The Importance of Idioms and Proverbs in Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages

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Idioms and proverbs play a significant role in the language as they enrich the speech and help to understand the situation better. To speak the language fluently it is very important and it is difficult to gain students’ interest in improving their own pronunciation. Teachers should use techniques in order to encourage their interest and more comfortable in learning pronunciation and enlarging vocabulary.

An important component of language learning and teaching is vocabulary. It is a necessity for language teachers to be able to teach vocabulary in a pleasantly planned way. Fixed expressions such as collocations, idioms, proverbs, and the like, comprise a large section of the vocabulary in any language, thus deserving special attention. These expressions are sometimes handled within vocabulary or reading courses.

One type of fixed expressions is idioms or idiomatic expressions. The word idiom comes from the Greek word ― *idioma* meaning ―*peculiar phrasing*. [1, McCarthy M., O’Dell F.] Idioms are a type of multi-word units that have non-literal meaning. People use idioms to make their language richer and more colorful and to convey subtle shades of meaning or intention. Idioms are used often to replace a literal word or expression, and many times the idiom better describes the full nuance of meaning. Idiomatic expressions can be more precise than the literal words, often using fewer words but saying more. Teachers and learners should use different idioms classifications to learn them. As a result, it can help them to build a new learning style and systematize their knowledge more effectively. The most famous Russian classification of phraseological units is Vinogradov’s classification, which is based on the cohesion degree of the idioms’ components. V. V. Vinogradov identified three types of idioms:

Phraseological fusions. The idiom meaning is not based on the meaning of each single word, e.g., *at sixes and sevens.* Such idioms used to be figurative expressions, but now native speakers do not understand them.

Phraseological unities. The idiom meaning is determined by the meaning of each word. The figurative meaning is understood by native speakers, e.g., *to play the first fiddle*. This type of idiom can have a homonymous word combination, which is used in its primary meaning, e.g., *a fat cat*.

Phraseological combinations. In this type of idioms one of the words is used in the primary meaning and the other - in a figurative meaning, e.g., *to break a promise* [2, Арнольд, И. В., c. 376].

Another type of fixed expressions is proverbs or proverbial expressions. The word proverb comes from the Latin word ―*proverbium* that is the combination of the prefix –pro meaning ―*forth* and the root ―verbum meaning ―*word*. So, the literal meaning of the word proverb is ―*a set of words put forth*. The different features present in different proverbs make them various, which has resulted in the formation of many definitions. So, the variety in proverbs makes it difficult to come up with a definition that encompasses all the features of proverbs and that enables one to identify them easily. They concisely and effectively express a truth relating to everyday experience, a word of advice or warning, or a wise general comment on a situation. Byrne mentions three main functions for proverbs. “Firstly, they transmit wisdom and cultural values from one generation to another. Secondly, they advise and warn children about proper and dangerous behavior, i.e. a burnt child fears the fire. Thirdly, many proverbs have a playful and provocative tendency; they embellish speech and cap arguments. All these make proverbs easy to remember and use.” [3] The best way of learning and teaching idioms is by activities which we can use during the lesson.

One of the most common genres of oral folk art in any country are proverbs and sayings, the time of occurrence of which is not known, but the fact that this is the most fertile material for learning a foreign language remains indisputable. Early sources describe the use of proverbs in England as one of the effective tools in teaching Latin. In proverbs and sayings a large part of human experience is formed. Owing to its generalized nature, proverbs and sayings can be used at all levels of foreign language teaching in teaching the art of allegory, the ability to illustrate one’s thought and summarize it in a short form. The use of proverbs and sayings in a foreign language lesson will certainly contribute to a better mastery of this subject, expanding knowledge of the language, vocabulary and the developing of critical thinking of the learners. Knowledge of the proverbs and sayings of the country of the language enriches the vocabulary, helps to assimilate the figurative structure of the language, attaches to the wisdom of the people, develop memory. It is important to use proverbs and sayings for the development of children in order to make a correct speech, concentration, and memory. In addition, in these small in volume works, the history, the wisdom of our ancestors, their ideas about what is good and bad is captured, so you can think about it with the pupils. Using the proverbs, we see as different people on different continents in different ways, but at the same time equally modified similar life situations, phenomena of objective reality, characterizing them with peculiar features. [4]

References:

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