

PRACTICAL MEANS TO ACTIVATE LEARNERS' LANGUAGE SKILLS

ПРАКТИЧНІ ЗАСОБИ АКТИВІЗАЦІЇ МОВНИХ НАВИЧОК УЧНІВ

The article is devoted to the problem of elaboration and implementation into practice means aimed at activating learners' language skills. Having analyzed pedagogical literature, we highlight practical activities which give the opportunity to develop more than one skill of the pupils at a time. The term four skills is predominantly exploited with reference to productive skills: speaking and writing, and receptive skills: listening and reading. Researchers state that listening and reading as receptive skills are interactive processes, involving use of background knowledge by the learners. They that receptive activities play an important role in such forms of learning as understanding content of the given course, considering textbooks, works with reference. The problem of elaborating and implementation into practice language learning materials and activities involving all four skills holds an important place in scientific research. The main purpose of the article is to introduce practical materials and activities aimed at integrating all four skills. We suppose that activity Carousel generates a list of students' thoughts on a particular topic. Learners may work collaboratively, in small groups, to discuss their own ideas and to respond to others' ideas. The listening activities "Very short story" and "Jack and Jill" stimulate both speaking and writing skills of the learners. A dictogloss is a form of dictation, but the one in which the learners hear the whole text and are asked to reconstruct it. The research findings have proved the efficacy of implementation of activities in which different language skills of the learners are integrated. To conclude, the activities described in the article (carousel, dictogloss, listening activities "Very short story", "Jack and Jill") make it possible to develop more than one skill at a time deliberately. The prospects for further research in this field are to elaborate new methods and technologies aimed at activating learners' language competence, to study the psychological basis of this process.

Key words: skills, receptive, productive, activity, listening, reading, writing, speaking.

Стаття присвячена проблемі розробки та впровадження у практику засобів, спрямованих на активізацію мовних умінь та нави-

чок тих, хто навчається. Проаналізувавши педагогічну літературу, ми виокремили завдання, які дають можливість розвивати декілька мовних умінь та навичок учнів одночасно. Термін «чотири навички» в основному використовується з посиланням на продуктивні навички – говоріння та письмо – та навички сприймання – слухання та читання. Дослідники стверджують, що слухання та читання як навички сприймання являють собою інтерактивні процеси, котрі передбачають використання учнями опорних знань. Вони відіграють важливу роль у розумінні змісту навчального матеріалу. Проблема розробки та впровадження у практику навчальних матеріалів та засобів, які активізують усі чотири навички, займає важливе місце в наукових дослідженнях. Основна мета статті полягає у вивченні та розробці практичних завдань, спрямованих на інтеграцію всіх чотирьох навичок. Діяльність «Карусель» допомагає учням викладати свої думки з певної теми. Учні працюють спільно, в невеликих групах, щоб обговорити власні ідеї та відповісти на чужі. Якщо класифікувати цю діяльність під кутом зору продуктивних навичок та навичок сприймання, то можна сказати, що активізуються навички читання, письма та говоріння. Завдання із прослуховування «Дуже коротка історія» та «Джек та Джилл» одночасно стимулюють навички мовлення та письма учнів. Диктогос визначається запропонованим як форма диктанту, але така, в якій учні слухають увесь текст, а потім повинні його реконструювати. Підсумовуючи, зазначимо, що практичні завдання запропоновані у статті, дають можливість розвивати мовні навички та вміння учнів інтегровано. Перспективи подальших досліджень у цій галузі полягають у розробці нових методів та технологій, спрямованих на активізацію мовної компетенції учнів, вивчення психологічних основ цього процесу.

Ключові слова: навички, вміння, сприймання, продуктивність, діяльність, слухання, читання, письмо, говоріння.

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Statement of the problem. In the given challenging times the teachers urgently need to master new effective means to help the pupils to improve their language skills. In ELT the term four skills is predominantly exploited with reference to productive skills: speaking and writing, and receptive skills: listening and reading [3, p. 137; 6, p. 205–206]. The mentioned division into four skills has been a crucial one in terms of course design and lesson planning. Analyzing the general competences of an individual, the authors of the CEFR stress the reliance of skills on the ability to carry out procedures. It is underlined in the document that once the skills dealing with certain aspects of language learning have been honed, the pupils can be expected to be more self-assured [2, p. 10–11]. The problem of elaborating and implementation into practice language learning materials and activ-

ities involving all four skills, rather than practising them together holds an important place in scientific research, it cannot be considered completely solved.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

This issue still remains important among modern scholars: learners attitudes to speaking activities (Jolita Šliogerienė, Irena – Darginavičienė); designing writing (Burak Tomak, Ufuk Ataş); developing skills in isolation (J. Harmer, J. Scrivener); integrated skills (J. Edge, S. Garton). Scott Thornbury in his dictionary of terms and concepts used in ELT emphasizes that listening and reading as receptive skills are interactive processes, involving use of background knowledge by the learners [6, p. 123]. The CEFR underlines that receptive activities play an important role in such forms of learning as understanding content of the given course, considering textbooks, works with reference [2, p. 14].

The ultimate objective of the article is to introduce practical materials and activities aimed at involving all four skills.

Outline of the main material of the article. Bainbridge and Heydon mention the following opportunities created by reading aloud: positive attitudes towards books and reading; the understanding that written language is meaningful; the language of various genres of text and understanding of its structures; an understanding of what is fluid, proficient reading sounds and looks like.

Activity Carousel generates a list of students' thoughts on a particular topic. It is great for brainstorming what pupils already know or think about a new topic. The given activity can also be used for reviewing what they have retained about something recently explored and studied. Learners may work collaboratively, in small groups, to discuss their own ideas and to respond to others' ideas. We suggest the possible instructions which can be given to the learners.

Write your assigned question on a section of the white board closest to you.

Each pair has 2 minutes to respond to their question. After 2 minutes, when you hear the bell, rotate clockwise to the next question. To respond to each of the subsequent questions:

- 1) add any ideas that are not yet represented;
- 2) put a ✓ next to things you agree with, and put ? next to ideas you aren't sure about.

After you have visited all questions, return to your original question and review the responses.

- Can you categorize the ideas listed?
- Can you identify which ideas are most salient?
- Can you see any conflicting information in the responses given?

Share responses with the whole class.

If we categorise this activity in terms of receptive and productive skills, we can say that reading, writing and speaking skills are activated.

Let us look at how writing might work when lesson is based on integrated skills. Writing is always carried out with a specific purpose and for a distinct audience. People use different voices, styles, genres, formats and media, depending on the purpose of our writing and the audience the writing is intended for.

Narrative links a series of events together and its purpose is to entertain. Recount implies retelling of events with no attention paid to setting, plot, conflict/climax. Children should learn two things simultaneously: write and tell a story. Studies show that children begin to form stories from the age of two onward, but master story forming over time. As writers mature, stories become more complex and cohesive.

Expressive writing is personal writing we do informally as thoughts form in our mind. It can be found in blogs, diaries, journals for the presentation of thoughts, feelings, ideas, and interpretation of events.

Expository is intended to explain, persuade or instruct (e. g. reports, textbooks, memos, flyers).

Here are the examples of writing activities in which other language skills are integrated. The first one is called "Very short story". It can be fulfilled in different ways: individually: write a short story about a bunny, a turtle, and a pond; in groups: compare with others at your table. What are the similarities? Differences? by whole class: what is the purpose of this text (what is it trying to do?) Who is the audience that you imagined when you wrote it? How can you tell from the text what its purpose and intended audience are?

The second one is "Jack and Jill" writing activity. The teacher writes the short story by Mother Goose on the blackboard or gives them the printed version of it:

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.
Up got Jack, and home did trot
As fast as he could caper
He went to bed and bound his head
With vinegar and brown paper.

Then the teacher asks the pupils to divide into groups and fulfil some of the following tasks:

Group A: Write this incident as a **newspaper report**.

Group B: Write **the next chapter** of this story (not in a rhyme).

Group C: Write up the incident as a **police report**.

Group D: You are Jill, describe this incident in your **diary**.

Group E: You are Jack and Jill's teacher, write a **letter** to Jack and Jill's parents explaining what happened and why.

Group F: Write a **dialogue** between Jack, Jill and their mother about this incident.

The touched upon listening activities stimulate both speaking and writing skills of the learners.

Conversation reflects speaking and listening skills. Aural comprehension suggests receiving: experiencing sound and paying attention to it; understanding: making sense of sounds as information; evaluating: critical assessment of sounds; responding: verbal and non-verbal reaction; remembering: categorizing and retaining information. When the teachers implement a listening activity into the classroom, they ought to take into account the difficulties the learners may come across: idiosyncratic or regional pronunciations (warsh yer hands?); collapsed language (gonna, wanna); redundancy and false starts (what he said was, he said...); colloquialisms or slang (like, you know; howzitgoin?) speech speed, intonation, stress. Contexts for listening are also to be considered. Interpersonal listening involves taking part in party conversation; bus stop conversation about weather; phone conversation with friend and listening to someone recounting personal anecdote or someone tell-

ing a story. Informational includes taking part in job interview; giving directions or instructions; phone call inquiring about computer repair and listening to news on radio or TV, lecture, recorded phone information.

The following one-way listening activities can be used in the classroom: play 3 different sounds. Students make up a story that integrates all three sounds; listening for information; spot the Difference (two versions of a story); picture dictation (put the pictures in order); matching games (description).

In two-way listening activities the listening takes place in the context of a dialogue of some kind: asking for clarification: phrases need to be taught and posted; describe and draw (listening to instructions, describing objects); map game (identical maps, agree on starting place, one student gives directions and other follows); dictogloss.

A dictogloss is a form of dictation, but the one in which the learners hear the whole text and are asked to reconstruct it. The instructions for the pupils are the following:

1) listen to the story without taking notes (read two times at natural speed);

2) during the third reading (at natural speed), individually write down as much as you can as fast as you can. The goal is to get as much of the information (details) as you can;

3) don't try to write complete sentences. Just write key words and phrases;

4) in pairs, compare notes and start to reconstruct the text you heard. Two pairs should now join each other to form a group of four. Combine your information about the text to capture as accurately as possible a record of the original text;

5) write out one version of the text. Be sure to check your grammar and spelling;

6) compare your version of the text with the original (what are the differences?). We offer the following text by Thyra Heder as a kind of example for the dictogloss: the Bear Report recounts an adventure that a young girl named Sophie takes with a polar bear named Olafur. At the beginning of the story, Sophie's ignorance about and boredom with her research topic (polar bears) is depicted through her unhappy facial expression and her extremely brief research with just three vague facts.

When Sophie is watching TV (after having abandoned her research report), Olafur suddenly appears in her living room and invites Sophie on a journey through the Arctic. With Olafur as her guide, Sophie discovers the beauty and diversity of the Arctic's wild-

life as well as the eating, sleeping, and entertainment habits of Olafur.

Toward the end of the story, the issue of global warming is introduced when Sophie and Olafur awake from a nap and find themselves on a melting ice patch far from shore. While the problem of getting to shore is resolved (with the help of a whale), the problem of global warming is not; and it creates a sense of urgency to better understand and protect the rich natural world of the Arctic.

The story concludes with Sophie at home ensconced in her books, maps, and papers as she enthusiastically writes a detailed report on polar bears and their habitat.

We recommend that the following instructions should be followed by the learners:

1) look at your text and identify noun-pronoun combinations. If you see places where you could add some to help text cohesion, do so;

2) find words that indicate order or sequence. If you see places where you could add some to help text cohesion, do so;

3) if you have time, find other ways that you have created cohesion in your story summary.

Conclusions. The activities described in the article make it possible to develop more than one skill at a time deliberately. To sum it up, among the suggested activities the special attention must be paid carousel and dictogloss. These activities prepare the pupils for listening activity, but also develop their reading and writing skills.

The prospects for further research in this field are to elaborate new methods and technologies aimed at activating learners' language competence, to study the psychological basis of this process.

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