

THE IMPORTANCE OF USING SONGS AND RHYMES IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: *in this article we describe the importance of using songs and rhymes in teaching English as a foreign language in the primary school. Beside these theoretical points we give practical advices how to teach songs and rhymes. After a classification we describe some possibilities to exploit songs and rhymes in lessons and say something about possible problems with using these language forms. There are a lot of song and rhyme collections in public libraries or in our personal ones. Therefore we do not work out another collection but list only a few that we tried out in our lessons and which are appended to this paper.*

Keywords: *song, rhymes, primary, listen, habit, comprehension, way, writing.*

ВАЖНОСТЬ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ ПЕСЕН И РИФМ В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ В НАЧАЛЬНОЙ ШКОЛЕ

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Аннотация: *в этой статье мы описываем важность использования песен и рифм в преподавании английского языка как иностранного в начальной школе. Помимо этих теоретических положений, мы даем практические советы, как преподавать песни и рифмы. После классификации мы опишем некоторые возможности использования песен и рифм на уроках и расскажем о возможных проблемах с использованием этих языковых форм. В публичных библиотеках или в наших личных коллекциях много сборников песен и рифм. Поэтому мы не разрабатываем другую коллекцию, а перечисляем только некоторые из них, которые мы опробовали на наших уроках и которые прилагаются к этой статье.*

Ключевые слова: *песня, рифмы, первичная, слушай, привычка, понимание, образ, письмо.*

There are many reasons for using songs and rhymes in teaching English as a foreign language in primary schools. Naturally, "children really enjoy learning and singing songs and have fun doing rhythmic activities while reciting rhymes. But there are deeper psychological, cultural and linguistic aspects.

Children grow up with songs and rhymes and develop their first language by them. Apart from being the most important spoken language, songs and rhymes are the first experienced parts of communication in the children's mother tongue. They listen and react to nursery rhymes and finger games spoken and often acted by their parents. They go to sleep with lullabies sung by their closest caregivers or try to imitate little songs by babbling. So songs and rhymes give them an intimate feeling, a special connection with their human environment and influence the acquisition of their first language in an important way.

Analogous to the development of the mother tongue, the following points also support foreign language acquisition :

– music, rhythm and rhymes produce a positive live feeling

– they motivate to learn and to be active

– children do not understand all words but do not feel inhibited

– rhythm supports vocabulary and structure learning Songs and rhymes are both means and content of foreign language acquisition. There is no gap between the language used in lessons and that used in real-life situations. Each understanding and each reacting are progresses in language learning.

Songs and rhymes stimulate the hemispherical interaction. Busy with songs and rhymes the left hemisphere (vocabulary, structure of the language) and the right hemisphere (rhythm, feelings, mimic, gesture, senso-motoric etc.) work

together and make learning more effective. So it is small wonder how quick students are at learning songs and rhymes [1].

The holistic approach also means that rhymes and songs are connected with other learning and living areas like sport, literature, music and art.

2.4. Motivation by songs and rhymes

Pupils' motivation to learn "largely depends on the teaching methods and the teacher's personality" If the teacher skillfully uses songs and rhymes the pupils usually are highly motivated. Songs and rhymes are relaxing, they vary the lesson's progress, they provide fun and action "and encourage harmony within oneself and within a group" . So the pupils are learning with fun and more effectively than without these forms. Even shy or slow learning children are given encouragement by singing or speaking in choir and so they feel able to speak in a foreign language.

Songs and rhymes present a lot of linguistic material in a natural linguistic context. So they support the monolingual and contextual approach in teaching a foreign language. Words in songs and rhymes are meaningful to the learner, which influences the acquisition in a positive way. "In general they use simple conversational language with a lot of repetition". Therefore songs and rhymes stick in the learner's mind and the words and expressions used are memorized more easily. Besides, songs and rhymes provide many possibilities for constant repetition and revising as important mechanisms of the language acquisition. "Poems, rhymes, chants and songs could be used to give a feeling for the rhythm of the spoken language. Many well-known rhymes make use of the iambic pentameter, the natural rhythm of the English language". Practicing intonation through reciting rhymes and poems is mostly funny and very effective. To vary the sometimes boring pronunciation teaching it is a proven remedy using rhymes and rhythmic chants, e.g. with minimal pairs.

Songs and Poems are important elements of each culture. Learning this authentic material pupils get to know parts of a foreign culture. It satisfies children's natural curiosity about everything new. Being familiar with songs and rhymes in a foreign language pupils feel closer to the foreign culture and its language. If the pupils hear the same melodies or similar rhymes they are astonished at the parallels between their own culture and the foreign one. So the foreign cultures aren't alarming and frightening but interesting and worth being discovered. It's an important contribution to the development of tolerance and open-mindedness.

How to teach songs and rhymes?

The following guidelines are not meant to be dogmas. According to the specific situations they could be varied by the teacher. For presentation rhymes or chants should be played from a CD or spoken by the teacher and the actions should be demonstrated. Then the teacher should check if the students understood the content. It is not necessary to translate word by word but the students should know what the rhyme or chant means. This step can be

supported by visual aids. Now the students learn the text step by step. In the literature are to be found two tried and tested methods: the snowball principle and the echo principle.

The snowball principle means that the teacher says a sequence becoming longer and longer. After each saying the students repeat that sequence in chorus. For example (from Here we go round the mulberry bush)

Teacher: This is ...

Students: This is ...

Teacher: This is the way ...

Students: This is the way ...

Teacher: This is the way we wash ...

Students: This is the way we wash ... etc.

The echo principle means that the students as a group imagine they are an echo in a mountain wood, a valley etc. The teacher shouts a sequence and the students repeat the teachers' sequence. It is expedient to build up a longer structure from its end. For example (from The wheels of the bus).

Teacher: all day long ...

Students: all day long ...

Teacher: round and round ...

Students: round and round ...

Teacher: round and round all day long ...

Students: round and round all day long ... etc. [2-3].

Both methods can also be supported by visual aids. If there are any actions they should be done by the students while learning the text because it is easier to learn them together. Longer texts can be learned verse by verse in the following lessons. Now the children say the whole rhyme in chorus, in groups or alone and do the actions.

Speech is a process of communication by means of language. For example, (1) a pupil tells the class a story about something which once happened to him; (2) the teacher asks questions on the story read by the pupils at home and starts a discussion; (3) pupils speak on the pictures suggested by the teacher, each tries to say what others have not mentioned; (4) pupils listen to the story and get some new information from the text; (5) they see a sound film and learn about something new from it, etc.

Writing as a skill is very important in teaching and learning a foreign language. It helps pupils to assimilate letters and sounds of the English language, its vocabulary and grammar, and to develop habits and skills in pronunciation; speaking, and reading. The practical value of writing is great because it can fix patterns of all kinds (graphemes, words, phrases and sentences) in pupils' memory, thus producing a powerful effect on their mind. That is why the school syllabus reads: "Writing is a mighty means of teaching a foreign language." Writing includes penmanship, spelling, and composition. The latter is the aim of learning to write. The school syllabus states: "Pupils are

expected to be able to write a letter in the foreign language within the material learnt." Since writing is a complicated skill it should be developed through the formation of habits such as:

- (1) the habit of writing letters of the English alphabet;
- (2) the habit of converting speech sounds into their symbols — letters and letter combinations;
- (3) the habit of correct spelling of words, phrases, and sentences;
- (4) the habit of writing various exercises which lead pupils to expressing their thoughts in connection with the task set.

In conclusion aural or listening and comprehension are difficult for learners because they should discriminate speech sounds quickly, retain them while hearing a word, a phrase, or a sentence and recognize this as a sense unit. Pupils can easily and naturally do this in their own language and they, cannot do this in a foreign language when they start learning the language. Pupils are very slow in grasping what they hear because they are conscious of the linguistic forms they perceive by the ear. This results in misunderstanding or a complete failure of understanding.

When aural a foreign language pupils should be very attentive and think hard. They should strain their memory and will power to keep the sequence of sounds they hear and to decode it. Not all the pupils can cope with the difficulties entailed. The teacher should help them by making this work easier and more interesting.

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