การใช้นิทานภาษาอังกฤษในห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ

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บทคัดย่อ

ภาษาอังกฤษทวีความสำคัญมากขึ้นเรื่อย ๆ ใน
ปัจจุบัน ชาวต่างชาติที่ไม่ได้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษา
แม่จึงถูกผลักดันให้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษ แต่ผู้ที่เรียน
ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศจำนวนมากก็
ยังใช้ภาษาไม่ถูกต้องและเหมาะสม อีกทั้งยังขาดแรง
จูงใจในการเรียน ดังนั้น เพื่อเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพในการ
เรียนการสอนภาษาและสร้างแรงจูงใจแก่ผู้เรียน นิทาน
ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นหนึ่งในสื่อการสอนในห้องเรียนภาษา
อังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศที่เหมาะสมและ
น่าสนใจ บทความนี้จะนำเสนอข้อมูลในภาพรวมของ
นิทานรวมทั้งอภิปรายข้อดีของการใช้นิทานเป็นสื่อ
การสอน และเสนอแนวทางในการเลือกและใช้นิทาน
ในห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ
อีกด้วย

คำสำคัญ: นิทานภาษาอังกฤษ, สื่อการสอน, ห้องเรียน
ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ

Using English Tales in EFL Classrooms |

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Abstract

A number of non-native English learners are compelled to study English since it has become more and more important today. Many of them attend English classes at various educational institutions, but EFL learners still incorrectly and inappropriately use the language and lack learning motivation. To enhance effectiveness of language pedagogy and generate motivation among learners, English tales can be one of the appropriate classroom materials in EFL classes. This article will present an overview of tales and discuss the advantages in using tales as teaching resource. It also provides some guidance on selecting and using tales in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: EFL classrooms, English tales, Materials

Introduction

Selecting classroom materials for teaching EFL learners is not easy and requires careful consideration since they play a significant role in the success of language pedagogy. Good instructional materials should arouse students' interest and develop learners' language skills. Additionally, to deal with the difficulties of language misuse, EFL teachers should also consider the authenticity of the language used in the selected materials (Harmer, 2001). As a result, English tales can be one of the suitable alternatives that meet these characteristics as tales are rich and authentic materials that provide motivation and enthusiasm among learners.

According to Kim (2003) and Lee & Liu (2011), tales are enjoyable and can create positive attitudes towards foreign language and language learning. They can also be a source for a wide range of language activities which can be used for all skill practice (Wijaya & Tedjaatmadja, 2009; Keshavarzi, 2012). Consequently, English tales should be employed in EFL classrooms.

This article aims to provide the readers with 1) types of tales; 2) the benefits of using tales in the classrooms; and 3) the ways of selecting and employing tales in English language instruction.

Types of Tales

A tale is an entertaining story that reflects local beliefs, values, folklores, and customs (Suthisak, 2003; Odabasi, Karakus & Murat, 2012), so there may be several versions of the story with the same themes that might be told or written differently in diverse cultures. Tales can be mainly classified into five categories, namely fairy tale,

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myth, animal tale, jest tale, and legend.

Fairy tale or a tale of magic is an old traditional story that includes values and beliefs of ancient people (Sirisunthorn, 1996, cited in Sudjit, 2002; Suthisak, 2003). Outstanding features of this kind of tales are its length and more complicated story. The characters usually have power or magic to create both good and bad things.

Myth is a story that relates to people's belief and religion (Sudjit, 2002). The characters are mostly gods, goddesses, kings and queens. The story concerns the power of the gods and goddesses and natural phenomenon created by them (Suthisak, 2003).

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Animal tale or fable mostly consists of the animal characters that can talk or communicate to each other like humans. However, the animal tale and the fable are slightly different in the focus of the story. The fable aims to provide the readers with morals and ethics through the animal characters' actions or behaviors whereas the focus of the animal tale is problem solving strategies, tricks, and intelligence that animal characters use in the stories (Suthisak, 2003).

Jest tale or humorous tale is created for the readers' amusement. This kind of tale has a simple plot and short content (Suthisak, 2003). It concerns impossible events such as stories of unusual journeys or adventures, gambling, and tricks (Sirisunthorn, 1996, cited in Sudjit, 2002).

Legend or chronicle tale is a true story of the past, with clearly identified time and setting in the history. (Suthisak, 2003) Legends can be divided into several categories, including explanatory, ghost, and hero tale. The classification depends on the theme of the story (Sirisunthorn, 1996, cited in Sudjit, 2002).

Advantages of Using Tales in EFL Classes

In EFL classrooms, tales have advantages in several areas including language improvement, integrated skill instruction, cultural learning, easy access, and learning interest arousal. The details of the advantages are described below.

Regarding language improvement, learners can develop their linguistic knowledge through the use of simple and rhythmic language as well as repetitive and predictable structures and grammar (Taylor, 2000; Cooper & Collins, 1992; Cullinan & Galda, 1994; Hill, 1999; Kowalski, 2002; Mallan, 1992; Nodelman, 1996, cited in Wu, 2008; Puspani, 2011). These common characteristics can be a clue for better reading comprehension of learners and improve their vocabulary recollection as well as thinking skills (Taylor, 2000; Kowalski, 2002, cited in Wu, 2008). While reading tales, learners can practice predicting the story and asking questions to themselves about what they have read. Both strategies help improve reading skill especially reading comprehension and help encourage students to read actively (Wongphangamol, 2005). The repetition and predictability of language in tales also makes it appropriate materials for young or adult EFL learners whose language proficiency is at a lower level (Puspani, 2011) since they can learn and remember the sentence structures.

Besides, vocabulary used in tales are concrete and tangible (Taylor, 2000), so non-native English students are able to understand the story and remember sentence patterns as well as new vocabulary. Nevertheless, some tales are long and use more complicated language, so they can also be employed for teaching higher proficiency EFL learners.

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Moreover, tales are rich materials that can be used for various pedagogical purposes (Wilhelm, 1999). Tales are also proper materials for teaching integrated skills (Wu, 2008). Through the use of tales, students can practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing simultaneously in one lesson. For example, students can learn strategies to observe language usage, grammar, and organization of the stories. Several tales have common and predictable organizations. This provides an opportunity for teachers and students to teach and practice a number of reading or listening strategies (Sampson, 2009) such as previewing or predicting strategies. Moreover, when reading or listening to a story, students can realize the function of the words and the relationship between context and the words' meaning (Lee & Liu, 2011). They can guess the meaning of vocabulary and identify its part of speech from the surrounding sentences.

Tales can also enhance learners' understanding of norms, ways of life, attitudes, beliefs as well as values of the target group of people as they include cultural aspects (Odabasi et al., 2012). With cultural knowledge, non-native English students can develop necessary skills for cross-cultural communication. For instance, tales can raise their awareness of cultural diversity, and they can learn and understand how to deal with people from different cultures through tales (Brock, 1999; Hanlon, 1999; Davidheiser, 2007).

Furthermore, tales are accessed easily on the Internet, which currently becomes one of the major sources of information and offers language teachers an opportunity to access teaching materials more easily (Cai, 2012). Teachers can find a collection of tales not only in book stores and libraries, but also on a variety of websites. According

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to Sampson (2009), the Internet provides a bountiful supply and serves as a rich source of tales.

Finally, tales motivate students to learn more and pay more attention in class as the stories are enjoyable and inspire the readers' imagination. According to Keshavarzi (2012), when reading the literary text, the students will be interested in the story and continue reading it to find out what is going to happen. Meanwhile, they will feel "close to the characters and share their emotional responses" (p.557). Coady (1979, cited in Brock, 1990) also suggested that interesting stories will motivate students to read though the language although the text is difficult. Therefore, tales should be used as teaching materials because they are sources of motivation (Keshavarzi, 2012).

Selection of Tales

Although using tales in EFL classes has many benefits, there can also be a problem regarding attitudes of some students who may believe that tales are suitable only for children, and the story does not relate to the real world (Hanlon, 1999). Consequently, it is vital to use appropriate tales in EFL classrooms.

When choosing tales, teachers need to consider four main criteria which include language level, course objectives, translated version of tales, and background knowledge of students.

The first criterion is language level. The language used in the selected tales should not be too difficult but challenging (Wilhelm, 1999). Although language used in tales is not very complicated, there is also a language level based on the length and linguistic complexity of the story. Thus, when choosing the tale as classroom material,

teachers should also consider language proficiency level and age of students. For instance, tales classified in easy level should be used with beginners or young students, while more difficult ones for higher proficiency learners.

The second criterion is objectives of the course and lesson. EFL teachers should establish the objectives of the lesson and select the tale related to the course and lesson purposes such as to teach grammar rules, vocabulary, culture, and other language skills indicated in the course outline.

The third criterion is the translated version of tales. If the selected tales do not belong to English-speaking countries, teachers should select a good translated version. There are a wide variety of tale versions. Some versions are translated by those who do not have good English skills or have insufficient cultural background. These translators may have wrong interpretation, use wrong grammar, or use inappropriate vocabulary. These mistakes can cause misunderstanding and confusion to the readers (Wijaya & Tedjaatmadja, 2009). Therefore, teachers should read many versions of tales and choose a good translated one or the one with no linguistic mistake.

The last criterion is background knowledge of students. Background knowledge has a strong influence on reading comprehension. If the readers do not have knowledge about the text or cannot associate the new information with what they have already known, they are not able to understand the text (Brock, 1990; Nuttal 2000). Moreover, there are studies concerning reading comprehension which indicate that "reading comprehension was significantly better when students read a text about culturally familiar topic"

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(Steffensen et al, 1979; Johnson, 1981 cited Brock, 1990, p. 22). Accordingly, teachers should begin with using tales that are in similar or well-known culture to teach students.

How to Use Tales in Classroom Activity Management / Organization

In EFL class, tales can be used to enhance listening and reading skills, so the activities can be divided into three stages: pre-reading/listening, while-reading/listening, and post-reading/listening. The details of activities in each stage are as follows:

1. Pre-reading/listening Stage

Before reading or listening to the tales, teachers should ask students to do some pre-task activities because they will help them understand the story more easily and relate new information to their prior knowledge (Sampson, 2009). To prepare the students for reading or listening to the tales can be done through several activities as follows:

1.1 Reading Activities

Teachers might begin with explaining some ideas of the story. Chen & Graves (1995, cited in Sampson, 2009) also discover that a preview or a short explanation that activates background knowledge will increase reading or listening comprehension of students. However, the preview should be conveyed in simple language so that students can understand it.

1.2 Speaking Activities

Alternatively, instead of explaining, teachers can encourage students to think and activate their prior knowledge of the culture, grammar, or vocabulary used in the tales by asking questions. The teachers can also use pictures or other tools as prompts to elicit ideas,

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words, or expressions relevant to the language found in the tale. Then, ask them to predict the story (Sudjit, 2002; Sampson, 2009).

1.3 Grammar and Vocabulary Activities

In case of low proficiency students, teachers may provide them with a list of new vocabulary, meaning, and sentence structures they will find when reading or listening to tales and teach them in advance. However, teachers should be more careful because pre-teaching vocabulary may not help improve their receptive skills (Field, 1998b, cited in Harmer, 2001) and minimize their chance of using reading or listening strategies. In other words, guessing meaning of an unknown word is one of the important reading and listening skills. If all unknown words are pre-taught, the learners will not take advantage of the context in guessing the word meaning. Therefore, to pre-teach vocabulary or not depends on the lesson or teaching objective.

2. While- reading/listening Stage

The aims of the activities during reading or listening to tales are to practice using strategies and to encourage students to read and listen actively. Therefore, in this stage, teachers play an important role in facilitating and supporting students to use strategies for their better comprehension (Grabe 2004, cited in Sampson 2009). The activities that could be done in this stage are suggested below.

2.1 Reading Activities

To improve and practice reading skills, teachers should encourage students to use reading strategies that facilitate their understanding of the text. Those strategies include skimming or reading for main idea, scanning or reading for specific information, guessing meaning of unknown words from the context and affixes, asking

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questions about what they read, and analyzing structure of the tales (Nuttal, 2000; Wongphangamol, 2005; Sampson, 2009).

2.2 Listening Activities

Like reading skill, while listening to the tales, students should be encouraged to use listening strategies including listening for gist, listening for details, using context to guess meaning of unknown words, asking questions about what they listened, and analyzing structure of the tales (Sampson, 2009).

2.3 Writing Activities

Apart from reading and listening activities, if the tale is long, teachers can get students practice writing skill. For example, teachers can assign the students to take note while reading/listening to tales or write a summary after reading each section. This way will encourage them to pay attention to what they read or hear, help them remember the stories, and improve their understanding.

3. Post-reading/listening Stage

Activities after reading or listening to tales are very important because they serve two instructional purposes. The first one is to check the students' reading or listening comprehension, and the other one is to encourage students to apply their experience and knowledge gained from reading or listening to the tales in order to practice English skills (Sudjit, 2002). Although tales are mostly used for receptive skill practice, they can also be used for developing speaking and writing skills, and those skills can be practiced in this stage. The recommended activities when using tales in EFL classrooms are discussed below.

3.1 Listening and Speaking Activities

There are many levels of speaking tasks used as post-stage

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activities. The easiest speaking activity is to ask learners to retell the story in their own words (Sampson, 2009). This activity can be done individually, in pairs, in small groups, or the whole class depending on the students' confidence and language proficiency. It helps develop both speaking and summarizing skills of learners, and it is suitable for all ages and levels of proficiency.

Another interesting speaking activity is role play, which is also appropriate for all ages and language proficiency levels of students and can be done in group (Sampson, 2009). For beginners, teachers may provide students with a script and allow them to memorize it before acting out. Or else, teachers can let them create a script of the stories they have read. For advanced students, teachers might assign them to search for their own tales and let them write scripts for these stories. Students should attempt to use vocabulary and sentence structures introduced in the lessons. After the role play, teachers may provide them with a feedback or allow audiences to ask questions and express their opinions about the role play (Sampson, 2009). In this way, teachers can encourage students to listen actively and carefully.

The group discussion is the activity which is suitable for intermediate or higher- leveled students who will share opinions about the culture, ethics or moral values, characters, settings, and other ideas about the stories. If the class consists of students from different cultures, the discussion may concern a comparison of similarities and differences between the culture reflected in the tales and their own cultures. For intermediate level, a topic of discussion might be lighter and easier; for example, talking about their favorite tales, characters,

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and morals (Ilieva, n.d.).

3.2 Writing Activities

Teachers can engage students in various activities to improve their writing skills. For example, teachers can assign them to write a summary of the story, which is an essential skill for all students. Summarizing also helps enhance their reading comprehension. Another writing activity is writing a response or an opinion paragraph about the stories which improve not only writing skills but also critical thinking skills because students are required to give reasons or examples to support their ideas (Cottrell, 2005). Moreover, responses or opinion papers are very significant in academic writing (Blanchard & Root, 2004 p.152). Content of the response may be what they learn from the story and the feeling they have for each character. The length of the response depends on course objectives and students' proficiency levels. Nevertheless, teachers can combine both summarizing and writing opinion paragraph together.

For students from different cultures with high proficiency level of English, teachers can assign them to write a tale from their own culture and share it with others. Otherwise, students may be assigned to write about their culture and compare similarities and differences between their culture and the culture that appears in the story.

3.3 Grammar and Vocabulary Activities

Language teachers can employ inductive method of teaching by using tales as pre-teaching materials. According to Keshavarzi (2012), teaching English based on use and function-focus is very important, and tales can be used in addressing grammar in context (Taylor, 2000). After students read and listen to the story, teachers

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can bring out distinctive grammar rules and new vocabulary which appeared in the tale. They can show the real use of the grammar or vocabulary from the context as examples and provide students with exercises to practice. The type of exercise depends on grammar rules, activity objectives, the age of students, and their levels of language proficiency.

Conclusion

Teaching materials are vital for language instruction since they help improve students' knowledge and generate learning motivation. Tales are one of the effective authentic materials for EFL learners. They help develop both linguistic and cultural knowledge of students and motivate their language acquisition. They are also easily accessible materials that can be used for teaching integrated skills. However, teachers should select the appropriate tales and class activities by considering students and the teaching objectives.

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