

Teaching Language through Literature

B. Zulaiha

Head, Department of English
TBAK College, Kilakarai, Ramnad District

ABSTRACT

The paper aims to develop a module for teaching language through literature. The paper does not fail to prove that a single poem can teach all four skills - LSRW. It also substantiates that when the study of language in Science, the same can be taught with the help of technology. The target of the paper is to delete examination-centred education and to add the method of teaching to help the students to live with received knowledge. A colleague of mine Ms. Rosy had been used as a student to develop this module.

KEYWORDS

Language; Literature; Teaching.

“It is time to change the type of teaching because the type of learning is changed”

Many students, who seek admission to English medium colleges, do not have sufficient language skills to understand lectures, read textbooks, participate in discussions and generate satisfactory written work. The following are the main reasons for the students not having a chance to encounter the language directly:

- Examination centered teaching
- Known only to live with received knowledge
- No emotional involvement
- No critical thinking
- No need to buy the prescribed text since bazaar guides are available

Who is to bell the cat? No one but teachers as field workers should prepare alternative methods with materials. The need of the hour is clarity and quality to save the future generation. The material must be thought-provoking, creative and relevant. And it should also meet the interest and comfort of the young generation.

As they involve in material preparation, they should also be involved in the mental preparation of the students by giving them scaffold learning. Things to care about when they motivate students for language learning.

- Expose them the way that to make them get passionate and drive for learning the language
- Give them the experience of success
- Teach to learn by doing
- Make them wanted and accepted

The touch of the master’s hand will fine-tune, polish and colour the life of students and help them to discover successful learning styles. So it is the sole responsibility of the English teachers to help them to have the opportunity to develop these skills to organize, plan and make decisions about their learning.

The main purpose of this paper is to provide ideas to use ‘poetry’ as a tool in English language teaching to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and to highlight some of their advantages. For this aim, the teacher may

focus on teaching through a particular poem entitled '*Night of the Scorpion*' by Nissim Ezekiel by recording it in the teacher's own voice itself.

Equipment and materials needed for this method to be adopted:

For an affordable situation	For an unaffordable situation
1. Computer	Tape Recorder
Mike	Cassette
Audio Mixer	Dictionary
Speakers	Text Handout
Software: Audio editor, Dictionary MS Office	White Sheet and Pen

Teacher's Task - I: Setting an Objective Poem chosen

I remember the night my mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of steady rain had driven him to crawl beneath a sack of rice. Parting with his poison - flash of diabolic tail in the darkroom - he risked the rain again. The peasants came like swarms of flies and buzzed the name of God a hundred times to paralyse the Evil One. With candles and with lanterns throwing giant scorpion shadows on the mud-baked walls they searched for him: he was not found. They clicked their tongues. With every movement that the scorpion made his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said. May he sit still, they said. May the sins of your previous birth be burned away tonight, they said. May your suffering decrease the misfortunes of your next birth, they said. May the sum of all evil balanced in this unreal world

against the sum of good become diminished by your pain. May the poison purify your flesh of desire, and your spirit of ambition, they said, and they sat around on the floor with my mother in the centre, the peace of understanding on each face. More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours, more insects, and the endless rain. My mother twisted through and through, groaning on a mat. My father, sceptic, rationalist, trying every curse and blessing, powder, mixture, herb and hybrid. He even poured a little paraffin upon the bitten toe and put a match to it. I watched the flame feeding on my mother. I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation. After twenty hours it lost its sting. My mother only said Thank God the scorpion picked on me And spared my children.

Teacher's preparation for recording

The following are some guidelines that can take you a long way towards getting a great recording:

- Use comfortable and quiet atmosphere
- the mics are very sensitive, so avoid unwanted noises
- Always remember that, if you want to get a very personal sound, you need time to experiment.

Pre-listening instructions to the students:

Tell the students that they are listening to the recitation recorded by the teacher and ask them the following questions:

1. What do you know about the author?

[possible answers: Indian writer/ male writer/ living writer]

2. (Have the students in pairs answer the following question) What do you want to know about the poem (any poem for that matter)?

[Possible Answers; flashback technique / motherhood / rituals / childhood / Indian culture / love / hatred and so on.]

Now instruct the students to listen to the poem and try to find the information they want to know. Picking out vocabularies

Ask the students to find out unfamiliar words and write them on the paper they have in hand. Prepare a vocabulary list accordingly as given below:

1. Diabolic
2. Evil
3. Giant
4. Mud-baked
5. Misfortunes
6. Diminished
7. Sceptic
8. Rationalist
9. Hybrid
10. Paraffin

Finding the main idea:

As they listen, pause after each line and ask students to guess the theme of the poem. Check whether they got the information that they wanted to know about the poem. Ask them to write a title for this poem after reading each line. The complete list of titles should be written on the board one by one.

List of titles:

1. My old golden days
2. Gain from rain
3. Motherhood
4. Suffering
5. Escapade of the scorpion
6. On a rainy day
7. Superstition
8. Ignorant peasants
9. Hunt for the scorpion
10. Mother is love

After students have listened to the poem, divide them into groups of four or five and assign each group a topic and ask them to write a short poem on it.

Poem written

Motherhood

Eternal love- do we have such a thing?
I'll be there for you. He says, she says.
God has promised too
Girl was I, when I believe his word
Silly was I, when I believed her word
Good was I, when I trusted Him and his word.
Great will I be- if I believe the person whom I have never trusted but is always for me.

After writing a poem of not more than 6 lines, ask each group to write two to four questions about their topic and the poem which could be answered by reading the same. Later they will ask these questions to their classmates in the other groups. These questions, vocabulary and titles can be typed by the students and saved if it is a computer-aided interaction.

Prepared questions:

1. Who are all the persons who had promised?
2. What was the poetess' statement, when she believed 'her word'?
3. How will she be, when she believes the person whom she has never trusted?
4. Has God made a promise?
5. When was she good?

Group presentation:

Ask each group to present their topic to the class. Students may be asked to take notes on the group's presentation and at the end of the presentations; all students will be familiar with all the topics prepared. Later the students may be told to ask the prepared questions as was instructed before to other group students. The instructor should go on rounds to check whether all the students have understood the poem and the entire task given.

After quizzing each other in groups, bring the class back together. Then, as a

class discuss the entire poem with its focuses mentioned in the objective.

Written response:

Ask the students to write a paragraph or an essay on the poem. The instructor may ask the groups to exchange these essays to check for their clarity, vocabulary, sentence construction and the like. After getting feedback from their peer, they may draft an improved letter. This can be given as homework.

Experience sharing:

After understanding the poem, students may be asked to write an essay on their own experience with mothers and the love received from them- how much they have been cared for by their mothers and what will be their future responsibility to save them and make them happy.

The teacher's preparation should give extra information which was not attempted or guessed by the students. The poet's use of various types of imagery may be the expected preparation of the teacher:

Visual imagery

scorpion crawling beneath a sack of rice
peasants came like swarms of flies

Smell imagery

smell of candles

the smell of burning oil in the lanterns as well as the burning of flesh; "flame feeding on my mother"

Tactile experience

scorpion biting the mother
father pouring paraffin on the toe.

Internal sensation

fear
pain
anxiety
concern
relief (in the end)

Sound imagery

buzzed the name of god a hundred times
they clicked their tongues

Other figures of speech

Metaphor

"diabolic tail"(tail has been described as diabolic)

Simile

"The peasants came like swarms of flies"(peasants have been compared to a swarm of flies)

Teachers have to prepare brainstorming questions after going through all their experiences for which the students have to give spot answers which makes the class interactive and student-centric.

WORKS CITED

Yule, George. *The Study of Language*. Noida: Cup, 1996.
McCarthy, Michael, and Felicity O'Dell. *English Vocabulary in Use*. Kundli: CUP, 2003.
Hansen, Barbara, and Rebecca McDaniel. *Developing Sentence Skill*. US: Eaglewood Cliffs, 1990.
Mohan, Krishna, and Krishna Banerjee. *Developing Communication Skills*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd., 1999.