

TOK Knowledge Framework – Language and Literature

Scope and Application

Literature helps you express yourself – ideas, emotions... It allows you to be creative (what does this mean, exactly?), exploring ideas, concepts and opinions through characters, stories.

The fluidity of language – there are millions of ways of expressing the same/ similar ideas.

Language acquisition helps us to understand other cultures and mentality. Language is used as a medium or tool to pass information, facts and knowledge between people(s)

Literature and its study enables us to polish language and refine meaning preventing or minimizing the possibility of misinterpretation meaning or words.

What do we mean by language? What counts as language? Music? Dance? Art? Maths? Do animals have language? Is language natural?

Language used to communicate, cooperate, collaborate, share, check, develop, Language

Methodology

Literature involves emotional interaction.

The study and understanding of literature requires empathy (emotional understanding and connection)

We need imagination to read a text – make meaning from the words. What is the importance of images in language – metaphor and simile and visualization

Is language manipulative? Is translation an art or a science?

Are there correct and incorrect interpretations? Or is relativism absolute when interpreting texts? Is there such a thing as over-interpretation?

What factors – individual psychological, cultural, historical, social –deter mine the interpretation?

Comparing different models of interpretation: differences and similarities in the models of interpretation of different disciplines.

Who 'owns' the text.? The author or the reader? If the latter: who is the creator?

Language and reality: What kind of reality does a work of fiction create? What is the ontological status of characters in novels?

The dichotomy: documentary-fiction versus fiction-fiction.

Questions about the basics of philosophy of language: signifier – signified; the nature of hopes (metaphors etc)

What is a symbol? How does a symbol work?

Concepts and Language

The study of literature has specific terminology – stanza, sonnet, etc referring to forms and genre and is often culturally and historically specific.

The study of language also has a specific terminology – syntax, noun, punctuation.

We use this terminology to, for example, compare Shakespeare and JK Rowling.

Do we need language to think?

Vagueness/ Ambiguity/ Precision/ secondary meaning/ Denotation/ Connotation/ Euphemism/ Weasel words/ Labels/ classification/ stereotypes/ sapir whorf/ linguistic determination...

Language and Literature

Links to personal knowledge

We use and interact daily with language.

Use of language to arouse emotion/ empathy/ understanding.

The connection between language and emotion/ language and reason.

What does swearing tell us about taboos, society's values and pre-occupations? What is the link between swearing and our emotional lives?

How do euphemisms work? What do they tell us about values and societies?

Historical Development

The conventions of language have often been forced upon the language due to technology – printing standardized punctuation, dictionaries standardize spelling and meaning (to some extent) – yet it is the people who use the language who decide on a words meaning and their usage.

Language is constantly evolving.

Words are changing meaning constantly – how does this work?

Technology seems to be driving the development of language – is this a good thing?

- The use of printing, telephones, email, sms, smilies, etc.

Accepted conventions such as the Linnean classification system or the periodic table.

Knowledge Questions

What is language? Why do we have language? Is language a way of knowing, or a way of transferring and deliberating knowledge?

Does our daily use of language change the way we use language?

Can we think without language? If so, in what way?

Is this the same as language shaping our thoughts?

What social function does language play?

Is language a way of knowing or a tool to knowing?

What impact has technology had on language – printing, sms, word processing, spelling, emails rather than hand written letters?

How does language connect to emotion and reason?

In what ways does language influence the knowledge we obtain?

How does our language reflect some sort of world view?

How does language support the acquisition of knowledge?

Is language a way of knowing or a tool for communicating, sharing, arbitrating, checking, speculating about knowledge?

In what ways does language hinder the acquisition of knowledge?

How does language evolve as new knowledge is made?

How is it possible to communicate precisely when language itself remains vague and imprecise? What knowledge of the world does each different language bring?

What kind of knowledge - and about what – do we get from literature (fiction, drama and poetry)?

What kind of authority is the author?