

Interaction between Language and Literature

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Abstract: Every society is composed of individuals who share a common culture thorough the language they use. The continuity of this culture and its transmission to the other generations are mostly made through the language. The literary works are those transponders that convey the cultural heritage of the nations to the future and put a light on the past.

Although literature is supposed to do so, the language is shaped in the hands of master of languages; namely, literary men. As famous Russian literary critic, writer and philosopher Belinski said, literature is the best expression of a nation's spirit in the medium of language. In another word, the literature is to add something from the soul, feelings into the work of art by using language.

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1. Interaction Between Language and Literature

Various sources have defined language and literature and as time passes, new definitions appear. In its most classical definition, Longman Dictionary (2017) treats the language "as a system of communication by written or spoken words, which is used by the people of a particular country or area" and according to Longman Anthology by David and his colleagues (2003) literature is a range of artistically shaped works written in a changed language, appealing to the imagination at least as much as to discursive reasoning". As it is clear from the definitions, language and literature are correlated to each other.

Kaplan (2005) suggests that the interaction between language and literature is a direct intercourse. He states that every society is composed of individuals; each of the individuals shares a common culture thorough the language they use; and this culture is made to continue by use of language and transmitted to contemporaries, posterities or other nations by means of the language. One of the ways of this transmission is 'literature' which is an 'institution of culture' just like language (Kantarcioglu, 1997) and as Kaplan (2005) stated in his book *Kultur ve Dil (Culture and Language)*, this cultural institution is a kind of art that is composed of language.

However, the language of this art, that is to say literature, is more different from ordinary language. In the statements of Jakobson, “the language of literature is a deviation, transformation and intensity from standard use of language in the society” (cited in Eagleton, 1983). Definitely, it is possible to see a daily speech usage but this style of usage becomes a part of literary work; it is one of the ornaments of the literature in the work of art.

A literary work is composed of form and content. Content is given thanks to form, that is to say, content is presented through the language according to the selection of the author or poet. To I. A. Richards, literary language provides an emotional and unpractical reaction by addressing to the senses. This reaction is provided through the images used in a work of art. If reader manages to read a poem or a literary work in demanded density –everybody [more or less] manages this [that is why there cannot be man who is not affected with any kind of writing or discourse except for dead people]- she or he will get a kind of [literary] density and the delight of this emotional density (Suer, 2005). This density is called ‘defamiliarization’ as Formalists said (Eagleton, 1983); In other words, language in the literature catches people’s attention whether they accept or not and make them be aware; for instance, when a fish swims in the sea, if it is taken to the river for a short time, the fish lives estrangement. Although the locations in both cases are water in appearance, as formation and content of these are different from each other - amounts of salt are different even though hues are the same-, the fish cannot adopt itself and feels ‘notification’ which Eagleton (1983) calls “all literature as a poetry”. Looking from this perspective, the attention is paid only to what language did to people.

On the other side, it should be remembered that literature is the “work of human experiences” (Kantarcioglu, 1997); the source is human, and it gains shape according to ‘maker’ of it. In another way of expression, literature has an aim within itself as language has. This peculiarity of the literature is reflected as “... to express emotions [and thought] that are the most significant and valuable side of the literature...” (Moran, 2004, p. 305). In a much more advanced way, Vissarion Belinski, a Russian literary critic, writer and philosopher, defines literature as “the best expression of a nation’s spirit in the medium of language” (cited in Kantarcioglu, 1997, p. 112). According to Moran (2004), in this sense, the aim of literature can be resembled to the Victorian sense of literature ‘art for art’s sake’ and as in the Romantic era of Western Literature, it is limited to the individual. However, for Belinski, it is more than that. He accepts literature as ‘collective as a whole’ because “a work of art finds its expression in language [of that particular society] modified by the philosophical conventions and literary conventions of historical perspective [which belong to that society, not to an individual because an individual is a part of that society; without society, an individual cannot occur since man is a social creature]” (cited in Kantarcioglu, 1997, p. 3).

Another point is that the literature provides a systematic constitution as a whole for language; practice area of language in an extended and transcendent way. Formalist view, for example, treats the language in this perspective. Let’s think of an artist who while painting his/her tableau, uses colors by help of the brush to make his work. In this example colors stand for language in a literary work of art and brush is the style of the author. Poets or writers gives new shapes to the words or makes archaic words alive (as Horace said in his Art of Poetry) just like the painter does this to colors with the brush. In other words; for instance, the reason of figures of speech is the literature itself or new shaped words are made to

accept through the literary works. Cetisli (2001, p. 17) expresses this situation as follows: “the most significant share on the growth and development of the language belongs to poets and authors because they are the masters and servants of the language who devoted their lives to [development of] the language”.

Reason for these successes lies beneath their excellent observations of the environment because though daily language or scientific languages deal with denotations, masters of the literature deal with unseen that is beneath the surface as poststructuralists do. In the words of Woolf (1969, p. 46), “I am astonished, as I draw the veil off things with words, how much, how infinitely more than I can say I have observed”.

On the other hand, “sometimes daily language is seemed to approach to literary language” (Cetisli, 1999, p. 17). This approximation is provided through men of literature because they bring those things [language usage, figures of speeches and new words etc.] to the language bazaar for the service of the people without demanding any interest, but unfortunately most of the people ignore those as Woolf (1969, p. 52) said: “You, all of you, ignore it. What ... poet said, you have forgotten. I cannot translate it to you [into your basic language] so that its binding power ropes you in...”.

Speech language is the common share of a society. Common language is anonymous. All of us breed, think and live with it. Literary man day-by-day puts new things to this common share and make it rich (Kaplan, 2005) or with the words of Longinus (cited in Kantarcioglu, 1997, p. 32), “literary man ennoble the language by use of an elevated language while ennobling his soul with literary work”.

2. Conclusion

Literature is a kind of art in which language is the most significant material. Now that, literature is the reflection of a nation’s culture into literary work, it also includes the language which is the mirror of culture and eventually, both of them capture each other. These cannot be separated from each other because only to have knowledge of language will not be enough, neither will have the knowledge of literature. They should be “whole” since the literature expresses itself thanks to language, as people express themselves by means of the language.

In other words, language is a bridge between people and literary work; without language it cannot be talked about the literature because without it, literature remains as ‘unsaid’. As Aristotle (n.d.) said, “art imitates life either in verse or prose”.

However, language of the literature should be different from the accustomed, daily and ordinary language since one of the aims of literature is to lead our senses and attention to what we ignore or what we do not know although they have already been around us. Furthermore, it should not be neglected that the literature also has some essential dominance over the language due to the fact that the best users of languages are the authors and poets.

These people give (news) ways to the language through the literature and prevent it from monotonousness by inventing or recalling/reusing the vocabularies either in their usual way or in an unordinary style. This usage also saves the language from being forgotten and archaic or dead.

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