



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes a technique for teaching English through short stories and multimedia combined towards motivation enhancement, cultural and vocabulary comprehension and a contextual view of language.

The purpose of this research is to see if teaching English through short stories and multimedia is a good way to enhance students' motivation and capacity to understand the language.

This research was based on three linguistic views, The Natural Approach, the Total Physical Response Storytelling Method, and the Cognitive Approach. Several aspects of each methodology were taken into account to develop a specific technique that could be applied in the different universities in Cuenca.

The results and conclusions were based on experiences had in English classes at different universities in Cuenca, combined with the study of the theoretical framework which included both printed and online texts; also, numerous surveys and studies were carried out to prove the hypothesis. This fact made it possible to triangulate all the information and draw conclusions in order to show that teaching English by using short stories and multimedia, if performed correctly, can be very effective for successful language acquisition.

Teaching English through short stories and multimedia has been thought of as a way to help teachers enhance student motivation within regular classes, as well as to help students become more aware of vocabulary, idioms, and cultures. Several techniques have appeared recently with technology advances, and with the use of some creativity, they can greatly help to develop skills in English students.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Keywords:

Short Story

Multimedia

University

English

Teaching

Cuenca

Linguistic

Technique



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	11
CHAPTER 1: VARIOUS THEORIES ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL	13
1.1. Introduction	13
1.2. Methods of TEFL: A Chronological Review	14
1.3. The Total Physical Response Storytelling Method	17
1.4. Adapting TPRS to Teaching English at the University Level Using Multimedia Resources and Short Stories.	20
1.5. TPRS and the Natural Approach	21
1.6. The Communicative Language Teaching and The Total Physical Response Storytelling Methods	23
1.7. The Total Physical Response and the Total Physical Response Storytelling Methods	24
1.8. The Total Physical Response Storytelling as a Particular Successful Method for Teaching English as Second Language at a University Level	26
1.9. The Cognitive Approach	27
1.9.1. Comprehensible Input	28
1.9.2. Interaction	29
1.9.3. Comprehensible Output	30
1.10. Developing Literary Understanding of English	31
1.11. Digital Boards and Digital Markers	
CHAPTER 2: THE SHORT STORY GENRE AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL TO DEVELOP READING SKILLS	32
2.1. The Beginning of Literature	32
2.1.1. The Epic Poem	33
2.1.2. The Ode	33
2.1.3. Drama	33



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.1.4. Literary Genres Born After Greek Times	34
2.1.5. The Appearance of Unsung Literary Genres	34
2.1.6. The Appearance of the Short Story Genre	35
2.2. Traits of the Short Story	35
2.3. Elements of the Short Story	37
2.3.1. Content	37
2.3.2. Point of view	41
2.3.3. Slant	43
2.4 The Reality of Reading as a Reason to Use Short Stories for TESL	50
2.4.1. The “Death of Reading” Hypothesis	50
2.4.2. The “Reading Will Not Die” Hypothesis	56
2.4.3. A Study: How Much Do University Students’ in Cuenca Read Traditional Text?	60
2.4.4. Conclusion	63
CHAPTER 3: LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE WITH MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES	64
3.1. The Expansion of Multimedia	64
3.2. Reasons to Believe that Adding Multimedia to Text is Conducive to Successful Learning of English	64
3.3. A Study: Evaluation of Multimedia Programs and Textbooks Used at a University Level in Cuenca	66
3.3.1. Evaluation Criteria	66
3.3.2. Results of the Study	69
3.3.3. Conclusions	76
CHAPTER 4: USING SHORT STORIES AND MULTIMEDIA TO TEACH ENGLISH.	79
4.1. Introduction	79
4.2. Using Interactive Methodologies for Teaching English at a University Level	80



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

4.3. Steps for Interactive Teaching English Through Short Stories and Multimedia	81
4.3.1. Pre Reading Activities	81
4.3.2. Reading Activities	86
4.3.3. Post Reading Activities	87
4.4. A Practical Case: Teaching English at a University Level Through Short Stories and Multimedia	88
4.4.1. Creation of a Class Blog	89
4.4.2. Pre-reading activities	90
4.4.3. Reading Activities	92
4.4.4. Post Reading Activities	92
4.4.5. Creating a Class Movie Based on a Short Story	93
4.5. Reasons to Use Multimedia and Short Stories for Teaching English at a University Level	95
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	98
5.1. Conclusions	98
5.2. Recommendations	100
WORK CITED	102
APPENDICES	105



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES, GRAPHS AND APPENDICES

List of Figures

Figure # 1 Sequence of Plot Development in the Short Story _____	39
Figure # 2 Dealing with vocabulary _____	90

List of Tables

Table # 1 Various Methodologies for Teaching Foreign Languages _____	17
Table # 2 Slants of the Short Story _____	43
Table # 3 Survey # 1 Results _____	61
Table # 4 Survey # 2 Results _____	72
Table # 5 Survey # 3 Results _____	75
Table # 6 Survey # 4 Results _____	97

List of Graphs

Graph # 1 Survey # 1 Results _____	62
Graph # 2 Survey # 2 Results _____	72
Graph # 3 Survey # 3 Results _____	76



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Fundada en 1867

Yo, Thomas Elden Youman Henley, reconozco y acepto el derecho de la Universidad de Cuenca, en base al Art. 5 literal c) de su Reglamento de Propiedad Intelectual, de publicar este trabajo por cualquier medio conocido o por conocer, al ser este requisito para la obtención de mi título de Magíster en Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada. El uso que la Universidad de Cuenca hiciere de este trabajo, no implicará afección alguna de mis derechos morales o patrimoniales como autor.


Thomas Elden Youman Henley
0102653730

UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA
Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y
Ciencias de la Educación


Luis Carrion
Cuenca, Ecuador

Cuenca Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad. Resolución de la UNESCO del 1 de diciembre de 1999

Av. 12 de Abril, Ciudadela Universitaria, Teléfono: 405 1000, Ext.: 1311, 1312, 1316

e-mail cdjbv@ucuenca.edu.ec casilla No. 1103

Cuenca - Ecuador



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA



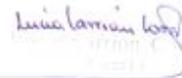
UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Fundada en 1867

Yo, Thomas Elden Youman Henley, certifico que todas las ideas, opiniones y contenidos expuestos en la presente investigación son de exclusiva responsabilidad de su autor/a.


Thomas Elden Youman Henley
0102653730

UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA
Facultad de Filosofía, Letras
y Ciencias de la Educación


Luis Larrea
2022

Cuenca Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad. Resolución de la UNESCO del 1 de diciembre de 1999

Av. 12 de Abril, Ciudadela Universitaria, Teléfono: 405 1000, Ext.: 1311, 1312, 1316

e-mail cdjbv@ucuenca.edu.ec casilla No. 1103

Cuenca - Ecuador



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

**FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
DEPARTAMENTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y POSTGRADOS
MAESTRÍA EN LENGUA INGLESA Y LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA**

**Título de la Tesis: Teaching English at the University Level Through Short
Stories and Multimedia.**

Tesis previa a la obtención del Grado de Magíster en
Lengua Inglesa y Lingüística Aplicada

Autor: Thomas Elden Youman Henley

Directora: Marcela Carrasco

Cuenca – Ecuador
2012



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I want to thank my family, especially my parents, Ion and Kate, who have supported me all the way and have given me great ideas acquired throughout their years of teaching English. I also want to thank my friends and professors who shared great moments with me during the Master's course.

A special thanks to Marcela Carrasco, a great director, who has helped me to accomplish my goals with patience and dedication.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

INTRODUCTION

Helping and facilitating student performance in the EFL classroom is one of the most important goals of the teaching-learning process, and teachers need to be aware of such an important responsibility. According to educational specialists, motivation is an essential key to have in mind when teaching. If motivation disappears, students will never be capable of really acquiring anything. They need to feel and see the necessity to learn something new, and in the same way to see how useful it is for their lives and their context. It is also important that the learning process be a fun and motivating experience in itself.

In the short history of linguistics, different views have appeared and several methodologies for teaching foreign languages with them. Sometimes, new approaches considered old ones as obsolete, and stated that the new approach was modern and had the correct techniques. This judgment has proven to be incorrect because a socio-linguistics axiom says that pedagogy is continuously changing and adapting to human needs and realities. Today, we can affirm that there is no “correct methodology for teaching languages.” The most appropriate is the one that adapts to certain needs and realities and it can contain many approaches. For example, three theories could be taken into account, the Natural Approach, the Total Physical Response Storytelling Method and the Cognitive Approach. By combining them, a specific technique that integrates interactive and structural views for improving language skills in local universities can be developed.

This thesis work has five chapters. The first chapter describes several theories for teaching foreign languages from a chronological point of view. The second chapter analyzes the short story as a genre circumscribed in literature as an art. The third chapter analyzes multimedia, and a review of resources available in local areas is performed. The fourth chapter describes how short stories and multimedia can be used successfully for second language acquisition. And, finally,



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

the fifth chapter gives the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research.

This thesis proposes a technique for teaching English through short stories and multimedia combined towards motivation enhancement, cultural and vocabulary comprehension and a contextual view of language. Several blogs were created for assessment and evaluation.

Teaching English through short stories and multimedia has been thought of as a way to help teachers enhance student motivation within regular classes, as well as to help students become more aware of vocabulary, idioms, and cultures. Several techniques have appeared recently with technology advances, and with the use of some creativity, they can greatly help to develop skills in English students.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

CHAPTER 1: VARIOUS THEORIES ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

"Any given method is only as effective as its implementation."

Georgi Lozanov¹

1.1. Introduction

There are many methods of teaching languages. Some have fallen into relative obscurity and others are widely used; still others have a small following, but offer useful insights. In the following pages, a chronological review of foreign language pedagogy methodologies is intended to provide a general overview of the reasons to be using certain techniques nowadays.

While sometimes confused, the terms "approach", "method" and "technique" are hierarchical concepts. A method is a plan for presenting the language material to be learned and should be based upon a selected approach. In order for an approach to be translated into a method, an instructional system must be designed considering the objectives of the teaching/learning process, how the content is to be selected and organized, the types of tasks to be performed, the roles of students and the roles of teachers. A technique is a very specific, concrete stratagem or trick designed to accomplish an immediate objective. Such are derived from the controlling method, and, less directly, with the approach (Mora)².

Most methods that have appeared in the history of EFL pedagogy can be grouped into two principal linguistic views:

- 1) The structural linguistics view treats language as a system of structurally related elements to encode meaning.

¹ Dr. Georgi Lozanov from Bulgaria, created *suggestopedia*, a remarkably effective method of teaching based on how the brain actually learns.

²<http://www.moramodules.com/ALMMMethods.htm>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

- 2) The interactive linguistics view sees language as a vehicle for the creation and maintenance of social relations, focusing on patterns of moves, acts, negotiation and interaction found in conversational exchanges. This view has been fairly dominant in the last decades.

1.2. Methods of TEFL: A Chronological Review

It can be interesting to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of different methods which have arisen in the academic world for TEFL at the university level. H. Douglas Brown in his book, "Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy," talks about the history of language teaching as a cycle in which new methods break off from a predominant method of a certain time. The new system will take with it some positive aspects of the older method leaving behind what is no longer considered useful. In a successive way, newer methods arise, with a continuation of the cycle, choosing and rejecting parts of the former "innovative method." At the same time, some aspects of older systems that have been rejected may be brought back into a new method.

Looking back at some of the first methods of teaching foreign languages, we can consider that the oldest one on record is the "Grammar-Translation" method (Mora). Through this method the teacher concentrated on language in order to understand and translate classical texts. The teacher presented grammatical rules and isolated vocabulary, and the emphasis was on precision in memorization. This was the origin of the structural linguistics view. However, because of the flaws in the Grammar-Translation method, the next system originated the interactive linguistics view; in other words, the opposite extreme, and, at the close of the nineteenth century, the "Direct Method" was born. Promoters of this system believed that second languages had to be absorbed in the same way that first languages are, that is, by means of constant oral repetition in a spontaneous way, with no translation between the first and second languages, and very little, preferably not any, emphasis on grammar rules. The teacher taught the class only



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

in the target language and students were supposed to absorb vocabulary and grammar through a kind of osmosis, so to speak (Arabski, 14).

Later on, during the Second World War, from 1939 to 1945, a new methodology arose. The army saw the necessity of rapidly training great numbers of soldiers to speak foreign languages and believed that structural linguistics was more accurate for this purpose. The Grammar Translation and the Direct Methods were not geared towards rapid learning, so the army devised their own system based on behaviorist psychology. Behaviorist psychology emphasized conditioning through rewards and punishment, and also through structural linguistics, which, as mentioned before, studied the structures and differences between various languages as its main techniques. The Army Method was born, and after World War II, it became popular in schools. It was known then as the Audio-lingual Method (ALM). Extensive drill practice was the main technique of this methodology (Cook, 87). The teachers modeled phrases and dialogs; students repeated them. Instruction was mostly in the target language. Students were not taught grammar rules outright, but it was assumed that they would learn them inductively through the contexts in which the structures were presented. At the same time drills presented grammatical rules in set sequences to show students which structures differed most from the student's own language.

After the ALM method there arose the Cognitive Code Learning approach, which was nothing more than the ALM method with the addition of precise grammar instruction. The Cognitive Code Learning approach was born in the 1970s. This decade was very innovative with respect to interactive language teaching methods. Structural linguistics views were neglected and thought of as inappropriate. Brown divides these methods into categories of "Affective-Humanistic" and "Comprehension-based" approaches. Both categories rejected drills as boring and useless. The Affective-Humanistic approach had the goal of encouraging the students to feel relaxed in the classroom, whereas the Comprehension-Based approach put emphasis on the idea of students having extensive exposure to the target language before they were required to speak



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

(Mora). Two other methods that arose from this decade are the classical Total Physical Response (TPR) and the Natural Approach that were to become the base for Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS).

The Total Physical Response method was created in the 1970s by a psychologist named James Asher. It proposes to teach languages through commands that entail, as is obvious, a “physical response.” On the first day of a class, for example, a teacher could instruct students in learning correct responses to commands, such as “Stand up,” “Sit down,” “Turn around,” and “Jump.” At this point, students would be required only to act out the commands since the initial focus of TPR is on the comprehension of language, not on production. TPR is very appealing to a kinaesthetic learning style by making language learning involved with actions. The language practiced is used in a meaningful way and therefore students can retain it longer (Bruner)³. Critics agree that TPR is effective in teaching vocabulary quickly and entertainingly for long-term retention. On the other hand, in some ways this method is very limited. As a single class activity, it could become boring and monotonous. In addition, only a few grammar structures, and only limited vocabulary can be taught through this method; to be exact, commands and concrete objects. For this reason the TPR Storytelling method was created. TPRS can introduce a wide range of vocabulary through short stories, which go a long way in making a class less boring, as compared to a class that is taught using the TPR method exclusively.

³<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/310/TPRS.pdf>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

<i>Table # 1 Various Methodologies for Teaching Foreign Languages</i>		
Linguistic View	TFL Method	Traits
Structural	Grammar - Translation	Teacher presented grammatical rules and isolated vocabulary, and the emphasis was on precision in memorization.
	Audio-Lingual Method (Army Method)	Extensive drill practice. Teachers modeled phrases and dialogs; students repeated them. Instruction was mostly in the target language. Students were not taught grammar rules outright, but it was assumed that they would learn them inductively through the contexts in which the structures were presented.
	Cognitive Code Learning Method	ALM method with the addition of precise grammar instruction.
Interactive	Direct Method	Second languages had to be absorbed by means of constant oral repetition in a spontaneous way, with no translation between the first and second languages, and very little, preferably not any, emphasis on grammar rules.
	Affective-Humanistic	Encouraging the students to feel relaxed in the classroom.
	Comprehension-Based	Extensive exposure to the target language.
	Natural Approach	A language is acquired in an intuitive and simple way (natural)
	Communicative Language Teaching	Acquire communicative competence through constant communication with low or no attention to grammar rules.
	Cognitive Approach	Dynamic methodologies including also techniques for teaching structure and using multimedia resources in learning.
	Total Physical Response	Proposes to teach languages through commands that entail a physical response
Total Physical Response Storytelling	Introduce s a wide range of vocabulary through short stories.	
Source: Mora, Jill. "Second-Language Teaching Methods, Principles & Procedures."		

1.3. The Total Physical Response Storytelling Method

What is the TPRS Method?

The Total Physical Response Storytelling method is, according to some experts, a highly effective methodology that promotes listening and reading comprehension skills, and also speaking fluency. The student is exposed to planned, sequential, and repetitive language structures through listening to and reading interesting and engaging stories. Students focus on listening to and reading entertaining stories rather than memorizing language. In its most simple presentation, there are three steps for successful and easy application of TPRS. The process as related below was taken from the following website:

<http://www.tprstorytelling.com/images/file/How%20to%20Apply%20TPRS.pdf>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Step One: SHOW

The teacher begins by selecting three vocabulary items from a new vocabulary list. These items could be phrases as well as words. The items are introduced and practiced in a way that is natural to normal speech. Obviously, the items should be selected according to the level of the class – beginner, immediate, or advanced – but the methodology could be used for any level. The teacher should say the vocabulary items, and then convey meaning through translation, gestures, props, pictures, and/or mini-scenarios. Translation is permitted but it should always be followed up with a visual representation of the new vocabulary structure. Once the students have grasped the meaning of the new vocabulary structure, the teacher models the proper gesture for the students and the students practice making the same gesture. Each of the three vocabulary items are introduced in this way. Once the students understand the vocabulary items, the teacher will have the students practice the items by giving the students commands using the words or phrases that have been introduced.

Step Two: TELL

Once the meanings of the vocabulary items have been conveyed and gestured, the teacher provides contextualized repetitions of the vocabulary via **Personalized Questions and Answers (PQA)** and **Personalized Mini-Situations**, which are referred to as **Class Stories**. Focusing on the new vocabulary items, the teacher asks students questions that concern their personal experiences, likes and dislikes, and individual personalities. The idea is to “fish” for interesting and entertaining topics and ideas that will engage students and make them laugh. For example, the teacher could use the three vocabulary items *he/she is thirsty*, *he/shedrinks water*. The questions could be *Are you thirsty? Do you drink water? Whatdo you like to drink ?, Do you drink water? What do you drink? Is water delicious? Do you drink hot or cold water?*



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

As the teacher asks questions, referred to as “**fishing**,” the goal is to first identify a question in which students are highly engaged and interested. Once a “winning” question has been presented, the goal is to get students to respond with the “best” answer possible. The teacher is not looking for a correct answer; rather, he or she is searching for an answer that students find humorous, interesting, and engaging. The teacher “fishes” for the best answer, which then becomes the “hook” that catches student attention and participation, and which lays the foundation for the class story. The teacher continues “fishing” until each “best answer” has been repeated through this system of continued questioning called “**Circling**.” **Circling** is a systematic way of getting needed repetitions (reps) out of Target Vocabulary Structures.

The teacher continues asking the question until students get involved with the questions and until student participation and interest indicate that it is time to stop “fishing” and “circling.” PQA and circling engage students and provide a way for them to participate in natural conversation and in the creation of a class story. Even though the method is referred to as storytelling, it really should be referred to as story ASKING. The key is to ASK the story instead of telling the story. Each answer provides the building block for the next part of this step, which is the production of a class story.

The purpose of a CLASS STORY is to provide more Contextualized Comprehensible Input (CCI). The average language learner must hear a vocabulary structure many times, anywhere from 25 to 50 to 150 times, before it will be internalized. Thus, the goal is to cooperatively create a class story to provide as many repetitions as necessary for acquisition to take place. A class story should contain no more than one to three new vocabulary items and three to four basic events or ideas. The following is an example of a mini-scenario based on the following new vocabulary items: he/she is thirsty, he/she drinks, water.

There is a drop of water. Her name is Samantha. Do you know what Samantha drinks? Samantha does not drink water! No, she does not drink; all drops of water



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

do not drink. Why doesn't Samantha drink? It's because she isn't a human being. Where does Samantha live? She lives behind our school. Really?! Yes, Samantha lives behind the school. Why? It's because she loves children. One day, she wants to drink milk, but she has a PROBLEM! Do you know what her problem is?...

A class story must be told and retold a number of times to make sure that students are internalizing the vocabulary items and can eventually verbalize ideas and facts about the story. Each time the story is retold small details can be drawn from students through more PQA (fishing). Each detail or fact is circled and then added to the story. The general rule for creating a class story is to have a problem to be solved or an issue that has to be addressed. The solution always involves an ongoing process; in other words, the characters in the story must travel to different places to try different possible solutions in order to solve the problem or finish the story.

Step Three: READ

Once the class story is complete, with every detail added, the teacher will write the class version of the story on the board and then read it with the students. The storylines of each story may not match, but the vocabulary structures will. The focus is on teaching language, not on teaching a specific story. Each version contains numerous repetitions of the new vocabulary structures.

1.4. Adapting TPRS to Teaching English at the University Level Using Multimedia Resources and Short Stories.

Teaching English at the university level by multimedia resources and short stories is a technique that has developed from and been inspired by the Total Physical Response Storytelling method. Certainly the creation of stories in the TPRS method is similar to the use of short stories in the multimedia methodology. In the words of an expert on the TPRS approach, Michael Bruner, "this (TPRS) method synthesizes aspects and ideas from several other foreign language



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

teaching methods which preceded it, though in different ways⁴.” On the one hand, after having asked some teachers about this matter, they sometimes consider the TPRS method hard to understand and boring for students, especially at elementary levels. On the other hand, the basic language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing can be taught and learned effectively with the TPRS method. Taking methodology one step further, a teacher can use the PQA and Circling methodology of the TPRS method and adapt it to the use of short stories and multimedia resources. For example, the plots, characters, and themes of tales can change what could be a monotonous way of teaching into something exciting, innovative and, linguistically speaking, interactive.

Through the use of short stories, a teacher can introduce new language items, either textual or grammatical, while at the same time giving the learners an interesting setup with which to recall these structures through multimedia resources. Furthermore, the idea is that the students and teacher not only read, but also write new stories which can be published in a class blog, or through another program online. This way, students are actively involved in the class, and are encouraged to be creative. At the same time, a good atmosphere for learning is created in the classroom. Both the TPRS method and the Short Story Multimedia method are based on three different methodologies:

1. The Natural Approach.
2. The Communicative Language Teaching Approach, and
3. The Total Physical Response Method.

1.5. TPRS and the Natural Approach

An important methodology that has contributed to the development of the TPRS and consequently to the Short Story Multimedia methodology is the Natural

⁴<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/310/TPRS.pdf>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Approach, which is important for the theory surrounding it more than for any particular aspect of the method per se. The Natural Approach was first presented in the book *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom*, by Stephan D. Krashen and Tracy D. Terrell. It was created to demonstrate the theories of Krashen, a researcher of second language acquisition. Krashen's concepts are concentrated around a system of five hypotheses about how people acquire a second language. Krashen's five hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) "Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis": This hypothesis states that there are two forms in which a second language can be acquired. First, learners absorb both lexical and grammatical forms through an unconscious process; second, learners acquire language through education with respect to grammar rules and memorized vocabulary.
- 2) Natural Order Hypothesis: According to Krashen, evidence shows that teachers should not follow any order when presenting grammatical structures.
- 3) Monitor Hypothesis: After learners have digested the rules of a language, they will use them to correct what they are thinking about saying (self-correct) or to correct what they have said (self-repair). According to the monitor hypothesis, learners:
 - Need to have time to think about what they are about to say or have said.
 - Need to focus on "form;" how do I say it so that it is correct?
 - Need to have knowledge and be able to apply rules.
 - Second language learners who are literate in their first language, and adult second language learners, are more likely to use their monitors.
- 4) Input Hypothesis: According to this hypothesis, ideal language input has three characteristics:



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

- The focus is on meaning, more than on the way something is said.
 - Speaking is spontaneous when the learner understands enough.
 - The best input is not necessarily grammatically sequenced.
- 5) Affective Filter Hypothesis: Krashen's last hypothesis states that there are many factors which influence the learner's attitude towards the target language. The ambience in which the language is taught can encourage or discourage the acquisition of the target language. The goal of the teacher should be to create low anxiety, high motivation, and self-confidence.

These hypotheses are often criticized by other experts in the area of second language acquisition for their deficiency of concrete empirical evidence (Barker)⁵. In spite of the criticisms, Krashen's hypotheses make up a complete system to describe how a language is acquired in an intuitive and simple way that non-linguists can understand. (Krashen, Terrel, 89) Therefore, Krashen's theories may be attractive to TEFL educators at the University level in Cuenca, especially those who have no time to keep up with the most recent developments of second language investigation, but at the same time desire a system which seems sound in theory.

1.6. The Communicative Language Teaching and the Total Physical Response Storytelling Methods

At the end of the 1980s designer methods lost popularity, since the concept of using only one method was transformed into the idea of a more general approach to language education called Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Rather than concentrating on a certain set of activities and techniques for the language classroom, the communicative approach puts forth goals that are to be

⁵<http://www.didascalía.be/mortality.htm>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

achieved (Cook, 91). CLT encourages the use of a variety of teaching methods. Teachers should utilize the methods that are the best for their particular situation, if these techniques will help the students to reach the basic goal of CLT, which is communicative competence. Communicative competence means the ability to communicate in an effective and efficient way in the target language. Due to the fact that the focus is on communication, not necessarily on accuracy, CLT puts little or no emphasis on grammar instruction. Communicative Language Teaching has become the most important methodology for EFL teachers in Cuenca from the time of the late 1980s, when it first emerged. It is widely used at a university level in Ecuador.

Total Physical Response Storytelling developed simultaneously with CLT. However, TPRS is a special method; perhaps we could say it is a self-contained method, whereas CLT is an eclectic approach. TPRS entails a solid theoretical foundation and specific techniques that are used exclusively. However, over the years teachers have become discouraged with the idea of using only one method, since one technique after another was discarded and replaced. Many teachers have relied on the Communicative Language Teaching methodology, which offers the educator great freedom in the selection of classroom activities and techniques. At the same time, such freedom has made the approach less structured than former approaches, and the goal of “communicative competence” has seemed ambiguous and unclear. Although TPRS is one more technique in the Communicative Language Teaching methodology, TPRS is an attractive methodology because of its focus on storytelling.

1.7. The Total Physical Response and the Total Physical Response Storytelling Methods

What makes TPR Storytelling interesting is its focus on stories. Asher's classical Total Physical Response combines with the theories of language acquisition of Stephan Krashen to produce a new technique. The goal of a TPRS lesson is to give the students as much fully comprehensible input as possible



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

(Bruner)⁶. Classical TPR is one of the few methods that can achieve comprehensibility in an ideal way. As said before, if a teacher gives a command such as, “Stand up,” he/she acts it out for the class to make sure that everyone understands what is meant. For that reason, at the moment that students hear the command, they have no trouble following it or associating the action with the meaning of the command. However, as stated previously, whereas classical TPR furnishes a high level of comprehensibility, it is restricted to only certain types of words and syntactical structures. Storytelling makes up for this deficiency because, instead of giving students commands, a TPRS teacher uses a story. At the university level the TPRS method could be embellished by introducing short stories that have already been written by famous authors. Then multimedia resources can be added to make the stories more comprehensible. The university teacher elicits physical responses by asking individuals or groups of students to act out the short stories they read. This can be an adequate interactive technique for successful EFL learning. This methodology can be considered a new methodology that uses elements of TPRS with other Communicative Language Teaching techniques, especially with multimedia techniques.

Additionally, in the same way as in classical TPRS, by use of multimedia and short stories, the target language is translated into real-life observable actions which are dramatized by the students, but the actions are more complicated and more realistic than in simple TPR or TPRS methods. Just to give an example, instead of a command such as, “stand up,” the teacher could say a line from a story, such as, “The girl stands up”. The simple stories of TPRS can be replaced by the introduction of existing short stories which allow for the use of much more realistic language and the inclusion of practically any word or structure in a language.

⁶ <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/310/TPRS.pdf>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

1.8. The Total Physical Response Storytelling as a Particularly Successful Method for Teaching English as Second Language at a University Level

The potential of the TPRS method as a tool for teaching English far outweighs the TPR technique and other classical methodologies. Total Physical Response Storytelling includes all of Krashen's hypotheses. TPRS can be well used with CLT. It focuses on the acquisition of language, instead of on the learning of language, by presenting items in a meaningful, observable way, rather than by teaching vocabulary lists and grammatical rules. Through the use of short stories, grammar and vocabulary items may be presented and repeated in a context that is both meaningful and comprehensible to learners, and this situation can be well combined with multimedia resources. In order to provide a structure for the language "monitor" system, new vocabulary is introduced before the story is told, and grammatical explanations of new or difficult forms are explained; several multimedia resources can be used in this process. Following Krashen's "Input Hypothesis," TPRS puts great emphasis on the comprehensibility of the language used during the course of a class. When using the TPRS with the short stories and multimedia techniques, it is very important to be sure that the students comprehend the story, especially with respect to students of lower ability. Multimedia resources such as pictures, podcasts and videos can be well used for this goal.

The TPRS combined with short stories and multimedia resources may help to hold the attention of all the students, and also lower the "affective filter" described in Krashen's fifth hypothesis. Lowering the affective filter means making students feel more at ease in the classroom and in relation to the target language through two major strategies. First, in order to maintain student interest in what is being presented, the short stories should be chosen according to how mysterious and intricate they are in plot and characters. Second, the students should not be expected to produce any language until they have had sufficient exposure to it in a comprehensible setting. Here is where multimedia resources play a very important role in going deeply into a story. Finally, TPRS using short stories and multimedia



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

is not boring because grammar explanations are not part of the technique. According to Krashen's "Natural Order Hypothesis," grammatical explanations have little or no effect on the order in which grammatical structures are acquired. The goal of TPRS is practically the same as that of CLT. It works to produce confident and fluent speakers, who are capable of producing accurate language spontaneously without excessive analysis and translation. The short story multimedia technique derives its strength from the TPRS method which is one type of Communicative Language Teaching.

1.9. The Cognitive Approach

"The Cognitive Approach" appeared in the fifties. It is based on interactive methodologies which include techniques for teaching structure along with multimedia techniques. It has recently acquired acknowledgment because of Plass and Jones' research. These two authors describe how English can be taught effectively through this approach. Three stages appear in this approach: a) comprehensible input, b) interaction, and c) comprehensible output.

1.9.1. Comprehensible Input

In the first stage of the Cognitive Approach for second language acquisition, comprehensible input, the underlying assumption is that the learners need help identifying the critical features in "the wealth of the linguistic and non-linguistic information they receive" (Plass, Jones, 150). The supports found in a multimedia instructional approach can guide what students notice in a word, sentence, passage, or image. However, the teacher needs to help the students by highlighting portions of a multimedia assignment that require attention, thus helping students to focus on their work in an active and productive way. With the teacher's guidance the learner can understand task directions and focus on pertinent information to comprehend or revise as the case may be.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Another strategy for increasing the accessibility of materials is the use of a multimedia glossary for problematic vocabulary. When students have access to images, sentences, and pronunciation of words, their comprehension of the content increases. As an example, when using digital tools for teaching, a glossary can be made accessible to students on **a class blog**, and several multimedia resources can be used with it, such as a crossword puzzle.⁷

The Creation of a Class Blog is a webpage with a dynamic approach due to the active participation of students. It is possible to create a class blog on several online resources. The webpage that provides blogs that were used for this study is *blogger.com*. The teacher becomes the administrator and chooses the design and template, and adds all the information wanted. The students are the participants and they write their posts and comments, which appear in the center of the blog. The teacher is able to put several resources on the sides of the blog, such as lists, pictures, news, and surveys.

1.9.2. Interaction

The second stage of the cognitive approach includes “information links that provide simplification, elaboration, clarification, definitional support, or redundancy” (Plass, Jones, 169). Similar to highlighting important information, teachers can scaffold student comprehension of content-area facts, concepts, and generalizations and the links between them. When considering how students might interact with new content, it is important to ensure that new information be linked to previous learning.

Graphic organizers are effective ways to facilitate this task because they can provide an overview of a new topic and visually represent links between the concepts to be learned.

⁷ There are several online places where a class blog can be created, such as blogger. A crossword puzzle can be made with a software item such as Crossword Forge, which is available for free on the Internet.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Student interactions with content can also be more effective when they have control over the mode of presentation. In a digital environment, for example, some students might prefer hearing short stories read aloud, whereas others might prefer reading them on their own. If reading fluency in the target language is the objective of a lesson, it can be useful to use audio multimedia resources such as podcasts⁸ to provide students with the pronunciation and correct spelling of words, to facilitate their general understanding of texts. Learners have accessibility to the podcasts to listen to them whenever they want, and as many times as they consider necessary.

1.9.3. Comprehensible Output

Plass and Jones define the third stage, comprehensible output, as “the need for use of language in meaningful contexts to develop the learners’ communicative competency” (185). Effective means to support students during this stage include support for self-correction. For example, in a digital environment, text-to-speech programs enable the user to hear what he/she has written and check if a sentence makes sense. In a class blog, students can write their own posts about topics they consider important, and at the same time they can read their classmates’ posts and write comments about them. The teacher can command the learners to write some corrections of errors they may find in their classmates’ posts.

Today’s tendency is to include more multimedia resources through, for example, digital classes. Research on second language acquisition through multimedia resources indicates a need for teachers to focus on both students’ academic and affective learning (191). To do so, teachers need to be aware of the potential discontinuities between learning online and learning at the university. To address this disconnection between Internet and class, many teachers have found success by bringing “socio-cultural (and personal) elements into the classroom curriculum and instruction” by allowing students to select topics for writing assignments. The teacher can also create shared experiences for the entire class

⁸ A podcast is a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically and often downloaded through web syndication.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

through virtual field trips or other cooperative activities using a digital environment. (Rueda, August, Goldenberg, 40)

1.10. Developing Literary Understanding of English

Many researchers say that it is necessary to develop “literary understanding” in students, especially at a university level. Literary understanding is that form of thinking which is characteristically personal and inward, focused on "personal meanings, understandings of human situations and the complex web of relationships embedded in them." (Langer, 3)

In spite of the fact that much attention and effort in the educational field has been focused on the cultivation of critical thinking, these efforts have commonly been unidirectional. Critical thinking has traditionally been understood as springing from the characteristics of scientific reasoning, and so most critical thinking curricula have been confined to the development of the same. Deeply connected to the tradition of the English language arts, for example, is a text-based set of beliefs which states that there are "common images, evocations, and responses to a literary piece that all good readers experience" -- therefore, that "certain approved interpretations of particular phrases, lines, or themes... need to be learned." (Langer, 6) Such standards have led to the development of English as a second language courses that typically encourage scientific, not literary understanding. This can be seen in “classic” books for teaching English at a university level. Interactive methodologies for teaching and learning English offer alternatives to more structural approaches intended to achieve scientific understanding. Whereas structural approaches are based on close uses of English texts and "correct" interpretations, interactive theorists regard learners as active meaning-makers whose personal experiences affect their interpretations of things they are exposed to.

Theories of interactive learning encourage the exploration of various perspectives and the production of personal interpretations of, for example, short



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

stories, leading to the construction of defensible interpretations, and they also make the quality of students' critical and creative thinking the focus of evaluation. They make student-generated questions the center of learning, encouraging a "problem-finding" as well as a "problem-solving" approach to critical thinking similar to the simple TPRS creation of a class story. Interactive learning methodologies emphasize the importance of teaching and learning the processes of literary understanding, which are considered to be important both socially and personally.

At a university level, it can be seen that although interactive methodologies are generally accepted by EFL university professors, in fact these approaches to teaching are still comparatively rare. Perhaps this is because the traditional set-up of the classroom itself acts as a barrier to the successful implementation of interactive practice. Most classrooms, for example, do not have the necessary equipment for using interactive materials that come with textbooks, such as digital boards or digital markers.

1.11. Digital Boards and Digital Markers.

Digital Boards and Digital Markers are electronic devices developed for dynamic teaching. With them, the teacher is able to work on the board as if it was a computer screen. The teacher can write, move things and double click on icons to play audio, open pictures, videos, etc.

The traditional setup of classroom teaching, based on linearity, hierarchical lines of authority, and emphasis on scientific reasoning, on the individual, and on tradition, springs from the evolution of print as the primary medium of communication. (Purves, 19) However, it seems possible that the use of multimedia in the classroom together with printed texts might result in environments more conducive to interactive teaching and learning.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

CHAPTER 2: THE SHORT STORY GENRE AS AN IMPORTANT TOOL TO DEVELOP READING SKILLS

2.1. The Beginning of Literature

In general terms, the human voice is used to produce two things: speech, and song. Speech is a means to communicate images and ideas from one person to another, for purposes of play, work, love, or any of the other ways that people talk to each other. Song has the same meaning, but with a musical background.

The earliest examples of literature are *The Bible* and the epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by the ancient Greek poet Homer, and these early works had as much to do with music as with speech (Encyclopædia Britannica)⁹. In the Bible one of the books of the Old Testament is called “The Song of Solomon.”

The Iliad and The Odyssey are in fact songs, and even today, in places like Albania, there are singing poets who recite epic poems of unknown age. These performers use a one-stringed instrument called a *guslik* to give a musical accompaniment to their recitations. Whether Homer used an instrument like a guslik is unknown, but the system of accents and intonations of ancient Greek was so complicated that if these epics could be produced in their original form, even without a guslik they would be immediately recognizable as songs.

One thing that should be emphasized is the fact that at the time Homer sang The Iliad and The Odyssey they could not be called literature, because they were not written. Homer sang these long poems from memory. He did not use any book; in fact, at the time he lived (about 700 B.C.) there were no books in existence (Fox, 23).

⁹<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/343579/literature>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

The word literature comes from the Latin word *litera*, which means “letter.” So without letters, literature cannot exist. Homer did not write his poems. But his poems were so popular that other people memorized them, and passed them on to their children, until the time came when they could be written down. As of that time, centuries after the death of Homer, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* could be considered literature (Fox, 44).

2.1.1. The Epic Poem

The first literary genre that it is possible to speak of is the epic poem. Epic means that it deals with some very big subject, and poem means that it originally had the element of music. Once *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* became literature, by being written down, they began to lose their music, because fewer and fewer people would actually sing them (let alone memorize them) when they could just read them. Nowadays, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are just read; sometimes read aloud, but never sung.

2.1.2. The Ode

After the genre of epic poetry there came many others, in the area of literature. One of the first of these was the ode, which was also meant to be sung (from Greek *oide*, “song”). This was like the epic, except that it did not have a “big story”; it had a more local, specific scenario, and it was short. There were also several sub-genres of the ode, like the heroic ode, which celebrated the triumph of one single person, as in winning a battle against the country’s enemies, or winning in the Olympic Games. There was also the elegiac ode, to lament the death of someone; and the lyric ode, or “love song.” (Gosse, 64)

2.1.3. Drama

Another literary genre that was born in ancient Greece was “drama,” which combined literature with live action, on a stage. Both “tragedies” (to make people



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

suffer) and “comedies” (to make people laugh) were produced and enjoyed during the golden age of Athens (from about 500 to about 400 B.C.)

2.1.4. Literary Genres Born After Greek Times

The Romans, who ruled the world after Greece, also invented many genres of literature, including “satire” (making fun of some person or some people or some things that people do), “the scientific journal,” “the epistle,” “biography,” and “the war journal.” (Duiker, Jackson, 140)

Over the course of English history other genres were added to the “literary catalog,” such as the “Spenserian Stanza,” “the sonnet,” and “blank verse”; the “travelogue” (record of a person’s travels), “the directive” (how to do something or make something), “the parody” (funny imitation of something serious, like a mock-epic poem or a mock-tragic drama), “the sermon,” “the opera” (literature that is sung), “autobiography” (telling the story of one’s own life), and “the novel.”

2.1.5. The Appearance of Unsung Literary Genres

All literary genres are still divided into the original two categories of literature that were mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: those that are sung, and those that are just spoken. After the epic poem (sung) and the odes (sung) “unsung” genres of literature, like “history,” “philosophy,” and “journal” began to appear.

These two categories of literature – the “sung” ones and the “spoken” ones, correspond to what are called today “poetry” and “prose,” respectively. Among the most important genres that use prose are the novel and the short story.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.1.6. The Appearance of the Short Story Genre

The short story, as a literary genre, is a comparatively modern invention (about 200 years old), and it is one that most scholars and critics attribute to the United States (Encyclopædia Britannica)¹⁰.

Stories have existed since the beginning of literature. The Bible is full of stories: the story of the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man; the story of the Tower of Babel; the story of the Nativity; the story (parable) of the Prodigal Son. There are other ancient stories, also, like Aesop's fables and the 1,001 Nights, and later examples like *the Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. But in this thesis "stories" are not considered as a generic phenomenon; but rather here the short story is thought of as a literary genre, which means the definition is much more precise. Perhaps the best way to define this genre is by listing its characteristics.

2.2. Traits of the Short Story

Determining what exactly separates a short story from longer fictional formats is problematic. A classic definition of a short story is that "one should be able to read it in one sitting," a point made in Edgar Allan Poe's essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (Krutch, 98).

In this essay, Poe listed the following characteristics of The Short Story genre:

1) It must be short

There is no limit as to how short it can be. Ernest Hemingway's story "A Very Short Story" has 634 words. The story "Sheep Rescue," written by 12-year-old Mary Traywick, has only 337 words.

¹⁰<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/343579/literature>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

As far as length goes, we can take “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” by Washington Irving, one of the very first short stories, as one of the longest ever. This story has almost 12,000 words (28 pages in a hardback book). If a story goes any longer than that, then it becomes a “short novel.”

2) It must be prose

Sometimes poems tell stories, but they are still poems. The short story has nothing to do with poetry. It is a prose genre directly related to the novel but shorter.

3) It must have an author

According to Poe, a short story cannot be anonymous. This excludes legends and fairy tales, like “Snow White” and “Cinderella.”

4) It must be self-contained

A short story cannot have any antecedents. The mind of a reader who begins a short story is a “blank page.” Everything that the short story is going to do has to be done “from scratch.” No antecedents, no “afterwords.” No prequels or sequels.

5) It must not have a “context”

If a short story is part of a larger work, then it no longer qualifies as a short story. In modern terms, it is called an episode. This is what disqualifies “The Arabian Nights”: all the 1,001 stories are told by Scheherazade. It also disqualifies “The Canterbury Tales” (which are poetry, anyway) and the “Sherlock Holmes” stories.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

6) It must work uniformly, from the first word to the last, towards an effect or a conclusion

The writer of a short story must know exactly where he or she is going. Once the story starts, every word has to work towards a preconceived goal. Not a single word can be wasted.

A short story is a work of fiction that is written in prose, often in a narrative format. Thus, this literary genre, strictly defined, began with Washington Irving, who lived in the early part of United States history, after the country had won its war for independence against England. He wrote his stories around 1820-1830, when the United States was feeling its independence, as a country, but with many left-over European elements. In his stories can be seen both the end of the old European influence, and the beginning of the new American genre – the true short story.

2.3. Elements of the Short Story

The next thing that should be considered, to have a real understanding of the short story genre, is its elements. There are three elements of the short story:

- 1) Content
- 2) Point of view
- 3) Slant

2.3.1. Content

In terms of content every short story has to have the following:

- 1) Setting
- 2) Characters
- 3) Plot
- 4) Theme



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.3.1.1. Setting

Setting means the “scene,” the “place” where the story is supposed to be happening. Sometimes a short-story writer (like Washington Irving) will spend a long time, at the beginning of a story, just to describe the scene. Sometimes a writer (like Ernest Hemingway) will spend only a single sentence to set the scene.

2.3.1.2. Characters

Characters mean the persons that the story is about, or who participate in the story. Without characters it is obvious that a short story cannot exist – for the simple reason that it would not be a story. It would be a description, or a recipe, or a scientific journal, or something else.

2.3.1.3. Plot

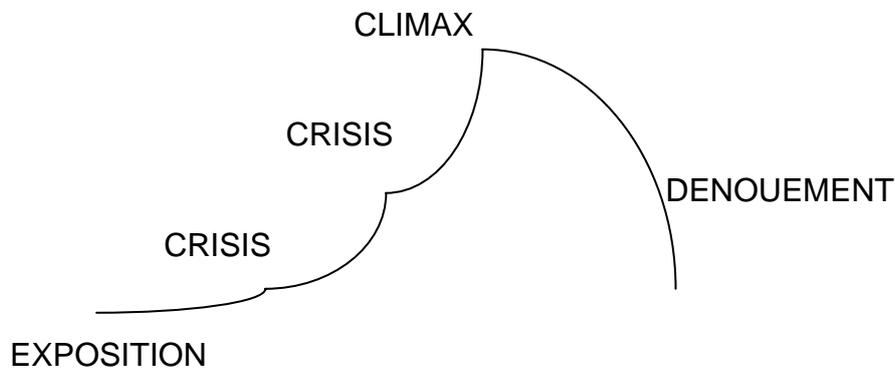
Plot means the story: what happened. Every short story has to tell about something that happened. Sometimes the story is sad, sometimes funny, sometimes just about everyday events. But something always has to happen.

The general pattern of plot development is the same for the short story as for the novel. It looks like this:



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Figure # 1 Sequence of Plot Development in the Short Story



Source: "short story." Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011.

After the author has set the scene of the story and introduced the characters (exposition), he presents some kind of situation: an action, an event, a problem, a question, a wish, a dream, a memory, a prophecy... something to attract the reader's attention and make him or her want to continue reading. Then this situation is developed, together with the setting and the characters, by periodic reinforcements called "crises," which remind the reader that the situation exists, and that it needs a solution. Then, with the "climax," the problem is resolved: an answer is given, for better or worse. But the main thrust of the story, its "punch," is over.

After the climax there usually comes a part of the story called "denouement," where the story is looked at in retrospect. If there is a need for the reader to have an explanation; if the reader wants to know, "And what happened then?" then the writer can bring things to a harmonious conclusion in the "denouement." It ties up the "loose ends."

This outline of the short story, however, is very general and not at all obligatory. Sometimes short story writers want to emphasize the "effect" of their



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

stories, so they pay less attention to “action” and, as a consequence, it is difficult to feel the “climax” of the story (let alone the “crises”). But some of these stories can be considered very good, such as John Steinbeck’s “The Great Mountains,” about a boy who has always wondered what lies beyond the mountains that lie to the west of his father’s flat-land farm. One evening an old man appears, from the west, and announces that he has come all the way down from the mountains to die there, on that farm, because he was born there. But the father of the farm gives him to understand that that is not possible: the old guy can stay that one night, but in the morning he must go. So early in the morning old “Gitano” leaves the farm, taking with him his fellow – the also-moribund horse, “Easter.” They are spotted by a neighbor heading back west – the old man and the old horse – back into the mysterious mountains.

In the evening, after supper the night before, the boy had had a chance to talk to old Gitano. He had asked him his burning question – “What’s behind the mountains?” But Gitano did not help him. He said he did not know. “Probably more mountains,” he said.

So where is the climax in all this? It’s hard to find. Nevertheless, “The Great Mountains” is recognized as an excellent short story.

As for the “denouement,” in “The Interlopers,” by H. H. Munro (“Saki”), the “climax” is the very last word of the story. So how can there be any denouement? Only in the reader’s mind.

The traditional pattern of plot structure is good to keep in mind, but the short story, being by meaning a “free” literary genre, is always trying to explore new techniques; to speak with new voices; to see things a different way; to surprise... to delight... to sadden... to pose a question... to intrigue... to hold in suspense... even to shock.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.3.1.4. Theme

Theme means the “main idea” or the “gist” of the story (the idea that the author had in his mind before he or she started writing).

If the reader is asked, after he or she has finished reading a story, “What was it about – in one sentence?” then the answer to that question is the theme. For example, if the question is, “What is ‘The Masque of the Red Death’ about?” the average reader will probably say, “No one escapes death.” For “The Open Window” it might be “Believe nothing of what you hear and only half of what you see.” For “Sheep Rescue” it could be “A job well done deserves a reward.” And so on.

2.3.2. Point of view

Point of view means “Who’s telling the story?” There are two possible answers to this question: the “omniscient observer”; or the “first person.”

2.3.2.1. Omniscient Observer

In an omniscient observer story, the author is allowed to “know everything”; see everything, hear everything, feel everything. He or she can even go inside the characters’ minds, and tell us what they are thinking.

The omniscient observer is not confined to any particular place or any specific time. He or she can jump around from one scene to another, or into the future, or the past (Encyclopædia Britannica)¹¹. All in all, an omniscient observer is like the director of a movie, who has to choose which scenes to shoot, from which angle, when to change scenes, how the characters should act, etc. Just as the director of a movie is responsible for “creating” the film – making the whole thing

¹¹<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/541698/short-story>.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

work – so the writer of a short story must conceptualize the finished story as a whole, and choose what particulars should be communicated to the reader, and how.

Since the author of an omniscient observer story has no restraints, he or she is never “in a hurry.” Aside from the basic requirement that a short story be comparatively short, and that every word in it be directed toward a significant conclusion, the author is free to spend as much or as little time on any one part as he or she likes – as long as the whole story is not too long.

2.3.2.2. First Person

In the first person story, the author takes the part of “I” and tells the story from that character’s point of view. We find a good example of this technique in “The Cask of Amontillado,” by Edgar Allan Poe, a story that starts like this:

“The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge.”

Once the author takes the part of “I” then he or she can no longer be omniscient. The writer has to “become ‘I’” and relate only what that “I” feels and experiences. On the other hand, the author can make “I” any kind of person: good, bad, strong, weak, a child, sick, crazy, a hypochondriac, an old person, a monomaniac, a nun, a criminal... any kind of character at all, as long as the character is consistent and believable. In “The Cask of Amontillado,” for example, as the story is read it becomes gradually apparent that the “I” protagonist is a psychopathic killer.

One “I” that is extraordinarily ingenious and fascinating is the one in the story “Sheep Rescue,” which was mentioned before as a “very short” (337 words) example of the genre:



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

"I stood in a grassy field, awaiting my master's signal. When he whistled, I crept forward toward the sheep."

As could have been guessed, the "I" of this story is a dog. So is this a "first person" story or an "omniscient observer" story? Obviously, the "I" presentation makes it a 1st-person story, but the fact that the readers are inside the mind of an animal gives it elements of the omniscient observer story, too. What an interesting trick! And it should be remembered that the author of this story is a 12-year-old girl.

2.3.3. Slant

In terms of the short story, "slant" means "a way of looking at something." This, then, is the ultimate question, in relation to a short story – what is the author's slant? – which is closely related to the question, who is the author? No matter how good a short story is, it is only as good as the person who made it; and the reader always, instinctively, wants to "discover" that person.

To "look into the author's mind" and see his or her "slant," it is necessary to see him use the 4 elements of the short story: setting, characterization, plot, and theme. As the writer does this, the readers try to discover, "where is this writer coming from?"

Some of the slants that occur most frequently in short stories are listed in the chart below.

Table # 2 Slants of the Short Story			
Mores	Pathos	Horror	Slice Of Life
Character Piece	Shock	Disguised Moral	Human Sympathy
Humor	Irony	Disguised History	Twilight Zone
Satire	Suspense	Monster	Magical Realism
Source: "short story." Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011.			



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.3.3.1. Mores

Mores means “customs.” Quite often a short story writer focuses upon the mores of the characters in the story.

This is especially true of language. The author has to make the characters of a story speak the language they should be speaking, according to who they are and where they live. If they are poor black people from Mississippi, for example, then they have to speak the way that poor black people from Mississippi speak; and if the author cannot reproduce this speech faithfully then his or her characters will lose credibility, and the writer will seem to be a poor practitioner of the short story art.

And this is not true only of language. The “mores” that an author can introduce into a story, and even make a crucial part of it, include habits and traditions, occupations, dress, food, and beliefs. There are many, many ways that a writer can make mores part of his or her story.

Sometimes a short story maker will write a story that is only about mores, or at least almost so. A good example is “Only the Dead Know Brooklyn,” by Thomas Wolfe. This very short 1st-person narrative is written in heavy “Brooklynese,” and it seems evident that Wolfe wrote the story mainly to record and preserve this curious dialect. The “I” of the story only relates how, the day before, he met a European tourist on the subway who thought that he would be safe on the streets of Brooklyn, and not get lost or mugged, simply because he had a map. “Jeez, what a nut!” is the narrator’s conclusion.

2.3.3.2. Character Piece

Closely related to the “mores” story is another slant that is available to the story writer, called the “character piece.” In this type of story the author’s main focus is upon the development of some character. Setting and plot are important



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

only insofar as they reflect upon the main character. The portrayal of that character is the justification of the story. A good example of a character piece is “Aunt Cynthy Dallett,” by Sarah Orne Jewett.

2.3.3.3. Humor

One obvious slant that a short story author can take is humor. The very shortness of the short story lends itself to this possibility. Most jokes are short. What better way to make a story fascinating and memorable than by making it a joke?

Hundreds of humorous short stories have been written. In fact, this is probably the most common slant of all. A good example is “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty,” by James Thurber, about a man who escapes from his wife’s constant nagging by having a secret dream life where he is always the hero in many fantastic situations (also a character piece).

2.3.3.4. Satire

The humorous slant can also be extended to include satire, which as has been said means making fun of some person or some thing. An example is “The Devil and Daniel Webster,” by Stephen Benet, which makes fun of political orators.

2.3.3.5. Pathos

At the opposite end of the spectrum from humor there is pathos, which means a feeling of sadness. Some short story writers produce stories that make the average reader want to cry. Among the best stories with this slant are the ones by Oscar Wilde, like “The Selfish Giant.”



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.3.3.6. Shock

Other writers want to shock the reader with their stories – to leave him or her speechless, and perhaps even deeply affected. Stories like this are hard to write successfully, of course, but in the cases where it is done well it is a truly stirring experience to read them. These are the stories that people remember the most. A good example is “The Cask of Amontillado,” by Edgar Allan Poe.

2.3.3.7. Irony

Irony is another element that enters into many short stories. Generally speaking, it is “the unexpected” – just what the reader was not prepared for. O. Henry was a very popular short-story writer of the early 20th century who produced exclusively stories with an ironic slant. One of the best of these is “The Gift of the Magi,” about a young married couple who are very poor, but each of them wants to give the other a special present for Christmas. So the girl sells her beautiful long hair (her only valuable possession) so she can buy a gold watch-chain for her husband’s antique pocket watch (an heirloom from his grandfather – his only valuable possession). In the evening, when it comes time to open the presents, it turns out that the husband has sold his watch in order to buy a set of beautiful turquoise hair-combs, that he knows she has wanted for a long time, to put in her long beautiful hair. This is a wonderful example of irony.

2.3.3.8. Suspense

One of the most versatile instruments that a storywriter has at his command is suspense. Everyone loves suspense. Whether it is for a happy ending or a sad one or a surprise one or a shocking one, everyone wants to see the end. If the storywriter manages the “crises” well, that lead up to the main “climax,” then he or she can create a lot of suspense as a prelude to the climax. One of the best examples of this particular slant is “The Interlopers,” by Saki.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.3.3.9. Horror

Sometimes a writer combines suspense with horror. Horror stories are as popular today as they were when the genre was at its height of popularity some two hundred years ago. Now horror can be found not only in books and plays, but also in films and comics and on the Internet. Edgar Allan Poe is generally recognized as the master of this slant, and his story, “The Masque of the Red Death,” is an excellent example. Another one is “The Monkey’s Paw,” by W. W. Jacobs.

2.3.3.10. Disguised Moral

Sometimes a story is clearly a disguise for something else that the writer wants to say. “Mammon and the Archer,” by O. Henry, for example, has an underlying moral that must be discovered – “Money Changes Everything.” This could be called the “disguised moral” slant. The writer does not state the moral expressly, as Aesop did; but he certainly hopes that the reader will “get it.”

2.3.3.11. Disguised History

Similarly, the author of a story may want to “make a story of history.” He or she wants to capture a moment of history by giving it all the elements of a short story. A good example is “Illinois Afternoon,” by Rev. Alfred Gillespie Youman, which portrays one of the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates prior to the U.S. presidential election of 1860, and which became popular as a “radio story” – that is, people in the 1940s, before television, liked to listen to it being read on the radio (Sterling, 82)



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.3.3.12. Monster

Just as people like horror stories, so also they like to read about monsters such as Gregor Samsa, the “hero” of Franz Kafka’s story “Metamorphosis,” about a man who wakes up one morning to discover that he has changed into a horrible insect. He wonders what he should do, while his landlady is knocking on the door of his room.

Speaking of the most recent innovations in the development of the short story, there are four slants that demand attention: Slice of Life, Human Sympathy, the Twilight Zone, and Magical Realism.

2.3.3.13. Slice of Life

In a Slice of Life story the author tries to make everything ordinary. There is nothing special – no special scene or event, no special person, no real “story.” It is like a photograph of something perfectly common, like someone’s back yard. But if the author is a good storyteller, he or she can still make the story interesting and hold the reader’s attention to the last... and then maybe something special may happen, like a surprise... or it may not. Ernest Hemingway has written two outstanding examples of this kind of story: “Indian Camp,” which does have something special at the end, and “Cat in the Rain,” which has nothing special. In fact, Ernest Hemingway could easily be called the inventor of this particular slant.

2.3.3.14. Human Sympathy

In the Human Sympathy story the reader is asked to identify very closely with a character – so much so that everything that happens in the story is seen and felt through the medium of that character’s personality. The reader “becomes” that person. Probably the best example of this technique is another story by Ernest Hemingway, “A Day’s Wait.”



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.3.3.15. The Twilight Zone

“The Twilight Zone” was the name of a very popular television program of the 1950s and 1960s, which represented scenes and stories from a kind of dream world – half way between realism and fantasy. One of the stories presented on that show – perhaps the most memorable of all – was “An Incident at Owl Creek Bridge,” by Ambrose Bierce, about a man who is sentenced to death during the American Civil War, for treachery, and is about to be hung by the neck until dead by a military tribunal. The rope is placed around his neck, and he is pushed off the bridge, but then... something unexpected happens. The rope snaps in two and the man plunges into the river below, very much alive and surprised and happy to be so. The current carries the man downstream, while the soldiers on the bank shoot at him, unsuccessfully, until finally he is in the clear and can get out of the water. He makes his way across the countryside until he sees his own home, and he imagines the welcome he will receive from his delighted family...

And then, in the last paragraph, the story snaps back to reality. The rope never broke at all. Everything read has taken place only in the mind of the man, in the brief interval between his being pushed off the bridge and his death. The last sentence of the story reveals (or shows, on TV) that the man is in fact dead.

2.3.3.16. Magical Realism

Finally, there is magical realism, which is a genre of literature that became popular in Latin America and later in the whole world in the last half-century, with Gabriel Garcia Marquez and other Latin American writers. This kind of literature requires the reader to suspend all his or her “regular beliefs” as to relationships of time, space, cause, etc. He or she has to be ready to “believe anything.” A good example of this, as a short story slant, is “The Bucket Rider,” by Franz Kafka, the writer already mentioned, in connection with the monster story “Metamorphosis.”

It is possible for a short story to have more than one slant – one principal slant, and another minor slant, or even more than one minor slant. Some of the



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

subsidiary slants that an author can introduce into his or her story are Heroism, which can appear almost anywhere, as a subsidiary theme, as in “The Outcasts of Poker Flat,” by Bret Harte; Violence, as in “The Killers”; and Romance, as in the story, “Sophistication,” by Sherwood Anderson. Symbolism is an element that many short story writers introduce into their tales, as in Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death,” where the number 7 figures repeatedly. And finally there is the Trick – a story that contains a hidden piece of information which, if the reader misses it, makes the whole story meaningless for him or her. “The Ruum,” by Arthur Porges, is an excellent example of this technique, although the principal slant of that story is Magical Realism.

2.4. The Reality of Reading as a Reason to Use Short Stories for TESL

Several critics and analysts are writing about the decline of reading. Reading, as known in our day and age, will be, sooner or later, “replaced” by something else.

For people who are involved with the teaching of English as a profession, this is an all-important question: “Will ‘literature’ die”? People have always thought of the teaching/learning of English as consisting of four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of course, if there is no “reading,” then there is no “writing” either. Who would write something that no one is going to read?

2.4.1. The “Death of Reading” Hypothesis

Several researchers, such as Deaver, say that reading will die in the future. It is necessary to examine the evidence that supports this “death of reading” theory:

- 1) It becomes more obvious every day that “letters” (alphabet letters) are used mainly to divide the world and foment hostility. Which letters? If on



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

the news people carry signs in “other letters,” do their signs gain sympathy for them? No. Just the opposite.

- 2) Aside from the international confusion of letters, there is the internal, innate confusion. How is this string of letters pronounced by a native speaker of English: S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T? Does the pronunciation of it have anything to do with its “literal” representation? No. So why do these centuries-old “letters,” that only serve to confuse, exist? Why not have a better system, that at least relates symbols and sounds faithfully? These questions have been around the academic world for some time, and many theories have arisen, but still without solving the problem completely.
- 3) Aside from the theoretical and emotional arguments that surround the issue of the “death of reading,” there is the simple and inescapable fact that it is already happening. Dyslexia is its physical evidence. But society is also against it. More and more people “never read.” And the average level of reading capacity, in American high schools, has gone “off the charts” - downward.
- 4) Another evidence for the death of “letters” is that there are other options that are faster, clearer, and more efficient. The possibility of improved symbol-sound relationships, such as the International Phonetic Alphabet, or similar systems, has already been mentioned. Then, there are alternate “languages” designed for computers, like cobol and fortran, hypertext and html.

And here, again, the simple fact that it is already happening is evident: [ILUVYU] (“textese”)

Is this the kind of “reading” (and “writing”) that will take over in the future? Probably not, because how would a word like “adolescence” be represented in “textese”?



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

In a phonetic system, the same word would be represented by using special symbols, which give a true and exact representation of how the word sounds, in English, according to a specific system. But this is only for people who make a study of the relationship between symbols and sounds.

Likewise, in all the cases of “specialized” languages (business languages, HTML, codes), these are only for the people who know those specialized languages; so that kind of “reading” may or may not survive. Here, the subject is not specialized reading, but reading in general.

Maybe this will become a major division of “readers” in the future: those who want to “see speech,” and those who want to keep the old, traditional ways of reading alive (in every language) because what they want is to “think” (“see?” “imagine?” “feel?” “touch?” [Braille]) what they are reading?

But so far the topic has been “written” systems. What about pictures? A recent issue of Time magazine (August 2010) was devoted to “What Animals Think,” and it explained how certain monkeys called bonobos can be “fluent” in up to 400 “icons,” which they arrange systematically (like letters and words) to create sentences and make requests. For example, a “bread” icon followed by a “cheese” icon followed by a “tomato” icon is a request for pizza. Some of these icons can be based on alphabet letters, it is true, but the fact that the monkeys recognize the icons as entities rather than as combinations of individual letters is a big step away from “alphabet reading.” To communicate the idea of “flood,” for example, one bonobo put the icon for “big” (letter-based) before the icon for “water” (picture).

Thinking about pictures, it is interesting to consider the change that has occurred in the relationship of reading to prohibitions.

When did the “NO _____ING” signs start to die? Several years ago they were everywhere: “No Smoking,” “No Parking,” “No Swimming,” “No Camping,”



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

etc. Nowadays they are hardly ever seen. Instead, there is a picture with a slanted red line through it. The picture can be either of a letter – the first letter of the corresponding verb, like for “No Parking,” or it can be a picture of the forbidden entity, as for “No Pets” or “No Cell Phones.” But what is important, in either case, is that reading per se, reading letters and words, has been replaced by something more direct and efficient... at least in the area of prohibitions. Death of reading? Yes. Or at least drastic change in “reading,” again.

Clearly, one of the functions of reading is “prohibition.” And while the role of reading in relation to prohibition has been reduced, through pictures, it seems certain that prohibition will continue to depend principally on reading, as with the penal code, traffic violations, etc. The future of reading in the realm of prohibition is difficult to forecast. But no one is justified in saying that reading will die in that area.

With respect to the subject of prohibitions, it is advisable to think about what other functions “reading” has fulfilled, traditionally. One that comes to mind right away is instruction. Here, as with prohibition, there has been a major change away from words and towards pictures. When buying a dish rack, or a chair, or a table, or anything that has to be “assembled,” probably the “assembly instructions” will be given in pictures, not words, for the simple reason, again, that there are so many different words. What good do instructions in English do for a person who wants to set up a tent in China? Or vice-versa? But with pictures the process becomes easy, for anyone, anywhere. And this process is repeated again and again, every day, all over the world. In the airport, if it is necessary to find the “Men’s Room,” the first thing to look for is a picture.

On the other hand, as with prohibitions, there are some instructions which have to be written, because they cannot be represented pictorially. How could the “golden rule” (“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”) be represented with a picture? How could “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind” be represented pictorially?



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

It is clear, therefore, that, in relation to prohibitions and instructions, reading will probably not die, at least not altogether. It has a function.

There is a very interesting movie about reading as related to prohibition and instruction. It is called “The Book of Eli.” It depicts a post-nuclear-holocaust world where books exist, but only as relics. Nobody reads them; in fact, nobody knows how to read. Intellectually, the world has regressed to the Stone Age.

At the time the movie is supposed to be happening, it is 30 years after the “flash,” and there are only two pre-flash people still alive. One is black and the other is white. We can assume that they are now 50 or 60 years old. Everyone else in the world is younger than 30, and although they see the remains of the pre-flash civilization around them, and they have a vague notion of the “flash,” they are basically cavemen.

The black pre-flash man has the only existing Bible, since all the Bibles were burned after the flash. He has heard it and read it and memorized it and loved it all his life. He does not know what to do with it, really, but he knows that it is the salvation of this new “post-flash” society; and then a mission is divinely communicated to him: he has to carry it west, all the way across the continent... just west; and then he will find out what to do with it. So he starts walking... west. His ascetic lifestyle has made him a true samurai; he has to defend himself all the time, against the neo-cavemen.

His route west brings him into the realm of the white pre-flash man, who has a small empire and who realizes that if he has the Bible in his hands he will conquer the world. History is repeating itself. Very gradually people are discovering that there are certain immutable truths and modalities of living that make life better, and they attach themselves to the people who “know” these truths and exemplify the “good” modalities, although it be instinctively. Eventually, everything that was discovered in the pre-holocaust history of mankind will be repeated – from religion to atomic physics to cell phones to rock music. And as a result, the person who can



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

find and control the sum of all that previous human development will have the means to control the world. He will have the “end” right at the beginning. And what is that “end,” that “sum”? The Bible. So, the man concludes, if he can get a copy of the Bible he will control the whole world, since he is the only person who understands what is in the Bible, and what it is about. He thinks of the Bible as a “weapon.”

Once he realizes that there is a person in his domain who has a real Bible (through his spies, who have brought him thousands and thousands of other books – not “the one with a cross on it!”) he is ready to do anything to get that Bible. He makes contact with the black man and uses everything in his power to get that book: persuasion, seduction, threats, and of course murder.

At last he leaves the black man for dead and returns triumphantly with the book “with the cross on it” to his “castle.” The lock on the book is a bit of problem, but he puts his engineers to work on that.

When they finally get it open, it is a bunch of blank sheets.

Meanwhile, the black man has recovered and continued his trek westward. He escapes from the realm of the white villain and finally arrives at Alcatraz Island. He gains entrance by announcing (from his boat) that he has a Bible. The moral community that lives on the island admits him immediately and demands to see the Bible. They have an enormous library, with hundreds of volumes... but no Bible. These are the neo-neo-cavemen, who know that humanity has a great future. Although they are “post-flash,” they know intuitively that there does not have to be another flash. Humankind can find salvation. And now... the Bible?

The black man makes them understand that he does not have the Bible “on” him... he has it “in” him. He has it memorized. So he finds a person who is willing to sit down with a pen and start writing. And from there the story goes on, until the end of the black man’s life, practically.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

And thus the Bible is saved, in the post-flash era, and mankind, too.

This is a pretty fantastic movie, but its message is very clear: it is that reading will not die. In fact, in a world where no one reads the person who does read becomes all-powerful, because he can know all the prohibitions and all the instructions that mankind can know.

2.4.2. The “Reading Will Not Die” Hypothesis

Researchers argue that reading as a function of prohibition and of instruction will die – or at least will change so much that it will be unrecognizable, in terms of what it is now. Does that mean that reading will die, completely? No, because there is a third function of reading, which is art. Literature is art, and it will not die.

Are people saying that music will die? Do they say that painting will die? Or sculpture? Of course not. Neither should they say that reading will die, because reading, as a human art, is a reflection of the real world, just as music and painting and sculpture are. The human race needs “stories.” The Bible is full of stories, and much of its teaching is communicated through stories, as with Jesus’ parables. Then there is Aesop, and The Iliad and The Odyssey, and history, and philosophy, and science, and the gospel. All of this exists because of reading, and depends upon reading to exist, because it is art. It is part of mankind’s endeavor to explore the universe around us, and make sense out of it, and use it to our advantage.

One very encouraging manifestation of reading’s non-death is the success of children’s magazines.

It is a fact that the proportion of “home-schooled” children and adolescents in the United States is increasing at an unprecedented rate every year. Not only do many Muslims and Latinos and African Americans want to spare their children the possible humiliation of an in-presence high school experience, but more and more



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Americans themselves are becoming sick of the regimentation, homogenization, and indoctrination of American youth in the schools and high schools. And so they turn to a more personalized, more “in-the-home” (and surely more “in-the-heart”) approach to their children’s education. And here it is that reading comes back in.

Hand in hand with home schooling goes “detelevisionization” (and “devideogameization.” Since the home-schooled minor has to learn (with or without the guidance of his/her parents) the prescribed material for each subject for each year – the same material that is given “in presence” in the schools and high schools – that child has to study, and learn. It’s not a vacation. And what is the best way to learn, at home: Watching television? No! Playing video games? No! Using the Internet? Yes! But of course that involves reading.

Once the home-schooling parents realize how important reading is, for their home-schooled child(ren), then they want them to become expert readers as early as possible. As a result, the “Kid’s Mag” industry is growing by leaps and bounds. A typical publisher has 14 magazines, divided into age groups (3-6 up to 14+) and areas of interest (history and culture; literature and imagination; ideas and science). And the best part of all is that these magazines are not made just for children and adolescents, but by and for them. The content of the magazine, at whatever level, is supplied by writers of that level. As an example, there is, again, the short story, “Sheep Rescue,” by 12-year-old Mary Traywick, of Cary, North Carolina. Her story was published in the July/August issue of Cricket magazine (age group: 10+ ; category: literature and imagination) as first prize winner of the March 2010 Story Contest.

It seems that it can be stated positively that reading as it is known will not die, altogether, because, as has been seen, it has the three functions of prohibition, instruction, and art. But now it is necessary to turn attention to the question of how much it will survive. If it becomes restricted to a very small sector of the general population, then it cannot really be said that it has survived. The computer languages cannot be counted as “reading” material because they are



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

restricted to the people who know those languages. Phonetically-based languages (except Textese) cannot be counted either because they require people to make a special study of the phonetic system involved. And Textese cannot be counted either, because it restricts the scope of “reading” drastically, so that reading’s function as “art” is practically eliminated. Is it possible to imagine any piece of real reading, in the traditional sense, being represented in Textese? No. Not even a short story, like one of Aesop’s fables.

So how many people will still read, 50 or 100 years from now? Will it be one person in ten, or one in 50, or one in a hundred? Will reading be the hobby of a few old diehards? Or will it still be an important human function?

To answer this question, it is necessary to think about the competition reading has. A hundred years ago it was easy to think of typical “reading” situations: a person (of any age) curled up in an easy chair, reading a book for entertainment and/or instruction; a mother (or father) reading a bedtime story to children; a person reading aloud to a bedridden person; a student reading some material in order to write a composition about it afterward (homework).

All these situations still occur, of course, but are they as common as they used to be? Not by any means. The person curled up in the chair will more likely have a laptop, or a cell phone, nowadays, instead of a book. The children will probably prefer a television show or a video game to a bedtime story, as preparation for sleep. And the bedridden person will also prefer some kind of electronic entertainment, rather than being read to. And the student who has to study a given amount of printed material in order to do a homework assignment on it, rather than just “reading” that material will probably seek some audio-visual aids on the internet – syntheses, charts, graphs, pictorial representations, spoken summaries... all kinds of alternate methods of information gathering, organization, and assimilation, which fundamentally alter the nature of what used to be considered “reading.”



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

And this reminds us that when we think about the future of the printed word we need to keep in mind not only the question of how many people will read in the future – whether the number of readers will increase or decrease, or disappear completely – but also the question of what kind of material people will give their attention to: whether it will be the printed word, as we have always known it, or whether it will be some alternate system of symbols and semantemes which could range from “almost the same” as reading as we know it today all the way to some system that is so new and different that an average reader of today would have no idea about how to comprehend it.

The idea that reading will die has never been accepted 100%. To support the theory that the death of reading is a myth, there was a study carried out by Eliot Van Buskirk in 2009 about “Rumors of Written-Word Death Greatly Exaggerated.” Van Buskirk states that in the United States, print consumption has declined since 1960, but words delivered by computer have more than made up the difference. Conventional wisdom holds that YouTube, videogames, cable TV and iPods have turned us away from the written word. Glowing streams of visual delights replaced paper and longhand letters shrank to bite-sized Facebook status updates. Conventional wisdom, in this case, is wrong. We’re reading far more words than we used to. Americans consumed 3.6 billion terabytes of information last year, averaging 11.8 hours of information consumption per day.

As for what the “terabytes of information” consist of, the article says the Internet is about the death of the written word as a means of exchange and a store of value. As a method of conveying information, written words are inefficient and ambiguous. Sounds and images are far superior. Thus, textual minimalism is replacing books and periodicals.

However, that ‘textual minimalism’ sure adds up fast. No matter how you slice it, this study found text to be a bigger part of our lives than it was 30 years ago.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

So, although the traditional “written word” is going through a well-deserved process of demise, the opposite is true of “text” – especially “textual minimalism” which, it seems, still depends upon the written word. Technology may have truncated and warped the written word in some cases, while increasing competition for our time. But as borne out by this new data, technology hasn’t found a substitute for the written word as a means of conveying certain types of information. And, in fact, it has made reading and writing even more essential parts of everyday life.

In the last analysis of the article, then, it is the question of what this “truncation” and “warping” consists of, and how extensive it will become, that demands our attention. How far will “textual minimalism” be carried? As for the answer... it looks like only time will give us that.

2.4.3. A Study: How Much Do University Students’ in Cuenca Read Traditional Text?

For this study, a total of seven class blogs were created in three universities in Cuenca during a time of fourteen months. These class blogs were carried out parallel to regular classes. Three blogs were created for University of Cuenca intensive English classes in the Department of Languages: one for a second level class, one for a fourth level, and one for a fifth level. Two blogs were created for the Pan American University, both for advanced English students of a class called The Short Story. Finally, two blogs were created for the “Universidad Dual Empresarial of Cuenca,” both for students of the second level of general English. A total of 142 students participated in the surveys. The same students read the stories, carried out the activities, and produced videos at the end of their courses.

Trying to answer the question, “How many hours a week do university students in Cuenca read traditional text?” a survey was carried out on the seven EFL class blogs. The students were able to click onto one of the options that were below the question. The options were as follows:



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

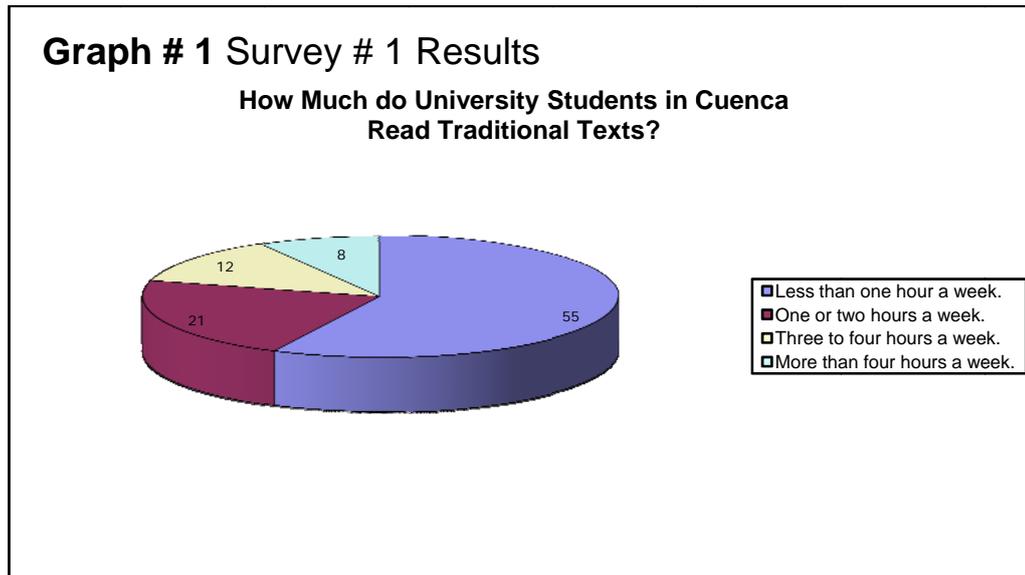
1. Less than one hour a week
2. One or two hours a week
3. Three to four hours a week
4. More than four hours a week

A side explanation mentioned that students were supposed to answer only concerning narrative readings. This includes literary works, magazines, blogs, and online books (excludes micro-blogging reading, such as social networks). In total, 96 students participated in the survey. The results are presented in the following graph:

Table # 3 Survey # 1 Results	
How much do university students in Cuenca read traditional text?	
Frequency	Number of Students
Less than one hour a week	55
One or two hours a week	21
Three or four hours a week	12
More than four hours a week	8
Source: Author	



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA



One of the main concerns of students' reading less traditional texts is that the level of "literary understanding" is lowering. Critics say that it is evident that there is a need to establish more practical pedagogical methodologies to facilitate the development of literary understanding at the university level in Cuenca. "Literary understanding" is that form of thinking which is characteristically personal and inward, focused on "personal meanings, understandings of human situations and the complex web of relationships embedded in them" (Langer, 3). Literary understanding can be seen as an important type of analytical thought, as distinguished from "scientific reasoning," which is characterized as impersonal, objective, and rational. Indeed, scholars over the years (e.g. Bruner) have theorized that these two forms of thinking represent some of the various forms by which people interpret and give meaning to their own world, and that, as such, both are indispensable to mature thinking. Literary understanding tends to be lowering today, giving way to a more scientific reasoning. This means that students are thinking in a more logical way (impersonal, objective, and rational) and are thinking less in an holistic way (personal and inward); nevertheless, it is important to keep a balance of both types of analytical thinking for various reasons. Literary understanding can certainly be developed in learners by using short stories regularly in the EFL class.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

2.4.4. Conclusion

Which direction will reading – traditional reading – take? Will it become rarer and rarer, as society becomes more and more technology oriented? Or will more and more people (both adults and children) turn back to traditional reading, as instruction and art? The encouraging sign represented by the growth of children’s magazines has already been mentioned. Maybe this trend will become increasingly prevalent. Using short stories in TEFL classes could encourage university students to develop the habit of reading literature often, and in this way not only improve reading skills, but also develop literary understanding.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

CHAPTER 3: LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE WITH MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

3.1. The Expansion of Multimedia

Multimedia is the integration of multiple forms of media. This includes text, graphics, still photographs, animations, sound, video, and digital resources, with which users can interact (Swan, Mitrani, 23).

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the methods for acquisition of a second language that appeared in the last decades can be grouped into two pedagogical views. First, proponents of “the structural approach” argue that drill and practice is the best way to learn grammar and vocabulary, which is the basis of L2 acquisition. Second, the interactive approach emphasizes the way the learner interrelates with language. An effort is made to make language acquisition a more active process. Instruction is based on activating prior knowledge and allowing the learner to build the cognitive skills necessary to acquire the language (Plass, Jones, 153). Today, it is commonly seen in textbooks and programs that a combination of interactive and structural approaches is applied for teaching English as a second language. It is also evident that multimedia is expanding and providing more and better tools for instruction. Books and programs for teaching English are increasingly coming out with graphics, still photographs, animations, sound, video, and digital resources.

3.2. Reasons to Believe that Adding Multimedia to Text is Conducive to Successful Learning of English

The researchers Swan and Matriani, in their article “The Changing Nature of Teaching and Learning in Computer Based Classrooms,” give several reasons for believing that multimedia added to traditional text might produce successful learning of English. These reasons are summarized in the next 6 points:



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

- 1) Multimedia encourages independent learning through student control of information and events and can therefore foment interactive student-centered learning. Indeed, teaching and learning in computer labs has been notably more student-centered than teaching and learning in traditional text-based classrooms.
- 2) Multimedia has proven to be a potent stimulus for interactive learning. It can increase socially mediated learning processes.
- 3) Multimedia supports constructionist ideas of learning, which state that learning takes place when students actively and collectively build knowledge structures. Computer-based presentations can make this process explicit, thus increasing the probability that students will retain what they are learning.
- 4) Multimedia encourages multiple presentations of knowledge and nonlinear interpretations, and can open the door to a wide range of information from which multiple meaning and interpretations spring.
- 5) The visual and aural elements of multimedia support diverse learning styles. These same elements make multimedia a rich and motivating learning process, thus contributing to high levels of engagement and involvement (Chomsky).
- 6) Finally, multimedia creates an opportunity for teachers to reformulate their own understanding of the role of text-books in the teaching and learning of EFL, and, as a result, their own ideas concerning participation in the teaching/ learning process. In fact, many contemporary scholars believe that multimedia is the perfect path towards interactive approaches to the teaching, learning, and evaluation of literary understanding (Landow).



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

But perhaps the most important issue is to choose the correct multimedia resources for each case, considering that with the advance in technology today vast external resources can be found, and many times classroom possibilities are limited.

3.3. A Study: Evaluation of Multimedia Programs and Textbooks Used at the University Level in Cuenca

Intending to identify the use of multimedia and the interactivity of textbooks and programs currently used at a university level, a study was carried out using an assessment blog. The idea of this study was to explore the characteristics of multimedia that support the teaching and learning process of English. The study's first stage involved reviewing existing multimedia resources, including graphics, still photographs, animations, video, and online resources included in the textbooks as well as programs currently used for teaching English. A major goal of the study was to develop criteria to help scholars think about multimedia resources and their role in interactive teaching and learning of English. The results of this study greatly help us decide which books and programs are more adaptable to local academic needs.

3.3.1. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation group was composed of 5 professors of English as a Foreign language and 42 students who were actively involved in the area of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language and who had been able to work with several multimedia resources. The study was performed in a blog where the teachers and the students were accessed as participants and were exposed to surveys. It was decided that responses within each category would include ratings on a 10-point scale for comparative quantitative purposes. Also, for a qualitative analysis, some considerations were written in the blog to assess the ratings. Resources with a score of four or below were seen as being "poor," those with ratings of five to seven were seen as being "adequate," and those with ratings of



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

eight or higher as being "good." A survey and a written description of books and programs were developed on the blog to make the evaluations. Six evaluative categories were created:

1. Content clarity
2. Use of technology
3. Linguistic View
4. Student participation
5. Teacher participation
6. Accessibility

The evaluation was presented on a template where the teaching resource was mentioned and evaluators were asked to click on a scale of 1 to 10, considering the criteria of 1 to 4 as "poor," 5 to 7 as "adequate," and 8 to 10 as "good." Evaluators were asked to evaluate only resources they were familiar with.

3.3.1.1. Content Clarity

Content clarity is concerned with the general accuracy, completeness, and appropriateness of an EFL textbook or software for the students. It is also concerned with whether the structure of a resource and its use of multimedia are adequate to its content.

This category also asks whether a given textbook or software use of multimedia is intrinsic (serves to enhance content) or extrinsic (decorative) and whether or not it is aesthetically pleasing overall.

3.3.1.2. Use of Technology

Use of technology is concerned with whether an EFL textbook or software makes good use of multimedia technologies or whether its content could be just as



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

well or better presented using more conventional means. It is particularly concerned with the multimedia aspects of particular resources.

3.3.1.3. Interactivity

With respect to Interactivity, reviewers were asked whether a textbook or software encouraged a structural or an interactive approach to language acquisition. If the evaluation was closer to 10, it meant that the book was more interactive.

3.3.1.4. Student Participation

Student participation is concerned with whether learners are aided or hindered by a didactical resource design. This category considers the degree of student control over a textbook or program, and evaluators were also asked whether or not a resource might support student discussion and interaction.

3.3.1.5. Teacher Participation

Teacher participation is concerned with whether a teacher is aided or hindered by textbooks or programs. It considers whether resources include teacher materials and/or didactical management tools, and whether or not a textbook or program promotes student-teacher interaction.

3.3.1.6. Accessibility

Although this study was primarily concerned with accuracy of multimedia materials in textbooks and programs for interactive EFL teaching and learning processes, how such materials are used will ultimately determine their success. Bad materials can be used well; good materials can be used poorly. The new tendency of Ecuadorian laws is to improve classroom environment for appropriate learning. Evaluators felt, therefore, that a category should be included that dealt



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

with accessibility. In the case of programs, evaluators rated the possibility of using the program “anywhere” and “at any time.” In the case of textbooks, evaluators were asked about actual potential of using certain extra materials that come with a particular book in local classrooms.

3.3.2. Results of the Study

The results of the study of interactivity of English books and programs used at a university level in Cuenca are summarized in the order they were presented.

3.3.2.1. Evaluation of Programs

Two multimedia programs were reviewed: *Longman English Interactive*, and *Tell Me More Performance English*. They were chosen according to local university uses and possibilities, considering actual practice and accessibility by scholars. The study also analyzed the software that is currently used and its acceptability by learners.

Longman English Interactive (LEI) is a 4-level online program based on video, which intends to develop integrated skills such as structure, oral expression and comprehension, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, and writing. These programs are continuously being uploaded, and they require a license that can be purchased on the Internet.

Tell Me More Performance English (TMMPE) is a 10-level interactive computer based program. It is meant to be student centered, and the teacher is supposed to guide the learning process indirectly. This program also intends to develop integrated skills, and its main difference from the other program assessed is that it uses translation in several activities and tends to be more structural from a linguistic point of view. This was seen in the results of the evaluation, which are described next:



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

3.3.2.1.1. Content Clarity of Programs

The first evaluation category, content clarity, considered the general quality of the programs, and they were rated quite high in this matter (7.1). LEI was evaluated as “good” (7.7), whereas TMMPE was viewed as “adequate” (6.5). This indicates that available multimedia ESL programs are of generally good quality and well accepted by scholars.

3.3.2.1.2. Use of Technology of Programs

In the second category, use of technology, multimedia resources were rated as accurate or not and if their existence was justified. Again, in this criterion, LEI was seen as “good,” with an average score of 8.4, whereas TMMPE was assessed as “adequate,” with an average score of 7.6. This category obtained the highest rates overall (8.0), meaning that the programs are of good quality and well accepted by learners.

3.3.2.1.3. Interactivity of Programs

When evaluating the linguistic view, it was seen that both programs used primarily an interactive approach, with an average of 7.1. Nevertheless, there was a considerable difference between LEI, with a rate of 7.9, seen as “good,” and TMMPE, with a score of 6.3, seen as adequate.

3.3.2.1.4. Student Participation in Programs

The category of Student Participation is concerned with whether students are empowered or constrained by a multimedia program; reviewers gave high ratings to this criterion (8.0), indicating that they felt the students were somewhat empowered by the multimedia programs evaluated. LEI was rated with 7.8, seen as adequate, whereas TMMPE received a score of 8.2, seen as good.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

3.3.2.1.5. Teacher Participation in Programs

The category of Teacher Participation is concerned with whether a teacher is empowered or constrained by a program, and with whether or not a program promotes student-teacher interaction. Reviewers gave this criterion the lowest ratings of any category (4.1), indicating that they felt that teachers were essentially disregarded by the multimedia programs reviewed. LEI received a score of 4.6 and TMMPE was rated with 3.6. These 2 programs were seen as poor in this regard. Interactive approaches suggest that students and professors work uniformly towards successful second language acquisition, and these programs showed poor student-professor interaction. Such results are quite discouraging. They indicate that these programs, rather than breaking new ground in EFL teaching and learning, have generally adopted older and more traditional pedagogical approaches. McLuhan suggests that new media generally follow old forms, as in the cases of, for example, the Gutenberg Bible, or early movies. Perhaps it is too early to be overly discouraged. Perhaps, on the other hand, it is a good time to become proactive on such issues.

3.3.2.1.6. Accessibility

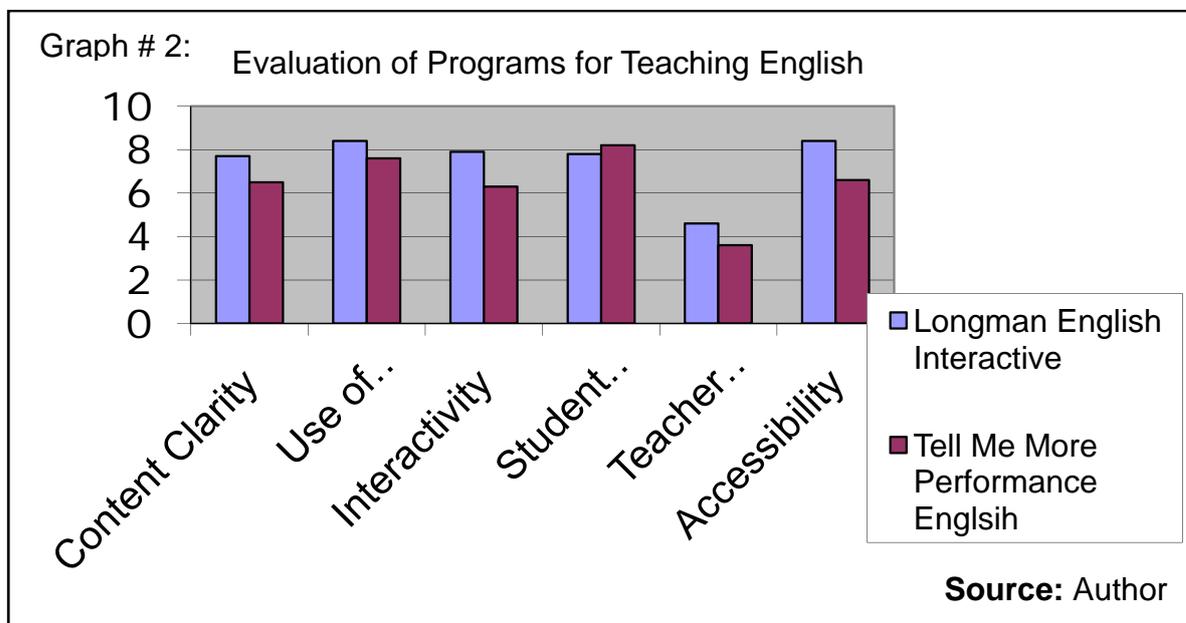
The category "accessibility" is concerned with how a multimedia resource or program might require specific technical environments, or if it can be accessed from any computer at any place. Both programs received a high score in this criterion (7.5), although there exists a remarkable difference between one and the other. It was seen that LEI is more flexible because it can be accessed from the students' homes with a user ID and password, whereas TMMPE requires software on a CD which necessitates certain computer specifications. LEI was designed to be used online, and it can be accessed from different platforms (Windows, Linux, MacOS); it was rated with 8.5 in this criterion, seen as good, whereas TMMPE was designed as a software for Windows exclusively. It received a score of 6.6.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Table # 4 Survey # 2 Results						
Evaluation of Multimedia Programs						
	Content Clarity	Use of Technology	Interactivity	Student Participation	Teacher Participation	Accessibility
Longman English Interactive	7.7	8.4	7.9	7.8	4.6	8.4
Tell Me More Performance English	6.5	7.6	6.3	8.2	3.6	6.6
Average	7.1	8	7.1	8	4.1	7.5

Source: Author



3.3.2.2. Evaluation of Textbooks for Teaching English

Five ESL textbooks were reviewed. They are books that are currently used at a university level in Cuenca.

1. *American Cutting Edge* is an EFL textbook produced by Longman English International, aimed at young and adult learners. Its pedagogical view is, as stated in its web page, that it is based on “solid



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

grammar work, a focus on high-frequency vocabulary and regular well-structured speaking tasks.”

2. *New Interchange* (Third Edition), produced by Cambridge University Press, is considered by many scholars “the best book for teaching English as a Foreign Language ever.” It is aimed at young and adult learners with several multimedia materials. Its pedagogical view is to promote an interactive acquisition of English with dynamic practice and communication between teacher and learner.
3. *New Headway* by Oxford University Press is an EFL textbook aimed at young adults, based on extensive structure practice through “interactive exercises, puzzles, and games.”
4. *Hemispheres* is a four-level integrated skills series for adults and young adults. It is said that it is aimed at developing language and critical thinking skills. McGraw-Hill Higher Education produced it in 2009.
5. *Touchstone* is a textbook for adult and young adult learners of English. It is produced by Cambridge University Press, based on pragmatics research into “the Cambridge International Corpus of North American English - a large database of everyday conversations and texts that shows how people actually use English.” It uses an interactive pedagogy with an inductive approach to structure.

3.3.2.2.1. Content Clarity of Textbooks

The first evaluation category, content clarity, considers the general quality of the textbooks and, as with the programs, in general, the textbooks were rated quite high in this matter (7.2). This indicates that available multimedia ESL textbooks are of generally good quality and well accepted by scholars.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

3.3.2.2.2. Use of Technology of Textbooks

In the second category, use of technology, accuracy of multimedia resources were rated, to see if their existence was justified. Again, this criterion obtained the highest rates overall (7.5) stating that the textbooks are of good quality and well accepted by learners.

3.3.2.2.3. Interactivity

When evaluating the linguistic view, it was seen that the tendency today is that interactive approaches are predominant with extensive communication between teacher and student, but structural approaches are also important for providing techniques to improve grammar and vocabulary learning. In this criterion, the average was of 6.2.

3.3.2.2.4. Student Participation

The category of Student Participation is concerned with whether students are empowered or constrained by a textbook and its multimedia resources. Reviewers gave high ratings to this criterion (7.7), indicating that they felt the students were somewhat empowered by the textbooks evaluated and that the textbooks were “good” in this category.

3.3.2.2.5. Teacher Participation

The category of Teacher Participation is concerned with whether a teacher is empowered or constrained by a textbook, and with whether it promotes student-teacher interaction. Again, reviewers gave this criterion the lowest ratings in any category (4.5), indicating that they felt that teachers were generally disregarded by the textbooks reviewed.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

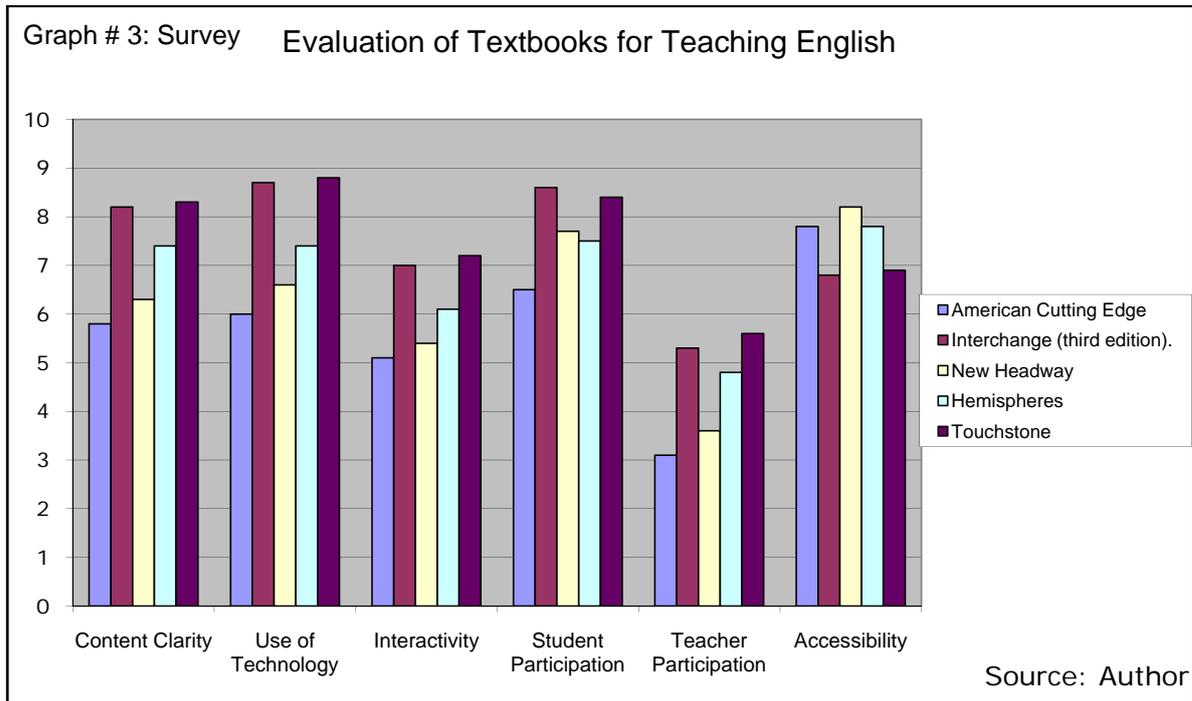
3.3.2.2.6. Accessibility

The category “accessibility” is concerned with the way a textbook might be easily acquired or not by learners and if its multimedia extra resources might be useful or not in a general classroom seen in our area. In general, the textbooks for teaching English as a second language reviewed were seen as “adequate” for classroom usage in Cuenca, receiving a score of 7.5. Nevertheless, it was seen that they tend to come with more “unuseful” technologies, which require academic environments with high economic resources.

Table # 5 Survey # 3 Results						
Evaluation of Textbooks for Teaching English at a University Level in Cuenca						
	Content Clarity	Use of Technology	Interactivity	Student Participation	Teacher Participation	Accessibility
American Cutting Edge	5.8	6	5.1	6.5	3.1	7.8
Interchange (third edition).	8.2	8.7	7	8.6	5.3	6.8
New Headway	6.3	6.6	5.4	7.7	3.6	8.2
Hemispheres	7.4	7.4	6.1	7.5	4.8	7.8
Touchstone	8.3	8.8	7.2	8.4	5.6	6.9
Average	7.2	7.5	6.2	7.7	4.5	7.5
Source: Author						



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA



3.3.3. Conclusions

The results of the survey of available multimedia resources and programs for teaching English at a university level reveal that while such resources are generally of high content clarity and use of technology is linked to works commonly taught in universities, the pedagogical approaches are not interactive. In general, it was found that the approaches tend to be a combination of both, interactive and structural views, adapted to specific academic environments.

Also, the preliminary findings indicate that most available multimedia resources and programs are at this point matching a balance between technology and pedagogy. That is, most of the programs and textbooks evaluated exploit the capabilities of multimedia technologies, often very good for successful second language acquisition. Nevertheless, it was seen that several graphics, animations, sound, video, hypertext, and colors were used to seemingly no purpose. In the resources reviewed, it was seen that resources support the development of integrated skills and "correct" interpretations of English, and that they can be very



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

well used with short stories for the development of literary understanding, as it is analyzed in the next chapter.

A major goal of this study was to develop criteria to help scholars think about multimedia resources and their role in interactive teaching and learning of English. Thus, the following distinctions were made:

1. Good multimedia: A program or textbook that has “good multimedia” usage, presents high-quality sound and video and digital resources that are highly motivating and capable of enhancing understanding of certain elements of language. At the same time, evaluators agreed that extrinsic and too extensive use of multimedia might detract from students’ learning abilities. Thus, they thought that a balance between the multimedia and the technical aspects of a textbook or program should be sought.
2. Extensive supplementary materials: Both internal and external supplementary materials were supportive of response-based teaching and learning. External supporting materials such as online resources were thought particularly useful, as were the activity suggestions found in some teacher guides that encouraged the linking of themes developed.
3. Teacher direction and guidance: Evaluators thought that teacher direction and guidance would be necessary for the correct response-based approach of teaching English as a second language. It was generally agreed that teachers needed to develop questions, methodologies, tasks, and opportunities for discourse that would lead students to respond to these resources in ways that supported the development of critical learning of English.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

4. Student groupings: The importance of student groupings for interactive learning of English is directly related to the notion of discourse opportunities. This is especially true in classes where textbooks are used and, as they are analyzed in the next chapter of this thesis, they can work well when adding short stories to regular English classes for the development of literary understanding.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

CHAPTER 4: USING SHORT STORIES AND MULTIMEDIA TO TEACH ENGLISH.

"The superior teacher has regularly gotten superior results regardless of the method."

William E. Bull¹²

4.1. Introduction

This thesis intends to propose using short stories and multimedia resources as extra activities for teaching English as a foreign language at a university level for successful language acquisition, and for the development of literary understanding. It does not intend to change the current pedagogical views and practices. The idea is to propose interactive techniques, which can motivate and improve language learning.

Teaching English at a university level through short stories and multimedia resources is thought to be a very successful approach for language acquisition. As already explained, three interactive approaches remain as "adequate" for this purpose: a) The Natural Approach and Krashen's five Hypotheses provide parameters for successful teaching and learning environments; b) The Cognitive Approach and its three stages provide the idea that multimedia and structure can be very well integrated into English as a second language class; and c) the TPRS Method inspires the idea of using short stories for Teaching English as a second language along with multimedia.

Short stories can successfully be a good source of vocabulary learning and, when used correctly, can be applied for teaching other integrated skills. As seen in

¹²William Emerson Bull (1909-1972) was a Professor of Spanish Linguistics. His work is a reaction against the formal structuralism of descriptive linguistics, favoring a semantic approach in which the native speaker's production reflects an organization of objective reality which the foreign learner does not share. Bull also introduced an innovative application of concepts from mathematics and physics to language analysis.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

the preceding chapter, several multimedia resources are available for aiding language acquisition, and many of these resources contain short stories.

4.2. Using Interactive Methodologies for Teaching English at a University Level

Plass and Jones describe how English can be taught effectively through “the Cognitive Approach.” It is based on interactive linguistic views, including also techniques for teaching structure and using multimedia resources in learning. Three stages appear in this approach: a) comprehensible input, b) interaction, and c) comprehensible output. There has been little research on this approach at a University level, and it has only taken place on a very small scale in Ecuador.

As has already been mentioned, Total Physical Response Storytelling, combined with short stories and multimedia, when correctly applied, is a very effective methodology for promoting listening and reading comprehension skills, as well as for writing and speaking fluency. Through TPRS adapted to short story analysis, students are provided with a great deal of Contextualized Comprehensible Input (CCI). To put it another way, the students are exposed to planned, sequential, and repetitive language structures through a process of listening to and reading interesting and absorbing short stories. Several multimedia resources can help to make the TPRS with short stories method more successful and interactive for accurate EFL acquisition. Through podcasts, for example, students concentrate on listening to and reading stories instead of on memorizing language structures.

Teaching English through short stories and multimedia can be a useful methodology for successful second language acquisition if the Cognitive Approach and the TPRS Method are considered. Multimedia has very useful tools to reinforce comprehension through a deeper perceptive analysis of vocabulary, grammatical rules, and short stories. Approaching the teaching of English as a second language through these interactive methodologies can increase long-term



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

retention of the second language, and motivate the students with very dynamic techniques. The following plan introduces instructions for teaching English using short stories and multimedia.

4.3. Steps for Interactive Teaching of English Through Short Stories and Multimedia

There are three steps for successful teaching of English through short stories and multimedia.

1. **Pre-Reading Activities:** This stage is directly related to the comprehensible input step of the Cognitive Approach and the recognition of vocabulary and historical context described in the TPRS method.
2. **Reading Activities:** This is associated with the interaction stage of the Cognitive Approach and with “reading the story” of the TPRS method.
3. **Post-Reading Activities:** This is connected with the last step of the Cognitive Approach, comprehensible output, and with the ultimate goal of the TPRS method, which is “students’ active production of stories.”

4.3.1. Pre Reading Activities

In this stage, the underlying assumption is that the learners need help in identifying the critical features in “the wealth of the linguistic and nonlinguistic information they receive” (Plass, Jones, 470). This means that the supports found in a multimedia instructional approach should guide what students notice in a word, sentence, passage, or image.

In regular English as a foreign language classes in Cuenca, several multimedia materials are usually available, especially in textbooks and on the



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Internet. This is not intended to replace the regular development of a class, but to give extra techniques to improve interactive pedagogy and to teach grammatical structures and vocabulary through a more dynamic method.

To start, it is important to choose adequate stories for the students, according to their English level and their culture. This is significant in order to lower the affective filter mentioned in Krashen's five hypotheses in the first chapter. There are several stories available on the Internet that can be used in English classes. It is important to be cautious in the use of stories that are translated because some stories lose effect with the interpretation of translators. As Edgar Allan Poe said about short stories, "they must work uniformly, from the first word to the last, towards an effect or a conclusion." This could be lost in translation. For example, in the story "*The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*" by Mark Twain, the following paragraph is found:

"Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tomcats, and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump."

The author is intending to represent the accent of certain people of a region of the United States, and he achieves this goal in a carefully crafted way. But these mores cannot be represented in a translation for the simple reason that the accent represented by the author is in a regional dialect of the English language.¹³

Pues bien, aquel Smiley tenía fox-terriers, gallos de pelea y toda clase de animales, hasta el punto de no contar con ningún

¹³ This is the translation found in the website: <http://albalearning.com/audiolibros/twain/lacelebre-sp.html>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

instante de descanso. Así, cuando alguien quería encontrar no importa qué cosa, para apostar en su contra, siempre estaba dispuesto. Un día atrapó una rana, la llevó a su casa y dijo que iba a educarla. Durante tres meses no hizo nada más que tenerla en su corral y enseñarle a saltar, y apuesto lo que quiera que le enseñó. No tenía más que darle un pequeño empujón por detrás, e inmediatamente se veía a la rana girando por el aire como una espiral que diese una vuelta, o dos si había tomado gran impulso, y volver a caer sobre sus patas con la destreza de un gato.

Here, it is evident that the southern dialect of the United States was intended to enhance the story, but the translation into Spanish has not captured this manner of speech.

Likewise, in the case of the book *Huasipungo*, by Jorge Icaza, the book includes several customary representations of dialects when trying “to make people talk through text,” and the author achieves this goal excellently. But how can this special accent be translated faithfully? Nevertheless, *Huasipungo* has been translated into several languages of the world, although the translations have generally not been able to capture the flavor of the original version.

On the other hand, if nothing is “lost in the translation” it is good to use stories by writers from different parts of the world. In that way, it is possible to teach the students about several cultures. If local stories are desired, there are several translated into English; stories from Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Octavio Paz, for example. In this case, the students might read a story in Spanish after they have read it in English, and they can even infer what has been lost in the translation.

To access the stories, the teacher may create a virtual class through a program like Moodle, or develop a class blog.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

4.3.1.1. Creating a Class Blog

As mentioned before, it is a good idea to create a virtual class to organize the activities pedagogically and to present the short stories, grades, chats, and calendars.

A class blog is a student-centered website resource which can enhance learning of active skills such as writing. Thus, it can be more useful than other web resources such as “Moodle,” especially because students become members of the blog, and they participate actively with their posts.

There are several websites that offer the possibility of creating a blog website for free. It is possible to sign up and start designing a blog immediately. It is a good idea to choose a correct template, according to the class, and even to change it periodically for visual multimedia motivation.

Once the blog has been created, the objectives of the class and the reasons for using short stories and multimedia can be posted. Next, the teacher adds the students as participants of the blog, inviting them through an email that they have to accept.

In a general blog, the central or main space is reserved for posts that will be written by the members. On the sides, there are several places available to add resources such as links, pictures, videos, lists, surveys, etc. It can be a good idea to make a list of useful links, such as some that have several downloadable stories¹⁴.

The next step is to add a list of the authors' biographies, and the stories. It can be recommendable to start analyzing each author's biography because many times it is possible to understand the reasons that made an author write a certain

¹⁴For example: www.theclassicreader.com



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

kind of story when looking at his or her life and the historical context in which the author lived. For example, in the case of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), it is evident that many people he loved had died, and that death was a very important issue in his life; therefore, it is understandable that he would write so many stories about death.

4.3.1.2. Dealing with Vocabulary

Many people involved in teaching English through short stories agree that a very important issue is dealing with vocabulary, especially when a story includes difficult words or themes. In the pedagogical approach intended here, the best way to deal with vocabulary is to introduce it as a pre-reading activity. A multimedia resource that can be very helpful in this aspect is a crossword puzzle.

To create a crossword puzzle with the words from a story, first the teacher starts by obtaining a list of the words that may be considered as difficult to understand by the students; in this way, a database is created. Then, certain software can be used to create crossword puzzles; there are several available online programs that are free (for example Crossword Forge). Multimedia resources, such as pictures for the background, can also be added.

When the crossword puzzle is ready, the next step is to give it to the students in the classroom and tell them to solve it in small groups. This can be very motivating for students and can help them acquire the vocabulary they need to understand the short story in a better way. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the importance of student groupings for interactive learning of English is directly related to the notion of discourse opportunities. This is especially true in classes where textbooks are used, and it can work especially well when adding short stories to regular English classes. The most effective use would be with whole classes and/or small groups of students. At this level, a teacher could introduce a crossword puzzle by sharing it with the class and encouraging discussion around it; then the teacher could direct students to a variety of small-group activities.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

The vocabulary should also be introduced and practiced in a way that is natural to speech. The more advanced the level, the more complex the vocabulary structures should be.

Each one of the vocabulary structures chosen must be presented when reviewing the crossword. However, since the human brain recalls visual images more readily than vocabulary words out of context, it is a good idea to give a visual representation of the word or phrase presented. Visual multimedia resources can be used; several pictures for words, phrases, and stories can be acquired online and presented in a sequence on a class blog.

4.3.1.3. Teaching New Grammatical Structures

It is common to use several TEFL techniques in a single class, and it is even acceptable to take into account both linguistic views – structural and interactive – for English pedagogy. The TPRS and the Cognitive approaches consider it important to remember the benefits of structural views, and therefore to teach grammar rules and verb tenses and forms. Only one structure should be focused on at a time, and it should be the one that appears most naturally and centrally in the short story being read.

New verb forms and tenses and other grammatical structures can be introduced through the process of revision of the short stories. Only one verb form or tense should be introduced at a time, and only verbs that have been mastered should be presented in a new form or tense.

4.3.2. Reading Activities

The second stage of the cognitive approach includes “information links that provide simplification, elaboration, clarification, definitional support, or redundancy” (Plass, Jones, 169). It is important to ensure that new information be linked to previous learning. Multimedia resources are effective ways to facilitate this task



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

because they can provide an overview of a short story and visually represent links between the concepts to be learned.

Student interactions with content can also become more effective when students have control over the mode of presentation. In a digital environment, for example, some students might prefer hearing short stories read aloud, whereas others might prefer reading them on their own. As has been said, if reading fluency in the target language is the objective of a lesson, it can be useful to use audio multimedia resources such as podcasts to provide students with the pronunciation and correct spelling of words, to facilitate their general understanding of texts. Learners have accessibility to the podcasts to listen to them whenever they want, and as many times as they consider necessary.

Once the students are familiar with the author's biography, the story's historical context, the vocabulary, and some pictures and/or graphs of the story, it is time to read it. Students should have time to finish reading the story individually at their own speed until they grasp the gist of the story.

After the students have finished reading the short story for the first time, it is a good idea to use multimedia resources for better interactive understanding. For example, the audio of the story can be played, and the students can read the story a second time while following the speaker. There is a podcast called *The Classic Tales* in which more than 200 short stories can be downloaded in an audio version.

4.3.3. Post Reading Activities

Plass and Jones define the third stage of the Cognitive approach, comprehensible output, as “the need for use of language in meaningful contexts to develop the learners’ communicative competency” (175). Effective means to support students during this stage include support for self-correction. In a class blog, students can write their own posts about topics they consider important, and simultaneously they can read their classmates’ posts and write comments about



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

them. The teacher can encourage the learners to write some corrections to errors they may find in their classmates' posts.

There are several activities that can be done after the reading. It can be a good idea to give the students a quiz, to check their level of understanding. This quiz can include a full analysis of the story (describing the setting, characters, point of view, etc). Activities that include multimedia resources are also very useful in this part. For example, the students can continue the story from the end, using their own ideas, or they can change the ending. But carrying out these activities in a class blog gives the students more motivation because they are working in an online environment, and they are able to add pictures and videos to support their ideas. Also, in a virtual environment students do exercises more responsibly because their posts are "published," and they know that many others can read their work, even several years later.

After the students are familiar with writing, it is time for them to start writing their own stories. This is the most important part of the TPRS inspired short story multimedia method, which, as was seen in the first chapter, is part of interactive linguistics and is oriented towards student active participation and dynamic production of the language.

Among the slants that are recommended to be used with students who are not primarily learning literature are terror and suspense. These elements are usually popular because most people like mysteries, and students usually enjoy writing about personal experiences related to these subjects.

4.4. A Practical Case: Teaching English at a University Level through Short Stories and Multimedia

Intending to show the way teaching English through short stories and multimedia can be done, and if it may motivate students and develop literary understanding of language in them, a study was carried out in seven general



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

classes of English as a foreign language in three different institutions in Cuenca. The students had different levels of English; nevertheless, the same stories and activities were performed. Short stories and a class blog were added to the regular pedagogical textbook-based template. For this study, a total of seven class blogs were created in three universities in Cuenca during a time of fourteen months. These class blogs were carried out parallel to regular classes. Three blogs were created for University of Cuenca intensive English classes in the Department of Languages: one for a second level class, one for a fourth level, and one for a fifth level. Two blogs were created for the Pan American University, both for advanced English students of a class called The Short Story. Finally, two blogs were created for the “Universidad Dual Empresarial of Cuenca,” both for students of the second level of general English. A total of 142 students participated in the surveys. The same students read the stories, carried out the activities, and produced videos at the end of their courses.¹⁵

4.4.1. Creation of a Class Blog

Before the class started, a class blog was created at blogger.com. The general objectives of the class and some core concepts were written in the headings. The central space was reserved for further student posts. On the left side, a list of activities was created for appropriate guidance. Then a list of useful links was added for deeper learning, such as grammar explanations and more short stories. Next, a list of authors’ biographies was included, intending to link the list to pages that have brief and concise descriptions of writers’ lives. Then a list of the six short stories to be read was presented. The stories were the following:

1. *The Bucket Rider* by Franz Kafka.
2. *The Masque of the Red Death* by Edgar Allan Poe.
3. *The Monkey’s Paw* by W.W. Jacobs.
4. *A Worn Path* by Eudora Welty.

¹⁵ an example of one of the class blogs, the following link might be visited:
<http://berufs1.blogspot.com/>



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

5. *The Open Window* by H.H. Munro (Saki).
6. *He* by Katherine Anne Porter.

Finally, students' email addresses were obtained, to send them an invitation to become members of the blog.

4.4.2. Pre-reading activities

One of the main concerns of pre-reading activities was dealing with vocabulary. For this purpose, crossword puzzles were created with several words from the stories, and they were presented in class, to be solved in small groups before the students had contact with the stories. This proved to be a very efficient technique to enhance comprehension of stories. An example of a crossword puzzle used in these classes is shown next:

Figure # 2 Dealing with vocabulary

Example of a Crossword Puzzle

Source: Author



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Across	Down
1. A tooth of a venomous snake	2. To make someone very surprised
3. A wood-burning stove	4. An incarnation
6. Frantic emotion	5. To join together
7. Amusingly or grotesquely strange or unusual	6. A party
8. A soft green plant that likes to grow in the shade	9. Bright red.
11. Bram Stoker wrote "....."	10. Sick
12. Unusually or impressively large	13. A formal dance
15. Poe's foster parents were the	14. A chain fastened to somebody's ankles or feet
17. Extreme anger	15. Monastery
18. A torch	16. A small recess or hollow
20. To sparkle or shimmer brightly	19. The victim in "The Cask of Amontillado"
21. The killer in "The Cask of Amontillado"	20. A kind of rock
24. A challenge	22. Mary published her novel Frankenstein (1818).
25. Extremely thin and bony in appearance	23. Charlatan
26. Muffled	27. Run away
28. An underground cemetery	31. Full of light-heartedness and merriment.
29. A men's secret society	33. A small hand tool used for spreading cement or mortar
30. A fine textile	34. Something done or said in a playful, joking manner
32. A kind of cement	36. A phrase included on a coat of arms
35. A large and rich mansion	37. Lament
38. A mark made by something such as blood, wine, or ink	39. Dignified
40. A lock that is opened with a key	41. Montresor told Fortunato that he was on his way to see to ask him about the wine
43. Extremely unpleasant or horrible to see	42. A row
44. Dark, gloomy, and bizarre	44. A way of walking or running
45. Somebody who participates in festivities wearing a mask or disguise	48. Before
46. Poe married when he was twenty-.....	49. An underground room or vault
47. A lustrous fabric	50. A malicious or lustful look
52. A sweet Spanish wine	51. A heap
53. Poe died after a session of drinking	
54. Strident	
55. Wetness	



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Next, students were presented with the general aspects of analyzing a short story as a literary genre, namely, characters, setting, point of view, slant, theme, and plot.

Finally, a grammar tense was presented which was analyzed in the class textbook. For example, in the case of *The Masque of the Red Death* students were presented with the first paragraph and were asked to underline the verbs in the simple present tense. After that, they were told one of the uses of the simple present, which is to describe general truths and unchangeable things.

Before starting the story, the biography of the author was read in class, and the historical context was analyzed.

4.4.3. Reading Activities

The students were told to read each short story for the first time as homework. When they returned to class, general aspects were asked about, to check their comprehension and to motivate deeper comprehension. Then the audio-podcast of the short story was played on the computer, and several pictures related to the stories were placed on the class blog.

4.4.4. Post Reading Activities

When the students finished reading the stories individually and following the audio-podcast, there came the time to check reading comprehension through a quiz and to analyze the stories in groups.

In this case, after students read the stories of *The Masque of the RedDeath* and *The Monkey's Paw*, they were strongly motivated to communicate personal suspense stories and they were asked to write their own story individually in the class blog. The results were quite surprising; it was



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

possible to perceive emotions through their writings, and their literary understanding of the language was evident. It was also appropriate to ask students to add pictures to their stories and to choose a good title, which would be attractive to readers. Reading and commenting on posts encouraged classmates' participation.

4.4.5. Creating a Class Movie Based on a Short Story

As said before, the aim of the TPRS and the Cognitive methodologies is dynamic production of the language, to enhance retention of vocabulary and grammar rules and to develop multiple skills.

The main objective of creating a class movie based on a short story is to encourage more CCI (Contextualized Comprehensible Input) in a special setting. It is said that most language learners need to hear new vocabulary many times (anywhere from 25 to 150 times) before they retain it. The idea is to organize the students to produce a class movie based on a short story in a context that could help audio-visual retention of language.

Choosing the correct short story is very important. It is advisable to have in mind the number of characters, the setting, the plot, and how the students can work on the script. After learners have an appreciable number of short stories they have read and analyzed, professors may add a survey to the class blog to ask students which ones of the short stories they have enjoyed the most. In the case of the classes studied, *The Open Window* and *The Masque of the Red Death* seemed to be the most popular among the students, who also chose them from a practical point of view, thinking about the possibility of making a movie based on one of them.

After the class's favorite short story was chosen by the learners, the teacher told the students to work in groups and pretend that they worked for a movie production company and that they were going to produce a movie about



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

their favorite story. For example, in one of the cases studied, the movie they chose as their favorite was *The Masque of the Red Death*, and the following exercise was given to them:

Imagine you are movie producers and you have decided to make a movie based on this story.

1. Choose a setting (a place where the movie is going to be developed). Define the era: 19th century, early 20th century, or contemporary times; and, based on your decision, choose the furniture and clothing.
2. Among your classmates, choose the characters for this story. Which visual resources would you use to define the personality of the characters?
3. Which music would you use during the introduction, the buildup, the climax, the denouement, and the end of the story?
4. Now that you have developed your own movie, think of a good title for it.

When the students finished their movie proposals, they presented their activities to the rest of the class, and then, with the results, they chose the best ideas. Then the learners were helped to develop the production of a class movie.

This activity can be very motivating, and students showed their ability to actively comprehend English vocabulary and culture, and they developed literary understanding because they learned about the story and its “spirit.” All the students helped; they decided on the setting, and they chose those who were going to be the actors, camera people, and script writers. Some of them helped with the music, the lighting, decoration, and costumes, and some of them helped with the editing of the movie script and filming.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

The students ceased to concentrate on the class version of the short story, and the scriptwriters changed some aspects to make the movie more producible by the class. From a pedagogical point of view, this is completely acceptable because the focus is on teaching language, not on teaching a specific story. The role of the teacher is to include all the students in the production of the class movie, and, in order to improve language comprehension and successful output, the teacher should keep in mind the following aspects:

- The students should have dominion over the vocabulary before the reading.
- The learners should become acquainted with the stories.
- The stories have to be interesting for the students.
- Culture should be introduced in class as much as possible.
- Grammatical structures should be introduced in context.

4.5. Reasons to Use Multimedia and Short Stories for Teaching English at a University Level

Multimedia books and programs have been available for some time for teaching English. It is understood that to develop language skills, perception is very important, and technology combined with creativity can help to develop several multimedia resources for better language acquisition. Many tools are available today; nevertheless, as can be inferred from the study, it seems that there is no “out of the line” program or book for teaching English, and, if there is, there are classroom issues that cannot be ignored. Adding short stories to an English class can help to enhance literary understanding of the language, and using TPRS- inspired methodologies can be much more conducive to learning English than other techniques.

The most accepted framework to assess students’ learning of English is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. According to



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

this framework, university students are encouraged to acquire the B2 level, which means that each student

“Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.”

This level could be achieved more accurately if short stories combined with multimedia resources are included in English classes, because they can develop literary understanding that can help to learn to identify main ideas and to produce text on more topics. They can also include culture in L2 classes, which can help to understand idioms of language and therefore help students be able to interact fluently with native speakers.

Another survey was carried out in the seven class blogs. It had the following question:

“Do you think using short stories can actively influence the acquisition of the B2 level of English?”

Yes.

No.

Students were informed that it was optional to answer the question, and a link was added to the blog, to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages wikipedia site.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

In total, 51 students answered the question; 43 clicked on “yes,” and 8 clicked on “no,” showing that learners of English as a second language believe that adding short stories to traditional teaching of English can actively and successfully influence the acquisition of language. It is believed that this method can enhance motivation and improve vocabulary skills, among other benefits.

Table # 6 Survey # 4 Results		
Learners' Answers to the Question “Do you Think Using Short Stories can actively influence the Acquisition of the B2 Level of English?”		
Option # 1	Yes	43
Option # 2	No	8
Total		51
Source: Author		



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter has as its main goal to describe the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the research. These two important aspects were obtained after adding short stories and multimedia to EFL classes.

While the studies took place, it was interesting to see how students evolved from not comprehending vocabulary and other social realities to achieving a degree of literary understanding along the ability to grasp historical and cultural backgrounds to stories, while recognizing words in context.

5.1. Conclusions

In total, there were five surveys in several class blogs, which included evaluations of multimedia, questions about reading, and opinions about learning through short stories. It is possible to draw the following conclusions.

- Chronologically speaking, there have been many methodologies developed for foreign language teaching. No theory can be linguistically recognized as the most appropriate. For practical cases, it is reasonable to think from an inductive point of view, that is, from specific classes to general methodologies. Observation is very important, and teachers should try to perceive the needs and situations of each case and time and apply the method that best adapts. Sometimes, many methods can be applied at the same time, taking into account structural and interactive views combined, for better acquisition of language.
- Referring to ways of reading in general, it seems things are constantly changing. It is difficult to forecast how people will read in the future. Nevertheless, short stories remain popular tools for teaching English



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

because they are short, improve vocabulary skills, instruct about different cultures, and can be used in a standard class combined with several multimedia resources that can be didactically applied.

- Multimedia materials currently used at a university level in Cuenca have been shown to have many advantages and disadvantages, as evaluated by their users. Programs and textbooks lack, especially, teacher participation and activities for student interaction with educators. Short stories can create a socio-cultural context in the EFL class and improve student-teacher affectivity.
- Using short stories and multimedia together for teaching English at a university level has been shown to be appropriate for better language acquisition. Three methodologies stand out as adequate for this purpose. First, the natural Approach and Krashen's five hypotheses give parameters for a better classroom academic environment. Second, the Cognitive Approach gives ideas of the three stages to keep in mind when teaching English in this way. Finally, the Total Physical Response Storytelling Method shows how literature and short stories can be used for EFL classes in an interactive and dynamic way for development of integrated skills such as vocabulary.
- At the university level in Cuenca, nowadays it is generally desired to achieve the B2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, for most of the careers offered. Students expressed the fact that they felt more motivated when adding short stories and multimedia to English pedagogy. Many researchers have said that motivation is key in language acquisition because it encourages concentration. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that short stories and multimedia can successfully improve language learning and help to achieve the desired level properly.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

5.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

- Teaching English through Short Stories and Multimedia should be included in the curriculum of local universities as a methodology for increasing motivation.
- It is important to encourage students to read traditional text and literature, to develop literary understanding, which is thought to be as important as scientific thinking. Using short stories can successfully include culture and context in EFL classes and create in students the habit of reading narrative regularly, and therefore of developing literary understanding.
- It is important to have a virtual class to accompany the physical presence in the classroom. This can motivate student participation, and it is in accordance with actual practices and needs. In a virtual class, the teacher can interact with students continuously and improve reading and writing skills.
- At least three short stories should be included in every EFL class. There are vast possibilities. and they can be chosen according to the level and the circumstances.
- When using short stories in EFL classes, it is very important to use dynamic and interactive techniques. This can be accomplished by using multimedia and teacher creativity.

For future research, it is important to carry out surveys among teachers, students, and scholars of English as a second language. Linguistics is the scientific study of human language, and it is continuously changing and



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

adapting to human situations. In the future, it will be important to study real situations of students and adapt the best approaches, methods, and techniques for specific cases.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

WORKS CITED

- Arabski, Janusz. Language Transfer in Language Learning and Language Contact. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2006.
- Barker, James L. On The Mortality of Language Learning Methods. November 8, 2001. University of Chicago. March 13, 2011 <<http://www.didascalie.be/mortality.htm>>.
- Brown, H. Douglas. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. White Plains, NY, 2001.
- Brune, Michael. Total Physical Response Storytelling: an Analysis and Application. 2003. University of Oregon. July 14, 2010 <<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/310/TPRS.pdf>>
- Chomsky, C. Books on Videodisc: Computers, Video, and Reading Aloud to Children. Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1990.
- Cook, V. Second Language Learning and Language Teaching. London: Edward Arnold. 3rd edition, 2001.
- Duiker, William; Jackson, Spielvogel. World History. Wadsworth: BA, 2001.
- Eliot Van Buskirk "Rumors of Written-Word Death Greatly Exaggerated" San Diego: San Diego University Press, 2009.
- Fox, Robin. Travelling Heroes: Greeks and their myths in the epic age of Homer. New York: Allen Lane, 2006.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Gosse, Edmund. Ode. Encyclopædia Britannica (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Krashen, Stephan and Terrell, Tracy. The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom. Hayward: The Alemany Press, 1983.

Krutch, Joseph. Edgar Allan Poe: A Study in Genius. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

Landow, G. P. Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Langer, J. A. The Process of Understanding: Reading for Literary and Informative Purposes. New York: Longman, 1990.

"literature." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 17 Aug. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/343579/literature>>.

Mora, Jill. Second-Language Teaching Methods, Principles & Procedures. Moramodules. September 17, 2010. San Diego State University. January 11, 2011 <<http://www.moramodules.com/ALMMMethods.htm>>.

Plass, J., & Jones, L. Multimedia Learning in Second Language Acquisition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Purves, A. The Scribal Society. New York: Longman, 2001

"short story." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 23 Aug. 2011.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/541698/short-story>>.

Sterling, Christopher and George Shiers (Eds). History of Telecommunications Technology: An Annotated Bibliography. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2000.

Swan, K., and Mitrani, M. The Changing Nature of Teaching and Learning in Computer Based Classrooms. Chicago: American Educational Research Association, 1999.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1:

COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES

Level	Description
-------	-------------

A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
----	---

A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate concerning simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment, and matters in areas of immediate need.
----	---

B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
----	--

B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain
----	--



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

C1 Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.

C2 Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations.

APPENDIX 2:

EXAMPLE OF A CLASS BLOG SURVEY:

9. Read the story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" 

perfect.

weren't going to

e when he

HOW MUCH DO YOU READ TRADITIONAL TEXT?

Less than one hour a week.	55
One or two hours a week.	21
Three or four hours a week.	12
More than four hours a week.	8

Votos hasta el momento: 96





UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

APPENDIX 3:

PRACTICAL CASE: Analyzing short stories.

The Masque of the Red Death:

Introduction:

Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Masque of the Red Death* was first published in 1842. In the original publication, the title was given the English spelling of "mask," but it was changed to "masque" in 1845. In this macabre tale, Prince Prospero seals himself and a thousand of his friends into the abbey of a castle in order to protect them from a deadly pestilence — The Red Death — that is ravaging the country. But when the people indulge in a lavish costume ball in order to distract themselves from the suffering and death outside their walls, the Red Death, disguised as a costumed guest, enters and claims the lives of everyone present. The story is narrated in a manner which gives it the quality of a myth, allegory, or fairy tale, exploring themes of man's fear of death, sin, madness, and the end of the world.

This tale is a prime example of Poe's Gothic horror fiction. Poe evokes a dark and eerie mood in a story that focuses on images of blood and death, while the personification of the Red Death lends an element of the supernatural. *The Masque of the Red Death* embodies Poe's mastery of the short story; in addition, it illustrates his literary philosophy. According to Poe, a short story should be so tightly focused that every word, from beginning to end, contributes to the overall effect. In *The Masque of the Red Death* powerful imagery and an illusive narrative voice are tightly woven into a macabre tale of horror, with insight into the human condition.

Three of the most important women in Poe's life died of tuberculosis. Although the "pestilence" in the story *The Masque of the Red Death* is not



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

defined, it seems reasonable to assume that it is inspired in some ways by Poe's experience with tuberculosis. The distinguishing mark of the "Red Death" is profuse bleeding, just as the distinguishing sign of tuberculosis is the coughing up of blood. According to Britannica Online, tuberculosis, often referred to in literature as "consumption," is "one of the great scourges of mankind." The disease reached a high scale during Poe's life.

The story:

The Masque of the Red Death

The "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal — the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease were the incidents of half an hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress or egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death."

It was toward the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. There were seven — an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different, as might have been expected from the duke's love of the bizarre. The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass whose color varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern

extremity was hung, for example, in blue — and vividly blue were its windows. The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange — the fifth with white — the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only, the color of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet — a deep blood color. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire, that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall a gigantic clock of ebon . Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to hearken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the Time that flies) there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colors and effects. He disregarded the decora of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the moveable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great fete, and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm — much of what has been since seen in "Hernani." There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these — the dreams — writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away — they have endured but an instant — and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westward of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture; for the night is waning away; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-colored panes; and the blackness of the sable drapery appalls; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches their ears who indulge in the more remote gaieties of the other apartments.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirling on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who reveled. And thus too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumor of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise — then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade license of the night was nearly unlimited; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jest, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revelers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood — and his



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.

"Who dares?" he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him — "who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him — that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise, from the battlements!"

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly — for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the prince, with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who, at the moment was also near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centers of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterruptedly, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple — through the purple to the green — through the green to the orange — through this again to the white — and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry — and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revelers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave ceremonies and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

The End

Analysis of *The Masque of the Red Death*

- Setting:

The story covers a period of approximately six months during the reign of the Red Death. The action takes place in "[the] deep seclusion of one of [Prince Prospero's] castellated abbeys." The "masque" takes place in the imperial suite which consisted of seven very distinct rooms.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

- Characters:

This story has no characters in the usual sense, which lends credibility to an allegorical interpretation. Only Prince Prospero speaks. His name suggests happiness and good fortune; however, ironically, this is not the case. Within the Prince's abbey, he has created a world of his imagination with masked figures that reflect "his own guiding taste." These dancers are so much a product of the Prince's imagination that Poe refers to them as "a multitude of dreams." Even when the "Red Death" enters, the author refers to this character as a "figure" or a "mummer" who "was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask...was made...to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse....But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in blood – and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror." When the mummer is seized toward the end of the story, all "gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpselike mask...untenanted by any tangible form."

- Plot:

The story-line of this tale is simple. During plague time a group of people try to isolate themselves in a "safe zone." This is a very old and obvious procedure. The medieval Italian author Boccaccio used this technique as the background of his *Decameron*.

In this case, the "safe zone" is the palace of the rich and decadent Prince Prospero. Here the Prince and a thousand of his friends ensconce themselves, believing that they will be protected from the ravages of the disease outside. But they fool themselves. The plague does not respect walls or doors or isolationism. It makes its way inside the "safe zone" and kills all the people who thought they were so invulnerable.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

- Point of View:

Poe tells this story from the point of view of the omniscient observer. Elsewhere he expressed his dislike for allegory – "a tale in prose or verse in which characters, actions, or settings represent abstract ideas or moral qualities." Poe argued that allegory was an inferior literary form because it is designed to evoke interest in both the narrative and the abstract ideas for which the narrative stands, which distracts the reader from the singleness of effect that Poe most valued in literature. "Under the best of circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world." Yet Poe himself openly used allegory, as in *The Haunted Palace* verses which he inserted into his story *The Fall of the House of Usher*, as well as in *The Masque of the Red Death*. (See Slant for allegorical interpretation.)

- Slant:

SYMBOLISM: Poe's story takes place in seven connected but carefully separated rooms. This reminds the reader of the past significance of the number seven. (The history of the world was thought to consist of seven ages, just as an individual's life had seven stages. The ancient world had seven wonders; universities divided learning into seven subjects; there were seven deadly sins with seven corresponding cardinal virtues; and the number seven is important in mysticism.) Therefore, an allegorical reading of this story suggests that the seven rooms represent the seven stages of one's life, from birth to death, through which the prince pursues a figure masked as a victim of the Red Death, only to die himself in the final chamber of eternal night. The prince's name suggests happiness and good fortune, and the prince, just like all human beings, uses happiness to wall out the threat of death. Prince Prospero's masked ball or dance reminds us of the "dance of death" portrayed in old paintings as a skeleton leading a throng of people to the grave, just as the prince leads his guests to the Red Death.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

The significance of time in this story is seen in the symbol of the "gigantic clock of ebony" which is draped in black velvet and located in the final room. Although the clock is an object, it quickly takes on human aspects as the author describes it as having a face and lungs from which comes a sound that is "exceedingly musical" but "so peculiar" that the "dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand," in a momentary rigor mortis that anticipates the final one.

The relationship between the Red Death and time is a key to understanding the symbolic meaning of the story. The seven rooms are laid out from east to west, reminding us of the course of the sun which measures our earthly time. These rooms are lighted from without, and it is only in the seventh room that the color of the windows does not correspond to the color of the room, but instead is "a deep blood color" through which light illuminates the westernmost chamber of black, with an ebony clock on its western wall. In creating this room, Poe links the colors red and black with death and time.

"Scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim" indicate the presence of the Red Death. Blood, the very substance of life, becomes the mark of death as it bursts through the pores. Death, then, is not an outside antagonist, to be feared and walled out as Prince Prospero attempts to do; but instead it is a part of each of us. Its presence is felt in our imaginations as we become aware of the control that time has over our lives. We hear the echoes of the "ebony clocks" that we carry within. Prince Prospero tries to escape death by walling it out, and by so doing, creates a prison out of his sanctuary. However, the Prince learns that no one can escape death. Death holds "illimitable dominion over all."

There is a strong element of DISGUISED MORAL in this story, also. Closely connected with the plot – a select group of people trying to isolate themselves and escape a threat that everyone else is exposed to – there is a sub-theme of disgust and rejection. The reader (at least most readers) gets to hate the Prince Prospero and his fellow-revelers because they want to let



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

everyone else – the people outside the castle – suffer, while they escape unharmed. They are eminently selfish, so that when their doom catches up with them the reader is actually relieved. The disguised moral could be “Those who think they are the safest are really in the greatest danger.”

- Theme:

No one escapes death.

Human happiness (as represented by Prince Prospero) seeks to wall out the threat of death; however, the Biblical reference (I Thessalonians 5:2-3: “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night”) at the end of the story reminds us that death comes "like a thief in the night," and even those who seek "peace and safety...shall not escape."

During the course of a plague, Prince Prospero calls together his friends to come to his castle for fun and frolic until the danger of pestilence has passed. A masquerade is planned, and in typical "Poesque" fashion the great halls are described in imagery that foreshadows a horror to follow. The night of the ball comes, the guests arrive in their costumes, and the festivities begin.

The gaiety is interrupted by the arrival of a guest, dressed in the garments of the grave besprinkled with the scarlet blood associated with the plague of the "red death." The intruder stalks the halls until confronted by the host in (of course) the black hall. Without explanation, the host falls dead at the masquerader's feet, and the revelers, setting upon the intruder, find that the costume is "untenanted by any tangible form." Whereupon the guests began to die in their tracks as they acknowledge the presence of the Red Death.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Class Activities:

Answer the following questions:

1. - What were the symptoms of the Red Death? How long did it take to kill a person?
2. - How did Lord Prospero think he could escape from the Red Death?
- 3.- How many rooms were there in Prospero's palace? How was each one special?
4. - What was different about the "West" room?
5. - What was special about the clock?
6. - What happened while the great clock was striking twelve?
7. - Why was the strange masquerader's costume in bad taste?
8. - Who was the only person who thought he could kill the stranger? How?
9. - How does the story end?
10. - Do you get the feeling that Lord Prospero and his partying friends got their just desserts?