ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:13, Issue:1, March 2024

Utilizing Poetry in Teaching Language:

University of Technology and Applied Sciences as a Model

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Abstract

Though Poetry is considered one of the major genres in English Language Teaching (ELT), it seems that some teachers rarely admit, or seriously take, the role of using it in teaching language. The possible question here is: to what extent and depth does poetry take in teaching languages, English, in particular? The researchers have distributed a questionnaire among (20) male and female students in the Foundation Year (FY) at the Preparatory Studies Centre - University of Technology and Applied Sciences- Sultanate of Oman. What the researchers have found is: utilizing poetry in teaching language has a great effect on students' academic and personal lives. Discussion, explanation, and recommendations will be fully highlighted throughout this paper.

Keywords: content, communication, knowledge, poem, poetry, teaching, verse, vocabulary

(Received: 03 December 2023; Revised: 10 January 2024; Accepted: 21 February 2024; Published: 29 March 2024)

Introduction

Literature does help unfold and explore so many hidden sides of the text at hand. There is a need for a deep discussion with students to generate more astonishing and critical thinking in learning and comprehending, where literature can play a wonderful resource to elucidate a more context-driven meaning of the text. As for literature, it could be considered as a means that reflects familiarity with all the cultural notions of language, for example, history, background and the environment of authors, poets, etc. Therefore, utilizing literature in the language domain becomes clear and enjoyable. Most literary genres such as the use of poetry and fiction, in addition to others, are helpful and supportive in enhancing linguistic skills as well as engaging and promoting societal events and activities.

teaching poetry focusing on language elements –grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary is worthwhile and of much value and interest for students, whether in the elementary, preparatory, and secondary phases. One advantage of teaching poetry in class ignites creativity and exploration, reading between the lines, for example. Moreover, poetry might be defined as a type of expression and impression, as well. Could poetry be treated as a way of understanding things beyond nature--metaphysics? Teaching poetry has an effective role in encouraging and highlighting communication, collaboration, as well as creativity among students. This paper considers teaching language through poetry and sheds some light on the different items that make up language, any language.

Study Problem

This study identifies the ultimate benefit of utilizing poetry in teaching different genres in class in different stages—elementary, intermediate, and high. Upon getting the results and findings of the questionnaire given to participants, things will get revealed about the reason beyond poetry -centered classrooms.

What can students say about this experience? Upon what criteria should things be evaluated? All this will be fathomed in detail in this paper.

Study Objectives

1. investigating the significance and merits of using poetry as a means of teaching language elements in class.
2. shedding some light on the benefits teachers and students, alike, get such as communication, thinking critically, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, etc.
3. contributing to a deeper understanding of utilizing poetry in learning new cultures and background of particular poets.
4. identifying the value of teaching language through poetry as perceived by participants.

Research Question

The fundamental question of this study is: What benefits and values does teaching language through poetry have at university level- University of Technology and Applied Sciences as a model?

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:13, Issue:1, March 2024

Literature Review

Teaching is a process performed by plans and schedules, not tries done at random. Teachers and experts in the field of education keep looking for possible ways to teaching students. They keep exploring what works well with excellent results. Some teachers use teaching aids such as drawings, pictorials, etc. Moreover, teachers can improvise some skills and ways as possible ways to draw students' attention. However, others have tried, and succeeded, another practical way in the classroom—teaching through **poetry,** which could be used in pronunciation: students can recite loudly. "This is an example of how to use a popular poem to engage students and improve pronunciation using old-fashioned but effective drilling" (Penston,2018, Para. 1). "Poems are written to be read aloud and usually have a rhythm that can be shown and enjoyed" (Penston,2018, Para. 2).

As mentioned above, teaching is not performed at random, on the contrary, every part is done under control of the teacher. Suppose that students suffer from some problems with pronunciation, here the teacher might write them on either the board, or any prominent place so that all students can see them, then the teacher reads loudly, while students repeat after him. "Deal with two or three serious mispronunciations on the board, showing any relevant phonetic factors" (Penston,2018, Para. 14).

Poetry promotes constructive and fruitful dialogues, discussion, and open symposia, whether in or out of class. It is a real and authentic material that students appreciate, not only at this moment, but also in their future studies –academic and/or personal.

> Depending on the lesson, poetry is a great way to show ESL students that English isn't just about function. It's also about expression. Poetry is a great authentic material to encourage students to express themselves, to learn pronunciation or vocabulary, and to formulate opinions on a variety of discussion topics(Dore,2022, Para.2).

In teaching pronunciation, poems have to be selected according to a high caliber criterion, and should be challenging, especially when teaching advanced (ESL) students. This makes all students involved in the discussion that has a real content. "When teaching pronunciation to advanced ESL students, it is possible to select a more challenging poem for analysis. It's even possible to involve the class in a discussion about content or meaning" (Dore,2022, Para. 9) "To aid with pronunciation, teachers can record their voices and send the recording through applications educators use to communicate with parents like Class Dojo or Remind" (Ramirez-Espinola, 2023, Para. 10). Successful, caring teachers should ignite the spark of enthusiasm in their students who are studying English.

> I believe teaching poetry is significant in the language classroom because it brings a positive impact on the social and emotional learning of the students. Being an ELT teacher of secondary level, I always enjoy teaching and bringing out new teaching

> pedagogy so that I can create a sort of enthusiasm in my students' English language learning (Rejina, 2021, Para. 4).

Teaching poetry promotes exploration and creativity. Highlighting group activities in class discussion supports and encourages diverse opinions and critical thinking. "Group activities are very useful to elicit creative interpretations from the students. The group activities support both the teaching-learning process and personal creativity" (Rejina, 2021, Para. 9). The combination of poetry and songs gives more interest and fun, especially when the rhymes give beautiful words with strong usages. Songs are comprehensible, enjoyable, authentic and full of language we need in real life. They are part of our lives and they are around us" (Sherly, 2021, Para. 2).

> Learning English through songs and poetry can increase our enthusiasm for learning English better. That is because learning English through songs and poetry is very interesting and fun, the rhythm contained in a song can help to remember words better, and also poetry with beautiful words can add to our vocabulary (Sherly, 2021, Para. 1).

Teachers are the masters of their classes; they can choose and use any method in teaching, especially poetry. Any method proves beneficial and practical should be used. Some teachers prefer using worksheets as a step of analyzing songs or poems.

> In literature class, we can use a worksheet to analyze the songs that have been heard. In synchronous class, we can share the songs we have listened to friends and teachers. Besides being able to enrich our vocabulary, learning language through songs can also improve our listening skills (Sherly, 2021, Para. 5).

According to Turner (2023, Para. 1) "Whether you liked them or not, you might have assumed that English poems are best for native English speakers. But that is simply not true. Poems can be unique and powerful tools to learn English". Poetry is international, whether written in the native language or translated. It has a powerful magic that titillates emotions and goes deep into the humans' souls.

Literature, poems in particular, are multipurpose in the classroom. They can promote students' skills; fluency and reciting aloud pieces on literature, as well as acquiring a wide range of vocabulary, especially poetic. "Promoting a love of literacy, learning English, and improving reading fluency and comprehension is vital. Educators aim to encourage students to read, practice their fluency, diction, pronunciation and word recognition, or strengthen vocabulary and reading comprehension" (Ramirez-Espinola, 2023, Para. 1).

Not only do students get benefit of poetry in class, but also their family members. In winter, for instance, they can sit by the fire- place enjoying a certain poem by a certain poet, say Robert Frost: *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening***.**

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods, fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

"Poetry can be shared with family members and peers and can help build confidence. It is universal and a great teaching tool" (Ramirez-Espinola, 2023, Para. 10). Moreover, poetry can increase students' motivation and creativity in a freely developed domain.

> Any authentic material exposes students to some 'real English' and can be very motivating for your students, provided they are supported throughout the task. The other great thing about poems is for students to have the opportunity to see the language work creatively and freely (Michaelsen, 2021, Para. 1).

A number of teachers usually ask their students to learn some beautiful verses- or even some short poems- by heart. This has a great effect on students in the future. "Once you have chosen the poem and have worked with it with your class, encourage the students to learn one verse by

heart (Michaelsen, 2021, Para. 12). Can games by teachers in class have some effect on teaching language?

In fact, playing games in class is beneficial and rewarding provided that it promotes learning language through poetry. Poems in this case are a useful tool by which students learn in an interesting way, full of fun and pleasure.

> As teachers, we all have our favorite games to play in class, and our favorite resources to plan lessons around. Poems in TEFL classes can be a useful addition to these games and resources because they teach English in a fun, flexible way (MyCoolClass, 2021, Para.1).

Different poets write on different subjects. That is normal, but it depends on the era and circumstances around them. Some write about war, peace, nature, etc. "There are also poems about basically everything. Food, emotions, the seasons, animals and anything you can think of. We can find a poem to compliment any lesson or course we're teaching" (MyCoolClass, 2021, Para.3). In some classes, students, use and play with words that they get from a certain poem which highlights and promotes their knowledge about elements of poetry such as personification, assonance, rhyme scheme, rhythm, etc.

> Poems in TEFL classes not only introduce new words but encourage students to play with the words they learn. Regularly studying poetry will introduce students to rhyme, meter and synonyms in a natural, playful way. It also enables students to find patterns and similarities in the English language, as well as encouraging a light-hearted and experimental approach to learning (MyCoolClass, 2021, Para.6).

. Moreover, through poetry, students can excel at listening activities provided that they are short, expressive, impressive with concentration on fluency, not syntax or vocabulary.

> Poems in TEFL classes are especially good options for listening activities because they're often short and pleasant to listen to. Unlike other many other listening activities, poetry enables the student to focus on fluency instead of being distracted by vocabulary or grammar (MyCoolClass, 2021, Para.6).

"Literature helps add profundity to language use. It also adds an aesthetic element to communicative input and calls for a deeper, nuanced interpretation" (Shahzad Ahmed: lecturer at Preparatory Studies Centre- University of Technology and Applied Sciences). Miss. Jumana AL Hatmi- a lecturer of English at the Preparatory Studies Center – University of Technology and Applied Sciences- concludes that "Teaching literature and poetry always has a way of appealing to the emotions and minds of the students. By using it in the classroom, students will not only be able to learn new vocabulary and expressions, but also learn the culture of the language and its

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:13, Issue:1, March 2024

people. Novels, poems and stories provide a rich context for discussion, critical thinking and problem solving. This approach will also teach students that learning outside the classroom is possible and enjoyable, as well".

Methodology

In order to get complete and accurate results on teaching language through poetry, the researchers distributed a survey among (20) Foundation Year (FY) students at University of Technology and Applied Sciences. All students are Local -Omani-, with a small number of expats in the light of cultural cooperation with some countries. Students' first language is Arabic, but the language of instruction is English.

Participants

All participants were randomly selected to participate in the questionnaire. They come from diverse regions in the Sultanate of Oman. They were all briefed about the questionnaire and told that it is voluntary, and there is no need for mentioning their names.

Nature of Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of (10) questions: (5) Yes/No, and (5) Agree/ Disagree. This is shown in the appendix page.

Findings and Discussion

Table1

2. Teaching poetry promotes exploration and creativity.	Yes	No
	18	2
	90%	10%

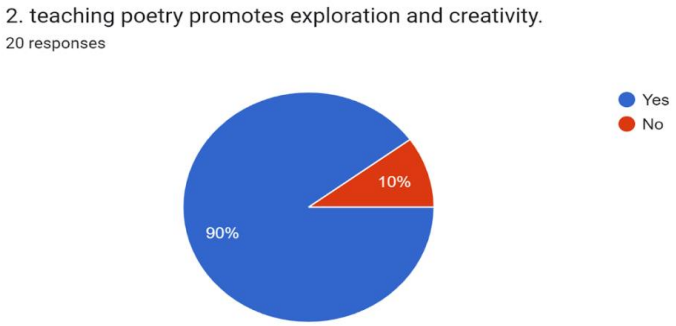

Table 1 illustrates that 90% of participants agree that teaching poetry promotes exploration and creativity. This is a good indicator of the role poetry plays in teaching language.

3. One advantage of teaching poetry is encouraging students to	Yes	No
	19	1

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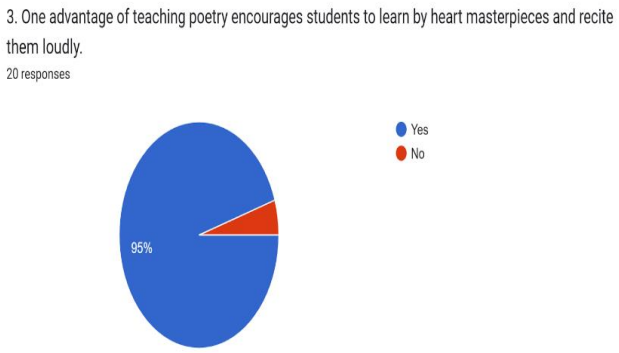
learn, by heart, masterpieces and recite them loudly.		
	95%	5%

Table 2



The findings indicate that most participants -about (95%)- believe that one advantage of teaching poetry encourages students to learn masterpieces by heart and recite them loudly. For students, poetic words and phrases are always a source of great enjoyment.

6. learning English by using both, songs and poetry can add a number of things to learners such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, listening practice, games and fun, writing, reading and speaking skills.	Agree	Disagree
	20	-
	100%	100%

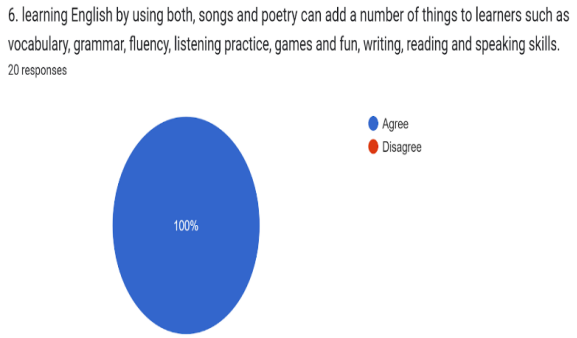


Table 3

Table 3 shows that all participants -(100%)- agree that learning English by using both, songs and poetry can add a number of things to learners such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, listening practice, games and fun, writing, reading and speaking skills. Poetry provides great practice in speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Students can increase their vocabulary through poetry, as well.

Table 4

10. Poetry promotes constructive and fruitful dialogues, discussion, and open symposia, whether in or out of class. It is a real and authentic material that students appreciate, not only at this moment, but also in their future studies –academic and/or personal.	Agree	Disagree
	19	1
	95%	5%

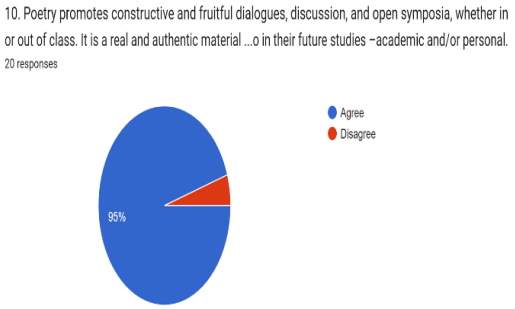


Table 4 shows that most participants -about (95%)- agree that poetry promotes constructive and fruitful dialogues, discussion, and open symposia, whether in or out of class. It is a real and authentic material that students appreciate, not only at this moment, but also in their future studies –academic and/or personal.

Recommendations

-poetry is multi-purpose; it can be used in teaching grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, etc.

-poetry can provide learners with so many sorts of discussion points starting from themes; content, figurative language, and many more.

-teaching poetry could be combined with songs to promote students' reciting skills, as well as improvising.

-teachers may ask students to record their voices to improve their pronunciation.

-poems should be suitable for the level of students—primary, intermediate, and advanced.

-students should be advised to refer to *Search Engines* that contain poems with educational purposes.

-amazing poems, lyrics, quotations invite learners to develop deeper promotion of the human experience, especially poets' lives and heritage.

-students may share poems they admire with their family members or colleagues out of school.

- poems can be powerful tools to learning languages.

-learning English through poetry plays an important role in increasing students enthusiasm for better learning Language.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to thank all (FY) participants without whom things would not have come this way.

Conclusion

Learning English by using both, songs and poetry can add a number of things to learners such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, listening practice, games and fun writing, reading and speaking skills. The learning method using songs and poetry can be used as a reference for both experienced and prospective teachers who teach English to their students, as it makes them feel happy, enthusiastic, and eager to learn.

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ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:13, Issue:1, March 2024

Appendices

Questionnaire

Dear participants,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information for an article titled "Using Poetry in Teaching English. This information will not be misused and you will not be identified.

Part One

Yes/ No questions

1. teaching poetry, focusing on language elements –grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary is worthwhile and of much value and interest for students, whether in the elementary, preparatory, and secondary phases.

(A)Yes (B)No

2. teaching poetry promotes exploration and creativity.

(A)Yes (B)No

3. One advantage of teaching poetry is encouraging students to learn masterpieces by heart and recite them loudly.

(A)Yes (B)No

4. Not only do students get benefit of poetry in class, but also their family members.

(A)Yes (B)No

5. playing games in class is beneficial and rewarding provided that it promotes learning language through poetry.

(A)Yes (B)No

Part Two

Agree / Disagree

6. learning English by using both, songs and poetry can add a number of things to learners such as vocabulary, grammar, fluency, listening practice, games and fun, writing, reading and speaking skills.

(A)Agree (B) Disagree

7. Learning English through songs and poetry can increase our enthusiasm, interest, and zeal for learning English better.

(A)Agree (B)Disagree

8. In teaching pronunciation, poems have to be selected according to a high caliber criterion, and should be challenging, especially when teaching advanced (ESL) students.

(A) Agree (B)Disagree

9. Teaching is a process done by means of plans and schedules, not just tries, or at random.

(A)Agree (B)Disagree

10. Poetry promotes constructive and fruitful dialogues, discussion, and open symposia, whether in or out of class. It is a real and authentic material that students appreciate not only at this moment, but also in their future studies –academic and/or personal.

(A) Agree (B)Disagree

About the Researchers

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