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## POETRY AS THE CHALLENGE OF CONDUCTING CONVERSATION PRACTICE AT THE ENGLISH LESSONS

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*The paper deals with the possibilities of conducting conversation practice at the English lessons using popular poems by English and American authors, which can become productive items for discussion. The procedures of considering English and American poetry are described. The analysis is based on the personal observations.*

**Key words:** *conversation practice, items for discussion, procedures of considering poetry, message of the poem, intellectual heritage.*

Poetry is painting that speaks, according to Plutarch. It is the artistic use of language which sums up its essence and requires a definite degree of linguistics sophistication for understanding and appreciation. A teacher should reserve English poems for students who are both proficient in English and genuinely interested in poetry. Only with such groups can poems become popular and productive items for conversation.

Considering English and American poetry, for instance, the poems by Robert Burns, George G. Byron, Edward Thomas, Percy B. Shelley, Thomas Hardy, Emily Dickinson, Edna Vincent Millay, Robert Frost, William Blake, Edgar E. Poe and other well-known poets, a teacher should provide excellent discussion material. A poem that is short, written in clear language and universally appealing is most likely to interest students. As Jerome Gram said, *Unlike a novel or a play or a story, such a poem presents itself on the page in bite size – encouragingly compact and accessible – a manifestly possible task. And at the same time, the density of meaning and possibility in a word or a line of poetry yields ample and varied material for study.* [1, 1024].

Having collected poems, a teacher may use the following procedures:

1. To read each poem two or three times to the students before they see it in the written form. They should listen for meaning as well as for rhythm.
2. To give everyone a copy of the poem.
3. To explain the meaning of words or expressions that students may not be familiar with.
4. To read the poem again while the students follow the written form.
5. To discuss the message in the poem and to ask the students whether they agree or disagree with the poet's views and then have them retell the poem in prose.
6. To read the poem and ask the students to listen to it with their eyes closed so that they concentrate on the sound of the words.
7. To ask the group go through the poem with a different student reading each line, one student reading one verse and the group reading any pattern which adds interest and varied vocal quality during the reading of the poem.
8. To discuss the poet – his life, philosophy, other poems he has written, and additional information that would interest the students.
9. To discuss the cultural elements appearing in the poem and to ask the students compare them with elements in their own culture.
10. To help the students memorize the poem if they are interested in doing so. Besides, a poem which is learned by heart becomes the students' actual possession, a living part of his own intellectual heritage.

J.Gram said, *There's no better way to get familiar with English poems than to have a few English poems running through your head.* [1,1028].

Thus, for example, a poem by Robert Frost «Acquainted with the night» [2, 494] was discussed by the students at the lesson, later they presented their own translations and compared with the translation by V.M.Ternichenko.

***Acquainted with the night***

*(by Robert Frost)*

*I have been once acquainted with the night,  
I have walked out in rain – and back in rain.  
I have outwalked the further city light,  
I have looked down on the saddest city lane,  
I have passed by the watchman on his beat  
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.  
I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet  
When far away an interrupted cry  
Came over the houses from another street,  
But not to call me back or say good-bye,  
And further still at an unearthly height  
One luminary clock against the sky  
Proclaimed the time as neither wrong nor right.  
I have been once acquainted with the night*

***Знакомство с ночью***

*(Роберт Фрост)*

*Ночь, я с тобой воистину знаком!  
Я шел туда, где нет городов,-  
Туда под дождь, обратно под дождем.  
Вал городской, за ним – угрюмый ров.  
Я мимо стража молча проходил,  
Не зная, как сказать, кто я таков.  
Я замирал, и шум шагов гасил,  
Я слышал слабый крик издали  
(Хоть там кричали не жалея сил),-  
Но не по мне звучала в нем тоска.  
А наверху, в пространстве неземном,  
Часы, что отмеряют нам века,  
Внушали: Время над добром и злом.  
Ночь, я с тобой воистину знаком!*

*(Translation by V. M. Ternichenko)*

Here is one of the translations, offered by the student.

***И снова с ночью я***

*Вокруг темно и мрачно – это ночь,  
И дождь вчера, сегодня - снова дождь,  
И вдалеке холодными огнями  
Мерцает города неясный силуэт.  
У городских ворот – угрюмый стражник,  
Молчу – не зная, что ему сказать,  
Зачем я здесь? Кого иду искать?  
Все замерло вокруг, и стихли все шаги  
Лишь слабый крик звучал из темных окон,  
Но это не по мне вздыхали, а увы...  
И снова ночь... И звезды... И тоска,  
Все вечности ближайшиие подруги.  
Я шел вперед, за мной текли века,  
Но вздох одной секунды мне был нужен.*

*(Translation by Marianna Protsenko, 4-year student)*

One more poem which has been studied and successfully translated by the student is «No Enemies» by Charles MacKay.

**No enemies**

(by Charles MacKay)

*You have no enemies, you say?  
Alas, my friend, the boast is poor;  
He who has mingled in the fray  
Of duty, that the brave endure,  
Must have made foes! If you have none,  
Small is the work that you have done.  
You've hit no traitor on the hip,  
You've dashed no cup from perjured lip,  
You've never turned the wrong to right,  
You've been a coward in the fight!*

*Итак, врагов ты не нашёл  
Увы, мой друг, в том славы мало.  
Кто смел и стоек в битве был  
Тому врагов всегда хватало  
Коль их нашёл ты не успел,  
То мало совершил ты дел...  
Не дал предателю пинка,  
Не уличил клеветника  
Ты зло в добро не обратил  
Ты трусом в битве жизни был!*

**Нет врагов**

*Ты говоришь, что нет врагов?  
Увы, приятель, дело худо.  
В твоих словах лишь хвастовство,  
И вовсе это и не чудо.  
Тот, кто в бою непобедим  
И терпит кто в бою лишенья,  
Кто ценит честь – тот не один,  
С ним рядом враг, для «утешенья».  
Враги у каждого, друг мой,  
Без них жизнь смысла не имеет.  
И учат нас они понять  
Добро и зло, в себя поверить.  
И если ты не знал кнута,  
И не был с ложью в шумном плясе,  
То не поймешь ты никогда  
Как страшен мир и как прекрасен...  
Так и останешься глупцом,  
И будешь по миру скитаться,  
И нет друзей, и нет врагов,  
И мира нет. Куда деваться?!*

(Translation by Rادی Bydantsev, 4-year student)

We should remember the words of the outstanding German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, «One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, see a fine picture, and if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words».

Another way of conducting conversation practice, rather funny, is through limericks – light, nonsensical verses. They consist of five lines in which the first, second and fifth lines rhyme with each other and the third and fourth lines, shorter in form, make up a rhymed couplet. According to one theory, the name comes from a group of poets who wrote in Limerick, Ireland in the 18<sup>th</sup>

century. Another attributes the name to a party game of making up a nonsense verse and following it with a chorus of «Will you come to Limerick». The first limericks appeared in books published in 1820, and the form was popularized by Edward Lear. [5, 83].

Limericks, like poems, can be used in a reader's theatre approach to give students the chance to playfully interpret a passage in a mock-dramatic oral recitation. In preparing the students to present the limericks such procedures can be proposed:

1. To read the limerick so that every word is heard.
2. To vary the speed of presentation.
3. To vary the tone of voice to fit the meaning of the message. Some parts may be neutral in tone, some joking, some mock-serious.
4. To vary the volume of voice.
5. To decide what the emphatic words are and emphasize them.
6. To pause in appropriate places in order to give time to ponder what has been said and to speculate about what is to come. Pauses may be before emphatic words, before and after direct speech, and before any kind of climax.
7. Not to recite mechanically or to exaggerate the rhythm of the poem.
8. Not to pause automatically at the end of the lines if the meaning does not require.

Here are some examples of limericks which can be used.

*1) A groundhog who lived in St. Paul  
Was the laziest groundhog of all.  
On the second of Feb  
He stayed in bed,  
And spring didn't come until fall!*

*(Anonymous)*

Presenting this limerick it should be mentioned that the groundhog – a small hibernating animal, also called «woodchuck», according to the legend, comes out of his hole on February, 2. If the day is cloudy, he stays out, and it means that spring is near. If the day is sunny and he sees his shadow, he is frightened back into his hole and there will be six months of winter more. The matter is, St. Paul, Minnesota is known for its long winters, and groundhog watchers there especially hope for an early spring.

*2) There was a young maid who said, «Why  
Can't I look in my ear with my eye?»  
If I put my mind to it,  
I'm sure I can do it.  
You never can tell till you try.*

*(Edward Lear)*

*3) There was a young man of Oporta,  
Who daily got shorter and shorter.  
The reason, he said,  
Was the hod on his head,  
Which was filled with the heaviest mortar.*

*(Lewis Carroll)*

*4) There once was a student named Bessor,  
Whose knowledge grew lessor and lessor.  
It all last grew so small  
He knew nothing at all,  
And today he's a college professor!*

*(Anonymous)*

(\*lessor and lessor = less and less).

Besides training listening and speaking skills, a student may be offered to test himself in the translation trying to preserve light and mocking mood of the verses.

2. American Literature. – Mission Hills, California, 1987. – 892 p.
3. British and Western Literature. – Treasury Edition, New York. – 784 p.
4. Brown H. D. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching / H. D. Brown. – Prentice Hall, 1987. – 285 p.
5. The Lighter Side of TEFL. – US Information Agency, Washington, 1994. – 135 p.

**Ткаченко Л. Х. Поетичні твори як продуктивний засіб ведення дискусії на заняттях з англійської мови.**

*У статті розглядаються можливості мовленнєвої практики на заняттях з англійської мови з використанням відомих віршів англійських та американських авторів, які можуть стати продуктивними засобами для ведення дискусії. Описано методи роботи з поетичними творами. Аналіз базується на власних спостереженнях.*

**Ключові слова:** мовленнєва практика, засоби ведення дискусії, методи роботи з поетичними творами, основна думка поетичного твору, інтелектуальна спадщина.

**Ткаченко Л. Х. Поэтические произведения как продуктивный способ ведения дискуссии на занятиях по английскому языку.**

*В статье рассматриваются возможности осуществления разговорной практики на занятиях английского языка с использованием популярных стихотворений английских и американских авторов, которые могут стать продуктивными способами для ведения дискуссии. Описаны методы работы с поэтическими произведениями. Анализ основан на личных наблюдениях.*

**Ключевые слова:** разговорная практика, способы ведения дискуссии, методы работы с поэтическими произведениями, основная идея поэтического произведения, интеллектуальное наследие.