

PECULIARITIES AND BENEFITS OF USING PROVERBS IN MASTERING LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE

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ABSTRACT

In this article there outlined peculiarities and benefits of using proverbs in mastering students' communicative grammatical competences on the base of communication based activities. There highlighted the characteristics of CLT (Communicative language teaching) and proverbs are described as sources of authentic materials and ready mini context which meet the specification of CLT. There suggested some examples of activities based on proverbs that can be used in communicative classes integrated into grammar instruction.

Keywords: CLT (Communicative language teaching), communicative competence, explicit, implicit grammar instruction, accuracy, fluency, activity, technique, learner needs, authentic materials, teaching in context.

INTRODUCTION

In modern times constantly growing need for English language has created enormous demand for new language teaching materials, effective methods and techniques. Nowadays every English teacher has one final aim of their own teaching. In my opinion it is the accomplishment of learner's language abilities, in other words to teach students the ways of successful communication and to develop communicative competence in target language.

Teaching English in context is one of the core issues of modern English teaching methodology. Modern standards of English language teaching demand from teachers to be alert about learners' needs. Modern language learners are aiming at the ability for a real communication. One of the best ways of preparing learners for genuine communication is resources of a target language that is using authentic materials successfully in language teaching. As teaching in context is regarded as an important issue in communicative language teaching, proverbs and sayings are considered ready mini contexts that can be used without any changes and as a rich store of variety of tasks in multifocused instruction. Not only are proverbs and sayings good source of authentic materials, but also they can be used in any English lessons for any level of learners with variety of linguistic focus.

In this article I'm going to outline the role of proverbs and sayings in developing learners' communicative grammatical competence in an integrative way of grammar instruction to language skills teaching through communication oriented tasks.

Studying proverbs can help language learners understand the similarities and differences of other cultures compared to our own. The proverbs of some different cultures are used to illustrate the differences between cultures.

Materials and methods

According to the definition of a prominent proverb scholar in the USA Wolfgang Mieder, a proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.

(Mieder, W, 1985)

English proverbs and sayings are a great treasure of the English language and valuable resource for language teachers. When we, modern teachers of English, can use them appropriately, there will be great benefit not only to arouse students' interests and improve their accomplishment about language, but at the same time encourage them to be aware of the culture, philosophy of life, broaden their knowledge and world outlook.

As well as any experienced language teacher can imagine how beneficial can be applying this lexical richness of the language in communicative classes as they are a good store of vocabulary and grammar structures and can be found for any topic and for any occasions of life.

As famous English scholar and methodologist Jack C. Richards mentions in his book "Communicative language teaching today" modern communicative language teaching demands from teachers to develop learners' target language skills considering communicative competence over grammatical one. Communicative language teaching is characterized by the following:

- People learn a language through communicating it;
- People learn a language best when using it to do things rather than through studying how language works and practicing rules;
- Classroom activities should be meaningful and involve real communication;
- Both accuracy and fluency are goaled;
- Language should be taught in context rather than in isolated sentences;
- Grammar should be taught implicitly rather than explicitly. (Richards,C,2006)

Taking into consideration above mentioned characteristics of communicative classroom proverbs can be taken as ready grammar structures with mini context and serves as useful material for communicative grammar lessons.

Moreover, proverbs have meaning priority over their language structures and it provides opportunity to develop different meaningful tasks, communicative activities, real reason for communication and for any stage of the lesson including interesting and adaptable warm-up activities or for pre, while and post stages of the lesson .

It is obvious that proverbs contain specific vocabulary related to the culture, people, nature or place where they are originated from. This advantage of proverbs can provide the chance of cultural awareness input and improving comprehensive skills of learners. Using proverbs as teaching materials we, teachers may carry out multi tasks and create not only authentic and communicative environment but also can successfully interlink culture and language in the classroom.

For example: An Englishman's house is his castle.

If you want to please an Englishman, be polite about his garden.

When in Rome do as Romans do.

All roads lead to Rome

Proverbs in various languages are found with a wide variety of grammatical structures. In English, for example, we can find the following structures (in addition to others):

- Imperative, negative - Don't beat a dead horse.
 - Don't judge a book by its cover
 - Don't cry over spilt milk
- Imperative, positive - Look before you leap,
 - Do as I say, not as I do
 - Love me love my dog
- Parallel phrases - Garbage in, garbage out.
 - There is no gain without pain
- Rhetorical question - Is the Pope Catholic?
- Declarative sentence - Birds of a feather flock together.
 - Practice makes perfect
- Conditional sentences –If you want to be a friend, never borrow, never lend
 - If you want to please an Englishman, be polite about his garden
 - if you can't beat them, join them
- Relative clauses – He laughs the best who laughs the last
You are what you eat. Everything that glitters is not gold
A friend who shares is a friend who cares
- Subordinate clauses - Mice will play when the cat is away.
Make hay while the sun is shining
Don't count your chickens before they are hatched
Don't judge a man until you have walked in his boots
- Comparative and superlative adjectives – Better late than never
An open enemy is better than a false friend
He laughs the best who laughs the last
The best things in life are free
Don't bite off more than you can chew (Arora, S.1984)

Result and discussion

While developing and using communication, comparison, translation-based activities which focus on implicit grammar instruction on the base of proverbs, sayings and other types phraseological units, we observed that there are mainly three important ways of interpreting and explaining their meanings in classroom teaching:

1. Word for word translation. There are very rare proverbs, sayings and other types of phraseological units that can be translated word for word, however, I observed some examples while working on them in my classes, such as:

In English : Better late than never

In Uzbek: Hechdan ko'ra kech yaxshi

In Russian: Лучше поздно чем никогда

In English: An open enemy is better than a false friend

In Uzbek: Soxta do'stdan chin dushman yaxshi

In English: Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today

In Uzbek: Bugungi ishni ertaga qo'yma

In English: A friend in need is a friend indeed

In Uzbek: Muhtojlikdagi do'st asl do'st

Although grammatical specifications are slightly different in these examples (in English version comparative degree of adjectives in Uzbek positive adjectives are used), lexically they fully match.

2. Match an English proverb with an equivalent version in the target language. Although these type of proverbs consist of different words they have similar meaning in their context. For example:

In English:

East or West home is best

Home sweet home

Englishman's house is his castle

There is no place like home

In Uzbek:

O'z uyim o'lan to'shagim

O'zga yurtida shox bo'lguncha o'z yurtida gado bo'l

Uzoq yurtning bug'doyidan o'z yurtningni somoni afzal.

All these examples in both languages highlight the advantage of being in your homeland rather than in any other countries of the world.

Other similar examples:

Live and learn – beshikdan to qabrgacha ilm izla

Think before you leap – etti o'lchab bir kes

An early bird catches the worm – Erta turgan kishini xudo o'nglar ishini

Clothes make the man – Libos insonning ko'rki

3. Proverbs that can be explained through context. These type of proverbs neither can be translated word for word nor can be matched with equivalent in the target language. The only way of teaching and interpreting them is through context.

For modern English language teachers to update their knowledge of teaching periodically and to be aware of new methods and approaches of teaching is essential. Besides, to share with own findings in teaching and get them published in a professional journal can be beneficial for other teachers to use, to experiment and give feedback to the author. I would like to share with some activities with proverbs which worked well in my classes.

Activity 1 "My favourite proverb"

Level: pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate

Aim: To practice speaking, to develop critical thinking skills and cultural awareness, to promote real reason for communication

Language focus: flexible and adaptable, according to targeted focus of the lesson.

Procedure: Teacher announces to students that they are going to talk about their favourite proverbs or sayings and explain why they like, how it is useful in their life.

Teacher can share with his/her own example in order to encourage others to speak, e.g: There is no use of crying over spilt milk.

Teacher: It is my favourite proverb and my motto in life because it always reminds and teaches me to be careful before doing anything in my everyday life so as not to regret later, especially in the situation which can't be improved or changed after once you committed.

Teacher elicits answers from each student and encourages students to define the contextual meaning of the proverbs and to suggest equivalent version or translation of them in their native language.

Activity 2: Proverb competition.

Level: intermediate to advanced

Aim: To practice topical vocabulary and speaking, to develop language and cultural awareness, to promote real reason for communication,

Language focus: flexible and adaptable, according to targeted focus of the lesson.

Procedure: Teacher announces to students that they are going to compete with each other and the competition is on proverbs. Teacher divides the class into two groups announces a topic, groups take turns to tell a proverb containing a word related to the topic until one group is not able to suggest a proverb. e.g:

Food: -an apple a day keeps the doctor away,

-apple doesn't fall far from an apple tree,

- one man's horse is another man's meat
- hunger is the best sauce,
- a man doesn't live by bread only
- there is no use of crying over spilt milk

Animals:-You can't teach an old dog new tricks

- when the cat is away, mice will play
- an early bird catches the worm
- birds of a feather flock together
- one man's horse is another man's meat

Places: -all roads lead to Rome

- when in Rome, do as Romans do
- Rome wasn't built in a day
- Englishman's house is his castle
- if you want to please an Englishman, be polite about his garden

Other suggested topics are parts of body, travel, things, colours, country and nationalities, money and finance, health and eating and etc. As well as a teacher can choose grammatical topics such as Noun, Adjective, adverb, Numeral, Pronouns, Verb, Imperatives, Relative clauses, Conditionals and many others.

Activity 3 "Proverbs in pictures"

Level: pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate

Aim: To practice reading and, to develop critical thinking skills and cultural awareness, to promote real reason for communication

Language focus: flexible and adaptable, according to targeted focus of the lesson.

Procedure: Teacher announces to students that they are going to draw some pictures that can suggest the meaning of their proverbs. Teacher tells students that there are cards with proverbs and one student takes a card, reads written proverb silently and draws a picture which suggest the meaning of the proverb and other students try to guess the proverb. Suggested proverbs to write on the cards:

- when the cat is away, mice will play
- an early bird catches the worm
- birds of a feather flock together
- one man's horse is another man's meat
- an apple a day keeps the doctor away,
- apple doesn't fall far from an apple tree,
- a man doesn't live by bread only
- there is no use of crying over spilt milk
- to kill two birds with one stone

Conclusion

To conclude, carefully chosen proverbs can be used with learners from pre-intermediate level up. Proverbs and sayings whose content relates to cultural development and awareness have potential to become a useful motivational device. In general, proverbs and sayings bring motivation through a context. Nevertheless in using this specific type of the text it should be also the teacher who strengthens motivation through approaches and tasks.

Being an efficient user of a foreign language requires not only the ability to receive and produce the message in the foreign language but also being culturally aware.

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