

ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH THE USE OF SHORT STORIES

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Annotation: *Considering the importance of continuous progress and innovation in language teaching methods on one hand and the advantages of using short stories in language classes on the other hand, a new language teaching method as Short Story based Language Teaching (SSBLT) is introduced here.*

Keywords: *Short Story based Language Teaching, communicative competence, teenagers, learner-centered, language proficiency, literary genre, critical thinking, linguistic awareness.*

The need to learn foreign languages is almost as old as human history itself. The field of foreign language teaching has undergone many fluctuations and dramatic shifts over the years. This is the field where fads and heroes have come and gone together with the changes in youth culture. So the sphere feels a great impact of time and society. The requirements of time and society dictate how to teach foreign languages as throughout history foreign language learning has always been an important practical concern. If a foreign language is so important for practical purposes the most favorable teaching approaches are those which encourage students using language in order to acquire it. If the society is not interested in practical implementation of language, then comes the time of analyzing it.

This article focuses on teaching the English language to teenagers through stories, especially using short stories in an effective way. Short stories are the most suitable literary genre to use in English teaching due to its shortness, is supported by Collie and Slater when they list four advantages of using short stories for language teachers. Moreover, the work focuses on roles of teacher, one of which is assessing and the usage of short stories in the process of teaching language. The use of short story in English teaching should be aimed to encourage the teenagers to use what they have previously learnt. By doing this, the learning process will be learner-centered. However, the teacher plays a

great role. She/he must choose a suitable text to use in class, and should help her/his teenagers understand the story with various activities. In using short stories to teach English, story selection is indeed one of the most important roles of the teacher. Since the lengths of short stories quite vary, choose a story short enough to handle within course hours. The shortness of the text is important for the teenagers because they will see that they can read, understand and finish something in English, and it will give the teenagers a feeling of achievement and self-confidence. Besides the length of the text, Hill points out three other basic criteria of choosing the text: (1) the needs and abilities of the teenagers; (2) the linguistic and stylistic level of the text; (3) the amount of background information required for a true appreciation of the material. The importance of considering these criteria could be perceived by realizing that the vocabulary and sentence structure of the short story to be studied must be suitable to the level of the teenagers. The short stories with archaic, slang, foreign words, and allusions, having sentences imitating the speech of a particular locality or ignorant people or foreigners should be avoided if the text is intended for teenagers below intermediate level. Similarly, very long sentences are difficult for teenagers to understand. As teenagers will not understand these sentences and words, they will get bored and not read the work. Therefore, before giving the short-story, the teacher should decide the readability of the text. In order to meet that readability criterion, using graded or simplified stories is possibly the most practical way. According to Ur, "... the use of 'authentic' text with less proficient learners is often frustrating and counter-productive". Therefore, the use of simplified text with less proficient readers is highly suggested for the sake of suiting the texts with the level of teenagers. In addition to the previous criteria, Spack suggests the aspect of interest to be considered. According to him, it is important for the teacher to choose stories that would interest teenagers that he/she most likes to read and teach, and that have been made into film to provide visual interpretation. McKay and Rivers point out that learner read and enjoy a text if the subject-matter of the text is relevant to their life experience and interests.

The short story is one of the most common narratives that is used in the language classroom. Of course, one of the characteristics of the short story is that it is short. The short story disposes of limited time and space dimensions. It concentrates on one section of the characters' lives and offers a direct access to the action. Many aspects support the use of short stories in English language

teaching. A few of the characteristics mentioned above already give an impression what the advantages of short stories are. Based on the findings, it could be concluded that using short stories and activities for developing all four language skills could improve language mastery of teenagers. Studying short stories has a number of benefits for the students such as broadening their perspectives, enabling them to think about the reasons rather than the result, showing them different life styles, providing them with a comparison between their own culture and other cultures.

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