REVIEW ARTICLE

LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Language through literature is a highly effective way of knowing, learning and mastering any language. Instead of enhancing the skills of language like listening, speaking, reading and writing through exercises, like gap filling, multiple-choice questions. matching the words etc., it would be appropriate to provide a literary text to acquire the language skills. That is, instead of filling in the blanks which would only provide the clue about a particular language skill or concept, it would be better to provide a literary content which would convey the usage of that particular concept. So what makes the difference is the interest of the reader or the learner; he would be more interested to read the literary texts and so the language concepts would get into his mind very easily rather than filling in the blanks. This study of learning a language through literature is dealt in Sidney Sheldon's *Are You Afraid of Darkness?* (2004).

Introduction

Language is an art or skill which can only be learnt through practice. The basic purpose of learning any language is to communicate in that particular language to its native speakers. The reason for learning a language varies from person to person. A person may learn a language for existence in a new place, for studies, business etc Hence the sort of conversations, vocabulary, grammar and the sense that a reader come across a literary text is basically known to him and actually practiced by him, and this practice would help him to converse and communicate in real time situations with flow, good vocabulary, proper grammatical structures and expressions which are effective, stylish and in a standard way.

Using literature to learn a language basically interests a reader and it also enhances the reader's reading speed and writing style. While reading a literary text, the reading speed complement the better understanding of the flow of thought in the literary text and in the case of writing style, the reader could know the proper punctuations, capitalization, order of words, sentence structure etc. to put in brief, learning a language through literature makes the process very easy, enjoyable and effective.

In this paper the study is done in one of Sidney Sheldon's novel *Are You Afraid of Darkness?* Which was written in 2004. It is the last novel of Sheldon which is taut with suspense and vivid characterization. It is the story of two women, Kelly Harris and Diane Stevens, the widows of two of the deads. They find their life in risk and are thrown together in fear. Meanwhile they suspect if there is any mystery behind their husband's death. Finally they found that Tanner Kingsley, the chief executive of an international Think Tank, is behind everything and he had amazing discovery which would influence the world and make him rich and powerful. So Kelly and Diane had to outwit the men of the biggest Think Tank in the world and have to expose the truth of the

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discovery and the true nature of Tanner Kingsley to the world. So such novel with thrill and suspense obviously interests a reader.

The novel has a prologue which narrates the death of four persons who died in four different countries in apparent accidents within twenty four hours. The four victims are connected in just one way that they work for Tanner Kingsley. Thus the prologue pictures a mysterious happening which tempts a reader to read the novel further. The first line of the prologue is:

Berlin, Germany.

Sonja Verbrugge had no idea that this was going to be her last day in earth (1)

Thus the opening line of the novel foretells and so persuades the readers to read the novel further. It is also evident that the words used in the quoted sentence are very expressive and powerful. To be explicit, the sense of the sentence could be expressed in many other ways like 'This was going to be the last day of Sonja Verbrugge in the earth', 'Sonja Verbrugge was going to live her last day in the earth'etc. so out of the different ways to communicate the sense in the form of sentences, the sentence that Sidney has employed is very effective and to the point as it reflects what the author wanted to say and implies the nature of the character and the situation. Such sentence highlights coherence and the line of thought which are very potential and basis of learning any language.

In the case of vocabulary, it is very difficult to remember words and its meaning from a dictionary but a word that is used in a particular literary context makes the reader search the meaning of the word. Primarily the words used in the literary text makes the reader guess the meaning of the word. So when he searches the meaning in the dictionary and then fix it in the context of the literary text, it provides him better understanding and remembrance which in future would enable him to use the word in actuality. This could be proved with a passage from the novel which describes the murder of Mark Harris.

As they were speaking, the second man had moved behind Mark Harris and two things happened almost simultaneously. A heavy, blunt instrument slammed into his skull, and an instant later he felt himself being lifted and tossed over the parapet in the cold driving rain, his body plunging toward the unforgiving pavement thirty-eight storeys below (3).

In the above passage the reader would not be sure of the exact meaning of the words like 'slammed', 'parapet' etc where he would guess the meaning of the word with relation to the content and situation.

The non-native English learners learn English as a set of rules where the teaching is mostly descriptive rather than prescriptive and also the importance given to conversational English is negligent as more prominence is given to writing than speaking. But in everyday life, regardless of whatever profession a person pursue, speaking is unavoidable and has to be effective and impressive. In such case, it becomes a mandatory one that a person has to make face to face conversation, telephonic conversation, speak In meetings, give presentations, discuss his reports and proposals, solve problems and make decisions in group discussion etc. but mostly when a non-native English speaker speaks in English, his language is rigid without flow and expression and he is unable to convey what he exactly wanted to. So when a reader reads a novel or story, he could imagine the way characters talk by the narration of the author about the characters and situation. This continuous reading of literary texts would help him to speak in a much promising way. For example, the conversation between Diane Stevens and Franz Verbrugge's secretary is given below where the conversation is naturalistic, has a flow and with a purpose.

'I wonder if I could do an interview with you?'

'I don't know –'

'Just for some background information'…

'What about lunch?'

'I'm sorry, no'

'Dinner, then.'

'There was hesitation in her voice. 'Yes, I suppose I could do that.'

'Where would you like to meet?'

'There is a fine restaurant called Rockendorf's. We could meet there.'

'Thank you'

'Eight-thirty?'

'Eight-thirty.'(342)

Conclusion

To sum up, the refined form of a language is literature. Any language becomes a special one by the literature that it possess which consoles both the heart and mind. So more than teaching or learning a language technically, if a language is taught through literature, then the impact of learning becomes an enjoyable and much better one,

Work cited

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