

V.N. Golodnaya

USING PROVERBS TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION SKILLS

Abstract. The article is devoted to using proverbs as a way to learn about the cultural peculiarities of a different culture. The proverbs are regarded as both linguistic and cultural units, in which the facts of national mentality are conceptualized. They require no special conditions for the usage. The author suggests some ways to integrate proverbs in the process of students' independent work on the foreign language. The assignments can be adapted as far as the level of knowledge, teaching environment and students' psychological features are concerned.

Keywords: proverb, value, linguistic unit, cultural unit, meaning, critical thinking, national mentality

В.Н. Голодная

ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ПОСЛОВИЦ ДЛЯ РАЗВИТИЯ НАВЫКОВ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОГО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ ОБУЧАЮЩИХСЯ

Аннотация. Статья посвящена возможностям использования пословиц как способа познания особенностей другой культуры. Пословицы рассматриваются как языковые и культурные единицы, отражающие факты национального менталитета. Они не требуют особых условий для применения. Автор предлагает некоторые способы внедрения пословиц в процесс самостоятельной работы обучающихся над иностранным языком. Разработанные задания могут быть адаптированы в зависимости от уровня знаний, педагогических условий и психологических особенностей студентов.

Ключевые слова: пословица, ценность, лингвистическая единица, культурная единица, критическое мышление, национальный менталитет

Proverbs are part and parcel of every language. They are regarded as facts of ethnic and national mentality and considered to be productive tools of learning other cultures. As such they are both linguistic and cultural units and should be integrated in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language.

Almost any other social value (marriage, friendship, labor, family, education, etc.) is reflected in language. According to the definitions, values are not a reality, but common knowledge or a personal wish. They do not exist in concrete things, but preserve social sense and meaning [1]. Values are revealed in the process of peoples' attitude towards somebody or something. Besides, values are ethnically and culturally determined. Depending on geographical, climatic, historical and economic factors, different cultures promote different values. In this way, a value in one culture may be seen as useless in another one [2-3].

So, if a person wants to get deep knowledge of a foreign language, he or she is to get a no less deep cultural knowledge of the people who speak it. As many authors point out, by learning other cultures, we enrich the understanding of our own.

Our research is devoted to some ways proverbs can be used as a part of students' independent work on mastering their language skills. As far as we are concerned, all tasks and activities should be organized as group rather than individual work, thus encouraging learners to collaborate and share their ideas and opinions. The outcome of this work is seen as a project in the form of a presentation.

To begin with, students are to fill in a brief questionnaire, which would give them some ideas of what they can learn from proverbs. The same questionnaire is to be presented as the end of the project to compare the expectations and the results. A sample questionnaire looks like this.

Why should we learn proverbs? Please, tick the statements you find most relevant.

- They enrich vocabulary;
- They enlarge cultural and intellectual scope of interests;
- They develop sense of humor;
- They help to master critical thinking skills;
- They can serve as guides in different life situations;
- Other (please, specify).

The next step is to make an information card on the word “proverb”. It can include the following: definition; word origin; synonyms; collocations. All this information and even more can be found on the website www.onelook.com. It might be necessary to provide students with an information card sample.

Proverb (noun) – 1. a short pithy saying in frequent or widespread use that expresses a basic truth or practical percept: Her grandfather has a proverb for every occasion; 2. a person or thing exemplary in respect of a characteristic: Antarctica is a proverb for extreme cold; 3. a wise saying or admonition providing guidance.

Proverb (verb) – 1. to utter or describe smth. in the form of a proverb; 2. to make smth. a proverb.

Word origin: from Latin “proverbium” – a common saying, old adage, maxim

Synonyms: adage, byword, saw, locution, saying, expression

Word combinations: old proverb, ancient proverb, popular proverb, well-known proverb, favorite proverb, true proverb, shrewd proverb

After this, each group of students is to make a list of proverbs devoted to a particular social value, such as family, friendship, health, law, truth and falsehood, etc. Later on the lists can be compiled and published as a brochure or an electronic document to be used by other students and teachers.

Now we would like to suggest some assignments students could do using the proverbs from their lists.

1. In what thematic subgroups can the proverbs in your list be divided?

Sample. Health

Health as a priority

- Good health is above;
- Health is better than wealth;
- Wealth is nothing without health;
- He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything
- Health is not valued till sickness comes

Tips to stay healthy

1. Eat well, drink in moderation, sleep sound – in these three, good health abound;
2. An apple a day keeps a doctor away;
3. Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise;
4. Laughter is the best medicine

A person's responsibility for his / her health

- Temperance is the best physic;
- Every patient has his or her doctor inside;
- Prevention is better than cure

2. Choose one proverb from your list and think of a situation (from a book you've read, a movie you've seen, your personal experience, etc) to which it can be applied.

Sample. My cousin Amir needed to rent an accommodation. Rather than hiring a real estate agent he found a landlord on the Internet website himself as he didn't want to pay any fees. They agreed upon the price and after paying key money Amir took his belongings and went to a new flat. When he arrived, however, he found out that two more people were living on the premises. The landlord's phone was switched off. There was no point in going to police as Amir had absolutely no proof of paying any money or even meeting with the man. As people say, a man who is his own lawyer is a fool for a client.

3. Choose one proverb you agree to and one you disagree. Write down three arguments in favor of your opinion.

Sample. I agree with the proverb “Health is better than wealth”

- Health can help you live longer while money doesn’t;
- A healthy person is able to work hard and become rich;
- A poor but healthy person is happier than a wealthy but sick one.

I disagree with the proverb “Fond of doctors, no health; fond of lawyers, no wealth”

- A person cannot possibly be an expert in every field, so he or she has to consult a specialist when a particular problem arises;
- Consequences of unprofessional actions can cost more than experts’ fees;
- A specialist’s consultation is better than layman’s advice.

4. From your list choose two proverbs which have contradictory meanings. Try to explain this contradiction.

Sample. According to the proverb “Better suffer the truth than prosper by falsehood”, truth is always the best option and, eventually, it is more beneficial than lies. The proverb “All truths are not to be told”, however, states that telling the truth is not always the best way of behavior. We agree with both proverbs when it comes to a particular situation. In serious matters and close relationships, it is better to tell the truth. In minor circumstances and with people you don’t know well enough, the truth is better to be withheld, at least for some time.

5. Choose the proverb, which, in your opinion, can have two or more interpretations. Present them to the class.

Sample. In our list there is a proverb “Face to face, the truth comes out”. We believe it can be interpreted in two different ways. First, it can mean that truth is always to be told to a person directly, not behind his or her back and not in the form of innuendoes or rumors. But it can also mean that talking to another person one can see things from a different angle and as a result he or she may realize that his or her initial opinion was completely or partially wrong.

We suggest that each particular assignment was checked by a teacher separately. Individual consultations and mistake corrections may be needed after which all the completed tasks are to be presented to the class. It can be useful for future classes if students give their opinions on the proverb project, outlining their difficulties, positive and negative points and the benefits they have gained from doing it.

Here are some questions students can be asked to answer at the end of the project.

- What is your overall opinion of the project (positive, negative, neutral).

- Did you find it beneficial to work as a part of a team or would you prefer to do an individual project?
- Which of the tasks were the easiest and the hardest to complete?
- Which task do you find the most interesting?
- Are there any other tasks you would like to do in the framework of the project?

In conclusion, we would like to say that proverbs serve both academic and social purposes. They are brief, easy to understand and do not require a very high level of the language knowledge. Containing both cultural and linguistic content they can be used as a productive tool to develop cross-cultural communicative skills in the lack of the language-speaking environment.

Their social purpose consists in the fact that they naturally promote essential values such as respect for law, family ties, selfishness, healthy way of life, etc.

References

1. *Lee, I.* Supporting greater autonomy in language learning [Text]. *ELT Journal*, no. 52, 1998, pp. 282-289.
2. *Malcolm D., Reindfleisch W.* Individualizing learning through self-directed projects. *English Teaching Forum*, 2010, pp. 10-14.
3. *Sheerin S.* An exploration of the relationship between self-access and independent learning. In: *Autonomy and independence in language learning*, eds. P. Benson and P. Voller. London: Longman, 2007. P. 54-65.

Список литературы

1. *Lee, I.* Supporting greater autonomy in language learning [Text]. *ELT Journal*, no. 52, 1998, pp. 282-289.
2. *Malcolm D., Reindfleisch W.* Individualizing learning through self-directed projects. *English Teaching Forum*, 2010, pp. 10-14.
3. *Sheerin S.* An exploration of the relationship between self-access and independent learning. In: *Autonomy and independence in language learning*, eds. P. Benson and P. Voller. London: Longman, 2007. P. 54-65.