



## LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND COMMUNICATION NEXUS

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### **Abstract**

**L**anguage and literature are interrelated and interdependent. Both of them have bearings on the various strands of societal life. The goal of language and literature is communication of information. Without communication, the human world can be in the oblivion. Herein lies the far reaching consequence of language and literature on our

existence. This paper examines language and literature as Sibling Rivers forming a confluence of communication.

### **KEYWORDS:**

language,  
literature,  
communication,  
societal  
coexistence,  
interrelationship,  
interdependence.

### **INTRODUCTION**

**L**anguage and Literature have inextricable destination which is communication of information. Although they constitute different aspects of people's culture, they dovetail into each other. The discourse of language and literature is of interesting complexity. What then is language? What is literature? How are they related and interdependent?

#### **Language:**

Language is a broad linguistic terminology. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English explains language as "a system of communication by written or spoken words". It is also regarded as "a style of communication." By style, we mean the particular way individuals, groups, societies or particular field of human endeavor uses language. This is why we talk of medical language or medicalese, language of journalism or journalese, administrative or official language as officialese, legal language or legalese religious language,

literary language and so on. Language also involves paralinguistic devices such as nodding of head, whistling, laughing, hissing, beckoning, dancing, mode of dressing, sculptures, pictures, carvings, sounds and others that are used in communication. Indeed, the concept of language has attracted many definitions and explanations but the bottom-line is that, it is a means of human communication.

Language and communication are inseparable. Communication cannot take place without language. On the other hand, no language is a language except it is used for communication. The existence and survival of any language is dependent on its utilization in communication. Languages like Sanskrit, Aramaic and others have gone into extinction because they are no longer used in communication.

Language is fundamental to societal coexistence. Language is used in giving information to fellow humans. The information can be an opinion, factual subjective or objective. It can be good or bad. Language is used in directing people to do something. It is also used in expressing our emotions of fear, pity, love, happiness, etc. For instance, Jawaharlal Nehru in Marlow E. and Digumarti, B.R (2014: 85) announced the death of Mahatma Gandhi in manner that effectively enveloped the nation of India and the whole world in the darkness of outrage and sorrow but love and respect for the deceased:

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of your lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we all called him; the father of the nation is no more.

Language can engender peace, progress and unity. Shedrack (2004) in Jessica and Joy (2014) maintains that language can serve as a non-violent medium of management of conflict in the form of negotiation, collaboration, dialogue, mediation, conciliation and adjudication. On the other hand, language can provoke the fire of crisis and anger in the society. Humanity is expected to be discreet or politically correct in the use of language. Politically correct language is the use of language in such way that it will not hurt or derogate someone religiously, morally, culturally, socially, gender, ideologically and others. Murhy's law in Jessica and Joy (2014) considers "the use of language to hurt someone is a form of violence." Cousin in Jessica and Joy (ibid) report that Hitler's book. *Mein Kampf* is "the most effective book of destruction of humankind" as "for every word in the book, 125 lives were lost; for every page, 4,700 lives and for every chapter, 1,220,00 lives" underpins the fact that language which is an asset to humanity can also be a source of calamity if it is used without discretion.

Because of the enormous trouble associated with careless derogatory, abusive and hate inciting use of language, many countries including Nigeria are crowing up with hate speech legislations. For instance, in Nigeria, the National Commission for the Prohibition of Hate Speeches Bill (2019) is seeking for capital punishment for offenders although there is massive criticism that the legislation poses censorship or dangers to freedom of speech. The development and use of euphemistic language or expression is therefore critical in human communication. Euphemism is saying what we do not want say. It is a polite use of language. In English language for instance, the following are vulgar, derogatory, taboo or offensive language are juxtaposed with their euphemism:

prostitute:	commercial sex worker/ women of easy virtue
menstruation:	period
Black:	African
dis-virgin:	deflower
cleaner:	sanitary engineer
carpenter:	wood technologist
Bush Indians:	Native Americans
penis/rod:	front
vagina/cunt:	front
buttocks:	back

Language has reciprocal relationship with literature. Literature cannot exist without language as language is the channel of literature transmission. A literary artist or story-teller uses language to communicate his thoughts, feelings, views, experiences and culture in order to produce certain thoughts and emotions in the reader or audience. The literary artist or story-teller is successful to the extent that he is endowed with impressionable linguistic armoury that he can deploy to give his message. The language can be simple or difficult. It can be satirical, mellifluous or dignified. Language is part of the totality of the issue of style of a writer.

In conterminous, literature is regarded as language in action. Behtash (2012), maintains that “literature is the aesthetic manifestation of language.” Literature “transforms and intensifies ordinary language and deviates systematically from everyday language.” Literature therefore plays a formidable role in the development of language. Creativity as a feature of language is normally associated literature. A colossus in African literary firmament, Chinua Achebe in (NCE/DLS English Language Cycle 2, 2000:349),

affirms the writer's capacity and liberty to create and expand language when he says:

*... but I feel that the English will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it would have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surrounding.*

Yet, literature, especially of the written mode is the store house of a language. For instance, Behtash (ibid) in his exploration of London English from the old (600AD) to the present has used some literary products of the various periods. It is important to give a full quotation of Behtash summary on the relationship between English language and literature of London of the aforementioned period:

*The grammar of present day English is closely related to that of old English with the same tense formation and word orders. The verse unit is a single line and its organizing device is alliteration. The range of Chaucer's English did much to establish English as a national language. The writers of the Elizabethan period reshaped the literary language by borrowing foreign words and by coining new expressions and figures of speech. Shakespeare's language and modern English have enough in common so that historians consider that they both belong to the same stage in the history of English. Milton attempted to reinvent the English language through his Paradise Lost. The writers of the seventeenth century developed a prose style that could bear the weight of the most serious complex ideas. Then, writers of the eighteenth century devoted themselves to developing out a formal polished and correct style of expression Wordsworth and Coleridge intended to purify and recover the literacy language and make it closer to the everyday speech of the ordinary people. Modernism tried to articulate a representation of the world and the way of seeing it through complexities of mind using the spoken rather than the formal language.*

In the same vein, researchers or scholars who want to know about English language that was used in Nigeria many years to come can only effectively use literature of these eras.

### **Literature**

Etymologically, literature comes from a Latin word 'littera' meaning letter. In a general sense, literature is anything that is written. Magazines, newspapers, letters the Quran, the Bible and textbooks are examples of literature.

Literature can also be a collection of writings on any given area, endeavor or issue, e.g., colonialism, slavery, corruption, military governance, Nigeria/Biafra civil war, Feminism and so on. This is the type of literature that scholars and research workers talk about in research studies. Literature review in research studies involves locating, studying and making comments on what has been written by other people in a given area of study. It is a critical pre-writing procedure. It shows the awareness of a researcher of the writings on an area of study and justifies his work as a relevant contribution to an area of study. Digumarti Rao and Digumarti Latha (2006), have further explained the importance of literature review thus:

*..... this step helps to eliminate duplication of what has been already done. It is as a valuable guide to define the problem, recognize its significance, to suggest promising data gathering devices, to appropriate study design to identify sources of data, to make effective analysis and to arrive at fruitful conclusions. (p. 147).*

Literature can also be a discipline, that is, a subject of study like economics, mathematics physics etc. As a discipline, literature refers to stories that are created from an artist's imagination. It is regarded as a "fictive exploration of human experience." It is this type of literature that is the focus of this paper. This literature can be in the written mode or oral, what is otherwise known as *Orature*. Like language, literature is an instrument of communication. Whether literature is educating, entertaining, informing, teaching morality, culture, history and others, it is communicating. Here-in lies the communicative confluence of language and literature. Like language too, literature is a cosmic variable in societal coexistence and development. It can be used to raise national consciousness, criticize and advocate for social and moral sanity. The theory of social realism in the sociological school of literature believes that literature should reflect the realities of the society. It believes that literature should be appropriated in the struggle for societal development. John Munoye, a Nigerian novelist, in Ogu (1986:126) puts vividly the responsive nature of Africa literature to the dynamics of socio-political change in Africa society this way:

When we started, we felt a sense of mission about reconstructing our history, but now we must write about the present. We must go into the society, its strong and weak points, its problems, the prescriptions we would like to offer, casting these into arts forms.

In a similar vein, Leo-Tolsty in Asghar (2012), believes that literature tells us about two fundamental things: who we are and how we should live. Thus

literature is not just a mirror of the society but a navigational compass of our existence. It is probably because of the encompassing role of literature in our life that has given birth to the saying: The pen is mightier than the sword.

A brief commentary on the novels, *The Successors* by Jerry Agada and *Forgive Me Maryam* by Mohmed Tukur Garba, both who are Nigerian novelists is necessary at this juncture to show an example of how literature does not only mirror life but teaches life. In *The Successors*, Agada explores the issue of material success is sacrosanct in human existence and that the attainment of this requires the combination of vision, planning, hard work, discipline, commitment and ability to swim in the social, economic and political waters of the society. On the other hand, economic failure is bad in the life of man and it comes when the individual is bereft of the elements needed for success. However, the writer does not fail to tell the reader that life is not all about the struggle for material prosperity. Man equally owes moral obligations to the society. He must therefore pursue economic prosperity giving cognizance to the canons of societal morality. Agada demonstrates these ideas in the life of the major characteristics of the novel, *Terkura*, *Atsen* and *Okoh Ameh* and their family generations.

Garba, in his *Forgive Me Maryam*, mainly dramatizes the burden of love and money on humanity particularly in the arena of marriage. He depicts that both love and money are critical variables in enduring matrimony. Shuaibu (2019) in his essay, *Love, Wealth, Power and Ambition in Forgive Me Maryam*, of Mohmed Tukur Garba concludes:

The writer explores the ideas of love, wealth, power and ambition as pertinent issues of existence. They are ennobling if we deploy them to usher in happiness and development for humanity. However, they can be sources of psychological traumas that can set the fire of depression, anger, pain, suffering, evil and tragedy on humanity. Man must therefore handle them with reason. Garba's novel is psychological offering critical social advice.

### Conclusion

Language and literature are inseparable. They are interrelated and interdependent. Both of them are instruments of human communication. Communication is of supreme importance to the survival of human existence. A discreet and beneficial use of language and literature is important.

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