

Teaching English Language through Stories: A Helpful and Amusing Way for Iraqi Students to Learn the Language

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Abstract

In teaching English language, stories prove to be a helpful and amusing tool for Iraqi students learning this language. The writing of this article focuses on the benefits of using stories as a tool used in teaching and also provides practical tips on how to incorporate stories into the classroom. Stories can help to improve the students' language skills and also foster their love for learning through engaging their imagination and their creativity. The use of stories in language teaching has been shown to increase students' motivation and engagement, along with improving their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This article provides examples of how stories can be used effectively in the classroom and offers suggestions for selecting appropriate stories and incorporating them into lesson plans. Overall, the use of stories in language teaching offers a fun and effective way for Iraqi students to improve their English language skills.

Key Words: skill, ESL, Learn language, Iraqi Students, Stories, Teaching English

تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال القصص: طريقة مفيدة ومسلية للطلاب العراقيين لتعلم اللغة

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تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال القصص هو طريقة مفيدة ومسلية لطلاب العراق لتعلم اللغة. يستكشف هذا المقال فوائد استخدام القصص كأداة تعليمية ويوفر نصائح عملية لإدراجها في الفصول الدراسية. من خلال إشراك خيال وإبداع الطلاب، يمكن للقصص المساعدة في تحسين مهاراتهم اللغوية وتعزيز حب التعلم. قد أظهر استخدام القصص في تعليم اللغات زيادة دافعية وتفاعل الطلاب، بالإضافة إلى تحسين مهاراتهم في الاستماع والتحدث والقراءة والكتابة. يوفر هذا المقال أمثلة على كيفية استخدام القصص بشكل فعال في الفصول الدراسية ويقدم اقتراحات لاختيار قصص مناسبة وإدراجها في خطط الدروس. بشكل عام، يوفر استخدام القصص في تعليم اللغات طريقة ممتعة وفعالة لطلاب العراق لتحسين مهاراتهم في اللغة الإنجليزية

الكلمات المفتاحية: المهارة، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية، تعلم اللغة، الطلاب العراقيون، القصص، تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية

Stories have been a fundamental part of human communication since the dawn of time (Haven, 2007). They can captivate people's attention, engage their emotions and transport them to different worlds. In the context of learning English as a second language, stories can be an incredibly effective tool for students. In Iraq, where English is taught as a second language in schools, using short stories can be an effective tool for captivating and improving students' language skills.

One of the main benefits of using stories in language learning is that they provide a natural and engaging context for students to practice their language skills (Wajnryb, 2003). When students listen to or read a story, they are exposed to a wide variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures. This exposure helps them to internalize the language and improve their comprehension and fluency (Ellis & Brewster, 2002).

When presented with compelling stories, ESL students will encounter many new words and expressions, forcing them to think and focus on the language's context, meaning and usage. It makes each student's learning experience immersive and personalized, ideal for learning a new language.

For example, if a learner hears the word "castle" in the context of a story about a knight, s/he is more likely to remember the word than if s/he simply saw it in a list. Hence, in a study conducted by Al-Ali (2017), it showed that using short stories in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) improved students' reading comprehension and vocabulary. The study involved 60 EFL students from a university in Jordan, and it showed that the use of short stories helped students understand the meaning of new words and phrases in context. The study also found that students who listen to or read stories are exposed to new words and phrases in context. Listening to stories helps them to learn the meaning of these words and how to use them correctly

Stories help learners to develop grammar skills and to understand how grammar works in English. This is because stories often use a variety of grammatical structures. For example, a story might use simple sentences to describe the setting, compound sentences to show how events are related, and complex sentences to show the thoughts and feelings of the characters. By means of listening or reading stories, learners can see how grammar is used in real life.

In addition to providing a rich linguistic environment, stories also offer students the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills (Wright, 1995). As they follow the plot and try to make sense of the events and characters, students are encouraged to think deeply about the story and make connections between different elements. This process helps them to develop their analytical and problem-solving skills (Ghosn, 2002). Students can learn how to identify main ideas, make inferences, and draw conclusions by reading short stories. They can also develop their critical thinking skills by analyzing the author's use of language, tone, and style.

Short stories can teach students how to read between the lines and understand the subtext of a story. This is an important skill for language learners, as it helps them understand the nuances of the language and the culture. By analyzing the subtext of a story, students can develop a deeper understanding of the themes and ideas presented in the story.

Stories provide students with valuable listening and reading comprehension practice, particularly important for ESL students (Chang, 2018). They learn to ask questions as they comprehend the characters, plot and context, helping them to develop better interpretations of the text. Reading comprehension in the context of a story is particularly helpful, since it is not just about language practice, but also about being able to understand the sequence of events, the plot, and how events interact. It helps with a full understanding of the language structure, leaving the student with more knowledge about it.

Another benefit of using stories in language learning is that they can help students develop their cultural awareness (Adair-Hauck et al., 1999). Stories often reflect the values, beliefs, and customs of the culture in which they were created. By exposing students to stories from different cultures, teachers can help them broaden their understanding of the world and develop greater empathy and tolerance towards others (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996).

Authors from different cultures and backgrounds write many short stories, and often reflecting the social and cultural values of their respective societies. By reading short stories from different cultures, students can better understand different perspectives and ways of life. This can help them become more empathetic and open-minded, which is an important aspect of global citizenship.

For example, a study conducted by Khojasteh and Shabani (2019), it was found that using short stories to teach English to Iranian EFL learners improved their vocabulary learning. The study involved 60 EFL learners from a language institute in Iran and it showed that the use of short stories helped students to learn new vocabulary in context. The study also found that students who read short stories were more motivated to learn English and enjoyed the learning process more than those who did not.

As ESL (English as a second language) students learn to use English through stories, they will become more confident in their language skills. They will develop a better command of the English language, allowing them to communicate more effectively in all areas of their lives, including academic and social scenarios (Boudah, 2017).

Through practice of the language via storytelling, students can improve their listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills as well (Piazzoli, 2019). Writing and oral storytelling help a great deal in creating empathy, emotional understanding, and better communication in all social settings, as well as facilitate logical comprehension.

Furthermore, stories can also help students to develop their creativity and imagination (Wright, 1995). As they listen to or read a story, students are encouraged to visualize the events and characters in their minds. This process

helps them to develop their imaginative abilities and can also inspire them to create their own stories.

Moreover, short stories can be used to promote literacy and a love for reading. In many countries, including Iraq, there is a low level of literacy among the population. By using short stories in the classroom, teachers can help promote a love for reading and encourage students to read more outside of the classroom. Reading stories can have a positive impact on students' language skills and their overall academic performance.

In addition to these benefits, students can gain a better understanding of the culture of English-speaking countries through stories. Every story bears the imprint of the writer's construction of culture (Ardalan et al., 2020). Through reading, ESL students can gain a deeper understanding of indigenous values, beliefs, and practices of an English-speaking people.

In addition, stories can offer a multifold purpose by giving the student knowledge about people from other cultures through literary novelties. By learning how to understand different perspectives, they can prepare themselves better for any global interactions and navigate differences effortlessly.

Stories can also be used to teach English learners about a variety of other topics, such as history, science, and math. In a study done on students, results found that by using stories to teach English, teachers can make learning more enjoyable and engaging for their students. (New Routes. 2022, March 8). (The importance of stories when teaching young learners. Retrieved from <https://newroutes.com.br/blog/the-importance-of-stories-when-teaching-young-learners/>)

To use stories in teaching the language, the teachers should follow some tips :

- Choose stories that are appropriate for the student's age and interests. It is also important to choose culturally appropriate stories. For example, a teacher may want to avoid stories that contain stereotypes or negative portrayals of Arabs.
- Make sure the stories are well-written and engaging. Stories that have interesting characters, plots, and settings.
- Use a variety of story types. There are many different types of stories, such as folktales, fairy tales, myths, legends, and realistic fiction. Using a variety of story types will help keep the students engaged and interested.

- Use stories to teach a variety of subjects, such as math, science, social studies, and language arts. Using stories will help the students see the relevance of stories to their lives and their academic studies.
- Be creative and have fun with the stories a teacher chooses and the activities s/he uses to teach them.

How to Use Stories to Teach English

There are many ways to use stories to teach English. Here are a few ideas:

- Reading aloud to students. By reading aloud, teachers can have a great way to introduce them to new vocabulary and grammar and to help them develop their listening comprehension skills. When s/he reads aloud, s/he has to be sure to stop and ask questions to check for comprehension. The teacher can also encourage students to discuss the story with each other.
- Teachers should use visuals to help students understand the stories they are reading, such as pictures, posters, or even videos.
- Teachers should have their students retell stories. Retelling stories is a great way to practice speaking and listening skills. When students retell stories, they have to think about the plot, the characters, and the setting. They also have to use their speaking skills to communicate their ideas clearly.
- Teachers should have their students write about stories. Writing stories is a great way to practice writing skills. When students write about stories, they have to use their imaginations to create a new version of the story in their own words. They also have to use their writing skills to communicate their ideas clearly.
- They should use stories as a springboard for discussion. This is a great way to help their students develop critical thinking skills and learn about different cultures. When they use stories as a springboard for discussion, they should ask their students questions about the story that will help them think critically about the characters, the plot, and the setting. They can also use stories to teach their students about different cultures. For example, if a teacher is reading a story from another country, s/he can ask her/his students questions about the customs and traditions of that country.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of short stories in teaching English for Iraqi students in schools can be highly beneficial. Short stories provide a context for new vocabulary and grammar structures, develop reading comprehension skills,

promote cultural awareness, and encourage a love for reading. Teachers should incorporate short stories into their lesson plans and encourage students to read and analyze them. By doing so, students can improve their language skills and develop a deeper understanding of the English language and culture.

Stories have an important role to play in students' learning of English. They help with vocabulary expansion, enhanced comprehension skills, improved communication skills more effectively, and cultural understanding. By actively exploring these elements of the stories, ESL students are able to have a more immersive language learning experience that can end up transforming their knowledge, confidence and social interactions. As English continues to be the emergent language of the global marketplace, everyone must have tools to succeed, and by using stories as a learning tool, ESL students are equipped to embrace the language effectively.

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