

## CHALLENGES IN TEACHING-LEARNING ENGLISH LITERATURE AT AN UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

**Dr. Surekha Gurupad Mandi**

Asst. Professor in English

Shri Shahaji Chhatrapati Mahavidyalaya, Kolhapur.

---

### **Abstract:**

*Now a day English has become most important language for both formal and informal communication but mostly the problem is faced by many Indian students. Thought as a difficult language, it is challenging for teachers not only to teach English but also English literature. So the teacher of English literature has to face many challenges. Students also have their own problems. So the present paper focuses on the challenges before teachers of English literature as well as problems faced by students. Some solutions to these problems are also suggested through this paper in order to make teaching learning process more enjoyable. English literature can also become interesting and favourite subject for the students.*

### **Introduction:**

English has now become a global language. The study of English language has become more significant in present milieu as it has become link language. So far as India is concerned, it is not only difficult to teach English language but also English literature. Majority Indian people are living in rural area. So not only students but also teachers also are not that much aware about the new techniques of teaching English language. In such situation, if the teacher is not teaching the subject properly, then students also remain weak in that subject. They do not feel that particular subject interesting. So it is the responsibility of the teacher to make English subject more interesting for the student though it is foreign language.

One more important reason, why English is supposed to be difficult language, is prejudice of students towards English. This prejudice is passed from one generation to another generation. But the present generation is too much aware about the importance of English. So they are trying to improve their English but they have to face many problems like vocabulary building as well as grammar. If they will get good teachers, their attitude towards this subject will become positive. So it is up to teachers that how they are teaching English to their students, how much efforts they are taking to improve students' English. It is the fact that English is foreign language for both teachers and students. So it is challenging for teacher to make this subject easy for students. Most of the times, it happens that the problems faced by students in school level are carried forward in their college if they have not done conscious efforts to improve their English.

The study of English is as important as English literature. So far as Indian students are concerned it is challenging for teacher to teach students for whom English is a second language. Indian students, as they are mostly from rural area, have not even mastered their mother tongue. So it

becomes difficult for teacher to teach such students who have not properly learned this second language. In such situation the job of teacher becomes arduous.

Teaching learning is a two way process. Learner should also be active like teachers because it is learner who has to achieve his goals in his career. Our education system is student centred so student's active participation as well as their development is important. Students are just like empty vessels so it is teacher who has to fill up these empty vessels but he has to fill it up carefully so that it will lead to great personality.

Literature is reflection of life and it teaches students different ways of life. So it is important to learn literature and the study of literature includes reading, writing, thinking and discussion. So literature helps to develop the personality of students. They can learn how to sympathise with people. Similarly it helps to develop personality of students. Through literature they can learn how human life is complex. It makes students intellectually rich. Through English literature different English cultures are learnt. It not only develops their language but also their vocabulary building. It also helps to improve their thinking ability. All these are the benefits of teaching as well as learning literature but for that teachers have to put efforts to make his/her teaching more interesting. Dr.Anisa Mujawar in her article Creative ways of teaching English literature:

Hence, it is essential to teach literature with the help of new methods. With these methods it is possible to involve all the students in the learning activities. It gives them an opportunity for interdisciplinary study also. It will help them to undertake research in other disciplines or it will encourage them for comparative study. These techniques are motivating and challenging. They help students to enrich and sustain their efforts of learning literature. They encourage students to interact and communicate with each other (126-27)

#### **Challenges in Teaching English Literature:**

- I. First of all, teacher of English literature has to keep in mind that these undergraduate students do not have any literary background. They have not learned any literary form like drama, novel in their high school or pre-graduation period. So the lecturer has to clear these basic literary concepts like what is novel? what is drama? to the students. One more important challenge before teacher of English literature that they have to create a particular aura while teaching English literature. Teacher has to think about the students who are weak in English. So it is hard for teachers to make this subject more interesting.
- II. Teachers have to choose the books or texts which are relevant to particular literary text to make his teaching more and more rich but all the time such books may or may not be available to the teacher.
- III. Another important challenge for the teacher is that he has to study the text properly and has to convert that text in such a way that it will become easy for the students. Teacher has to think about the level of students.
- IV. If the particular literary text is lengthy, mainly English novels are lengthy, it becomes difficult to cover all text book in the classroom. Here also teacher has to use his skill to make it short in such a way that it will cover all the important points.

- V. Most of the English literature shows foreign culture. If there is any Indian novel or any other form, Indian students can understand it very easily but if it belong to any western literature then it becomes difficult to teach. Teachers have to use his/ her skill to take the students to that particular atmosphere. So teaching foreign literature is a daunting job for both teachers as well as learners. Sutappa Dutta says in his article *Teaching English Literature to a Heterogeneous Class: The Challenges and Problems of Differing Identities*:
- Each one of us has cultural identifications, and associated with these are shared perceptions, experiences and behavioural patterns. The acceptance of English as an international language of communication has no doubt enabled nations to interact with each other. It is an indispensable medium to share knowledge, experience and culture. It facilitates intercultural communication and allows nations and people to share their diverse thoughts, views and traditions. But the challenge lies in learning and teaching English language and literature in a multi cultural, multilingual, multiethnic classroom.
- VI. Most of the time, it happens that teachers are interested to give each and every thing to the students but the time span or the lectures allotted to them are not enough to explain each and everything. So teachers have to teach the students from the exam point of view.
- VII. Use of ICT helps the students to make their teaching more effective and it saves the time of the teachers. But all the time, it is not possible because all the colleges do not have that much technology available. So teachers have to follow their traditional method.
- VIII. There is mismatch between standard of syllabus and standard of students. This creates bigger challenge for teachers. Here teachers have to work like a bridge between student's level of learning and the standard of syllabus. Teacher has to make it more easy and interesting for the students.
- X. Instead there are many problems like poor attendance of students, their disinterestedness, constrain of time and burden of extensive course can become hindrances in teaching learning process.
- XI. One more hindrance in teaching English literature is that any literary text requires critical thinking which is not developed by the students in their earlier learning process. So teachers have to explain each and everything about the text.
- XII. Sometimes, it happens though teachers are taking efforts to make the learning process easy, students are not serious or they are just thinking it from exam point of view so they just try to keep it in mind, the concept as it is without understanding the real meaning. So even after graduation in English literature students remain as an empty vessel.

### **Challenges Before Learners:**

#### **I. Cognitive Development:**

At this stage student's cognitive capacity is not that much developed. So it happens that they do not understand the new literary concepts. So the job of teacher becomes more challenging in such situation.

**II. Lack of Critical Thinking Ability:**

While learning literary text it is necessary that students must have that much thinking ability but the real picture looks contrast. Students do not have that much thinking ability or they are not thinking or analysing text critically so once again teacher has to do all these things. Teacher has to make all the concepts clear as well as teach them how to think critically on the particular aspect of the literary text.

**III. Lack of Vast Reading:**

This is the area where most of the students lag behind. Now a days, students are spending much time in surfing social media. So most of them are not taking much literary texts or any other texts as a result they are less knowledgeable. This is also a reason that these students cannot analyse any literary text. So it is need of time that these students have to develop their reading habit and teachers have to suggest them good books as well as encourage them to develop their reading ability.

**IV. Lack of Vocabulary:**

This is again result of students' little reading. When they will start reading on a wider scale, automatically they will improve their vocabulary because they will come across new words which will make them to learn a new word with particular context. So students have to develop reading habit which will gradually develop their critical thinking, vocabulary building as well as they can improve their speaking and writing ability.

**Solutions to These Problems:**

In order to make teaching learning process more interesting it is necessary to overcome these challenges and have to make English literature as a favourite subject. If teachers will be able to solve at least some problems among it, their students can improve more and more. In order to make English literature teachers have to make use of post cards, music CDs, film clips, even audio texts.

**I. Perfect Atmosphere:**

First of all teacher has to create atmosphere for the particular text. In order to create such atmosphere he has to make use of technology. Teacher can either show photographs of that particular historical, social background or he can show any film based on it. In such way teacher make students familiar with particular atmosphere of the particular text.

**II. Small Project:**

In such situation teacher can either tell his students to collect the social or political or economic background of that particular country or particular era through internet sources so that students can do their self study and understand more or teacher himself can make use of such clips or images related to background of the text.

**III. Use of Video Clips:**

Showing video form of the literary text before or after the text is more effective. Students can compare between the text and the film and watching such film not only improves their literature but also their English language.

**IV. Use of Language Labs:**

Students of literature can learn proper pronunciation in these language labs. They already have a subject like linguistics which shows how to pronounce the word in a proper way and with the help if this language lab they can learn about British and American accents. They can experience it practically.

**V. Use of internet:**

Now a day internet is more easy and accessible and the use of it should be made in teaching as well as learning. It can help both teachers and students even they can read blogs which are in social networking websites. Similarly e-books also can help them.

**VI. To Make Students Active:**

It is the job of teacher to make the passive students more active. So teachers can ask them to present short biographical sketch of the writer or write a book review after the completion of the text. This boosts their reading, writing and speaking skill.

**VII. Make the Students More Creative:**

In order to make students more creative, teacher can ask them to write a poem on the particular novel or a poem on that particular theme. Even they can write essay on it. In such way, student's active participation will lead to greater success.

**VIII. Presentation of Drama:**

In every university, throughout three years graduation course atleast one drama is prescribed for the syllabus. So teacher first of all has to teach this drama and later can make his students perform a small part of drama. This will also work in a very different way.

**IX. Develop critical thinking:**

Critical thinking is necessary to analyse any literary text. So teachers can teach their student to read the text between the lines. This will lead students to analyse each and every line which will improve their analysing power. Teacher can give them some lines of poems to analyse them for exercise and can correct students through their mistakes.

**Conclusion:**

If such activities are taken in the classroom, teaching will never remain as monologue. Students' active participation can lead them to dialogue. Such innovative techniques make students to learn by heart. All these new techniques will make learning process more interesting. Students will also take interest in learning and using new techniques will remain centre of attraction for the students.

So such innovative ways of teaching English literature will make the subject interesting for students. Even they will never forget the activities they have done and will able to memorise any literary information for longer time. so it is teacher's responsibility to make their active participation in whatever literary activity is done in the classroom and help them to learn the subject by heart.

**References:**

1. Dr. Mujawar, Anisa. Creative Techniques of Teaching English Literature. July 2013. Vol. 13:7. Print.
2. DattaSutappa. Teaching English Literature to a Heterogeneous Class: The Challenges and Problems of Differing Identities.  
<http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/teaching-english-literature-to-a-heterogeneous-class/10787928> Jan. 2017.