

10

LITERATURE AS A VERITABLE FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

BY

DOMIKE, ISAAC NWACHUKWU

FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PANKSHIN

AND

OLADEJI, A.O

FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION PANKSHIN

Abstract

The importance of literature to language development cannot be over emphasized. Literature has helped many people in no small measure to develop language skills. It has made people to be proficient in their daily use of language making them to understand the connotations of words which helps them in building their vocabulary. this paper therefore discusses the meaning of literature. It highlights the three genres of literature. It further discuses literature as a veritable tool for language development.

Introduction

Literature has no single definition. It means different things to different people. Some see it to be any special expression using language in any of the following forms: prose, poetry and drama. Literature uses any of these forms to tell stories orally or in a writing. Many see literature as a wriuing that conveys pleasant and unpleasant experiences of life to those who are interested in them. Some also see it as an imagination of man that expresses thought, feelings and desires in a written form Acholonu (1980 p 3). Literature engages the inner issues of life and tries to present the society as it is with a view of creating positive impact on it. It is therefore a work of art which seeks to interpret values and experiences for the purpose of guiding and elevating man. Literature is a creative work of art. As a work of art, it is created for Our enjoyment. However an operational definition of literature will guide in this paper. Hornby (1995 p 687), sees literature as "a writing valued to be work of art, which includes prose (fiction and non fiction), drama, poetry, and which are quite different fromn technical books, newspapers and magazines". It is an imaginary work of art with a different form of approach Irom technical books. It involves life and experiences. It deals with human beings and animals.

Genres of Literature.

Literature have three broad genres. They are prose, drama and poetry. Prose is derived from the Latin word "prosa" which literally translates as straight forward. Prose is the ordinary of spoken and written language whose unit is the sentence rather than the line as it is in poetry It narrates life's experiences which are woven around the hero or heroine. Iheakaram (1994p 5), sees prose as "a narrative or text whose events, characters, place and other elements are made up from imagination of the author rather than from facts of history". Prose is written a narrative form and is divided into chapters. It has a central idea which is the theme, the plot could be fiction or non fiction, Drama is that type of literature that is acted on stage before the audience. Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia (1973 p 146) volume 8 defines it as "literally Composition in either verse or prose that tells a story through action and speech and is usually intended to be performed by actors before an audience". Drama is full of action rather than mere narration of story and is mostly written in acts and scenes. Its main aim is to entertain for pleasure. It has major and minor characters. It could be comedy, tragedy or tragicomedy. Poetry is the study of poems. It is an expression of beautiful thoughts in a metric or verse form. it uses punctuations and figurative language. Poetry sings, it dances and it is full of colour. This prompted Grieve (1960 p 4) to say that "poetry opens a whole new world of experience. It sharpens Our sense, makes us more keenly and fully aware of life, exercises our imagination and stores up treasure in our memory".

or arrangement of the idea, the setting which deals with time and place the story is

The Role of Literature in Language Development

One of the reasons behind the reading of literature is the development of language Literature contains a wide range of words coined together by combining two or more letters to form a word which are constructed into sentences. A reader of literature text gets acquainted with these words and other sentences to build up his vocabulary. In support of this, Ogbonna (2003) is of the view that "there is a linguistic purpose of literature". This shows that literature is important in the acquisition of language. This in essence shows that if one wants to acquire language more, he should read literature texts because language is exposed there. To Okoye (1995), literature has become the most effective language skill reinforcer. It enables us to develop and retain English skills. Students in their academic studies are normally required to get acquainted with wide variety of literary genres. This is efficient in classroom situation English teachers sometimes advice their students to read one or two chapters of a given text urging them to pay attention to strange words advising them to look over their definitions in the dictionary pay attention to sentence constructions, phrases and clauses etc for proper understanding of a given topic in English. If the students really do this, they acquire more words and master their usage in sentences. Children indeed needs to soak themselves in literature because they learn so much from written language and storytelling which helps them in their language development. Nwadike (1989 p4), affirms that "we learn from literature gramta new words and different

sentence formations". To him literature is indispensable to languages because literature is language applied. Through it we come across new words and their usage. This then implies that for one to develop linguistically, one should be in love with literature and always have a date with it. The reason why some science students in senior secondary school opt for literature in place of Geography is to enable them understand the use of English which will help them in passing their English Language. Literature in this way puts language at work. It keeps language going. It preserves language and protects it from dying. This is obvious. The Shakespearian dramas help in preserving the Elizabethan English spoken at that time. People who read these dramas sometimes find their selves speaking that English especially within the circle of friends. Literature in this way circulates and revolves language thus making it go round. Literature makes people to know how the spoken language looks like. It makes people to admire language. It keeps our linguistic acumen high and creates awareness where language to say that language is beautiful when spoken but literature makes it more beautiful when seen thus attracting people to have a glimpse of what the spoken language looks like, that is drawing people closer to it to look deeply at its beauty in order to beautify their language. Literature in this way has become a resource material sought after for the development of language. Njoku (2003 p44), in Jhejirika and Ogbonna (ed) opines that "a good work of art enhances our vocabulary He further states that "we acquire new words and try to make them our own". When we come across a new word, we find that word in the dictionary, read over all the definitions and find the definition that fits what we are reading, we make sentences with the word in order to know the usage thus we master the word. A good work of art is a fertile ground through which language is planted and propagated. It provides language and showcases it in many forms. Okoye cited earlier says that "literature is language at its best since literature is usually written in the author's best language". For examples, the author, knows he is writing to the whole world. So he makes sure that he uses the best language he has to convey his message. The avid reader of literature acquires this best language of the author And tries to make it his own. Azikiwe (1998p 202), opines that literature is language in action. She further affirms that "people have observed that literature has been used to assist the development of competence in language." To be competent in any language, one should be an avid reader of literature in that language because you meet the use of language in different forms, Fadare and Adegun (2009 p3), posits that "literature improves language use of the learner". This is so because literature communicates through language and language is the most powerful tool for studying literature.

One of the objectives of teaching prose in schools according to WAEC (1988) is to help the learner of language in which the literary work is exposed. A good work of art improves student's performance in language. It enables them to be fluent in that language and gives them the ability to understand very well what they are reading. Bright and MacGregor (1981), corroborated by Ogbonna (1997), affirms that "where there is little reading, there will be little language learning". This view emphasizes that extensive reading of literary works develops language competence where as little reading develops little or no language at all. Reading creates awareness where

information is got. Reading of literary works opens a new way where information about language is obtained.

Conclusion

The best way to enrich our vocabulary is through literature because it helps us to attain competence in language and helps to develop and perfect our use of language. Literature serves as language embellishment. It polishes languages and presents it to the people to behold its beauty. It nourishes language and makes it fat so that people may feed from it to quench their linguistic hunger. However, literature has become an avenue where language is conceived and given birth to. Literature indeed feeds people with proper use of language.

REFERENCES

- Acholonu, AA (1980), A Guide to Unseen Prose and Poetry. Ibadan, Claverianum Press.
- Azikiwe, U. (1998), Language Teaching And Learning, Onitsha, African Fep Publishers.
- Fadare, O.N and Adegun, S.A (2009), Literary Appreciation, Theory and Practical Criticism: A Descriptive Approach, Jos, Akins Press and Services
- Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia (1973) Vol 8.
- Grieve, D.W (1960), Adventures Into Poetry For African Schools, London, Macmillan and Co Ltd.
- Hornby, A. S. (1995), Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, New York, Oxford University Press
- Iheakaram, RO. (1994), Introduction to Piction and Gutdelines for Short Story and Novel writing. Owerri, Heins Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- Njoku, C.N (2003), The Essentials of Use of English and Communication Skills, Owerri, Versatile Publishers.
- Nwadike, I:U. (1989), Ntoala Agumagu, Ihialla, Deo Gratias Press.
- Ogbonna, TI. (2003), Literature: Its Definition, Aim and Functions Reading in Languages Vol 1 FCE Pankshin.
- Ogbonna, T.I (1997), Factors Influencing School Children's Performance for Literature texts Implications for Developing Reading Habits in Nigerian Secondary School Pupils. Pankshin Journal of Education Vol 1.
- Okoye, PN.C. (1995), Literature and Adolescents, Focus on Nigeria Journal of Literary Studies Vol 1 EC.E. Pancen. WAEC/WASSCE (1988), Regulation and Syllabus, Kadura, Basmeá Printers Ltd