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Using Poetry in Teaching English as a Second Language as a Means of Improving Language Production

N.M.A.D.W.C. Gunarathne

Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Institute

dulinigunarathne@ymail.com

With the intention of meeting the needs of English Language learners, Language teachers and instructors are trying to use different methods to improve the language skills of the students. It has been observed that the majority of the students are weak in speaking and writing in English Language. Therefore this paper aims to explore how poetry can be used as a teaching tool in improving speaking and writing among English Language learners. A survey was done using 35 students at the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technology, Tangalle. Several instruments were used in this research. They were some speaking activities, writing activities, questionnaires, interviews. As for the materials, six English poems were selected by different poets. More than 90% students were engaged in all the activities given to them. A significant progress could be seen in both speaking and writing activities with compared to their previous performance in these activities. With respect to the vocabulary they tried to use new words which were learnt through the poems in writing and speaking. Further from the data that were collected through questionnaire, it was learnt 100% of the students agreed with the view that these activities were really helpful and encouraged them to speak and considerably the students were highly motivated, active and enthusiastic since they were free to express their views on the poems unlike on other days. Consequently, the students were less hesitant and became creative in the process. This process was carried out for four weeks and the last two weeks were very important because the students showed considerable improvements. Therefore the results of the research show that the use of poetry in classrooms is very effective and productive indicating fact that poetry can be used as a strategy for improving the language production of the students.

Key words: poetry, second language, speaking, teaching, writing