A Conceptual Review Of The Role Of Teaching And Learning Of Second Language Through Literature And Communicative Approach

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Abstract

The paper reviews the role of teaching second language (SL) by using Communicative Approach. The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the importance of using literature and Communicative Approach for teaching and learning SL. The review of previous literature indicates that teachers normally prefer to teach L2 through Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which requires little efforts and few resources to teach (1). Many studies have found that GTM is not an effective method of teaching SL. In order to critically understand at a deeper level the role of literature and Communicative Approach in teaching SL, this paper explores thoroughly the existing literature and analyzes various works done on the importance of using Literature and Communicative Approach to teach SL. The current study found that teaching of SL through literature and Communicative Approach is more effective than through GTM. It is, therefore, recommended on the basis of this paper that teachers of L2 should adopt Communicative Approach and literature for teaching second language.

Keywords: Communicative Approach, Literature Review, Second Language

INTRODUCTION

Learning Second Language outside the native speech community is both taxing and demanding because L2 learners do not usually have direct access to native environment are often forced to put in extra efforts in the language classroom. But unfortunately, it does not seem to work for native real life environment, because the method of teaching of L2 is based on Grammar translation Method, which is more prevalent among SL teachers, for it demands little efforts and resource on the part of teachers (textbooks, a piece of chalk and blackboard). In addition, it is less labor-intensive for teachers and learners all students are to learn are grammar and vocabulary in chunks, and that too in isolation. Main focus of this method is on memorization, rote learning and translation from the target language to first language and vice versa. Teaching SL through this method provides learners with some knowledge about target language but they are unable to communicate, for its focus is not on the communicative aspects of the language rather on the usage of it (2). Its contents are often limited to school family life, and very rarely involve social and real life, attaching much importance to mastering form rather than practical application of L2. Hence, learning only linguistic elements and grammatical knowledge is not sufficient for L2 learners (3). Moreover, language learned in this fashion has no utility in real life because it is taught in isolation and units (4, 5). For example, teaching L2 through word to word translation and using students’ first language for teaching target language (6, 7), does not serve the needs of L2 learners. Teacher is the authority in the class and students are required to get correct answers. The fundamental objective of this method is to enable students to read and write at the cost of speaking and listening, with pronunciation almost ignored. Memorization of vocabulary and grammar is emphasized at the cost of communicative competence, so students graduating from schools are not competent in communication. Nevertheless, the main purpose of teaching L2 is to improve learners’ communicative competence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Using Communicative Approach for Teaching and Learning Second Language

Language teaching and learning is a process whose aim not only varies from country to country and culture to culture but from individual to individual. The methods and techniques designed for teaching and learning of L2 may work in one context, but may not work in another context due to certain reasons. Thus various methods, techniques and approaches were tried and used for certain period of time, such as (GTM) The Grammar Translation Method and Audio-lingual Method which relies much on structured drills and repetition of drills making the process monotonous and the activities boring for the students.

The Grammar Translation Method was suggested as the offspring of the German scholarship by some of the leading supporters (8) the goal of which was “to know everything about something rather than the thing itself” (9). In United States the Grammar Translation Method was alternatively known as the Prussian Method (A book by B. Sears, an American classics teacher, published in 1845 was titled The Ciceronian or the Prussian Method of Teaching the Elements of the Latin Language (10). The salient characteristics of this method include:

The purpose of learning a foreign language is to make one capable of reading its literature or to get full advantage from the psychological discipline and the rational growth that affects studying the foreign
Analysis of the Role of Literature in Teaching and Learning of Second Language

Literature not only provides authentic materials but also introduces the learners to the target language culture which can prove positive in terms of learners’ positive attitude towards target language community (28, 30). Literature transmits the values and norms of the target community which has inevitable penetrative and pervasive effect on the minds of the learners (31). Literature familiarizes L2 learners with the true nature of the target language, how much it is flexible and elastic that native speakers bend it to meet their needs, or adapt to new situations. Apart from “authentic materials”, short story gives two characteristics, one language in use, meant for native speakers without any modification to its linguistic elements (32).

Second an aesthetic representation of spoken language which is meant to recover or represent language within a certain cultural context (33, 34). Short stories are not written without their contexts. They always happen in certain cultural contexts which represent certain segments of a given society. It also penetrates through the static nature of language established by artificial grammar of classroom being modified and artificially reconstructed where the learners communicate but at a survival level.

Short stories being another genre of literature give access to authentic materials used in practical world, providing learners with an approach to the language nourished by different linguistic and rhetorical uses of the language as well as “form and conventions of the written mode irony, exposition, argument, narrative and so on, and settle the learners with a certain geopolitical context (35). For example, the literary works of Mark Twain reconstruct the way language is used in certain geopolitical context. These reconstructions provide learners with a good idea of how language is used by a contemporary low class youth in (Edinburgh) by native speakers in Mississippi shore. Learners can also develop an aesthetic reading of the text, and through social and personal experience learners can easily develop a closer relationship with the language.

Language enrichment whether it is through an aesthetic reading or different reading of literary work provides a “rich context in which individual or lexical items are made more memorable”. (36, 37). Apart from this, it also develops familiarity with literary work that exposes learners to the formation and function of sentences improve their speaking and writing skills. It also enriches their vocabulary as looking up words is often followed by looking up cultural references, and cultural enrichment as well, Justice (38). As rightly defined by (39) that Literature as a source of authentic materials, where learners are exposed to the language that is genuine and undistorted in the classroom context.

How Literature Helps in Teaching and Learning of Second Language?

There are different ways in which this goal could be achieved. These ways have been presented below.

Reinforcement and Benefits of Short Stories

Researchers who advocate the use of short stories to teach L2/EFL list several benefits of short stories. These include motivational, literary, cultural and higher order thinking benefits. All instructors should take advantage of, is reinforcement of skills.

Reinforcing the Skills

Short stories facilitate teachers to teach language learning skills to all levels of language proficiency. (4) indicates that “short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance ELT courses for learners at intermediate levels of proficiency”. He explains as to why stories should be used to reinforce ELT; by discussing activities instructors can create activities such as drafting, letters, applications and essays to various audiences and on different topics as well as acting out dialogues. Also, (40) affirms that literature helps students to write more creatively critically.

Language. The way of Grammar Translation is to have a detailed examination of its grammar rules, then translating the texts and sentences into and out of the language by the application of the skill acquired. Hence, according to this method language learning is not only understanding the rules and facts but to understand and manipulate the syntax and morphology of the second language. As mentioned by (11) “The first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language” (455).

Likewise, in the seventies, methods such as the Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, Total Physical Response, and the Natural Approach did not capitalize on literature in teaching second/foreign languages, and nor did Notional-Functional Syllabus, (12, 13). It was the past two decades or so since literature has found its way back into the teaching of L2.

The period from the 1970s through the 1980s witnessed a major paradigm shift in language teaching, and the quest for alternatives to grammar-based approaches and methods led in several different directions. Conventional language teaching welcomed the increasing interest in communicative Teaching approach to teaching foreign language.

In this approach, the focus on teaching grammatical rules and units and other linguistics elements shifted to teaching of communicative aspect of language using authentic materials in the language classroom where students take ownership of their learning. On the assumption, that they can use what they learn in the language classroom. This communicative approach and other related approaches appeared such as Audiolingualism, Situational Language Teaching Total Physical Response, Silent Way Counseling Learning and Suggestopedia appeared in the same period. Apart from these methods and approaches Neurolinguistic Programming and Multiple Intelligences appeared in the language teaching profession. These methods were not considerably developed in the language teaching field because the learning principles of these methods and approaches were different from those available in second language acquisition except vocabulary and lexical phrases that are the building blocks of communicative competence. Methods like total Physical Response, Silent way counseling- learning, and suggestopedia did not flourish in the language teaching domain nor the majority of second language teachers. Each of them saw but a brief popularity among language teaching domain and soon disappeared from the sight.

To overcome the lack of communicative competence among L2 learners, the integration of short fictions in SL classrooms seems to be an appropriate option among other materials because of its rich potential and authentic materials (14). Short stories with its rich potential and promising nature can easily enhance the learners’ four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (15) Short stories have been singled out on account of their effective, motivational and cultural enrichment (4, 16) According to (17-20) literature has approved stuff, cultural improvement, language development and individual involvement. As many educators and professionals argue that it is not feasible to teach English without teaching culture (20). Short stories as a source text in combination with communicative approach have been recommended by scholars for being involving, interesting and authentic. In addition, communicative approach being popular and practical for giving much importance to the use of authentic materials used in real life situations (16, 21), for teaching L2.

Moreover, English language teachers have realized that literature can be best utilized to strengthen the four basic skills, and to improve language teaching as well (22, 23). (24, 25) assert that with learners at the beginning and intermediate levels, teachers can utilize literature for “language practice, reading comprehension, and possible aesthetic appreciation”. (26, 27) in contrast, with advanced students literary texts may be first language is maintained as the reference system in the development of knowledge of world literature such as recognition of figures of speech, levels of meaning, and other stylistic features” Moreover, students can gain insight into literature by gaining entry into the world of familiar or unfamiliar to them mainly due to the cultural aspects of stories (28), compels them to think outside the box.
For Example, instructors can ask students to write dialogues (4, 41) or more complex writing activities if students have reached a high level of language proficiency. In the same vein, a literary work provides a “rich context in which individual or lexical items are made more memorable, and gives learners a much clearer idea about the syntactic structure of written text and to what extent written language differs from spoken language.

Language is much more than mere words; language is a repository and transmitter of habits, traditions, routines, social and economic context. And above all, when mastered through literature, it can reflect the human soul (42, 43). To have the students deal with originals in a first course, use the language creatively, improve their language level, loose themselves from the claws of the dictionary, respond positively to the subject and learn some literature. As pointed by (15), literary texts can be used in language teaching, because the language used in literary text is suitable for the contexts of the events. (44) points out two levels of linguistic knowledge as; the level of usage and the level of use. According to his definition usage involves a knowledge of rules, whereas use entails knowing how to use these rules for effective communication. As argued by (45, 46) that “Literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge”. The application of literature and culture in a language classroom must not be random, since the teaching of both disciplines is not akin to the bare transmission of information regarding the people of the target community or country, (47).

Learners can also develop an aesthetic reading of the text and a closer relationship with the target language because they construct and reconstruct the target language on their own. Language enrichment whether it is through an aesthetic reading or efferent reading of a literary, work provides a “rich context in which individual items are made more memorable”. It also provides learners with a much clearer idea about the syntactic structure of a written text and to what extent written language differs from spoken language.

Literary text offers a rich source of Linguistic input and helps learners to practice the four skills, besides this, it can help learners to develop understanding of their cultures awareness of difference and to develop tolerance and understanding. At the same time Literary text can deal with universal themes such as love, war and loss that are not always covered in the course books of L2 learners. Literary texts are representational rather than referential (19, 48). Referential language communicates at only one level and tends to be information, whereas the representational language involves the learners and engages their emotions as well as their cognitive faculties. It also gives students the chance to learn about literary devices that occur in other genres.

There are certain objections as to the complexity of literature for teaching foreign language but according to (49), the linguistic difficulties of literature has been overstated, readers do not need to experience total comprehension to gain something from the text in fact literature with its extensive and connotative vocabulary and its complex syntax can expand all language skills (50).

Benefits of Short Stories

A number of reasons and advantages of using literature in language teaching classroom have been presented by various authors such as, (51) by listing the following with less or more endorsement.

1. Cultural amelioration, by reading literature one can promote one’s awareness and understanding with target language community and thus reduces the intensity of cultural shock, (52, 53).
2. Linguistic Expression, literature is composed of diverse writing techniques and expressions. It provides learners with various distinct styles.
3. Mental training, literature being the creation of sublime and great minds among other disciplines builds and trains readers’ sensibility and moral sense.
4. Literature extends readers’ linguistics competence, especially of those who have already mastered the basic of linguistic.
5. Reliability the materials of literature are genuine and authentic for teaching purpose (54).

6. Using literature in language teaching is useful because of the facts that the language used in it is taken from real life situations.

7. Being Interpretive and suggestive, it is open to multiple interpretations and a useful and convenient resource (17).

Literature stimulates discussion and interaction because it is rich in having multiple level and shades of meanings, and interpretation, which can easily be exploited by learners. It enhances learners’ awareness of the target language obliging them to analyses standard and non-standard usages of language occurred in literary texts. Moreover, it makes their awareness more subtle and analytical of the norms of language use (55, 56). Apart from its motivating quality, it enjoys an elevated and high position in many cultures and countries, so learning or understanding a piece of highly respected literature can give the learners a sense of achievement. It is involving because it keeps the learners in suspense as what will happen next, on basis of what has just happened. The instant difficulty with its linguistic elements (lexicons) may not cause any hurdle in the way of understanding and comprehending the theme.

Hence, learners can get an insight into the meanings by inferring the meanings of difficult words the contexts they are used in a short story. The approach of using short stories in language classroom is based on experience. This means that learners first experience and become engage in the literary text before they go on analyzing it. For example, students may refer to their experience first before listening to the text or visualize in their minds what is going on in the text that is being read to them. This approach is based on theories of language acquisition (57)). It is inductive, where learners discover rules for themselves. Many researchers (40, 58, 59) say it is more profitable for learners to discover things about language for themselves, rather than being told about the rules.

Importance of Incorporating Short Stories in Teaching of Second Language

Short stories help students enhance their communication skills through developing sensibility and empathy and serve as a powerful motivator to help learners to acquire the “capacity” to exploit the knowledge they have gained long after the class is over. It can help develop learners’ interpersonal skills such as sensibility and empathy which are very vital in today global business contexts (60). According to (61) one of the criteria for optimal input for acquiring language is being interesting and relevant. Using relevant short stories can arrest students’ attention and motivation to learn. (62) recommends using literature to help students go beyond acquiring basic knowledge of the language to “Learning about” the language and how it works because using literature can help develop the “fifth” skill in language learning the skill of thinking and processing.

The correct use of literary text in classroom is to improve communicative competence and provide “a springboard for the development of critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation” (63, 64), and create students awareness about the culture of the target language community. For example, the results of some studies, like those of (55) strongly recommends the integration of literary texts into the SL/FL curriculum. Likewise, many writing on this subject advocate a context focused curriculum that include literature (65, 66). Short fiction is a supreme resource for observing not only language but life itself. In short fiction, characters act out all the real and symbolic acts people carry out in daily lives, and do so in a variety of registers and tones. The world of short fiction both mirrors and illuminates human lives (6). The inclusion of short fiction in the ESL / EFL curriculum offers the following educational benefits (67). Short story makes reading easier for learners due to being simple and short when compared with their text books and other literary genres. It gives learners the opportunity to use their creativity and sensitivity. It promotes critical thinking skills. Also helps students with different backgrounds to communicate with each other because of its universal language.

Students at the advanced level can observe how characters in a play or a short story use figures of speech, such as simile, metaphor,
Reinforcing the Productive (speaking and writing) Skills

Short stories allow teachers to teach the language skills to all levels of learners. According to (69) indicates that "short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance ELT courses for learners at intermediate levels of proficiency" (p. 9). He explains why stories should be used to reinforce ELT by discussing activities teachers can create opportunity such as to write the theme and act out the role of characters in the story.

As the results presented by (70) of a comparison between a group of students that read literary texts and a second group that read non-literary texts at a university in Hong Kong. The group who read literary texts showed improvement in vocabulary and reading. High-intermediate and advanced students can also profit from literary texts. For example, what they read and study gives them the chance to come up with their own insights, encouraging them to speak the language in a more imaginative and creative way. They become more creative since they are faced with their own point of view, that/those of the main character(s) of the story and those of their peers, according to (35). This thoughtful process leads to critical thinking p. 85. As (35) confirms, “Focusing on point of view in literature enlarges students' vision and fosters critical thinking by dramatizing the various ways a situation can be seen” (p. 85). Therefore, when students read, they interact with the text. By interacting with the text, they interpret what they read. By interpreting what they read, they can work toward speaking English more creatively.

Motivating Aspect of Short Story

As short stories generally have a beginning, middle and an end, they stimulate students at all levels of language proficiency to continue reading them to the end to find out how the conflict arises, reaches its climax and resolved. (71) for example, affirms that literature motivates advanced students and is “motivationally effective if students can genuinely engage with its thoughts and emotions and appreciate its aesthetic qualities” (p. 197). He stresses the importance of developing student–response and competence in literature. In addition, one of the reasons (72) lists for using literature with students is that literature motivates students “to explore their feelings through experiencing those of others” (p. 1).

To choose stories according to students’ preferences, stories should have various themes because, as (73) point out, variety of themes will offer different things to many individuals’ interests and tastes (p. 178). Teachers should teach simple elements such as character, setting and plot to intermediate levels. Whereas more complex elements, such as conflict, climax, resolution, etc., can be introduced with more advanced levels. Gadješek (74) explains how literature can be introduced by describing the order of activities; pre-reading activities, factual in-class work, analysis and extending activities. In the pre-reading activities, students have the opportunity to learn about the background of the story and vocabulary (p. 233). Instructors can start by asking students questions before they are introduced to “The Happy Prince”.

Besides the four skills, short stories help instructors to teach literary, cultural and higher-order thinking aspects. As for culture and other benefits, (75) believes that culture should be integrated into the curriculum and “literature is one feature . . . in the cultural domain that provides added value beyond the level of language acquisition.” Literature helps students to expand their “linguistic and cognitive skills, cultural knowledge and sensitivity” (quoted in (20)). One is led to say that integrating short stories into the curriculum will help EFL students to become well rounded professionals and human beings, for short stories teach more than the skills necessary for survival in the target language.

Students also become more productive and daring once they come to know the richness and flexibility of the language they are learning and set about to make use of some of that potential without any external support. Thus knowing the meanings of individual lexical items or phrases becomes less significant than chasing the development of the story. Student becomes enthusiastic to find out what happens as events unfold; he/she feels close to some of the characters in the story. This can have favorable effects on the language learning process.

As pointed by (74, 76), that Literature in SL classrooms provides students with opportunities to acquire competence in L2 like that of native speakers, enabling them to learn the features of modern English as well as linguistic system such as idiomatic expressions. (77) explains that literature can open horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore. In short, literature provides students with an incomparably rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers. If students can gain access to this material by developing literary competence, then they can effectively internalize the language at a high level (63, 64). Especially, for students with verbal linguistic intelligence, the language teacher’s using literature in a foreign language class serves for creating a highly motivating, amusing and lively lesson (78). Literature is not only a tool for developing the written and oral skills of the students in the target language but also a window opening into the culture of the target language, building up a cultural competence in students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion it can be concluded that using literature and communicative approach for teaching of second language is highly effective. A large body of knowledge on the use and importance of Communicative Approach and literature also supports this contention as is mentioned above. In this regard many studies have found that teachers can effectively use Communicative Approach as a teaching tool to teach second language. In the same way, many studies also indicated that using short stories (literature) can highly be beneficial for teaching and learning of second language. Based on the analysis done in this paper, it can easily be inferred that communicative Approach and literature can be an effective sources for teaching and learning of second language.

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