THE USAGE OF TALES IN TEACHING VOCABULARY IN 7th GRADE

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Our research investigates the usage of tales in teaching vocabulary in the 7th grade and is based on a didactic experiment held during the pedagogical practicum at "Spiru Haret" Lyceum in Chişinău. Two groups of students were tested at the end of the studying process. The results of the experiment were displayed at the National Session of Student Scientific Communications, held between 11th and 13th of April, 2019 at Moldova State University, Chşinău. After revising a big number of opinions of notorious researchers in the field of teaching vocabulary, we decided to concentrate this research on: the study of words in a context (Intentional Vocabulary Learning), Reading Comprehension, emotional stimuli connected to the process of learning that could improve the memorization rates of the students and interactive techniques combined with clearly specified pedagogical objectives.

The methodologic and theoretic materials used for accomplishing these objectives were: the didactic insights taken from the methodology of the researcher Jim Scrivener, the data about the needs of mixed-ability classes from a handbook for teachers by Julie Tice, some methodological advice given by Moldovan professors Galina Bur-

deniuc and Silvia Rotaru in their book *Basics of Teaching English as a Foreign Language* and authentic English tales from online resources.

The researcher Albert Sydney Hornby perceives vocabulary as "the total number of words in a language; vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings" [3, p.1331], while Alan Burns defines it as "the stock of words which is used by a person, class or profession" [1, p.295].

Vocabulary allows the students to develop the main competences of a learner. Without knowing the words of a language, the success with the rest of the competences decreases. The Moldovan schools put emphasis on the children literature mainly in native language classrooms. The English language classroom often lacks authentic and interesting texts and base generally on the textbooks. We would like to affirm that the tales are suitable not just for the native language acquirement but also in the English language classroom and with more mature students as well.

The approach that we have selected assumes that an attractive and interesting context provided by the tales combined with their cultural value would facilitate the vocabulary learning. Many of the researchers agree that the context is the core for the vocabulary learning: "In fact, most vocabulary growth can be attributed to learning from context while reading" [5]. It implies the necessity of the development of the reading competence which further results in understanding the new vocabulary items through the reader- literature interaction [8]. The importance of the context in learning vocabulary is also supported by the Canadian Professor of Applied Psychology and Human Development Keith Stanovich: "In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension – more vocabulary knowledge generally leads to better reading comprehension, which, in turn, results in increases in vocabulary learning" [7, p.360].

The world history, culture of various nations and the other contexts people live in are the main aspects of life one can find in literature and undoubtedly in tales. All of these educative elements combined with appropriate pedagogical tasks oriented to the achievement of pedagogical objectives can certainly lead to the development of the students' proficiency in the English language. Also, this type of

literature is likely to remind the learners about the importance of the national folklore and of the national treasures of that community, the language of which they learn in schools.

Vocabulary teaching is one of the crucial elements of language teaching. It carries the content of what the people want to express, so it is a bearer of meaning; people express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts with the help of words. The students have a high sensitivity to rhythmic-prosodic impulses, linguistic structures, and non-verbal signs. These features are to be found in tales and in activities that the teacher performs with their help in order to reach the pedagogical objectives.

In addition, many experiments based on the connection between the memory and emotions showed that: "a person's emotional state at the time of an event can influence whether or not it is encoded as a memory" [2]; "words, which were intended to elicit an emotional response, were recalled more frequently than words which carried less emotional connotations" [4].

The tales carry important beliefs and traditions of peoples who lived in different historic periods, thus contributing in a number of ways to the improvement of learners' knowledge. The students "feel" the culture of the community, the language of which they learn. We, as language teachers, should find appropriate techniques in the process of teaching vocabulary. The more language teaching techniques and authentic materials we bring and apply in classroom, the more dynamic and prolific our vocabulary teaching will be.

In our opinion, the tales should be used as supplementary literature to the basic textbooks, as well as didactic material in core classroom for accomplishing the didactic objectives with regard to communicative competence based on vocabulary learning. The didactic experiment proved that the tale combined with appropriate interactive techniques take the students out from the boring routine of the textbook.

In choosing the vocabulary items to be taught, we focused on content words and the aim was to extend the learner's vocabulary beyond the textbook. We chose words from various categories, such as nouns, verbs, phrasal verbs and adjectives. We focused on the following plan of the lesson: performing a warm-up activity, introducing

the topic through a pre-reading activity, working on tales and vocabulary units through various types of top-down and bottom-up activities, designing interesting post-reading activities. Also, we concentrated on individual work, pair-work, group-work and frontal activities in order to diversify the lessons.

After the period of teaching the new vocabulary items to the 7th graders, we designed a final test in order to check the learners' comprehension. In designing the tests, we focused on the theory of the researcher Jack Richards, who explains what does it mean to know a word [6]. The students had to completely fulfill the main aspects of knowing a word.

The results in the 1st group that learned the words through the tales are highly better, as we supposed before the experiment. This is due to the fact that the tales create emotional responses that correlate with the increase in the memorization rates. The grades are higher: 10- 39%; 9- 39%, 8-6%, 7- 11%, 65%, 5-0% in comparison with the 2nd group: 10- 8%, 9-0%, 8-0%, 7-54%, 6- 23%, 5-15%.

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