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ENGLISH EDUCATION - UNS
INTERNATIONAL TEFL CONFERENCE

Current Belief in ELT and Its Implication in English Classrooms
May 18, 2013

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Using Metaphor in Teaching Paragraph Writing

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Abstract

Literature has been used in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in several ways. For example, metaphor can be used for teaching business English for Spanish students, specifically about business vocabulary, reading, and translation into Spanish. This paper highlights common problems in writing class at a beginner’s level such as difficulty in generating ideas, making a good topic sentence, and providing appropriate details in a paragraph. Next, the paper discusses the classroom experience on the use of metaphor in teaching paragraph writing. Metaphor is considered useful device in teaching paragraph writing because it helps students generate new ideas and improve creativity. Using metaphor as the topic sentence facilitates the students to make a good topic sentence for their paragraph. Metaphor is compact yet able to carry the depths of ideas the writers want to express. Therefore, they are encouraged to write appropriate supporting details because metaphor cannot be understood literally. Metaphor is also an interesting writing topic. Student writing samples are presented to disclose how the students introduce themselves with a metaphor in a paragraph. The paper also reviews responses of the students in of the writing class. The observation and student responses show that using metaphor in a self-introduction paragraph is a useful activity. Finally, some pedagogical implications are drawn on using metaphor to teach paragraph writing for EFL learners.

Keywords: metaphor, paragraph, EFL writing

INTRODUCTION

Besides having entertaining and educational values, literature has other other uses for teaching-learning purpose, especially to teach language. Many teachers utilize poems, short stories, or songs to teach English skills and components. Literary works are suitable materials because they belong to authentic materials; they show how language is used in a real context. They also provide “cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement... universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest...” (Collie and Slater, 1990, p. 3, in Hışmanoğlu, 2005, p. 54). This shows that literature is a useful source for English learning.

In terms of teaching writing, literature can be used as a writing model or writing subject (Hışmanoğlu, 2005). Students can learn about creative writing using poems or short stories as models. They can also write essays responding to a literary work or write compositions after being inspired by a literary work.

Definition of Metaphor

In general, metaphor is a figure of speech that compares objects or ideas that are basically incompatible. According to Barret, Burto, and Cain (2004, p. 707), a metaphor “asserts the identity, without a connective such as like or a verb such as appears, of terms that are literally incompatible.” For example is Shakespeare’s famous line that “All the world’s a stage.” This metaphor presents two objects that are of different nature, i.e. “the world” and “a stage”. Literally, the world is a different place, even a different object, from a stage. However, if one reads and analyze through the next lines, one can see that these incompatible objects actually share similarities. A stage is a place where a play usually takes place. The play consists of several acts played by the actors and actresses. When an act begins, the actors enter the stage and start playing their roles, creating and resolving conflicts outlined in the play. When the acts end, the curtain pulls down and the actors leave the stage. The world is a stage for the players, the people living in it. People are born to it, live their lives, and eventually “leave the stage” when they die. Similar to the many roles that can be found on stage, men also have roles to live in. Some become bosses; others