

PROMOTING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY THROUGH INTEGRATED LITERATURE BASED LESSONS

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ABSTRACT

Literature is a tapestry of life, cultures, and imagination woven from the scores of colorful strands of characters, setting, mood, plot and embroidered with the carefully chosen silk threads of words and expressions. Hence, it has the potential to become a perfect resource for the teachers for engaging students in language learning classrooms. In the present research paper, the teacher-researcher explores the benefits of using short stories for teaching language arts to the elementary and pre-intermediate level undergraduate students of Punjab following an inductive approach of second language acquisition. The second part of the paper presents a complete lesson plan based on the mythological story of “The King Midas and the golden touch.”

KEYWORDS: *Intermediate level Undergraduate Students, Based on the Mythological Story*

INTRODUCTION

Stories weave magic for the listeners. They not only grab the attention, captivate the interest but also arise the curiosity level of the listener. Hence, they can be one of the best resources for language learning. As Krashen 1985 rightly pointed out in his theory of Language acquisition that by giving comprehensible input to the learners, language can be acquired naturally, rather than learning it consciously. Comprehensible input refers to the language given to the students just above the level of their present language competence. Besides enhancing listening, reading, speaking and writing skills, this helps them get engaged and motivate them to understand, make meaning out of the input, learn new sentence structures and other grammatical aspects of the language. Hence, if chosen carefully, stories have the potential to promote effective language learning among the students.

While choosing the right kind of story,

- The age and language level of the students have to be taken care of.
- The events that interest and excite, scare or amuse the children enough to motivate them to continue reading.
- The story with an appropriate length – not too short, not too long?

Besides familiarizing with different cultures, stories use a holistic approach to language teaching as well and support the natural acquisition of language. It has been put forth by many ELT researchers like David Nunan that language is learned in contexts and in chunks, not in isolation, word by word or sentence by sentence. Stories are meaningful inputs i.e. comprehensible inputs (Krashen 1985) that children receive as they listen to and tell stories.

Storytelling, too, has special pedagogical values for the foreign language classroom, as Rossiter (2002, p. 1) points out below:

Stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, memorable and entertaining. The believability stems from the fact that stories deal with human-like experience that we tend to perceive as an authentic and credible source of knowledge. Stories make information more memorable because they involve us in the actions of the characters. In so doing, stories invite active meaning making.

Benefits of using Stories

Stories help in creating a healthy, positive and conducive learning environment for the students.

Learning becomes extremely enjoyable and hence, effective too. As the language is straightforward, the imagery is powerful, the message is clear, and the story is unforgettable.

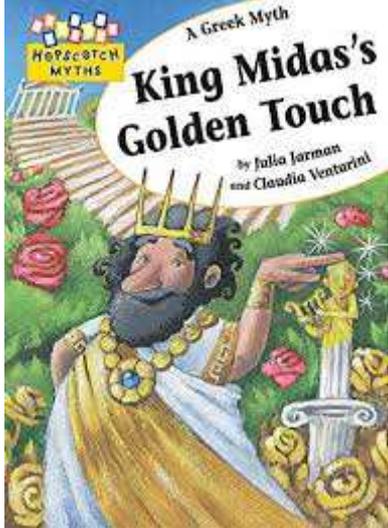
- A perfect accompaniment to the class as the story based lessons can be used for enhancing reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Furthermore, learners are encouraged to explore relationships between grammar and discourse. Instead of a “rules first” approach, readers learn how grammar works in the target language by observing it naturally within stories. Learning with stories can help you avoid a dangerous obsession with rules by having you focus on understanding and enjoying the story first and foremost. Rather the learner gets so much more exposure to global features of the language like sentence structure, narrative, sequencing events, and pronunciation in the case of audio books or video presentation of the story, which propels them forward much faster than if they were trying to learn everything from rules. This makes everything more memorable, and also helps them to improve their listening skills at the same time.
- The key words are repeatedly used in the story, as they crop up again and again at different points in the context. They are much easier to learn as compared to isolated words, hence making an excellent resource for building vocabulary.
- There’s no other method that can conceivably offer so much raw exposure to the learning of target language. It is believed that part of learning a language is spending a lot of time with that language and therefore, stories are a good bet. Readers get absorbed in the short pieces and are desperate to find out what happens next with the twists and turns in the plot.
- Every word, every phrase, every preposition, every verb in a story appears in context. That means one learns which words naturally go together with other words. One can never learn a word without knowing how to use it, or a grammar rule without a real-life example to go with it. Unlike traditional language learning methods, with word lists, grammar rules, and exercises, stories make sure that you learn things the way they’re supposed to be learned by making transparent the links between form, meaning, and use.
- A student’s anxiety, low self-esteem, or lack of motivation can serve to cause a mental block preventing the successful acquisition of a second language and Krashen names this obstacle as “**affective filter**”. But if the affective filter is lowered by creating a learning environment in which students are more motivated and suffer from less anxiety and low self-esteem, the possibility of success in achieving second language acquisition is greatly improved.

- Learners get encouraged to become active explorers of language. They get opportunities to develop their own understandings of the grammatical principles of English by progressively structuring and restructuring the language through inductive learning experiences.
- Through stories, the learners are exposed to authentic samples of language so that the grammatical features being taught are encountered in a range of different linguistic and experiential contexts;

Having said all about the use of stories for enhancing language proficiency, the researcher presents a lesson plan based on the Greek mythological story of “The King Midas and the Golden Touch”. Though the presented lesson plan is for pre-intermediate, with certain changes the same plan can be used for elementary students as well.

Table 1

Type of Class: Under-Graduate Students (3-year Degree Course)Topic: The World Around me	Level: Pre-Intermediate to Intermediate
Lesson objective By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to make use of different kinds of linking words accurately.	

Stage	Time	Activity
Warmer	5mins	Play the Fortunately, Unfortunately game around the class: Teacher: I woke up very early this morning. Student A: Fortunately, it was a lovely day. Student B: Unfortunately, I missed my college bus.
Presentation Skills: Listening and Comprehension , Vocabulary Building	15 mins	<p>Watch the video carefully and identify the moral of the story.</p>  <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7nGicehujI</p> <p>Teacher: Students, I have a few questions for you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who did the king love more than his gold? Is the story about the events likely to happen? • Listen to the story again to identify the words and the phrases that connect the sentences. Do they all have the same function? What do you notice? <p>After discussing the new words and the role of Greek mythology in the story, the teacher introduces linking words to the students.</p>

		<p>Events Occurring at the Same Time</p> <p>The use of "while" and "as" introduce a <u>dependent clause</u> and require an <u>independent clause</u> to complete your sentence. "During" is used with a noun, noun phrase, or <u>noun clause</u> and does not require a subject and object. The construction for this kind of sentence is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While / As + subject + verb + dependent clause or independent clause + while / as + subject + verb <p>An example of using "while" in a sentence is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While I was giving the presentation, a member of the audience asked an interesting question. • Jennifer told her story as I prepared dinner. <p>The construction for using "during" in a sentence is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During + noun (noun clause) <p>Examples of using "during" in a sentence include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the meeting, Jack came over and asked me a few questions. • We explored a number of approaches during the presentation. <p>Ending the Story</p> <p>Mark the end of your story with these introductory phrases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finally, • In the end, • Eventually
<p>Freer /Communicative Practice Skills: Speaking</p>	<p>15 mins</p>	<p>Role Play: The teacher divides the class into a group of 5 students and provides the story in the form of a play. The students are thereafter asked to select the roles for themselves and perform the story in front of the class.</p> <p>A day or two can be given to the students to prepare for their play presentation.</p>

It is reiterated at the end that literature has immense potential to become an excellent resource for the enhancement of language proficiency.

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