

The Short Story: An Analysis Perspective for the Teaching of English

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ABSTRACT

The short story is one of the literary genres that capture the reader's attention for its brevity and effect. From this perspective, this study has as objective to present and analyze the literary genre as a tool in Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). We used, as analysis corpus, *The Cask of Amontillado*, by Edgar Allan Poe and we analyzed it from the socio-discursive interactionism (ISD) a theoretical and methodological framework as presented by Bronckart (1999/2003/2009). After our analyses, we can state that the short story is an outstanding genre to ground the field of TEFL once its structure helps in the understanding of the author's representations created from the understanding and functioning of the literary text.

KEYWORDS

ISD, English literature; the short story genre.

1. Introduction

The Brazilian guidelines for the teaching of English as a foreign language in basic education of Paraná State introduce a proposal for the development of subjects from Discourse as a social practice, and the basic subjects to be implemented by the teachers and students inside their classrooms. These subjects are formed by the discursive genres and also by the oral, reading, writing and linguistic analyses. The subjects take into account the social spheres circulation of these genres as well, such as the literary sphere, for example.

From this perspective, the textual genres become teaching objects and the teacher is the one responsible for managing their usage. We hardly ever find literary texts related specifically to the secondary school materials, for example, and when we do find them, they are mainly explored in grammatical terms.

Our choice here is to analyze and explore one genre of the literary sphere, the short story, based on socio-discursive interactionism (ISD), a theoretical and methodological framework as presented by Bronckartt (1999/2003/2009). As a research

objective, this perspective has the human acting, the communicative acting through language, as a way to show how the production and interpretation of the verbal units, the texts, can contribute to the transformation of the ones who act. One of the representations in it has a very important role in the development of the human action. In addition to this theoretical framework, this study is also based on Schneuwly and Dolz's (1998) consideration of the genre as a "mega instrument" for the teaching of languages.

We also consider that when we bear our studies on these characteristics, they can contribute to developing a didactic model of teaching (Cristovão, 2007), highlighting the teaching elements for foreign language learning.

To achieve our objectives, we will present the short story characteristics, the production context of the chosen short story "The barrel of Amontillado", the textual infrastructure and, finally, the conclusion.

2. The short story

The literary genre is located in the social domain of the fictional literary culture and it has, as a typological aspect, narration. The language capacity of this genre involves the imitation of human action through the intrigue of creation.

The telling tales art, according to Gotlib (2003), began 4000 years before Christ. Over the course of history, this genre has changed from oral to writing, and, only in the nineteenth century, with the development of the printing press, has the short story reached the reading public of newspapers and magazines. Therefore, in the nineteenth century, the modern short story is created, having as its greatest representative the writer and short story theoretician, Edgar Allan Poe.

From the moment, this genre gets its literary status whose main objective is to conquer and keep the reader's attention, assuming the style of economy with a short theme. Moreover, the art of the short story is only consolidated as an aesthetic composition as the teller becomes the narrator.

When mentioning Poe's style, Gotlib (2003) describes it according to the effect principle, that is, the short story must have the perfect extension so that it can achieve the desired effect in reading. In other words, Poe considers that the short story must be read without pauses so that it can call the reader's attention from the beginning to the end. Moreover, it must impact the reader, and therefore, the writer has to take into account the desirable effect he wishes to cause in the reader.

According to the author, the short story has all the characteristics of a novel, however, in a smaller extension. The narrative situation is generally unique and it can be centred either in the omniscient narrator or in one character. The characters are generally in a reduced number, three in most cases. As a consequence, the short story increases in dramatic density. In the following section, we will present the short story production context (Bronckart, 1999/2003/2009).

3. The production context

The production context is defined by Bronckart (1999/2003/2009, p.93) as "the set of parameters that can exert an influence on the form as a text is organized". From this, these parameters can be grouped into two sets: the physical world and the social objective one. The first refers to space and time and the second, to the representations of the social and subjective worlds. Therefore, in *The Cask of Amontillado* we have:

Table 1: Analysis of The Cask of Amontillado context

Physical Context	Social subjective Context
Sender (Emissor) Edgar Allan Poe, the short story author.	The sender's social position. Writer and poet, best known for his short stories.
Receiver (Receptor) Readers – society in general, students.	Receiver's social position People who are in search of pleasurable reading and also the school community.
Place of text production Longman Group Ltda, London.	Specialized in titles for learning of the English language, founded in 1724, by Thomas Longman. In 1968 it became part took part of Pearson Education. http://www.pearson.com.br/institucional.asp
Moment of production <i>The Cask of Amontillado</i> : 1846	The story was written during the nineteenth century when mystery and imagination had their best development.
Support (suporte) Books	Interaction objective To inform about history, teach literature and language and amuse people

When writing the short story, Edgar Allan Poe holds the title of being one of America's greatest short story writers. Reaching most of the 19th readers, Poe calls attention to his mystery and imagination short stories. Our next analysis involves the textual infrastructure of the Cask of Amontillado.

4. Textual infrastructure

4.1. Overview of the text

The Cask of Amontillado is inserted in a book composed by ten Edgar Allan Poe short stories. Distributed along five pages, one of them with a picture, the short story follows the principles adopted by the author as to what characterizes a good short story: that it is short and can be read in one sitting. Moreover, we notice the effect unit that Poe seeks in his short stories, to hold the reader's attention from the first until the very last line.

The plot is very simple and the narration is done in the first person which we discover is Montresor. This character soon announces the name of the second character, Fortunato, who, although the name reminds us of a lucky person, is introduced in the opposite

way. Due to the injustices that Montresor is said to have received from Fortunato, he announces, just at the beginning, that he wants revenge, and this conducts the entire short story. After that, Montresor minimally plans his revenge, without demonstrating it to Fortunato, until he has succeeded.

The story takes place during the carnival period in an unknown European city. However, the scene changes its atmosphere to the dark catacombs as soon as revenge gets closer, which helps to compose the sinister atmosphere of the short story. Thus, the reader becomes the accomplice, who knows all the details of the murder's mind.

As we can perceive, the short story presents a short number of pages, contributing to a quick and effective read. Besides, we notice that the number of characters involved in the plot is up to three. The short story writer planned each detail so that it could become extremely significant.

4.2. Types of sequencing

The narrative is the style which fundamentally masters most of the short

stories. According to Bronckart (1999/2003/2009), the narrative sequence only happens when its organization is born by an intriguing process. In other words, it is necessary to consider that the narrated happenings must form a connection between the beginning, middle and end.

In *The Cask of Amontillado*, we clearly notice the phases that, according to the mentioned author, are divided into five main phases: initial situation, complication, action phase, resolution, and final situation.

Initial situation:

I had suffered, as best as I could, the thousand wrongs that Fortunato had done to me, but when he began to be insulting I swore to revenge myself.

Complication phase:

My chance came one evening during the holiday. We met in the street. He had been drinking heavily, and he greeted me very warmly.

Action phase:

My servants were not at home. I had told them that I should not return until the morning and had given them strict orders not to leave the house. I knew that these orders were enough to make them disappear as soon as my back was turned.

Resolution phase:

Go in, I Said, here is the Amontillado (...) a moment more and I had chained him to the rock,

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Final situation:

There was no reply to this, I called and called again (...) for half a century no one has disturbed them.

The phases above can have alterations depending on the complexity of the short story, oscillating between actions and complications until the final situation. In a more detailed analysis we could name more actions and resolution, therefore, our aim here is just to exemplify the different kinds of phases.

We believe that when we identify the phases of the narrative sequence, it can contribute to a deeper interpretation, understanding how the development of the textuality is dealt within this genre. So, with EFL objectives, this comprehension is able to develop different levels of text comprehension.

Conclusion

The short story genre can be considered an English language teaching object as in the English language classes and in English language literature classes. Its short form and intensity contribute to the psychological, emotional and cognitive needs during the process of foreign language learning.

So we conclude how relevant it is to deal with the short story along with the learning of the English language, once its structure helps us to visualize the action progress that is developed to accomplish an end, besides linguistic elements which explore the English language structure.

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