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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TEACHING WRITING SKILLS USING SHORT STORIES.

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Manuscript Info

Abstract

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Introduction

The most important purpose of learning and teaching a foreign language is to be able to communicate it in different situations for expressing thought and information. Nowadays, concentrating only on spoken English is not enough, written competency has also become indispensable for an EFL learner. Also, they have to respond to questions in the form of written assignments, essays and many other ways. So, there is a need for the language learner to explore and express the ideas properly. If we, the teachers change the strategy or implement the new technique in English language teaching, can enhance the students' English Language Learning Performances.

This can be done through the use of literary texts in the classroom which will augment the language learning process not only interesting but also enjoyable. Engaging the students in the process of reading and listening a literary text will result in enhancing the productive skills speaking and writing. According to HouriaElhabiri (2013), literary texts can be a valuable resource for enhancing students' response to texts due to the fun and interest imbedded in them and particularly, short stories which will develop the writing skills.

Literature text has the capability to express human values and culture, applying this teaching strategy promotes better expression of ideas. The language style and use of vocabulary in the literary texts can enrich the students' knowledge. ParvinGhasemi (2011), proposes a variety of strategies with the use of short story to improve reading and writing skills. These techniques include pre reading activities, in-class oral reading, textual analysis and post reading assignments. Particularly using a short story in the classroom will provide a chance to the learners to learn new vocabulary and different writing styles. Gradually, students can use the selective vocabulary in their writings and also construct the sentences and paragraph in a perfect way.

Moreover, using short stories in the EFL classroom can create a positive learning environment. The short story's distinctive features create interest among the EFL learners. If the teachers select a suitable short story according to the proficiency level of the learners, this strategy can stimulate an intellectual and emotional involvement among the EFL learners. According to Pardede, P. (2011), short story can be used a powerful and motivating tool for ESL/EFL learners to develop their writing skills, as it can serve both as a model and give a context for creative writing. Thus, this paper tries to prove that suitable selective short story facilitates the students and can develop EFL learners' language learning process. Also, short story can be used as a valuable tool for improving the sub skills of writing, i.e. vocabulary development, development of ideas, grammar and the logical and critical thinking.

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Problems Faced by the Arab Students

Arab learners, in particular, the students in graduate level first year are not able to utilize the opportunity to speak in English in their formal school classrooms because of their mother tongue interference. The students are exposed to the English Language instructions only for a few hours per week. These instructions focus more on written form than listening and speaking. Moreover, the school curriculum was not concentrating English Language; their primary focus is only on the courses which are all in Arabic. Because of this barrier the students are not showing interest to learn or know about English Language. The main problem is their mother tongue influence in the classroom teaching. Students are not getting chance to learn the language in a systematic way. The students concentrate only on their marks and to pass. In addition to that, they also prefer to read online translation materials in Arabic although there is an option to change into English.

Writing in English involves several processes namely, collecting data/information, organisation, and other mechanics such as prewriting, revising and rewriting. Saudi learners find it all the difficult to write, which is mainly due to the limitation of vocabulary, complex grammatical structures, style, cultural hindrances, lack of exposure, practice and less experience in using the rhetorical structures of English language.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to use short stories to create a positive environment and develop the writing skill in an enjoyable way.

Participants

The participants of this study were thirty students, who have taken up English as their major in the Bachelor's degree from the fourth level.

Using Short Stories in the Writing Class room

This research study used the short stories of Oscar Wilde to determine if the use of short stories can help in the development of writing skills of students. Oscar Wilde's story was selected as he was considered to be a major figure of the aesthetic revival in English art. This study was done by selecting five short stories of Oscar Wilde for the duration of one semester, and employed them in the classroom, and then checked the progress of the students through small written tests and presentations. In order to measure the effects of writing progress, a qualitative approach was used. The design assessed if short stories are used in the classroom, it helped in the active participation of the learners, in turn, enhanced the writing skills of the learners.

Methods to Use Short Stories

The text book which is used for Writing-I course is Interactions-I Middle East Edition. This text focuses on the sub skills of writing, i.e. vocabulary development, development of ideas, grammar and the logical and critical thinking. Short story was selected according to the interest of the students. Moreover, all students are interested to listen to stories, especially, the Arab students who are not much exposed to stories in their young age.

Oscar Wilde's 'The Model Millionaire'

First, brainstormed the students by showing clippings related to the story and then asked the students to create a vocabulary chart of what they have observed.





(Pictures selected from

https://www.google.com.sa/search?q=the+model+millionaire&safe=strict&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiowfDD_e7RAhWethQKHx4-FYQ_AUICCG&biw=1078&bih=501)

After this activity discussed the clipping shown, and then provided a paragraph with blanks to be filled up with the vocabulary list given on top. By this way, the students understood the meaning of the words and how to use the vocabulary.

An extract from ‘The Model Millionaire’

Unless one is wealthy there is no use in being a charming fellow. Romance is the privilege of the rich, not the profession of the unemployed. The poor should be practical and prosaic. It is better to have a permanent income than to be fascinating. These are the great truths of modern life which Hughie Erskine never realised. Poor Hughie! Intellectually, we must admit, he was not of much importance. He never said a brilliant or even an ill-natured thing in his life. But then he was wonderfully good-looking, with his crisp brown hair, his clear-cut profile, and his grey eyes.

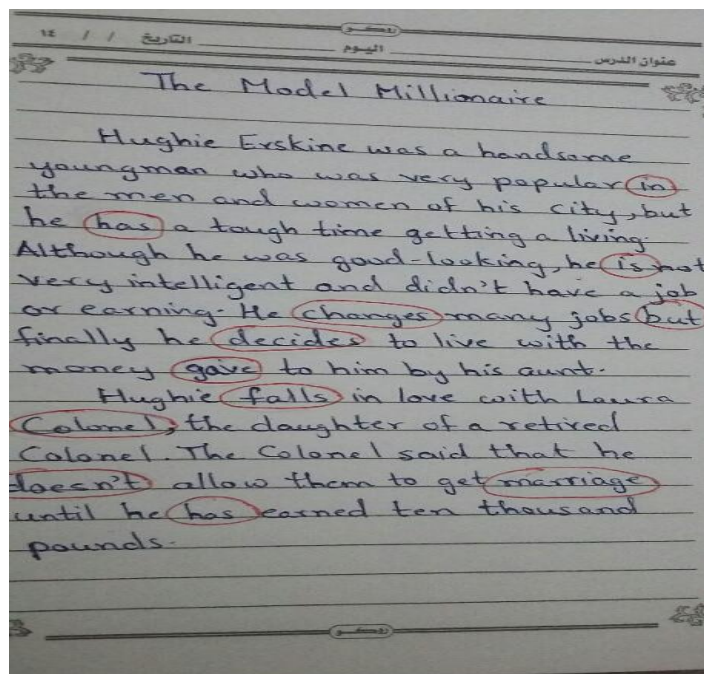
Subsequently, a paragraph was provided to the students to be read. After reading the paragraph, the same paragraph was offered with blanks. In this manner, the students recognized how to employ the vocabulary appropriately.

To make matters worse, he was in love. The girl he loved was Laura Merton, the daughter of a retired Colonel who had lost his temper and his digestion in India, and had never found either of them again. Laura adored him, and he was ready to kiss her shoe-strings. They were the handsomest couple in London, and had not a penny-piece between them. The Colonel was very fond of Hughie, but would not hear of any engagement.

'Come to me, my boy, when you have got ten thousand pounds of your own, and we will see about it,' he used to say; and Hughie looked very glum on those days, and had to go to Laura for consolation. (Extracts taken from <http://www.wilde-online.info/the-model-millionaire.html>)

Video

Next, played the video of the story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEqTmN5EPWQ>) and then provided the opening lines of the story to be developed into a paragraph. Majority of the students developed the first part of the story in a logical way. This activity is carried out to enhance the logical and critical thinking skills of the students. While performing this activity, the students' grammatical level can be observed. After analysing the errors, measures are taken to rectify the inaccuracies.



Conclusion

This study made known that short stories have an immense effect on students learning process and can be used as a powerful tool to enhance the sub skills of writing. It was also found that the students feel it more appealing when they are allowed to think outside the text and develop their ideas in an interesting way. Moreover, it can be established that employing any short story will create a positive environment for the development of learning writing skills. This can be one of the strategies which will be beneficial to enhance the writing skills of the students. Teachers can adopt suitable strategies according to nature of the classroom.

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