

## **INTEGRATING SHORT STORIES IN THE EFL CLASSROOM FOR DEVELOPING LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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It is well known that the English language has become a global language. In some countries it has been used as mother tongue and in other countries it is learnt as a second language.

In that way, English language is the only medium of communication/ instruction for the speakers of other languages. Louis H. Gray defines that "language may be said to be any means of expressing emotional or mental concepts by any living being or beings whatsoever and of communicating them to, or receiving them from, other living beings" [10; 12].

English Literature is a rich medium not only to reflect the experiences of people from various countries, but also to contribute a deep sense of cultural identity.

Generally, literature kindles and motivates learners' desire to enjoy various genres of literature i.e. poetry, prose, drama, novel and short stories. Majority of language teachers consider the use of literary texts in language teaching as an interesting tool, because literary genres help the learners understand how language functions through the writers' thoughts, feelings and experience. Edward Sapir states: "it is obvious that language has the power to analyze experience into theoretically dissociable elements and to create the potential intergrading with the actual which enables human beings to transcend their individual experience and to join in a larger common understanding"[11]. One of the most important barriers of communication is lack of interest in the chosen subject. This is because the contents or topics that the students learn in their speciality syllabus are monotonous and are only language based, not literature oriented. But learners are interested in both (language & literary aspects) to enhance their communication skills. That is why Carroli states that, "there is a need for qualitative studies, focused on learners, to explore the relation among literature, language and students". It is important to note that everything should be seen in the learners' perspective rather than others' views. But, on the contrary, in colleges, to acquire the skills of language, students are forced to concentrate on subjects which are not normally interesting.

According to Collie and Slater, "there are four main reasons which brought literature into the EFL classroom. They are considered to be valuable authentic materials for cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement". In language classrooms, the non-native speakers are isolated from the context of events and situations which compel students to use second language for their communicative purposes [6].

Using literature in the classroom is the only way to overcome this problem because, in literary works, language creates its own context. The actual situation of the reader makes them become the real characters as hero she looks on the events created by language. These events transcend the artificial classroom into real situations where the language learning takes place naturally.

The use of literature is a technique for teaching both language and about language areas, such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Literature stands as a model for language learners to become familiar with different forms and conventions, containing real examples of grammatical structures and vocabulary items; the real texts raise awareness of the range of the target language and advance their competence in all language skills. Using literature in language teaching has the advantage of providing cultural information about the target language. Carter and Long comment: "since literature enables students to understand and appreciate other cultures, societies and

ideologies different from their own, it encourages personal growth and intellectual development”[5;3].

**Objectives of the Use of Short Stories to Teach Language Skills**  
Short stories are found to be the most suitable authentic literary genre to use in the English language teaching classrooms to improve learners’ communicative competencies easily and effectively. One of the most prominent reasons is its brevity. Abrams defines it: “as a narrative that can be read at one sitting of one and a half hour to two hours, and that is limited to ‘a certain unique or single effect’, to which every detail is subordinate”[1;58].

So the objectives of using short stories are:

- Short stories are practical
  - Their length is short enough to cover very quickly
  - Theme and plot are not too complicated for the students to understand during listening or reading on their own
  - Variety of choices available according to the students’ interest
  - They motivate the readers and promote critical thinking skill
  - Moral, mysterious and/or humorous stories become valuable tools in the attainment of cultural knowledge
  - Short stories are available for all levels from the beginner to advanced learner, as well as for all ages from young learners to adults
- Integrating Some Short Stories in the EFL Classroom as a Trial**

Short stories make the task easier for the language educators to teach the four skills at all levels of language proficiency for the students. It provides opportunity to the students to engage themselves in different activities, such as group discussion, character role play, criticism and interpretation of the theme, content, organization, style and so on. To enrich the concept, Murdoch adds: “short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance English language teaching courses for learners at intermediate levels of proficiency”.

Literature plays an important role in English language teaching. Language educators found some of the drawbacks of teaching English language through literature. They are things like inappropriate literary materials, lack of preparation, lack of interest, lack of motivational strategies and lack of training and objectives in the chosen field. To eliminate these drawbacks, So the EFL teachers should select authentic materials on the basis of learners’ needs and expectations, proficiency of the learners, interests, age and gender and different levels of the learners. By doing this, the teaching-learning process becomes learner-centered.

So, it has eventually been realized that the careful selection of short stories and their proper induction into EFL classroom teaching could definitely improve not only students’ communicative competence in their target language, but also buildup their cultural identity which automatically encourages students to excel in all the fields.

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