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پښتونخواه علمي او ادبياتو مرکز  
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number of teachers is, obviously, responsible for the problem. The students' few choices in the time of registration lead to large classes which, in turn, result, inevitably, in the level of instruction falling far below the desired standard.

I don't think that this deficiency can, in a near future, be remedied unless a nation-wide program is effected for the recruitment of qualified faculty and generous funds are allocated not merely for the training of those really brilliant and promising young graduates who are willing to join the academia, but for doing everything possible to make the profession attractive for all such graduates.

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papers and assignments. Most of the books at such libraries are there simply because an allocation had to have been expended. Nobody has given it a second thought as to whether or not they would be used for any purpose at all. It is impossible to go through the stacks of any university in Tehran without coming across several copies of James Morier's notorious Hajji Baba of Isphahan, but a desperately needed book or article on a much-debated literary issue would be hard to find. It wouldn't be difficult to supply a decent amount of funds to furnish a department with what books and periodicals are needed. What is rather difficult, however, would be to appoint a well-informed committee with full authority to buy what works are necessary.

The scarcity of books and sources becomes more noticeable by that universal and all familiar complaint of class overcrowdedness. In order to maximize the teacher-student interaction, literature classes have to be kept as small as possible. Class size is an important factor to get the students participate in class activities and create in them that essential feeling that each one of them belongs. Obviously, this is possible only when the class is not larger than the teacher can handle. Mental and psychological maturity of college students calls for inductive and inferential instruction. This is most effective because they willingly respond and participate in the discussion. The strategy, though, is hard to adopt because classes are often overcrowded. The insufficient

further reading, and 4) save them a great amount of frustration caused by their language barrier.

In the implementation of a curriculum it is often hard to draw a border-line between the teacher and the administrator. This is partly due to the fact that both cover vast areas of responsibility which often overlap. However, there are problems whose solutions lie solely in the hands of the administrators and there is nothing that teachers can do about them. Providing sources and teaching material for the program is a case in point. This is a matter whose neglect would create no little amount of inconvenience. A continued interest in reading literature is indispensable to a literary pursuit. There is no need to mention that teachers and students alike have to have constant and easy access to books and periodicals. It would be unfair to expect the teacher to function acceptably without his essential tools and it would be absurd to expect the students to make any reasonable achievements without making available for them not merely the required texts, but all those materials which complement the teacher's instruction and stimulate them to learn more about the content of the course. In our Country, as regards English literature, there is a drastic shortage of sources-- primary as well as secondary. Department libraries are very poor and periodicals are very few and far between. In many cases teachers are the only sources for the students to consult while writing their

Nelson Brooks who totally condemns the idea by saying that it "is not only an inglorious admission of defeat on the part of the teacher, but the betrayal of the very principles upon which the study of contemporary language is founded" (100). This difference of opinion may have sprung from a difference of curricular objectives. If we are using literature as a means for language acquisition, Brooks' position can perhaps be justified, but in Iran, this is not the case. The curriculum is not merely oriented towards a proficiency in the four skills of the language. An emphasis has also been placed upon literature proper and on a program whose objective is to introduce the student into the world of a different literature. Of course, I cannot agree more with Stephen Dunning who says "No...student should enter the world of literature... as a foreigner who has yet to learn the language" (86), but the Iranian teacher of English literature would have to accept the inadequacies of the student and realize the fact that his initiation into the target literature would occur more smoothly if he (the teacher) would take advantage of the vernacular while discussing the complexities of the selections. The question of how much and to what extent the native language should be utilized is a different matter. But I firmly believe that a limited use of the vernacular would 1) give freedom to students to express themselves 2) prevent the instruction from falling down to the level of absurdity, 3) encourage the students to get involved and thereby acquire impetus for

their competence and improve their strategies and teaching practices. Participation in international conferences and conventions which concentrate on the latest developments in scholarship and methodology should be strongly encouraged and even subsidized by the government. Sabbaticals or anything of the kind are not, as they are usually taken to be, vacations when teachers may take a rest or busy themselves with anything but what they are there for. It should be required of them to take refresher courses and get better prepared for the time when they are back in their classrooms. The professional competence of a teacher of literature is judged, among other things, by 1) his capability of choosing appropriate selections, 2) his strategies to present those selections. These strategies include a large spectrum of variables which may, by no means, be overlooked. When we discuss, for instance, the "appropriate" selections and "good" methods of presentation, we may not forgo the major factors which are involved in these two processes, namely, the student's age, his mentality, his language ability, his religion, his cultural and even socioeconomic background. All these (and there are others) deserve special attention when Iranian students of English literature are being dealt with.

Related to the question of methodology I should like to point out that the utilization of the vernacular has always been a controversial issue. I cannot agree with

sized. Good instruction is so consequential for the successful implementation of literature programs that it would be a catastrophic mistake to ignore it. The best-designed curriculum is bound to fail if it is not supported with the sound strategies of the teacher who should be well aware of his many-sided responsibility as regards his students' backgrounds, mental capacities, and psychological maturations. All this calls for the teacher's devotion to his profession. This devotion manifests itself in a number of ways of which the most important is a continual attempt to keep up to date with what goes on in the world of scholarship and research. It is regrettable that in this country, quite understandably, the propensity of most college teachers to keep abreast with their colleagues in other countries is negligible. Therefore, their enthusiasm for literature gradually deteriorates and thereby it grows increasingly difficult for them to generate in their students that interest and enthusiasm which is so fundamental for literary appreciation.

There is no terminal point to a teacher's education. A teacher of literature should constantly try to improve his ability to judge and his taste to choose. This is not possible unless he seriously engages in an extensive reading of the major works that belong to that literature. Iranian teachers of English literature, and indeed all English teachers, need continual opportunities to advance

Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", The Wasteland, The Sound and the Fury or Mrs. Dalloway in an undergraduate course would create distaste in the students because these are not their idea of art forms. 2) They should stimulate as much as possible the curiosity of the students to make comparisons between the selections and Persian works of the same genre. This would lead them to their own "moments" of experience in that particular form and eventually enable them to realize that an entirely different set of criteria is required to be able to appreciate a literature that is so different from their own. 3). In order for the selections to be completely assimilated they should not require of the students a certain background-- either historical, philosophical or political -- that the teacher is sure they do not have. 4) They should not be contradictory to their religious beliefs nor should they be offensive to their national pride. We are, by nature, very sensitive as regards our creed and long-accepted national concepts. I know it would be very hard to avoid such issues in class altogether, but the teacher would be better off if he sees to it that his selections do not violate any religious, ethical, or cultural codes.

Let us not forget that the best of selections would not be successful without the valuable aid of competent and devoted teachers. Indeed, the importance of instruction at any level of education can hardly be overempha-



issues is not of primary importance. The goals and objectives, for instance, are never clearly defined nor are they usually established with regard to the student's essential capabilities. The curricular items which justify the inclusion of the obscure and complex selections is a case in point. I really find it hard to understand why our curricula does not explicitly discourage the inclusion, in the undergraduate program, of such intricate authors as T.S.Eliot, W.B.Yeats, e.e.cummings, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Harold Pinter, William Faulkner etc. Wouldn't it be wiser if we went for a less sophisticated and a less ambitious program which does not so naively presuppose the linguistic proficiency, among others, of every student whose mere enthusiasm has been considered sufficient requirement to take him into a literature program?

This, however, is not a purely administrative issue. Indeed, the teachers are more to blame here than the administrators are. Too often they refuse to accept the limitations imposed upon them by their learners' command of English and their background in literature. We, as teachers of literature, should keep in mind that in order to be instrumental in developing the desired literary perception in the students and stimulate them in their pursuit, our selections have to meet some basic requirements: 1) they should not be in great conflict with the students' aesthetic concepts. The introduction of "The

implementation of it. It goes without saying that students, teachers and administrators form the triangle on whom the success of any curriculum depends and without whose synchronized efforts no degree of achievement may be expected. It is easy to argue that in finding solutions for this monumental and manifold problem, the student factor should receive the greater emphasis because, after all, it is the quality of the student-- the immediate beneficiary-- and the amount of energy he puts in that guarantees the success of any college curriculum. Maybe so. But, as I said, there seems to be no reason why the quality of the student, and his ability to cope with the college programs, should not have been better had the other two factors, namely teachers and administrators, functioned properly during his pre-college education. Bearing in mind, therefore, that the Iranian student has enough potentiality to make as great an achievement in English literature as possible and granting that there is no reason why he should not be able to put in as much time and energy as required-- unless, of course, he encounters curricular or personal hindrances-- we may temporarily overlook the student factor and discuss the other two.

Policy makers and those who are in charge of designing the curricula do not show enough concern over the existing problems of the English departments and for them the question of how to deal with these long-standing

from novel. Therefore, the introduction of such forms into the curriculum in the initial stages of the program is another deterrent for our students to enjoy the target literature.

The problem of the introduction of unfamiliar forms becomes more serious when in our selections we ignore the student's language abilities and present great works of literature at the wrong time and introduce texts that are more appropriate for advanced graduate levels. Naturally, the class cannot go beyond the semantic stage of achievement and the students are so overwhelmed by the complexity and richness of the selections that any involvement on their part would be out of the question. Such premature exposure of the students to texts with intricate stylistic arrangements would only result in spending valuable moments of class time on laboriously defining and elucidating the text. Thus the students' chances of developing a fuller control of their discipline is minimized and their sluggish progress leads to a lack of interest in and a distaste for the literature that they are expected to love.

It would be very naive optimism to think that there are quick solutions for the mentioned problems. Even the most reasonably designed curriculum is bound to fail unless all those people who are somehow involved in it have enough enthusiasm to make sincere attempts at the

Another factor responsible for the failure of the students' literary perception in English is their unfamiliarity with the fairly recent critical systems which are now universally recognized to be so essential for any literary analysis. Wellek and Warren, Richards, Brooks, Daiches and Frye are almost unheard of in Persian literature classes, even at college level. The most popular approaches to literary works are still textual, historical or moral. Consequently, our students in an English literature class are bewildered not merely because they are not familiar with the principles of new criticism but also because they do not even possess the essential critical terminology. Very basic and elementary terms like tone, mood, form, setting, persona, tenor, vehicle, etc. have to be explained to them because these are not the tools used in the classes of their own literature. It is true, of course, that one does not have to know these literary terms to enjoy literature but, in a classroom situation while literary analysis is in progress, communication between teacher and students would become almost impossible if critical terminology was to be avoided.

To all these inconveniences one may add also the absence, in Persian literature, of some literary forms existing in English. Poetic drama, for one, is almost alien to our students and short story is still a novelty which has not yet been accepted as a genre different

with Reuben Levy, naively though, that there is in English a "poverty of rhyming words and rhyming grammatical affixes" ( 30 ). He would be elated to hear Walter Leaf reassure him that "in Persian it is a small task to find eight or ten rhymes to most words, and by no means impossible to find twenty, thirty, forty, to many-- in some of the verbal terminations--indeed there are almost as many rhymes as there are verbs in the language... One ode of Haafiz has twenty-eight rhymes in -āram. Another has forty-four in ān-girad"(7).

To us a Persian poem is, metrically and thematically, such a well-ordered entity that our students find it extremely disconcerting when they are expected, as they often are, to appreciate, say, T.S.Eliot and they come across the following verses:

Unreal City  
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon  
 Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant  
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants  
 C.i.f. London: documents at sight,  
 Asked me in demotic French  
 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel  
 Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

It is a whole new idea to them and having their own criteria for judgements they come up with a million of unanswerable questions about the substance and about the absence of those "fundamental elements" which, to them, are so essential in any metrical composition.

find that no English prose writer would bring as much enjoyment to an Iranian student as John Lyly would in his Euphuse. The reason is his apparent similarities with Sa'di and other Iranian writers. Lyly's alliteration and rhyming words, his consonances, assonances and symmetricalities recall the familiar Persian prose forms like mussaja, mutawazi, and mutawazen. The student quickly gets involved and easily forgives Lyly for his superficiality of substance. The good prose writers like Sidney, Bacon or even Johnson would have no appeal to him in point of stylistics and no Addison or Lamb would strike him as good prose, simply because they do not meet his aesthetic criteria.

In poetry the Iranian's problem is much greater. He grows more and more perplexed when he finds how differently from his own poetry English metrical compositions work. This is due to the fact that in Persian, poetry, as we know, is determined by 1) the measurements of syllables according to length and 2) the factor of rhyme. A bayt or distich, irrespective of the formal description of the poem--ghazal, gasida, epic forms, etc.-- should invariably agree with a very rigid set of prosodic rules. Therefore, no matter which one of the several patterns of form a poem follows each line from first to last should be in one measure. In an English poetry class the student is embarrassingly bewildered when he is told that English poetry does not work like that. He would agree

Another insuperable impediment is presented to us in the peculiar genius of the Persian language, which, independent of its extreme melodiousness, its simplicity, and the delicacy of its construction so abounds in compounds, as at times to crowd whole stanzas with compound epithets. This luxuriance, however graceful in its own idiom, is too exuberant, we apprehend, ever to be easily, if at all, appositely imitable in ours (6).

Or "The softest and the richest language," says Costello,

in the world is Persian: it is so peculiarly adapted to the purpose of poetry, that it is acknowledged there have been more poets produced in Persia than in all the other nations of Europe together....There is perhaps, in no poetry so much variety, both in style and subject, as in the musical and expressive Persian (6).

Jan Rycka, speaking about the enthusiasm with which the Iranian approaches poetry, attributes his "mania" for writing verse to

the pleasure in the euphony of Persian language, enhanced by an enchanting rhythm, the art of the idiom and grandeur of the substance...(80).

Now, the Iranian who has understandably developed an interest in, and acquired a facility for, the native literature, has reasonably gained enough self-confidence to go in for foreign literature. But all he brings with him is his enthusiasm and his own aesthetic criteria for literary judgements. It is no surprise, therefore, to

rightfully believes that Dryden's "Alexander's Feast", with its relevance to Persian history and its lucid and melodious language, is a good Neoclassical selection. Now, a brief look at the few mythological and Christian allusions in the poem, though, would reveal how tedious and time-consuming it would be to have to explain those allusions as well as the other aspects of the poem with which an Iranian has a problem of a different sort to cope with.

The set of criteria which is regarded basic to any literary judgement in Persian literature creates an almost insurmountable hurdle for the Iranian student of English literature. This is partly due to the fact that the two languages, though both of Indo-European origin, are phonologically, lexically and syntactically very different.

The average Iranian student grows up with the notion that his mother tongue is one of the sweetest of all the languages in the world and there are few other languages that can be as appropriate a vehicle for poetry as Persian. I don't mean to discuss the validity of this statement. I should like to point out, however, that nearly all the Iranologists who have somehow been involved in Persian language and literature have expressed their feelings in epithets like rhythmic, musical, melodious, etc. Hindley, discussing the impossibility of translating Haafiz into English, states:



literary study his problem, as regards such historical knowledge, is almost nil. On the contrary, an Iranian who is admitted to an English department finds himself working in a vacuum because during the earlier periods of his education he has had the monumental task of grappling with the massive literary, religious and sociopolitical history of his own country. English or American history and culture -- and, indeed, the history and culture of any other nation, for that matter -- have only been touched upon for mere awareness. It is amazing that an Iranian student who graduates from high school may have no knowledge, whatsoever, of the cultural histories of Greece or Rome whose pasts are so deeply interwoven with that of our own. Therefore, the students who have any adequate knowledge of Greek and Roman literature and mythology are very few and this, naturally enough, poses another difficulty for the teacher who finds it impossible to do away with what, he knows, cannot possibly be divorced from the target literature. The introduction of Greek and Roman mythology into the curriculum, due to the inept presentation of it, has never been successful and has never been taken seriously. The Persian massive volume of mythology and traditions ( except for a few basic myths and archetypes that recur in the legends, ceremonials and literatures of most nations) are of no help. The result is that a considerable amount of class time is wasted in explaining the most familiar myths of other cultures. Take, for example, the case of the teacher who

Religion is so very much a part of the history of England that the teacher would not be able to discuss one without a detailed discussion of the other. Furthermore, the nature of a great number of selections necessitates a historical approach and would require a historical background. This does not mean, of course, that the students have to be plunged into an ocean of historical trivialities and forced to cram their minds with matters that do not help them enhance their appreciation of literature. Even crucial dynastic changes and political contentions are often irrelevant. Milton can be tackled without any reference to the high position he held in the Interregnum and the Commonwealth and a Victorian background would not be a necessity for a discussion of Thackeray, George Eliot or even the controversial Ruskin and Thomas H. Huxley. None the less in the words of Hook a writer "is an outgrowth of his age and his characteristics were shaped by the time in which he lived" (138). An author's works are the delineations of his mental and emotional state and without such essential information full appreciation of those works would hardly take place. A knowledge of the civil wars in the 17th Century England would be indispensable to a successful discussion of such a good selection as Marvell's "An Horatian Ode" or a mere mention of Absalom and Achitophel would require a familiarity with the rebellion that occasioned it. Now, these are part and parcel of an American or English student's pre-college education and when he pursues a

The most serious aspect of this problem is cultural. To appreciate the artistic contributions of a nation one has to have a knowledge of that nation's culture, that is, its religion, customs, folklore and mythology. These are the inseparable parts of that essential foundation without which no considerable degree of any artistic appreciation would be possible. Iranian students of literature have always been at a great disadvantage when it comes to the cultural features of English literature.

For an Iranian student one of the impediments which would be very difficult, if not impossible, to overcome is the religious aspect of English literature. We are muslims and English is a Christian literature containing, naturally, Biblical allusions and liturgical references. A mere sacrament, for instance, that a Christian boy looks upon as a matter of course and has actually practiced ever since his early childhood, is, for a muslim college student, a concept whose "oddity" may obscure his whole literary perception. Naturally, the introduction of Christian liturgy into the curriculum, and the catechization of the students in a muslim country would be absurd. The Holy Bible is not considered literature to justify its selection as teaching materials. So, here is the teacher, trying helplessly to get the students involved in the literature and yet constantly on his guard lest he create a problem which he or his department would not be able to unravel.

teaching materials are, among other things, the cause of a distaste for language learning which gradually develops in the students.

A considerable number of the language teachers at the secondary level in this country are not qualified for the positions they hold. They teach the language because they (hopefully) know it. They have had no training for the job and they have been hired because their knowledge of the language has presupposed their capability as language teachers. No effective measure is taken to remedy the situation; there is no consistent pre-service or in-service training and the summer schools which might enable them to improve their professional competence are regrettably few and mediocre in quality. As a result, teaching materials are presented in a most haphazard manner and one can hardly find a teacher who follows a pre-planned strategy when tackling the materials which, incidentally, have already been prescribed for his students.

The impact of the curricular deficiencies in foreign languages at high school is clearly felt a few months after the enrollment of the students in the college departments. Here they are impeded in their studies by hurdles which, though fundamentally attributable to their backgrounds, are caused by a more complex problem which is worth breaking into its major components.

call for all the time and energy that the pupils can afford to put in.

Science courses in our secondary education enjoy all the curricular priorities. In fact by placing all the emphasis on such courses, the policy makers exercise a repressive force over the foreign language learner. The amount of foreign language instruction at school is minimal and by taking advantage of the loopholes in the regulations governing the language programs a student can easily get by and indeed go through his whole secondary education without having achieved anything worthy of mention in the area of foreign languages. Science courses, on the contrary, are made as tough and demanding as can be; more school time is devoted to them; better qualified faculty are assigned to teach them; and no student would ever be encouraged to take up sciences unless his achievements fully satisfy the administration. In a developing country, like ours, it is perhaps justified to "track" the students to whatever is necessary for the general good of the nation. But who is prepared to argue that in the world we live in a knowledge of foreign languages is not indispensable to any scientific achievement?

The indifferent attitude of the students to foreign language learning resulting from the ill-designed curriculum is reinforced by other factors. The low standard of instruction in language classes and the poor quality of

In order to provide answers to these and many other related questions one has to take into consideration all the possible aspects of our culture, namely, our history, geography, religion, arts, folkways, customs, institutions, psychological traits and educational and socio-economical systems. Some of these features, of course, overlap, but taken individually, each one of them is in its own specific way conducive to the creation of the problem which is now facing the departments of English in this country. To deal with all these in any detail, however, would require the scholarly attempts of the social scientist-- which I am not. I merely propose to look into the problem from an educator's perspective and try to 1) shed some light on the nature of it and pinpoint the factors responsible for their appearance, and 2) suggest some solutions which, though hypothetical, would hopefully lead to what everybody concerned is now seeking.

As regards language learning, secondary education policies are often determined by people who do not properly appreciate the complexity of the subject and who do not seem to believe in the ways and means that modern researches and a host of scholars have provided to facilitate the acquisition of foreign languages. This apathy of the administrators concerning foreign languages would be more remarkable when one notes the ambitious and the intolerably cumbersome science courses that regrettably

The Specific Problems of the Iranian  
College Students With English Literature and  
Some Hypothetical Solutions

Dr: Hooshang Honarvar

The popularity of Persian literature classes among the students of all age groups in this country creates the presumption that the literatures of other nations should have an irresistible fascination for Iranians, thereby making them the best of students in foreign literature classes, too. This, however, is not true; in fact second literature classes are, for a great number of them, most boring and tiresome. Departments of foreign languages, especially English, are not so successful as they are expected to be and any amount of money invested in their programs almost go to waste.

Nobody has yet come up with a definite answer as to why the student who is so evidently carried away with the lyricism of Haafiz or Rumi can be so indifferent to the romanticism of Blake or Shelley; and the young man, who delightfully elocutes, or possibly does his morning exercises to, the masculine lines of Firdowsi may by no means be introduced into Milton's epic poetry.