purves is Expressed Response of which he mentions four categories:

1) **Engagement:** The student should not only become engrossed in the literary work but he should also be able to maintain a distance from it.

2) **Perception:** It consists of a number of cognitive behaviours like classification and analysis of the parts of the whole, of the relationships and organization of the literary work.

   a) Analysis of the parts would include the linguistic analysis of the

      i) phonemic features (rhythm, metre, alliteration, rhymes, etc.);

      ii) lexical features (diction, etymology, connotation, ambiguity);

      iii) syntactic features (grammar sentences – types etc.);

      iv) literary devices (description of metaphors, images, rhetorical devices like paradox, irony, dialogue, narration etc.);
v) content, i.e., perceiving and discussing action, character and setting.

b) Analysis of the whole involves perception of the relationship between language, literary devices and content – the relationship between form and content.

3) Interpretation: It involves making inferences from a given text.

4) Evaluation: Here a reader has to consider

i) how successfully the writer has been in affecting his reader,

ii) the technique used,

iii) the vision or philosophy of life of the writer.

iv) finally, the reader has to express a pattern of preference. This is the development of taste.

Eisner (1978) feels that it is difficult, probably impossible, to decide specifically, describe unambiguously, or measure with accuracy the behavioural changes in the pupils the teachers hope to effect as a result of their teaching. He, therefore, rejects ‘instructional’ objectives in preference to ‘expressive’ objectives, which, while identifying the situation in which the learner is to work, and the problem with which they are to learn from such an encounter, is evocative rather than prescriptive.

Ray Thomas holds the view that a satisfying model of literature teaching demands from the teacher the following:

(a) Make possible the experience of literature.

(b) Make available such knowledge about literature as was necessary to gain that experience.
(c) Invite 'products' that extended the pupil's own interpretation and critical judgement.

(d) Satisfy himself and his pupils that in any curriculum unit there was evidence of progress, or mastery or illumination (1978:113-21).

Ray Thomas has divided literature teaching objectives into three general categories: instructional, expressive and experiential.

**Table 1: (Thomas p.119)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional</th>
<th>Expressive</th>
<th>Experiential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
<td>To inform</td>
<td>To provide occasion for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>The uninformed</td>
<td>The inquiring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong></td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>Exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terminus</strong></td>
<td>Literary “knowledge”</td>
<td>“Product”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher’s Response</strong></td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Appraisal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Thomas, as the diagram indicates, the experiential objective operates at the level of response, and not of instruction or interpretation. The teacher, beginning with the imparting of information-knowledge – finally surrenders his authority and accepts the learner as a mature reader of literature. This, according to Thomas, is the aim or objective of the literature course.
Bloom  | Purves  | Thomas
---|---|---
**The Cognitive Domain**  
1. Knowledge  | 1. Knowledge  | 1. Instruction  
2. Comprehension  | 2. Application  | 2. Expression  
3. Application  | 3. Response  |  
4. Analysis  | 4. Expressed Response  |  
5. Synthesis  |  |  
6. Evaluation  |  |  

**The Affective Domain**  
1. Receiving  | Expression of the Reader’s preference or development of taste on the learner’s part  
2. Responding  |  
3. Valuing  |  
4. Organization  |  
5. Characterization  |  

**Conclusion**

The progressing steps in the growing maturation of a literature student seem to vary more in terminology than in nature. The hierarchy of skills is also evident. It is interesting to note that teachers of literature, as well as scholars of literature, expect literature - learning to proceed from knowledge to experience of literature, from the Cognitive to the Affective Domain.

The two groups, however, seem to differ on two issues. From the teacher’s point of view, ‘knowledge’ about an author is essential in order to have full experience of his works. The literature men do not appear to feel the need for ‘knowledge’ about the literary piece. This, therefore, neglects teacher-mediation. Secondly the men of literature seem to be content with evaluation on the learner’s part, the teachers want ‘production’ from him.

Excepting for the terminology, the two groups seem to agree on other main issues, though teachers are understandably more precise about their objectives than others.
Stylistics

The focus on teaching of literature in the classroom has been a point of discussion among critics and teachers of literature for a long time. Literature teaching has remained confined to only giving information. In the words of Widowson (1984)

The usual procedure is to instruct students in a sort of simplified version of literary criticism so that they may be given access to significant aspects of the work they are studying without having to go through the bother of learning to read it for themselves.

This approach necessarily presupposes that students are already in command of high-level reading skills in English language and are fully familiar with the non-literary varieties of language. Widdowson rightly remarks that in this approach “the most immediate source of reference and inspiration is not poetry or fiction but the pronouncements of critics (Ibid). Eminent critic’s views on the work are transferred from the teacher/source material to the notebook of the student without giving him competence either in literature or language.

Stylistics purports to substitute precise and rigorous linguistic descriptions and to proceed from those descriptions to interpretations, or vice-versa, so as to claim a measure of objectivity. Stylistics, as Fish puts it, is “an attempt to put criticism on a scientific basis (1973:109). This approach is based on the analysis of the text itself. The contention is that interpretation of a text is subservient to the medium in which it is expressed.

In the words of Rodger (1983) “if such exchanges are to be more than the mere arising of surmises and prejudices, they must focus as consistently as possible on the only objective factor: the precise linguistic form of the
author's text, which establishes both the scope and the limits of its potential significance.

Literary critics, however, hold that linguistics uses literature as data for making sociological, anthropological, and political statements and not for aesthetic appreciation of literature. Bateson (1971), for example, feels that the use of linguistics in literary criticism may sound like a good idea but at the same time he maintains that evaluation continually insinuates itself into the description of language. He expresses his views in the following words:

To invite the reader to look hard, really hard, at the words on the page is indeed what the modern critical doctrine of close reading amounts to when it is reduced to its simplest terms. And, since a similar concentration is the initial premise of modern descriptive linguistics, some degree of amicable cooperation between the two approaches should not be impossible. Or rather, when it does work, it is only at the most elementary level (1971).

The procedures of stylistics also focus the absence of any constraint on the way in which one moves from description to interpretation of the text – with the result that any interpretation one puts forward is arbitrary. To quote Fish again

"it is just that the explanation for meaning is not the capacity of a syntax to express it, but the ability of a reader to confer it" (1973:36).

Fowler, however, recommends the teaching of linguistics to the students of literature. According to him, "Textual exegesis, and efforts to conserve ancient and honoured forms of language have traditionally nurtured a linguistic science in intimate contact with value and meaning of texts", (1971:9). Fowler maintains that it is only in this century that linguistics and literary studies have lost their inter-dependence. He points out three areas of
advantage:

1) Some knowledge of how language-work is indispensable, as basic information for the student and critic of literature (An educational claim).

2) Certain areas of literary study demand close engagement with the mechanics of the language (e.g. metrics): linguistics provide specific information and analytic technique (A technical claim).

3) Linguistics is an advanced theoretical discipline which provides certain insights into the nature of literature and criticism. (Ibid :11).

Widdowson (1973) views the literary use of English as a type of communication in which the literary writer uses language to communicate aspects of reality which are not immediately apparent to people. He provides the reader with a new way of looking at things. The literary artist is “instructed in inquiring into the nature of reality which in some sense is concealed by the picture we have of it: a picture which is projected by our language”. A literary text is independent of a social context, and its meaning has to be self-contained.

What the writer has to say cannot of its own nature be conveyed by conventional means and in consequence he has to devise his own fashion of communicating. This consists essentially in reversing the normal principles of language structure and use, combining what is normally distinct and making distinct what is normally combined. The result of this is that our conventional concept of reality, realized as it is through the language code and the standard uses we make of it is disturbed. It is still recognisably the reality with which we are familiar, just as the language in literary discourse is recognisably that which we use in our everyday affairs. but
turned, as it were, inside out — a reality which is presented in a strange new perspective (1975:69).

Literary competence demands a certain degree of linguistic sophistication: one cannot respond to a work of literature unless one has some minimal understanding of it. It involves a recognition that language can be used in a deliberately irresponsible way to create metaphorical meanings that illuminate our self-awareness. It involves a reasonably sophisticated knowledge of the particular kind of language employed in a given text, and an awareness of particular literary styles and conventions.

Cummings and Simmons in their book, *The Language of Literature*, claim that stylistics as an academic activity makes for itself:

> The way to make our intuition more conscious is to make the linguistic structure of the text more conscious... The aim of this book is to make the student a stylistian, someone who can comprehend literary texts through a comprehension of their language structures. Someone who can say not only 'I know what I like,' but also, 'I know why I like it; because I know how it works (Cumming and Simmons, 1983:5).

Carter asserts that "stylistic analysis can provide the means whereby the student of literature can relate a piece of literary writing to his own experience of language and so can extend that experience.... It can assist in the transfer of interpretative skills, which is one of the essential purposes of literary education. Hence by appealing primarily to what people already know, that is, their own language, there is no reason why practical stylistics cannot provide a procedure for demystifying literary texts (1982:4). Cummings and Simmons also claim that stylistics will help students 'appreciate' literature more, because 'linguistic analysis' helps make 'intuitions' conscious, which will then help them talk about literature more accurately.

The basic principle of a linguistic approach to literary study and
criticism depends on analytic knowledge of the rules and conventions of normal linguistic communication. Carter argues for three main points of principle and practice:

1) that the greater our detailed knowledge of the workings of the language system, the greater our capacity for insightful awareness of the effects produced by literary effects;

2) that a principled analysis of language can be used to make our commentary on the effects produced in a literary work less impressionistic and subjective;

3) that because it will be routed in a 'systematic' awareness of language, bits of language will not be merely 'spotted' and evidence gathered will be made with recognition of the fact that analysis of one linguistic pattern requires reference to, or checking against, related patterns across the text. Evidence for the statements will thus be provided in an overt or principled way. The conclusion can be 'attested' and 'retrieved' by another analyst working on the same data with the same method. There is also less danger that we may overlook textual features crucial to the significance of the work. (see Ibid:6).

The Task

Alex Rodger favours the teaching of English literature suggesting a way of teaching it. He says,

I take it as axiomatic that our task (as teachers of literature) is not to hand over predigested meanings, but to teach our students how to read and interpret for themselves ... not to indoctrinate them with an academically hall-marked and guaranteed set of received opinions ... but to be reasonably skilled and sensitive readers, able to feel and judge for
themselves, with fidelity to the textual facts, in response to any work of literature they may choose to read (Alex Rodger, 1969:89).

The method of teaching literature is the traditional lecture mode of giving information rather than teaching ‘skill’. Widdowson makes a distinction between ‘learning’ and ‘studying’ literature:

By study I mean enquiry without implication of performance, the pursuit of knowledge about something by some kind of rational or intuitive enquiry, something, therefore, which is given separate third person status. By learning I mean getting to know how to do something as an involved first person performer. Study, in this case, is action which leads to knowledge and extends awareness, whereas learning is knowledge which leads to action and develops proficiency (1984:69).

Both Rodger and Widdowson suggest that the task for the classroom teacher is to teach his learners ‘learning’ of literature, ‘how to read and interpret for themselves’.

Thus, as Moody points out, two things are needed:

1) A theory of Literature brought up-to-date and assimilated to other intellectual movements of the day, and

2) An Approach to The Text, derived from the theory and applicable by practitioners at various levels to suitable selections of texts for any pedagogic situation (1983:21).

The importance of an approach is to provide a framework, or sequence of operations to be used in the study of particular texts. The approach Moody recommends is based on the distinction Wellek and Warren (1963) make between the Extrinsic and the Intrinsic which in various ways determine a
text. Under the Extrinsic, the reader approaches the text from (1) the biographical, (2) the historical, (3) the aesthetic, and (4) the philosophical angles. It will also include the background knowledge. Under the Intrinsic, there are again four levels (1) the grammatical, (2) the lexical, (3) the structural, and (4) the cultural. There is, according to him, no question as to which must be attempted first since “in practice the process of reading is likely to move backwards and forwards between the two elements.”

Alex Rodger, on the other hand, insists that “the acquisition of literary competence demands communicative competence as its essential prerequisite” (1969:89) Literary writings constitute a special domain of linguistic communication and hence they differ from non-literary writings. Literary messages differ from non-literary ones not in the use of the language system but in communicative purposes which differ from the conventions of non-literary communications. The creative writers invent special conventions of literary discourse and also use the language system in itself in ways which are unorthodox. Their writings are thus ‘foregrounded’, against the familiar banalities of everyday language use and thus attract attention. Rodger argues that since literary writings are ‘foregrounded’; students need a gradual, patient and systematic training in how to read them and discover their meaning. They have to be taught (i) how to recognize the special conventions of literary communication, and (ii) how to make sense of the ways the creative writers exploit the code of the language in order to convey their personal meaning. Thus students ought to be trained in comparison and contrast in the use of the code and communicative conventions of literary writings and non-literary ones.

Rodger argues that without this sort of training the students cannot utilize the historical erudition. All the knowledge in the world about the genre-conventions of Pastoral, about the relevance of the Renaissance, neo-
Platonism, and about possible sources’ and influences can mean nothing to a student who is unable to construe the text and so discover what its meaning potential is. Rodger sees the interdependence of language and literature and maintains that linguistic competence is an essential requisite of literary writings and communicative competence depends on literature.

The Second-Language Context

Every language makes use of a limited number of linguistic devices. The individual writer deviates to achieve his special effect. Specific attention to these would lead to better response on the learner’s part. Panicker (1976:13) feels that there are some special gains from this approach in the second-language context. The difference of medium is likely to affect in predictable ways, the meaning and quality of that work.

In the interpretation of the stylistic devices we have to consider the degree of their deviance from the normal. “Joyce, Hopkins, Cummings have produced their most subtle effects by inventing their personal grammar” (1976:13). “The most deviant writer is using ‘grammar’ to get beyond grammar” (Ibid). Ambiguity (arising with deviations from phonological, syntactic and semantic norms), metaphors, grammatical deviations, etc. have to be tackled by the teacher of L₂ literature. Linguistics is likely to be of immense help here. The learner will not only get familiar with the basic grammatical features, but he will also learn to evaluate and appreciate deviations from them. It is, however, difficult to invent a foolproof apparatus to spell out the aesthetic consequences of stylistic features. There are major constraints on literary interpretation of linguistic devices other than the context – the personality of the writer, biographical facts, socio-political background, and facts of history – all of which may have some bearing on the semantic dimension of the text in question. Still, the scientific study of the literary devices should be a beginning. For once the linguistic sensibility of

179
the student is made active at the undergraduate level, it may proceed to work on its own to make new discoveries and not to be entirely dependent on books of criticism.

Nagarajan (1976) has advocated the use of I. A. Richards' *Protocol Method*: “The interpretation is best achieved not through ‘lectures’ as in college classes, or through ‘paraphrase’... but through criticism of the students’ own efforts”.

**Conclusion**

It is always possible that a non-native learner’s perceptual advance will always remain parallel to that of the native user. That is, in a diagrammatic form, the native and non-native speaking lines of progress will never overlap nor converge. The two may always witness a fundamental difference. Thus a suitable methodology needs to be developed which would enable undergraduate students to become independent of “foreign” tools while “experiencing” literature, ultimately enabling them to develop into mature readers of literary works.