



## The Mutual Relationship between Literature and Language

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### Abstract

The first look at literature and language reveals that both are closely connected. Hence, it is unbelievable to discuss literature without referring to language due to the close relationship between them. Through this relation the effective teaching and learning can be enhanced strongly.

This research paper is about the mutual relationship between literature and language. It is divided into three sections and a conclusion. Section one; the introduction illustrates some writers' points of view about the separation between literature and language. Section Two discusses the importance of literature in language, whereas section three shows the importance of language in literature. The conclusion shows that there is a strong relationship between language and literature and both affect each other.

### المستخلص

#### العلاقة المتبادلة بين الأدب واللغة

إن النظرة الأولى إلى الأدب واللغة تكشف أن كليهما مرتبطان ارتباطاً وثيقاً. وبالتالي، فإنه لا يمكن مناقشة الأدب دون الإشارة إلى اللغة وذلك للعلاقة القوية بينهما. ومن خلال هذه العلاقة يمكن تعزيز التدريس والتعلم الفعالين بقوة. هذه الورقة البحثية تنقسم إلى ثلاثة أقسام وخاتمة. القسم الأول- المقدمة. توضح بعض وجهات نظر الروائيين حول الفصل بين الأدب واللغة. القسم الثاني يناقش أهمية الأدب في اللغة في حين القسم الثالث يوضح أهمية اللغة في الأدب. وتلخص الخاتمة إلى أن هناك علاقة قوية بين اللغة والأدب وكلاهما يؤثران على بعضهما البعض.

## **1. Introduction**

The terms, language and literature are acquainted to any well-educated individual because they are used not only for literary works but also for many other sciences, such as medical and computer. Unfortunately, not too many people know about the close relationship between language and literature, thinking that literature is of narration and description, cannot develop the skills.

Language and literature are used to speak and communicate with others as each one has specific meaning. If one asks any teacher of English, "What do you teach?" the teacher's answer will be 'language and literature'. Through this answer, we notice that there is no any difference between them and they are being as a compound word. But in reality, there are some limited differences between them as some researchers refer to that.

During the period 1960 till 1970, many researches confirm the separation between literature and language. One of them, Carrington (2003: 37-46) in his book *Our Greatest Writers and Their Major Works*, refers to the thoughts of many writers who refuse the use of literature in the second language for not improving its skill and not providing the student with cultural contact. Another writers relates the hesitancy of language's teachers because of their including literature in the syllabus. Moreover, Carrington states that some writers do not interest in studying English literature as "a luxury that cannot be indulged"(47). They argue for the presence of literature on psychological and linguistic grounds.

Will Durant (1967: 19) opposed the ideas of other writers that there is a separation between literature and language since he believes that the study of literature as the major reason for learning a language. He adds that there is a "justifiable and profitable place for literature in teaching language", as literature makes the experience more real and the language learning more creative and inspired. As a matter of fact, through studying literature, we know more about other cultures.

## **2. The Importance of Literature in Language.**

The fact that there is a strong relationship between literature and language; and Literature could be assimilated with Language teaching and learning. Literature and language are intertwined and inter-related since literature with the device of language is concretized. For that reason, it is illogical to study literature without language and vice versa.

Because people have different cultures, they see language not enough to convey their thoughts to others. So they learn the art of writing. Whatever they write preserved and in this way literature appeared. It is obvious that literature is the product of language, meaning they are related to each other. When a language is dead, automatically, its literature is also dead. On other hand, if anyone wants to destroy a society, first he abolishes and kills its language (Alexander 2000: 9). Each language has its own literature. As there are many languages in the entire world, many different literatures appeared.

Collins English dictionary defines literature as "written materials such as poetry, novels, essays, etc. especially works of imagination characterized by excellence of style and expression and by themes of general or enduring interest" (11). Throughout the centuries, literature is regarded as a term used to describe written or spoken material. In general, literature describes anything from creative imagination.

Literature is vigorous for man's life. By studying literature, man knows himself that is a kind of self-revelation. He can know the mistakes and correct them. Hence, literature is considered as a mirror of social and political life of the period in which it was written; representing the real life of the era.

Literature as a kind of documents contains the history, social, political, cultural aspects, tradition, habits, customs, and the way of living of the people of only that time. For example, Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400)'s poetry shows the life, tradition and culture of the people in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Allen 2004: 61). William Shakespeare (1564-1616)'s poetry and dramas illustrate everything about the life during the Elizabethan age. Any literary text reflects whatever related to the period in which it was written. So literature provides not only pleasure but realistic information of a specific period and its community.

Literature refers to written subjects; therefore, the values of literature could be educational, cultural, moral, recreational and socio-political. Literature helps to develop learner's linguistic performance because it arouses their zeal and keeps in them an ever-ready inclination to read. Moreover, it helps the learner to develop his fluency and the ability to comprehend what is read. Literature has many literary forms such as, prose, poetry, drama, novel and short stories that are constructed by language in which they are written (Greenblatt, et al. 2006: 12).

Collie and Slater (1987: 20) support the presence of literature in the language as it provides valuable and reliable material improves individual participation and give the reader cultural as well as language improvement. Lazar (1993) supports their idea concerning the use of literature due to its great importance in developing the language. It can motivate materials, reassure language gaining, and increase students' language awareness and interpretative skills. Moreover, it can educate the student completely, "Literature should be used with students because it is a motivating stimulus for language acquisition, students enjoy it, and it is a fun, it is found in many syllabuses and the like"(Lazer 60).

M. B. Willmott (1979) refers on the importance of literature for assisting the cultural integration, language development and skills. He adds that any subject of literature is:

an organization of language to which linguistic awareness must be applied if it is to be understood and appreciated. In the process the pupil learns much of practical value both about language and in the use of language (57).

Henceforth, Willmott in his literary studies considers language the most different and influential method. In addition, he examines the use of it in the linguistic resources. Thus, literature determines language at any work.

Literature helps the student to use language as it offers worthy models and motivates linguistic answers of different types. As a matter of fact the role of the teacher is very important as not only to present literature but also activate it for having the ability to generate language and illustrate it as well. Literature is embedded in language and the latter gets life through Literature. This enhances the fact that both literature and language are unified.

Carter and Long (1991: 8) said that literature is a valuable source for language teaching. It is also considered as a medium to convey the culture of people who speak the language in which it is written. So literature is a great point of language usage as it marks the skills. Basnett and Grundy (1993:12) observe that if one needs to gain deep knowledge of language, he must read literary texts in that language.

Literature assumes language as there is no severe separation between them. Ayo (2003) avers that:

through the creative methods of teaching literature,  
the students can be helped to develop confidence  
in themselves in producing coherent and cohesive  
paragraphs with effective linkers and.....  
organizing paragraphs into coherent an written discourse (127).

Besides, the study of literature that develops the reading skills, Wilkins (1978: 37) suggests that reading can provide a means for the acquisition of vocabulary and effective writing in a second language. Wilkins adds that reading facilitates acquisition of language because the effective writing has the ability to form meaningful sentences that are logically and successively associated. The literary text should be within the linguistic aptitude of the student and be related to his educational and socio-cultural experiences. This means that the literary text must have effective acquisition of modern language. The most important thing in literature is a communication for the cultured people through story, poetry or novel.

The themes of literary works provide motivations for language learning and meaningful discussions that develop the learner's linguistic and communicative aptitude. Literature provides learner with true models for the standards of language use and helps him to develop his knowledge about language. In addition, through the literary text, the learner can develop his explanatory and analytical skills since literature provides learner with visions into the cultural

values exemplified in the language and enable him to learn new vocabularies and literature forms. Hence, literature is considered as a perfect model for language learning (Collie & Slater 1987: 53).

It is obvious that the purpose of using literature into language teaching is not for criticism on the contrary; it is for being important resource. So the contributor in the creation of meaning from literary writings has an impact on language teaching. Obviously, the new methods make literature obtainable to the learner. Hence, integrating language and literature can be understood from a literary idea.

### **3. The Importance of Language in Literature**

Communication takes place orally and in writing as well. Language is basically a system and means of communication among the members of a society; therefore language is one of the most important features of a community and its history. It expresses culture and conveys traditions and values of a community. According to the Free Encyclopedia, language is defined as "the human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communications"(11).

Through language people express their ideas to others. On the other hand, through literature the thoughts are expressed with the help of language. This shows that without language the people cannot express their thoughts and there is no existence of literature as language is a vital unit of literature.

Literature is formed by the creation of language as it is a way of expressing the thoughts by means of clear sound. Because language contains sounds, words and sentences, literature comprises thoughts expressed in any language. As a matter of fact, language is the technique of expression whereas literature is the collection of such expression.

In previous centuries, the language of literature was completely different from the language which was used by the common man, spoken or written. Consequently, only educated people could understand literature as it contains some difficulties of expression. For example, Shakespeare's language and Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)'s writings were not easy for common people since they were full of oratory with originator models in Greek and Latin. Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was the only novelist who wrote in the ordinary language.

In our modern time, the language of literature has changed and been written in a way that common people can understand as it is from their daily life. Only through this way, literature has become popular and any one can enjoy reading it. This encourages writers to concentrate on using common and ordinary language as they believe that literature is the mirror of our lives. Literature reflects the society and the lives of people. Literature includes "all the activities of

human soul in general, or within particular sphere, period, country, or a language" (Childs 2000: 21) as it is a kind of writing that provokes feelings, emotions and thoughts.

Language reaches its ultimate through literature. Language is not only a group of words but the individual and social passion of human beings; this is called the literary language that contains symbols, metaphors, exaggeration and etc. Those figures of speech are used to express the writer's observation effectively. As literature is the expression of man's thoughts, the writer has to use the language of ordinary people in order to communicate with others easily (Long 1909: 61).

M. Stephen (2000: 21) said that the writers of the Elizabethan age reformed the literary language by borrowing foreign words and creating new expressions. Shakespeare's language and modern ones have sufficient in common, hence the historians consider that both belong to the same stage in the history of English. In Elizabethan age, there is an attitude to refine the language. John Milton (1608-1674) was one of the writers who borrowed words from Latin. He used simple words to convey a sense of unfathomable mystery. Milton has the ability of making language so simple, inventing words in time having the hugeness of his thoughts. By writing his famous poem 'Paradise Lost' (1667), Milton tried to reinvent the English language.

The writers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century developed a proper and correct style of expression. The Romantic poets like William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Coleridge (1772-1834) intended to purify the literary language and made it closer to everyday language of the common people. They seek that conventional poetry should be replaced by a language nearer to the normal talking of ordinary people, using a language really spoken by man. In time the language has been changed and grown, literature on the other hand also has been developed. Though, Wordsworth admires the easiness and directness of countryside speech, he believes that for literary work the language must be purified as Stevens remarks (2004: 45). He means that all language expressions and any grammatical disappearances from Standard English must be avoided.

Concerning the writers of the Victorian era, Zare-Behtash (1994: 9) observed that they were aware of their living in a time of change that disturbing and worrying. Therefore, the language of a Victorian literature is considered the language of a disappearing country life.

Modern writers whether poets or dramatists aim to represent the world in a way that expressed a deep sense of spiritual and psychological conditions. At the same time, they use images, symbols, allusions and words with the syntax as a resource for the expression of meaning (Carter and McRae 2001: 100). T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) is one who followed this way in his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915:13). The use of 'I' in the poem is a persona but the use of 'you' is not obvious. It could refer to us, or the reader or someone invited within the dialogue situation to be with the 'I'. Eliot seeks to make the speaker in the poem addressing

another one; therefore both the 'I' and the 'you' are not clear. Also the syntactic structure is not completely obvious. This emphasizes the fact that during 20<sup>th</sup> century the development in the language focuses on spoken language. Even the titles of the dramas or novels are designed to be powerful (Carter and McRae 2001: 103).

Modernist writers prefer titles which are more symbolic that need to be analyzed by the reader, concentrating on the language as a main theme in their writings and to be dominating. Above all the insufficiency and uncertainty of language is often addressed in 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. Language permits the people to make unspecified and surrealistic sense of the world (Carter and McRae 2001: 107). 20<sup>th</sup> century writers make use of all the possibilities of the spoken language on contrary to 19<sup>th</sup> century writers who considered the informal spoken language unsuitable.

The phrase '*Language through literature*' means using literary writing as source for language rules teaching.

Other phrase is '*Literature through language*' means using pre-literary text to appreciate the reading and actual stylistics. Carter concentrates on these two phrases to prove the fact that language and literature affect each other due to the strong connection between them (44).

Learner cannot develop literary capability without a suitable ability in language so mixing literature and language is of great benefits for the learner. Henceforth, teaching language through literature has moral linguistic effect as literary texts reflect the norms of language.

Some writers regard language to be the improvement of unrestrained skills and not information of methods and meanings. Collie and Slater (1987:10) state that mixing language and literature, "let the student derive the benefits of communicative and other activities for language improvement within the context of suitable works of literature". So, the combination of language and literature at the same time offers a way into texts study to develop language cognizance.

Widdowson (1990: 29). realizes that literary text has great importance for language learning as "*its use originates from the process of literary study and analysis, rather than from the linguistic resources confined in the text*" It is evident that literature does not follow the straight language structures that the learner must use for giving sense and meaning to the literary text.

The language through literature develops the student's abilities rather than providing him with knowledge. Also it motivates "the confidence gained in one's own problem-solving strategies probably as important as the results of interpretations themselves" (Widdowson 34). Hence, Language learning is not only obtaining precise logical talents.

The comparison between the 'literary' and 'non-literary' texts helps the learner to understand literature. In addition, this comparison can reduce the differences between other sorts of writing as Widdowson demonstrates (39). This means to give the learner a further alertness of the communicative means of the language. For example, connecting the literary text with the creative language activities; such as rewriting the endings of a story will make the text more accessible to the learner. Another example, to compare a text of a poem with 'non-literary' text like announcements that are nearer to learner's everyday practice of language can disclose parallel ingenious influence of language that help the learner to understand literary methods. Moreover, the comparison of texts shows the variety of styles in the context and the language used.

So, literature is like other communications presented in the language and not in form, as many outdated literary methods indicate. Widdowson states that "the comparative procedure enables the learners to see the meaning in the literary text and at the same time they learn how language is used conventionally for other forms of description"(43).

Bassnett and Grundy (1992: 23) suggest "that discussion is the best way of teaching literature through language; the same techniques could be used to develop linguistic competence, by using the literary text as a resource, language through literature".

In current time, the preconception against nonstandard English in literature has basically vanished partly because of the concern for pragmatism and precise detail that marks much of the contemporary writings. So it is necessary to know that studying literature is regarded an important factor in language teaching.

### **Conclusion**

The terms 'language' and 'literature' have analyzed and reevaluate to illustrate the importance causes of their combination.

Language is a medium of communication and literature a written form in a particular language. So language is used to produce literature and both help to spread knowledge. It is usually language that influences literature and the latter in turn influences language as well.

In the past centuries, Scientists who studied language always used literature sources to give them some examples of language as literature can offer new words, new idioms and new vocabularies into the language. There are many words Shakespeare is recognized with having created in English.

Language, spoken or non-spoken, is essential to the survival of mankind because it is an important device for communication, and the protection of the literary text. The relationship between language and literature is so strong to the extent that a change in one ultimately affects



the other. The overall harmony is that the combination of language and literature has a progressive result on the teaching and learning.

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