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Teaching And Learning English Literature In Nigerian Context: A Study Of  
Bauchi And Jigawa States

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## ABSTRACT

When we look at the concept of teaching and learning English Literature in Nigerian context, we are going to understand that both teaching and learning are related. The relationship is obvious for that, to effectively teach literature language is integral part. Hence, you cannot teach or learn literature without language. The tradition, the secondary schools have in Nigerian context, are indications that Language and literature are two different school disciplines. To high grades of secondary education, the knowledge of literature and language are imparted differently by at times the same English teacher. By this difference, literature teachers usually teach some stories, social and economic dispensation of the society with no emphasis on the textual language. At the graduation, some students tend to perform better in literature than English Language. With this background knowledge, this research work focus on existed relations of language and literature. In this regard, the research suggests the continual observable relations for effectiveness in both of the disciplines undertaking which in turn result to the overall attainment of efficiency in approach, imparting and acquisition of the required skills and information of language and literature across all grades of learning in the country, (Nigeria), Precisely Bauchi and Jigawa States. The research suggests standardization on all the activities of both the disciplines. ie language and literature.

## 1. Introduction

The use and learning of English as a language in Nigeria in general and Nigerian context in particular traced its origin to around ending of 16<sup>th</sup> and beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> centuries at a place called Badagry, close to the present Lagos coastal state. From the initial stage, Christian missionaries were not intended to make Nigerians learn English language for any reason other than to make them literate in order to be able to read, understand and translate bible into their Nigerian indigenous languages ( Taiwo R. 2009). English is seen in Nigeria as second language learned usually in the expense of one' s inherited language.

Hence, one' s primary language. The language of these missionaries, English has also become part and parcel to Nigerians as that, it' s widely spoken and officially used. In any formal disciplines at the university or any institution of higher learning, the language is of paramount importance that without scoring at least a credit, one would not be admitted. (Evue in Abubakar 2018)

The language of English is the Nigeria' s official language as medium of imparting knowledge to all grades of learning specifically post primary and tertiary grades. English has international recognition as “ for any nation particularly in the 3rd world to be relevant and derive the maximum benefit from the opportunities that abound in every area of human need, for personal advancement and national development, English is a sine qua non” . (Owolabi amd Nnaji in Hassan 2018) in essence, English occupy a greater across all borders of all spheres of life (Hassan M. 2018). Indeed all grades of Nigeria' s education system of Primary schools, Secondary schools and Tertiary institutions of learning are all English based centers of learning. Nigeria has serious problems with English learning and teaching, impacting negatively on the ability of young people to access and succeed in tertiary education (Alexander O. 2014).

## 2. How literature functions in its concept

Literature is primarily has two divergent directions. Firstly, it includes all materials written on any philosophical subject. Secondly, it is a school subject studied at a university level or any school setting; and this applies to the context of this research. Been area of learning, Literature is defined in various ways by different scholars in the field. Thus:

To the view of one Onuekwusi (2013), “ Literature is nothing but any imaginative and beautiful creation in words whether oral or written, which explores man as he struggles to survive for his existence and position and which provides entertainment, information, education and excitement to its audience” . Even though, this gentle man tried to depict the meaning of literature from its purpose, but the term covers not only imaginative. Factual is also part of literature with principal role to play. This made the genre of prose to include aspects of fiction and non-fiction which are universally known. But in whatsoever the case may be, literature as the extract of this definition is the part of human life that is transmitted by use of conglomeration of words.

This in essence is saying that, English is seen the vehicle which the term literature is driven. Based on this premise that, an assertion is usually made to say “ Literature is practical language” . In fact, one may be definitely right on, linguistic theories, style- analyses are used in literary texts. Therefore, to possess power for upward interpretation and analysis of any literary work, you must have the potentials of that language. And for him also to have the ability to understand the language well there is also a need to understand the literature of that language.

It’ s clearly however that, literature has so many important functions contained in its subjects. To put in advantage for every student to derive the benefits of literature, Ayo (2003) deduces advantage on utmost utilization of Literature. By same Ayo, “ the utilities of Literature includes; educational, cultural, recreational and socio-political advantages. Literature has the advantage to improving the linguistics performance of the students as it keeps them with the ability to extensive reading from literary texts. More so, “literature is of benefit to students’ ability to comprehend what they read” Slater C. (1987) proposes the inclusion of Literature in languages classes because it contains valuable genuine materials, help in developing readers’ cultural and linguistic enhancement. In the same development, Lazar on utilities of literature (1993, pp. 14-20) provides five reasons for using literature. viz;

- (i) Motivational
- (ii) Encourage acquisition of language
- (iii) Expansion of language awareness in students
- (iv) Development of students’ ability to become interpretive
- (v) Education of the whole person.

In addition to these utilizations of Literature as far school subject, Unoh R. (1980) in Ogunnaike (2002) maintains his view that, a good literary work serves as an important tool for cultural diffusion; language performance and language competency; conflict resolutions, emotions and stabilities, developments, developing values and good-oriented attitudes for better life; a liberation to educational entertainment, relaxation and various experiences positively to values; desired a desirable moral or/and other attributes; and as a consequence of all these, a stable and matured personality.

### **3. Literature and Language**

The relationship between Literature and language cannot be overemphasized. The term literature and the term language are birds of the same feather. You cannot in anyway read and understand the former or latter without taking cognizance of each other. Hence, they are interrelated.

The cogent relationship between the two can be seen in the work of Willmott (2018)

The literature for all grades of learning conglomerates language components that lead to the understanding and appreciation of the language. In this process, learners tend to learn the linguistic components based on the contextual usage in literary dispensations. This shows the elements of intimate relation between literature and language

In essence, literature demonstrates how language works. Thus, it helps learners to imbibe cultural linguistic exploration and understanding. Language teachers, not literature teachers, explore it, this is for, they use the term in its utmost advantage to language. Literature melted in language and language's life is found through Literature. Hence, Literature and language are intimately working. Lazar (2017) opined that, Literature supposed to be carried out with students for it motivates stimulus in acquisition of language, they enjoy it, drive fun of it, and it also found there in syllabus and the like. Literature being the source for transmitting foreign cultures, serves as motivating materials for language teaching.

Liong C. (2011) agrees on the legitimacy of Literature as it serves value resource for language teaching. Vealtes (2014) has it that, Literature viable the components of second language programmes at all levels appropriately of the major functions of Literature is to serves as medium to transmitting the culture of and the language written in.

Similarly, when literature has been taught in a classroom setting, language is also taught. They both assist each other in utmost sense of interrelation. (Grundy and Basneett, 1993). View the relations between Literature and language as concrete, Uhakwe U. (1979) reviewing Brooks (1966) opines, the language and Literature are interrelated, as such, literature and language should always go together as literature is originated from language.

They argued to the end that there shouldn't be difference between father and son, hence, no divergence between Literature and language. Literature presupposed language. Ayo (2003) has it as, "through the creative pedagogy of teaching Literature, students can be assisted to develop confidence in themselves while producing coherent and cohesive written and spoken discourses and in making the sentences to become paragraphs with effective linkers and using paragraphs to maintain coherent and meaningful written discourse". Hence, Literature enhances the development of reading skills.

Researchers have it that, relations exist between reading and language acquisition, specifically effectiveness. Example, Weilkins Q. (2012) maintain that extensive reading improve in development of new vocabularies of any language in question. It also maintains giving tide relation in its context.

Thus, we usually start writing using our personal experience which insufficient enough to cover everything as far writing. Hence, there is need for external experience which is extensive reading. Scheuster G.(1997) display 3 mean on how reading supports writing:

- (1) Readings can broaden familiarization on resources of language.
- (2) They provide useful information.
- (3) Comparison among experiences.

Stetson- Peps-Gunn, (1993) while commenting the relations between reading and writing which says reading improves content of writing and speech in a language, with this, it increases one's exposures.

Kriashens (1985, 1986, and 1988) linked the relationship between reading and writing to that between a mother and her biological daughter. All from the source that, good writing is the result of better reading.

In same development, people read in order to gain information, developing their vocabularies, inferences, classifying, observation, analyzing, criticizing, identification of relationship, differentiation of styles, drawing the conclusion as well as making generalization. Ayo(2003) said that prose in literature has all the ingredients for better literary write ups.

For example, arguments, descriptions, narrations and expositions are crystal to the better reading in its sense. The poor performance of students in English learners at all grades, would be the resultant effect of poor literary undertakings, specifically at the secondary due to recent techniques of teaching the term Literature at that level. It' s commonly to know that, Language is learned in different setting in Nigerian context which need adjustment.

With the approach, teachers are divided in to two, language and literature teachers. Everyone operates as entity. It' s the view of this paper to advise this primitive method be changed with the one that gives room for innovation and explore the many opportunities between language and literature for better results.

#### **4. Ways to improve literature and language learning effectively**

Here, we intend to suggest for teaching Literature and English Language for effectiveness.

(1) Both teachers be made to have common goals to promoting efficiencies and effectiveness to teaching and learning literature and language. When the pre-determine objective of the two parties centered around achieving greater impact, then, the result will positive.

(2) that, importance attached to English and mathematics be applicable to literature and language. Hence, both language and literature are to be considered as core subjects especially at all grades of learning from primary, secondary and post secondary grades of learning.

(3) in an event, if students are only put to read for examinations purposes, then there is no reason whatsoever that students will get what is called reading culture. This reason culture is what keep the students to learn appropriately the required and expected skills, information and mastery of the said content.

(4) The bodies concern should change from the practice of assessing literature without due considerations to language, as both are birds of the same feather. Hence, students should suppose to learn the expected skills.

(5) Conclusively this work established that, there is a cogent relation between Literature and language. It opined that, if this relationship is harnessed in the teaching and learning of Literature and English Language at the secondary school would greatly assist in addressing lack of proficiency in English on the part of Nigerian students particularly Bauchi and Jigawa States at all levels of education and to minimize high rate of failure in English Language in public examinations. It is also expected that a high level of proficiency in English Language on the part of Nigerian students would be the panacea to solve problem of poor academic performance currently threatening the educational industry in Nigeria at large. Therefore, governments, curriculum designers,

schools and the teachers of Literature and English Language should work hand in hand to ensure that these

Suggested innovations in the teaching of Literature and English Language in our schools and colleges are definitely implemented as well.

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