



10º Simposio de Ensino de Graduação

THE USE OF COMICS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' INTEREST IN LITERATURE

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1. Introdução

Nowadays, it is important for an English teacher to find an efficient and good method to expand his knowledge for his students. It is also important to discover the better way to engage these students with the language, in order to accelerate the learning process, and help them to identify themselves with the study, not only for obligation, but, more than that, for pleasure.

Literature is one of the different tools found and used to achieve this purpose, because it brings to the class the particular cultural aspects of a nation, its cultural traits, what is clearly important for those who want to understand the purpose of their study. It is not just a question of reading, but it is also a question of promoting the critical thinking, an important and vital topic in education that, regrettably, has been missing in the schools.

Unfortunately, a huge problem that teachers face is the lack of interest and also the difficulty the adolescent students show with the reading process. They just do not like to read. The solution is to search for resources that call the students' attention, that engage and make them feel comfortable with the process, like the use of Comics [comic books, comic strips, and graphic novels], which is a different and simple method who can attract them, and promote the interest in furthering this habit, and which is, consequently, the object of this research.

2. Objetivos

The purpose of this study is to examine the benefits of introducing comics in ESL classes, aiming to improve and motivate the interest of literature.

The study is justified for the support and facilities that the use of comics can bring to class, and also to investigate if this resource can promote positive results when working with literature

It will focus in the use of graphic novels (one of the aspects [don't know a better word to describe "one part of"] of Comics) and will evaluate the results of a class given in the public school, using this resource.

3. Desenvolvimento

With the purpose of discovering what are the effects of literature through comics and graphic novels with the beginner students of a public school, the work is following four different steps of methodology.

In a first moment, the researcher will observe the students and their behavior for a short period and, with the information's, will be created a diary, where the researcher will note ideas of how to work with the adolescents, what would be good for them, what are their likes and what would help in the proposed activity. It will take at least one month of observation.

After that, a questionnaire approaching the studied theme – in the case, the use of graphic novels and the students' interest of literature – will be created, and applied to the group, (it will be applied in a normal class, for around 15 minutes).

Latterly, based on the answers of the questionnaire, a class will be prepared and applied for the same group of students. At least, the results and feedbacks will be analyzed and used to answer some research questions proposed in the beginning of the work.

The paper is divided in 3 parts, each one describing relevant points of the work, which can help the researcher to understand the problem.

ADOLESCENT STUDENTS AND MOTIVATION

Trying to understand the age of the researched students, the first part shows the relation between adolescent students and motivation, a very important tool used to call the students attention.

According to Winne and Marx (1989), cited in Ushida (2005, p.49), “motivation is both, a condition for, and a result of effective instruction”. If there's no motivation from the teacher, the student won't have, neither. Initially, the teacher needs to understand the changes that are happening with the student at this age, and after that, start to search efficient methods to involve and motivate them. As Hagemeyer (2008, p.145; our translation) argues, “it is common the adolescent that decides not to participate of an activity, or even not to effort himself, aiming the self-protection. ” So it's a teacher's obligation to be prepared for deal with it, and encourage students to deal with the language.

Hagemeyer (2008, p.145; our translation) also says that, looking to this desire of protection, “Giving the students success experiences, teaching learning strategies, reducing the anxiety and encouraging them are some procedures who can be adopted for teachers, aiming to construct the student's self-confidence. ”

For that reason, the study of Motivation has been included at the work, as a way to understand how to understand the students' necessities, and then, work on it.

LITERATURE IN THE ESL CLASSES

Literature is an important tool to motivate students to participate and be interested in the class. It can provide an interaction between the cultural aspects that teacher tries to introduce, and the desire students have to learn, but that, sometimes, become uncomfortable when they work with it.

According to Maley (1989), cited in Khatib, Rezaei and Derakhshan (2011, p.202), “literature deals with non-trivial things which are personally relevant to them.” Students feel immersed in another reality when dealing with literary texts, even when the text means to work with a real problem.

McKay (1982, p.531) says that “literature offers several benefits to ESL classes. It can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge and (...) to the extent that students enjoy reading literature, it may increase their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately increase their reading proficiency”.

At this point, working with literature can be a great way to introduce literary works to the students' life and motivate their desire to know more about that, and also, to search more about renowned authors that many times are considered too difficult to present in the classroom. A good and well prepared class can trigger the student's interest and engage them to read more.

COMICS AND ESL CLASSES

Knowing that literature brings so many benefits to the students, the major question asked for teachers is: How to stimulate the student's interest for literature and how to keep this interest? and the first answer who comes to the mind for this question is: Comics and Graphic Novels! Why not?!

Cary (2004) explains that there are four different types of materials who can be called by the name of comics, which are: cartoons, comic strips, comic books and graphic novels, and, as this paper is based on Monica's Gang adaptation for Romeo and Juliet, the right definition to be used is graphic novel, as well.

Many experts agree that comics are an effective method that attracts readers, because of the quick and simple structure used in this type of work, and the great feedback students' manifest, especially when working with ESL students.

They are easy and attractive, and students feel comfortable with them, because it works with visual skills, and, as also said about literature, they can bring not one, but many benefits for both, students and teachers.

Through comics, the teacher can present the main concepts of the topics, explore the students' abilities and keep the students interest, and the most important for this work, show the students the importance and richness of literary works.

Reinforcing these ideas, Derrick (2008) cited in Baker (2011, p.13) shows that,

Not only can they [comics] provide language learners with contextualized comprehensible input, they can also engage the learner and lead him or her to explore more graphic novels or books, magazines, newspapers, and other reading materials

4. Resultado e Discussão

Until that moment, the research points out that it is possible to increase the interest for literature of the students using graphic novels, because it is a method that involves different and interesting tools, who can call the student attention on what has been studied. It is believed that the conventional way of introducing literature in ESL classes, especially at public school, can take the student's interest, and the teachers can't let it happens, knowing that Literature is such an enriching way to improve knowledge.

The researcher wishes to apply a questionnaire and a class, if the Ethical and Research Committee approves, using the comics and the graphic novels as part of the class, to analyze if this method really works, and also, analyze the reactions and attitudes of students and teacher with the class, its high and low points, and what could be improved to make this idea to be incorporated on the teacher's curriculum.

5. Considerações Finais

Apparently, the study indicates that the use of Graphic Novels as a method to improve the students' interest in literature is a good idea, because its use can bring a lot of benefits to the students, and become the use of literature easier. The study is still happening, but it is believed that making use of visual skills is a great tool to call the students attention to the class, and make them interested on the content, without having troubles with boring and annoying classes, where the students prefer to sleep than watch the class, and also, to avoid the lack of interest of the teacher himself.

It is expected that, changing the way the students see literature, and showing them that read can be fun and important, the other abilities, such as writing and listening can become also easier to use, and consequently, it would improve the student's interest for books, important authors, and more knowledge, and make them learn for pleasure, and not only for obligation

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