

Literature - a pedagogic tool: a defence

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ABSTRACT: *In this article the author highlights the use of literature in language class at different stages of language teaching history. Literature had tough time during 1960-80. At that time it received strong resistance from many quarters on different grounds. While exploring the arguments for or against teaching literature, the paper examines the pros and cons of the use of literature in ESL / EFL class too. Finally the paper defends literature as a pedagogic tool on different grounds on one hand and on the other hand, warns that the successful exploitation of literary texts purely depends on careful selection and what approach to literature is adopted in the class.*

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES: *literature, language class, arguments, language skills*

I. INTRODUCTION

Having formed part of traditional language teaching approaches, literature became less popular when language teaching and learning started to focus on the functional use of language. However, the role of literature in the ELT classroom has been re-assessed and many now view literary texts as providing rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other languages and a potential source of learner motivation (British Council BBC).

Teaching materials are essential for a language class as they support the teacher with what to teach and act as a source for the students to learn the language. The success of learning a language depends largely on what we select for using in the class. Before the introduction of modern language teaching methods, literary texts of high quality were used extensively as teaching materials. But when the Communicative Language Teaching Approach started dominating language teaching scenario, the literature as a pedagogic tool was removed from the language class as the supporters of modern methods started coming up with strong arguments against the use of literature on different grounds. Again, in 1980s there came a renewed interest in the use of literary texts in the language class. The researchers were showing several benefits of using literature. Thus the language teachers and educationists were divided into two rival camps on the question of literary texts as a pedagogic tool. But ultimately literature started gaining grounds. In the present paper an attempt is made to explore how it happened in the face of great resistance.

II. LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The history of language learning reveals that in the remote past people generally learned a language coming in contact with the speakers of the target language or keeping a servant or tutor of the that language. This practice was similar to learning the mother tongue. In the ancient Roman Empire, Latin was learned in this way. So, at the beginning literature had no role in language learning scenario. In the Middle Ages Latin ceased to be the language of communication and it became a school subject. At that time the language of Latin classics (especially works of Virgil, Ovid and Cicero) was considered 'original', 'pure' and 'correct'. Efforts were made to replace the spoken Latin by so-called 'original' Latin. So, teaching classical literary texts became a part of curriculum for learning Latin. Reading and translating classical literary texts were considered very important for learning a language. Again language learning was viewed as the memorization of grammatical rules with their exceptions and application of these rules through translation from mother tongue into the target language and vice versa. The fundamental purpose of teaching a foreign language was to enable learners to read the literature written in that language. So, students were given the task of reading the works of the best authors of the target language as the texts were considered "the illustration of grammatical rules" (Duff and Maley 1996: 3 cited in Llach 2007). Thus literature was introduced in language teaching scenario. During the Renaissance period the language teaching scenario was also dominated by teaching of grammar along with the literary texts of very high quality. Grammar was taught rigorously only to enable the learner to read the literature. The skill of reading and comprehension of literary texts of the target language was seen as the great progress in learning the target language. So literature enjoyed a very high prestige in the study of language at that time.

III. A FAREWELL TO LITERATURE

The above system of teaching a language had been in practice up to the first half of the last century. At that time there was a belief that if students were exposed to the best of literature, they would somehow become proficient in the language, specifically English (Short and Candlin, 1981:91). However, the literary texts of high quality appeared difficult to the learners. Moreover, there was no any consistent methodology for teaching. All these 'brought about an unexpected effect: an enthusiastic teacher-orator and passive, bored students unable to response to the text (Langer 1987). The period from 1960-1980 was not favourable for using literature. During that period the language teachers and the educationists started to find out many inadequacies with literature as a tool for developing language skills. "For the structural approaches to language teaching, literature was discredited as a tool, because it represented the old tradition. The functional-notional method ignored literature, because in this method the importance lies on communication and they present authentic language samples. Literature was not considered either to have a communicative function nor to be authentic example of language use" (Llach 2007). Here we can also cite Negrete who says

This was the period (1960-1980), where the Structuralism Approach was concerned with correctness of grammatical form and not with content, interpretation of the written word or style. During this period the grammar exercise books proliferated and teachers were mainly concerned with correctness of grammar use. Later on and with the appearance of the Communicative Approach in the late 70's and very early 80's, literature as a teaching tool seemed completely unteachable. The tendency in the EFL classrooms was to teach "usable, practical" contents and here nor poetry nor drama, had a place. During this period dialogues proliferated as a means of communication and gave the EFL student the necessary tools to communicate in the most practical manner, which after all, it is the aim of most EFL courses.

In addition, as it was an age of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the teachers and the language specialists thought that English should be taught using authentic texts dealing with the subject for which the language is learned. They held that the texts should come from the field in which the target language will be used other than literature. Thus the literature was removed from the language class.

IV. ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE USE OF LITERATURE

The language teachers and specialists who are against the use of literature put forward many arguments in favour of removing literature from the language class. A brief description of some prominent arguments against the use of literature are given below.

Political arguments against literature: According to the critics (Hişmanoğlu 2005, some others) of EFLT, teaching English means to propagate linguistic imperialism and they further argue that the use of literature in the language class as a tool for teaching English means to propagate linguistic and cultural imperialism under the garb of literature.

Linguistic arguments against the use of literature: The language teachers and experts point out following loopholes regarding contents and the language of literature.

Argument against the contents of literature: Some critics are of opinion that literary texts are heavy with philosophical ideas. They think that literature dealing with high philosophy is beyond the comprehension of young learners. Naturally learners develop a disliking for such texts.

Argument against literary style: According to a group of critics literary writings are often aphoristic, epigrammatic, and pregnant with multiple meaning. As such is the case, most of the young learners do not feel comfortable with this kind of literary texts.

Arguments against the language of literature: The most common charge against the use of literary texts is that literary language is a deviation from normal everyday language and often not in conformity with the day to day communication.

Complex syntax used in the literary texts very often "makes reading a cumbersome task" for the young learners (Khatib et al. 2011). It is argued that literary texts create a variety of difficulties in the areas of syntax, lexis, phonetics and phonology, semantics and selection of materials for the teacher as well as the learner.

"This is one of the main criticisms leveled against literature in EFL/ESL. McKay (1982) and Savvidou (2004) contend that literary texts are far from the conventions of Standard English and hence can induce problems for language learning purposes. It is argued that literary texts are loaded with complex structures sometimes miles away from Standard English. The irregularity of syntax is particularly evident

when it comes to (old) poetry. Poems are usually written in a form deviant from the norms of speaking or even writing and hence they make understanding them a herculean task (cited in Khatib et al. 2011).

MacKay (1982) also affirms "... since one of our main goals as ESL teachers 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".

In addition, lexical difficulties of literary texts also stand as a great hurdle for the second or foreign language learner. According to Robson (1989:25), it is because of syntactic and lexical difficulty, literature is seen to do "little or nothing to help students to become competent users of the target language" (ibid). Other critics of literature also held that in literary texts we often come across vocabularies which are no more a part of day to day language as they disappeared long back. So, such words are no more in practice. This, according to these critics, poses serious problem for the modern learners.

According to Bassnet and Grundy (1993) "Many EFL/ESL teachers consider the literature just as the work of art and beyond the proficiency level of their students and ignore it as a source of learning and teaching" (as cited in Turker 2011).

Methodological problem: Another problem is that teaching language through literature often turns into feeding "the student heavy, repetitive and somewhat roundabout literature which has no relevance to his immediate problem". The usual practice is that the literary terms and meanings of words are explained to the learners. Then they are asked to analyze the subject of the literary piece. As the learners are non-native speakers, they usually memorize the topic and end up generally repeating or at best rephrasing it (ibid).

Literature is irrelevant to the future academic / occupational life of learners : Language teachers and educationists hold that the literary texts do not help learners much "in academic settings or specialized fields such as biology and zoology where educational goals are given priority over aesthetic values of literary texts" (cited in Khatib et al. 2011). Many critics further believe that study of literature does not play any positive role in helping the learner in materializing his goal or objective for which he /she is learning the language. MacKay (1982) also mentions the same allegations against the use of literature in the language class. According to him "the study of literature will contribute nothing to helping our students meet their academic and /or occupational goals".

Cultural problem: As authentic materials literary texts are set in the cultural background of the target language. Since the learners are not familiar with the culture of the target language, such cultural settings pose some hurdle and make foreign or second language learning a bit difficult for the young learners. Martinez (2002) (cited in Aghagolzadeh 2012) says "they (literary texts) can be too culturally biased, often a good knowledge of cultural background is required when reading, as well as too many structures being mixed, causing lower level problems in decoding the texts." This is also affirmed by MacKay (1982). He says "literature often reflects a particular cultural perspective, thus, at a conceptual level; it may be quite difficult for students".

V. REVIVAL OF LITERATURE

"The use of literature as a technique for teaching both basic language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) and language areas (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) is very popular within the field of foreign language learning and teaching nowadays" (Hişmanoğlu 2005).

In the middle of 1980's there was a comeback of interest in literature and language teaching. Linguists and other contributors suggested that literature should be involved in classes of English for non-native learners and in another pedagogical approach, Lang states "...the teaching of literature is an arid business unless there is a response, and even negative responses can create an interesting classroom situation" (Lang 1987). There continued a heated debate among language educators and ELT practitioners over the use of literature for teaching a second / foreign language. But literature as a legitimate vehicle for teaching language has been gaining momentum since 1980 (Duff and Maley 1991). Van (2009) also believes that the use of literary texts in the language class is very useful for providing meaningful contexts with a profound range of vocabulary, cultural awareness; encouraging critical thinking and lastly it is in line with CLT. Therefore, nowadays many teachers consider the use of literature in language teaching as interesting and worthy concern (Sage 1987:1)

VI. A STAND AGAINST THE ABOVE ALLEGATIONS

Some of the arguments against the use of literature no doubt stand valid. However, majority of the arguments against the use of literature in language teaching have been successfully refuted. Accusation concerning the philosophical language of the literary texts, the advocates of the literary texts point out the simple solution saying that this kind of texts should be avoided at the time of selection of teaching materials.

Regarding the allegation that the literary writings are aphoristic, epigrammatic and pregnant with multiple layers of meaning, supporters of literary texts argue that instead of creating problems for the learners, these kinds of texts rather help learners familiarizing themselves with a variety of styles of writing which is absent in spoken language and triggering their power of critical thinking (Lazar (2005), Ghosn (2002), Van (2009)). Nafish (2006) writes “ as literary texts are often rich in multiple levels of meanings, the readers, in this case FL learners should be able to uncover the implied meanings of a particular text” (as cited in Aghagolzadeh 2012). According to Odeja et al. (2012) as literary text has many layers of meaning, it demands the reader / learner get involved in ‘teasing out’ the unstated implications and assumptions of the text. Thus the learner develops the power of grappling with the multiple ambiguities of the literary texts and also develops the overall capacity to infer meaning.

As to argument against the use of literature that the literary texts do not help the learners to acquire grammatical rules which is the main objective of second or foreign language teaching, we can cite Widdowson (1978:3). He mentions two levels of linguistic knowledge e.g. the level of usage and level of use. According to him, usage involves the knowledge of rules. He views literature as a source of language usage and language use. In this connection McKay (1982) writes “Most present day literary texts assume that literature can provide a basis for extending language usage. Many of these texts focus on the particular grammatical points that are salient in the text (see, for example, Fassler and Lay 1979). Furthermore, vocabulary expansion is dealt with by attention to word forms and common expressions”.

As to the argument that literary texts do not have any utility in occupational life of the learner, McKay (1982) says that the study of literature certainly contributes to the academic and occupational goals. In some cases the reading text helps students to deal with the complex syntactic structures. He further says “For some students, literature may provide the affective, attitudinal and experiential factors which will motivate them to read. As such, literary texts can aid in the development of reading proficiency and this way contributes to a student's academic and occupational objectives.” Maley (1989) also thinks that “we can use literature as a motivating tool for instigating the learners to explore different text types. Also Shang (2006) indicates, literature can even be integrated in content-based instruction classes. Though literature cannot directly serve ESP/ ESL courses’ needs, it can be a positive catalyst for quickening language learning process” (cited in Khatib et al. 2011)

Concerning the allegation of cultural imperialism, McKay (1982) admits that literary texts present some cultural problems for the learners. In order to refute this charge he writes “ Marshall (1979:333) , in using English literature with Puerto Rican students, found that as she worked to help students over-come the difficulties of the text, her own appreciation of the text, was clarified and her respect for the students’ own culture framework enhanced. Thus literature may work to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and student”. There is another benefit of potential cultural settings. Through studying the literary text the learners go on struggling with the cultural problem. This in turn according to some advocates of literary texts may promote students’ creativity.

As to the allegation regarding complex syntax of literary texts, it can be said that such texts instead of being a problem for the learners, serve as source of language practice mainly for the learners of intermediate level or above. A common allegation is that poetry is very unsuitable for language class as it contains complex and far-fetched syntactic structures. But poetry can be used as a good source for practicing grammar. In this case the learners may be given the task of paraphrasing the poetry into modern language.

Regarding the lexical difficulty, the advocates of literary texts say that this problem arises due to lack of proper selection of texts. Instead of selecting the old or middle aged literary texts, if the writings of modern authors are chosen, there will not be any such vocabulary problem. And, when any old English text is required to be included for using in the language class, the modernized version should be adopted.

As to the problem regarding semantic change of some words over time, it can be argued that “...these semantic changes are not considered to block the learners’ previous knowledge but an appendix to their earlier semantic repertoire. As long as they are not impeding language learning, no harm is expectant from these semantic variations” (Khatib et al. 2011).

Arguments for using of literature a pedagogic tool

In support of the use of literature in the language class, Povey (1972: 187) 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” (cited in McKay 1982). He further argues that the great advantage of using literature for developing language awareness among learners is that the language used in literature reflects a particular setting and a particular social setting needs particular register or special type of dialect. Maley (1989: 12) points out some of the reasons for regarding literature as a potent resource in the language classroom. They are as follows:

- [1] **Universality:** Literature of all places deal with universal themes like human feelings, emotions e.g. hate, anger, love, marriage, separation, death, Nature etc. which appeal to human beings irrespective time, place and person.
- [2] **Non-triviality:** Very often many language teaching inputs ‘tend to trivialize texts or experience. On the other hand literature never trivializes or underestimates a text. This is because literature ‘about things that mattered to the author when he wrote them’.
- [3] **Personal Relevance:** literature deals with what man has experienced and thought about life. So it generally “deals with ideas, things, sensations and events which either constitute part of the reader’s experience or which they can enter into imaginatively, they are able to relate it to their own lives” (ibid:12).
- [4] **Variety:** Literature includes all varieties of subjects within it. It is a great source of topics. “Within literature, we can find the language of law and of mountaineering, of medicine and of bull-fighting, of church sermons and nursery talk” (ibid: 12).
- [5] **Interest:** One of the main functions of literature is to give pleasure to the reader as it deals with themes and topics which are intrinsically interesting. So it deals with only such kind of topics and human experience which definitely gives pleasures to the readers engaging their attention.
- [6] **Economy and Suggestive Power:** “One of the great strengths of literature is its suggestive power. Even in its simplest forms, it invites us to go beyond what is said to what is implied. Since it suggests many ideas with few words, literature is ideal for generating language discussion. Maximum output can often be derived from minimum input” (ibid:12).
- [7] **Ambiguity:** As the language of literature is highly associative and suggestive, it carries different meanings and messages for different readers. It is, therefore, very rare for two different readers to react identically to a given literary text. For language class, thus, literature has the following two advantages:
The first advantage is that each learner’s interpretation has validity within limits.

The second advantage is that an almost infinite fund of interactive discussion is guaranteed since each person’s perception is different. That no two readers will have a completely convergent interpretation establishes the tension that is necessary for a genuine exchange of ideas” (ibid: 12). So we see that for teaching a second or foreign language the use of literature is a suitable tool for triggering interactive discussion in the class.

Moreover, literature is storehouse of sociolinguistic richness as it provides students with a wide variety. Hismanoglu (2005) believes

The use of language changes from one social group to another. Likewise, it changes from one geographical location to another. A person speaks differently in different social contexts like school, hospital, police station and theatre (i.e. formal, informal, casual, frozen, intimate styles speech). The language used changes from one profession to another (i.e. doctors, engineers, economists use different terminology). To put it differently, since literature provides students with a wide range of language varieties like sociolects, regional dialects, jargon, idiolects, etc., it develops their sociolinguistic competence in the target language. Hence, incorporating literature into a foreign language teaching program as a powerful source for reflecting the sociolinguistic aspects of the target language gains importance.

Literary texts are cultural documents that reflect different aspects of the society offering the opportunity for a deeper understanding of a country or countries (Basnet & Mounfold 1993). H.L.B. Moody also considers literature as an umbrella term giving information on every business (Moody 1971: 1 cited in Turker 2011). Collie and Slater (1991) also speak highly about the benefits of using literature in the language class. According to them

Though the world of literature is created one, it depicts contextually vivid characters from varied social backgrounds. A reader can discover their thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy, how they speak and behave behind closed doors. This vivid imagined world can quickly give the foreign reader a feel for the codes and preoccupations that structure a real society.

Looking upon literature from linguistic point of view, Alexander Baird points out “Literature is the use of language effectively in suitable conditions” (ibid). Here Collie and Slater (1987) also voice that “in reading literary texts students have also to cope with language intended for native speakers and thus they gain additional familiarity with many different linguistic uses, forms and conventions of the written mode: with irony, exposition, argument, narration, and so on”. According to Baird (1969) literary texts can be used in language teaching, because the language used in literary texts is suitable for the contexts of the events. “The role of literature in the ELT classroom has been re-assessed and many now view literary texts as providing rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other languages and a potential source of learner motivation” (British Council BBC). “...the use of literature can also inspire students to take risks with the target language, enrich their vision, fostering critical thinking, stimulating their creativity and promote their greater cultural tolerance and sensibility” (Wen, Su 2010 cited by Fernandez). According to Odeja et al. (2012) it is true that the use of literature at lower level for linguistic purpose is not fruitful. But “at higher levels students may be so absorbed in the plot and characters of an authentic novel or short story that they acquire a great deal of new language almost in passing”. Other great advantage of literature is that literary texts can be used in its original form, or in its simplified or abridged version. “Another reasons for, or benefits of, teaching literature in the FL classroom have been proffered by a variety of authors. For example, Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000: 9-11) list, with more or less approval, the following ten:

- [1] Cultural enrichment. Reading literature promotes cultural understanding and awareness. (See also Collie and Slater 1987; Schewe 1998; Sell (ed.) 1995; Silberstein 1994).
- [2] Linguistic model. Literature provides examples of “good” writing, linguistic diversity, expressive ranges, and so on.
- [3] Mental training. Better than any other discipline, literature trains the mind and sensibility.
- [4] Extension of linguistic competence. Literature stretches the competences of learners who have mastered the linguistic rudiments.
- [5] Authenticity. Literature is genuine linguistic material, not a linguistically contrived textbook (Duff and Maley 1990).
- [6] Memorability. Because literature, especially poetry and songs, is memorable, it can be a memorised archive of linguistic usage (Maley and Moulding 1985).
- [7] Rhythmic resource. Poems assist the learner in assimilating the rhythms of a language (Maley and Moulding 1985).
- [8] Motivating material. Literature is more likely to engage with and motivate a learner than artificial teaching inputs because it is generated by some genuine impulse on the part of the writer and deals with subjects and themes which may be of interest to the learner (Duff and Maley 1990).
- [9] Open to interpretation. Because literature is open to interpretation, it can serve as a basis for “genuine interaction” between learners (Duff and Maley 1990).
- [10] Convenience. Literature is a handy (photocopiable) resource” (cited in Sell 2005).

Lazar (1993:15-9) (cited in Sell 2005) suggests that literature in the FL classroom motivates, offers access to cultural background, encourages language acquisition, expands language awareness, develops students’ interpretative abilities and educates the whole person in so far as it enhances our imaginative and affective capacities (see also Fernández 2003: 60-31). “Burke and Brumfit (1986:171-2) state that literature promotes literacy and oracy, critical and analytical ability, social skills and the use of the imagination; encourages liberal, ethical and humanitarian attitudes, respect for the imagination, respect for literacy and cultural tradition; and provides information about literature, literary traditions and language” (cited in Sell 2005). Hadaway, Vardell and Young (2002) point out the following advantages of using literary texts:

i. Literature serves as an excellent source of contextualization of language. Through literary texts the learners become familiar with the variety of uses of language used in different situations.

ii. In literature different social and affective factors are set in. The literary texts such as picture books, news papers, short stories, etc. represent all sorts of social happenings and events in an impressive way. These can be exploited in the language for the benefits of students with individual differences. And as students differ with each other in respect of their likings and disliking, and tastes, different formats of literary texts can be used aptly in keeping with this.

iii. "The third benefit refers to the natural and meaningful use of language which are accomplished by illustrations and use of descriptive language in literature" (Khatib 2011).

Van (2009) (cited in Adegholdezah 2012) points out the following advantages of using literature in the language class:

- [1] It provides meaningful context;
- [2] It involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose;
- [3] It appeals to imagination and enhances creativity;
- [4] It develops cultural awareness;
- [5] It encourages critical thinking ;
- [6] It is in line with CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) principles.

Literature is authentic texts as they are "real life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes" (Wallace 1992, Clandfield 2005). On the other hand, some researchers think that the modern EFL/ESL text books lack authenticity as they are fictions in different ways. "The artificial nature of the language and structures used, make them very unlike anything that the learner will encounter in the real world and very often they don't reflect how the language is really used"(cited in Aghagolzadeh 2012). So, undoubtedly the literary texts as authentic material is useful in language class because these texts show how language works in particular contexts demonstrating examples of particular type of language required for a specific situation.

The literary texts, if properly used, can serve as a very powerful tool for developing all the language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). "Literary texts offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners to practise the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing - in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary"(BBC). Scholars like Stern (1992), Belcher and Hirvela (2000), Van (2009) believe that literary texts can take care of these skills well (cited Aghagolzadeh 2012).Through literature students learn about syntax and discourse, different structures, functions, and the different ways of connecting ideas, all these help students to develop their writing, listening, reading and speaking skills. Povey (1972) holds that literary texts are a good source for expanding learners' language skills. He thinks "literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax" (cited in McKay 1982: 539). Scholars like Oster (1989), Murdoch (2002) Ghosn (2002), Cruz (2010) and other experts similarly hold a very positive view about the contribution of literary texts to developing all target language skills. In language learning, motivation plays a very effective role. If the learner is motivated, he/she can go a long way in learning the target language. Literary texts are a good source for motivating the learners as they are authentic and provide meaningful contexts. In this respect, Lazar (1993) says "It can help to stimulate the imagination of our students, to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness" (cited in Negerete). Literature always deals with interesting things which usually appeal to our mind and as human beings we crave for such things in the world of our imagination. "Motivation is especially achieved when students are exposed to what they really enjoy. Experience shows that students are highly motivated when they are exposed to literary texts for language learning purpose" (cited in Khatib 2011). So the role of literature as a motivating tool cannot be denied.

VII. CONCLUSION

The above discussion reveals that there exists a debate among the educationists and language teachers regarding the use of literary texts as pedagogic tools. In 60s literature was removed from language classroom. This happened due to two reasons e.g. (i) absence of research on literature as a pedagogic tool and (ii) the traditional separation between the study of literature and the study of language. This is also voiced by Maley (2001) and Savvidou (2004). The former "argued that this attitude towards literature is due to a paucity of empirical research confirming the significance of literary input for language class" (cited in Aghagolezadeh 2012). And Savvidou (2004) "believes that the reasons why few experts often consider literature inappropriate to the language classroom may be found in the common beliefs held about literature and literary language and these views reflect the historical separation between the study of language and the study of literature, which has led to the limited role of literature in the language class" (ibid).The above discussion reveals that well-chosen literary texts are very much conducive for teaching FL / SL though there exist some valid allegations against the use of them. When in 80s researchers started exploring literary texts as pedagogic tool for language class, a new

horizon was discovered. They came up with strong reasons showing multifarious benefits of using literature as teaching materials in language class. Consequently literature as pedagogic tool has come back today to the language class with flying colours. But while using literature in the language class, the language practitioners should bear in mind the following warning of Melania

If the approach to literature relies heavily on the teacher – who paraphrases, explains, clarifies the text, the students will become dependent on the ready-made commentaries and will probably see no use in reading the literary text itself.

The danger of spoiling literature by over-teaching it appears in a language-based approach, too. If the analysis is undertaken in purely linguistic terms, with heavy emphasis on meta-language and little chance for personal interpretation, the students lose the best part of the literary text – its emotional value – and become demotivated.

In light of the above discussion, the author of this article now firmly believes that the literature will yield immense benefits provided that the texts are interesting, having appropriate language level, not too long, culturally not offensive, not requiring “much cultural or literary background knowledge”, and above all exploitable for language learning purposes (British Council, BBC).

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