

## **Effective Teaching Methodologies in the Literature and Language Classrooms**

**By**

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### **ABSTRACT**

As the society aspires for a change, different and distinct teaching methodologies emerge and evolve around the sphere of teaching in order to meet the requirements of the students. Imparting knowledge on a particular subject or a concept in it differs from teaching the skills involved in acquiring a language. There are ELT theories on Second Language Acquisition and other novel methodologies like flipped learning and blended learning to teach the language skills for the techno-savvy generation. Yet, the teachers suffer a lot to satisfy the need of the student in a language classroom due to overloaded syllabus, lack of proper time management, and non-updated content in the language text books. Therefore, this paper brings to light how to make a teaching methodology an effective one especially in literature and language classrooms.

**Keywords: ELT, Effective Methodologies, Literature, Language**

### **Introduction**

Literature and language are interdependent to each other where we need language to explain the concepts of literature and we need examples from literature to teach a language. The rhetoric and prosody are best enjoyed in literature only through the artistic beauty of the language employed in them. Therefore, both literature and language are intertwined and interrelated to each other. The literary aspects and the devices should be concentrated on one side and the language puns and humours should be enjoyed on the other side. Only when the aspects of literariness and the language unite, can the artistic output be felt. When it comes to pedagogy, the right teaching methodology should be implemented in order to make the teaching-learning experience an effective one. The interrelation between literature and language can be familiarized to the students only through the interesting adaptation of methodologies used in the classroom.

## **Effective methods to teach Literature**

Literature stands as a vehicle to understand the life and therefore is in the need to be taught effectively. Literature is not just the texts written by literary stalwarts but it is the reflection of what they have written. Literature is not a single voice but the collective experiences shared by common folks to one another. On the basis of humanity, literature helps individuals to lead a happy life which becomes the basic element of living. It helps us to understand the varied emotions in life, to face problems, analyse them and solve them, to enjoy little things in life and on the whole it moulds a human to be a pillar of support to the other human in need. Therefore, a teacher of literature has to be conscious enough to use different and right teaching methodologies to get the crux of literature into the students of literature. Some of the effective teaching methodologies are discussed below that could make a literature classroom lively and useful.

### **Teaching Poetry:**

“Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth” said Samuel Johnson. The art of teaching poetry in literature classes is a gift of being an English teacher where one can truly express their feeling and interpret the crux of the text without missing any rhetorical elements. Be it a General English class or a literature class, to teach poetry, one must know to see the poem from a rhetorical lens and should analyse the lines of the poem word by word.

Generally, teachers summarize the poems in a general English class where they might have thought that the linguistic technicalities hidden in the poem may not be comprehensible to the students and are also not needed from their examination point of view. The same might not be the case with Literature classes as the essence of the poetry and its artistic language is subject to be tested rather than the meaning of the poem. In order to analyse the poem from part to a whole, the teacher should apply the dissecting method of teaching poetry where the entire poem is dissected word by word so as to identify and understand the meaning of the line and later the poem itself. This method is exactly like a dissection of any species in a biological laboratory used to label the parts of that species and learn from it. A poem should read aloud in the class and then should be dissected line by line to create a word-level analysis for better comprehension of not only the meaning of the lines but also the nuances of literary devices hidden in the poem. It is with the knowledge on the literary devices and the rhetorical emphasis created in the poem, the art of teaching poetry gets completed.

The following is an example of understanding a literary figure of speech from Milton's Paradise Lost.

*Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend*

*The supple knee?*

**(Milton's Paradise Lost)**

Satan is the speaker of the above line where he asks his followers whether they are going to yield to God's command. The words 'necks' and 'knees' stand for whole persons of the fallen angels proving to be a Synecdoche that uses an image to represent a subject. 'Necks' and 'Knees' are images that represent 'fallen angels'. The teacher can explain how these two words form a substitution of a part for the whole thereby making itself as a Synecdoche using these lines along with the meaning of the line. Therefore, the student learns not only the meaning of the text but also an add-on poetical device and the usage of the same.

### **Teaching Drama & Plays:**

Literature classes become lively and interactive with the roles in the drama and the plays prescribed. Shakespeare is best known for his plays and he says "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and entrances." Teachers should become the narrator and the students the characters in a Drama class in order to better experience the essence of the drama. Teaching plays become easy with the role-play of characters involved in it. Instead of summarizing the events act-wise or scene-wise, role-play method can be used not only to understand the play but also to make the student a performer. Teacher can monitor the intonation of the dialogues employed in the plays and can give ideas to visually present the plays by using as much as properties they could use. The performance can be recorded for feedback purposes and can also be used as a tool for learning the art of theatre. Thus, a slight modification in the teaching methodology will produce an effective output in teaching the literary aspects in an interesting and fun-learning platform that facilitates peer-learning and peer motivation through their active participation.

### **Effective methods to teach Language**

The prime function of a language is the ability to communicate one's thoughts and express the same clearly. Language and Communication goes together. Communication is

essential for the existence of the society and it plays a prominent role in the functioning of different professional organizations. Social interaction cannot take place without communication because human interaction is essentially communicative in nature. Communication is a dynamic interactive process that involves the effective transmission of facts, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and values. It can also be understood as an exchange of meaningful expressions in order to mutually share one's concern over the other. Since, meaning is central to communication, transmission of meaning becomes the core of communication. Therefore, teaching to communicate properly will help a student to maintain relationships, to work in an environment and be able to handle diverse situations globally.

The role of the language teacher is not to cover the syllabus prescribed by just summarizing the text. The teacher should concentrate on the text-book exercise pertaining to communication skills that help in enriching one's vocabulary and also help to acquire more knowledge on the usage of grammar. Even the punctuation has a vital role when it comes to language teaching. The same words can have two different meanings depending upon the context and how we interpret them. For instance the following sentence has two meanings and the differences are caused just with the addition of punctuation.

Case 1: A woman without her man is nothing

Case 2: A woman, without her, man is nothing.

The words were same in both the cases but the meaning has changed completely. This is because of the addition of punctuation in case 2 that changes the emphasis which in turn changes the meaning of the sentence altogether in a different way.

When it comes to the communication skills in a language, LSRW becomes the keyword standing for Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. The mother tongue or the vernacular language is acquired purely based on the listening skill. The child language acquisition theories too affirm the fact that L1 being the first language is acquired with the baby listening to the language of its surrounding environment. It is clear that listening complements speaking skill as in the case that the more one listens the more he/she can speak in that language. Stephen Krashen (1984), who is known for his Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, says that the relationship between reading and writing is like the mother-baby relationship where the writing is the by-product of the reading skill.

Students of this generation are tech-savvy and are likely to be interested when technology is introduced as a tool for teaching in the classroom. Technology becomes inevitable in language learning and teaching too. Podcasts can be used as effective tool to enhance listening skill either inside the classroom or outside the class. Ted Talks come with motivational videos through which language constructs like sentences, intonation; usage of phrases, connectivity words can be taught. There are several mobile applications available in Google Play Store for English language learning that comes with testing the skills of an independent learner. Even British Council has introduced many free web programs and applications for second language learners to earn a certificate of proficiency by participating in the tests conducted online.

Though technology is readily available at the outset for the students to self-explore many new things, it is the teacher who can be a guiding force in choosing appropriate materials from the ample of online resources. Creating a class group in a social media app like WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger would help the teacher to be in contact with the students even outside the classroom. It also facilitates to be a self-monitor for the students and a record for the teacher so as to know the pulse of each and every student. Time management would be the key skill when things turn online as the teacher has to spend extra time in taking care of what is popping around in the class group. Self-discipline would be the integral key to avoid unnecessary forwards or non-academic messages in the class group which the teacher has to monitor in order for the smooth conduct of teaching-learning to take place.

The language aspects like Idioms and Phrases can be taught using simple one-liner examples. For instance, an idiom 'a red-letter day' stands for 'an important day' and 'a man of letters' stands for 'a lover of literature'. These idioms can be taught by asking students to guess the meaning with the keywords in them. Students might come up with funny responses such as postman for 'a man of letters' and bad day for the colour 'red' in 'red-letter day'. This can be corrected by using prompt sentences using the idiom in it as in the case of 'Rabindranath Tagore is a man of letters' and 'August 15 is a red-letter day for India'. Upon giving them the sentences, students will be able to guess the correct meaning of those idioms. Since August 15 is an Independence Day, it is an important occasion for Indians. Therefore, 'a red-letter day' will stand for 'some important thing'. This is how trial and error guessing method works out when idioms and phrases are taught.

Tense will be the subject of tension in language teaching. Tense can be taught using a very simple method. A short story with a moral can be handed over to the students provided the story should be in one tense. Let us assume that the story is in simple present tense and the students are supposed to identify the simple present verb forms at first by underlining them. The second step would be converting the simple present verb into a simple past form thereby changing the entire story into a simple past version. This would definitely be an interesting exercise for students to learn to transform the sentence from one tense to another. Similarly, the teacher can ask the students to rewrite the story given in simple tense form to a continuous form. Likewise all the tense forms can be applied and teacher can teach the differences in the verb forms with respect to each tense.

Thus, when it comes to language teaching, the focus should be on the language aspects like the grammatical part or the vocabulary building rather than the mere content in the text. Teaching a unit for comprehension not only includes the meaning of the passages but also the construction parameters of that passage that involves the grammatical components in it. Therefore, a simple and customized method of language teaching enhances the interest in language learning and also shows considerable shift in their learning process. It is in the hands of the language teacher to apply a methodical approach rather than sticking a particular methodology throughout the class. We are living in the post-method era, where any customized method should be able to work on improving one particular focus of language element rather than a concretized regular methodology that bores the learning community with its stitched environment of sticking to the rules.

## **Conclusion**

Language can be taught through literature and vice-versa. Both Literature and Language classes are complement to each other to an extent that one cannot survive without the other. Teaching literature helps to enhance the cognitive behaviour which in turn affects the intellectual, social and moral values of students. The artistic expression hidden in literature is brought out well only with the analyses of language aspects in it. Therefore, choosing the appropriate material that consists of more literary value is significant in using literature in a language classroom. The effectiveness can be achieved only through the customized method created by the teacher that will help to strengthen the pulse of the students both in communication skills and in knowing the literary aspects of a text.

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