

THE RISE OF TECHNICAL ENGLISH AND THE FALL OF LITERATURE

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This paper is an attempt to bring out the already dug classics into the modern day curriculum, Great novels, plays, poetries have already disappeared from the minds of young learners, if the situation continues, and Literature will become extinct. This paper is an attempt to make the English classrooms more lively and attractive, which would also enable the learner to have a love for English language. One wonders when will the future generation understand and enjoy the greatness of classics that go unread and uncared. Modern day learners are deprived of the pleasures rendered by Literature¹. Why Literature? Has been a question for a very long time and in this fast moving world the beauty of Literature is not much taken care of. Some Arts and Science colleges In India prescribed an English paper with the essence of literature. Even it had only the most famous scene in any one play, from the classics of Shakespeare, for many years². Earlier Language Teachers took up the challenging task of taking the learners to the mesmerizing world of poetries. Now, Most English teachers claim that most of their classes have become more and more monotonous and raw as they are executing facts and realities, Grammars and Logical reasoning questions to the already 'mechanical' mindsets. This paper vividly discusses how English Literature has been occupying a dominant position in the past era and its present day downfall.

“Teachers must train the students to present their answers using self-structured sentences. Our examination should make the learner excel in communication skills and need not be a memory tester³ Our syllabus should give focus to the proficiency of the learner instead of his writing skills. Learner should be graded based on his communication, polite behavior; his promotions should depend on his speaking ability and not by his securing 50 marks. Presenting a paper in the class can bring his confidence hence it should be encouraged⁴. Listening is always termed as the first and primary requisite for learning English but little importance is given in our syllabus towards it.

Institutions today have set up English language laboratory to make the learner listen English conversations. Most Educationists argue that including such Lab classes in the curriculum can alone bring a positive result. English for Occupational purposes has been the need of the hour and when Educational Institutions affirm the revamping of syllabus structure a drastic change is certain⁵. All the hope is not lost yet, there is a dire need for revamping our syllabus structure and provide oxygen to the already dying Literature classics.

Immortal works of Shakespeare, mesmerizing lyrics of Keats, unfathomed world of Coleridge can be included in the English Syllabus which would also pave

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way for the modern day learners to get introduced to a new subject at their right age rather than dealing again with the text and grammatical principles which they have been dealing for their past 12 years of their school life⁶. English teachers should also understand the greatness of literature and should motivate the students to go for classics. It is a proved fact that Literature reading paves way for their Language acquisition hence necessary steps should be taken in this regard for revival of our classics.

‘David Foster Wallace pointed out that “every year the culture gets more and more hostile . . . it gets more and more difficult to ask people to read,” which he blamed on the speed of Internet culture, lagging educational standards, and weak demand for “serious books” relative to Europe. Before all of these it was Jonathan Franzen, a novelist known for riffing on the theme of literature’s failings—“its inability to change anything, its over-intellectualization, and its experimentalism”

George Steiner proclaimed “The Death of Tragedy” in 1961, Frank Kermode claimed that the paradoxical “fate of the novel, considered as a genre, is to be always dying” in 1965, and Alvin Kernan acted as the mortician at “The Death of Literature” in 1992. For a yet-further expanded scope, see Caleb Crain, who wrote in the *New Yorker* that not just literature but literacy itself might be endangered..

“The decline of literature indicates the decline of a nation.” “What is wonderful about great literature is that it transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of the man who wrote.” - E.M. Forsterhann Wolfgang von Goethe, from this it is evident that Literature is the mirror of life and our generation. But Literature in the modern day has become an untouched genre at most levels. Our earlier generations had plays and poetries in their syllabus, they were taught and they started to teach the content to us.

Today, modern educationists have divided the English Language studies into two parts either Literature or Technical English. There are innumerable Engineering colleges sprouting up every year, the learners believe that English studies ends with Grammar studies only, ever since their elementary education Active and passive voice, Tenses dominate the English hour, where the teacher and learner become dull imparting only Grammatical aspects with examples in class rooms.

Literature Vs ELT

If one can remember his or her English teacher it would be undoubtedly due to their proficiency in literature verses, their capacity to enact a Shakespearean scene, their verbal ability in delivering Antony’s oration etc. How many of our modern learners actually have enjoyed the romantic poets, read a sonnet, an ode or plays of Shakespeare? They have become more and more ‘mechanical’ their minds have become ‘concrete’ enough, their mindset to ‘dissect’ insects prevents them from being mesmerized into the world of literature. “While thought exists, words are alive and literature becomes an escape, not from, but into living.” - Cyril Connolly

but our modern day learners do not find a solace or escape from the clutches of a monotonous and insipid syllabus structure some Educationists argue that fantasy has no role to play in this scientific era, hence focus is given on technical skills as a result Technical English and its contents are given importance and Literature and its experts are asked to occupy the last seat!

Many conferences were conducted on literary themes, literary debates were frequently conducted, role of a teacher in an English classroom was even more challenging, when we take into account our modern day Engineering English, it lacks the liveliness, pleasant atmosphere a literature class would have. Earlier competitions like enacting a scene from a play, reciting a poem, writing a poem were conducted. They were all the bundle of pleasure literature provided, and now English Language Teaching (ELT) is occupying a predominant position. Grammar classes are conducted at all levels, Analogy and analytical skills find place in English syllabus.

However, we could not deny the fact that most students lack grammatical skills; fail to write a report or a letter. The teachers have become trainers to make the learner ready for his corporate sector with the necessary fluency, verbal and non-verbal skills. The response to the ever-increasing demand for English as a result of economic globalization. Such a demand leads to pressure on governments from international economic forces to ensure there is an English-speaking workforce. The pressure from parents in the national context who want their children to benefit socially and economically from learning English⁸ as a result, in most of the institutions, Literature has become a Department that is no longer sought. The yesteryear classics have occupied the last shelves of the famous libraries with the label, the untouched, old classics. Many Arts and Science colleges still maintain English Literature as a course to be reserved for the below average lots. Syllabus in English Literature also gets deviated and includes all modern writings. Some institutions have Basic Grammatical Principles, Soft skills, Journalism, ELT as the main stream of papers excluding the classics forgetting the words of Alfred North Whitehead, "It is in literature that the concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression." All these are examples that vividly state that Literature has its downfall and the rise of ELT is evident.

When we analyse the factors that hinder literature existence is the lack of interest among the learners. Most educationists argue that though Literature is given an option, most learners show their disinterest in the subject. This issue could be solved only with the steps taken by the school teachers, ever since the learner focuses English he or she is given a notion that Grammar is the whole crux of English Language, course and paper. With this wrong notion they approach Language classes disinterested. Great Classics, works and writers should be introduced to them during their school education. Then there would be an aversion towards the Language. Lack of motivation by the Parents also a valid point to

note, parents in this modern world do not cultivate reading habit in the minds of youngsters, as a result we cannot find any learner with a novel or interesting poetry verses. There should be awareness among the parents regarding the development of artistic talents of the young ones. Teachers play a vital role in motivating the learners as a result, revival of literature and cultivating reading habit largely depends on the teachers and the methods they employ while teaching. Modern day English teachers should sow the words of wisdom in the young minds through literature and thereby evoking their artistic talents. It is a pitiable fact that Modern day learners lack artistic talents and they more and more mechanical, mundane.

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