

TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH LITERARY WORKS

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Abstract: To be successful in teaching English as a Foreign Language needs various methods and approaches. One of the methods that can be an alternative is using literary works, such as drama, prose and poetry. They can be valuable resources to teach the language aspects such as vocabularies, pronunciation, and grammar. It can also be used as an effective way to create an engineered real-life situation for learners to practice the language. And in the long run, such a way of teaching English will also create appreciation and enjoyment for the learners.

Key words: alternative, drama, literary work, appreciation

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) can be troublesome. The learners in a TEFL setting usually have low intrinsic motivation. They think that English is not relevant for them since it is not part of their daily lives. In many countries such as in Indonesia, English is considered as one of the requirements for a test or because it is a compulsory subject of the curriculum. Besides that, TEFL setting often involves large classes and very limited contact hours between the teachers and the learners. What can a teacher do if he has to have a class with 30 to 50 students and meets once a week for about 90 minutes? The next problem is that the students do not have enough exposure to the use of the language itself. The students do not really want to practice or do not have enough chance to use the language daily.

One of the excellent alternative ways to teach English as a Foreign Language is through the teaching of literary products such as drama, poetry or some other literary works. There are some advantages that people can get from teaching those literary works, (Penny Ur, 1996:201) for example;

Literature can be very enjoyable to read, it provides examples of different styles of writing, and representation of various authentic uses of the language, it is a good basis for vocabulary expansion, it fosters reading skills, it can supply excellent jump-off point for discussion or writing, it involves emotions as well as intellect, which adds to motivation and may contribute to personal development, it is a part of the target culture and has values as part of the learners' general education, it encourages empathetic, critical and creative thinking, it contributes to world knowledge, it raises awareness of different human situations and conflicts.

From those quotations we can see that using literary works to teach English as Foreign language is really beneficial for both teachers and learners. It

can cover many aspects that the learners need during the process of learning a language. One of them is that they have a chance to practice the language they learned in engineered real life situations. And it will boost the students confident to practice it in their life.

Fleming in Doyum & Gulay (2006) state that the advantages taken from that activity are 1.) to develop cognitive skills to motivate students toward the reading of classical literature in English; 2.) to improve students' knowledge of second language vocabulary and pronunciations; 3.) to illustrate professional skills to students through communicative, interactive, and student-centered activity; and 4.) to enhance the personal skills of cooperative learning, oral participation, and the affective variables of motivation, confidence, and self-esteem.

Besides all those advantages the teachers should also consider some of the problems that may come up in implementing that teaching technique. For example; the limitation of students' vocabularies, the pronunciation, the type of students, and the time limitation can also become stumbling-block. There are some considerations to make in teaching literature in class as stated by (Penny Ur, 1996:201);

Much literature is written in language that may be difficult for foreign language learners to read, we can use simplified versions, but these are a poor representation of the original, many literary texts are long and time consuming to teach, the target-language culture on which the literature is based is alien to learners and may be difficult for them to relate to, by using texts as a basis for language teaching we may spoil learners' enjoyment and appreciation of them as literature, students of science and technology may find literature irrelevant to their needs.

To solve the problems stated in that quotation, teachers can make some adjustments such as by carefully selecting the text, occasionally by using only part of a long text and others suitable with the condition needed. In some cases using simplified or abbreviated versions is quite representative if they want to focus it on the enjoyment and appreciation of the composition itself, and not on merely the language teaching aspects.

Fleming in Doyum & Gulay (2006) state that enacting a stimulating dramatic performance of a memorable literary work of art offers the opportunity to select content that is highly relevant to students, which increases the quality of their experience and challenges the teacher to define specific educational objectives". By enacting what they have learned in class in the form of drama performance, students will likely make concrete improvement with such a technique. They have a chance to practice the language in an engineered situation.

Considering all those aspects the writer wants to write about the teaching of drama in EFL class. One of the dramas that can be used is the simplified version of **Alice in Wonderland**, which usually many students are familiar with, and the story is not that really complicated. The writer hopes that this paper will be very beneficial for especially the writer and generally for all readers, that it can

be used as an alternative solution to fight the basic enemy in teaching, “-the boredom.”

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

The time needed for this activity will depend on several factors, including the size of the class, the language level of the students, and whether they are familiar with the work to be performed. If students have read the play before, the play can be reviewed and the activity can aim for more lengthy and complex performances and a higher level of interpretation. If the play is being introduced for the first time, more schemata-building introductory time may be necessary. It will really help the students to understand the text better if the teacher asks comprehension questions about the text.

The following five-step activity is based on one session of approximately fifty minutes. After being introduced to **Alice in Wonder Land**, students receive scripts, discuss roles, rehearse, and perform the play.

Step 1: Distribution of Scripts

The class is divided into groups according to the number of acts in the play with attention given to the number of characters appearing in each act. Or it can also be divided based on the number of the students evenly, let them decide the act by themselves. Each group receives a script that contains (1) the main characters and their roles in the play; (2) the main events of each act summarized in a few sentences; and (3) two or three short quotes for each act, usually among the most well-known or important ones.

It is also possible that the teachers let the students decide everything by themselves, so the teacher only gives the modified script, or in higher class even the teacher gives chances to the students to choose their own drama. It is not advised that the teachers provide the translation of the drama, though it may be helpful, because it will decrease the target of playing it itself.

Step 2: Assignment of roles

The teacher explains to the students that they are to interpret the action any way they like in a twenty-minute dramatization of the act assigned to them. They are to use their imagination to create gestures and dialogue to illustrate the events of the particular act they are to perform. Each group will decide which students in their group will play a particular role. So there will be a possibility that a student will get two roles in the same time. Ask them to make sure that the second role will be the minor one that does not involve too many dialogs. To make it fair they can do a toss-up, to determine the cast, since there is a tendency that a student will avoid to play a certain cast.

The teacher should try to make a fair distribution of the excellent students, so that they will exist in each group. They are expected to lead their respective group in preparing for the drama performance under the guidance of the teacher.

Step 3: Rehearsal of the play

Each group of students is encouraged to creatively imagine what kind of actions their roles require and to rehearse their act to prepare for the performance

of the drama. Props and costumes can be supplied by the teacher or created by the students themselves from materials found in the classroom or school or they may prepare the costumes at home. (An example of a prop "created" by a student: instead of a real, elegant, special hat for Alice, the student can make it from the used newspaper, and the effect was very amusing.)

Rehearsal should last within about twenty minutes in two or three meetings, with the teacher walking around the classroom, helping students with pronunciation, vocabulary, the interpretation of each group's performance, and in general being a spontaneous director. The groups may also practice by themselves at school or at home. They may mix the collections of many kinds of music to support their performances. Sometimes the students can create the amazing music background by themselves well to support the scene in the acts.

It is important to emphasize here that this activity is not supposed to be analytical or intellectual; it is dramatic, and students are encouraged to imagine how characters feel in a particular situation and to represent those feelings and actions in their own way. Through this activity, students will enjoy the text and will therefore be more willing to invest the intellectual efforts needed, in and out of class, to more fully comprehend and appreciate the work. The teacher can explain the unknown vocabulary in the script, but the difficulties of language should be smoothed over. Students can be encouraged to guess at interpretations, to use their world knowledge to grasp the dramatic situations as quickly as possible, and to use their imagination to a great extent in determining what the writer meant in any given situation.

The three main resources involved in the activity are (1) the teacher, who is familiar with the work; (2) the background knowledge the students will possess from their study of it, unless the activity is used as an introduction to the work; and (3) the students' imagination and creativity complemented by the enthusiasm of the teacher and the excitement and challenge of performing a whole drama in one class period. The momentum should be fast, excited, and cheerful.

Step 4: Performance of the play (20 minutes)

Each group of students performs the play for fifteen to twenty five minutes in class, act by act. The non-performing groups are encouraged to carefully observe the other groups' performances and to listen carefully to the pronunciation; after each act, the class tries to identify those quotes. It is also possible that with a better preparations and rehearsal, the drama is performed in a graduation party or in other school events.

At this time Video Camera is not a luxurious thing, so it will be very beneficial that the performances are recorded so that it can be used by teachers or later on by other classes as an evaluation or an example.

Step 5: Evaluation of the performance

The members of the class comment on the results of the performance, including the dramatization of the play summaries and the use of quotes. Then they choose the best group or the best actors and actresses according to set criteria established with the instructor beforehand, which could include the effectiveness

of the overall interpretation by the actors, the use of gestures and dramatic voice, the amount of enthusiasm shown by the performers. During this process the availability of the recorder is very important and helpful. The teacher then gives the final comments on the overall performances and provides any necessary advices to the students.

CONCLUSION

This drama activity combines the use of authentic material with students' creativeness to help them make a difficult literary works on their own through interpretation and self-expression. This activity is much more different than a totally scripted performance where the students create nothing. As a combination of play summaries and real quotations, it allows the students to use their own ideas, gestures, actions, interpretations, and expressions to vent out their interpretations of the characters. As they experience the excitement of interpreting, rehearsing, and performing a play in a relatively short time, students customarily become inspired by English literature. This is important, because it exposes them to the way a writer uses language poetically to create a special and powerful effect.

One reason for the success is because all people react to good stories, especially ones with meaningful action and relevant themes. Cockett (2000: 22) notes a simple but very true fact: "Students have a sense of drama." This sense of drama may be intensified, made more conscious, and channeled into improving students' overall English skills by studying and performing a play like Alice in Wonderland.

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