

## Poetry in the EFL Classroom: Cooperative Suggestions

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### ABSTRACT

The study of American and English poetry related to Cooperative teaching ideas and teaching methodology in a EFL classroom is important at schools in which poetry is rarely studied. The study of poetry vinculated to English teaching methodology might help teachers interested in working with poetry in their classes. This research will focus on a selection of poems to which some principles of English teaching methodology applied to the classroom will be used. Then we will relate them to ideas of Cooperative teaching and learning. The type of methodology chosen here to explore the theme will be bibliographical research and its application to a classroom in which we will attempt at interacting poetry to cooperative teaching as well as suggestions for EFL classes.

**Keywords:** Poetry, Cooperative learning, Semantic maps.

### Introduction

English as a foreign language, in contrast with English as a second language is the English language learned and taught on non- English speaking countries, that is, English is not used as a means of communication and interaction in these places. English as a second language is learned and taught in English-speaking countries and students of ESL need the language to communicate, interact and survive in these English - speaking countries. From my own experience as an English teacher, I have always been puzzled by the lack of poetry in the students textbooks. I have been asking questions about this and the answers I have gotten so far can be summed up in one: poetry is too difficult for students and teachers. They do not like it. This article intends to bring ideas and suggestions on how to study poetry in the EFL classroom. Some of the greatest modern poets of English and American literature were selected: Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, E.E. Cummings, Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Gary Snyder among others. Selected poems had been chosen to captivate the student's interest in learning for their themes and also for their adequacy to the student's level. Integrating poetry in the EFL classroom hopefully can lead to suggestions engaging activities such as The 5 questions, Word and concept maps. This paper hopes to offer teachers new possibilities in the treatment of poetry and, at the same time to offer students opportunities to practice and interact in English. Many EFL students come to poetry with negative attitudes. They see no relationship between read and handle in the classroom and their own lives. The purpose of this paper is to gap this barrier between the student and poetry and to help the student to create an affective response to the poems he is supposed to read by presenting them so as to involve him/her in his/her world and the art form of poetry.

### Objectives

My objective is to combine the skills needed in dealing with poetry with an understanding and appreciation of poetry as

relevant and meaningful to the students life. This article might open up new windows to the students as far as poetry and the English language are concerned.

### Methodology

As an alternative to traditional, individualistic, competitive structures, this method provide students with opportunities not only to improve second language skills but also to develop social skills that are necessary in everyday life. Cooperative learning takes place when students work together in small groups to accomplish group as well as individual goals. Groups can be as heterogeneous as possible, so that students benefit from each other's knowledge and experiences. This method has been developed for secondary EFL classrooms of students with intermediate proficiency in English. The main objective is to help develop the students reading and writing skills while improving their oral language development. During the lessons, the students work in groups of four. Each group is heterogeneous and they do not depend on language proficiency, ethnicity, personality and gender. An ideal group would include: students from different ethnic or linguistic backgrounds; leaders and followers; two students with good receptive skills, two students with good productive skills; girls and boys; students who are neither best friends nor worst enemies. In using poetry, these teaching suggestions focus on the importance of integrating the study of literature with language development. After studying poems from different English and American authors students will be able to create poems in English from their own cultural backgrounds. Poetry can help develop cultural and linguistic insights, assisting and supporting students in learning more complex forms of language and literature. These activities hope to provide room for students to gradually improve their writing skills through what they have already experienced and read. The cooperative learning structures seem to offer students a supportive atmosphere in which to write for an interested audience. Their peers or group members are available to help them write words, sentences, paragraphs and finally, poems.

Cooperative learning activities are guides to provide students with opportunities to use English for meaningful purposes in a supportive atmosphere. It is aimed here at show how literature based language development can be organized for foreign language learners, providing them with high-level skills. It should be noted that students do not actually begin writing their own poems until they have had enough language experiences with other poems so that they have developed an understanding of the elements of a poem.

## Results

The semantic maps appear as a tool for vocabulary comprehension of the poems. Semantic mapping is interactive because in drafting a map, students work with each other. Its creation entails total student involvement; the students are active participants throughout the development of the map. Their brainstorming allows the map to take its first shape and their output during and following the assignment determines the final shape the map will have. It encourages students to make connections between new and known words: and it can be used to build relevant context around new words. Equally important, the semantic mapping promotes active student involvement, a key to effective learning in general.

## Discussion

Reading poetry and writing poetry are worthwhile and pleasant things to do. Students will find that reading poetry is a great help in writing it, and that writing is very good for the understanding of what they read.

The more students know about poetry and the more they read poetry, the more at ease they will feel with it, the better they will get at reading it, and the more they will like it. When students read a poem, the poet's experience becomes, in a way, their own, making them see things they wouldn't see or think otherwise. It's something like traveling, seeing new places, hearing things talked about in new ways, getting ideas of other possibilities. Poetry is there to be read. The idea behind talking about poetry is not to get to the bottom of it, but to clarify it, to make it more a part of what students know and will remember.

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