

The role of the Teacher in Teaching Short Stories to Acquire Language Skills and Communicative Competence

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to reveal the effectiveness of the teacher in teaching English Short-stories in ESL classrooms. An effective teacher undoubtedly creates an indelible impression on the minds of students. The main concern of ESL teacher is not only to teach language but to develop learners' abilities to make them competent in using the language for a variety of purposes. It is found that ESLs have knowledge of English but they are not able to use it in their day-to-day life for communicative purpose. This paper aims to pinpoint the role of the teacher in acquiring language skills with communicative competence. Applebee (1974:154) states that teachers have to be encouraged to develop customized learning materials on the basis of particular needs manifested by the class. It has been realised that the careful selection of short stories and their proper induction into ESL classroom teaching could definitely improve not only students' language skills and communicative competence in their target language but also built up their cultural identity which automatically develop their overall personality. The paper focuses on how teacher helps to develop critical thinking, creative thinking, imaginative thinking, analytical thinking, logical thinking, cultural identity and vocabulary. It is very important that ESL teachers should select authentic materials on the basis of learners' needs and expectations, proficiency of the learners', interest, age and gender and different levels of the learners.

Key Words: ELT, ESL, Communicative Competence

Introduction:

The main objective of ESL teaching is to help students to enrich communicative competence in the target language. Among literary genres short stories seem to be the most suitable choice for this due to its potential to help students enhance the four languages skills-listening, speaking,

reading, and writing. Literature also enables students to understand and appreciate other cultures, societies, ideologies different from their own, it encourages personal growth and intellectual development (Carter and Long 1991,pp.2-4) .In the 19th century, Second/Foreign Language were taught with the help of the Grammar Translation

Method, Students would translate literary texts from the second/foreign language to the native language. When this method was replaced by methods that emphasized structures & vocabulary, literature was no longer used. In the seventies, methods such as the Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia, The silent way, Total physical Response and the Natural Approach did not utilize literature to teach second language.

Now it is realized that literature can be used to reinforce the skills & it is complementary to language teaching. Murdoch (2002) indicates that, "Short-stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately provide quality text content which will greatly enhance ELT courses for learners at intermediate levels of proficiency (p.9)". Oster (1989) affirms that literature helps students to write more creatively (p.85). Teacher can ask students to write dialogues, (Murdoch 2002, p.9), Oster (1989, p85) further says this thoughtful process leads to critical thinking.

Teacher through short-stories transmit the culture of the people about whom the stories were written. By learning about the culture, students learn about the past and present, about people's customs & tradition. Culture teaches students to understand & respect people's differences. They start comparing their culture to the other culture to see whether they find similarities or differences between the two cultures. Misinterpretations may occur due to differences between the two cultures as Gajdusek (1998 p. 232) explains. To avoid misinterpretations teacher should introduce the culture to the students or as them to find relevant information about it.

The paper proposes that the short story can provide ESL learners with suitable study resource which is both delightful and instructive to improve their linguistic proficiency and reading comprehension. Consequently this paper aims to put forward variety of strategies to make the teaching of the short story enjoyable and an academically enriching experience. Short story makes them better reader. But for this the text selection is very significant one in language classes.

This paper aims at emphasizing the use of short stories in English language teaching classrooms, for developing students' communicative competence.

Communication means the transfer of information from one person to another person through language and understanding. Communication is must in social context. So communication plays a vital role in human life, to build a rapport with others and to make a social as well as professional interaction possible. The primary purpose of learning a foreign language is to acquire the ability to communicate ideas, feelings, meanings and attitudes in the foreign language, Gurrey (1969:168).

According to Hymes (1972:281) "theory of communicative competence emphasizes what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community."

Cande and Swain (1980:45) insist upon "four dimensions of communicative competence."

They are identified as follows:

	Four Dimensions of Communicative Competence	Reference
1	Grammatical Competence	Refers to the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity of an individual.
2	Sociolinguistic Competence	Refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the share information of participants and the communicative purpose for their interaction.
3	Discourse Competence	Refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse pr text.
4	Strategic Competence	Refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, repair, and redirect communication.

Literature stands as a model for language learners to become familiar with different forms and conventions, containing real examples of grammatical structures and vocabulary items.

Short-Stories are found to be the most suitable authentic literary genre to use in the English Language Teaching classrooms to improve learners' communicative competencies easily and effectively.

Short-Story helps students in the following way:

Practical:

The length of short story is short enough to cover very quickly. Theme & Plot are not too complicated for the students to understand during listening & reading on their own. Varieties of choices are available according to the students' interest.

Motivational:

The story itself – its content, is interesting that can motivate students and make them involve in the class (Wajnryb, R.

2003).Teacher can motivate the readers and promote critical thinking skill.

Personal Development:

“Stories enable children to develop their own feelings and emotions by identifying with story, characters and plots. (Godwin & Perkins1998, p.25)

Linguistic development:

Using stories can expose students to different language patterns (Wright 1997, Garvie, 1990. cited in Cameron 2001)

Conceptual Development:

Teacher can introduce with some new ideas & knowledge through stories which can facilitate their conceptual development.

Intellectual Development:

The Short-Stories also promote students' creative writing skills. So teacher should do the selection of short stories appropriate to students' language requirements. Teacher should give importance to an active involvement of the students in the learning process. King (2001) lists different ways in which stories help

students to learn: First, students enhance the memory through the identification of patterns, the stimulation of the imagination and emotions and the association of ideas. Secondly, stories encourage participation and student centred learning. Students may interact with each story through a series of activities.

Communicative Competence:

In India many language teachers, teacher educators and researchers have expressed the belief that the primary aim of second & foreign language acquisition is to enable learners to communicate with people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in a multicultural world. Communicative Competence is more than acquiring of mastery of structure and form. The short story helps students to enrich communicative competence.

Critical and Analytical Thinking:

Content:

The value and attitudes conveyed in the story should be appropriate to children (Cameron 2001) interesting characters, a clear plot, a surprised ending.

The story should contain simple language so that students can understand easily.

Animated Stories:

Teachers can also use computers for improving reading and writing skills in English as a second or foreign language has drawn robust attention in recent years. Computers can create an encouraging and motivating atmosphere for ESL & EFL learners to better improve their reading & writing skills. With the help of computer it will be easy to acquire reading and writing skills. Teacher can take the help of these animated stories for development of

four skills and mainly communicative competence.

Use of Pictures and Videos:

With the help of video teacher should teach the stories, this is particularly important for the own motivation of students & the own achievers because children like interesting pictures (Wheler, 2001) and they attract to colourful pictures but this visual effect which also create interest among the students. Particularly, teachers who wish to make language learning more colourful, motivating & interesting can make use of videos of short stories in their language cases. This visual effect definitely helps in creating interest among the students.

Choosing stories for language learning:

Teachers should be careful when they choose stories for their students because as Wheeler (2001) emphasises good story can hold children's attention, stimulate their imagination & also their desire to use the language. The short stories distinctive features i.e. its brevity, modernity and variety makes it appealing and interesting to language learners and it improves L2 reading comprehension. The short story can offer learners adequate linguistic, intellectual and emotional involvement to enrich their competence. Using literature as a vehicle for the teaching of second or foreign language has proved very beneficial to the ESL/EFL students' learning experience. Notable researchers such as Susan Louise Stern (1985) Yorio (1971), M Ckinely (1974), Walsleben (1975), Gorman (1979) and Povey (1979) have attested to the effectiveness of the implementation of literature in the language class. The short story enhances students' reading proficiency. It makes

students sensitive to the hidden and implied meaning. While in reading non-literary material students learn to read the lines and decode the meaning, in reading short stories they learn to read between the lines. Indeed, the short story is multidimensional literary genre can be profitably used in the acquisition of various language skills. It develops their learning experience.

The paper provides **systematic steps** for the short story teaching mentioned in ('Language in India' 2014: 672):

1. Pre-reading activity-to provide vocabulary exercises and cultural background
2. Oral reading by teacher: to improve listening and spoken abilities
3. Textual analysis & group work: to improve Reading Comprehension & Communicative Skills.
4. Post reading assignments: to improve written skills.

Teacher are becoming aware that are of the main goals of language teaching is to enable learners to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Through this teacher may activate the students' initial response. Teacher should read the story in class as it is one of the most important skills for mastery of a foreign language. Laine (1997) suggests

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that in foreign language classes where there are children who are not motivated and who are low achievers, a story, if it is well- chosen, can help change their attitudes to the language.

Conclusion:

In the long run, the teacher's role is a facilitator who guides the students as they draw inferences and provide learning experiences through personal involvement with the text. It will be overall benefit of the ESL learners if the teachers promote the use of stories at all levels. Since the goal of ESL teaching must be to help students to communicate fluently in the target language. In addition to the four skills, short story helps teachers to teach literary, emotional aspects. Lao and Krashen (2000) also conducted a survey in Hong Kong found that the group who read literary texts showed improvement in vocabulary & reading. Since the goal of ESL teaching must be to help students to communicate fluently in the target language. In addition to the four language skills, Short story helps teachers to teach literary, cultural and higher order thinking emotional aspects.

In English language classrooms it is common to observe boredom, lack of interest, a negative attitude towards learning, phobia of English. According to King (2001) using short stories may offer solution to such problems, it provides a relax atmosphere, create enjoyment and fun.

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