
Importance of Proverbs in Teaching Language

Dehkanova Muattar Ithomovna

TSTU the branch of Almalyk after named Islam Karimov the teacher of "Uzbek language and literature"

Sulaymonova Guzal, Chinniboyev Jamshid

Students of TSTU Almalyk branch

Abstract: "A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation".

Keywords: metaphorical content, memorable form, rhythm, pattern.

This article will analyze positive sides of using proverbs in teaching. There is a widespread opinion that the proverb plays an important role in language teaching as a part of gaining cultural knowledge, metaphorical understanding and communicative competence. Proverbs are a part of every language as well as every culture. Proverbs have been used to spread knowledge, wisdom and truths about life from ancient times up until now. They have been considered an important part of the fostering of children, as they signal moral values and exhort common behavior. Proverbs belong to the traditional verbal folklore genres and the wisdom of proverbs has been guidance for people worldwide in their social interaction throughout the ages. Proverbs are concise, easy to remember and useful in every situation life due to their content of everyday experiences.

According to the Wolfgang Meier (2004), proverbs have been used and should be used in teaching as didactic tools because of their content of educational wisdom. When it comes to foreign language learning, proverbs play a role in the teaching as a part of cultural and metaphorical learning. Linguists also claim that the use of proverbs in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language is important for the learners' ability to communicate effectively. The use of proverbs and declining in the teaching of modern languages has long been discussed.

Durbin Rowland (1926) points at some arguments pro the use of proverbs in language teaching. Rowland says that proverbs "stick in the mind", "build up vocabulary", "illustrate gradually to a surer feeling for the foreign tongue" and proverbs "consume very little time". It was also said that proverbs are not only melodic and witty, possessed with rhythm and imagery; proverbs also reflect "patterns of thought". As proverbs are universal, there are analogous proverbs in different nations that have related cultural patterns. Proverbs are therefore useful in the students' discussions of cultural ideas when they compare the proverbs' equivalents in different languages. But as the experience shows the incorporation of proverbs in the foreign language classroom is rare. When proverbs are included, they are often used as time fillers and not integrated into a context. The proverbs that are used are often randomly picked from dictionaries, which often include archaic proverbs and new proverbs might therefore be missed. The suitability of proverbs in teaching is due to their form; they are pithy and easy to learn, they often rhyme and contain repetition figures like

alliteration and assonance.

Some scholars the use of proverbs in a range of areas within language teaching; grammar and syntax, phonetics, vocabulary development, culture, reading, speaking and writing. They state that proverbs, besides being an important part of culture, also are an important tool for effective communication and for the comprehension of different spoken and written discourses. The person who does not acquire competence in using proverbs will be limited in conversation, will have difficulty comprehending a wide variety of printed matter, radio, television, songs, etc, and will not understand proverb parodies which presuppose a familiarity with a stock proverb.

It is considered that both the structure and content of proverbs are useful in ESL, teaching especially when it comes to teaching and understanding of culture, as proverbs conveys the values and metaphors by a culture. Proverbs are also useful in teaching the differences between spoken and written language, something that often confuses language learners; they conversational style when they write. Proverbs are one way to help the students to clarify the distinction between oral and written English.

One of the scholars compares the content of proverbs, which includes the metaphors contained in them, to “a microcosm of what it means to know a second language”. He points out that proverbial competence both requires knowledge of the linguistic structure of a target language (i.e. morphology, syntax, lexicon, pronunciation, and semantics) and of the rules and regulations that are necessary to be able to use a proverb accurately. His conclusion is that the processing of proverbial language involves all the functions of both the right and the left hemisphere of the brain. The function of the left hemisphere supports the understanding of context. Due to the metaphorical content of a proverb, the function of the right hemisphere is to create a literal meaning with the help of the contextual features in which the proverb is used, while the left hemisphere processes the linguistic structure of the proverb. Proverbs therefore serve an important purpose in the second-language classroom.

In conclusion as we have seen above proverbs play an essential role in teaching spoken and written language. Proverbs are one way to help the students to clarify the distinction between oral and written English.

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