

Exploring the Avenues of Integrating English Literature in Soft Skills Training for Professional Courses

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Abstract: *Literature as a mirror of society has not only reflected myriads of images about the socio-psychological and religious standards of any culture but has also acted as a tool to help in learning and using a language. English Literature as a widespread technique for teaching and training has been brought into the purview to assist and understand how Literature can support our students of professional courses to learn the Language English in the first place and then acquire the anticipated acumen of exhibiting the desired Soft Skills in the professional world as demanded. Soft Skills or Person Skills in this 21st Century have been the latest annexation in the prospectus of different professional courses as per the industry demand. The expectation from a would-be professional to exhibit both complex skills and soft skills at its ace has triggered the quest of researching new pedagogical attributes to make teaching and training more realistic, pertinent and applicable. The stipulated time frame of any professional course makes it all the more challenging and stimulating, and to cater to the need of this requirement, exciting tools, aids and methods need to be devised to make teaching and training more engaging, motivating and inspiring. In countries where the language English is taught and learned as ESL/EFL, English Literature, with its bouquet of candid channels of expression in this context, may help a student/Young professional in learning the language and then making it a strong channel of transmission to clear GDs, crack interviews, bag jobs and finally sustain and flourish in the same. This paper thus, explores the avenues of integrating English Literature in Soft Skills Training for Professional Courses.*

Keywords: EFL, English Literature, ESL, Professional Courses, Soft Skills

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Introduction

Professional Courses in this modern era of Globalization and Technological Advancement are diverse and varied to suffice to the needs and requirements of the industry. The growing need for trained and skilled professionals has helped Universities and Academic Institutes to design and implement tailor-made courses for young professionals to accentuate the expectations of the market. To ensure employability, courses have been branded under Hard Skills and Soft Skills, where Hard Skills lay the foundation for knowing and learning the basics of the subject. Soft Skills, conversely, act as an adhesive connecting and glueing a professional to the profession. The attributes and the intricate traits of Soft Skills make them indispensable and comprehensive in today's education system, which the profession still needs professionals. Understanding Soft Skills as an integral soul of existence in the professional world, several assorted pedagogical manoeuvres have been intended and propagated to make the teaching and training of Soft Skills more relevant, enjoyable and result-oriented, among which Literature stands out as a unique tool of instructive feat catering to what Goethe explains as "the humanization of the whole world." With its many conduits of expression and entertainment, Literature stands out as an exclusive pedagogical aid fostering and embellishing the need and demands of learning English as a Foreign Language and accomplishing the goals and targets of acquiring Soft Skills Training as expected by the industry.

In a multilingual country like India, where English exists as a second or foreign language, the reach of employability gets even more challenging. Since the knowledge and application of the said language with maximum young professionals are at its embryonic stage, it poses a challenge to the trainer in the first step to equip the student in the English Language and then help them attain the standards of achievement in the professional world. Since trainers and educators need to accomplish this target of getting their

trainees or students placed within the stipulated timeline, it has encouraged many teachers and trainers to discourse on the need and viability of infusing English Literature as an effective pedagogy in teaching and training the said language and also effective communication and soft skills. This amalgam as a need of the hour has intrigued so much that several universities offering professional courses have blended in components of English Literature, like short stories, poems, and drama, in their engineering and other management programmes. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad University of Technology, West Bengal, MAKAUT, for example, has incorporated 'Language through Literature Modes of Literary & non-literary Expression Introduction to Fiction' for their 6th Sem Civil Engineering course and 'Modern Indian Languages and Literature,' under the code of AECC 201, for BBA, BCA and other undergraduate Programmes 2023-2027, again, Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce, under Savitribai Phule Pune University runs a course titled 'Soft Skills Through Literature.' IIT Kharagpur also has an array of research areas ranging from 'Asian American Literature,' 'Comparative Literature, Myth Studies,' 'English Literature, and Cultural Studies,' to 'Postcolonial Literature and Theory.' These restructured and updated syllabi adopted by the different technical and management institutes and universities have hinted at the fact that many teachers consider the use of Literature in language teaching as an exciting and worthy concern (Sage 1987: 1, Murat Hişmanoğlu 2005), which further establishes the cognizance that 'a university education should lay the foundations for a lifelong commitment by graduates to learning and professional development,' (West, 1998, Joseph Edward Felix, Dr K Selvam, 2018). Including English Literature in the hitherto strict Communicative English curriculum may act as a catalyst in developing both English Language skills for necessity and communication and Soft Skills for achievement and execution.

Literature Review

Since the term Literature, with all its uniqueness, stands out as a liaison linking the two ends of the title, viz, English Language and Soft Skills, the first attribute that needs addressing is the art and strategy of mastering the LSRW components of language skill to ensure a smooth and flawless viability of the language to achieve the desired purposes. In the paper titled 'Teaching English Through Literature,' by Murat Hişmanoğlu, published in the Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, Vol.1, No. 1, April 2005, Hişmanoğlu summarizes how English can be taught and learnt through the various Literature components, viz, prose, poetry, drama, short stories. The understanding of how Literature enhances the growth of language skills by being a tool and not an end features the blending of literature components with language learning at the primary level to acquire listening, speaking, reading and writing skills; the literature level also increases with the progress of the entrant, some more skills like creative thinking, problem-solving, group work, critical thinking, body language and decision making as mentioned in this paper, sharpens with the exposure to Literature for learning the language. As Obediat (1997:32, Murat Hişmanoğlu 2005) states, Literature helps students acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic systems help in communication, see how idiomatic expressions help, speak clearly, precisely, and concisely, and become more proficient in English, as well as become creative, critical, and analytical learners. Custodio and Sutton (1998:20, Murat Hişmanoğlu 2005) explain that Literature can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. In sum, Literature provides students with an incomparably rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers. If students can gain access to this material by developing literary competence, they can effectively internalize the language at a high level (Elliot 1990:198, Murat Hişmanoğlu 2005).

The paper titled 'Integrating Soft Skills with English Language Learning,' by Joseph Edward Felix, MA, (PhD) and Dr K Selvam, PhD selected paper in the Second National Conference on English Language, Literature & Culture Kongunadu College of Engineering & Technology, Thottiyam, Tamil Nadu, India, ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 18:2 February 2018, have primarily dealt with the need of Learning the English

Language and Soft Skills for sustenance in the job market. This paper deals with a sufficient number of newspaper headlines and research materials that hint at the disturbing trend of young graduates being continuously rejected by companies, despite having requisite degrees and hard skills, just for not being adequately versed in the English Language and Soft Skills. These stressful statistics have triggered the urgency of learning English as a language of communication, thereby strengthening the Soft Skills component. This paper also highlights how the knowledge of English unconditionally mixed with Soft Skills can make a student 'fit' into the scheme of things, i.e., help the candidate get a job in the first place and then help sustain, displaying the diverse traits of Soft Skills essential for competition and existence in the professional world. Soft Skills, as an integral component of sustenance in the job market, deal with some basic skills like 'Collaboration and Teamwork, Creativity and Imagination, Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving,' which, on scrutiny, yields the minimum difference between Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Soft Skills Training as mandated by the industry.

Soft Skills Integration in Teaching Professional Training for English Language by M. Stanley Jones¹ * Dr Kalyana Chakravarthi Thirunagari² in Journal of Advances and Scholarly Researches in Allied Education Vol. 16, Issue No. 1, January-2019, ISSN 2230-7540 vividly associates the need to learn the English Language for the sake of employability and success. According to this paper, English is not only the language of administration but also the language helping climb the ladder (Graddol, 2010). The need and importance of learning English and Soft Skills to enhance employability has been the focus of this research; how English makes or mars a career has been discussed explicitly, featuring multitudinous data all hinting to the same direction that honing English Language Skills and Soft Skills have become the need of the hour.

Developing Soft Skills using 'Literature Circles' by Mohd Nazri Bin Latiff Azmi, in The Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Science Volume 1, Issue 2, talks about the importance of RRT (Reader Response Theory) 'which is called 'Literature circles' (LC) with Active Learning (AL) in learning Literature in English.' The expansion of the horizon of interpretation of any literary piece from the standard of mere 'The Story Grammar', where students are trained to explain how the piece works and what it says (Basiga, 2009) got lifted following RRT, to a level where the multilayered interpretation of the text divulged several Soft Skills components like creative and critical thinking, problem-solving and effective communication, which further led to 'meaningful learning activities.....for example, class discussion, small group discussion, debate, posing questions to the class, think-pair-share activities, and short written exercises and polling the class in which methods in AL are applied such as solving problems, answering and formulating questions of their own, discussing, explaining, debating, or brainstorming during class (Mills, 2007). This paper has covered in detail the need and necessity blending of English Literature in developing Soft Skills acumen.

The association of the different components of Soft Skills have been likened very skillfully with the various Literature components viz., prose, poetry, drama, and short story, in the paper titled 'Imparting Soft Skills through Teaching of Literature,' by Noojilla Srinivas, Lecturer in English, Govt. College (A), Rajahmundry and Dr T. Ashok, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Andhra University Campus, Kakinada, in the International Journal of Academic Research ISSN: 2348-7666 Vol.2, Issue-3(5), July-September, 2015, this paper explains how Robert Frost's, 'The Road not Taken,' associated with Decision Making skill, likewise, H.W. Longfellow's poem "Trust No future..." emphasizes on the present and thus promotes positive thinking skill, this paper also gives an insight as to how, students and trainees can learn the language English and Soft Skills through analysis, creativity and entertainment.

John Marlow (2023), in his online article on 'The Role of Literature in Career Development: Building Critical Thinking and Communication Skills,' dated Feb 23, 2023, in Career Development, has clearly stated how the different forms of Literature like prose, poetry, drama can help develop Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills and also Soft Skills like Critical Thinking, Problem Solving,

Creativity Analytical Skill and Effective Communication Skill. Literature acts as a powerful tool and method in teaching the language English and also invites young professionals to develop their rhetoric, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary along with Emotional Response, Memory and self-reflection, improved cognitive functioning, Enhanced Story Telling Skills, Decision Making and Collaborative Skills. Literature, with its universality and pleasure, can motivate a learner to grasp Language and Soft Skills in a very subtle way to enhance and ensure their career development.

Objectives

- Exploring and understanding the influence of Literature on Learning English as a language
- Exploring the need and relevance of designing Soft Skills Training Programmes in English for Professional Courses and
- Exploring the use and application of English Literature as a medium of instruction for Soft Skills Training Programmes.

Methodology

The information required for this paper has been collected mainly from secondary sources, from various websites, journal papers, documents and materials from Literature books, social media platforms, old archives and AV Creations. The data collected from different sources are mentioned beside the quote or provided data. The information required for analyzing the different components of the title of this paper, viz., English Literature, Language and Soft Skills, have primarily been accessed from various e-books, kindle and other online sources in addition to the paperback books.

Discussion

Literature as an art form has explored and excavated the depths of human emotions with its intricate weaving of language, expressions, exaggeration, rhetoric, humor and creativity over the ages; it has acted as a mirror reflecting the multitudinous images of society and has prophetically played the role of a tutor, educating with its silhouette morals, creative pleasures, miscellaneous aesthetics and professional skills. Literature as a pure expression of art seems quite distinct from soft skills, where the two seem pretty different, as discrete genres of study orbiting in parallel zones never to meet, but the recent standards of soft skills training have posed a challenge to upskill and train the young professionals to not only get employed but also to retain their respective role and sustain in the long run.

Literature and Soft Skills may seem quite different in their approaches and functions, but once synthesized they can create an indelible impact, where art and aesthetics can blend with skills and competencies to beget thoughtful leaders and creative communicators. The 21st Century has raised the benchmark of grooming an entrant thoroughly from both aspects, where, on the one hand, the entrants need to have a sound knowledge of coding, programming, AIML (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning), and on the other hand, needs to be an ardent communicator, collaborator, creator, negotiator and many more to name a few to present as a complete professional. Though this fusion seems very difficult to achieve at the outset, it still acts as a prerequisite for any company's recruitment process. The art of effective communication and LSRW of English language skills need to be honed at the very outset to become an accomplished professional; therefore, learning the Language English in the first place in a multilingual country like India becomes a priority to for the smooth transmission and conduction of messages and information. Moreover, to learn the Language of English with ease and pleasure, Literature can shape out to be the best tool for "love and appreciation for the sound and power of language" Çubukçu (2001:1), Murat Hişmanoğlu (2005).

Exploring and Understanding the Influence of Literature on Learning English

Literature, as an essential teaching tool, plays a significant role in developing the basic LSRW language skills and other language areas like grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The lexical, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic aspects of knowledge development also get enhanced by studying various literary works. Collie and Slater (1990:3) state that there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use Literature in the classroom. These are valuable, authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. In addition to these four main reasons, universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy, and suggestive power and ambiguity are some other factors requiring the use of Literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context (Murat Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

Expressing emotions or celebrating imagination is not the only task of various literary texts; there are also authentic Materials that inform, educate, update and appear, materials relating to CNA- Current News Awareness, Pamphlets, Advertisements, and Magazine Articles, expose the reader to real-life scenarios and information, which enables understand the authenticity of the modern colloquial language in use, its acceptance, usage, application and newness with its Communicative features and meanings. Valuable Authentic Material also keeps a student abreast with the headlines and advertisement that might help as an add-on source of information for GD and PI rounds.

Novels, Short Stories, Plays and Poems help groom a professional culturally by helping them understand the background of such literary creations with the socio-political-cultural backdrop, motivating and influencing the birth of the idea and the execution of the literary piece thereon. The understanding of the rich concoction of emotions exhibited in different literary works paves a way to understand and analyze different human thoughts, feelings, actions, reactions, traditions, customs, and beliefs to enrich understanding of human behaviour and psychology, which again invariably acts as the two most essential conduits in determining and developing our communication skills. The colourful imaginary world of Novels and stories animates characters with different characteristics and regional settings. However, their portrayal of love, anger, fear, hatred, joy and sorrow, coupled with their action and reactions to different situations, helps a learner to feel for the codes and preoccupations that shape a real society through visual literacy of semiotics Murat Hişmanoğlu (2005).

Literature enhances Language skills and ensures personal involvement, where comprehending a literary text helps idealize the characters, their situations, their background, and above all, the stages of development of the work. The involvement that develops while reading a text quite naturally helps in developing the Reading, Writing and Speaking skills by helping a student to learn sentence structuring, use of vocabulary, grammar and, of course, style of discourse. Discourse analysis also helps students identify the major and minor information required and used in the text. This understanding later helps them with Information design, Developing User Manuals, Content Writing, Technical Reports, and Project Proposals in their professional career. These technical writing contents that the students need to develop in their stipulated academic phase have become very challenging and insipid, but if blended with the flavour of Literature, like when teaching 'Narrative Writing,' if exemplified with excerpts from poems, personal essays, fairy tales, short stories, novels, plays, autobiographies, then understanding the concept of enhances with expressions, style, lexical and syntactical insight, which later helps to teach Technical Reports, Project Proposals with ease and reference. The Universality, Non-Triviality, Personal Relevance, Variety, Interest, Economy and Suggestive Power and Ambiguity of Literature are also some of the other attributes that act as a potent resource in Language Classrooms Maley (1989:12), Murat Hişmanoğlu (2005).

Literature in Developing Reading Skills

In his essay "On Studies," Francis Bacon wrote, "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man." From here, an inference drawn may explain how reading as an essential

attribute to language skill development can best be achieved by reading different literary works, and when it comes to teaching English in an ESL/EFL Classroom, then how English Literature can act as the best medium in enhancing English Language Skills, where reading a particular text, may not only be read for pleasure and amusement but may also be used to sculpt a way of learning and analyzing a text from its amateurish level to its proficient level through its different stages of application starting from its literary level, to inferential, to collaborative and evaluative level. All these levels are proportional to developing Effective Communication Skills and boosting Soft Skills Training. The theory of Rapid Reading as a part of Engineering Syllabi can best be understood and applied using different Literary Sources. To this, the practice of Skimming and Scanning, with its functional appropriateness, can also be delegated with excerpts and features from Literature, which will help students learn the various theories of Communication and Soft Skills coated in the dogma of Literature, making learning exciting and pleasurable. Reading not only helps to understand a text literally but also helps build analytical and critical thinking skills with problem-solving abilities. The understanding of a particular literary work in 'Suum cuique,' – 'To each his own,' way also transcends the horizon of imagination and analysis to beget another creative perspective, quite unprecedented and unique, this 'thinking out of the box' without any inhibition or reserve is a gift of Literature that proposes discourse, discussion, debate, and deliberations to build confidence and poise in a young professional helping them to 'learn how to think creatively, freely and critically. Such training helps them in other courses which require logical reasoning, independent thinking, and careful analysis of the text (Spack 1985:719, Murat Hişmanoğlu 2005).

Literature Enhancing Writing Skill

Writing is an integral and inevitable skill and is exceedingly crucial for both General and Professional Courses. Amidst debate on how can exhaustive and elaborately detailed forms of writing style be adopted for Literature to be helpful for Technical Writing in Professional Courses? Nevertheless, here, too, Shakespeare comes with his indulgence, stating, 'brevity is the soul of wit,' and any technical writing that we aim for condenses the aim of writing in brief, to the point avoiding too much fringing or making jargonistic allusions. Here again, Literature with basic writing practice skills in "On or About" Literature and writing "Out of" Literature (Murat Hişmanoğlu, 2005) mode may help in developing the art of writing, which is beneficial for different genres of Technical Writing. In the ESL/EFL Classrooms, if they apply the techniques mentioned earlier in writing, students can express themselves using the choicest words and vocabulary in appropriate places of need. The practice of writing answers, essays, paraphrasing and summarising in "On or About" Literature may teach students to connect directly with the given text and understand it literally, and the "Out of" Literature may also allow them the space to rediscover and rewrite the same content using forms such as, *Adding to the work*, *Changing the work*, *Drama-Inspired Writing*, *A Letter Addressed to another character*, (Murat Hişmanoğlu, 2005), inciting a greater insight of understanding, analyzing, creative and critical thinking, problem-solving and organizing. Moreover, all these skills amalgamated enhance decision-making and communicative competence to manifest what Francis Bacon once said: '.... writing makes an exact man.'

Literature for Speaking and Listening

Using the different forms of Literature, like poetry, drama, short stories, and novels, for Speaking and Listening enhancement may help in a myriad of ways in designing activities impacting and enriching the English Language learning classes with innovation and creativity. The speaking skill may be enhanced by reading aloud a particular literary work and then by analyzing and discussing the same with the entire class; now, these activities may be in an individual mode or groups, enhancing teamwork, leadership skills and persuasion. Group discussions or presentations following any text read out by the teacher or based on any audio-visual clips displayed in the class may help in assessing their level of concentration, attentiveness and listening skills. Excerpts, references or quotations from famous literary pieces may prop best for role plays, debates and public speaking; different types of literature-related games may add to

erase the monotony of teaching only fundamentals without any variation. Today's classroom expects concepts through tryouts and training through activities, and to extract the maximum output, activities designed should invite wholesome participation and contribution from the class at large. Since listening is a receptive skill and speaking is a productive skill, animated and live sessions on both need to be activated to heighten the outcome of the class. Since listening is the first and the most important means of learning any language, more and more listening activities may augment an environment where students live in an ambient English atmosphere. Through listening and speaking, the perfection of stress, intonation, pitch, and pronunciation may help students communicate better in their careers. Different Literature forms not only enhance LSRW Skills, but they also, as Custodio and Sutton (1998:20) explain, that Literature can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. In sum, Literature provides students with an incomparably rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers. If students can gain access to this material by developing literary competence, they can effectively internalize the language at a high level (Elliot 1990:198, Murat Hişmanoğlu 2005).

Literature is not only a tool helping students to learn English as a Language for professional communication. However, it is also an aid serving students to explore the world of imagination, cultural understanding, human behaviour and psychology, literary semiotics, critical and creative thinking, analysis and application and the art of communication, and all these attributes, when curated together invariably impacts the Soft Skills Training sessions with innovation and care.

Exploring the Need and Relevance of Designing Soft Skills Training Programmes in English for Professional Courses

In Exploring the need and relevance of designing Soft Skills Training Programmes in English for Professional Courses, we find that, “the colonial past of India has contributed to the language English being predominant in the constitution as almost, a national language. For all practical purposes, Article 343 of the Indian Constitution, and later the Official Languages Act of 1963, lists no language as National Language, but allows English to be listed as 1 of the 22 official languages. For all practical purposes India uses English as her official language for Business Communication across the country.” (Suneeta De, Sohini Ghosh: February, 2023) Similarly, Soft Skill Training Programmes and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) seem to exist with very little difference where teaching English is used to fulfill the demand of the employers to use English meaningfully at workplaces, teaching grammar implicitly rather than explicitly and also motivating learners to adopt unique and discrete writing styles (Joseph et al. K Selvam, 2018), Soft Skills Training in English has become a mandate as because, 'English is a language that is deemed a benchmark not because many standard organizations have accredited it but because it has been enormously employed by many information and technology industries that have recognized it as standard.'- The Pioneer. In her article titled 'Is the English Language Still a Challenge for many Indians?' (Priyanka Modi, 2023) talks about the inevitability of learning English, which has not only become a language of official communication but has also linked a multilingual country like India, manifesting its need and requirement in science, technology, research and industry. English has become a language of necessity, resonating with its obligation to ensure employability. Despite understanding its utility and efficacy, it is astounding to know that according to Forbes, 'only 30 % of people can speak English in India, which shows that there is a large population of people who do not have access to education, jobs, and opportunities due to their inability to communicate effectively. This language barrier prevents them from taking advantage of the global economy and growing as individuals,' (Priyanka Modi, 2023); this information indeed hints at some more research conducted in the past years, which too invariably has hinted at the gap between the supply and demand and supply of adequate professionals required for the various industries. A newspaper headline in India today in its Jun 13 2016 edition had an article titled, "Only 7 per cent

engineering graduates employable: What's wrong with India's engineers?" elaborated on ten points of lacunae depriving students of being employable, of which the ninth point talked about 'lack of proper English Skills,' and the tenth point hinted at the 'disregard of essential soft skills,' in this report, they also expounded that 73.63 per cent of candidates lacked in communication skills and that 'Soft skills have become crucial in the present job industry, but they are routinely being ignored in educational institutes.' (Joseph Edward Felix, Dr K Selvam, 2018), The bridging gap has become even more explicit when, in the Business Line, Varun Aggarwal, CTO of Aspiring Minds, said, "Engineering has become the de facto graduate degree for a large chunk of students today. However, along with improving the education standards, it is quintessential that we evolve our undergraduate programmes to make them more job-centric." This comment raises the question of how important it has become to standardize Soft Skills Training Programmes and teaching English in professional courses to yield market-oriented results; in another article, 'The Role of Pedagogical Intervention in Improving the Oral Proficiency of Engineering Students,' Mekala S states, "in the globalized context, the need for spoken proficiency in English has become a determinant factor (2017), which also state that, "the role of English is very crucial, and it is needed for mobility and social and economic advancement (Mekala S, 2017, p 7, Joseph Edward Felix, Dr K Selvam, 2018). Soft Skills are collective skills, an amalgam of communicative and leadership skills displayed together to achieve success and excellence. It is this X-Factor that shapes an employee's attitude to retain and sustain the job, and since today's global business is not only demanding domain knowledge but also demanding the nuances of soft skills, it becomes all the more essential to impart Soft Skills Training in English to live up to the expectations of the global standards. Writing about Soft Skills in her article, 'Need and Importance of Soft skills in Students,' Rani (2010) says, 'Soft skills are learned behaviours which require training and focused application. Soft skills will give students a strong conceptual and practical framework to build, develop and manage teams. They play an important role in developing the students' overall personality, enhancing their career prospects.' Again, West (1998) says that, 'A university education should lay the foundations for a lifelong commitment by graduates to learning and professional development' and Birrell (2006) states that many countries are facing a skills shortage, (Joseph Edward Felix, Dr K Selvam, 2018) with all these deductions and headlines in view one thing may be specified that the growing gap of expectation from the industry's end need to be addressed with additional promptness and reliability, otherwise like the report published in the Business Line of Jan 19 2018 edition which had a headline that read, '80% of engineers in India unemployable: report' actually indicated a significant skill gap, which further got ratified by another report from the fifth edition of National Employability Report 2015-16 conducted by job skills matching platform Aspiring Minds which found that over 80 percent of engineers in India remain unemployable, which further indicated a significant skill gap, (Joseph Edward Felix, Dr K Selvam, 2018) which if not addressed with immediateness will continue to broaden, damaging the employability ratio of the country. Thus, upgrading the campus and placement-related activities of any professional institute becomes a verdict, where providing an atmosphere and platform for students to excel in their Hard and Soft Skills becomes essential. Since Soft Skills act as a binding agent between the professional and the profession, honing Soft Skills to match the industry expectations needs to be structured by sharpening English Language Skills for the smooth conduction of professional activities and to ease this language learning process, several pedagogical stunts need to be adopted to lubricate the learning and training process of a heterogeneous class in a stipulated time frame and to meet these challenges of the curriculum, versatility of teaching methodologies using English Literature may be opted as a catalyst in synthesizing Soft Skills Training with CLT.

Exploring the Use and Application of English Literature As a Medium of Instruction for Soft Skills Training Programmes

As an innovative initiative, English Literature, if infused into Soft Skills Training Programmes, may make these sessions exciting and creative, where diverse Soft Skills attributes may well be associated with

different literary works to teach different concepts devoid of monotony and tedium. Concepts of Effective Communication, Leadership, Decision-making, Problem-solving, Positive Attitude, Adaptability, Goal Setting, and Conflict Resolution may be taught implicitly and explicitly to students to yield a need-based result.

Soft Skills Concepts and English Literature

Learning Soft Skills concepts in English can be amusing and adventurous by introducing our students to literary stalwarts like Shakespeare, Dickens, O Henry, Tolstoy, Eliot, and Lawrence to peep into a world of imagination, images, rhetoric, symbols, language, and concepts. A few analogies will help in understanding how this methodology actuates into practice. The speech from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them, but the good is often buried with their bones. So, let it be with Caesar.....You all did love Caesar once, not without cause. What cause withholds you, then, to mourn for him?" (Act III Sc II), this iconic speech not only presents its lingual exuberance, it also explicitly excavates the art of effective communication, where the use of stress, intonation, and modulation helps Mark Antony to persuade his audiences to win over his side convincingly, the setting of goal as a leader, to avenge Caesar's death is evident which has been artistically presented through the subtle stages of development of creative interpersonal skill to convince and motivate the Roman citizens to support his cause. This literary piece alone stands as a cumulation of several managerial skills that need to be imbibed by a would-be professional.

Use of Literature in Soft Skills Training

Implicitly, the same speech may help as a prop for writing "Out Of" Literature content, where additional imaginary sequels and episodes may be attached to the speech to encourage creative writing skills; the student can also write a letter to the characters, advising them how to overcome a particular problem or situation (Stern, 1991, p. 336), again enhancing the imagination, clarity of concepts and writing skill. Developing Speaking Skills using activities like Debates, Group Discussions, PPT Presentations, or Role Plays may serve the purpose. Reading and Listening Skills from the same speech by reading it aloud to the class or following the Rapid Reading technique, active listening with question-answer sessions may enhance both the targeted skills.

The powerful lines from John Milton's Paradise Lost Book I, "All is not lost—the unconquerable will, and study of revenge, immortal hate, and courage never to submit or yield: And what is else not to be overcome?" "A mind not to be changed by Place or Time." "The mind is its place, and in itself can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n." "This glorious sight, when sleep hath shut all eyes?" "Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n." or "Awake, arise, or be forever fallen" are a few of the many lines from this epic poem that can directly teach leadership skills, team dynamics, motivation, persuasive skill, positive thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking and goal orientation, the zeal and steadfastness to win lost matches bring out the characteristic of true leader and organizer, who from the caverns of desolation and despair can once again assemble the power of strategy to be triumphant again, here several Soft Skill becomes sheer examples of impetus driven incentives, taking care of multiple skill upgradation.

The poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost epitomizes the criticality of Decision-Making, stating.

*"I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference."*

Therefore, when Decision Making as a Skill needs attention, then scanning this poem as a case study can help in deciphering the Decision Making Model of using Rational Decision Making Skill, Bounded Rationality, and Intuitive and Creative approaches while making a decision, again, the different types and processes of decision making can also get highlighted with Shakespeare's 'To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in mind to suffer, The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles And by opposing end them. (*From Hamlet, spoken by Hamlet-Prince of Denmark*), again, Charles Dickens famous revelation in *David Copperfield*, saying, "Procrastination is the thief of time, collar him," further in the same text, the statement, "I never could have done what I have done, without the habits of punctuality, order and diligence, without the determination to concentrate on one object at a time," in one way deals with the attribute of Decision Making on the other hand deals with Goal Orientation, Strategy and Time Management. These literary marvels, if coupled with quizzes, presentations, JAMs and Extempore as activities conducted in a Soft Skills class, can yield results benefitting the students from the perspective of learning Soft Skills in English as well as widening their vista of imagination, Discourse Analysis, critical thinking and communication skills, with particular reference to the world of English Literature.

The distinct plot and character analysis from the different literary texts, in the light of Managerial Skills, may also endow an altogether new dimension in the light of Reader Response Theory, where 'Oedipus Rex with Creative Thinking and Problem Solving,' 'Marlow's Dr. Faustus, Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre with Decision Making,' 'Julius Caesar with Leadership,' 'Mark Antony with Effective Communication,' be likened, can generate an altogether new standard of critical analysis and out of text thinking, breeding an absolute amalgam where Soft Skills Training components meets Literature. Book Reviews on the same need attention from the Soft Skills perspective to enhance understanding and application; analyzing protagonists as leaders, with the theoretical qualities of leadership skills, will help understand the built of the character from the pages of Literature and also critically associate the said attributes with the standardized qualities from the management books.

Time Management and Relevant Work

Several other Soft Skills traits like Time Management, Stress Management, Adaptability, Conflict Management, Professional Etiquette, are very well explained through different literary excerpts like Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 64 'When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced' and Sonnet number 73 'That time of year thou mayst in me behold' have all celebrated love and youth but have also subtly solicited the inevitable shackles of time ruining youth, beauty and vitality, stressing on the skill of Time Management through the lines.

*'...Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare
That time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death which cannot choose
but weep to have that which it fears to lose....' (Sonnet 64)*

*And also, through the line from Sonnet No. 73
'...In me, thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by....'*

Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," though modelled on the 'Carpe Diem,' i.e. 'Seize the Day,' yet again celebrates utilizing time to its fullest while living in the present through the lines: '...but at my back I always hear,/Time's winged chariot hurrying near.'

Stress Management and Literary Excerpts

The elements of Stress Management taught as a chapter in Soft Skills classes find their scattered shreds of evidence in literary works, where "Becoming fearless isn't the point. That's impossible. It's learning how to control your fear and how to be free from it." *Divergent* by Veronica Roth relaxes the reflexes that sometimes may become vindictive and malicious, as hinted by Thomas Hardy in his novel 'The Mayor of Casterbridge' through his protagonist Michael Henchard, whose drunkenness and series of wrong decisions leads him to severe stress and wretchedness after that. Combating Stress has also been highlighted in several extracts where "There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour." — *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens and "I had the epiphany that laughter was light, and light was laughter, and that this was the secret of the universe." — *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt.

Adaptability and Literature

Adaptability is another essential trait of Soft Skills Training; its existence in some famous quotes and works that celebrate positivity of thought, flexibility of decision and uninterrupted motivation to win over any and every situation to fly the flag of success, adapting with self, stands as the first challenge, then profession and society, but with a positive bend of mind, harmful impositions may ward off with optimism, determination and hard work. "He looked across the sea and knew how alone he was now. But he could see the prisms in the deep dark water, the line stretching ahead, and the strange undulation of the calm. The clouds were building up now for the trade wind and he looked ahead and saw a flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over the water, then blurring, then etching again, and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea." — *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway talks about how creatively one needs to address and adapt to the crisis of situation to live up with self-motivation to survive and succeed till the end, 'Life of Pi,' by Yann Martel too highlights the different scopes and strategies adapted by Pi Patel to save himself and Richard Parker to emerge out victorious from dire constraints. Several other allusions celebrating adaptability skills are as follows: 'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them,' from (*Twelfth Night*, Act 2, Scene 5) "The world breaks everyone, and afterwards, many are strong at the broken places." — *A Farewell to Arms* by Ernest Hemingway, and "You can't live your life for other people. You've got to do what's right for you, even if it hurts some people you love." — *The Notebook by Nicholas Sparks*.

Conflict Management and English Literature

Conflict Management uses processes, tools, and skills to find creative and respectful ways to manage disagreements and disputes. It includes resolving conflict collaboratively through effective communication skills, such as active listening and assertive speaking- ([Conflict Management](#)).

When it comes to managing conflict remotely, there are four C's that matter: Commitment, Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Camaraderie in a framework developed by attorney, mediator, negotiator and conflict resolution expert Damali Peterman- ([Managing Conflict](#)).

Tracing its existence in Literature, Shakespeare's "Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair" (Macbeth, Act I Scene I), actually surfaces Macbeth's internal conflict of manifesting his unbridled ambition at the cost of morality is what gets echoed through the equivocal prophecies of the three witches. The dilemma stands as a conflict, the inadvertence to resolving his conflict stands as hamartia and the inadequacy of handling this conflict ultimately leads to an inevitable tragedy. In *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, the conflict between past and present arises, which is justified aptly through the solution of hiding the memories that tear: "It is

dreadful that one cannot tear out the past by the roots. We cannot tear it out, but we can hide the memory of it." More or less a reverberation of internal conflict of thoughts and memories gets reflected in "Memories warm you up from the inside. But they also tear you apart." — *Kafka on the Shore* by Haruki Murakami further blurts out the inevitability of conflicts faced by human beings at every step of their existence, be it personal or professional, and the victory lies when we can resolve such conflicts and continue "It is nothing to die; it is dreadful not to live." — *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo.

Limitations of the Study

- Findings say that not all Soft Skills Trainers come from a Literature background, making it difficult to sort literary texts and works to fit into the scheme of things. Choosing appropriate text or extract to amplify a Soft Skills component might get time-consuming or, at many times, inappropriate and irrelevant.
- It is also a matter of constant worry that since the post Covid times, the level of concentration has dropped drastically, making it next to impossible for any student to read a lengthy text like a novel or drama and then analyze the same, thus, reading habits as observed in the recent times, have become thoroughly challenged by reels, shorts and stories. Audio Visual contents to paper cover books have gained popularity to stand as an impediment in the way of their execution.
- The duration of any Professional Course is miserly stipulated, and adapting this method is elaborate; therefore, time can become a threat in infusing Literature with Soft Skills Training and executing it with perfection.

Conclusion

Literature as an art form with its unique and varied genres can make learning English and Soft Skills interesting and creative. The various types of writing styles can help a student to be akin to diverse vocabulary and syntax, with creative rhetoric, prosody, philology and phonetics. The cultural barrier that exists with its myopia also gets diluted when reading and understanding different works and contemporary literary theories unveil the openness of acceptance with tolerance. The synthesizing of concepts like leadership, group dynamics, conflict management, and problem-solving, with classics like Dr. Faustus, King Lear, Great Expectations, Frankenstein and others, sends forth strong signals of fusion study, where the old meets the new to beget a methodology that is innovative and rare. The world of English Literature is a mine full of breakthrough concepts that came as pioneers long before their acceptance among the masses; therefore, reading such texts can help with self-awareness, critical thinking, maturity in problem-solving and insightful disposition. Novels, Drama, Short Stories and poetry can help with flights of fantasy and out-of-the-box thinking. The various Literature and Soft Skills synthesized activities, if designed craftily, can also boost up an ESL/EFL class, yielding unprecedented results, where involving students in teaching and training will intensify their energy to participate and help them learn. Literature in Professional Courses may sometimes seem extraneous, but if examined from close vicinity, it will feature an integral bonding, helping wholesomely in career development. The various forms of Literature, viz. prose, poetry, drama, and stories, not only give pleasure and break cultural barriers, but they also help in developing Cognitive Skills, which are essential for any professional to delve deep into the situation, understand, analyze and then derive a constructive solution. Literature also improves Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills crucial for any professional to imbibe and succeed; it helps in evaluating new ideas with evidence-based conclusions using quantitative and qualitative data, develops comprehension of chronological orders essential as stages of development before arriving at a concrete decision, reading minute details helps in deeper analysis and greater intuition or farsightedness required for decision making, problem analysis with multiple solutions are also but a gift of reading literary texts. Understanding Emotional Responses gives an edge to communication skills,

and Literature helps in understanding E-signals at workplaces, which triggers the brain to react to emotions and feelings, which again substantially helps in influencing people's cognitive process. Memory Management and Self Awareness are also exhibited as vital qualities of a professional, helping them conduct SWOT Analysis of self and profession, enhancing critical and creative thinking skills, and improving memory, helping professionals to store and preserve valuable data, as required for learning job roles, procedure and process. Collaborative Skills, increasing teamwork and Communication Skills are also enhanced in the process, and all these traits, as required by the industry from a professional, finally get equipped through this proposed methodology, paving the way for success.

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