

Two Days National Workshop
on
Teaching/Learning Language through
Literature
July 18th & 19th 2014



Organized by

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
National Institute of Technology Meghalaya

Venue

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
National Institute of Technology Meghalaya

Report prepared by

Ms. B. Samita Devi & Mr. Guneshore Khomdram



Organizing Committee

Patron Prof. Dilip Kumar Saikia
Director, NIT Meghalaya

Chairman Dr Paonam Sudeep Mangang
Assistant Professor & HoD, Dept. of HSS, NITM

Coordinators

Mr. Amal Dev Sarma, Assistant Professor, NITM
Dr Meena Khwairakpam, Assistant Professor, NITM

Co-Coordiators

Dr Gitish Dutta, Assistant Professor, NITM
Mrs. Surmila Thokchom, Assistant Professor, NITM
Mr. Tikaram Subedi, Assistant Professor, NITM

Advisory Committee

Prof. Th. Ratankumar Singh, Manipur University
Dr Priyanka Tripathi, IIT, Patna
Dr Arzuman Ara, EFLU, Shillong Campus
Dr Haobam Subrata, DMC, Imphal
Dr Gyanabati Khuraijam, NIT, Agartala

About NIT Meghalaya

National Institute of Technology Meghalaya is an Institute of National Importance with full funding support from MHRD, Government of India. The Institute is functioning in its temporary campus at Bijni Complex, Laitumkhrah, Shillong. Shillong is well connected with the rest of the country by road. Nearest railhead and airport is Guwahati which is about 100 Kms from Shillong.

About the Department

The Department of Humanities and Social Sciences has been an integral part of the Institute since its inception in the year 2010. The main objective of the department is the holistic and all round development of the technical graduates into socially responsible individuals. There has been strong exhortation among the technical institutes that technical education needs to be complemented by a vital appreciation of the social values and interpersonal context of all learning. Responding to this, the department is infusing the concept of "Technology for the

greater good of mankind and society as a whole" so that the students will not only excel in technical expertise but also inculcate among themselves excellence in communication, refinement of reasoning, openness to new ideas, and a commitment to social values and ethical behavior.

The department strives to provide the students allied knowledge essential to engineering students and has expertise in various disciplines like English Language and Literature, European Literature in Translation, Abnormal Psychology, General Management, Marketing Management, Financial Management, Human Resource Management and Operations Management. The department has its own PhD Programme and is actively engaged in research. The department also has a modern Computer Assisted Language Learning Lab.

About the Workshop

Language learning/teaching has always been an essential part of school as well as higher education curriculum. However, there is a general lack of manpower equipped with the know-how of teaching languages to the learners. Though Grammar and Vocabulary constitute the basic ingredients in learning a language, studying them strictly through rules and practice alone makes the learning process slow and tedious. In the last few decades, we have noticed a change in the syllabus of Literature and Language papers. About 2 decades back, Literature and Grammar were studied as completely different and whole subjects. However, the syllabus setters nowadays have relegated grammar to the back seat from the school and college courses. Why is this so? Maybe it is a policy which suggests that language can be learnt easily and interestingly through literature. Grammar and Vocabulary, no doubt, continue to occupy a major chunk of the learning process although in a more concealed manner. Now students are expected to learn language through the literature course. However, the present day teachers of literature having studied language through the old syllabus system would naturally feel something amiss in the way they learnt languages and the way they are expected to teach. Therefore it becomes imperative that teachers and students of Literature and Language should learn

new approaches, methods and theories related with the teaching of Language through Literature.

On these perspectives, the department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology Meghalaya organized its first National Workshop on “Teaching/ Learning Language through Literature” on 18th and 19th July 2014.

Many eminent resource persons graced the workshop programme. They shared valuable knowledge on the importance of Literature in Teaching or Learning Language. A total of 34 students and faculty members from St. Mary’s college, Shillong; English and Foreign Languages University, Shillong Campus; St. Anthony’s College, Shillong; IGNOU; Shillong Polytechnic; Manipur University; DM College of Arts, Imphal; National Institute of Technology, Manipur; Kha Manipur College, Kakching; and Lilong Haoreibi College, Manipur, participated in the workshop organized and hosted by the department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology Meghalaya.

July 18, 2014

Ms. Toony Gill, Head, Department of English, St. Mary’s College, Shillong and Prof. Ananya S. Guha, Regional Director, IGNOU Jorhat Regional Centre were kind enough to graced the opening function of the workshop as the Guests of Honour.





Prof. Th. Ratankumar Singh, a senior professor of the Department of English, Manipur University, and also the Coordinator of Foreign Languages Department, Manipur University, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.



The chair of the president was graced by Dr Paonam Sudeep Mangang, Head of Department, Humanities and Social Sciences, NIT Meghalaya. He is also the chairman of the Organizing Committee of the two days workshop.



The Keynote Address of the workshop was given by Mr. Amal Dev Sarma, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Department and also the in-charge, Training and Placement Cell of the institute.



In the address he highlighted the main aim of the workshop which is to make the participants aware of the different methods of teaching and learning Language through Literature. He elucidated on the close connection of Language and Literature by citing examples such as the introduction of Nursery Rhymes in children's academic discipline which had turned out to be a successful achievement for the easy awareness it had provided of English language starting from a very young age, result being the dominance of English Language worldwide. He highlighted how helpful English literature could be in making language and its grammatical construction understandable in an interesting way. He stressed that when one reads a literary work, apart from the entertainment it provides it also gives an in-depth idea of the language construction. He emphasized on the new words literature provide which would be helpful in conversation. Citing such importance on language and literature he concluded his keynote address with a short introduction about the resource persons who were to give lectures on various topics.

The keynote address was followed by the main programme that is the lecture session. The first lecture was given by Prof. Ananya S. Guha who spoke on the topic "Use of Technology in Teaching of Literature".



He emphasized on the role Literature plays as teacher of Language. He stated that children were introduced to literature way before they got introduced to Grammar citing examples of rhymes and bed time story books. He emphasized the importance of using technology in imparting education. Technology has the capacity to bring a revolutionary change in the world. Today we are living in a high-tech world, meaning technology has made easy access to knowledge possible. Radio and TV programmes like Gyandarshan have enabled us to gain knowledge. Such steps to impart knowledge according to him were essential for quality as well as quantity education. One result of such step is India's booming human resource and their demand in the global market. He also stressed on the wrong usage of technology and the need of adult participation to restrict young student from easy access to anything bad. Citing example of movie adaptation of literary works which helps learners not to confine only in the realm of imagination but also to experience a vivid picture in a realistic way he concluded saying technology is important in teaching Literature.

The next lecture was given by Dr Arzuman Ara, Assistant Professor, English and Foreign Languages University, Shillong, on "Understanding the Language of Literature".



Defining the term literature which came from latin word 'litera' which means letter, she put forth a brief analysis on different literary devices like comparisons, figures of speech, composition of words etc which helps in learning language. She highlighted the tricks that words play, such as the tone of mockery, depending on how the line is spoken, either harshly or softly. She gave few glimpses on tools like metaphor and simile and their appropriate usage. She even pointed out the high adaptive nature of language that language tends to get affected by regional dialects. In the case of English, she cited example of the difference between British English and Indian English.

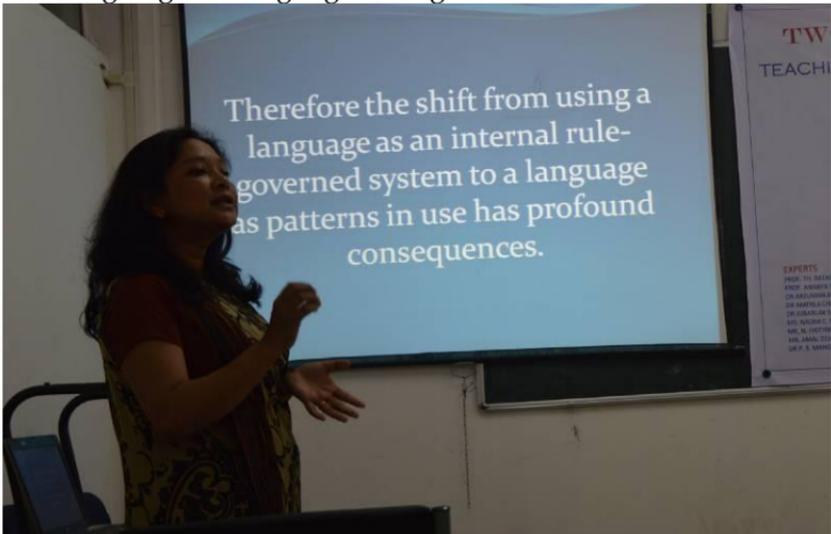
After the lunch break, Prof. Th. Ratankumar Singh lectured on "Stylistics in the Study of Literature".



He started off by giving the general explanation of literature as anything that has been written down or printed. He further stated literature to be imagination which not only entertain the readers but also make them understand the beauty and the linguistic knowledge the works provide. He stressed that literature should be aesthetic, of good quality to be expressed through language or group of meaningful words with the motives of teaching and to delight. He viewed that any literary work should have the quality to change the reader into a nobler and rational being. Citing the classical treatise "On the Sublime" by Longinus, he pointed out that grandeur of thought and

capacity to produce strong feelings and emotions are inborn in nature but the dignity of composition could be acquired through frequent practice. He concluded by emphasizing on the need to have a fair understanding of the language to learn language through literature. Otherwise the reader or learner would fail to grasp the wordplay ultimately leading to the failure to grasp how and why a given passage contains specific beauty.

Dr Jubanlak Sutnga, Assistant professor, St. Mary's College, Shillong, presented the next lecture titled "Exploiting Curiosity: Learning English Language through Literature".



She said literature provides genuine authentic samples of wide range of styles and text types. The advantage of literature is also tremendous as it provides creativity. She said that literature shows real feelings of the writer which generates a powerful motivation in the learner. She views language to be a rule-governed system as well as a pastiche (imitation) of patterns. She stated examples like 'Will you marry me?' to highlight the conventionalized usage of language. People naturally are bound by certain rules and some phrases are conventionalized. She says that people do not use 'I desire you to become married to me'. Mentioning that English has become a mass preference today, she highlighted the need for teachers to be efficient.

Symbolic Interpretation in *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Little Black Boy*", she emphasized on the importance of language in literature and how words assume different meanings in different context and situation. She stressed on the perceptive nature of word which can have literal or surface meaning/ metaphorical or pun intended according to the usage. She further lectured emphasizing on the "iceberg theory" according to which the easily conceived meaning is the floating upper part of the iceberg whereas the hidden meanings and ideas are the vast submerged part of the iceberg.



Using some literary works such as William Blake's poems and Hemingway's novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*, she highlighted the symbolisms certain sentences could carry such as the biblical echoes of redemption in the said works. She also discussed other works for the benefit of the participants.

Then Dr Arzuman Ara gave a continuation lecture on her first day's topic. This lecture was followed by the final lecture given by Dr Amenla Changkija, Assistant Professor, English and Foreign Languages University, Shillong on "Effectiveness on the use of Idioms and Euphemisms in English".



She emphasized on the importance of English Language. She talked of appreciating the language and to understand and relish the beauty of language. Her lecture wholly focused on the importance and usage of idioms and euphemisms. Euphemism she said, help the speaker to show the gentler side of oneself. When one adopts a gentler sentence or term in place of a harsh one it not only helps create a beauty in the sentence but also to draw a likable quality of the speaker. She further highlighted the beauty of idioms as phrases full of wit. Idioms and euphemisms she said are unavoidable in day to day life. Knowingly or unknowingly people employ these devices while conversing daily. She further stressed on the importance of how, what and when to use such devices. She concluded her lecture by citing some common idioms and phrases and asking participants to discuss on it.

After the lunch break, a special practice session for the participants to present papers on themes related with the workshop was arranged. The experts listened to the presentations and gave feedbacks and suggestions. Some of the participants learnt the proper way of presenting academic papers through this session.

There was also a journal release function. Prof. Th. Ratankumar Singh and Prof. N. Jyotirindra Singh released the 4th issue of Spectrum: An International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, ISSN 2019-6076. It may be mentioned that Prof. Th. Ratankumar Singh is the Chief Editor of this journal. Dr Paonam Sudeep Mangang and Mr. Amal Dev Sarma, are the Editor and Associate Editor of the journal respectively. Dr Haobam Subrata Singh, Assistant Professor, DM College of Arts, Imphal, was the Special Editor for this issue.



Prof. Th. Ratankumar Singh and Prof. N. Jyotirindra Singh were then requested to hand over the certificates to the participants. With the vote of thanks given by Mr. Amal Dev Sarma, the Two Days National Workshop concluded fruitfully and effectively.



Introducing the dignitaries



The busy organizers



Refreshing break after a hard lecture session



Dignitaries and participants enjoying a literary discussion



Some advice, some laughter: the day's experts and a volunteer



Yes, idioms and euphemisms are no more strange terms



The lavish luncheon that each participant would reminisce



One forgets the day's weary sessions in the midst of such delicacies



Announcing the detailed schedule of the workshop



The young minds mesmerized by new knowledge



People who made the two days workshop a success



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