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IMPLEMENTING STORY-BASED METHODOLOGY IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES TO YOUNG LEARNERS

Streszczenie

W nauczaniu uczniów młodszych języków obcych stosowane są takie metody i podejścia jak metoda audiolingwalna, metoda reagowania całym ciałem, podejście komunikacyjne, podejście oparte na wykonywaniu zadań językowych, podejście narracyjne i podejście integrujące naukę języka obcego z treściami nauczania na etapie wczesnoszkolnym. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest scharakteryzowanie jednego z tych podejść, a mianowicie podejścia narracyjnego, które zostało wprowadzone do nauki języków obcych stosunkowo niedawno i pomimo wielu zalet nie jest powszechnie stosowane. Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia zarówno aspekty teoretyczne jak i praktyczne związane z podejściem narracyjnym, uwzględniając takie zagadnienia jak rola tekstów narracyjnych w rozwoju językowym, kognitywnym, emocjonalnym i społecznym dziecka, przydatność opowiadań w nauczaniu języków obcych dzieci, struktura i język tekstów narracyjnych, rodzaje tekstów narracyjnych i kryteria ich doboru oraz zastosowanie podejścia narracyjnego w praktyce z uwzględnieniem faz lekcji i odpowiednich zadań językowych.

1. Reasons for using stories

Stories play a very important role in terms of children's linguistic, cognitive, emotional and social development. The role of stories in children's linguistic and cognitive development may be explained in terms of the socio-cultural theory. According to this theory, language is acquired in interaction with significant others, which has a profound influence on the development of cognition. More specifically, it is acquired by means of Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which is in-born and Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) which is provided by other language users. This social support is referred to as Vygotsky's¹ zone of proximal

¹ Vygotsky, Lev: *Thought and Language*. New York: Wiley 1962.

development (ZPD) or Bruner's² scaffolding. The former stands for the distance between the most difficult task the child can do alone and the most difficult task the child can do with help, whereas the latter for the way adults talk to children to mediate the world for them and to assist them in solving problems. According to Bruner³, reading stories to children is scaffolded in such a way that language use is predictable but a space for growth is created as the child is encouraged to participate at more and more difficult levels. In other words, the child works with a skilful adult within the zone of proximal development. Formats and routines, which combine the security of routines with the excitement of novelty, enable scaffolding and effective learning.

Narrative is an example of extended talk which poses children with higher linguistic and cognitive demands than conversational talk⁴. Cameron⁵ points out that narrative is present in children's early social experiences and that the language of the narrative is developed quite early in the first language, with sentence grammar and discourse grammar being probably interdependent. Iluk⁶ presents an example of an 8-year-old boy who can tell his own story which has all characteristic elements of narrative but he also points out that children's narrative skills depend on their level of communicative competence and general intellectual development. After Kubanek-German and Hellwig, he emphasises the fact that telling stories is a common form of communication among children who willingly talk about their experiences and adventures.

In terms of cognitive development, it is important to point out that the narrative is the basic form of information organization in memory in early childhood (3 to 6 years)⁷. At this stage, children's memory develops and is not deliberate, i.e. children cannot commit facts to memory but remember the events which impressed them. The narrative form of mental organization results from chronological coding and feeds autobiographical or episodic memory. Coding of events in memory by the child is better when these events are verbally labelled, which means that remembering is facilitated by social interactions. Summarizing events, making stories and sharing memories with others are verbal memory strategies developed in middle childhood (6 to 12 years) together with the development of speech⁸. Such strategies show intentional learning ability. Furthermore, the way of narrating the story is congruent with the way children's mind works⁹. Children's mental processes

² Bruner, Jerome: *Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Brown, Gillian and George Yule: *Teaching the Spoken Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983.

⁵ Cameron, Lynne: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge: CUP 2003. Pp. 36–71.

⁶ Iluk, Jan: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Katowice: Wydawnictwo Gnome 2002. Pp. 103–123.

⁷ Dakowska, Maria: *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Warszawa: PWN 2005. Pp. 157–178.

⁸ Jagodzińska, Maria. *Rozwój Pamięci w Dzieciństwie*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne 2003.

⁹ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

are based on stories and episodes before abstract thinking is developed. Narrative thinking and texts of stories enable children to understand their own experiences, the surrounding world and the rules of co-existing in the society. Children learn that knowledge about events is organized in the form of hierarchical episodic schemes which enable one to foresee, understand and evaluate events.

Stories develop children's imagination and creativity, and help them to connect their imaginative world and the real world. Iluk¹⁰ points out that imagination is the source of cognitive processes and cannot be separated from them. Noticing, memories, feelings and creativity come together in imagination. What is more, imagination is present in all aspects of one's life, including education and learning foreign languages. Children's imagination is aroused by central conflicts in a story, e.g. good-evil, fear-courage, justice-injustice, life-death. Their creativity is developed when they make their own stories on the basis of stories they listen to or read¹¹.

According to Egan¹², stories constitute a very important sense-making tool, i.e. they are a source of children's general knowledge about the world. Linking fantasy with the real world and addressing universal issues, stories help children to understand their everyday life. Iluk¹³ explains that fantasy world is more interesting for children than the real world. This is connected with the impression stories make by means of their artistic composition which involves the indefinite description of characters, dramatic situations, different perspective of the narrator and listeners, the dynamics of events, cause-effect relationships, supernatural elements influencing the characters and the plot positively or negatively, and a happy ending. Thus, it is better to depict people's problems in the form of a fairy tale because of its powerful influence on children.

In terms of social and emotional development, stories have certain pedagogical and educational values. Iluk¹⁴ points out that learning how to talk about oneself and one's experiences, the child acquires the awareness of oneself as a person. The content and morals of stories are useful in bringing up children as they show that struggling with difficulties is unavoidable, determination and independence are important virtues, and that being on one's own one can count on others' help thanks to which one may become more self-confident. Stories also help children to come to terms with their own feelings¹⁵. They enable children to identify themselves with the characters, which fosters imitation, co-operation and reflection¹⁶.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Brewster, Jean, Gail Ellis and Dennis Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Essex: Pearson Education 2002. Pp. 186–202.

¹² Egan, Kieran: *Teaching as Storytelling*. London: Routledge and Kegan 1988.

¹³ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Scott, Wendy and Lisbeth Ytreberg: *Teaching English to Children*. London: Longman 1990. Pp. 21–31.

¹⁶ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

In general, telling stories and listening to them in the early childhood has a positive influence on children's intellectual development and success at school. Thanks to the fact that stories develop children's language, imagination and thinking skills, listening to them has a therapeutic effect¹⁷.

According to Brewster et al.¹⁸, stories serve as an ideal introduction to a foreign language because they present it in a familiar context, i.e. children enjoy stories in their mother tongue and are familiar with conventions of the narrative. Using stories at length provides authentic acquisition-rich input thanks to which the processes of text comprehension and language learning may take place like in the natural context¹⁹. This is not possible with the use of course-book texts which provide acquisition-poor context. Such texts are often limited to every-day life situations and written to present certain lexical and grammatical items. Listening to or reading stories, children have contact with rich language in its artistic and metaphorical dimension used to describe a variety of topics. In other words, they do not have contact only with artificially filtered language sample consisting of basic grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Using stories offers optimal conditions for the development of receptive skills, especially global understanding, and for indirect acquisition of accurate pronunciation, intonation and rhythm as well as numerous words, phrases and structures²⁰. In addition, children acquire nonverbal means signalling understanding or non-understanding, forms expressing feelings and opinions, and ways of solving problems²¹. They also develop the ability to describe people, places and events, and the ability to divide longer stories to episodes and to present them chronologically. Stories also help to develop such learning strategies as predicting, guessing meaning and hypothesizing²².

Vale and Feunteun²³ pay attention to the significance of constructive and creative comprehension involved in storytelling. They point out that children start to develop their identity as readers from the age of three or four and that this development should be supported by parents and teachers who should also show children that they value them as readers. Four processes are involved in terms of comprehension and response while children read or listen to a story, namely picturing and imagining, i.e. making a mental picture of what is being read or listened to, predicting and recalling, i.e. predicting what is going to happen next and linking previous events to current events, identification and personalizing, i.e. identifying oneself

¹⁷ Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Knopf 1977.

¹⁸ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

¹⁹ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

²⁰ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

²¹ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

²² Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

²³ Vale David and Anne Feunteun: *Teaching Children English*. Cambridge: CUP 1995. Pp. 81–90.

with the characters and situations in the story according to one's own experiences, and making value judgements, i.e. relating one's own values to the values presented in the story. The results of these four processes are different for different children who, encouraged to express their ideas, develop creative partnership between themselves and the story.

Furthermore, stories in a foreign language lesson are motivating, develop positive attitudes, and create a desire to continue learning. Stories foster motivation and concentration. Studies reported by Iluk²⁴ show that children are fully involved in activities related to storytelling. They are willing to talk about the events from the story, anticipate the next adventures, display greater effort, persistence and spontaneity. A story-based lesson is characterized with a nice and relaxed atmosphere and lack of inhibition which is often caused by the lack of confidence or the fear of making mistakes. In a conventional lesson, the level of interest, concentration and motivation quickly decreases, the atmosphere is more tense, and the teacher has to often discipline learners, which is tiring for both parties. It is generally known that discipline problems increase when learners' attention, concentration and interest decrease. Stories provide children with joy and entertainment. They evoke strong feelings, like tension, anticipation, joy, disappointment, relief, which children do not experience while reading a text from a course-book. Children lose interest in learning a foreign language if texts in this language do not fulfil their natural emotional needs, including the need to play, act and fantasize²⁵. Moreover, stories lead to positive outcomes, e.g. games, competitions, drama, projects, book making etc. In addition, they provide useful information about other countries, people and cultures, which influences children's attitudes towards them. They create an opportunity to share experiences and opinions.

Storytelling is a holistic-approach to language learning. Eye-contact, changing voice pitch and loudness, miming and gestures, movement and actions especially during drama, emotional involvement enable the coding of the language in both hemispheres, especially in the right one which is poorly addressed in conventional lessons²⁶. But if the teacher just reads the story and asks a few comprehension questions, interaction is restricted and does not contribute to language processing and acquisition. Stories also address different learning styles and types of intelligence.

Having discussed numerous reasons for using stories in a foreign language lessons, it is also important to present some criticism. According to Illuk²⁷, behaviourist principles of language learning and teaching, which involve careful selection and gradation of teaching material and intensive mechanical repetition and which are

²⁴ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

²⁵ Stasiak, H. Wpływ czynników emocjonalnych na dziecięcą akwizycję języka obcego. W: Problemy komunikacji międzykulturowej. Lingwistyka, translatoryka, glottodydaktyka. Warszawa: Graf-Punkt 2000. Pp. 402–427.

²⁶ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

²⁷ Ibid.

present in many syllabuses for young learners, do not leave much room for the use of stories. The use of stories is criticised with respect to several factors. Firstly, many stories consist of a monologue, which is not useful from the point of view of communicative language teaching based on a dialogue. According to Iluk²⁸, this argument is false since storytelling is in fact an interactive process in which the narrator and the listener have distinct roles. Secondly, it is claimed that in stories it is difficult to find many speech acts characteristic for every-day life communication. Thirdly, texts are too long and include too many items which are not only new but also literary and of low frequency. Fourthly, stories do not include current information about L2 countries. Finally, a focus on such educational aims as developing abstract thinking, formal analysis, making conclusion etc., makes narrative skills less important. However, since stories are congruent with children's communicative, intellectual and emotional needs, they should occupy a more suitable position in foreign language teaching syllabuses.

2. The discourse organization of stories

Cameron²⁹ points out that the structure of stories reflects the fact that story telling is an oral activity and that stories are designed to be listened to and participated in. Stories as a literary genre have certain prototypical features which emerged as fairy tales spread from one language and its culture to the other. These prototypical features include a formulaic opening, e.g. 'Once upon a time...', the introduction of characters, the description of the setting, the introduction of a problem, a series of events in a temporal sequence which lead to the resolution of the problem, a formulaic closing, e.g. 'They all lived happily ever after', and an explicit or implicit moral³⁰. The main organizing features of stories are a temporal sequence of events and thematic structure. Events in a story take place at different points in time and a central theme changes throughout the story. The thematic structure of a story refers to the resolution of a problem³¹. If a narrative does not have a different thematic structure than time passing, it is not a story but a kind of commentary. Furthermore, a good plot is characterised by knowledge gap between story characters and audience, predictability and a surprising event or change. Humorous elements make the plot even more engaging. The knowledge gap exists when the story is told in such a way that the reader knows more than the main character. This creates a sense of suspense which motivates listeners to find out how the story will develop. Predictability built into the narrative creates the impression that one event inevitably leads to the next one. This predictability and inevitability of events is in-

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

³⁰ Propp, Vladimir: *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press 1958.

³¹ Hoey, Michael: *On the Surface of Discourse*. London: Allen and Unwin 1983.

interrupted by some surprising event, like for example in 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Predictability and continuity may be also created by the repetition of events with just a small change, just like in 'The Goldilocks and Three Bears' or 'The Story of the Fat Cat'. Such stories are characterised with the so called cumulative content³². Cameron³³ points out that the pattern of balanced degree of familiarity and surprise probably suits human psyche. This is precisely what Bruner³⁴ referred to with his notions of security and novelty discussing the role of formats and routines in children's cognitive and linguistic development.

It is interesting to add that many of these prototypical features are present when people tell each other stories in everyday-life conversations³⁵. It should be pointed out that many texts called stories in course-books for young learners lack some of these prototypical features. Usually such texts do not have a plot since characters are not posed with the problem which they try to solve but they just move through a set of activities and accompanying pictures which are assembled to illustrate some language structure and vocabulary. Teachers should not expect that such non-stories will appeal to children in the way real stories do.

3. Language use in stories

Language use in stories for children is characterised with literary devices, like parallelism, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, onomatopoeia, metaphor, simile, contrast etc., which may be useful in teaching foreign languages³⁶. Parallelism refers to the pattern of language repetition which reflects the pattern of predictability and change or repetition and change in the content of the story. Language structures and words repeated in a meaningful and amusing way in a story support not only the comprehension of a story but indirect learning of these items. As Pinter³⁷ points out repetition makes linguistic input more noticeable and salient, and clear pattern in cumulative content is like chain memory practice for vocabulary and structures. According to Iluk³⁸ repetition fosters learners' anticipation, active participation and memorisation. Alliteration, i.e. the use of words which start with the same consonant may be a starting point for learning letters and sounds. Rhymes, rhythms and onomatopoeic sounds help to entertain listeners or readers, and may be the basis for the acquisition of L2 intonation and pronunciation. Contrasts between charac-

³² Pinter, Annamaria: *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006. Pp. 45–64.

³³ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

³⁴ Bruner, J.: *Child's Talk: Learning to Use Language*. 1983.

³⁵ Labov, William. *Language in the Inner City*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1972.

³⁶ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

³⁷ Pinter, A.: *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Pp. 45–64.

³⁸ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

ters, actions and settings help children to understand a story as a whole and are helpful in teaching antonyms. As for metaphors and similes, Bettelheim³⁹ claims that early experiences with fairy tales are subconsciously translated into one's real world experiences, becoming a kind of script for one's life. Intertextuality, i.e. making references to other texts which are a part of cultural heritage, may be used by children who involve familiar characters or fragments of known stories while telling or writing their own stories alone, in groups or with the teacher.

Stories may consist only of narrative or dialogue but most of them link both these language uses. The way narrative and dialogue are used in the story contributes to its atmosphere. Dialogue creates an opportunity to act the story out and pick up some phrases from the conversation. It makes the story suitable for drama or pantomime. Narrative may include repeated grammatical structures which contributes to noticing new patterns or consolidating the familiar ones. Narrative and dialogue are clearly distinguished by listeners and readers. They have a different time-frame reflected in the use of tenses. Narrative is characterised with the past time-frame since it is an account of events described usually in the Past Tense, whereas dialogue is characterised with the present time-frame since it renders the characters' exchange at a given moment with the use of different tenses appropriate to the topic. Stories in course-books for young learners or simplified stories in English often use Present Simple or Present Continuous for the narrative probably because in EFL syllabuses these tenses are treated as simpler than past tenses and are introduced first. Yet, as Cameron⁴⁰ points out the use of present tenses in stories is inauthentic. The belief that the use of Past Simple would prevent children from understanding stories is false because stories in L1 are told in past tenses. Thus, it is the use of the present tenses that may lead children to misconstrue the verbs because they will expect past forms.

A simple story may have rich vocabulary describing the setting, characters and their actions. As Cameron⁴¹ points out the context of the story together with its predictable pattern of events reflected in language use helps listeners or readers to understand new words and the story as a whole. Stories create a space for growth in vocabulary as children pick up words indirectly, especially the ones they enjoy.

³⁹ Bettelheim, B.: *The Uses of Enchantment*. 1977.

⁴⁰ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

4. Selecting stories

4.1. Types of stories

First of all, teachers may choose between authentic stories and stories written for teaching purposes⁴². Simplified versions of popular fairy tales, fables, nursery rhymes or specifically written stories are called readers. They often supplement the syllabus of a given course in which words and structures are carefully graded and ordered. Authentic storybooks or real books are written for children whose L1 is English but may be also used for children who learn English as L2. Language in these stories is not selected and graded but often found in syllabuses for young learners. Authentic stories exemplify real language and constitute a good source of authentic input, especially with respect to lexis. They also increase learners' motivation as working with real books gives learners satisfaction. Teachers can also choose stories children know in their L1.

The trend to use authentic books, which reflected emergent literacy movement, was prominent in British educational system in the 1980s⁴³. Emergent literacy is the term describing the phenomenon whereby children appear to gradually learn to read in their mother tongue through exposure to reading texts⁴⁴. It showed that children first learn sentences by heart as they hear them many times and say them together with an adult. Next, they select known words from the text, notice letters and link the shapes with the sounds, paying attention to initial consonants, then to final consonants, and to vowels in the middle. Since in practice emergent literacy worked only with some children while the majority needed structured help, a return to more focused literacy teaching may be observed at present. However, the ideas behind emergent literacy are not ignored in that structured reading programmes are extended with the use of specially written or original stories. Emergent literacy is also proposed as one of the ways of teaching children between the age of 6 and 9 to read and write in English as a foreign language.

Iluk⁴⁵ enumerates different types of stories the teacher should use, namely classic fairy-tales and fables, stories which directly present children's problems, e.g. interests, feelings, friendship, stories whose topics are absurd or mysterious, e.g. prose poems, short stories, mini sagas, anecdotes, stories which are the product of teacher-learners interaction, e.g. the description and interpretation of a picture, urban legends, e.g. *Basiliscus*, and oral history, e.g. up-to-date reports and fictional texts about native-speaking children's life.

⁴² Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁴³ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

⁴⁴ Hall, Nigel: *The Emergence of Literacy*. Sevenoakes, Kent: Hodder and Stoughton. 1987.

⁴⁵ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

4.2 Criteria for selecting stories

Choosing a story, the teacher should pay attention to several factors, namely level, literary devices, content/subject matter, illustrations/layout, educational potential, motivation, values, global issues and language/content⁴⁶. These factors are linguistic, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural in nature.

To begin with the teacher should check the level of the story in terms of vocabulary, structures and language functions. The teacher should decide if the level is acceptable and challenging enough, and if the text includes rich vocabulary to provide comprehensible input.

Then, the teacher should examine the discourse organization of a story, paying special attention to the presence of prototypical features, the balance of narrative and dialogue, and repetition⁴⁷. The teacher should also identify literary devices used in a given story and check how they will help learners to understand the story, take part in telling the story, foster anticipation and memorisation, broaden their language, keep up concentration and interest, and create enjoyment⁴⁸.

Next, the teacher should check whether the content or subject matter is relevant to his or her learners or, in other words, whether it is engaging, interesting, amusing and memorable⁴⁹. Learners' emotional engagement is vital as emotions make learners active and creative⁵⁰. Good quality stories have an engaging plot and interesting characters so that listeners experience strong satisfaction when the story finishes. The described world is sufficiently familiar to children so that they can understand and imagine it empathizing with its heroes⁵¹. It is important to remember about the difference between reading age which refers to children's ability to understand a text measured by the average level of vocabulary knowledge, and interest age, which refers to interests characteristic for children at a given age. Research shows that a 14-year-old learner with average interest age reaches the reading age of a 7-year-old child in a foreign language. So the teacher has to choose simpler authentic texts but remember to narrow down the gap between the content and learners' interests. If for 8–10 year-old learners, the teacher chooses authentic texts for 2–4 year-old children, the learners' knowledge, experience and interests make it impossible to make them involved, motivated and concentrated.

The teacher should also pay attention to whether the story addresses any universal themes and whether the values and attitudes presented in the story are acceptable⁵². For instance, stories written some time ago may embody inappropriate attitudes to women or black people. Simplifications may lead to stereotypes. It is

⁴⁶ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁴⁷ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

⁴⁸ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard.: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

⁵¹ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

⁵² Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard.: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

also important at this point to check the length of the story and decide whether it can be read in one go or in parts.

Furthermore, the teacher should look for proper content visualization. Correct associations between verbal and nonverbal information are created, if the visualisation of content is intensive and transparent⁵³. In other words, visual means must precisely reflect verbal means or the process of verifying sense may be incorrect. Sometimes the relationship between information in the picture and in the text is not sufficient in that the picture contains too much or too little information with reference to the text, which makes selection and association difficult. If children have problems with understanding the story, they quickly feel disoriented. Failure and frustration have negative influence on their motivation, interest and activity, which leads to lack of concentration, passivity and discipline problems. Thus, the teacher should look at illustrations to make sure that they synchronize with the text and show the meaning clearly. Art work is as significant as the text, which means that the pictures should be attractive, colourful, big enough and suitable to the age of learners⁵⁴. It is also vital to check whether such features of the layout as split page, lift the flap, cut-away pages, speech bubbles or no text encourage the understanding of and interaction with the story⁵⁵.

In addition, the teacher needs to assess the educational potential of a given story⁵⁶. Educational potential refers to such aspects as learning to learn, cross-curricular links, world/cultural knowledge, conceptual development, learning styles and multiple intelligences. In other words the teacher needs to ask himself or herself whether the story develops pupils' learning strategies, different learning styles and intelligences, whether it develops their general knowledge of the world and other cultures, and whether it may be linked with other subjects. According to Iluk⁵⁷, manual and motor involvement in text comprehension and interpretation which addresses kinaesthetic learning style and bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence is crucial.

Moreover, the teacher may also pay attention to learners' motivation and attitudes in the context of storytelling⁵⁸. The story may be motivating for learners provided that it is relevant to their personal experience, develops their imagination and appeals to their sense of humour. Learners positive response to the story may contribute to their positive attitudes to the target language, its culture and language learning in general, which is vital for successful learning. If the story arouses learners curiosity, they may become more curious about the target language and its cul-

⁵³ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

⁵⁴ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

⁵⁵ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

⁵⁸ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

ture. If storytelling is a positive learning experience, it builds learners confidence and creates a desire to continue learning.

The teacher may not only look at the values present in the story but also at the values connected with the act of storytelling, such as cooperation, collaboration and emotional development⁵⁹. The teacher should make sure that the story will offer opportunities for children to work together, take turns and share. Children may also have a chance to become aware of different values and question them, examine and share their emotions, understand themselves better and develop positive self-esteem.

Stories may also address some global issues, like citizenship, multicultural education and intercultural awareness⁶⁰. The questions for the teacher to answer are whether the story broadens children's view of the world, addresses issues like tolerance, racism, sexism, human rights, environment and ecology, health and safety etc., and fosters an awareness of life and culture in other countries.

Looking at language and content the teacher should check whether language is authentic and whether the story is not too culture-specific⁶¹. But most of all, the teacher has to assess language use in the story dividing it into three groups, namely familiar language that will be recycled, new language that all children should learn from the story, and new language that children may or may not learn depending on their individual interest and skills. New language in a story will naturally occur but it must not make it incomprehensible. According to Nation⁶², different authors claim that a text may have 1 new word per 15 or even per 50 old words. The ability to cope with new words in a story depends not only on the number of new words but also on how well pictures and discourse organization support their understanding and how crucial these words are for the plot.

Finally, the teacher needs to evaluate activities used while working with a given story. Iluk⁶³ claims that activities which include questions to which everyone knows the answer or which require learners to name people and objects in the story are not the best. The teacher should also assess the potential for follow-up work the story has i.e. whether it may serve as a good starting point for other language activities and whether it may lead to concrete outcomes. Having selected the story the teacher needs to plan story-based work.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Nation, Paul. *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. New York: Heinle and Heinle 1990.

⁶³ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

5. Implementing story-based methodology

General procedures for planning story-based work are clearly outlined in a plan-do-review model⁶⁴. The three stages of this planning model correspond to the three stages of story-based work, i.e. pre-storytelling activities, while-storytelling activities and post-storytelling activities.

5.1. Pre-storytelling activities

Planning story-based work some important decisions have to be made. These decisions refer to learning goals and outcomes, story modifications, time spent on a given story, storytelling techniques, techniques used to make the content accessible to learners, and materials needed⁶⁵.

Firstly, linguistic, cultural and cross-curricular aims of the lesson should be stated. It is advised to explain the aims to learners in simple terms so that they know what they are expected to do.

Secondly, any modifications of the original story should be introduced if necessary. Modifying an original text the teacher should use the criteria for selecting stories. The teacher may reduce the content, simplify the language, and change the structure of the story by using more dialogue, repetition and predictability. Adapting stories makes many of them accessible to children with little English, but excessive adaptations deprive children of the opportunity to deal with authentic English⁶⁶. Bearing in mind that children do not need to understand every single word, teachers who adapt stories may move from greater to smaller modifications and from smaller to greater challenge with sufficient support. Examples of adapting stories are presented by Pinter⁶⁷ or Iluk⁶⁸.

Thirdly, time spent on a given story must be planned. Stories may supplement the course-book but may be also used as short basic syllabuses in that 6 or 7 books may be covered in a year, with 4 to 5 weeks, or 6 to 10 lessons per story⁶⁹.

Fourthly, different storytelling techniques need to be considered. The teacher may read a story, tell it or use a recorded version. According to Iluk⁷⁰, the aim of storytelling is to make an impression of authenticity so that the story involves the listeners emotionally and arouses their imagination. It is impossible to obtain such an effect using a recorded story or reading in a monotone as this is contrary to traditional storytelling strategies. According to Brewster et al.⁷¹, recorded stories are

⁶⁴ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Pinter, A.: *Teaching Young Language Learners*. Pp. 45–64.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

⁶⁹ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁷⁰ Iluk, J.: *Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych?* Pp. 103–123.

⁷¹ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

useful because they model native-like pronunciation, stress, intonation and rhythm, present different storytelling techniques, like disguising the voice for different characters, and contain amusing sound effects helpful in understanding the story. However, listening to recorded stories may be mechanical and passive if learners are not activated by proper tasks. Thus, it is suggested to read stories aloud to pupils, especially when they hear them for the first time. Telling a story without following the text is very difficult and rarely used. Reading a story is simpler but must be done in an appropriate way, namely the teacher should know the story very well so that he or she can tell it almost without looking at the text. Thus, the teacher should prepare himself or herself by studying the story line, language, layout and visuals, listening to a recorded version if available, practising reading aloud several times and even recording himself or herself. Reading stories enables the teacher to set up a personal rapport with pupils and to engage them in the story. It is more flexible than using a recorded version because the teacher may adjust the tempo to learners' needs, repeat the part they have problems with, explain some language or cultural item, encourage learners to predict what will happen next, or deal with discipline problems.

With the use of proper storytelling techniques the teacher can make the story come alive. The basic condition of successful storytelling is that the teacher maintains the style of narration and intonation patterns characteristic for children⁷². Thus, the teacher should use simple sentences, limited vocabulary, direct speech, proper intonation and rhythm, questions and exclamations. The teacher should tell a story in an interesting way. He or she should speak slowly and clearly but vary the pace, tone and volume of voice where necessary and make appropriate pauses for dramatic effect⁷³. The teacher should disguise his or her voice for different characters and make sound effects. The teacher should visualize the meaning of the story well by pointing to illustrations and focusing learners' attention on important items giving them time to think and link what they hear with what they see. Each sentence should be illustrated with props, pictures, gestures, miming and facial expressions. Expressing feelings and experiences during storytelling stimulates the atmosphere and children's reproductive activity⁷⁴. Emotionally involved children will follow the teacher's model and once they know the story they will visualize it on their own without teacher's help. Later a recorded version may be used which learners listen to with their eyes closed fully concentrated on the auditory channel only, like in a fantasy trip. The teacher should be also able to involve learners in storytelling. The story should be told in the atmosphere free from insecurity and anxiety, with some emotional bond created between the teacher and learners⁷⁵. The teacher should invite learners to join in and repeat some words and phrases by pausing and

⁷² Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

⁷³ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁷⁴ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

looking at them with questioning expression, putting his/her hand next to his/her ear, repeating what they say to confirm it is correct or expand it, and by asking questions⁷⁶. The teacher and children may practice some sounds, gestures or parts of the text before telling the story, and then children produce them when the teacher gives the signal, which is a good introduction to drama⁷⁷. The teacher should also skilfully react to children's spontaneous responses and include them in storytelling. He should not be afraid of repeating, expanding and reformulating as learners obtain more exposure to L2 as well as another chance to check if they figured out the meaning correctly. Learners should be also involved kinaesthetically in verbal activity. Generally speaking, the teacher has to like the story and storytelling, then children are interested⁷⁸.

Finally, materials and pre-storytelling activities have to be chosen⁷⁹. The teacher may dress himself or herself up and use various pictures, real objects, props, puppets etc. The following techniques may be used to make the content of a story accessible to learners: providing the context for the story, describing the cover, presenting the main characters, relating the story to learners own experience, activating children's prior knowledge, providing visual support, pre-teaching important language items. The teacher should present key-words by means of realia, props, visuals, actions, gestures and miming, brainstorm vocabulary on the basis of pictures from the story or elicit words in L1 or L2 from older children and write them in the form of a preparation list on the board. The teacher should also consider pre-teaching items which children will not figure out from the context. Presented vocabulary may be at this stage practised by a number of techniques, like lip reading, what's missing, guessing words written on wordcards presented upside-down for a moment, etc.

5.2. While-storytelling activities

Planning the second phase in the plan-do-review model, decisions about classroom layout and actual reading of a story have to be made⁸⁰. The teacher and children should set up a storytelling routine and rearrange the seating or sit on the floor⁸¹. The best layout for storytelling is created when children sit comfortably on the floor around the teacher so that they can see the teacher and pictures, hear everything clearly and have enough room to be involved kinaesthetically. Children may sit in a circle or semi-circle, which fosters integrity and attention. It is also a good idea to organize a reading corner, i.e. a cosy, carpeted place decorated with chil-

⁷⁶ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁷⁷ Pamula, Małgorzata: *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych w kształceniu zintegrowanym*. Warszawa: Fraszka Edukacyjna 2003. Pp. 68–71.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Scott, W. and L. Ytreberg: *Teaching English to Children*. Pp. 21–31.

dren's pieces of work, good to relax and concentrate. Children become accustomed to the fact that in this place a given type of activity is expected from them. If children are not accustomed to storytelling, it is best to start with short sessions adjusted to their concentration span.

Having planned the layout, the teacher needs to decide how, when and how many times the teacher will read the story for specific purposes. According to Cameron⁸², during the core activity, the teacher reads the story and gives children a lot of time to look at the pictures. In the first reading, the teacher should go on reading without stopping too much to talk about words or the plot, pictures may be used to reinforce what is going on in the story. The second reading may follow immediately, the teacher can pause at the end of each page to repeat key words or ideas, ask children to recall or predict some events. After listening to a story, children should respond to it expressing their feelings in English if possible. The teacher may simply ask them if they like the story. The teacher should not moralise or explain the story but discussion is important⁸³.

Finally, the teacher needs to choose while-storytelling activities such as listen and repeat some key words, listen and predict what will happen next or predict key words on the basis of rhymes and pictures, listen and order pictures e.g. children may order big flashcards together or a small pictures individually, listen and sequence, e.g. children are given a picture and stand in line when the words is read, listen and match pictures with words, listen and remember, e.g. rhyming words, listen and do, e.g. raise your hand, perform an action, make a sound, raise a picture. In listen and do activities, children may act as a whole group or individual children may act according to a cue from the teacher e.g. a small picture, a wordcard, a picture on a paper hat, headband, or bracelet, a picture pinned to the chest, etc. Mime stories are a kind of listen and do activity in which the teacher tells the story and the pupils and the teacher do the actions, e.g. rowing a boat⁸⁴ or hunting a lion⁸⁵. Once learners know the story, they may listen for mistakes and correct them. One form of storytelling is the so called fantasy trip⁸⁶. The activity consists of four phases: introduction during which children sit comfortably, close their eyes, relax and listen to some music, fantasy trip during which the teacher switches the music off and tells a story pausing after each sentence for children to imagine everything; ending during which the teacher switches the music on and children wake up opening their eyes and moving their hands and legs a bit, and evaluation during which children draw an object or a scene from the imagined story.

⁸² Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

⁸³ Scott, W. and L. Ytreberg: *Teaching English to Children*. Pp. 21–31.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Halliwell, Susan: *Teaching English in the Primary Classroom*. London: Longman 1996. Pp. 54–56.

⁸⁶ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

5.3. Post-storytelling activities

Planning the third phase of the plan-do-review model, the teacher has to choose the activities which consolidate, extend and personalize language used in the story. Finally, the teacher should review the work with children and evaluate the outcomes⁸⁷.

Post-storytelling activities include: drawing and colouring, e.g. drawing characters, maps, cover illustrations, displaying the results and putting them to personal folders or using them to decorate the book corner; handicrafts, e.g. following instructions while making masks, hats, puppets, models inspired by characters from the story; games, e.g. memory games, card games, Dominoes, etc.; songs and rhymes; book making; vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation activities, e.g. making a Picture Dictionary based on words from the story by drawing pictures or cutting them out from magazines and arranging words thematically or alphabetically, speaking activities, e.g. acting out some scene from a story, retelling the story on the basis of pictures and simple sentences, staging the story with props, continuing the story, creating a similar story. Retelling a story is difficult and has to be done with teacher's help whereby the teacher provides the structure and children say single words or phrases. The teacher should use props not to overload learners' memory so that they can pay more attention to verbalization of the content. Retelling a story we do not pay attention to accuracy. If we allow children to play with the language at this level and speak even inaccurately, it will have a positive effect on their fluency later⁸⁸. A good example of creating stories with children is given by Scott and Ytreberg⁸⁹. The teacher elicits from children a story similar to Belinda's Story (That's a bird. It's green. That's a butterfly. It's red. ... I'm an elephant. I'm grey. I'm an elephant. I'm super...), but children choose different animals and colours. Stories may be also used as a starting point for reading, writing, interviews, articles for school magazines, and the Internet discussions⁹⁰.

6. Research into story-based methodology

Initial studies found story-methodology to be 'extremely productive'⁹¹ and conducive to learning vocabulary⁹². However, further research is needed in this area.

⁸⁷ Brewster, J., G. Ellis and D. Girard: *The Primary English Teacher's Guide*. Pp. 186–202.

⁸⁸ Pamula, M.: *Metodyka nauczania języków obcych w kształceniu zintegrowanym*. Pp. 68–71.

⁸⁹ Scott, W. and L. Ytreberg: *Teaching English to Children*. Pp. 21–31.

⁹⁰ Cameron, L.: *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Pp. 36–71.

⁹¹ Djigunovic, Jelena and Mirjana Vilke. 2000. Eight years after: wishful thinking vs. the facts of life. In Moon, Jayne and Marianne Nikolov, eds.

⁹² Elley, Warwick: Vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories. In *Reading Research Quarterly* XXIV(2) (1989), Pp. 174–187.

Elley⁹³ who found out that 7- and 8-year-old children learnt some useful number of L1 words through stories, reported that learning was influenced by such factors as the number of times the word occurred (L1 users need between 6 and 12 encounters with a new word to remember it), the number of times the word was illustrated, the usefulness of clues, children's involvement, and the teacher's explanations. Blondin⁹⁴, who investigated story-based methodology in Italy, found it to be more effective than conventional, even fun-involving lessons, whose aim was to memorize words and dialogues. The main advantage was that language acquisition in the formal context of school was more like in the natural context. At the beginning, children used telegraphic speech omitting articles and prepositions. They made a lot of structurally diversified sentences and could use conjunctions to make complex coordinate and subordinate sentences they first receptively learnt from stories. In the 5th grade they could tell short stories similar to stories used in the classroom. Children from control groups used more accurate but simple constructions learnt by heart and could not tell any story in the 5th grade. Cameron and Bava Harji⁹⁵ found out that reading books to 5-year-old Malaysian children by their parents had a positive influence on children's literacy and oral skills. Iluk⁹⁶ reports conclusions from research findings in Germany which indicate that after one year of language teaching with two lessons per week, it is possible to use a longer narrative text, which requires good storytelling techniques from the teacher and deep concentration from learners, especially if their activity is reduced only to text perception. The results of different observations show an increase in the number of speech acts, grammatical structures and comments about the content often in L1 and their positive influence on interaction which normally if teacher-directed makes learners produce one-word utterances and ready-made chunks. Summing up, story-based methodology is an attractive holistic approach to teaching foreign languages and it is worthwhile teachers' effort to implement it in practice.

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⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Blondin, C., Candelier, I., et al.: *Foreign Languages in Primary and Pre-School Education: Context and Outcomes. A review of Recent Research within the European Union*. CILT: London 1998.

⁹⁵ Cameron, Lynne and Madhubala Bava Harji. 2000. 'Using stories with young learners.' Paper presented at IATEFL Conference, Dublin, 27–31 March. Cited in Cameron, L. 2003.

⁹⁶ Iluk, J.: Jak uczyć małe dzieci języków obcych? Pp. 103–123.

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