DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS USING COLLAGE AS A TECHNIQUE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The article describes "collage" as one of the techniques used in foreign language classes. This technique is a visual teaching tool, adequate to the actual goals of teaching foreign languages and the peculiarities of the student's worldview. The article discusses its structure, types and functions, as well as presents foreign and own experience of working with collage at the EFL classes. The steps of using collage in the educational process are described in the article.

Keywords: *collage technology, creativity, English proficiency, modern technologies, visual aids*

Rezumat

În articol, prezentăm fotomontajul drept una dintre tehnicile utilizate cu success în didactica limbilor străine. Tehnica în cauză este una vizuală şi legată, mai cu seamă, de predare. Ea vine în accord atât cu scopurile moderne ale didacticii limbilor străine, cât şi cu particularitățile de conceptualizare a realității la elevi şi studenți. În prezentul material, supunem analizei structura, tipul şi funcțiile fotomontajului prin prisma experienței de lucru cu el la orele de engleză ca limbă străină. Descriem, în articol, şi etapele de utilizare a lui în procesul didactic.

Cuvinte-cheie: *tehnologia fotomontajului, creativitate, competență în limba engleză, tehnologii moderne, suporturi vizuale*

For many years English teachers have been using a variety of techniques to encourage interaction and participation among language learners. What determines the teacher's choice of certain visual aids for using them at different stages of the educational process while teaching a foreign language? It depends on the tasks the teacher sets for solving specific problems.

The new standard, having presented new requirements for learning outcomes, gave us the opportunity to take a fresh look at the EFL lesson, to embody new creative ideas. But this does not mean that traditional methods and methods of work should be rejected. They can be applied in a new way, along with modern technologies. From linguistic point of view, collage as a process is considered, first of all, as the construction of a text model, and collage as a product, as a transformation and combination of texts of different linguistic nature.

There are unlimited advantages to using the visual arts for developing English language learning skills. The arts can be a source of inspiration, imagination, and motivation for language learners. They can engage students in a variety of themes, subjects, and issues, as well as to introduce students to new ways of understanding the world. Moreover, the arts can provide students with a voice in a world where they have limited English proficiency.

One of the most effective forms for acquainting students with linguistic and cultural information of a target language is the method of "collage". It consists of creating visual semantic chains with a clear structure in order to reveal the key concept of the topic being mastered step by step.

Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso created the new movement in visual arts as "cubism" and later on in 1912 they invented "collage" that was an extraordinary break with the past and from that moment the collage technique became widespread in the world. Collage comes from the French word "collage" that means "gluing" and "pasting". The etymology of the word includes three basic semantic components: 1) making and restoring something broken or torn; 2) compilation of something from any parts; 3) one piece covering another. According to R. Bartes, we can formulate the definition of the notion of "collage" - the construction of a single whole by superimposing, layering and comparing parts (Bartes, 1989, p. 16).

Collage today is a universal principle of constructing all texts, verbal and non-verbal, the universal language of the picture of the world (Семенюченко/Semenùčenko, 2016, pp. 16-17). The essence of the collage method consists in the emotional-figurative embodiment and design of the image. Collage allows the students to remove stereotyped perception, expand the range of searching for harmony and contrasts in the world around and in artistic creation (Русакова/Rusakova, 2014, pp. 194-199).

Collage is a universal and multi-stage process, which consists of creating a composition/ essay/ report on a specific given topic and provides for:

- selection of materials of visual, graphic and text series;
- organizing the selected materials into a collage;
- work on the study of objects and materials of the collage in order to form an adequate idea of the key concept, the core of the collage;
- direct design execution of collage and presentation of the results of activities (Арнхейм/Arnhejm, 1999, p. 2).

According to Ryjkina, the use of collage technology as a means of teaching English radically expands the teacher's capabilities in choosing materials and forms of educational activity, makes lessons bright and exciting, informational and emotionally rich (Рыжкина/Ryjkina, 2014, p. 24).

This technique for teaching foreign languages was described by German methodologists B. Müller, M. Sickmann and R. Poole. The beginning of the

development of the problems related to "collage" in the German methodology of teaching foreign languages correlates with the introduction of communicative method of foreign language teaching in the 1980s. German methodologist B. Müller was the first who applied "collage technique" to teaching a foreign language. From his point of view, collage is a conscious construction of social knowledge, which proceeds similarly to the process of mastering the concept within uncontrolled assimilation of a language using various relevant information (Семенюченко/Semenùčenko, 2016, p. 21).

We believe that the German methodologist's understanding of "collage" is greatly reduced. In Müller's interpretation the notion of "collage" is reduced to a means of semantization and conscious memorization of the country studies concept. Nevertheless, Müller was the first who described the structure of collage, made an attempt to build the stages of work with it, and convincingly proved the effectiveness of collage use in foreign language teaching methodology (Müller, 1983, pp. 17-18).

Continuing to develop Müller's ideas, another German researcher M. Siekmann defined collage as a means of visual and linguistic visibility, a method of changing established meanings in the process of their subjective combination by students within a topic. According to Siekmann, it is the collage as a methodological tool that meets the goals of communicative learning: it allows students to make a broad "reliance on their life experience, within the topic to present their subjective vision of the problem, their way of thinking and emotionality" both verbally and visually. Siekmann insists on providing a connection to reality in the foreign language classroom: examining the impact of the pictures, TV commercials, advertising brochures, magazines, and comic books on the student (Рыжкина/Ryjkina, 2014, pp. 91-98).

Collage seems to be an effective means of teaching a foreign language, as it has a number of *didactic advantages*, the collage includes not only images (drawings, photographs, etc.), but also verbal and iconic components (vocabulary, grammatical structures, dates, diagrams, symbols, etc.).

While working with collage, this technique acts as an operational means, causing certain actions: *receptive* (visual perception of verbal and non-verbal components of collage, anticipation, identification, discursiveness as material awareness, understanding), *reproductive* (imitation, substitution, construction, transformation, combining, lexical unit recall, model formation by analogy), *productive* (transformation, construction, retelling, improvisation). The process of collaging itself, as well as the work with the final version of collage together with the built system of exercises can be an active means of mastering a foreign language culture.

According to Müller's classification, there are the following types of collages, which might be used in teaching foreign languages:

1. Collage type A (Einfaches Sonnen System) resembles an ordinary solar system, where the main concept or core is located in the center and the "satellite" information beams diverge from it in different directions.
2. Collage type B (Blinde Flecke) or blind spot collage. When there are blank spots in the collage in the form of spots, and students need to determine what has been omitted and what information the spot in the collage is supposed to be for.
3. Collage type C (Blinder Kern), this is also a blind core that has a correspondence with type A collage. But students are to identify the main concept of the collage after they are familiar with the background of the collage.
4. Collage type D (Blitzlicht) or, in other words, flash, is formed with a single text in which the students have to select the most relevant country-specific information.
5. Collage type E (Wechselkern) or alternating core is the manipulation of "satellite" information based on which concept acts as the main one (Müller, 1983, pp. 24-26).

An undoubted advantage in such work is the condition that every student, has the opportunity to show his/her own imagination and creativity, activity and independence.

Using collage technology in English lessons allows the teacher to familiarize students with any topical material and serves as the most effective form of teaching. Moreover, this technique is of great educational value. It is aimed at the formation of social competence, i.e. the ability to act independently, choosing a strategy for their work to develop a sense of responsibility for the final result, the ability to speak in public and present the final result with some arguments.

Traditionally, a collage is a picture or design created by gluing different materials, objects, shapes, or colours onto a surface. The students can also use real photographs of people, their own image, or combine them with magazine pictures, etc. The main thing in a collage is not neatness, but the ability to express your thoughts, ideas, your view and your understanding of the topic. And even those students, who took up the task of composing a collage with reluctance, gradually begin to get carried away with the process and enjoy it.

Collage is a great tactile alternative to drawing and painting. Taking into account that we are living in a challenging time having online classes, students do not need any glue making a collage. They can apply to internet sources finding suitable pictures for the collage on a specific topic. When paired with a language focus, collage can generate enthusiasm and motivation for language use, engage students with English, and aid in the understanding of the target structure, vocabulary, or grammatical forms.

A collage assumes a key concept (core) and satellite concepts that make up the background environment of the core. In the first example we are going to describe, the core of the collage is "Protecting wildlife for a healthy planet":

"Protecting wildlife for a healthy planet"

Objective: Students will create a collage poster about a social issue and give a presentation using will to talk about the future.

Resourses: Information about marine animals (sea turtle/ pacific salmon/whale etc), primates (gorilla/chimpanzee etc), big cats (Jaguar/tiger/leopard etc) from https://www.worldwildlife.org/species .

Procedure:
Step 1: Warming up - Introducing and discussing the problem
The teacher tells the students that we protect wildlife because they inspire us. But we also focus our efforts on those species—like tigers, rhinos, whales and marine turtles—whose protection influences and supports the survival of other species or offers the opportunity to protect whole landscapes or marine areas.

Step 2: Reviewing the use of "*will*" to talk about things in the future respecting the topic of the lesson.
For instance, *I shall (I'll) recycle plastic and paper more. I shall organize a clean-up day with my friends.*

Step 3: Brainstorm solutions to the problem
- *How does this problem affect you and your community?*
- *What are some daily things people can do to help solve the problem?*
- *What are some weekly or monthly things people can do to help solve the problem?*
- *What will you do in the future to help solve this issue or problem?*

Step 4: Give students time (a week) to make up their presentations using collage as a guide.

Step 5: Have a "collage session" on the next lesson of English.
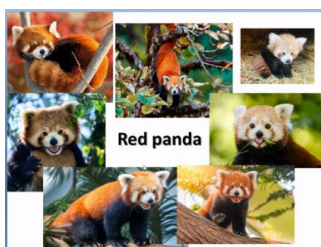
Collage technique is a universal principle of constructing all texts, verbal and non-verbal, a universal language of the picture of the world. Collage is a visual aid. What are the functions of visual aids in teaching a foreign language for a better communication?

The following functions can be distinguished:

- *educational* (visual aids are used to introduce educational and cognitive information);
- *controlling* (visual means are used to control and self-control the nature of the knowledge, skills, and abilities being formed);
- *organizer* (used in the selection of educational materials for classes and ways of presenting them).

Using collage technique, a competency-based approach is implemented and all types of universal educational actions are formed:

- *communicative:* students learn to work in groups and in pairs, collaborate with each other to achieve a goal, make a presentation of their work in public;
- *regulatory:* students have the opportunity to independently formulate the goals and objectives of the lesson, plan and predict their learning actions, assess and self-control learning activities;
- *cognitive educational*: students learn to work with the text, extract information from the text read and listened to, build a speech utterance;
- *cognitive logical*: learners learn analysis, synthesis, comparison and classification;
- *personal:* during the lesson, the motivation for learning increases, the desire to continue their studies, a respectful attitude towards the country of the target language is fostered.

Collage, as a type of projects, can also have the following varieties:

- *a group project* in which research is carried out by a group of students, but each separately studies the corresponding aspect of the topic;
- *a mini-research*, in which the student performs an individual social survey (a questionnaire or an interview);
- *a project* based on work with foreign sources, the student selectively studies the material on the topic of interest.

All types of projects described above we may use in practice. Working on such projects, students develop skills in working with various sources: with reference books, dictionaries, articles, texts. A kind of the most important group project in terms of teaching methods of foreign languages is mini research and work with literature. Improving collage skills consists in optimizing the techniques for working on a study assignment. In this context, collage is a versatile way to create a do-it-yourself project.

The second example will show the result of working with O'Henry's short story "While the auto waits":

Before reading the short story the teacher works on the new vocabulary:
- the new words as *fit (v/ adj), common, to plead (with smb), to hesitate*.
- the verbs and idiomatic expressions as *pick up, in an icy tone, look at, look like, look one's age, take one's place, take offence at smb, take pains, get in/off*.
After reading the short story the teacher suggests students the following strategy:

Step 1: Comment on:
- atmosphere of the story according to time and place of the action.
- the details of the lady's outfit and the book she is reading
- the young man's name (a real one or not)
- the following phrases: *Prince of Tartar*, *Grand Duke of a German principality*, an *English Marquis*. What do they mean, and why does the author put them into the conversation?

Step 2: Questions for discussion: *Why does the author repeat the words about the girl's gray dress? What does the author tell about her directly, and what is implied? Who is the young man? What does the author tell about him directly, and what is implied? What are the true stories of the characters? Why don't they confess to each other? What is the message of the story?*

Step 3: Speech practice
- Use the following proverbs in retelling and discussing the short story: *Poverty is no sin. To throw dust in one's eye. Poverty is not a shame, but the being ashamed of it is.*
- Make a plan of the story. Put down all expressions and phrases you are going to use in your speech.
- Divide the short story "While the auto waits" into several logical episodes, create a collage putting the episodes one by one and retell the story.

Based on the modern concept of teaching a foreign language, the key approach is communicative learning, that is, communication is recognized as the basis of personal development. The advantage of collage is that it can function as a means of organizing the process of communication and this technique can also act as the means of communication.

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