# From a Cognitive View: Vocabulary Teaching through Short Stories as Content in EFL Classrooms

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## 摘 要

字彙不能單獨使用：在没有内容烘托，上下文配合的情況下不能真正突顯其豐富的字義。雖然認知心裡學家將字彙與文法列入事實性或概念性的知識記憶系統，而聽、說、讀、寫與人溝通所需的技巧和有利於學習的策略知識則被歸類爲程序性知識。但在英語教學上，可增進學生閱讀能力的字彙訓練，需要靠事實性知識系統與程序性知識系統的整合，方能讓死記的單字被學生活用出來。英語教師在課堂上，除了提供一般性的語言知識外，也必須注意到教材的内容與教學的方法是否能激發學生的學習動機，並促成其持久的學習動力。本篇報告除了引文說明認知心理學對英語教學的影響外，也嘗試介紹Linda Gajdusek的英語短篇小說教學法，以補充認知心理學觀點下的字彙訓練。期望老師與學生，學生與學生之間，能透過文學作品的欣賞與研究，讓彼此的想法、感情與經驗有交流與互動的機會，進而幫助學生在成功的情境教學之中，其人格能達潛移默化之效。如此一來，學生所學到的英文單字才能被賦予完全的意義。

### Introduction

In the past decade, a great deal of attention has been paid to "communicative" language teaching. The late H. H. Stern (1981) identified and discussed two major, and largely unreconciled versions of the dominant language teaching: One was the linguistics approach and the other was the psychology and pedagogy approach. The former derived from new kinds of linguistic analyses--not analyses based on linguistic forms like phonemes, morphemes, and syntactic structures but analyses based on such semantic elements as notions and functions and particular speech acts. The latter

derived not from any kind of linguistic analysis but from studies of learners and the language-learning process.

Content-based instruction (CBI) is clearly a descendant of the psychology and pedagogy approach, in the sense that it consciously rejects the common sense notion that the content of a language course should be language. A basic premise of CBI is that people do not learn languages, then use them, but that people learn languages by using them. However, the content-based instruction has a scope of syllabus design with a three-dimensional concern with language form, language function, and the factual/conceptual content of such courses.

Increasingly, universities in the U.S.A. are establishing content- and theme-based ESL curricular. In response to this trend, I try to focus this report on the feasibility of vocabulary acquisition through short stories as content in the EFL classroom. As most EFL teachers know, each item of vocabulary has its own meanings and forms. To understand a word fully, a learner first must know not only what it refers to, but also where the boundaries are that separate it from words with related meanings. The learner's recognition of the boundaries can be informed by an awareness of polysemy, homonymy, and synonymy. Second, a learner should be informed that an item of vocabulary may cover attitudinal and emotional factors. These are often referred to as connotations. Some items intrinsicly have positive or negative connotations. Some vary in affective meanings depending on the speaker's attitude or the situation. And some lexical items have socio-cultural associations. Third, a learner should be instructed such terms as style (e.g. slang, informal, neutral, formal, humorous, ironic, poetic, literary, etc.), registers (the language of medicine, education, law, computers, etc.), and dialect (American English,

British English, etc.). In addition, some multi-word verbs, idioms and collocations should be included in the acquisition process of vocabulary items. But, the most important for students to know is that the meaning of a word can only be understood and learned in terms of its relationship with other words in the language.

Lately, we have used textbook dialogues and informational short articles to present vocabulary and grammar to junior college students. However, the discrete-point teaching , "correctness" in grammatical form, and repetition of a range of graded structures and restricted lexis bring adult mature learners to boredom. The structural approaches are likely to restrict their impetus to devoted learning. I do not mean, here, that students do not need this kind of bottom-up processing of language learning, but this, actually, is only one among several ways to approach a text. We also want to teach our students habits of inquiry and speculation, critical reasoning, and the conscious testing of inferences or hypotheses.

With time constraints in class, I use some contemporary short stories such as Ernest Hemingway's "A Day's Wait", and O. Henry's "The Gift of Magi", etc. in my syllabus. Short story writers like them are interesting to work with in EFL because their prose style makes especially strong demands on the reader to read carefully and validate inferences. Thus, a strategy training for guessing from the context to expand their range of meaningful vocaulary will be realized. Further, my specific goal in working with short stories is to bring my students to a favorable language learning situation which will help them to learn English with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their minds; and we can exploit this reader attitude (willingness and perseverance) to teach techniques of personal exploration and involvement with the text. These

techniques can then be transferred to encourage dialogue, self-expression, and problem-sloving -- in short, highly communicative EFL classes.

## I. Language Learning as a Cognitive Process

Anderson's (1980) three stages of skill acquisition (cognitive, associative, and autonomous) have important implications both for understanding the process of second language acquisition and for developing instructional approaches. During the cognitive stage, the second language learners engage in conscious mental activity in order to find meaning in the language. In the second, or associative, stage of skill learning, learners begin to develop sufficient familiarity with the knowledge acquired in the first stage so that it can be used procedurally, not-yet-accurately, though. When learners reach the third stage of language learning, they are able to process language autonomously, or without reference to the underlying rules. In other words, their performance in the language is much the same as that of a native speaker.

### 1.1 Declarative Knowledge and Proceduralized Knowledge

Declarative knowledge is a special type of information in long-term memory that consists of knowledge about the facts and things that we know. This type of information is stored in terms of propositions, schemata, and propositional networks. It may also be stored in terms of isolated pieces of information, temporal strings, and images.

Individuals make use of two types of declarative knowledge to identify the meaning of propositions: real world knowledge and linguistic knowledge (Richards, 1983). Real world knowledge, or

facts, experiences, and impressions concerning a topic, is used to elaborate on new information and give it greater meaning. The more additional processing one does that results in "related, or redundant propositions, the better will be memory for the material processed" (Reder, 1980). Two special types of declarative knowledge are scripts, or special schemata consisting of situation-specific knowledge about the goals, participants, and procedures in real-life situations; and story grammars, or schemata representing the discourse organization of fables, stories, and narratives. These schemata enable the person attempting to comprehend a passage to anticipate what will occur next, to predict conclusions, and to infer meaning where portions of the text are imperfectly understood. Individuals who make use of real world schematic knowledge to develop expectations of text meaning are using top-down processing (Howard, 1985). They are drawing upon information in memory or upon an analysis of meaning-based contextual features of the text to project additional meanings.

Linguistic knowledge may also be stored as schemata or propositions, but the information stored consists of a lexicon of word meanings and a body of grammatical or syntactic rules. Individuals who analyze each individual word for its meanings or grammatical characteristics and then accumulate meanings to form propositions are using bottom-up processing (Howard, 1985). This type of processing leads to three types of inefficiency. First, the meaning of any word often depends on the context in which it is used. An individual attempting to comprehend either written or aural text would need to process any word more than once if it was found later not to bear the meaning originally determined, which seems more likely to occur if each word is analyzed in isolation of its context. A second type of inefficiency is that lexical access

will be faster if the context can be used to narrow the range of possible meanings that must be explored in long-term memory. That is, the route through memory pathways to the specific word meaning will be quicker if the context is provided (Gagne, 1985). And third, bottom-up processing, or processing words without using context to project additional meanings, can be expected to have inefficiency since individuals who do make predictions about text meanings tend to have greater comprehension (Palincsar and Brown, 1984).

While procedural knowledge consists of the things that we know how to do. It underlies the execution of all complex cognitive skills. Procedural knowledge is stored in long-term memory and is represented internally in terms of production systems. Procedural knowledge includes mental activities such as problem solving, language reception and production, and using learning strategies.

A cognitive theory of skill acquisition would predict that aspects of the language that are at the first or cognitive stage of skill acquisition and are therefore represented by declarative knowledge would be forgotten first, whereas those aspects of the language that have become automatic or proceduralized would be retained. The theory also predicts that retrieval of words from long-term-memory depends on depth of processing (Craik & Tulving,1975), or the extent to which words have been applied in a number of semantic or syntactic contexts.

Therefore, the proceduralization of knowledge through tuning and the modification of declarative knowledge through its interaction with procedural knowledge are very important. It is the interaction between declarative and procedural knowledge that produces the kind of transformation (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). McLaughlin (1987a) examining the relationship of cognitive theory

to lexical retrieval finds the more proficient EFL learners use semantic encoding, while less proficient EFL learners use acoustic (phonemic) encoding. And for the more proficient EFL learners the retrieval mechanisms in long-term memory are based on connections established for word meanings and only after repeated practice of meaningful tasks do the retrieval mechanisms become automatic.

**1.2 Language Comprehension**

In cognitive theory, language comprehension is generally viewed as consisting of active and complex processes that applies equally to listening or to reading (Anderson, 1985; Byrnes, 1984; Howard, 1985; Richards, 1983). Anderson differentiates comprehension into three interrelated processes: perceptual processing (the retention of portions of a new text in short-term memory so that they can be processed for meaning), parsing (the construction of meaning-based representation of new information), and utilization (the process of relating a mental representation of a text to declarative information stored in long-term memory). The third process, utilization is referred to as "elaboration" in other descriptions of the reading process.

In learning vocabulary, Anderson (1980) notes that verbal-imagery linkages may be as useful as the keyword method. He (1985) also reports evidence indicating the method of loci, a visual mnemonic device used to remember unconnected verbal materials. The method of loci is used by imagining a fixed path through a familiar area (e.g., home to school) and imagining that the items to be remembered (e.g., vocabulary words) are interacting with well-known fixed objects along the path. A vocabulary word such as "biscuit" might be associated with a neighbor's house and the neighbor would be imagined eating the biscuit.

Inferencing meanings of unfamiliar words from context has rich

possibilities in comprehension tasks (Sternberg, 1985). Sternberg suggests that, in addition to the usual linguistic cues, there are a variety of cues in a text that individuals can use to infer meanings of words in context, such as classifications, attributes, causal relations, or temporal or spatial relations. The learner should weigh the importance of the work for overall text comprehension before applying the cues, selectively combine information from the cues to derive the definition, and compare the definition in its context with existing knowledge for related words or concepts. Ames (1966) also suggests thirteen items of sources of clues in meaningful texts; they are modifying phrases or clauses, words connected or in series, preposition clues, non-restrictive clauses or appositive phrases, definition or description, comparison or contrast, synonym, tone, setting and mood, referral, main idea-details, question-answer, and cause-effect.

In addition, in Anderson's discussion of elaboration with meaningful texts, elaborated memory structures are powerful aids to both memory tasks and reading comprehension passages. Elaborated memory structures influence through spreading activation, and the influence may occur by: (1) redirecting activation away from interfering paths and toward paths which lead to the target concept; (2) spreading activation toward concepts that are part of the study context; and (3) enabling a reconstruction of the original text through inferences based on information available at the time of recall. That is, individuals can enhance memory for concepts if they increase the number of related ideas that are present at the time of study or increase the number of related ideas that are present at the time of recall. Either approach will work, and each will contribute even further to recall if the

related ideas are part of a schema constructed out of prior knowledge through which a broader range of elaborations is available. So, how to successfully activate learners' prior knowledge and strategies either for the perceived language task or the context is essential to their comprehension and retention of information. Anderson indicates clearly in his discussion of elaboration that individuals can be encouraged successfully to elaborate on meanings to enhance memory with meaningful information. There are a variety of elaborations, including sentences, images, analogies, implications, relationships, and paraphrases.

However, elaborations may not always be possible. Levin (1982) points out that learners may not be able to formulate meaningful elaborations from expository texts when the materials are unfamiliar, highly complex, or otherwise difficult to remember. Mnemonic devices might be preferable for storage and retrieval with this type of information. Additionally, one could rely upon grouping as a strategy to begin the process of building schemata that will assist later in forming meaningful elaborations.

1.3 Language Production

Language production is seen in cognitive theory as an active and meaning-based process that applies to both speaking and writing. Anderson (1985) divedes language production into three stages: construction, transformation and execution. The first two stages have been described in terms of setting goals and searching memory for information, then using production systems to generate language in phrases or constituents, much like parsing in language comprehension.

In construction, the speaker or writer uses various types of knowledge, understanding of the audience, and sociolinguistic

rules. Discourse knowledge involves the ability to call up various types of schemata, such as story grammar if the language to be generated is a narrative, or event scripts if the language will be used to participate in a sequence of habitual actions, such as a service encounter in which a purchase is made. In drawing upon knowledge of the audience, the speaker or writer must assess what the audience's prior knowledge of the topic is likely to be, and then structure the information to be produced accordingly.

In transformation, the second stage of language production,the speaker or writer who has decided what to say must convert the information into meaningful sentences. In writing, the transformation stage has been termed translation (Flower and Hayes, 1980; Gagne, 1985). Translation refers here to converting intentions or plans into a mental representation rather than to rendering equivalent meanings between one language and another, as translation is generally thought of in second language acquisition. In speaking, the speaker selects the meaning for each constituent, specifies its basic syntactic structure, selects first the content and then the function words and affixes, and finally identifies the phonetic realization of the constituent to be communicated.

Therefore, strategies taught for various oral activities include elaboration of prior knowledge, working cooperatively in pairs and groups, asking questions to increase comprehension and using oragnizational planning, etc. As for strategies taught for writing, organizational planning, note taking and sharing written products during cooperative activities, etc. are included for learners to practice writing reports as a sequential task to oral activities.

## II. Motivation and Learning Strategy Training

The effect of student characteristics on instruction in learning strategies cannot be overemphasized. Characteristics such as motivation, aptitude or effectiveness as learner, age, sex, prior education and cultural background, and learning style may play an important role in the receptiveness of students to learning strategy training and in their ability to acquire new learning strategies.

Motivation is probably the most important characteristic that students bring to a learning task. Motivation, or the will to learn, can be considered a component of metacognition insofar as it plays a self-regulatory role in learning (Jones et al. 1987). Students who have experienced success in learning have developed confidence in their own ability to learn. Therefore, a major objective of strategy training should be to change students' attitudes about their own abilities by "teaching them that their failures can be attributed to the lack of effective strategies rather than to the lack of ability or to laziness" (Jones et al. 1987).

### 2.1 Internal Events

In the behavioristic view the initiating stimulus directly causes the response, whereas in the cognitive it activates a variety of internal events, which in turn result in a response. Some types of internal events that seem to play an important role in motivation include (1) conflicting thoughts or uncertainty, (2) causal attributions, and (3) success expectations (Gangne, 1985).

Berlyne (1960) distinguishes between perceptual and epistemic curiosity. Perceptual curiosity is caused by novel, incongruous,

surprising, or complex sensory stimuli. Epistemic curiosity, the form most clearly related to cognition, is caused by "discrepant thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes", which lead to increased arousal. And the increased arousal leads to exploratory behavior directed at resolving the discrepancy and thus reducing arousal. Therefore, what techniques can a teacher use to create cognitive conflict? Setting up debates on political issues in social science classes should create uncertainty about what position is the best. In English literature one might create uncertainty by having different students propose interpretations of symbolic stories, thus raising questions about which interpretation is the best. This should motivate students to defend their interpretations with specific details and examples. However, curiosity-producing techniques are effective only when they generate an optimal arousal level. For example, if a student is very anxious (aroused) about performance in front of a group, then a question that produces conceptual conflict would increase this student's arousal level to a nonproductive point.

Causal attributions (within achievement situations) are the explanations people give for why they or others achieved success or failed to achieve it. Success expectations are people's subjective estimates of their chances of succeeding at a given task. Both of these classes of thought have been studied by Weiner (1979, 1980) as he has developed a theory of motivation called attribution theory. Attribution theory, like curiosity theory, gives thought a central role in motivation. However, unlike curiosity theory (in which the important dimension is the amount of uncertainty produced by various thoughts, independent of their content), in attribution theory the content of thoughts is important. Only thoughts that have to do with causal attributions and success expectations are

relevant.

Weiner (1979) postulates that within achievement situations people tend to attribute their failure or success to one of four broad classes of cause: their ability, their luck, their effort, or the difficulty of the task. These attributions in turn determine people's feelings about themselves, their predictions of success, and the probability that they will try harder or less hard at the task in the future. For example, if a person attributes her failure to something that she can control (e.g., effort) then she will feel guilt, will predict that she can suceed in the future if she exerts more effort, and, in fact, will exert more effort in the future. On the other hand, when someone attributes his failure to low ability, he will feel depressed, he will predict that he will fail again, and he will use less effort in the future. Similarly, if people attribute a failure to bad luck, they are likely to keep trying because things could change, but if they attribute failure to task difficulty, they are likely to give up when they do not think task difficulty will change. Thus, attributions are said to affect (1) expectations of success, (2) emotional (affective) reactions, and (3) persistence at achievement-related tasks.

## 2.2 Instructional Implications

Several studies suggest that students can learn to change their attributions and that changes in attributions are paralleled by changes in persistence (Andrews and Debus, 1978). Teachers who attempt to change student attributions must be both careful and patient. Care is needed to select tasks at which the student can succeed with effort. Folllowing the behavioristic principle of shaping, it may be better to start with tasks that require only a small (but perceptible) amount of effort and then , as the student shows a greater willingness to exert effort, increase the amount

needed for success. If the teacher selects tasks that require no effort and then attributes the student's success to effort, the teacher will lose credibility.

There is growing evidence that competitive goals cause students to be more ability-focused in their causal attributions whereas individualistic goals cause them to be more effort-focused (C. Ames, 1984a). Thus, teachers may be able to encourage both effort attributions and facilitative self-instructions by forcing students on individual goals and self-improvement. In addition, extensive research on cooperative learning indicates that it is effective in increasing achievement on school tasks as well as fostering positive attitudes of students toward themselves and each other (Slavin, 1980). The extension of cooperative learning strategies to the EFL language classroom has been advocated as a way of achieving these same benefits for EFL learners, with the additional benefit of increasing opportunities for meaningful language practice (Chamot and O'Malley, 1987; Kagan, 1988).

## III. Vocabulary and Reading

### 3.1 The Use of Authentic Materials

The use of authentic materials is promoted for both cognitive and affective reasons. In cognitive terms, authentic materials provide the necessary context for appropriately relating form to meaning in the language acquisition process. In terms of affect, authentic texts are regarded as motivators and as a means to overcome the cultural barrier to language learning (Westphal, 1986; Bacon, 1987; Nostrand, 1989). Although the pedagogical trend is clearly in the direction of increased use of authentic input in language instruction, the difficulty of authentic texts is the instructional

point of issue. Allen and colleagues (1988) tested 1,500 German high school students with from one to five years of language instruction for comprehension of authentic texts at three levels of difficulty. They found that, regardless of level, all subjects were at the very least able to capture some meaning from all of the texts. Furthermore, even beginniers could cope with authentic text of considerable length, 250-300 words. They found that target language and level of instruction was a more important correlate of comprehension than was text difficulty. However, Bacon and Finnemann (1990) remind us that authentic input first must be an early and important part of instruction in the curriculum. Second, it must be accompanied by meaningful advance organizers and comprehension checks. Since exposure to authentic input has a positive perceived effect on comprehension and satisfaction and a negative perceived effect on frustration, students seem to profit from its inclusion. Finally, they also reinforce the importance of attending to students' affective needs and general language learning strategies when interacting with authentic input.

**3.2 Why Literature?**

George Dillon (1981) argues that vocabulary teaching should be taught by examining words in fairly large contexts and discussing the way a word plus the networks of meaning surrounding it contribute to the construction of meanings that are greater, more particular, than the sum of the series of individual words. Further, on the basis of Dillon's top-down notion of language instruction, Boretz and colleagues (1992) argue that in the ESL classroom vocabulary is consistently seen in its verbal contexts, not only in its sentence and paragraph relationships but in the word's relationship to the entire text. They thus encourage students to respond to how a word is used and reused in the

changing contexts of the literary text they are examining. In their view, it is the literary text which provides students with probably the richest source of verbal context. When students encounter a word in the literary work it is enriched in a complex of meaning-generating relationships. It exists in relation to not only an abstract definition, but a network of cognitive-specific interstices. Furthermore, the familiar narrative schema, the most common rhetorical pattern in fiction, helps students comprehend what they are reading and interprete the unknown or strange in texts. Dillon also shows that among language users there is a preference for or bias toward narrative. Narratives are what children first learning to read are drawn to, and it is narratives that seem to dominate the ways that humans organize experience. In addition, literature speaks about human concerns that often transcend their cultural contexts. Their second language students can thus more fluently respond to what the text says and to how its meaning can be applied to their own lives. If textual understanding involves some degree of self-understanding, then reading literature allows their ESL students the optimal opportunity to understand themselves and, along the way, to understand the possibilities for using the English language. Finally, in the process of reading authentic literary texts, learners are encouraged to develop complex reading strategies which serve them in the reading of other types of academic material -- guessing meaning from context, making inferences based on linguistic clues, and so forth.

### 3.3 A Linguistic Model for Narrative Structure

This model is developed by William Labov and his associates (Labov, 1972) working on Black English Vernacular (BEV) in New York. It was discovered that the narratives most highly prized had structural

properties in common with particular linguistic forms, culture-specific background, and stylistic patterns. The structural properties isolated by Labov can be described as follows (Carter, 1987):

1. **Abstract.** This is a short summary of the story that narrators generally provide before the narrative commences. It 'encapsulates the point of the story'. Not all, but most, natural narratives have an abstract. (What was this about?)

2. **Orientation.** This is an essential constituent in helping the reader/listener 'to identify in some way the time, place, persons, and their activity or situation'. It can include 'an elaborate portrait of the main character'. Orientation can be marked by many past progressive verbs, and, obviously, adverbial phrases of time/manner and place. (Who, when, what, where?)

3. **Complicating action** with narrative clauses. Each of such clauses has a verb which is simple past or simple present. They are the minimal units of the narrative and are temporally ordered, in that 'a change in their order will result in a change in the temporal sequence of the original semantic organization'. For example, 'The girl got pregnant. The girl married' is a very different story if the sentences are reversed. (Then what happened?)

4. **Evaluation.** Like the basic narrative clause, this is a most important element in narrative....Evaluation can take many shapes and be marked by a number of different linguistic forms:

A. Evaluation: Commentary
1 External: comments by the narrator external to the action and addressed directly to the interlocutor.
2 Internal: comment is embedded:
   a. The evaluative comment occurs to the narrator or character at a specific moment of the action;
   b. Comment is addressed to another character;
   c. Evaluative remarks are attributed to a third party.

B. Sentence-Internal Evaluation Devices
1 Intensifiers: e.g. gestures, expressive phonology, repetition, interjection, etc. In other words, a host of available stylistic-expressive-rhetorical means.
2 Comparators: generally speaking, a 'comparator moves away from the line of narrative events to consider unrealized possibilities and compare them with events that did not occur'. Realized linguistically by futures, modals, comparatives, questions.

5. **Resolution:** this contains the last of the narrative or free clauses which begin the complicating action. (What finally happened?)

6. **Coda:** the coda should provide a sense of completeness, signalling that the story has ended and has been evaluated by bringing 'the narrator and the listener back to the point at which they entered the narrative'.

However, Carter reminds us of the danger of relying too heavily on a model. It is a key principle of working with models in such contexts that they should not be seen as finite or self-complete but rather as hypotheses to be tested against data. Thus, Carter points out that the meanings of many modern short stories by Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and Saki are not easily or overtly extractable but rather communicated in an embedded or indirect way to the reader. Besides, many narratives do not simply proceed in an orderly fashion from "abstract" to "coda". Particularly, in the case of the category "orientation", there is much gradual unravelling, with orientational information embedded within other categories or within diffenent features in the structural sequence.

In addition, as readers try to interpret received linguistic clues they will naturally draw upon information gained from their own experience and background. This information is part of the schemata -- existing knowledge about the world -- that they bring to bear in the reading process. But when the reader and the writer do not share the same cultural assumptions in a piece of literature, the possibility of misinterpretation occurs. In addition, we should be also increasingly aware of a variety of linguistic registers or styles and similarly develop conscious attitude or approaches that correspond to different tyopes of reading, depending largely on their perceived purpose (Gajdusek, 1988).

**3.4 A strategy of Teaching Vocabulary through Short Stories**

In our enthusiasm to apply Labov's linguistic model for narrative structure to the EFL class, a word of caution is also in order; that is, although the theory encourages teachers to provide "abstract" to help EFL readers, it does not suggest that we should supply a summary of the action or a statement of the theme. That

is for the students to discover, to experience the excitement and pleasure in reading the text or through the process of exploration and interaction in classroom activities. According to the cognitive theory, classroom activities are meant to help students integrate declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge and develop their learning strategies described in the cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA) (Table 1). Therefore, the following classroom technique developed by Gajdusek (1988) fits all the theories I mentioned above. Her four-level sequence for in-class work with any literary text is summarized as follows:

1. Prereading activities: essential background information and vocabulary
2. Factual in-class work: who, where, when, and what (happens)
3. Analysis: aspects of structure, theme, and style
4. Extending activities: in-class activities that extend the ideas or situations encountered in the text; written response

Level 1: Prereading Activities

Unfamiliar words will interfere with comprehension, but prereading vocabulary items may be chosen and distinguished into three kinds: (a) words whose meaning can (and should) be derived from context, (b) words that contain vital clues to the cultural and emotional context, and even thematic information of the story, and (c) words that proficient readers merely categorize.

Teachers can present the first kind of words in a brief cloze-type exercise and teach more efficient word-attack strategies and encourage students to guess meanings from context. The subsequent in-class comparison of different answers and the original word is a highly communicative activity (as students present and explain their answers) and results in a stronger sense of the denotation as well as the connotation of the words in question.

The second kind of words need to be singled out and discussed when the culture-bound information they contain bears upon a correct (i.e., in keeping with the author's intent) reading of the story. Because this area of vocabulary work involves specific information that we assume the students may lack, the teacher here is obliged to act as informant rather than facilitator. But interactive, values clarification-type activities can follow to establish the significance of the raw information.

The third kind of words are not easily definable from context that even proficient readers will not know the precise meaning but that they safely categorize and dismiss so that they can move on. Teachers should resist the tempatation to discuss such vocabulary exhaustively; rather, they should encourage students to find the relevant category and move on.

Level 2: Factual In-Class Work

The factual level of work with a piece includes four steps: (a) point of view (who is telling the story), (b) character (who the

story is about), (c) setting (when and where the story takes place), and (d) action (what happens).

There are basically three possibilities to identify the point of view: (i) first person narrator (telling the story on the basis of his or her impression or opinion or distortion of the event for his or her own reasons, and is subject to the same limitations of knowledge and bias that we all experience, being human), (ii) omniscient third person (telling the story with equal insight into all characters and events), or (iii) limited third person (telling the story from the vantage point of one particular character).

Since the first person narrator may be a character in the story, point of view often leads us directly into a discussion of character. Students are asked to list and identify (i) the main characters, (ii) the minor characters, and (iii) the less important background characters before coming to class. In class, the teacher may ask students to refer to one aspect of the story or another to support their position. Later activities will involve deeper analysis of the main characters, their relationships, conflicts, and motivations.

Next, we must establish the when and where of the piece and notice how these simple facts influence action and values in the story. Four categories thus generated lend themselves to effective group work: (i) Time -- general (e.g., "In what historical period does the story take place? Does the story mention a date? If not, what clues do we find when we look at details?"), (ii) Time -- specific (e.g., "Specifically how much time passes in this story? a few hours? days? months?"), (iii) Place -- general (e.g., "Where does the story take place? What are the clues to national, regional, or local identity or to the social milieu (middle class, rural, urban), and how will this setting affect the situation or a character's response to it?"), and (iv) Place -- specific (e.g., " How many different sets or scenes would you need if you were to film the story, and describe each one?)

Finally, students assigned to small groups construct time line and place the significant events in chronological sequence on the time line (and cite line references from the text). The finished product helps the class see the relationship of various facts and events.

Level 3: Analysis

At this point, students have interacted communicatively with one another and a text to delineate a situation that has its own reality, values, complications. Now, it is the time to ask students questions about motivatin and deeper meaning as is one approach to the text as literature: (a) structure of the action (plot, conflict, and climax), (b) theme(s), and (c) style.

The concept of plot is analyzed in terms of the climax, the turning point (usually the moment of greatest emotional intensity). Since the climax usually leads to the resolution of the main conflict, the ideas of climax and conflict are closely related and help define one other. Students will first have to figure out who or what is in conflict. Central conflicts have been grouped into four main categories: (i) Man against other men (or animals), (ii) Man against the forces of nature (such as a storm or flood), (iii) Man against society (or groups of men who hold opposing ideas), and (iv) Man against himself.

As students work toward a statement of a story's theme(s), they are reminded that (i) a theme is an idea and as such will probably relate at least two significant elements of the story, and (ii) a

theme usually expresses an idea that is somehow universally true. One in-class activity to define the theme begins by first eliciting topics that the story touches upon. Then groups or pairs of students meet to develop a statement about the story, with the stipulation that it incorporate at least two of the elicited topics. Finally, each group reads its statement to the class for discussion and evaluation in terms of textual support.

Exploration of style deepens our awareness of the act of communication--how the writer uses the medium of written language to create experience and convey meaning to the reader. Teachers must therefore be alert to the possible importance of imagery and concrete or sensory detail, of metaphor, of patterns (of action, images, metaphors) as they relate to or reinforce something important in the story. A symbol, as opposed to an image, takes part of its meaning from outside the work, but that meaning must contribute to emerging patterns within the piece to be considered a significant literary symbol.

Level 4: Extending Activities

Straightforward debate of issues raised in the text is exciting. But carefully structured role plays or dramatizations of key scenes are usually more fun and actually more demanding intellectually: Ask small groups to dramatize (sketch out a script and perform) a few crucial scenes that readers have been told about but have not "seen". Then the following discussion and evaluation of the assumptions that each group make in the dramatization will help the class understand how some of them have misinterpreted the story.

Writing tasks are encouraged and grouped widely from ongoing, informal journal exploration to the development of formal, critical essays. If, as is often the case at intermediate or lower intermediate levels, one of the goals of the class is to present and practice sentence-level grammar, the issues raised by intensive work with a literary text through Levels 1 and 2 will provide the perfect context. Perhaps students at this level are not proficient enough to explore subtleties of structure or figurative language, but they have worked through to a clear sense of the characters, situation, and issues in a piece. Thus, they will have something to say, and teachers will have a context against which to teach sentence-level grammar (particularly the complex sentence grammar needed in academic writing) with a maximum sense of its communicative function.

Conclusion

Unless teachers structure the classroom experience so as to motivate the students and make them devote themselves to discovering what is significant there, teachers are not really teaching anything in EFL class. It takes students time and energy to learn a foreign language, but if our underlying goal is to involve our students communicatively in the classroom, then for teachers the active integration or implication of linguistics,

content-based instructional theory, and a motivational theory of instructional design in our EFL curriculum is necessary.

Howerver, teachers who plan to use short stories as content-based authentic materials to teach vocabulary must first explore the story in depth so that they can have a clear sense of how the categorized vocabulary is deeply related to the text, and second, more importantly, must carefully structure sequence of questions and issues which help students draw inferences about the piece and examine those inferences by constant reference to the text. Third, teachers, as facilitators, must help students to use the vocabulary to the sharing of their experience , and thus the text can bring both teachers and students new insights, new levels of experience in the EFL classroom.

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TABLE 1. LEARNING STRATEGIES TAUGHT IN THE COGNITIVE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE LEARNING APPROACH (CALLA) ( O'Malley and Chamot, 1990)

| | |
|---|---|
| *Metacognitive strategies* | |
| Advance organization | Previewing the main ideas and concepts of the material to be learned, often by skimming the text for the organizing principle. |
| Advance preparation | Rehearsing the language needed for an oral or written task. |
| Organizational planning | Planning the parts, sequence, and main ideas to be expressed orally or in writing. |
| Selective attention | Attending to or scanning key words, phrases, linguistic markers, sentences, or types of information. |
| Self-monitoring | Checking one's comprehension during listening or reading, or checking one's oral or written production while it is taking place. |
| Self-evaluation | Judging how well one has accomplished a learning task. |
| Self-management | Seeking or arranging the conditions that help one learn, such as finding opportunities for additional language or content input and practice. |
| *Cognitive strategies* | |
| Resourcing | Using reference materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, or textbooks. |
| Grouping | Classifying words, terminology, numbers, or concepts according to their attributes. |
| Note taking | Writing down key words and concepts in abbreviated verbal, graphic, or numerical form. |
| Summarizing | Making a mental or written summary of information gained through listening or reading. |
| Deduction | Applying rules to understand or produce language or solve problems. |
| Imagery | Using visual images (either mental or actual) to understand and remember new information or to make a mental representation of a problem. |
| Auditory representation | Playing in back of one's mind the sound of a word, phrase, or fact in order to assist comprehension and recall. |

TABLE 1. (*continued*)

| | |
|---|---|
| Elaboration | Relating new information to prior knowledge, relating different parts of new information to each other, or making meaningful personal associations with the new information. |
| Transfer | Using what is already known about language to assist comprehension or production. |
| Inferencing | Using information in the text to guess meanings of new items, predict outcomes, or complete missing parts. |
| *Social and affective strategies* | |
| Questioning for clarification | Eliciting from a teacher or peer additional explanation, rephrasing, examples, or verification. |
| Cooperation | Working together with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check a learning task, or get feedback on oral or written performance. |
| Self-talk | Reducing anxiety by using mental techniques that make one feel competent to do the learning task. |