

*The Goal of Teaching Literature: Global Citizenship beyond Narrow Borders?*

Phani kiran, Al-Jouf University, Saudi Arabia

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## **Teaching Literature**

This paper reviews the present status of literature teaching with respect to globalization and then move on to consider the role played by teachers in this context and suggests some integrated courses combining Language, Literature, Linguistics with student's specific majors. New technologies and migration have greatly increased the interconnectedness of people and places. This has coincided with the emergence of a new set of global challenges, including increasingly integrated and knowledge-driven economies and greater migration. Globalization constitutes both a challenge and an opportunity, depending on the point of view of the observer.

Literature, as an important component of humanities, is a very popular subject which reflects human culture, knowledge and wisdom. Literature preserves the ideals of people for generations. Recent educational reforms have focused heavily on studying mathematics, science and computer education. Though these subjects are important, they are not enough to provide the knowledge of world regions, global issues, cross-cultural skills, and values of citizenship and collaboration that are so important for living and working in this present day world. But literature provides an opportunity and fills this gap. However literature teaching should not limit itself with reading stories and grammar. It must enable learners to learn more about humanity with a broader outlook. In fact, narratives are probably the oldest teaching tools in history. We use narrations to pass on knowledge and wisdom because they capture reader's attention.

## **World Literatures Know No Boundaries**

World literature usually refers to the circulation of works into the wider world beyond their country of origin (**Wikipedia**). It is literature that has a readership and an impact beyond its original language and cultural area. It becomes a standard and iconic for a local culture. It then becomes an influence on a regional culture, and later on becomes the fabric of global community. It moves from local to regional and then regional to global. World literature offers rich opportunities to learners to experience ethical problems and explore issues of injustice and inequality. Readers today have access to an unprecedented range of works from around the globe in excellent translations.

## **Critical Thinking and Moral Development**

Learning of literature involves the development of critical engagement and reflective skills. It emphasizes and critiques the perspectives, language, power, social groups, and social practices. Beyond engaging the intellect, literature elicits emotions. As students know about others lives and cultures, learn new things and make comparisons to their own and they develop empathy for other people, tolerance for other cultures, and appreciation for differences. They may be ready to consider moral dilemmas that extend their sense of fairness beyond their own self interests. Literature with a systematic approach, appropriate and analytical methodology provides professional development and there by opportunities for learners in the global context.

## **Literature Teaching in the Global context**

Literature has been used for several purposes. It has been used for literacy for many, aesthetic pleasure for some and inspiration for some. Globally, English literature is studied in three basic contexts.

- 1) It is studied as the **Native Language** in countries like Great Britain, The USA, Canada, Australia, Newziland, and South Africa.
- 2) It is studied as **the Second Language** in countries like India, Pakistan, Sudan, Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore.
- 3) It is studied as **a Foreign Language** in countries like Japan., China, Russia, West Germany, Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries.

And the main purpose of teaching literature in a non-English-speaking country is to improve learner's English ability. In this context, language learning is the main target, and appreciation of literary values is secondary. It is an undeniable fact that literature plays an important role in English language teaching and learning in countries where students learn English as a foreign language.

Teaching of English literature has become a popular course of foreign language learning in many non-native countries. Learners from different cultural backgrounds have varied interpretations and reactions to the views of the authors. In this regard, teachers should provide necessary cultural information for better understanding of the text. However teaching literature to non-native speakers may pose challenges to teachers and these challenges may be administrative, technical, pedagogical, linguistic, social, cultural, political, or even a combination of all.

## **Literature and Language**

Literature is the art of language and it cannot exist without language. Therefore while learning literature one can also learn language. Literature expands language awareness.

Literary materials are more effective than the monotonous materials often compiled for strict grammatical and syntactic purposes used in language classrooms. And language used in literature is relatively artistic and flexible. In this case, literature can arouse learners' interest in their language learning and help them dismiss boredom in dry language learning and keep pace with the teaching progress.

## **Encyclopedia of a Nation**

Literature is usually considered as the encyclopedia of a nation's civilization and culture; it reflects the cultural norms, religions, history, economy, spiritual pursuits, political system and other aspects of ideology from different facets. In literary works, readers can also learn and find something about the society ( as literature mirrors life and society of the writer). It usually unfolds a panorama of the society by giving detailed and dramatized descriptions of the social life of the people and discloses the conflicts in the society.

## **Designing Integrated Courses (Triple L)**

Designing a course that can best suit learner's interests and needs in this well connected global context is very challenging. It is very strange to notice in some universities, there is a strict division among the departments of literature, linguistics and language. Well, it is alright for the administrative convenience but drawing a strict division is absurd. And it is meaningless to hear very hot arguments and debates in conferences about the importance of language or superiority of one subject over the other. When the whole world is interconnected and integrated after all is it not possible for the departments to integrate these three closely connected subjects (Literature, Language and Linguistics)? Designing Integrated Courses with a combination of Literature, Language and Linguistics is essential and perhaps it can simply be called (LLL) Triple L.

In recent years, there has been a growing international interest in designing academic courses specific to work-related needs. So the syllabus and course can be tailored according to the learner's needs, standards, culture, and the purpose. For example the purpose of reading Shakespeare is different for a language student from the management or a law student. Today, Shakespeare's dramas are not mere stories told in action and their role can't be limited to appreciation of language or characterization. They are beyond all these things with universal themes and values and can be very well used in other branches like management and law. A student of law can learn many interesting things from plays like "*Measure for Measure*" and "*The Merchant of Venice*". The teaching of literature can be seen as a means of introducing learners to such a serious view of our world.

## **Demands on Teachers**

The changing educational landscape in this increasingly interconnectedness world have placed unprecedented demands on teacher. Teachers should be culturally and pedagogically competent in addressing issues of globalization: racism, diversity, and social justice, and in creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment for students. Today's students need extensive knowledge of the world and the skills and dispositions to engage with people from many other cultures and countries. The teacher's role as a mere technician is not enough in teaching literary texts rather they should understand that classroom is socially constructed and historically situated. Teachers can also contribute to foster critical thinking skills by creative inclusive learning environment where students can exercise their values, assumptions and identities shaped by local, socio-cultural settings and expectations. Teachers today must be well prepared to educate students for this new global context.

## **Developing Teacher's Professional Competency**

Linguistic, cultural and racial diversity has become the characteristic feature of today's class rooms. Teachers need to develop their global competencies in order to teach the 21st century global citizens. Developing teacher's professional competency in educating for global citizenship is a big challenge. Many teachers are not adequately equipped with the theoretical understanding and professional skills to effectively engage and enable students to become global citizens. In order to promote

holistic thinking and cross-cultural understanding among the students, teachers must have the following competency.

1. Teachers must be culturally competent to address the diversity issues and promote inclusive educational practices.
2. Teachers should be pedagogically competent to help students intellectually and morally examine the complex and controversial global issues.
3. Teachers must be equipped with knowledge and skills to bring global perspectives into teaching and learning.
4. The teacher must be sensible in the selection of the texts and a grasp of the context is vital.
5. There is a constant necessity to refine the syllabuses and adopting comparative approach is a must.

### **Educating for Global Citizenship**

The need of the hour is preparing students as Global citizens and for this purpose teachers must design integrated, interactive, learner-centered courses with global-oriented themes and programs through a holistic approach. Most literature on the global citizenship confirms that a global citizen should demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics, including:

1. Respect for fellow humans, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, or political views;
2. Appreciation for diversity and multiple perspectives;
3. A view that no single society or culture is inherently superior to any other;
4. Cherishing the natural world and respecting the rights of all living things;
5. Striving to resolve conflicts without the use of violence;
6. Be responsible for solving pressing global challenges;
7. Think globally and act locally in eradicating inequality and injustice.

Educational practices conducted through the lens of global citizenship aim to prepare students to become global citizens with the above characteristics. The ultimate objectives of education for global citizenship are to build a sense of belongingness with the entire community and a common humanity, and nurture a feeling of global solidarity, identity and responsibility. When that day comes there does not exist any 'Absurd Theatre, and there is no need of 'existential philosophy'.

Today's students are graduating into a world that is well-connected as never before. As citizens in the 21st century, they are required to be responsible to the myriad complex problems. It is not only desirable but also crucial that all educational programs infuse global perspective and strategies, and develop teachers' professional competencies to educate learners for this global citizenship beyond narrow borders. Broader perspectives, global awareness with enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills, respect for diversity, more commitment to sustainable actions are essential to the citizens of the global societies. Finally it is suggested that it would be useful to look beyond all kinds of barriers that have separated citizenship education and to form a new global education. Through literature, students gain insight, empathy, tolerance, and develop a sense of understanding and view the world with a different perspective. Thus literature provides unique opportunities in turning the

learners as global citizens and expands the concept of education to beyond narrow borders.

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