

1.3 ACTIVATION OF STUDENT IMAGINATION AS AN EFFICIENT METHOD OF TEACHING WRITING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Melnyk Y. Y., Ph.D. in Pedagogy, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Foreign Languages Department, Faculty of International Relations, National Aviation University, Kyiv, Ukraine

Slobozhenko R. A., Senior Lecturer of the Foreign Languages Department, Faculty of International Relations, National Aviation University, Kyiv, Ukraine

Abstract. The article deals with the issue of enhancing the imagination as an effective technique for teaching writing in a foreign language. The important role of the use of imagination in maintaining the students' motivation to study is noted due to the creative nature of tasks, the removal of psychological barriers in the assimilation of foreign language material, a positive emotional background in the classroom, increased involuntary attention and memorization. Examples of texts and tasks for teaching foreign language writing are given, which stimulate creativity, imagination, extraordinary thinking of students. It is concluded that when teaching a foreign language writing, appealing to the imagination of students, the didactic sequence involves two stages when creating a written utterance: 1) familiarization with a sample text borrowed from fiction, journalistic, popular science literature / written by a teacher for educational purposes; 2) the implementation of post-text tasks developed by the teacher and aimed at forming certain language skills and developing speech skills. By activating the imagination of students, the sample text is a catalyst for the students' subsequent educational activities: it determines the direction of thought, provides a creative approach to completing tasks, suggests the choice of speech means necessary for the implementation of a creative idea.

1. Introduction

One of the effective techniques in teaching any subject is the active use of imagination in the educational process – the reflection of reality in new, unconventional, unexpected combinations and connections; transformation of existing ideas, which ensures the creation of a new, previously unknown situation; establishing incredible connections of objects and their characteristics. It is well known that imagination maintains and enhances interest, since the educational material takes on a vivid and imaginative form, and the presence of interest is one of the main conditions for successful implementation of the educational process and evidence for its correct implementation.

This idea became known in the didactics a long time ago, and its practical implementation is even depicted in works of art. For example, the hero of K. Paustovsky, a geography teacher, had bottles of yellowish water on the table in the classroom. Each bottle had a sticker: "Water from the Nile", "Water from the Mediterranean Sea" ... There was water from the Volga, the Thames, Lake

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Michigan, the Dead Sea and the Amazon. The teacher demonstrated these bottles in class and told how he personally filled the bottle with the Nile water near Cairo. "Look how much silt is in it! – he said. – Nile silt is more expensive than diamonds. The culture of Egypt flourished due to it." Over the years, the students learned that the bottles contained ordinary tap water, but the teacher believed that the stories associated with the bottles gave an impetus to the development of children's imagination.

In everyday pedagogical practice, the resources of activity based on imagination are not used sufficiently. This applies to both the instructor's methodological toolkit and the operational style of students' work. This state of affairs significantly impoverishes the educational process and reduces its effectiveness. It is well known that in modern realities, characterized by the presence of huge amounts of information, it is not so much the task of accumulating knowledge that comes to the fore, but the need to master the skills to interact with this knowledge, transform it, and generate new ideas on its basis.

All this is possible only with creative thinking, which presupposes a developed and functioning imagination. The purpose of this article is 1) to remind the role of imagination in teaching foreign languages in general and foreign language writing in particular; 2) to illustrate theoretical provisions with specific examples of tasks that involve the imagination of students and thus intensify the assimilation of language material and the formation of communicative competence in intellectually active creative activity.

2. The role of imagination in mastering a foreign language

Mastering a foreign language is in many ways a set of creative acts which are also impossible without imagination. The images generated by the imagination should always be positively colored. They take students beyond the framework of their everyday life, their usual existence, appeal to pleasant memories, draw bright future. That is why tasks that suggest dreaming (about an exciting journey, an ideal job, buying a house, etc.) and involving the development of certain language means are actively used in the methodology of teaching foreign languages. Dreams (pleasant reflections on the future, images of the desired future) implement the psychotherapeutic function of imagination, regulating the emotional state of students, which in this way partially satisfy some needs and are freed from the tension generated by them.

The activation of imagination in the learning process plays a compensatory role: thanks to it, what students are deprived of in everyday life is realized. It is about the opportunity to relax, get aesthetic pleasure and enjoy learning new things, create a new reality, see the world through different eyes.

Learning a foreign language is a stressful situation for the students who have to master a verbal code that is completely new to them. This situation causes a low self-esteem and discomfort, which affects the academic success and the general emotional state of students. The use of imagination allows to achieve the

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effect of "forgetting" about learning, control and assessment, exploits workarounds for digesting educational material that do not cause fatigue, activate the work of the subconscious (involuntary attention and memorization) and reveal new features of the student's personality.

Any teacher of a foreign language is familiar with the complaints of students that even with a sufficient level of language training when communicating, they are faced with the problem of generating speech products, not because they do not know HOW to say, but because they do not know what exactly they should tell. This is due to the fragmentation of ideas about the world around and the lack of formation to establish associative connections between them. The ability to make connections between individual facts is formed largely through repeated and regular appeal to the imagination.

Imagine inviting your students with you through the creaking door of the dilapidated old shed hidden in the woods of a nearby park. Inside, through the moonlight that manages to penetrate the solitary window, thick with dust, mildew, and cobwebs, you can see shelves of rusted tins and glass jars of all shapes and sizes. In the corner, slowly rocking back and forth, twisting her hands, is a grizzly old woman wearing a long, torn, black cloak. Her face is shrouded with thick layers of greasy grey hair, her face deeply lined and covered with black and brown moles each sprouting three or four coarse black hairs. And yet this repulsive person has the magic spells required to move through time. For those who have the nerve to enter her lair – a shed, you might add, that is only visible on certain cycles of the moon and at exactly six minutes before dawn – she can provide the spell required. The spell required to move back in time is a little more complicated than most. It requires a steady hand and a sober head. She throws three items into the cauldron that bubbles in the centre of the room – a subject of some kind, either "avoir" or "être", and a verb in past form. When cast in the proper way, this spell allows one to express the past – to in effect move in time. This example hints at how to engage students' emotions and imaginations in learning about a verb tense – something that, perhaps, does not seem particularly imaginatively engaging.

While our example is for French language teaching, it could easily be adapted to any other foreign language. The key is that imaginative teachers will try to engage their students' sense of wonder around the "tool" that is the past tense – to give some sense that what is so commonly taken for granted that it is just a chore to learn is in fact an astonishing human achievement. The use of the imagination brings out again that sense of wonder at the achievement, rather than focus entirely on the routines of everyday translation. Teachers might engage their students' sense of mystery in this particular feature of language learning by creating a Harry Potteresque story line. This example shows one way to begin to engage students' imaginations with the sense of mystery lying at the heart of a structure of language that symbolically moves us through time. It also teaches students the knowledge they need to properly write the past tense but it does so in a

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way that leaves them feeling something for the topic; they are intrigued, and possibly a little spooked, by the power of the tense [1, p. 345-346].

When we become fluent users of an oral language, we acquire a further toolkit for sense-making. These tools will remain with us throughout life and can be drawn on for imaginative teaching of adults no less than children. All people who can use an oral language, or some other form of language, such as signing, will have the following tools available in varying degrees. Story form: One implication of being an oral language-user is responsiveness to stories. All oral cultures that we know of have developed and used stories. Shaped by logical and psychological constraints, the invention of language seems to imply the inevitable development of stories.

Stories, then, are one of the forms of narrative, but a distinctive form that uniquely can fix our emotional orientation to the elements that make them up. No other narrative form can do this. We ascribe affective meaning to events, and to people, and to our own lives, by plotting them into provisional or partial stories. The reason we might reasonably consider the story as the most important social invention is that they orient the emotions of their hearers to their contents. We can, of course, make sense of our experience in a number of other modalities, but to whatever degree our emotional orientation is involved, then the plotting of events into partial or provisional or overarching stories will be involved. We are creatures who understand an important dimension of our experience and our world in story shapes [1, p. 350].

In much the same way as physical rhythm transforms into our language, so too do our earliest bodily games and humour give birth to jokes; the physical fun of peek-a-boo becomes the fun of the concocted language of riddles, puns and other forms of jokes. The humour comes from recognizing the different meanings of the same words in special contexts. So we learn to see language as an object, not merely as a behaviour. This develops "metacognition" of language, which is crucial to the development of flexible and creative language use [2, p. 159-174].

Like humour, the array of images available to our minds, while somewhat limited in our early years, is suddenly enriched immensely by the acquisition of language. We seem unable to not form images as we hear events described in words, and a range of the effects of stories depends, to a great extent, upon listeners' ability to form images in their minds. These can be so intense initially that most people seem able to recall with surprising clarity the images they formed when listening to stories in their early years [3]. The ability to call up precise and rich images is a unique feature of our minds and is clearly connected with the development of the imagination.

The active use of imagination in teaching foreign languages, along with "traditional" forms of work with educational material, allows us to increase the level of self-regulation of the individual. This self-regulation is not constant self-control, but rather the ability to give free rein to emotions at the right time and go into the world of imagination, and in another situation – "block" fantasy and emotions and subject them to strict rational control.

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Imagination can be developed with the help of special exercises – games of a psychotechnical nature, creative training. The main function of such games is to activate the creativity of students, the creation of creative tension, which will make perception, memory, emotional and motivational spheres function intensively.

In the course of psychotechnical games used in teaching foreign languages and differing from games in general, an intensive mastery of lexical and grammatical material occurs; the influence on the psyche of the participants is carried out due to emotional reactions, sensations, certain physical actions; imagination is used as a prerequisite for a successful activity.

In foreign languages, there is always material to be used with the imagination. Moreover, there is material that, by its very nature, involves the active exploitation of the imagination. Thus, for example, there is a conditional mood that conveys a possible action (potential, hypothetical, associated with certain conditions).

3. Activating imagination in teaching writing

The starting point for learning a foreign language with the use of imagination is samples of texts that may arouse the students' interest in their content (theme, plot, intrigue), are liked in terms of their form (style, extraordinary authorial manner), provide prospects for creativity.

Such examples can be literary, journalistic, popular science texts, excerpts from them, specially created educational texts that meet certain criteria (small volume, expressiveness, originality, ability to stimulate the imagination, the presence of a certain dominant (informative, narrative, descriptive, argument). One of the types of texts that can vividly illustrate the essence of the proposed activity is an artistic list of objects, phenomena, actions, facts united by a common idea (for example: "What is unpleasant: to cut with a blunt knife; to sail on a boat with torn sails; when trees overlap the landscape; when a fence obscures the mountains; run out of wine when flowers are budding; to celebrate in the summer in a stuffy corner." (Li Shan'in)).

Such texts are most often found in classical Oriental (Japanese or Chinese) literature (for example, "What passes swiftly" or "What are your precious memories" by Sei Shōnagon), but some modern authors also turn to the idea of a list (for example, "List of joys" by Berthold Brecht). Note that the world-famous "Prévert style list", which is also based on the list, can be actively used to develop foreign language skills, although it is difficult to establish an obvious logical connection between the elements which it is traditionally composed of. An example can be a quote that can activate the imagination and allow individual interpretations.

In any case, the proposed texts serve as a basis for organizing thinking and making statements by the students, serving as an example, roadmap, model, plan. The students understand in which direction they should move in their reasoning, in what form they should take their text on, and almost always find themselves carried away by the creative nature of the proposed activity.

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The choice of sample text depends on the age and level of students' language training, the subject of the lesson. Didactic exploitation of selected samples of texts takes place in two stages:

I. The first stage involves the expansion of the proposed text on the basis of imitation. The teacher draws students' attention to certain morphological and syntactic features of the sample. For example, in Li Shan's *What Is Unpleasant*, students are first asked to imitate the author's style using infinitive constructions and subordinate clauses. In the future, we should not exclude other possibilities of making the list: nouns, constructions "adjective + noun", "noun + subordinate clause", etc. Note that at this stage it is advisable to continue the formation and improvement of grammar skills (for instance, by transforming the elements of the list into other syntactic constructions: "It is unpleasant when trees overlap the landscape.") [4, p. 70-73].

Here are examples of tasks used at the first stage:

• ***Read the quote and write the text as instructed.***

1. *"Laugh often and a lot; win the respect of smart people and the love of children; to know that it has become easier for someone to breathe because you have lived. This is the essence of success in life."* (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Using the quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson as a reference, write what enriches life and makes it successful.

2. *"The role of a friend is to be there for you when you are wrong, as everyone will be there for you when you are right."* (Mark Twain)

Using Mark Twain's quote as a template, write your own definition of what a real friend is.

(Example: "The role of a friend is to make us laugh when we are sad, and to share joy when we are happy.")

The texts used at the first stage presuppose strict control over the speech activity of students, since its implementation and result are based on the imitation of a certain model. In this case, the intellectual activity of students is directed not so much to the formal side of the statement as to the content: they know HOW to formulate a thought, and they only think about WHAT they want to say.

II. The second stage is to create texts by students as a product of independent activities to perform creative tasks that activate the imagination. The second stage can be held in the form of a competition: the format of the competition activates the memory, intellectual and emotional reactions of students, which has a positive effect on the effectiveness of learning. The achieved result demonstrates the students their success, and using foreign language material is perceived by them as an interesting creative process [4, p. 70-73].

The texts used in the second stage are larger in volume and suggest greater freedom of students when choosing language means. In fact, this is only a demonstration that a thought can be expressed in this way, but not a pattern to be followed. After getting acquainted with such samples when writing their own texts, students independently decide not only WHAT they want to say, but also HOW they

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think it is right to do it. In this case, the fundamental role in the implementation of the practical goal of educational activity is assigned not so much to samples of texts, as to tasks developed by the teacher and directing the speech production of students.

Here are examples of sample texts used at the second stage (teaching French; subject: "Creativity. Cuisine. Cooking. Interpersonal relationships. Love. Work..."):

1. "Pour un art poétique" (Raymond Queneau)

Prenez un mot, prenez-en deux

Faites-les cuire comme des œufs

Prenez un petit bout de sens

Puis un grand morceau d'innocence

Faites chauffer à petit feu

Au petit feu de la technique

Versez la sauce énigmatique

Saupoudrez de quelques étoiles

Poivrez et puis mettez les voiles

Où voulez-vous en venir ?

À écrire...

Vraiment ? À écrire ?

2. "Bonne recette" (Metro, 13/05/2003)

@A.B.

Prenez deux êtres que rien ne semble lier. Déposez un filet de sympathie et faites mariner pour que naisse un début d'amitié. Ajoutez un zeste de frisson, une pincée de mystère, une cuillerée d'inattendu et faites frémir sur un fond de désir. Recouvrez d'un mélange harmonieux de tendresse, de complicité, d'amour et saupoudrez généreusement de sincérité. Servez encore chaud sur un plat en or et accompagnez d'un verre de passion. Voilà la recette que je déguste depuis ces quatre mois partagés avec toi. Ton amour [5, p. 71].

3. "Bain-Marie" (Metro, 8/09/2003)

@M.L.

Prenez 12 bureaucrates serrés les uns contre les autres, mettez-les à mijoter dans un bureau à 35°C pour agrémenter leurs odeurs corporelles, donnez-leur encore plus de dossiers à étudier, saupoudrez avec la chaleur brassée par de préputus ventilateurs "de fortune", rajoutez la chaleur de 12 ordinateurs et imprimantes, mélangez avec les rayons de soleil passés à travers des stores cassés, vous obtiendrez une nouvelle recette savoureuse au bain-marie, celle de 12 pauvres abrutis qui se dessèchent à vue d'œil : leurs bulbes déjà bien cuits, il ne reste plus que les corps, pauvres zombies. Recette pas du tout alléchante pour le patron, préférant sans doute un bon repas dans son bureau climatisé !

Here are examples of tasks used at the second stage:

• **Read the instructions and write a text (5-10 lines) to answer the questions.**

I. Imagine your shoes coming to life. What are they thinking about? What would they say? What are they doing? You can write down their thoughts and start your text by describing what happens from waking up in the morning until midnight.

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II. You are the singer who won the Best Song of the Year award. What is this song about? Write your speech. Who do you thank? Why? What are you telling them? What are you proud of in your career? What are your plans for the future?

III. Come up with a recipe for a non-existent dish. What will you call it? What are the ingredients and the amount of each of these ingredients? What are the cooking procedure? What is the cooking method and cooking time? What does this dish taste like? How is it eaten? What is the secret to the success of this dish?

IV. You have just been elected mayor of your city. What are the first decisions you would like to make? What would you like to change and improve in your city or town in each area (environment, urban planning, education, sports)?

V. If you won € 100,000 in the lottery and could spend it as you want, what would you do with it?

VI. What gift did you enjoy the most in your life? Why? What gift haven't you received but would like to receive? What do you like so much about this gift?

VII. What have you invented or created? Where did you get your inspiration? Are you satisfied with the result? Have you received any compliments or tips for improvement? What's your next creative project? What would you like to invent or create?

VIII. If you weren't yourself, who would you like to be? Why? What do you like about this person? If you became that person, what would you do more or differently?

IX. Imagine what you would do if you had a full year of vacation (holidays). Provide as many details as possible: What would you be doing? Why would you like to do this particular type of activity? Where would you go? What would the weather be like? What emotions would you experience? Who would you spend time with? How would you organize your daily routine [6]?

X. If these extraordinary events happened in reality ... Imagine that there are ropes tied to the clouds; that your home is on a desert island; that money has disappeared all over the world; that you met a Martian; that the trees spoke. What would happen in that case? [7, p. 47-49]?

4. Conclusions

Analysis of theoretical articles on psychology and methods of teaching foreign languages, as well as practical experience, allow us to conclude that it is advisable to regularly use techniques that activate the imagination of students when mastering foreign language material.

When teaching writing in a foreign language, the didactic sequence involves two stages when creating a written utterance: 1) familiarization with a sample text borrowed from fiction, journalistic, popular science literature / written by a teacher for educational purposes; 2) the implementation of post-text tasks developed by the teacher and aimed forming certain language skills and developing speech skills.

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By activating the imagination of students, the sample text is a catalyst for subsequent educational activities: it determines the direction of thought, provides a creative approach to completing tasks, suggests the choice of speech means necessary for the implementation of a creative idea.

The proposed didactic scenario demonstrates its effectiveness and is recommended for use in teaching writing in foreign language.

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