

# Use of Literary Sources in Soft Skills Classroom and Pursuit of Exploration

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## ABSTRACT

Soft skills which are otherwise known as Life Skills, Survival Skills and Personality Development Traits have everlasting significance as they determine the success of an individual both as a professional and as a person. The training of soft skills have been made part and parcel of the curriculum in the institutions of higher learning in general and Engineering Colleges in particular. Many training modules have been developed by psychologists and corporate trainers to impart soft skills. A plethora of books authored on Soft Skills offer varied textual ideas. However, literature remains as an inexhaustible resource with all its richness, vision, foresight, humanism, universal value, pragmatism and creativity.

The present paper titled Use of Literary Sources in Soft Skills Classroom and Pursuit of Exploration attempts to highlight the need to conduct an exploratory study for the purpose of drawing useful and relevant literary sources which help immensely in the teaching - learning processes. A few soft skills offered for the students of Engineering in JNTUA College of Engineering are selected with an objective of exploring relevant sources and material for providing training of soft skills for the students.

**(Keywords:** Soft Skills – Literary Sources – Exploratory – Training)

Employing Language through literature has been a trend since its inception in 1890 in teaching English as a Second Language. The ESL teacher is a fine source who undertakes numerous interactive practices initially and subsequently keeps on tuning the linguistic abilities of non-native learners. Such continuous practices eliminate linguistic phobias and transform the classroom into a friendly space. Taking these facts into account, language proficiency is essential to

figure out the core aspects of literature and enjoy it in true earnest.

The linguistic flavor can contribute a lot to perceive literature in wider extent. Language is inherent in enjoying literature at large. Literature presents multidisciplinary dimensions of life touching upon its varied facets. It is also defined as 'The body of written works of a language'. Such blend of literary composition not only cultivates values and tradition of the society but also helps to stimulate imagination, develop critical thinking and increases emotional intelligence which is crucial for inculcating soft skills.

Literary texts are highly motivating and evoke numerous thoughts, feelings and emotions influencing both personal professional lives. They strengthen communicative skills, critical acumen, creative thinking and analytical abilities. During the discussion in the class, a student may develop imaginative thinking and visualize different cultures widening one's cross cultural wisdom. By doing so strong social skills build to coexist with people different temperaments and attitude. Language teacher with literary insights can elicit more inferences in a meaningful and broader perspective. Sometimes extensive discussion takes the topic to broader level of thinking skills. Gilian Lazar renowned teacher who authored Literature and Language Teaching – A Guide to Teachers, opines that:

"Studying the language of the literary text will help to integrate the language and literature syllabuses more closely. Detailed analysis of the language of the literary text will help students to make meaningful interpretations or informed evaluations of it. At the same time, students will increase their general awareness and understanding of English". (G. Lazar. Pg. 38)

Using literary sources in soft skills classroom can foster overall personality development and professional skills. Youngsters

evince keen interest in acquisition of knowledge and within the classroom or outside classroom. The need of the hour now is to optimally utilize literature to nurture the critical insider of the student and the role of literature in this aspect is indispensable. Kunal Ray who teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune, is also of the opinion that: “Literature intended to endear readers to certain types of books – lifestyle, self help and ‘how to do’ guides – which don’t encourage critical questioning and thinking” (The Hindu dated 31/08/2021, The Purpose of Literature by Kunal Ray)

These lines specify that the purpose of literature is to develop the flavor of curious speculation about reflective thinking. She glorifies the importance of studying literature in the following manner;

“These are important elements to understand a text in it’s entirely but literature is also an introduction to where and how we live the challenges that face our time and society. In many ways literature is an introduction to who we are, or ought to be, as people”

(The Hindu dated 31/08/2021, The Purpose of Literature by Kunal Ray)

Certain theories of learning also strengthen the notion about the importance of learning through experience which are abundantly found in literature.

Human behavior observed under Classical Conditioning theory also conveys the message that human mind can be trained effectively by integrating past knowledge and present experience. In similar lines soft skills students also can be

trained by relating the present situation with comparable situations in works of art.

The primary source for writing literature is not art for art’s sake but it is for human sake. Literature is not static; thereby all the literary events are surrounded with variety of man’s needs and related emotions. Those emotions somehow connect in the customized classroom situation. Renowned linguists Joanne Collie – Stephen Slater in their book titled Literature in the Language Classroom make the following valid observation about the passion for literature among the students and its role in developing social interaction.

“Keeping literature off the syllabus, however, has produced a certain amount of unease as well. There is the awkward fact that many learners want and love literary texts, as we have found time and time again. Similarly, they often wish to become more familiar with patterns of social interaction in the country which uses the target language.” (Collie & Slater 1987 P. 5)

The above statement vindicates the point that literature has the potential to facilitate better social interaction. Collie, Joanne and Stephen Slater also suggest that a teacher must use literature to develop the activities involving students so as to expand their thinking. A line from a literary text such as Hamlet “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action” (Shakespearian Hamlet, Act III Scene II) can be an invaluable source to discuss communication skills and its essentials such as coherence, cohesiveness and correctness using the quote and context the teacher can elicit examples from the students for meaningful discussion. Other quotes from ‘Hamlet’ also serve to debate on communication skills. To cite a few

Quotations From 'Hamlet'	
“Words without thoughts never to heaven go”	Act III Scene III
“Words, words, words”	Act II, Scene II
“I speak daggers to her but use none”	Act III, Scene II
“Less art, more matter”	Act II, Scene II

The above mentioned lines are treasured utterances providing an ample opportunity for the teacher / trainer of soft skills to broaden the understanding of the subject besides inculcating a

sense of appreciation for both language and literature. A teacher can make use of ‘Hamlet’ to bring into context life skills such as:

- Broadening the Imagination
- Human Relationship
- Creative Thinking
- Life Situations
- Humanistic Attitude
- Sense of Discrimination
- Decision Making
- Foresight
- Judgement

Against the premise, the need to conduct an exploratory study is vital and useful. Such a pursuit on the part of the teacher will be a rewarding exercise. Exploratory study focuses on the existing problem, explores the available sources and identifies better ways of solution. It addresses

research gaps and prescribes suitable models. The present paper pays attention on exploring sources of literature, relevant works and qualitative analyses of the prescribed soft skills syllabus in selected Engineering college of Andhra Pradesh i.e. Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, College of Engineering, Ananthapuramu (JNTUA).

Here is an attempt to use the following sources for each skills prescribed for the soft skills course offered by JNTUA entitled “Soft Skill” as an open elective. For almost all the prescribed skills, literary sources can be explored. Besides, sources from epics, scriptures, autobiographies, speeches and anecdotes can also be brought into context.

Selected Institution : <b>Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Ananthapuramu, College of Engineering, Autonomous (JNTUA), Andhra Pradesh</b>	
Title of the Course : <b>Soft Skills Course</b> as an Open Elective	
Components of the Course	Sources / Source from Literature
Positive Thinking	"For there is nothing good or bad, thinking makes it so" - Hamlet Act II Scene II
	"Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven". Paradise Lost Book 1, Line 263
Stress Management	“He who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king” - John Milton, Paradise Lost Book II, Line: 463-472
Intra Personal Skills	“How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is. To have a thankless child” - King Lear Act I, Scene IV
	“To be, or not to be” that is the question: Soliloquy from Hamlet Act III Scene I
Interpersonal Skills	" My love's more ponderous than my tongue" Cordelia Act I Scene I, King Lear
	Caesar’s last words: (Et tu Brute) “You too Brutus” Julius Caesar Act III Scene I
Decision Making Skills	“Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less travelled by, and that has made all the difference” - Road Not Taken by R Frost

	<p>“Have a heart that never hardens, and a temper that never tires, and a touch that never hurts.” Charles Dickens’s novel 'Our Mutual Friend' Book III Chapter II</p>
Creativity Skills	<p>“I dwell in Possibility” – Title of the Poem by Emily Dickenson.</p>
	<p>"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; They kill us for their sport" King Lear Act IV Scene I.</p>
	<p>"What a piece of work is man!" Hamlet Act II Scene II Line: 295.</p>
Goal Setting	<p>"To be weak is miserable, doing or suffering" Paradise Lost,- Line 155 – 160</p>
	<p>“We aim above the mark to hit the mark.” ( Collected Works Ralph Waldo Emerson Vol. III, P. 107)</p>
Confidence Building	<p>"Awake, Arise, Or Be Forever Fallen!" Paradise Lost Boo I : 330</p>
	<p>“For Antony is but a limb of Caesar” Julius Caesar Act II Scene I.</p>
Leadership	<p>“A coward will die many a time but a tiger dies at once” - Julius Caesar.</p>
	<p>“Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius” Julius Caesar Act II Scene I</p>
Conflict Management	<p>"To be weak is miserable, doing or suffering" Paradise Lost, Satan's second speech-Line 155-160</p>
	<p>“To be, or not to be” Hamlet Act III Scene I</p>
Team Building	<p>"United we stand, divided we fall" John Dickinson, The Father of USA</p>
Time Management	<p>“I wasted time then, and now time wastes me. Time has made me his clock: my thoughts have become minutes that turn the clock hands in my eyes” Shakespeare, Richard II</p>
	<p>“Better three hours too soon than a minute too late” Act II Scene II The Merry Wives of Windsor, William Shakespeare</p>
Crisis Management	<p>If you can dream - and not to make dreams your master; If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim; If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster And treat those two imposters just the same; (Poem 'If' by Rudyard Kipling)</p>

	<p>“If winter comes, can spring be far behind” - Percy Bysshe Shelley. Taken from Ode to the West Wind.</p> <p>“Two roads diverge in a wood and I - took the one less travelled by and that has made all the difference” - Road Not Taken by Robert Frost</p>
Event Management	Episodes from Successful Movements, Struggles and Achievements which teach us lessons on Cooperation, Coordination and Cohesiveness: Example, PSLV Project under the able guidance of A P J Abdul Kalam. - Wings of Fire
Non - Literary Source	

With the help of these above mentioned sources a module on soft skills can be developed which would surely be handy to the participants of the course. A resourceful teacher after meaningful exploration can plan the following activities:

- Role play
- Case studies
- Debates
- Critical Discussion

### CONCLUSION:

Literature as a source for soft skills is something valuable and indispensable. Most of the teachers working in Engineering colleges out of propensity for literature use them making the discussion on soft skills more insightful. The

presence of too many books on soft skills, though useful, often confuses both the teacher and the taught. Except a few they seem to be mere textual devoid of illustrations from life situations present in works of literature. Therefore constant exploration of sources will certainly bring innovativeness, freshness and contemporaneity in the classroom interaction.

Exploration demands the inquisitiveness to read the classics of literature and judiciously use them for better learning outcomes. An Exploratory study would be a rich tribute to the writers who made this world a better place by their creative and intellectual endeavours. Further it would be a holy duty of protecting the beauty, grace and glory of literature.

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