

Role of Short Stories in English Language Teaching: An Empirical Study

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Abstract – The main concern of a 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. There is a wide gap between having information and being able to use or deliver it spontaneously for communicative purposes. This paper aims to pinpoint the relevant role of literature as a resource for second language teaching. Here the focus will be on the use of literary texts in order to help students to develop their proficiency in English. Literature supplies many linguistic opportunities to the language learner and allows the teacher to design activities that are based on material capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement than many other non-literary, informative texts. The aim of these activities should be to focus on the form and content of the text at stake, and to provide the stimulus for interaction to take place between the learners among them, and with the teacher. This paper is framed within the communicative approach to language teaching. A modernist text like a novel or a poem, for example, can be taken for teaching English Language skills to the students of ESL. A model followed in the ESL classroom with engineering background is discussed in this paper.

Keywords – ELT, ESL, Communicative Competence, Proficiency, Culture, etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the tertiary level can be seen as the bridge between the target language and its soul. It creates a real environment in learning a language with culture. Understanding the culture of the native speakers of the target language enables the learners to fulfill the requirement of communicative competence. The elements of literature such as authentic material, language in use and aesthetic representation of the spoken language, as well as language and cultural enrichment enriches ELT. Those who study or learn English as a second language need a good production of material and practice in learning the second language. It depends upon the purpose of learning ESL. For example, the science and engineering students may study ESL for communicative purpose alone. Joan Collie and Stephen Slater define literature as a source of authentic material in the sense that most works of literature are not fashioned for the specific purpose of teaching a language. In this sense, students are exposed to a language that is as genuine and undistorted as can be managed in the classroom context.

Language Proficiency Skills

During ESL teaching, the teacher tries to enable the students be proficient in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing with the integrated skill Thinking. Based on the

above intention, materials, teaching aids, course plan, practice, evaluation, etc. are produced. Since study of language depends on the main course of study of the learners, the materials or curriculum are designed or produced accordingly. As far as this paper is concerned, the third year engineering students have been selected for the analytical study. As per the Anna University guidelines, the courses on English for Specific Purposes [ESP] are conducted and the materials are followed as recommended by the university. In the experimental approach and model, in order to enrich the teaching-learning process in the ELT classroom, various literary texts were used in respect of the skills required for proficiency.

As far as the engineering curriculum is concerned, it has been designed to enable the students to be competent in English communication. Since the objective of the ESP courses at technical institutions aims at communicative competence, the ESL teachers at engineering colleges have freedom in designing or choosing their own materials for ELT. In that view, I have chosen some short stories from Charles Dickens for teaching ESP to my students.

II. METHODOLOGY

The following short stories were chosen from Dickens for teaching and practice;

1. The Child
2. Somebody's Luggage
3. Going into Society
4. The Poor Relation

In the first class, the students of V semester students of B.Tech. Information Technology were divided into four groups each comprising of 15 students. Each group was given with one story in a printed format and given 30 minutes time to read the stories in the classroom. And for the teaching and testing of Listening and speaking skills, audio files on the following short stories of Dickenson were also used in the language lab.

1. Mugby Junction
2. Going into Society

For the above purpose, a three period class allotted by Anna University for conducting Communication Skills Laboratory course was utilized. Following is the methodology of the approach.

Objective : To develop communicative competence

Duration : 3 hours

Activities : Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing

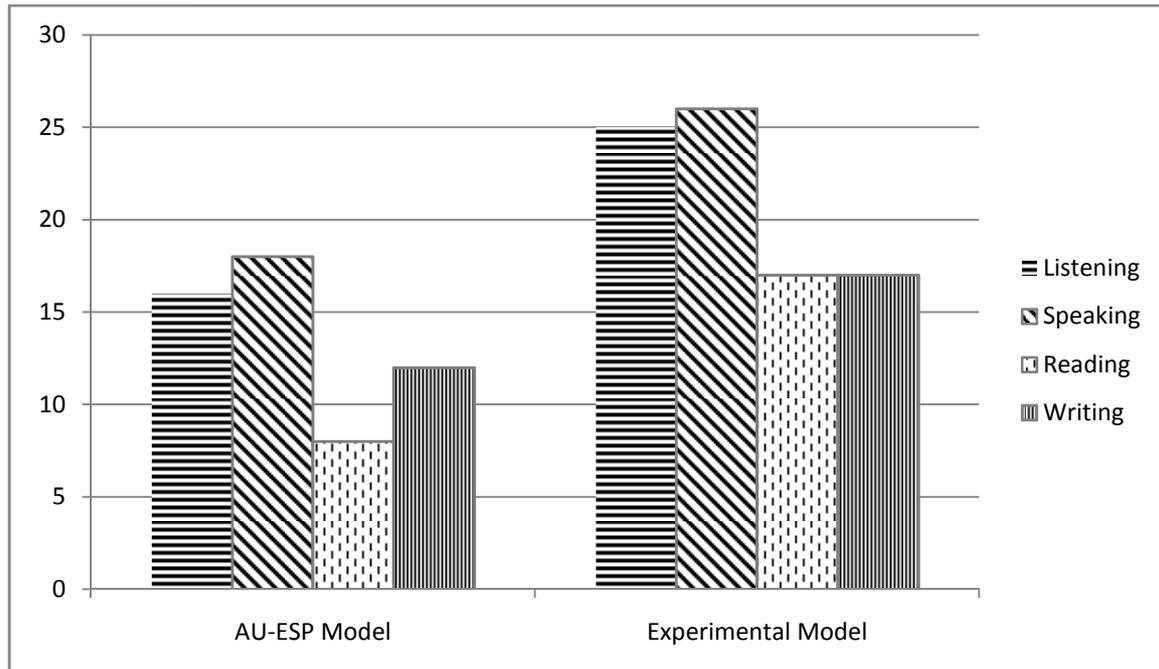
Materials : paper-printed stories and question papers, multimedia equipments

Skill	Aim	Time	Activities	Procedure	Assessment
READING a.Intensive	Attention to grammatical forms, discourse markers, and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding literal meaning, implications, rhetorical relationships, etc.	30 mins.	Reading to Writing and Reading to Speaking Cloze Reading, comprehensive reading, Skimming, Scanning, Quizzes, simple questioning and answering, etc.	Selected passages from the given stories, names of places and characters, to answer questions, to describe a situation as given in the story, oral explanation or description of characters	Based on correct answers/choice for the writing part and proper delivery and sequence of events, etc. for the speaking part.
	b.Extensive				
WRITING	Attention to grammatical functions, coherence, To promote skills on expository, descriptive, narrative, persuasive, creative, argumentative and critical writing	60 mins.	Describing characteristics of characters, situations, concept/moral, and creating own concept or criticizing the moral, etc. by writing	Essays, paragraphs, critical essays, choose the best one, fill in the blanks, etc.	Correctness, grammar, coherence, content, etc.
LISTENING	Attention to - Receiving - Codifying - Processing & Storing - Ordering -- Answering - Criticizing - Reproducing - Repeating - Recreating	45 mins.	Able to receive the message and reproduce/repeat, criticize, to answer questions, to create ideas, etc.	Listening to Dictations, Instructions, casual conversation, questions and answering, etc.	Correctness, relevance, proper and aptness in answering, etc.
SPEAKING	Attention to public and private speaking, Group discussion-small, large and peer, describing, proper pronunciation, fluency, etc.	45 mins.	Able to narrate the stories on his/her own way with proper usage of idioms, phrases, etc., able to involve in group discussions, give public talk –among students, answering questions, etc.	Asking to describe or explain about a character and place, narrate the story, seek opinion of the student/s, etc.[oral explanations and answers]	Correctness, relevance, fluency, grammar, proper and aptness in answering, etc.

III. RESPONSE ANALYSIS

The response and result gained through the above approach in ELT at the technical institution is good. It is noted that the students were fully involved in the

experimental approach since the literary texts are interesting to learn the global language English in an entertaining way. Following is the result analysis between the models of existing Anna University [ESP] and the experimental method using literary texts.



IV. CONCLUSION

Literary texts such as poetry, prose, novels, short stories, etc. can help the teachers to approach the students with a humanistic touch. The intercultural differences, habits, dialects, etc. of the native can easily be taught to the students of ESL through the literary texts of the native speaker in an easy and interesting way. For example, if someone says that I met her in white dress in the Western context; it means that she in wedding dress, but it is totally different from the Indian context which conveys the meaning that she is a widow. Hence, it is the duty of the Language teachers to create proper environment and provide learners with interesting English literary texts to enable them to learn the language easily.

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