

# Employing Short Stories as a Method of Teaching Language Abilities

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The idea that the primary purpose of teaching English as a foreign language is to enable students to converse fluently in the language being studied is what leads many teachers to feel that the primary focus of an English as a Foreign Language class should be solely on the mastery of linguistic aspects. Further, a current trend in EFL education shows the significance of integrating literature because it can serve as an actual example of how language should be used. This is because literature has great potential to provide an authentic model of language use (Yule, 2020). Short stories seem to be the most appropriate choice for this purpose among the various literary genres because of their potential to assist students in more effectively enhancing all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) due to the motivational benefit that is embedded in the stories themselves. This article's objective is to acquaint teachers of English as a foreign language with the help of including short stories into EFL instruction. Following the presentation of the criteria for picking a short narrative, the conversation will center on how to take use of a short story to improve students' linguistic abilities (Lynos, 1995).

**Key Words:** Short story, Language Skills

## Introduction

Teaching English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was dominated by the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in the nineteenth century. The most significant aspects of education during that time were getting students to translate literary works from their second or even third language into their first language. As a result, works of literature were an essential contributor to the content that was used in ESL and EFL classes. This practice was discontinued after the General Trait Model (GTM) was superseded by the Structuralism Approach in the 1960s and in 1970s. The validity of grammatical form was the focus of structuralist theory, not the meaning of individual words, how they should be interpreted, or the way they should be expressed. In other words, the instruction of foreign languages was a subject that fell under the umbrella of linguistics. The Direct Method, Audiolingual, Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, Total

Physical Response, and the Natural Approach were successively the most popular approaches to teaching English to speakers of other languages, but literature was not incorporated into these approaches. During the 1970s and 1980s, when the Communicative Approach was introduced, literature was likewise overlooked. The trend in EFL courses was to teach "practical, applicable" material. As a result, works of literature were excluded from the curriculum. The majority of EFL classes offered at this time were primarily geared toward teaching students how to speak verbally. As a direct result of this, discussions became the primary focus of the curriculum.

On the other hand, ever since the 1980s, when literature started making its way back into the teaching of EFL, the situation has undergone a significant shift for the better. To improve students' communicative competence and to serve as "a springboard for the development of critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation" are the goals of the current use of literary works in English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language classes. This contrasts with the way that it was utilized with the GTM. Additionally, these classes aim to raise students' awareness of the culture and society of the country being studied. Since then, the field of language teaching has been engaging in a comprehensive reexamination of literature. The use of literary works in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom has gained increased interest among teachers, and more and more research are being undertaken on how to employ literature in EFL and English as a Second Language classes. According to the findings of several studies—for example, those conducted by Lazar (1993), Cook (1994), and Shanahan (1997)—it is strongly recommended that literary texts be incorporated into the curriculum for SL and FL. Numerous pieces of writing pertaining to this topic urge for a curriculum that is content-oriented and that includes literature.

Literature is an excellent tool for teaching language because it provides accurate material, cultural enrichment, language development, and personal growth. In theory, employing literature in language instruction is particularly beneficial because it delivers these four benefits. This is consistent with Erkaya (2005) results, who identifies four advantages of utilizing short tales in the ESL/EFL classroom. These advantages include motivational, literary, cultural, and higher-order thinking advantages.

To begin, when it comes to stimulating the process of acquisition, literary texts can be more beneficial than informative resources since they give natural settings for the processing of a new language. This is because literary texts are more engaging. Learners are exposed to new ideas and surprising language via the reading of academic books. In this sense, the phrase "a literary text is an authentic text, real language in context, to which we may respond immediately" describes what a literary text is (M H Abrahms, 2015). This quality appears to make literature suitable and valuable to language teaching in many contexts and cultures. Literature also serves as a model for language learners to familiarize themselves with various forms and norms because literary writings contain language that is designed for natural speakers (Bretz, 1990).

Second, because the literary texts include authentic instances of grammatical structures and vocabulary items, they heighten students' knowledge of the scope of the target language and increase their ability in all aspects of language use. Literary works are not penned with the specific intention of imparting knowledge to readers. Instead, they focus on things that mattered to the author when he wrote them, which is an interesting twist. In light of this, the language is significantly more robust and multifaceted than the examples of language found in the textbooks. There is a wide range of difficulty in the presentation of many genuine aspects of written language, including the construction and function of sentences, the variety of conceivable structures, and the various ways of connecting ideas (Kramsch, 1993). Learners have been encouraged to think about the standards of language use while simultaneously being tasked with exploring literary language. This has been accomplished by assigning students to investigate academic language. Students are strongly encouraged to become familiar with a variety of usage, forms, and norms of the target language. This kind of exposure is vital for the learners, particularly for the development of their language skills. Because of this, kids are better able to appreciate the wealth and variety of the language and become more attuned to its characteristics (Albane Cain, 2000).

### **The Development of Language Abilities Through the Study of Short Stories**

The four abilities can be taught to students of varying levels of language competency using short tales. Short stories, according to Murdoch, have the potential to serve as a source of high-quality text content that, when properly selected and utilized, will significantly

improve the effectiveness of ELT programs for students operating at intermediate levels of proficiency. According to him, short stories have the potential to be beneficial resources in the ELT reinforcing process, particularly when incorporated into learning activities such as discussion, writing, and role-playing conversations (Hall, 1996).

In the following sections, in addition to demonstrating how to use a short story to develop language skills, a series of activities will be presented as an example for teachers to use in their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms so that they can get some concrete ideas about how to use short stories. It is vital to develop a variety of projects and activities in order to adapt to the many different ways that people learn. Moreover, to fully immerse students in a society where English is spoken, every single one of these activities is carried out in English (Ronald Carter, 1991).

- **Reading**

Short stories are a great way to help students learn new words and improve their reading skills. Lao and Krashen's study comparing reading achievement between literary and non-literary readers at a Hong Kong university found that academic readers improved their vocabulary and reading more (Pardede, 2010). Three different activities can be done with *A Divorce Case* to assist kids in expanding their vocabulary. These pursuits are connected to the form, meaning, and application of the thing.

Fill in the word form chart that's provided below. Keep in mind that some words cannot be spelled in all ways.

<b>Verb</b>	<b>Adverb</b>	<b>Participle</b>	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Adjective</b>
Decide	Decisively	Decided	Decision	Decisive
Cut				
	Hardly			
				Remote
immerse				

The number of words might be as many as the teacher deems necessary. However, a short story should not contain too many words, so students do not lose interest in

the exercise. This practice assists kids in expanding their vocabulary and teaches them how to utilize a dictionary (Pardede, 2010).

Literary materials are beneficial to students at both the high, intermediate, and advanced levels. They can develop their unique perspectives from what they read, which also assists them in employing a more innovative manner of speaking the language. They are forced to confront their point of view, as well as the point of view of the central character(s) in the story and the point of view of their peers, which leads to an increase in their level of creative thinking. According to Oster, this approach promotes critical thinking by demonstrating that focusing on the point of view in literature broadens students' perspectives and stimulates critical thinking by dramatizing the multiple perspectives on a subject (Burns, 2009).

- **Writing**

Short stories can be used as models and subjects for ESL/EFL writing. Students' writing uses a short story as a model when it either becomes exceptionally similar to the original work or blatantly imitates its substance, theme, organizational structure, and style. Literature functions as subject matter, however, when student writing demonstrates original thinking in the form of interpretation or analysis; when it originates from or is artistically driven by the reading; or when it demonstrates unique thinking in any of these ways. Oster agrees that reading literature encourages students to write more imaginatively.

In order to facilitate the growth of the students' writing abilities, teachers might devise a wide variety of writing activities. For example, if students have attained a high level of language skills, they can be asked to create dialogues or engage in more challenging writing assignments. For instance, if instructors read *A Divorce Case* in class, they may offer the subsequent writing exercises:

1. Write a conversation that takes place between Ms. Chasel and Mr. President.
2. Summarize the last two paragraphs of the short story in your own words.
3. Describe the main character, setting, conflict, climax, and resolution in five to seven sentences in a book report or in a summary of the narrative.

4. Write a single statement expressing the story's central idea.
5. Write a summary of the story.

- **Speaking and Listening**

The short narrative can also be an effective and inspiring instructional tool for both speaking and listening. EFL classrooms can make efficient use of a variety of learning activities that revolve on a short tale, including oral reading, dramatization, improvisation, roleplaying, reenactment, and discussion. These activities can all be used to improve these two skills. Students' speaking and listening abilities can be improved by having them read aloud a narrative. Additionally, it helps with pronunciation.

The following are some tasks that teachers can assign to students to strengthen their speaking skills using shorter works of fiction.

1. As part of a chain activity, the students read the narrative out loud to one another. The first student in the class will read the initial sentence. The student who comes in second is responsible for the second sentence, the student who comes in third is responsible for the third sentence, and so on. An activity like this will help students improve their pronunciation and fluency in a fun and engaging way. It is appropriate for use in primary school.
2. Students at the upper intermediate level participate in a chain activity in which they recount the narrative to one another in small groups. Every single student is going to have a plethora of chances to practice the pertinent connectors as well as other discourse markers in the setting of meaningful situations.
3. In a lesson for more advanced students, the students are split up into two distinct groups. Using the story, *A Divorce Case*, the first group is tasked

with developing reasons to support the notion that the father's choice to punish himself was justified. A separate group ought to get together some arguments to show why the choice is inappropriate.

4. Role-playing is a great exercise that can be used as an extension activity to help students improve their speaking skills and get them more immersed in the story. This can be accomplished by having the students act out the roles of a variety of different personalities.

The following are some things that teachers can undertake to help students improve their listening skills by using short stories:

1. The students will benefit from having the opportunity to hear the narrative read aloud by a native English speaker if you do so.
2. If there is a recording of the story, you should play it.

Students might participate in the exercise for the sake of entertainment, or they can use it to find answers to questions that have been presented to them and explained to them before the actual listening activity begins. In order for students to comprehend the narrative when they hear it for the very first time, the questions might be based on several literary forms, including the following:

1. Who is the primary protagonist in the short story *A Divorce Case*?
2. When and where does the event that the story is about take place?
3. What exactly is the problem (or the conflict) that the story focuses on?
4. How is the disagreement going to be settled?

### **A DIVORCE CASE**

M. Chassel advocate, rises to speak: Mr. President and gentlemen of the jury. The cause that I am charged to defend before you, requires medicine rather than justice; and is much more a case of pathology than a case of ordinary law. At first blush the facts seem very simple.

A young man, very rich, with a noble and cultivated mind, and a generous heart, becomes enamored of a young lady, who is the perfection of beauty, more than beautiful, in fact;

she is adorable, besides being as gracious, as she is charming, as good and true as she is tender and pretty, and he marries her. For some time, he comports himself towards her not only as a devoted husband, but as a man full of solicitude and tenderness. Then he neglects her, misuses her, seems to entertain for her an insurmountable aversion, an irresistible disgust. One day he even strikes her, not only without any cause, but also without the faintest pretext. I am not going, gentlemen, to draw a picture of silly allurements, which no one would comprehend. I shall not paint to you the wretched life of those two beings, and the horrible grief of this young woman. It will be sufficient to convince you, if I read some fragments from a journal written up every day by that poor young man, by that poor fool! For it is in the presence of a fool, gentlemen, that we now find ourselves, and the case is all the more curious, all the more interesting, seeing that, in many points, it recalls the insanity of the unfortunate prince who recently died, of the witless king who reigned platonically over Bavaria. I shall hence designate this case—poetic folly.

You will readily call to mind all that has been told of that most singular prince. He caused to be erected amid the most magnificent scenery his kingdom afforded, veritable fairy castles. The reality even of the beauty of the things themselves, as well as of the places, did not satisfy him. He invented, he created, in these improbable manors, factitious horizons, obtained by means of theatrical artifices, changes of view, painted forests, fabled empires, in which the leaves of the trees became precious stones. He had the Alps, and glaciers, steppes, deserts of sand made hot by a blazing sun; and at nights, under the rays of the real moon, lakes which sparkled from below by means of fantastic electric lights. Swans floated on the lakes which glistened with skiffs, while an orchestra, composed of the finest executants in the world, inebriated with poetry the soul of the royal fool. That man was chaste, that man was a virgin. He lived only to dream, his dream, his dream divine. One evening he took out with him in his boat, a lady, young and beautiful, a great artiste, and he begged her to sing. Intoxicated herself by the magnificent scenery, by the languid softness of the air, by the perfume of flowers, and by the ecstasy of that prince, both young and handsome, she sang, she sang as women sing who have been touched by love; then, overcome, trembling, she falls on the bosom of the king in order to seek out his lips. But he throws her into the lake, and seizing his oars, rows back to the shore, without concerning himself, whether anybody has saved her or not.



Gentlemen of the jury, we find ourselves in presence of a case similar in every way to that. I shall say no more now, except to read some passages from the journal which we unexpectedly came upon in the drawer of an old secretary.

How sad and weary is everything; always the same, always hateful. How I dream of a land more beautiful, more noble, more varied. What a poor conception they have of their God, if their God existed, or if he had not created other things, elsewhere. Always woods, little woods, waves which resemble waves, plains which resemble plains, everything is sameness and monotony. And Man? Man? What a horrible animal! wicked, haughty and repugnant!

It is essential to love, to love perdition, without seeing that which one loves. For, to see is to comprehend, and to comprehend is to embrace. It is necessary to love, to become intoxicated by it, just as one gets drunk with wine, even to the extent that one knows no longer what one is drinking. And to drink, to drink, to drink, without drawing breath, day and night!

I have found her, I believe. She has about her something ideal which does not belong to this world, and which furnishes wings to my dream. Ah! my dream! How it reveals to me beings different from what they really are! She is a blonde, a delicate blonde, with hair whose delicate shade is inexpressible. Her eyes are blue! Only blue eyes can penetrate my soul. All women, the woman who lives in my heart, reveal themselves to me in the eye, only in the eyes. Oh! what a mystery, what a mystery is the eye! The whole universe lives in it, inasmuch as it sees, inasmuch as it reflects. It contains the universe, both things and beings, forests and oceans, men and beasts, the settings of the sun, the stars, the arts—all, all, it sees; it collects and absorbs all; and there is still more in it; the eye of itself has a soul; it has in it the man who thinks, the man who loves, the man who laughs, the man who suffers! Oh! regard the blue eyes of women, those eyes that are as deep as the sea, as changeful as the sky, so sweet, so soft, soft as the breezes, sweet as music, luscious as kisses; and transparent, so clear that one sees behind them, discerns the soul, the blue soul which colors them, which animates them, which electrifies them. Yes, the soul has the color of the looks. The blue soul alone contains in itself that which dreams; it bears its azure to the floods and into space. The eye! Think of it, the eye! It imbibes the visible life,

in order to nourish thought. It drinks in the world, color, movement, books, pictures, all that is beautiful, all that is ugly, and weaves ideas out of them. And when it regards us, it gives us the sensation of a happiness that is not of this earth. It informs us of that of which we have always been ignorant; it makes us comprehend that the realities of our dreams are but noisome ordures.

I love her too for her walk. "Even when the bird walks one feels that it has wings," as the poet has said. When she passes one feels that she is of another race from ordinary women, of a race more delicate, and more divine. I shall marry her to-morrow. But I am afraid, I am afraid of so many things!

Two beasts, two dogs, two wolves, two foxes, cut their way through the plantation and encounter one another. One of each two is male, the other female. They couple. They couple in consequence of an animal instinct, which forces them to continue the race, their race, the one from which they have sprung, the hairy coat, the form, movements and habitudes. The whole of the animal creation do the same without knowing why.

We human beings, also.

It is for this I have married; I have obeyed that insane passion which throws us in the direction of the female.

She is my wife. In accordance with my ideal desires, she comes very nearly to realize my unrealizable dream. But in separating from her, even for a second, after I have held her in my arms, she becomes no more than the being whom nature has made use of, to disappoint all my hopes.

Has she disappointed them? No. And why have I grown weary of her, become loath even to touch her; she cannot graze even the palm of my hand, or the tip of my lips, but my heart throbs with unutterable disgust, not perhaps disgust of her, but a disgust more potent, more widespread, more loathsome; the disgust, in a word, of carnal love so vile in itself that it has become for all refined beings, a shameful thing, which is necessary to conceal, which one never speaks of save in a whisper, nor without blushing.

I can no longer bear the idea of my wife coming near me, calling me by name, with a smile; I cannot look at her, nor touch even her arm, I cannot do it any more. At one time I thought to be kissed by her, would be to transport me to St. Paul's seventh heaven. One day, she was suffering from one of those transient fevers, and I smelled in her breath, a subtle, slight almost imperceptible puff of human putridity; I was completely overthrown.

Oh! the flesh, with its seductive and eager smell, a putrefaction which walks, which thinks, which speaks, which looks, which laughs, in which nourishment ferments and rots, which, nevertheless, is rose-colored, pretty, tempting, deceitful as the soul itself.

Why flowers alone, which smell so sweet, those large flowers, glittering or pale, whose tones and shades make my heart tremble and trouble my eyes. They are so beautiful, their structure is so finished, so varied and sensual, semi-opened like human organs, more tempting than mouths, and streaked with turned up lips, teeth, flesh, seed of life powders, which, in each, gives forth a distinct perfume.

They reproduce themselves, they alone, in the world, without polluting their inviolable race, shedding around them the divine influence of their love, the odoriferous incense of their caresses, the essence of their incomparable body, of their body adorned with every grace, with every elegances of every shape and form; who have likewise the coquetry of every hue of color, and the inebriating seduction of every variety of perfume.

#### **FRAGMENTS WHICH WERE SELECTED SIX MONTHS LATER.**

I love flowers, not as flowers, but as material and delicious beings; I pass my days and my nights in beds of flowers, where they have been concealed from the public view like the women of a harem.

Who knows, except myself, the sweetness, the infatuation, the quivering, carnal, ideal, superhuman ecstasy of these tendernesses; and those kisses upon the bare flesh of a rose, upon the blushing flesh, upon the white skin, so miraculously different, delicate, rare, subtle, unctuous, of these adorable flowers!

I have flower-beds that no one has seen except myself, and which I tend myself.

I enter there as one would glide into a place of secret pleasure. In the lofty glass gallery, I pass first through a collection of enclosed carollas, half open or in full bloom, which incline towards the ground, or towards the roof. This is the first kiss they have given me.

The flowers just mentioned, these flowers which adorn the vestibule of my mysterious passions, are my servants and not my favorites.

They salute me by the change of their color and by their first inhalations. They are darlings, coquettes, arranged in eight rows to the right, eight rows, the left, and so laid out that they look like two gardens springing up from under my feet.

My heart palpitates, my eyes flash at the sight of them; my blood rushes through my veins, my soul is elated, and my hands tremble from desire as soon as I touch them. I pass on. There are three closed doors at the bottom of that gallery. I can make my choice of them. I have three harems.

But I enter most often the habitation of the orchids, my little wheedlers, by preference. Their chamber is low, suffocating. The humid and hot air make the skin moist, takes away the breath and causes the fingers to quiver. They come, these strange girls, from a country marshy, burning and unhealthy. They draw you towards them as do the sirens, are as deadly as poison, admirably fantastic, enervating, dreadful. The butterflies here would also seem to have enormous wings, tiny feet, and eyes! Yes! they have also eyes! They look at me, they see me, prodigious, incomparable beings, fairies, daughters of the sacred earth, of the impalpable air, and of hot sun rays, that mother bountiful of the universe. Yes, they have wings, they have eyes, and nuances that no painter could imitate, every charm, every grace, every form that one could dream of. These wombs are transverse, odoriferous and transparent, ever open for love and more tempting than all the flesh of women. The unimaginable designs of their little bodies inebriates the soul, and transports it to a paradise of images and of voluptuous ideals. They tremble upon their stems as though they would fly. When they do fly do they come to me? No, it is my heart that hovers o'er them, like a mystic male, tortured by love.

No wing of any animal can keep pace with them. We are alone, they and I, in the lighted prison which I have constructed for them. I regard them, I contemplate them, I admire them, I adore them, the one after the other.

How healthy, strong and rosy, a rosiness that moistens the lips of desire! How I love them! The border is frizzled, paler than their throat, where the carolla hides itself away; a mysterious mouth, seductive sugar under the tongue, exhibiting and unveiling the delicate, admirable and sacred organs of these divine little creatures which smell so exquisitely and do not speak.

I sometimes have a passion for some of them that lasts as long as their existence, which only embraces a few days and nights. I then have them taken away from the common gallery and enclosed in a pretty glass cabin, in which there murmurs a jet of water over against a tropical gazon, which has been brought from one of the Pacific Islands. And I remain close to it, ardent, feverish and tormented, knowing that its death is near, and watch it fading away, while that in thought, I possess it, aspire to its love, drink it in, and then pluck its short life with an inexpressible caress.

When he had finished the reading of these fragments, the advocate continued:

"Decency, gentlemen of the jury, hinders me from communicating to you the extraordinary avowals of this shameless, idealistic fool. The fragments that I have just submitted to you will be sufficient, in my opinion, to enable you to appreciate this instance of mental malady, less rare in our epoch of hysterical insanity and of corrupt decadence than most of us believe.

"I think, then, that my client is more entitled than any woman whatever to claim a divorce, in the exceptional circumstances in which the disordered senses of her husband has placed her."

## **Conclusion**

Since the goal of teaching English to speakers of other languages is to enable students to communicate successfully in the language being studied, it is important that teachers present students with genuine examples of language use. To accomplish this, she or he

needs to concentrate not just on linguistic aspects, but also on literary and cultural aspects. Short stories are a great tool to employ in ESL/EFL education programs since they provide these components. To get the most out of it, however, the short story selection should consider the course purpose, the learner profile, and the narrative substance. The utilization of a single work of literature differs from classroom to classroom and from teacher to teacher since every teaching setting is different. Short stories, as the discussion in this paper demonstrates, can be used to provide many tasks for lessons in reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The use of short stories as a backdrop for the instruction of various linguistic focuses and for the improvement of the students' interpretative methods is recommended. Lastly, the same story can be used to teach other aspects of the language, such as vocabulary (Shanahan, 1997).

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