

EDUCATION AND NEO-COLONIZATION: A CRITIQUE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE CURRICULUM IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This research study seeks to examine the study of the topics mentioned in Pakistani educational context and English literature being taught after the creation of Pakistan. An attempt has also been made to look into the cultural and socio-political dimensions of control which were established by the British colonist through the implementation of their language and literature in the subcontinent in 1835. Furthermore, Gramsci (1935) and Said's (1979, 1983) theoretical and conceptual models are used to describe the ongoing process of cultural hegemony, which is being carried on through educational institutions. This has been dealt with by attempting to discuss the present English curriculum at post graduate level with especial reference to Punjab University in the light of the research topic. The research aimed to find out how hegemony of the Western literature is perpetuated through education in Pakistan therefore; the theoretical and conceptual frameworks were investigated through a detailed library research. The theoretical analysis as well as the curriculum content selection was analyzed qualitatively, in order to highlight the role and importance of other literatures in English in the curriculum as other and indigenous cultural representations in education to neutralize and decentralize the Anglo centrality that exists in our present pedagogy of English literature in higher education.

Keywords: Neo-colonization, Anglo centrality, Eurocentricity, Western literature

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Introduction

Independence from the British colonial oppression was a tremendous achievement in the history of colonization. Many former colonies of Britain raised question to the continued use of English language and literature. According to Ngugi (1986) the language issue is a very important key to the decolonization process. However, the approaches to the continued use of English in the colonies were not uniform, and there were many and clear differences between them. For example, even in the white settler colonies, the use of their own literatures in the English language curriculum is swamped with problems. Some of the problems have to do with the national identity, whereby the literatures of the white settler colonies, many of whose texts explore questions of identities that are distinct from the British or English identity, need to be taught in school and university, but are not found in the curriculum. The situation in non settler colonies is not very different. In fact, it may actually be stronger. Achebe (1975) believes that there is an authoritative link between literature and education as conceived in a broader context. Ngugi (1986) on the other hand suggested not to incorporate British literature and gave preference to other literatures of the world in the curriculum.

As Pakistan is also a former colony of the British Empire and major changes in the curriculum should have been addressed. However, one feels that policy changes are slow in Pakistani educational context to acknowledge more diverse cultural issues of our indigenous heritage and tradition and to implement programme of change.

The institution of education does not exist in isolation. English literature has its roots in a complex web of social relations of which it becomes an important part. In many ways it has a connection with bodies such as the state, with issues of gender, the social classes, ethnicity, economic system, politics and above all representation. Moreover, Literary education should be analyzed as to how it interacts with complex areas such as the various groups and social classes in the society. Therefore, regarding the prevailing social class in the society and its alliance with that social force, education can perform a broader role. Education can be liberating, critical, conservative, or closed, it may be subversive or suppressive it can also be emancipator. Education in a society has a prospective to be both, subversive or liberating. In this

political context, it is important to note that as a social force English education frequently serves the interests of powerful groups in the society. For the prime reason that the state itself is more often than not a representative of powerful classes, and it is a matter of common observation that the education through English literature thus it imparts essentially the values and interests of the dominant classes. The mixed cultural attitudes towards learning English in Pakistan have been addressed to publicly by an ex-minister for education, Zobiaida Jalal Khan (as cited in Saigol, 1993, 126):

It is my experience as minister of education that the position of the government in respect to English is not enviable. We may be satisfied with what we are doing but apparently we are the target of criticism from two sides – the sides that are working for and against English.

Statement of the Problem

The English literature curriculum at master's level needs rethinking in introducing and incorporating indigenous knowledge and content in its selection while revising curriculum which is primarily dominated by the Eurocentric model. Therefore, in order to educate and liberate the learners from purely dominant Western literature and criticism, there is a need of research to provide insight into indigenous knowledge in English curriculum.

The purpose of this study was to contest over the marginalization of our local and cultural component in English literature curriculum. The indigenous wisdom in the form of literature other than mainstream Western, will, in turn, accelerate the intellectual and academic self determination and shall facilitate in cultural decolonization.

Context of the Study

The context of the present study was English language and literature at post graduate level. The aim was to raise awareness and need about this particular study in educational context.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to:

1. Critically review the official English literature curriculum and syllabi of the Punjab University from post colonial perspective.
2. Investigate how English literature, as a discourse of power, maintains hegemony over the periphery i.e. Pakistan.
3. Explore how dominant ideas, worldviews in a literary text can be resisted and made culturally relevant through education in literature pedagogy.

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

The methodology of this research study was qualitative. The curriculum of English literature with reference to content selection has been qualitatively analyzed. The novels of the 18th and 19th century British origin have been discussed briefly by referring to the conceptual framework provided by Said (1978, 1994). The hegemonic activity of the literary text as well as the state has been studied from the theoretical framework provided by Gramsci (1971).

Delimitation

The study was delimited to remain focused only one genre from the curriculum of literature, as it was beyond the scope of this study to include all the genres being taught at master's level.

Literature Review

The literature has been reviewed from various perspectives. From educational perspective past and present Educational as well as Language policies compiled by Dodwell (1858-1918), Mansoor (2005) and Rehman (1996) have been considered. To investigate the role of English literature and language in establishing socio-political dimensions of control in the subcontinent, I referred to the detailed studies by Viswanathan (1997). For a holistic and panoramic understanding of English language and literature in establishing imperialistic attitudes in the colonized territories various writers were reviewed including: Talib (2002), Ngugi (1986), Alberto (2008), and Philipson (1992). For the purpose of understanding the crucial relationship of ideology, curriculum

and literary studies theorist such as Eagleton (1983), Fairclough (1989) and Said (1978, 1994) have been primarily referred.

English Literature and Curriculum: A Critique

The British colonists in 1835 introduced their 'standard' English language and its literature in British India to control it intellectually and culturally. However, even after independence British political and ideological dominance in the form of English language continued as a dominant discourse and authority. It should have been dismantled to perpetuate national language and culture of the independent state. But, the successful survival of foreign rule (English) and its persistent dominance in the shape of English language and unaltered patterns of teaching literature in English curriculum in Post colonial Pakistan has been a contributing factor in perpetuating cultural hegemony of Eurocentric ideologies as apparently neutral and objective 'voices' of 'commonsense' (Gramsci, 1971).

One also observes that during the period of colonial domination, the role and function of English curriculum and usage may not have received astute critical review and contestation. Now, in what appears to be a time of 'neo-colonization' there is more critical awareness of its status as a means of control and of distribution of social and intellectual capital. The policy-makers, political bureaucrats, curriculum designers and learners and learning institutions in most governmental and non-governmental organizations are increasingly embracing English as the official, the formal, and the instructional language in their everyday businesses (Rehman, 1996).

At the same time, the writers and critiques of postcolonial literature for example, Pennycook (1994), Ngugi (1986) and Ashcroft, *Griffith & Tiffiny* (1995) also argue that the current usage and impositions of English language and literature in most global institutions re-establish colonial relations (or hegemonies) and would require more 'critical' awareness and scholarship. Similarly, Said (1994) whose conceptual framework on cultural imperialism was a prime inspiration for the present study, has provided the post colonial societies with a new agenda of studying literature in the universities. Said (1994) provides us with "Themes of Resistance Culture". According to Said and Fanon, recovering of geographical territory which is at the heart of decolonization stands for primary resistance. However, the period of secondary resistance begins with the period of

