

INTEGRATING STORY-TELLING ACTIVITIES INTO
A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOMВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ЗАВДАНЬ ЗІ СКЛАДАННЯ ІСТОРІЙ
НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

The article is devoted to the analysis of the story-telling activities as the way of forming and developing students' communicative fluency.

It is stated that the development of speaking skills follows the same pattern from reception to reproduction both in mother tongue and in foreign language teaching. It is shown that the learner's desire to inform the listeners of something exciting and important or to get information from them should be stimulated by the situation, created in the classroom. It is pointed out that the degree of learners' motivation and interest depends both on the type of material they are working on and the methods and techniques the teacher may use. It is emphasized that oral language is always situational and huge proportion of every day conversation is made up of personal stories. It is shown that story-telling exercises may function in various forms in a foreign language class. The material, used for story-telling activities can be divided into several groups according to a number of principles. The first group includes the interactive games and activities aimed at developing students' monological speech. It is proved that the activities belonging to this group are designed for getting the students to produce long connected texts. It is stated that such games can be useful for developing students' speaking skills as the learners get the opportunity to give the longest uninterrupted speech in English. It is emphasized that the exercises of this type also focus on accuracy and require the students to produce longer sentences and phrases.

The second group of story-telling activities includes the element of role play. The games belonging to this group help the teacher to get all the students personally involved by making them use their language skills and creative thinking. It is stated that the emphasis in such games can be both on successful communication and correctness of the language. It is shown that the interpersonal story-telling the games of this type include help the students to boost their confidence as English speakers. It is proved that story-telling activities can help the teacher to foster students' emotional intelligence as well as improve their language skills.

Key words: story-telling activities, creativity, role play, communicative skills, motivation.

Стаття присвячена аналізу завдань зі складання історій як засобу формування та розвитку комунікативної компетенції студентів.

У статті зазначено, що розвиток навичок говоріння відбувається за однаковою схемою від реценції до репродукції як у рідній мові так і у навчанні іноземної мови. Показано, що бажання суб'єкту навчання повідомити слухачам щось цікаве і важливе або отримати від них інформацію має стимулюватися ситуацією, створеною в класі. Зазначається, що ступінь мотивації та зацікавленості студентів залежить як від типу матеріалу, який вони опрацьовують, так і від навчальних методів та прийомів, які може використовувати викладач. Підкреслюється, що усне мовлення завжди ситуативне, та значну частку щоденного спілкування складають особисті історії.

Показано, що вправи зі складання та розповідання історій можуть функціонувати на заняттях з іноземної мови у різних формах. Матеріал, який використовується для роботи над розповіддю, можна розподілити на кілька груп за низкою принципів. До першої групи належать інтерактивні ігри та вправи, спрямовані на розвиток монологічного мовлення студентів. Доведено, що вправи, які належать до цієї групи, призначені для того, щоб навчити учнів створювати довгі зв'язні тексти. Зазначається, що такі ігри можуть бути корисними для розвитку мовленнєвих навичок студентів, оскільки вони отримують можливість висловити найдовшу безперервну промову англійською мовою. Підкреслюється, що вправи цього типу зосереджені на граматичній правильності та вимагають від студентів створення довгих речень та фраз.

Друга група вправ зі складання історій включає елемент рольової гри. Завдання, що належать до цієї групи, допомагають викладачеві залучити всіх студентів до участі, змушуючи їх використовувати свої мовні навички та творче мислення. Зазначається, що акцент у таких іграх може робитися як на успішному спілкуванні, так і на правильності мовлення. Показано, що міжособистісне складання та розповідання історій, яке включають ігри такого типу, допомагає студентам підвищити їхню впевненість як носіїв англійської мови. Доведено, що вправи зі складання історій можуть допомогти викладачеві розвивати емоційний інтелект студентів та удосконалювати їхні мовні навички.
Ключові слова: завдання зі складання історій, креативність, рольова гра, комунікативні навички, мотивація.

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Problem statement. The development of speaking skills follows the same pattern from reception to reproduction both in mother tongue and in foreign language teaching. Oral language is always viewed as addressed and motivated. The learner's desire to inform the listeners of something exciting and important or to get information from them should be stimulated by the situation, created in the classroom. The degree of learners' motivation and interest depends

both on the type of material they are working on and the methods and techniques the teacher may use. The suitability and unsuitability of the exercises and activities used in the class is defined by the educational goals which are set. Oral language is always situational. Since foreign language teaching is aimed at developing students' speaking skills, all situations in which real communication occurs should be created. A huge proportion of every day conversation is

made up of personal stories, most of them containing some kind of problem that needs solving or feelings and emotions that need sharing. Emphasizing the fact that humans are narrative beings, the researcher D. Heathfield points out: "Nothing comes more naturally to students than listening to their English teacher or to each other telling a personal story, and then to reciprocate with another story on a connected theme. Becoming English story-tellers leads to improved memory, language development, fluency and confidence in public speaking" [2, p. 45].

If we look at foreign language teaching more attentively, we can notice how much of story-telling it includes. As soon as the students learn how to build simple sentences, they start making up short monologues or stories based upon their personal life experience viewed as the richest resource necessary for taking part in social conversation more fluently and confidently. In D.Heathfield`s opinion, the teacher`s task is "to motivate students` bringing their lifetime of stories with them into classroom as well as to provide such interactive activities which give students opportunities to develop as co-creative story-tellers and story-listeners in English" [2, p.44]. The enjoyable practical activities can help the teacher to turn the language classroom into the perfect environment for the learners to tell the stories about their own lives and experiences.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The use of story-telling activities has been the object of research in the studies of many both native and foreign linguists. The work by G.Fairbairn is devoted to the analysis of developing academic story-telling. In the researcher`s opinion, "thinking of academic writing as narrative is helpful as a good narrative writer can engage the audience and hold its attention. The academic writers, lecturers and teachers can do similar things as all of them have stories to tell" [1, p. 7]. The researcher emphasizes the importance of adopting the narrative forms that are appropriate to the material the teacher is using or telling about. Well-arranged storytelling activities are designed for developing students` speaking and writing skills. Such exercises are equally good for sharing personal opinions and exchanging the results of the research that has been done.

D.Heathfield, who combines teaching English with being an international story-teller and teacher trainer, takes into consideration storytelling activities as the way of developing students` creative thinking. The researcher points out that "face-to-face storytelling activities provide clear frameworks within which students share their personal stories" [2, p. 44]. The practical and enjoyable activities encourage students to listen and pay close attention to each other, to show genuine interest in one another`s contribution and gradually develop as a successful community of learners.

Experimental psychologist S.Pinker throws light on the conditions necessary for developing story-telling skills in the language classroom. The researcher emphasizes that story-telling is not a one-way process. Such activities help the teacher to stimulate students` imagination and get them engrossed in a compelling narrative S.Pinker points out that "neural coupling arranged between the listener and the story-teller means that the listener tells and anticipates the story along with the story-teller and influences the course of the story" [4, p. 256].

F.Klippel works out enjoyable story-telling activities, aimed at training the students to use their knowledge of the foreign language flexibly. Fostering this flexibility is viewed as the most important for getting the students prepared for all communicative situations that may arise. The researcher points out, that such activities give students the opportunity "to practice many types of language functions and structures in a new way" [3, p. 7]. In F.Klippel`s opinion, story-telling exercises can be successfully used as the integral part of role plays and simulations. It is impossible to imagine exciting story-teller without using proper intonation, body language and facial expression. The more dramatizing story-telling includes, the more involved and motivated the students feel. The ability to dramatize can become the key to success of story-telling activities in a foreign language class.

Analyzing the aesthetic characteristics and artistic aspects of foreign language teaching, the researcher S.Thornbury compares a foreign language class with public performance "which sets up expectations similar to those of other performance genres" [5, p. 220]. Involving two distinct sets of participants, the lesson determines their code of behavior and ways of interaction. The survey, organized by S.Thornbury at International House in Barcelona, shows that "the students regardless of their proficiency level, age, gender and ability perceive a lesson as a film" [5, p. 221]. A foreign language class if it is properly arranged and professionally conducted has much to do with a film as it also has plot, theme, rhythm, flow and the sense of ending. Emphasizing the fact that learning is fundamentally narrative by nature, S.Thornbury classifies all foreign language classes into "story-type lessons and plot-type ones" [5, p. 224].

P. Watcyn-Jones focuses attention on "the necessity of the humour aspect in story-telling activities" [6, p. 5]. In the researcher`s opinion, stories can be made up by students individually, in pairs or small groups and then successfully told and dramatized before the whole class. Story-telling can be organized as a warming-up activity, ice-breaker, guessing game and competition.

The aim of the article is to define the ways of integrating story-telling into a foreign language classroom and offer a set of interactive story-telling activities

which are aimed at forming and developing students' communicative fluency and can be used at different stages of the English lesson.

Presenting the main material. Communication can be viewed as the exchange of various information, facts, ideas, opinions, attitudes, likes and dislikes. As a two-way process communication requires tellers and listeners. Everyone knows how absorbing and interesting the communication could be if the participants have exciting stories to tell. Any piece of information can be expressed in the form of a story either long or short. Story-telling exercises may function in various forms in a foreign language class. Everyone has a story to tell. The teacher's task is to create in the class friendly atmosphere and environment in which every learner would feel like sharing personal experience and telling stories.

The material, used for story-telling activities can be divided into several groups according to a number of principles. The first group of such exercises includes the interactive games or activities aimed at developing students' monological speech. For most learners nothing is more tiresome and tedious than learning the text by heart and then retelling it before the class. This traditional task, lots of teachers still use at the lesson, seems to be good and efficient. However, the modern communicative approach to foreign language teaching requires the introduction of new educational methods and it makes good teaching sense to use other more exciting ways of developing students' monological speech. Using creative storytelling appears to be one of them. Let's have a closer look at the interactive activities, designed for getting the students to produce long connected texts. The game "Tell me my story" focuses on attentive listening and remembering. It can be as well used for practicing a number of grammar patterns and structures. The game consists of several steps.

Step 1: The teacher prepares a set of stories containing the target vocabulary and grammar structures.

Step 2: The class is divided into two teams. The representative of the first team is asked to come and to stand face-to-face with the teacher.

Step 3: The teacher is reading the story prepared and the student is listening and trying to memorize all the details.

Step 4: The teacher finishes reading and challenges the student to tell the story back in exactly the same way using the first person *I*, expressing the same emotions, energy, pace, gestures, voice and facial expression.

Step 5: Once the student from the first team has retold the story, the representatives of the second team start analyzing his / her performance. The task of the second team is to find out all similarities and differences they have noticed. The representatives of the first team listen to the remarks made by the second team, agree or disagree with them. The teacher

asks the second team to award the student a percentage grade according how similar the storytelling they listened to was.

Step 6: The teacher asks the representative of the second team to come and listen to another story, the procedure is repeated. The team which gets higher percentage grades becomes a winner. This activity gives students the opportunities to act as story-listeners and co-creative story-tellers. The teacher, who starts off story-telling and remains in charge of the exercise, inspires the students to do their best and serves as a model for the learners. Being in competition with the teacher and other learners can be extremely motivating.

The game can be particularly useful for developing students' speaking skills as it gives them the opportunity to give the longest uninterrupted speech in English. The change in the traditional format allows the learners to present their monologues without getting bored. The activities of this type are designed for better memorizing target vocabulary as they help to fix the meaning of words in the students' mind. Such exercises focus on accuracy and require the students to produce longer sentences and phrases. As the activity is arranged as a competition, the emphasis in this game can be both on successful communication and correctness of the language.

The second group of story-telling activities includes the element of role play. The activity "Newspaper report" can be organized in pairs or in groups. This game helps the teacher to get all the students personally involved by making them use their language skills and creative thinking.

Step 1: The teacher prepares a large number of pictures and photographs taken from magazines and newspapers.

Step 2: Each pair or group of students gets a set of ten pictures or photographs. Their task is to prepare a newspaper report linking the pictures.

Step 3: When the report is ready, the teacher takes the pictures from the students and display them on the board or on the wall. Then the teacher asks the representative of group A to tell the story they created to the whole class. The task of the others is to listen and memorize the story reported. Then the students are to guess what pictures were used for creating the story. They are to recall and produce the sentences from the report they heard to fit the pictures they have chosen.

Step 4: The student from group B presents their story to the class and the procedure is repeated. The group that remembers more sentences, phrases and details from the story they listened to becomes a winner. The activity is suitable for practicing past tenses and passive structures. The game can be used for general revision of the topic "Mass media". Giving the students more freedom the teacher can help them to boost their confidence as English speakers.

The more unusual and widely differing pictures and photographs are chosen the more exciting and enjoyable result can be. The interpersonal story-telling game includes appears to be hugely satisfying and as it helps the students to boost their confidence as English speakers.

The game "Fairytale dominos" can be organized in pairs or in small groups of four-six learners. Such activity can help the teacher to foster students' emotional intelligence as well as develop their language skills.

Step 1: The teacher prepares the sets of cards for each group of students. The cards depict well-known characters from different fairy tales, various kinds of magic surrounding, scenery, situations and events.

Step 2: The first player from team A begins by choosing a card and laying it down on the table as the first event of the story. The player's task is to describe the picture using all the images depicted on the card as well as to lay the basis for the plot of the story the students are going to tell.

Step 3: The second player from team A chooses the next card to follow on as the next event of the story, lays it down on the table next to the first and narrates the next stage in the story. The procedure is repeated until all the cards are taken and described. The object of the game is to build-up a cooperative story whose plot must differ from the familiar fairytale. When all the groups are finished with their stories, the teacher may ask any representative of each group to tell the story they created before the whole class.

The game "Fairytale dominos" can nicely lead to follow-up dramatizing or writing activity. Getting the students involved in making up a new fairy tale and acting it out the teacher gives them the chance to practice their language skills as well as to be creative. The activity promotes both listening and speaking skills. It is important that the creative content of the stories come from the students and is shared among them.

The activity "Truth or Lie" provides clear framework within which the students are both to make up their personal story and to guess how much of their partners' stories is true. The game is a learner-centered activity, designed for engaging students in self-regulated oral interaction in a foreign language. The exercise can be organized in pairs or in small groups.

Step1: The teacher asks the students from each group to prepare a short personal story and besides the true facts include some false information.

Step 2: The student from the first group starts presenting the story they made up before the whole class. The students from the other groups listen to the story and try to guess the lie.

Step 3: When the first student finishes telling the story, the representatives of the other groups make their guesses aloud. The story-teller doesn't let know if they are right or wrong. When all the guesses have been made, the story-teller reveals the lie.

Step 4: The representative of the second group presents the story, hiding the lie among the true details, the procedure is repeated. The group which manages to reveal the most false information becomes a winner.

The activity "Truth or Lie" can help the teacher to develop students' creative thinking and prediction skills. The game gives the opportunity to enhance target language competence in systematic ways.

Conclusions. Integrating creative story-telling into a foreign language classroom can help the teacher to reveal the untapped potential of every student. The reciprocal nature of story-telling activities encourages the learners to experience the language rather than merely study it. Making up the stories and sharing them with the others students get the confirmation and confidence resulting from successful use of the language. Getting the learners involved in each other's personal story gives the opportunity to transform learning environment into successful self-sustaining community. The story-telling is viewed as both the simplest and the most creative way of altering the traditional format of the student standing in front of the class and retelling the text. Creating the stories students bring to the classroom their ideas, experiences, interests and emotions. Aimed at developing students' creative and language skills make studying enjoyable and keep the learners being active and motivated.

The **further research** in this area is to be devoted to the analysis of the development of reading skills.

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