

Short stories as a tool to teach English as a foreign language

Contos curtos como ferramenta para ensinar Inglês como língua estrangeira

Los cuentos cortos como herramienta para enseñar Inglés como lengua extranjera

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Abstract

Nowadays, the use of literature as a tool for teaching English in schools is becoming increasingly rare due to several obstacles: the advent of information technology, lack of interest in reading, unprepared teachers, inadequate materials, and lack of motivation among students (Zafalon, 2010). In view of the richness that literature can offer to the teaching and learning of English, this article seeks to revive literary texts in the classroom, showing how short stories can be used as an English as a foreign language tool to develop students' language skills, and presenting the positive points of this pedagogical technique, such as motivation, teaching literary elements, teaching culture and critical thinking. For this, a teaching project is described through two detailed lesson plans, with different activities on vocabulary, grammar, literary elements and text interpretation, using the short story "After Twenty Years", by O. Henry. The theoretical basis is provided by authors such as Zafalon (2010), Hull (2024), Lazar (1993), Pardede (2011), Erkaya (2005), Kurdi and Nizam (2022), among others. Thus, this article will be very useful to the school community, helping to rekindle students' interest in reading, since the stories are short, which will help them improve their English proficiency. In addition, teachers will be able to diversify their classes, making them more interesting and beneficial, as well as encouraging the reading of literary works.

Keywords: Literature; Short Stories; Teaching; Skills.

Resumo

Nos dias atuais, o uso da literatura como ferramenta para o ensino de inglês nas escolas está tornando-se cada vez mais raro devido a vários obstáculos: advento da informática, desinteresse pela leitura, despreparo dos professores, materiais inadequados e falta de motivação dos alunos (Zafalon, 2010). Em vista da riqueza que a literatura pode oferecer ao ensino-aprendizagem de Inglês, este trabalho busca reviver os textos literários na sala de aula, demonstrando como os contos curtos podem ser usados como ferramenta de ensino de Inglês como língua estrangeira para o desenvolvimento das habilidades linguísticas dos alunos, e apresentando os pontos positivos dessa técnica pedagógica, como motivação, ensino dos elementos literários, ensino de cultura e pensamento crítico. Para isso, um projeto de ensino é descrito através de dois planos de aula detalhados, com atividades diferentes sobre vocabulário, gramática, elementos literários e interpretação de texto, usando o conto curto "After Twenty Years", de O. Henry. O embasamento teórico é feito por autores como Zafalon (2010), Hull (2024), Lazar (1993), Pardede (2011), Erkaya (2005), Kurdi e Nizam (2022), entre outros. Assim, este artigo será muito útil para a comunidade escolar, ajudando a reacender o interesse dos alunos pela leitura, uma vez que as histórias são curtas, o que os ajudará a melhorar a proficiência em Inglês. Além disso, os professores poderão diversificar as suas aulas, tornando-as mais interessantes e benéficas, bem como incentivar a leitura de obras literárias.

Palavras-chave: Literatura; Contos Curtos; Ensino; Habilidades.

Resumen

Hoy en día, el uso de la literatura como herramienta para la enseñanza del inglés en las escuelas es cada vez menos frecuente debido a varios obstáculos: la llegada de la informática, la falta de interés por la lectura, la falta de preparación de los profesores, los materiales inadecuados y la falta de motivación de los alumnos (Zafalon, 2010). En vista de la riqueza que la literatura puede ofrecer a la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés, este trabajo busca revivir

los textos literarios en el aula, demostrando cómo los cuentos cortos pueden utilizarse como herramienta para la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera para el desarrollo de las habilidades lingüísticas de los alumnos, y presentando los puntos positivos de esta técnica pedagógica, como la motivación, la enseñanza de los elementos literarios, la enseñanza de la cultura y el pensamiento crítico. Para ello, se describe un proyecto de enseñanza a través de dos planes de clase detallados, con diferentes actividades sobre vocabulario, gramática, elementos literarios e interpretación de textos, utilizando el cuento corto “After Twenty Years”, de O. Henry. La base teórica se basa en autores como Zafalon (2010), Hull (2024), Lazar (1993), Pardede (2011), Erkaya (2005), Kurdi y Nizam (2022), entre otros. Por lo tanto, este artículo será muy útil para la comunidad escolar, ya que ayudará a reavivar el interés de los alumnos por la lectura, ya que las historias son cortas, lo que les ayudará a mejorar su dominio del Inglés. Además, los profesores podrán diversificar sus clases, haciéndolas más interesantes y beneficiosas, así como fomentar la lectura de obras literarias.

Palabras clave: Literatura; Cuentos Cortos; Enseñanza; Habilidades.

1. Introduction

Literature is rarely used in English language teaching because of the barriers that traditional education faces, such as insufficient material resources, students' knowledge, teachers' goals and workloads. For Pereira, Teixeira, and Pereira (2021), the difficulties of incorporating literature into teaching include the cost of books, lack of time for lesson planning, lack of criteria for choosing materials, and students' difficulties in learning the language. Thus, adding new pedagogical techniques, according to Aebersold and Field (1997), can improve students' and teachers' perception of English teaching.

The question that guides this research is how literature, more specifically short stories, can be useful in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in the classroom, bringing different ways of teaching subjects and motivating students in the learning process. Thus, the purpose of this English language teaching project is to promote the development of students through short stories, improving their skills, diversifying the teaching-learning process and fostering a love of reading.

This article aims to show how short stories can help and encourage students to learn English, improving their communication skills through literature, and innovating classroom teaching. This is a teaching project that will present two lesson plans to be taught in the classroom. The short story that will be used in the activities in class time is “After Twenty Years,” by O. Henry (<https://www.owleyes.org/text/best-o-henry/read/after-twenty-years#root-218684-31>).

The project was based on a bibliographical research, in which some theorists were read to support the work. In parallel with this step, some investigation about activities using short stories was done to inspire the project, as well as surveys of short stories and the authors' biographies, culminating in the choice of the short story “After Twenty Years.”

The teaching project will be presented, detailing the two activities that will be implemented in the lesson plan by the students, using the short story “After Twenty Years” and mixing the language skills to achieve success in learning English.

2. Methodology

The method used to analyze and improve this teaching project is bibliographical research. A survey is made of published works on short stories as a tool to teach EFL to support the written topics. Sousa, Oliveira and Alves (2021, p. 66) define bibliographic research as:

Bibliographic research is the survey or review of published works on the theory that will guide the scientific work, which requires dedication, study and analysis by the researcher who will execute the scientific work and aims to collect and analyze published texts to support the scientific work. This process of bibliographical research supports this project, highlighting how short stories serve to improve language learning in schools and emphasizing the advantages of this use.

3. Literary texts to teach English as a foreign language

Literary reading in language teaching has unimaginable advantages, bringing innovation to educational practices and increasing students' interest in classes. For Zafalon (2010), this interest in reading books and texts is so low these days, both among students and teachers, that an intervention is needed to make reading texts part of lessons again, fostering the use of literature as a teaching tool. Therefore, according to Pereira, Rosa, and Cardoso (2024), teachers can take advantage of the current ease of access to literary works on various platforms and in various formats to enhance English language teaching in schools.

In the age of advanced technologies, with artificial intelligence reigning supreme, a simple reading of any text becomes outdated in the thinking of modern society, according to Adorno (2003). Literature has also often been forgotten by teachers and educational institutions because they prefer to use learning methods that place more value on grammar, further distancing literature from the classroom. For Calixto, Souza and Silva Junior (2017, p. 3), learning based only on grammar “becomes boring and students lose interest in the language they are studying”. This is where teachers must act to reintegrate literary texts into school life, because it can only benefit language learning.

Literature has been part of our lives since we were children. We grow up listening to stories told by our parents, reading fairy tales and comics, imagining characters we want to be. This whole context contributes to people's intellectual growth and helps build our relationship with language. In other words, we consider that “people grow up reading and are permanently readers in training, receiving at each stage of their lives a new significant charge to the knowledge they have already accumulated in their previous readings” (Zafalon, 2010, p. 2).

These reflections show us how much language teaching is losing by separating literature from learning. The advantages of using literary texts to teach languages are many: from linguistic benefits to greater cultural knowledge and understanding of the world. For Hull (2024), the importance of using literary texts in language teaching encompasses extremely useful linguistic benefits, with students who use literature being able to improve their language skills, broaden their vocabulary, deepen their understanding of the language being studied, use language creatively, have multiple interpretations of the text, communicate more confidently and develop critical thinking.

As for the greater cultural knowledge and understanding of the world that literature brings to students, Hull (2024) states that literary texts are receptacles for culture, because the cultural load that a work carries affects the ideas, beliefs and attitudes of those who read it, broadening the world view and improving the readers' capacity for empathy. Therefore, it is understood that literary texts are a portrait of human experiences and are worth exploring in language learning for a greater enjoyment of the target language, to increase grammar and comprehension of texts, as well as bringing fun to learning.

4. How to teach English using short stories

The rise of short stories came at the end of the eighteenth century, along with novels. These kinds of texts are part of the literary genre of prose fiction and they are characterized by being objective, concise and impactful stories. To Klarer (1999), a short story is unique because it can be read in a single sitting, different from a novel, and because of the limited length, the time dimension is unusual, as the events of the short story take place more quickly.

Because of these characteristics, short stories are perfect for teaching English, because as well as holding the student's attention with quick and interesting texts, they offer many benefits for enriching writing, reading, listening and speaking skills of students at all levels of proficiency, as well as motivating them to learn about literary elements, diverse cultures and critical thinking, according to Lazar (1993). Confirming these thoughts, Oster (1989, p. 85) adds:

Short stories told from a single, limited point of view or through the eyes of one character make excellent vehicles for demonstrating the extent to which limited knowledge or an emotional stake in the events colors a character's vision. As students respond to stories and analyze their impressions, they see how their information was filtered through a point of view and limited by it; furthermore, they begin to see how their own experiences, cultures, or values affect their views.

4.1 Short story selection

The first important point to take into consideration when deciding to use short stories in language teaching is choosing the right story to work on with students. According to Hill (1994, p. 15), three factors must be taken into account at this stage: "the needs and abilities of the students, the linguistic and stylistic level of the text and the amount of basic information needed for a true appreciation of the material", as well as other points such as the length of the story, the age, level, interests and motivation of the students.

The success of using the short story in the classroom will depend on matching the needs of the students with the right choice of story. If students are at an advanced level of English, short stories with elaborate language and a more formal vocabulary can be explored. However, for beginners, it is necessary to use stories that are easy to understand and have a simpler vocabulary, as Kaya (2014, p. 42) states: "if it has a single plot, a simple setting and a few characters, it will be easier for the students to read and grasp the main idea".

The importance of choosing the right text according to the students' requirements is also highlighted:

The short stories with archaic, slang, foreign words, and allusions, having sentences imitating the speech of a particular locality or ignorant people or foreigners should be avoided if the text is intended for students below intermediate level. Similarly, very long sentences are difficult for students to understand. As students will not understand these sentences and words, they will get bored and not read the work (Pardede, 2011, pp. 18-19)

Based on these theories, the short story "After Twenty Years," was chosen in this project to be used in the activities of the lesson plans. It is an authentic material, it has all the characteristics described above and can be used with classes at all levels of English proficiency, from beginners to advanced, with simple language. It is an interesting story and easy to understand.

4.2 Developing skills through short stories

According to Pardede (2011), through short stories, teachers can teach the four skills to all levels of language proficiency. This will happen in the production of learning activities such as: text analysis, translation, vocabulary building, discussions on the themes of the short stories, introduction of a new grammar and pronunciation.

The following are some ideas of how teachers can use short stories in each language skill to enrich the lessons.

4.2.1 Writing

Many examples of activities are known for improving writing through short stories, because after reading, interpreting and analyzing any story, students are able to develop creativity in the production of texts. Confirming this theory, Oster (1989) mentions that literary texts help students to write more creatively.

Thus, according to Pardede (2011), teachers can ask students to write essays based on main the theme of the short story they are working on; write a dialog between characters; paraphrase any paragraph; write a summary of the short story in five to seven sentences, highlighting the main character, the setting, the conflict, the climax and the resolution; write a single

sentence on the theme of the story; write a review; write a paragraph about what you like or dislike about the story or write a different ending to the story.

4.2.2 Reading

When it comes to reading, short stories offer students the opportunity to acquire a greater vocabulary, as new words will appear in the texts and they will have to search for their meanings, form and use. In reading activities, Pardede (2011) advises students to use the dictionary to help them learn word definitions, synonyms, verbs, adverbs, participles, nouns and adjectives.

Students can make a list of unknown words so that they do not stop reading and waste time looking up the meaning. Once they have finished reading the story, they will look up the meanings and write them on the list for future reference. In addition to improving vocabulary, reading literary texts enables students to broaden their worldview, making them more critical and therefore more creative, as Pardede (2011, p. 21) states: “[...] 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”.

4.2.3 Speaking and Listening

Speaking and listening skills can be developed and motivated in the classroom by including short stories in teaching, because they allow students to practice reading aloud, improve pronunciation, do role-playing, dramatization, improvisation, reenactment and discussion activities (Pardede, 2011).

For speaking skills, the author proposes that beginners read the short story aloud, each reading a few sentences or paragraphs to practice pronunciation and fluency. For intermediate level students, he suggests telling the story in sections, with each student summarizing a part, to work on the text's connectors. And for advanced level students, Pardede (2011) recommends dividing into groups to discuss and argue about the theme of the short story chosen.

For listening skills, according to Pardede (2011), teachers can read the short story aloud for students to listen to, or for a better experience, play, if available, the recording of the story read by a native English speaker. Through listening, text comprehension activities can be carried out to answer questions about the story, such as: who is the main character? Where/when does the story take place? What is the conflict in the story? How is the conflict resolved?

There are many ways to use short stories in the classroom to enrich students' language learning, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to identify the needs of the class in order to apply the activities correctly. In the following section, positive points will be analyzed in order to use short stories as a tool to teach EFL.

5. The positive points in using short stories to teach English in the classroom

Teachers who use short stories to teach English in the classroom will discover many positive points that this teaching instrument brings to students. Kurdi and Nizam (2022) believe that the advantages of using short stories in EFL teaching are uncountable. According to Erkaya (2005), short stories bring motivational, literary, cultural and higher-order thinking benefits to students. To Khatib (2011), short stories enable students to interpret and analyze texts according to their points of view, experiences and feelings. In addition to reinforcing the four skills, which is already a great advantage, as shown in the previous section through the theories of Pardede (2011), the use of short stories offers other benefits to students, these include motivation, introduction to literary elements, cultural knowledge, teaching moral values and stimulating critical thinking.

5.1 Motivation

The motivation of learners is one of the most important factors in the success of learning a new language. The short stories contribute to this motivational process because they are quick, interesting and easy to read, making them a good ally in language teaching. Erkaya (2005, p. 5) states that, “since short stories usually have a beginning, middle and an end, they encourage students at all levels of language proficiency to continue reading them until the end to find out how the conflict is resolved”.

In other words, short stories stimulate reading. Since most students do not have the habit of reading nowadays, as Zafalon (2010) states, short stories appear to confront this reality, because they are texts that can be read in just one lesson, making students feel enthusiastic about reading something in a new language to the end. As Edgar Allan Poe (1984, p. 571) said, a short story should be as long as it can be read in one sitting! In other words, in one or two lessons, students can read, analyze and write about a short story easily and effectively.

Thus, Vandrick (1997) says that literature encourages students to experience their feelings through short stories. They will feel achievement from reading a whole story, motivating them to seek out more texts to read, improving their reading and, consequently, their other language skills too.

It is understandable then, according to Kurdi and Nizam (2022), that the structure and content of short stories contribute to their successful use in language learning, motivating students to read. This is why Barzani, Meena and Ali (2021) consider literary texts to be one of the factors that can most influence motivation in language teaching and learning.

5.2 Introduction to literary elements

The combination of the five basic literary elements — plot, character, setting, conflict and point of view — in a few paragraphs makes the short story very enjoyable to read and offers a range of possibilities for text interpretation tasks to be developed with the students to promote language advancement Erkaya (2005, p. 43) says:

Instructors can introduce literary elements with short stories. With beginning and low intermediate levels, instructors can teach simple elements, such as character, setting and plot. The same and more complex elements, such as conflict, climax, resolution, etc., can be introduced with more advanced levels.

The questions suggested by the author to formulate exercises using the literary elements of a short story are these:

- Who is the main character of the story?
- Where does the story take place?
- When does the story happen?
- Who is narrating the story?

This approach is perfect for use with beginners and low intermediate students for the reasons they require “very little analysis” (Erkaya, 2005, p. 7). For advanced students, on the other hand, more complex questions about short stories can be developed. To Erkaya (2005, p. 7), “students must be able to use their knowledge of the language to express their ideas. Thus, only students who have reached a high intermediate/advanced level of language proficiency should be introduced to these activities”.

5.3 Cultural knowledge

The definition of culture, by Edward Tylor (1871, p. 1), is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”. Knowing that, short stories, besides being beneficial for language learning, also serve to teach students about culture, because the stories portray human customs through different times and environments. According to Erkaya's findings (2005, pp. 7-8):

Short stories are effective when teaching culture to EFL students. Short stories transmit the culture of the people about whom the stories were written. By learning about the culture, students learn about the past and present, and about people's customs and traditions. Culture teaches students to understand and respect people's differences. When using literary texts, instructors must be aware that the culture of the people (if different from that of the students) for whom the text was written should be studied. As students face a new culture, they become more aware of their own culture. They start comparing their culture to the other culture to see whether they find similarities and/or differences between the two cultures.

For Pereira, Rosa, and Cardoso (2024, p. 20), in addition to literature helping to shape students as human beings, its use in the classroom allows them to learn about different “cultural and socio-historical realities” and develop diverse perspectives on the world. According to Pardede (2011), the advantage of teaching languages using short stories is that they provide cultural information about the target language and engage students in researching and learning about different cultures. So, literary texts can show students different social and cultural contexts, making them aware of the different realities of individuals:

By reading literary works, learners learn to see a world through another's eyes, observing human values and a different kind of living, and discovering others living in very different societies. They will understand and become broadly aware of the social, political, historical, cultural events happening in a certain society. Through literature, learners can deepen their cultural understanding (Pardede, 2011, p. 16)

Finally, according to Carter and Long (1991), literature, here represented by short stories, serves as a tool for teaching culture, allowing students to understand and admire other cultures, societies and ideologies different from their own, as well as fostering personal growth and intellectual development.

5.4 Teaching moral values and critical thinking

The most exciting positive aspect of using short stories to teach languages, according to Erkaya (2005), is the development of critical thinking in students. Reading stories has the power to activate the reader's higher order thinking, principles, moral values and common sense. Duarte (2023) states that teaching a new culture, such as the English language, has the potential to make students interact, participate, and become social and critical beings.

To Young (1996), short stories are excellent mechanisms for this purpose, as they are entertaining and introduce critical thinking issues in an easy-to-remember context. The author emphasizes that children's stories are pioneers in teaching critical thinking. According to Kurdi and Nizam (2022), most short stories have themes that contain some kind of moral value, either explicit or implicit, in which readers get involved and can express opinions or criticisms, and this is natural for human beings (Young, 1996).

The development of these thinking skills in students should be encouraged by teachers, because everyone needs to “make judgements, be decisive, come to conclusions, synthesize information, organize, evaluate, predict, and apply knowledge” (Howie, 1993, as cited in Erkaya, 2005, p. 9). In agreement with these arguments, Pathan (2012) states that short

stories can be the most effective means of teaching cultural and moral ideas, as they narrate values, principles and common sense for centuries, going through generations with moral teachings.

In conclusion, the use of short stories also offers many socio-cultural benefits, as Kirschenbaum (1995, p. 68) states that “storytelling is one of the effective tools for inculcating morality, especially for youngsters, as stories contain powerful images and symbols and operate on both conscious and unconscious levels, conveying intellectual and emotional meaning”.

6. The teaching project

As already stated by Hull (2024), literary texts bring significant linguistic benefits to EFL teaching for students, being useful for improving the four language skills, expanding vocabulary, deepening language comprehension and using language creatively, making learners more confident in communicating, as well as developing critical thinking.

Short stories are chosen for this article because they combine several good characteristics for language teaching, including, according to Klarer (1999), their short length, uniqueness and faster plot development. The students will find it easy to read and thus develop their writing, reading, speaking and listening skills, as reported by Pardede (2011). Short stories help teachers to teach the four skills to all levels of language proficiency. Besides that, as Kurdi and Nizam (2022) point out, there are numerous advantages to using short stories to teach EFL, among them we can enumerate, according to Erkaya (2005), motivational, literary and cultural benefits. Added to these positive points, activities using short stories also allow students to express their experiences and points of view (Khatib, 2011).

The focus of this teaching project is on using short stories to teach EFL in the classroom. Two lesson plans will be presented with different activities designed to develop students' skills, improve vocabulary, and provide tasks to interpret literary elements in text. The activities were created to be taught in private language school, in English classes, for students aged between 20 and 25 years old, proficiency level from lower intermediate to upper intermediate. Each lesson proposed will last for 80 minutes and the short story that will serve as the basis for the activities is “After Twenty Years”.

The short story “After Twenty Years” has the main qualities that a text of this category should have in order to be useful to teach EFL. As Kaya (2014) said, it has an interesting and single plot, a simple setting and a few characters. Written by O. Henry, pseudonym of William Sydney Porter and considered one of the best American short story writers of the turn of the 20th century, “After Twenty Years” is easy to read and has a surprising ending, holding the reader's attention and contributing to a satisfactory understanding of the text. Furthermore, “After Twenty Years” is a story that deals with conflicts about friendship, loyalty, arrogance and professional duty, topics that can be discussed with students in the classroom to stimulate creativity and improve skills.

The first lesson aims to help students develop their reading, listening and speaking skills, through reading comprehension questions to implement literary elements, as well as questions to activate their critical thinking. With this activity, the first lesson culminates in a discussion about the attitude of one of the characters in “After Twenty Years,” whether it was right or wrong from the students' point of view.

The second lesson aims to help students develop their reading and writing skills, as well as increasing their vocabulary, by applying the reading of the short story “After Twenty Years” to create a short text about the arrest of one of the characters, in the format of a newspaper article. With this activity, the second lesson also reviews Simple Past Tense, as the proposed text must be written in this tense, just as it appears in the short story.

7. The lesson plan

The lesson plan developed for this teaching project is inspired by activities created by Ms. Dickson's Class, published on August 27th, 2024, on the website www.msdicksonsclass.com. This project will include two classes, each one taking 80 minutes.

7.1 Context

This project is planned to be done with classes of approximately 12 students, aged between 20 and 25, in private English schools. They must be at the lower to upper intermediate proficiency level of English as a foreign language.

7.2 Materials

The following materials are used for this teaching project: whiteboard, computer, a multimedia projector, Internet, markers, printed reading and writing materials, paper and pen.

7.3 First class

Context: Students who learn English at a private language school.

Level: Lower to upper intermediate.

Target audience: 12.

Target audience age: 20 to 25 years old.

Lesson's theme: The Short Story "After Twenty Years" (working on reading, listening and speaking skills).

Description of the activity

Assumption: Students have already studied the Simple Past Tense and literary elements.

Materials: Computer, projector, whiteboard, printed materials, PowerPoint presentation, markers and pen.

Aims:

This activity is intended to help students to:

- To activate students' prior knowledge of the short story;
- To review the Simple Past Tense and literary elements;
- To integrate reading, listening and speaking skills to practicing through communicative tasks;
- To collect the main information about the short story;

Time: 80 minutes.

7.3.1 Description of the activities for the first class

The first activity consists of a lesson plan designed for teaching English, focusing on reading, listening, and conversation through analysis of the short story "After Twenty Years." The lesson is divided into three main stages: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. The methodology of this 80 minute lesson prioritizes the analysis of literary elements and critical discussion of the plot and characters, encouraging student participation and engagement.

The first stage, the pre-reading, will last 20 minutes and students will use the following materials: computer; projector; whiteboard; slides in a PowerPoint presentation; markers. To begin, the teacher introduces the class by creating a good environment greeting the students. Teacher shows slides summarizing the literary elements that compose a short story, and asks some students if they enjoy reading. So, teacher asks the questions: "Do you like to read? Do you know any short

stories? Which ones? Do you know the “After Twenty Years” short story?. Then, teacher shows the image of short story “After Twenty Years” on the projector and talks a little about the plot.

The next stage, the while-reading, will last 40 minutes and the materials used will be: computer; Internet; projector; printed materials; whiteboard; markers. At that time, teacher divides the students into three groups of four, distributes copies of the short story for them to read. After reading, teacher puts on a YouTube video on the projector to view and listen to the short story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jZrxEds2Mo>). After the video, teacher asks the groups: “Who is the main character of the story? Where does the story take place? When does the story happen? Who is narrating the story?”. The teacher writes the students' answers on the board to check if they agree with them.

In the final stage, the post-reading, lasting 20 minutes, teacher asks groups to discuss what they understood on the short story with the whole class. After this, teacher asks students the questions: “Did policeman Jimmy do the right thing? Did the friendship between the two characters continue after the arrest? What crime might Bob have done? Was there disloyalty between the friends?”. Finally, students answer the questions aloud and discuss their views on the short story to practice speaking.

7.4 Second class

Context: Students who learn English at a private language school.

Level: Lower to upper intermediate.

Target audience: 12.

Target audience age: 20 to 25 years old.

Lesson's theme: The Short Story “After Twenty Years” (working on reading and writing skills).

Description of the activity

Assumption: Students have already studied the Simple Past Tense.

Materials: Whiteboard, printed materials, worksheets, dictionary and markers.

Aims:

This activity is intended to help students to:

1. To build vocabulary about characteristics;
2. To review the Simple Past Tense;
3. To integrate reading and writing skills to practicing through communicative tasks;
4. To stimulate students' creativity by creating a newspaper article about a short story;

Time: 80 minutes.

7.4.1 Description of the activities for the second class

The second lesson describes activities focused mainly on reading and writing skills, using the same short story, “After Twenty Years,” by O. Henry. The lesson is also divided into three main stages: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. The lesson lasts a total of 80 minutes and seeks to deepen understanding of the text and practice creative writing. The objective of the lesson is to analyze the characters, describing their characteristics, and produce a written text, reinforcing the use of the simple past tense.

The pre-reading will last 20 minutes and the materials used by the teacher will be the whiteboard and markers. First, teacher introduces the class by creating a good environment greeting the students. Teacher begins the lesson asking students if they remember the title of the short story read in the previous lesson and what their memories of the story are. Then, teacher

summarizes the short story read and asks students the question: What happened 20 years later? Who was arrested? Where? By whom? How? Why? The teacher writes students' answers on the board.

In the next stage, while-reading, the class time will be 35 minutes. The materials used in class will be printed materials, markers, worksheets, and dictionary. The teacher asks students to read the short story again, this time marking the described characteristics of the characters. Teacher says that each students will read a few paragraphs of the short story aloud. Next, teacher gives students a worksheet to answer some questions about the story. So, students can consult the dictionary if they want and after this moment, teacher corrects the activity.

The post-reading, the final stage, will last 25 minutes and teacher will use the whiteboard and markers. Now, teacher returns to the questions answered in the pre-activity, written on the board. Teacher asks students write a creative paragraph about the arrest of the suspect, like a newspaper report, using the Simple Past and the characteristics of the characters present in the short story. And finally, teacher reminds that the paragraph should contain a title, like a newspaper headline.

8. Final Considerations

This article aimed to use the short story "After Twenty Years," by O. Henry, to teach EFL through a lesson plan that developed two activities, in order to combine language skills to enhance students' learning and revive literature in the classrooms.

A bibliographical survey was carried out to support the article and explain the relevant issues, which were chosen to encourage teachers to return to using short stories in class, thus enriching students' learning. Even knowing the real difficulties that teaching-learning passes in schools, such as demotivation, lack of time, advancement of technologies, this article sought to highlight the good that literature causes in both grammatical and texts comprehension besides improving skills.

The article discussed the importance of working with literary texts to teach EFL, specifically short stories, proposing how they can be used in lessons, from the choice of the short story, motivated by the aim of the lesson and the target audience, to examples of specific tasks for each skill: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

In addition to how to use short stories in language teaching, the article showed that there are numerous benefits to this teaching strategy, highlighting student motivation, the study of literary elements, the teaching of culture and critical thinking.

And to put into practice all the theories studied and shown throughout the article, this teaching project brought a lesson plan to develop the students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, through two lessons, designed to be developed in private language schools, in 80 minutes, for adults aged 20 to 25 years old, as seen in Table 1 and Table 2.

Therefore, this teaching project will be of great use to the school community, helping to make students want to read again because the stories are brief, which will help them to improve their English proficiency, and teachers will have the opportunity to diversify their classes, making them more fun and useful, as well as stimulating reading literary texts.

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