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**STORYTELLING AS A WAY
OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS'
COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS**

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The article is devoted to the analysis of storytelling as specific teaching technique and the way of using it in the combination with the other English language teaching methods at all the stages of an English lesson. Storytelling activities are taken into consideration as alternative to the traditional way of increasing communicative proficiency. They are described as the form of work designed for motivating students, encouraging their active participation, use of imagination, creativity and cooperation between a teacher and learners. It is shown that storytelling activities are a good way of recycling and memorizing linguistic units as repetition is typical for narration. Such exercises may help students improve their general knowledge and to be able to communicate on various subjects. Storytelling is viewed both as a kind of time-filler as well as introductory or illustrative exercise and the activity playing the central role in communicative situation created for developing learner's communicative skills. Storytelling exercises may be viewed as integral parts of other activities: warming-up exercises, guessing or discussion games, ranking and problem-solving activities. They seem to be helpful for passing new lexical items from the short-term to more reliable long-term memory.

It is pointed out that storytelling activities usually require some preparation. Storytelling games make use of variety of techniques. They may be enacted around the certain topic, may be based on the use of active vocabulary or learners' own experience.

The set of storytelling activities efficient for the development of students' communicative competence has been offered. It is proved that storytelling exercises give learners the opportunity to sense the work of language as living communication. They can cover a wide spectrum of individual preferences in ways of learning. It is shown that storytelling is suitable for all levels of proficiency. Narration can help students to become more language curious and more confident in their everyday speech and writing. It is shown that storytelling may be based on team work in order to maximize ways of making every learner experience success. It is pointed out that some storytelling activities may have quite a complicated structure consisting of a number of stages. Some of them can be

used as warming-up exercises some activities can help students to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge. The storytelling exercises offered in the article are easily adaptable to different teacher's aims and different learners' needs. Such activities may be challenging but they get students motivated and help to create learning environment which leads students to success and joy of learning. They promote a feeling of well being and relaxation.

Key words: communicative competence, creativity, motivation, storytelling activities, teaching method.

Щербина В.В. Складання усних історій як засіб навчання студентів комунікативних умінь. Стаття присвячена аналізу методики навчання складання усних історій у її поєднанні з іншими методиками навчання англійської мови на різних етапах вивчення іноземної мови. Складання історій розглядається як альтернатива традиційним методам навчання іноземних мов. Доведено, що творчі вправи розповідного характеру, спрямовані на розвиток комунікативної компетенції, можуть мати складну структуру. Більшість завдань на розвиток усного мовлення потребують додаткової підготовки. Показано, що вправи на складання історій часто використовуються для подання, повторення та закріплення нового матеріалу. Подібні методи навчання створюють сприятливе середовище на занятті та підвищують мотивацію студентів. Вправи на складання історій можуть бути складником інших методик, спрямованих на розвиток комунікативних умінь. Творчі вправи допомагають студентам підвищувати рівень знань, полегшують процес спілкування іноземною мовою.

Запропоновано низку вправ, найбільш ефективних у процесі розвитку комунікативної компетенції студентів.

Ключові слова: комунікативна компетенція, мотивація, навчальний метод, складання історій, творчість.

Щербина В.В. Составление устных рассказов как способ обучения студентов коммуникативным умениям. Стаття посвящена анализу методики обучения составлению устных рассказов в сочетании с другими методиками обучения английскому языку на разных этапах изучения иностранного языка. Составление рассказов рассматривается как альтернатива традиционным методам обучения иностранным языкам. Доказано, что творческие задания повествовательного характера, направленные на развитие коммуникативной компетенции, могут иметь сложную структуру. Большинство из заданий на развитие устной речи требуют дополнительной подготовки. Показано, что упражнения на составление рассказов часто используются для предъявления повторения и закрепления нового материала. Подобные методы обучения создают благоприятную обстановку на занятии и повышают мотивацию

студентов. Упражнения на составление устных рассказов могут быть включены в другие методики, направленные на развитие коммуникативных умений. Творческие задания помогают студентам повышать уровень знаний, облегчают процесс общения на иностранном языке.

Предложен ряд упражнений, которые являются наиболее эффективными в процессе развития коммуникативной компетенции студентов.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная компетенция, мотивация, обучающий метод, повествование, творчество.

The topicality of the research. The degree of learners' activity depends on type of material they are working on and methods a teacher may use. Storytelling may become an alternative to the potentially tedious procedure of a teacher's telling something in front of the class. Storytelling is concerned with students' themselves and as a result may stimulate their activity as well as enhance their motivation. Based on creative thinking as well as imagination an exciting story may be essential for effective learning and functioning in a modern world.

The method of storytelling may reveal the untapped potential of every student. It is important for a teacher to maximize the chance of every student to take part in this sort of activity. The teacher is to challenge students and show his or her care about the content of their contribution more than the language forms.

The genres of art based upon the stories go very deep in our beings as humans. Everyone loves stories. Stories are a huge potential for language use in a foreign language class. Storytelling is a deeply creative part of being human. We learn about ourselves from the stories we are told and the stories we tell. Such activities both entertaining and engaging as well as challenging help the students to experience the language rather than merely study it. Stories may help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.

Storytelling activities offer a reason for speaking, they can give the learners a confirmation and confidence resulting from successful use of the language. The stories may be educative or entertaining, deductive or humorous. Such activities may change our rigid way of thinking and make us learn to think creatively. They can be used at the beginning of the lesson as a warming-up activity and become a powerful positive start of the daily work. A good story, created by students may be suitable for light relief between periods of hard work. Such exercises are good for getting

students into the right mood before starting on some new project or task. Involving all the students into creating a funny story is a wonderful way to achieve classroom goals and improve language skills. Storytelling activities may function as introductions, reinforcements or homework assignments.

The degree of scientific research of the issue. Storytelling as a method of foreign language teaching has been the object of research in the studies of many both native and foreign methodists. The works by D. Heathfield, who combines teaching English in Exeter with being international storyteller and teacher trainer, are devoted “to practical ways of putting creativity at the heart of language learning” [3]. He tells stories with adults, children in a variety of settings: festivals, museums, forests and all kinds of educational establishments. His book “Spontaneous Speaking” is aimed at motivating learners in order to form and develop communicative skills [3]. His book “Storytelling with Our Students” revolves around celebrating cultural diversity and tells how he learns stories by listening to people all over the world [4].

A. Gersie works out original storytelling activities which require the active involvement of learners. Personal and creative storytelling offered by A. Gersie “encourage students not only to pay close attention to each other, but to build on each other’s responses. Such exercises are aimed at getting students listen attentively to each other in a foreign language classroom. “Becoming English language storyteller leads to improved memory, language development, fluency and confidence in public speaking” [8: 45]. The teaching techniques, offered by A. Gersie, encourage a free flow of ideas and value every student’s contribution to the storytelling activity.

S. Pinker examines the psychological aspect of storytelling. The scientist points out that stories stimulate listener’s imagination. Storytelling activity is not one-way process: listener’s brain reflects storyteller’s brain activity. The scholar proves that the listener “tells and anticipates the story along with the storyteller” [9].

J. Umstatter, selected Teacher of the Year several times, designed storytelling activities “focusing at students themselves” [10]. The researcher considers “personal inventory exercises” to be enjoyable, worthwhile and motivating ones. Through such activities students may absorb more information and may enjoy themselves at the same time. In his book “English Brainstormers” [10] a number of personal decision-

making stories and exercises based upon evaluation are offered. Such activities help teachers “to look at what students think of themselves and others as well as they can make students think more maturely and insightfully as they assess the world around them” [10].

F. Klippel considers storytelling exercises to be the technique that may help students to develop their “feeling of the language”, which seems to be necessary for formation and development of their communicative skills [5]. In his works the linguist views storytelling activities as an integrative part of role-play exercises and simulations which he considers to be at the heart of learning communicative skills.

A. Wright takes into consideration the function of storytelling activities as the important element in modern foreign language teaching for specific purposes [11]. The activities proposed in his books are based upon the area of foreign language application. The ways storytelling exercises develop students’ imagination and make them “word wise” and motivated are shown in his book “Games for Language Learning” [11].

The aim of this article is to define the ways storytelling activities may function at different stages of the English lesson and to offer a set of storytelling exercises which can be used for forming and developing students’ communicative fluency.

There are many ways of forming and teaching communicative skills. Storytelling exercises may function in various forms in a foreign language class. As introductory forms of activities such exercises can be aimed at helping students learn, memorize and recycle enough language material to be able to communicate on various subjects. A. Wright points out that “telling stories includes a heightened use of language in describing ideas, feelings and emotions” [11: 24]. The easiest way of telling stories may be based upon the repetition of given structures and modes. A. Wright offers the set of activities aimed at practicing storytelling. One of them called **Seeing in the imagination**. This exercise develops human ability to see pictures in the imagination and create short stories describing those images. The work with students’ imagination is one of the ways of altering the usual learning format and adding variety in everyday classroom routine.

Storytelling activities can be used as warming-up exercises. In this case they are easy and fast to organise. Let’s have a closer look at some storytelling activities that can be used at the beginning of the foreign language class.

Adding to a story is one of the most popular storytelling activities. In this exercise you will need one picture or object for each student.

Step 1: Give a picture or an object to each student.

Step 2: Explain students that they are to create a story together.

Step 3: Ask one student to start a story.

Step 4: The next student is to continue the story where the previous person left off. Every student is to refer to the picture or object at some point in their portion of the story.

The exercise **Stories with ten pictures** can be used both as warming-up activity and as the way of recycling grammar material. In this activity students are asked to make up stories using the necessary grammar structures. The exercise can be done both in pairs and in groups.

Step 1: Prepare ten pictures from different magazines and number them. Any pictures will do but they should show a variety of places, objects and people.

Step 2: Ask students to invent a story, making use of the pictures in whatever order appeals to them.

Step 3: Ask each pair or group of students to tell the story they've prepared and compare different versions.

Step 4: Stories produced can be published in a class book or put on the web.

Storytelling activity may require four to eight students involved; in these cases group work is essential. If there is to be competition between groups, they should be of mixed ability. If there is to be no such challenge, the teacher might choose groups according to ability: this is very much a personal choice.

The exercise **Chain story** can be organized for two big groups or for the whole class. The aim of this activity is to get all the students to produce longer connected texts. For this students will need skill in the foreign language as well as imagination.

Step 1: The teacher prepares small slips of paper with one noun, verb, adjective on each of them, as many pieces of paper as there are students.

Step 2: Each student receives a word slip.

Step 3: The teacher starts the story by giving the first sentence. The student sitting nearest to the teacher continues the story. The student may say up to three sentences and must include the word on his slip of paper. The next student goes on.

Step 4: One can direct the contents of the story to a certain degree by the choice of words.

F. Klippel points out that “story-telling activates more than a limited number of patterns and structures and these activities are best used as general revision” [5: 130]. The exercise **Keep talking** provides opportunities for intensive speaking practice and can be used for revising topics which have been dealt with in class.

Step 1: The teacher prepares slips of paper with both a sentence and a topic written on them.

Step 2: A student chooses a slip of paper and has to talk for one minute about the topic, beginning with the sentence on the piece of paper.

Step 3: The exercise can be played as a team contest.

To sum up, it can be said that storytelling may be challenging but it helps the teacher to create a learning environment, which leads students to success and joy of learning. Storytelling is concerned with learners themselves. Such activities offer significant changes in classroom work create relaxed and friendly atmosphere in the group, help students cooperate better with each other. Creating stories and telling them to the group makes students feel more comfortable with each other, confident and focused on the language lesson. Storytelling helps teachers to make a very complex process of teaching and learning more absorbing and exciting. Creating and telling stories students bring to the classroom his ideas, experiences, interests, feelings and emotions. Stories can help every learner understand why things happen and how it might be possible to change things if necessary. Aimed at developing students’ creative skills, storytelling activities make work non-routine and keep learners being interested and active during the whole class.

The **further research** in this area is to be devoted to the analysis of values clarification techniques and problem-solving activities as a significant component of developing communicative fluency.

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