

## Teaching English Language through Shakespeare's Play

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### Abstract

This research paper attempts to explain Shakespeare's play as source material for language teaching and learning. Ben Jonson says "Shakespeare Not of an Age, but for All Time". We can use Shakespeare's play as primary sources in the present day class room. It is like language through literature concept of teaching and learning. If we teach English with the help of Shakespeare's play 'Romeo and Juliet' is very interesting to the students of second language. Literature motivates the students to learn language unconsciously. Romeo and Juliet is a monument of Shakespeare's talent, and as such, we believe that students learn best using a performance based methodology and that performance can build a personal connection with the text that traditional teaching methods may not. It gives students listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in practice.

**Key Words:** *Literature, teaching, learning, play, language, methodology, process.*

### Introduction

Shakespeare's dramas have always proved fascinating to students. It is essential to make Shakespeare relevant, fun and accessible. There are so many good units and resources for teaching Shakespeare, the challenge is selecting the right one, for the right moment, and right time. Teaching English language through literature that is Shakespearean play is an interesting topic and concept for teaching students of second language. If we teach English with the help of Shakespeare's play 'Romeo and Juliet' is very interesting to the students of second language. At the young age they are interested to know the story of Romeo and Juliet. Literature motivates the students to learn language unconsciously and we can teach grammar inductively. Employing audio recordings really assists students to engage with the play as performance and it is certainly welcome relief from exclusively 'reading around the class' which can be fun, depending on the class and scene. Film adaptations can really spice up a traditional textual study, especially when employing clips along the way, as the play unfolds, rather than watching the entire film. The plots and characters still engage students as long as they can overcome the initial challenge of the language. Skillful teachers can make learning about blank verse and prose fun and achievable. Dramas of Shakespeare are excellent tools to help in developing the Four Basic Skills (LSRW) of communication. Teaching Shakespeare's drama with a special focus on language development can help the students' need in communication.

As Brumfit observes "A natural concomitant of literariness in language would be an approach to the teaching of literature in which language study and literary study are closely integrated and harmonized than is commonly the case at the present time". Literature is recognized as the most authentic of language use. Shakespeare is not an antiquated art form. His plays are full of family situations, complex relationships, and deep emotions that today's students can—and do. Shakespeare is for everyone and that students of all ability levels can successfully engage with his works. The best way to learn Shakespeare is to do Shakespeare. What does this mean? Put simply, it is getting students up on their feet and physically, intellectually, and vocally engaging with the text. We believe that students learn best using a performance-based methodology and that performance can build a personal connection with the text that traditional teaching methods may not. Performance—which is not the same thing as "acting"—activates the imagination. Active learning invigorates the mind and stays with the learner. Shakespeare's genius with language, his skill as a dramatist, and his insight into the human nature and condition can instill even the least academic student with a passion not only for Shakespeare but also for language, drama, psychology, and knowledge.

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Dramas are not meant to be read silently on. Students must be assigned roles and a batch of students may read their respective roles. Dramas have the magic of making the readers shed their self-inhibitive individuality. Dramas are helpful in contributing to the efficiency of learners' listening comprehension. It involves sound perception and recognition of the sound of words, their accent and their tonal variation. This technique of teaching drama will enable the students' to recognize stress and intonation patterns. The Lesson Plans and tips for teaching, Shakespeare included in this curriculum provide practical, classroom-tested approaches for using performance based teaching techniques. Famous lines and phrases from the play and interesting facts to share with students. Enthusiasm is more important than expertise. Francis Bacon said "Reading maketh a full man" and his statement is still relevant. Reading and enacting drama in the class room is a great help for students to learn language. To quote Brumfit again, "Literary texts provide examples of language resources being used to the full and the reader is placed in an active interactional role in working with and making sense of this language. Thus, literature lessons make for genuine opportunities in group work and /or open-ended exploration by the individual student". Performing Shakespeare—even at the most rudimentary level, script in hand, stumbling over the difficult words—can and usually does permanently change a students' relationship with the plays and their author. Shakespeare is for everyone. Students of all ability levels, all backgrounds, and at all grade levels can—and do—successfully engage with Shakespeare's works. The plays are full of explosive family situations and complex relationships that adolescents recognize. Performance is particularly crucial in teaching Shakespeare, whose naked language on the page may be difficult to understand. "Performance" in this sense does not mean presenting memorized, costumed, fully staged shows, although those can be both satisfying and educational. Performance means getting students up on their feet, moving around a classroom as characters, and speaking the lines themselves.

Shakespeare's stories have always proved fascinating to students. It is essential to make Shakespeare relevant, fun and accessible. There are so many good units and resources for teaching Shakespeare, the challenge is selecting the right one, for the right moment, and right time. Employing audio recordings really assists students to engage with the play as performance and it is in this lesson, learners will learn about Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. They will discuss what they already know about the play, check their understanding of the play, evaluate different characters' responsibility for the tragedy in the play, and take part in a group discussion to reach an agreement about who is ultimately responsible. Not only has Shakespeare inspired scores of artist and writers, but many of his plays have also been adapted to film. Showing students a cinematic version of one of Shakespeare's best works is a surefire way of creating interest and promoting an appreciation of the plot. It is not a substitute for a more in-depth analysis of the text, but can be an effective complementary activity.

Shakespeare is one of the most famous English writers there has ever been. In fact, even people who do not speak English have probably seen one of his plays translated or made into a film in their own language. The most well-known of his plays, Romeo and Juliet has been translated and made into countless books and films. Why is Shakespeare important for English language learners? After all, the type of English he wrote is in very different form to how English is spoken today. As well as being one of the greatest storytellers ever, Shakespeare also invented or coined many of the words we use in modern English. Some of examples of this include: accused, addiction, advertising, amazement, arouse and assassination. He also came up with many of the idioms and expressions that we use in English nowadays, such as 'the be-all and the end-all of something'. When we picturize the drama Romeo and Juliet to the students they will have more interest on the play. The learning will happen inductively and naturally without much effort. It is very easy for the teachers to teach the students effortlessly. Teacher can use the structures of sentences to teach grammar inductively.

### **Language Enrichment**

We have said that reading literary works exposes the students to many functions of written language but what about other linguistic advantages? Language enrichment is one benefit often sought through literature. Extensive reading increases learner's receptive vocabulary and facilitates transfer to a more active form of knowledge and vocabulary. On the positive side, literature provides a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactical items are made more memorable. The variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas-which broaden and enrich their own writing skill.

The extensive reading required in tackling a long play or drama develops the students' ability to make inferences from linguistic clues, and to deduce meaning from context, both useful tools in reading like Shakespeare's drama such as Romeo and Juliet can serve as an excellent prompt for oral work. In all three ways, a student working with literature is helped with the basic skills of language learning. Moreover, literature helps extend the intermediate or advanced learner's awareness of the range of language itself.

Above all, literature can be helpful in the language learning process because of personal involvement. It fosters in readers core language teaching materials must concentrate on how a language operates both as a rule-based system and as a socio-semantic system.

It is important to choose Shakespeare's drama which is relevant to the inner experiences; emotions, or dreams of the learner. Language difficulty has, of course to be considered as well. Because they have both linguistic and cultural gap to bridge, foreign students may not be able to identify with or enjoy a text which they perceive as being fraught with difficulty every step of the way. The main lesson that we can learn from the way that Shakespeare used English vocabulary is to pay attention to the world around us, listen carefully to expressions people use then use them ourselves when appropriate. Also that we can experiment with existing words, see which work well together and use them in combinations as compound words such as phrasal verbs or compound adjectives. Try it today, keep a notebook with interesting English expressions that you hear and practice using them yourself. Shakespeare enthusiasts – and English teachers – know that his work is full of complex characters, engaging plots and themes that are as relevant today as they were centuries ago. This paper examines how teachers attempt to teach Shakespeare, what challenges teachers must overcome to effectively teach Shakespeare, and what lessons can look like if both teachers and students embrace the difficulty of Shakespeare's language together.

Despite his material being written more than 430 years ago, William Shakespeare's work continues to be a core pillar of English classes all over the world. This is particularly true in England, the birthplace of the man regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. With the National Curriculum featuring more Shakespeare than ever – and today's students seemingly worlds away from the language and themes explored in much of Shakespeare's works - teachers and educators must be creative in the ways they bring Shakespeare to life in the classroom. The following tips should help to engage and inspire pupils to connect with Shakespeare. His work could be re-read over and over and there would still be nuances left to discover. Literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied body written material which is important in the sense that it says something about fundamental human issues, and which is enduring rather than ephemeral. Its relevance moves with the passing of time, but seldom disappears completely: The Shakespearean plays whose endings were written to conform to late seventeenth-century taste, and which were later staged to give maximum prominence to their Romantic hero figures.

A literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to reader in another country or a different period of history. Literature is authentic material. A literary text can serve as an excellent prompt for oral work. In all these ways, student working with literature is helped with the basic skills of language learning. A literature is authentic text, the activities used with literary 'text or genuine activities not once contrived around a fabricated text' (M C Rose, 1998:8).

Moreover, from the teacher's point of view, literature, which speaks to the hearts as much as to the mind, provides material with some emotional colors that can make fuller contact with the learner's own life, and can thus counter balance the more fragmented effect of many collections of text used in the class room. Language enrichment is one benefit often sought through literature.

What sort of literature is suitable for use for language learners? The criteria of suitability clearly depend ultimately on each particular group of students, their needs, interest, cultural background and language level. The overall aim, then of our approach to teaching of literature is to let the student derive the benefits of communicative and other activities for language improvement within the context of suitable work of literature such as Shakespearean play.

Based on the need of the student, we can teach. Need based teaching; need analysis has to be done. What is the level of understanding? What do they want for English? We can do need analysis to achieve language proficiency. What is the attainment of language standard? The students belong to the College of Education or Bachelor of Arts. English for Specific Purpose or English for Professionals. If they want to become a teacher, their need is different from that of general category or general English for degree students. Language through literature concept is unique for teaching English for a degree level. Second language teacher requirement and need is to be attained by teaching them structure or grammar, basic pattern with help of Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet.

### **How to teach in the class room?**

Presenting a play, however is its particular dramatic quality, which it is important to bring out as much as possible in the class room. Being able to take students to a performance is obviously a great help, as are in films or videos. Many plays are available on records or cassettes now days. With groups that respond well to drama activities, putting on one scene, or a short play, can be both enjoyable and rewarding.

Many students love planning costumes, sets, props, lights and so on. When full scale staging is not feasible, a prepared reading of a previously studied scene, at the front of the class and with few props, can also be fruitful. What is not so successful, in our opinion, is asking a student to read aloud an unseen or minimally prepared role. In fact, good play reading is not really all that easy, even one's own language. We prefer other kinds of activities to help students deepen their understanding of the text and the dramatic situation, followed by listening periods in class or if cassettes are available, in the language laboratory. We can work with play of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Then we have found it accessible and interesting for our students. Its theme of love in a setting torn by civil strife is universal and still very poignant today. It is a play that is often produced, so that we have been able to take students to performances, or to show the very beautiful Zeffirelli film. The various activities should also help students to a better understanding of dramatic structure, development of character, the mechanisms of tragedy, and so on.

### **Fend for thought.**

The well-known tragedy of young lovers is the bitter family feud between the Montagues, Capulets which permeates the atmosphere in the city of Verona, and creates an ominous tension of the play.

### **Conclusion**

There are more resources for teaching Shakespeare than any teacher could ever read, view or use but, of course, the plays and sonnets are what entertain. The benefits of this approach, though, are equally evident in the teaching and learning process outcome. Hence most of the British Institutions have followed this Methodology to teach Shakespeare to its students. Shakespeare's play is as source material for language teaching and learning. To conclude in the words of Brumfit : "Literature provides instances of language structures in use, which can form the basis for instruction and practice in the language skills, especially reading comprehension accompanied by a varying amount of grammatical analysis and explanation".

The overall aim, then, of our approach to the teaching of literature is to let the student derive the benefits of communicative and other activities for language improvement within the context of suitable works of literature such as Shakespeare's play like *Romeo and Juliet*. Our class room was something of microcosm of the English language teaching world generally reflecting a time when there is much questioning of the relationship between the studying of language and literature. Moreover, from the teacher's point of view, literature, which speaks to the heart as much as to the mind, provides material with some emotional color that can make fuller contact with the learner's own life. A literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country or a different period of history. Literature is authentic material in teaching learning process.

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