

TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE THROUGH PAREMIAS

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Abstract: The paper studies the issue of using paremias in the process of foreign language teaching. Paremias are interpreted as folk sayings characterized by their short, concise form that offer a wealth of cultural and linguistic insight. The linguistic nature of paremias according to main linguistic research trends is described in different linguistic planes, including linguacultural, discourse, and comparative studies. Paremiological units are described as a useful tool for teaching a foreign language since they help develop students' vocabulary and grammar, critical thinking and communication skills, sociocultural competence, as well as improve learners' motivation by creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment. The most productive classroom activities using paremias in the ESL context as a source for practising and reinforcing English language skills are described.

Introduction

Paremias, which include proverbs, sayings, aphorisms, idioms, and other phraseological units of folk origin, are expressions of centuries-old human experience in understanding and interpretation of the world. These stable linguistic units convey valuable lessons and insights about life embodying the unique identity and values of various ethnic groups.

As a result of globalization, English has spread all over the world and has been used as a lingua franca for political, economic, educational, cultural,

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commercial and social reasons. Paremiology, therefore, plays a role in the teaching of English as a second language for effective communication. Paremiology is not only melodic and witty sayings, short, pithy phrases that offer a wealth of cultural and linguistic insight with rhythm and imagery – on the one hand, they reflect patterns of thought of native speakers, their national identity; on the other hand, many of them are universal, which shows the same roots of many languages. They are, therefore, useful in students' discussions of cultural ideas when they compare paremiological equivalents in different languages [1]. This is the reason why paremiology should be included into the teaching process while implementing the curriculum of higher educational programs.

The aim of this study is to explore the benefits of using paremiology in foreign language teaching, since by studying paremiology students can gain a deeper understanding of culture's values and beliefs of the language being studied.

Nature of paremiology

Paremiology as a linguistic science of studying proverbs, adages, idioms, aphorisms and other forms of commonly used sayings explores the nature of paremiology and their role in language and culture. Paremiology is a unique form of language that offers a concentrated dose of wisdom and insight in a single phrase. The nature of paremiology lies in their ability to distill complex ideas into simple, memorable phrases. They are often deeply rooted in history and traditions of the country, and reflect its collective consciousness.

Paremiology has been an object of linguistic analysis in various planes. In domestic and foreign linguistics, paremiological units were considered from the standpoint of linguocultural studies by examining the language and structure of paremiology, identifying linguistic variations and similarities in paremiology, shedding light on the ways in which they are transmitted and adapted over time, as well as examining the social context in which proverbs are used and the cultural values they reflect [2 – 4]; discourse studies to show how paremiology is used in various communicative situations and areas of life [5]; comparative studies in order to identify the specifics of the linguistic pictures of the world of different peoples [6, 7]. As noted in [6], the interest of philologists in the paremiological fund of various languages in recent years is associated with such factors as the widespread use of paremiology in texts of various genre and stylistic orientations, including the Internet language.

According to W. Mieder, the most productive way of studying paremiology is through comparative analysis, which presupposes looking at these linguistic units from various cultures and time periods to find similarities, differences, and deeper interpretations [8]. A. S. Hornby, who sees paremiology as well-known sentences or phrases that give advice that is generally true, emphasizes the importance of studying paremiology in their cultural, historical, and social contexts by analyzing how paremiology is used in different situations and how they have evolved over time, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of their meanings and significance [9]. V. M. Mokienko emphasizes the importance of analyzing the language structure, syntax, and semantics of paremiology to uncover their underlying linguistic patterns and functions [4].

Overall, by combining all the scientific approaches researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of paremias and their role in communication, culture, and society.

Paremias as a tool for teaching a foreign language

Paremias are a key part of language and culture due to their opportunity to transmit cultural knowledge and wisdom from one generation to another, since they are often used to teach moral and ethical values, as well as offer guidance on how to navigate the complexities of life according to customs and traditions established in the society. Various paremias are short, concise sayings that offer a wealth of cultural and linguistic insight. That is why they provide a unique window into a culture's values and beliefs. They are often deeply rooted in a society's history and traditions, and can offer a glimpse into its collective consciousness.

Though paremias are often used in common everyday spoken language, the incorporation of idioms, proverbs and sayings in the foreign language classroom is very seldom. They are mostly used as time-fillers and not integrated into the ESL context of textbooks.

Teaching the minor course "English for International Communication" [10] aimed at acquiring cross-cultural soft skills and developing sociocultural competence among students of Tambov State Technical University, we observed how students' cultural knowledge, learning experience and language skills were improving.

- *Improving vocabulary and grammar skills*

Paremias are an effective way to build vocabulary and grammar skills. Because they are short and pithy, they offer a concentrated dose of language learning in a single phrase. Paremias can help students learn new words and phrases, as well as grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions, in a way that is both memorable and engaging. Paremias also help enrich students' vocabulary developing their language competence through learning new idiomatic expressions that are commonly used in everyday conversation.

So, instead of describing students' feelings and states they can use colour idioms: saying "*I feel blue*" one can express sadness or even depression, the idiom "*blue in the face*" expresses anger or irritation, while the idiom "*to catch smb red-handed*" means catching smb off guard at the moment when they do something inappropriate. To practise colour idioms the teacher can use various task options, e.g. matching, multiple choice, cloze tasks, involving colour paper or colored PowerPoint slides.

Paremias are an excellent way to introduce students to the nuances of language. Many proverbs contain wordplay, puns, and other forms of linguistic humor. By studying proverbs, students can learn to appreciate the subtleties of language, and develop a more sophisticated understanding of its many layers of meaning.

Paremias can also be a useful tool for practising grammar. Through proverbs, for instance, students can practise the following common grammar structures are common: imperative sentences, both positive and negative (*When in Rome, do as the Romans do* or *Look before you leap*), parallel constructions

(*Easy come, easy goor No pain, no gain*), passive voice (*The road to hell is paved with good intentions*), declarative sentence (*Birds of the same feather flock together*), etc.

Thus, incorporating paremias from the target language enhances vocabulary, aids in understanding figurative language, exposes learners to cultural wisdom, and improves memory retention. Short and meaningful phrases make it easier to remember new words and paremias fuel student interest, making them more memorable and aiding in the comprehension of grammar.

- *Developing critical thinking skills*

Many paremias contain a moral or lesson, and require students to think deeply about the meaning behind the words. By analyzing and interpreting paremias, students can learn to think critically and creatively, and develop a deeper appreciation for complexities of the language, both foreign and native.

Paremias can greatly improve the level of critical thinking skills through analyzing the meaning of paremias being studied, which makes students think logically. The meaning of most paremias does not lie beneath the surface and is usually rooted in culture and history. To develop critical thinking skills, the teacher may start the lesson with a small discussion of one proverb to reveal hidden meanings based on their background knowledge, the experience of past generations or using some examples from literature.

- *Developing communication skills*

Paremias can help students develop their communication skills. Since paremias are often used in everyday conversation, they can help students learn to communicate more effectively. By dedicating time to learning and practising paremias, students can enhance their language proficiency and ultimately boost their confidence in the communication process.

The experience shows that during class discussions, students often need to assess the events in the text, share their opinions, and utilize various language techniques. Unknowingly, students may incorporate proverbs or idioms from their native language in their expressions. The natural urge to use and understand these sayings is a crucial motivating factor and teaching tool for enhancing vocabulary.

It is also essential for students to not only learn a saying, but also know how to use it appropriately in different cultural contexts. Mastering a saying involves more than just understanding its meaning; the true linguistic challenge lies in applying it effectively in specific communicative situations.

- *Developing sociocultural competence*

By studying paremias, students gained a deeper understanding of the culture they were learning about, and developed a more nuanced appreciation for its customs and practices.

As an example we can refer to studying idioms with the lexeme ‘Dutch’ students learn the historical aspect of “Dutch” idioms. The Netherlands has a long history of global trade and colonialism, and those centuries of international involvement led to a lasting mark on the English language. The English, in particular, came up with some very colourful ways of describing or referring to the Dutch during the 17th century and beyond. This is the reason why “Dutch” idioms have a negative insight. For example, the idiom “*Dutch act / cure*” has

a meaning “committing a suicide”, “*Dutch comfort*” means “deriving comfort from the fact that things could be worse”, “*Dutch treat*” / “*to go Dutch*” means “when you go out to eat and each person pays for themselves”.

The idiom containing “Greek” national component has the meaning of something complicated, difficult to understand, e.g. *It’s all Greek to me* or *It’s written in Greek*. Such expressions go back to the Middle Ages, when monks copied Latin texts by hand and not all of them had a clear writing. This fact gave birth to the idiom, which became wide-spread in the English language.

Adhering to sociocultural approach, the teacher enables students to recognize cultural elements within the language, comprehend and interpret them appropriately, and foster respect for both familiar and unfamiliar cultures. This approach also helps students to recognize and appreciate the differences and similarities among diverse cultures, leading to mutual enrichment and the development of strategies for effective communication in intercultural settings.

Paremiology can help us to understand the cultural differences and similarities that exist between different societies. By studying paremiology from different cultures, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the unique perspectives and values that shape each society. Paremiology can help us to bridge the gap between different cultures, and to develop a more nuanced understanding of the world around us. Thus, teaching a foreign language through paremiology helps develop learners’ cultural awareness.

It is important to note that despite their simplicity, paremiology are not static or fixed in meaning. They are dynamic expressions that can be interpreted and applied in different ways depending on the context. As a result, paremiology have the ability to adapt and evolve over time, remaining relevant and impactful in changing cultural and social landscapes.

- *Improving learning motivation*

Paremiology have long been used as a tool in language teaching to motivate students and enhance their understanding of the language. Introducing paremiology in foreign language teaching can create an interactive and dynamic learning atmosphere that encourages students to actively engage in the learning process. Being rooted in cultural beliefs and values, paremiology become a good resource in ESL teaching. When used effectively in the ESL classroom, paremiology can help students connect with the language on a deeper level, as they provide real-life examples of how language is used in context.

The key benefit of using paremiology in the ESL classroom is their ability to motivate students to learn on the whole. Proverbs, idioms, witty saying are thought-provoking, so they can capture the attention of learners and spark their curiosity. By exploring the meanings and origins of paremiology, students can also develop critical thinking skills and engage in meaningful discussions about language and culture.

ESL classroom activities involving paremiology

The variety of paremiology allows for their effective incorporation into the educational process at various stages of the lesson, catering to students with different levels of language proficiency. Proverbs can be utilized as an introduction to the lesson.

Paremiias can be used as:

- *lead-in stage of the lesson*, transitioning smoothly into conversational exercises that prompt students to engage in deeper discussions related to the lesson topic and prepare them for speaking activities;
- *main stage of the lesson*, helping students learn new vocabulary and grammar structures, enhance their pronunciation skills, practice reading or listening comprehension, facilitate discussions or role-playing activities, introduce a topic for writing assignments or presentations, and broaden students' understanding of language and culture;
- *follow-up stage of the lesson*, aimed at summing up or evaluate students' academic progress.

At the *lead-in stage* paremiias are introduced into the lesson through the problem or social issue which will be discussed further during the lesson. At this stage of the lesson, teachers can introduce a selection of paremiias (proverbs and idioms) related to the topic being discussed. This can be done through a brief discussion or presentation, helping students to become familiar with the expressions before diving into more hands-on activities. For example, to introduce the topic "Crime and Punishment" the following proverbs and idioms can be used: *Commit a sin twice and it will not seem a crime; It's no crime to steal from a thief; Crime doesn't pay; to keep one's nose clean; white-collar crime; to get caught red handed; to cover one's tracks, etc.* Discussing the hidden meaning of these paremiias students express their personal opinion on the topic and try to activate their cultural knowledge.

The activities involve a literal translation of paremiias and correlating them with the issues they reflect, finding the real meaning of paremiias in the presented context, choosing Russian equivalents for English paremiias. Students can be encouraged to guess the meanings of the proverbs and idioms based on context or provided with definitions to build their understanding. Different types of activities can be incorporated into this lesson stage – multiple choice, matching, brainstorming, etc.

Here are the example tasks from the university coursebook "English for Intercultural Communication" [10] (Fig. 1).

During the *main part of the lesson*, paremiias can serve as a starting point for working with written or audio texts and facilitating a discussion. Students are encouraged to understand that paremiias are not used in isolation, but convey a certain message or describe something in a more vivid way. This allows students to share their thoughts and feelings about these sayings and situations, considering the underlying meaning of the paremia.

Learners can participate in a variety of activities to practice using paremiias in context. This could include role plays, discussions, or writing exercises where students incorporate the expressions into their responses. Tasks at this stage may involve agreeing or disagreeing with a given proverb, or selecting the most fitting one to conclude a story. The teacher may divide the class for several groups, give each group one proverb and ask them to role play the situation which will show the meaning of the proverb. In small groups or pairs, students can also create skits or stories that showcase the proverbs and idioms in a creative way. These interactive activities not only reinforce the meanings of the expressions but also help students to internalize them for future use.

Match the beginnings of the idioms based on nationality names with their endings.

1. Talk like a	a) Dutch
2. Chinese	b) Greek to me.
3. Double	c) Dutch uncle
4. Go	d) bearing gifts.
5. Roman	e) leave
6. It is all	f) Dutch
7. Beware of Greeks	g) holiday
8. Take a French	h) whispers

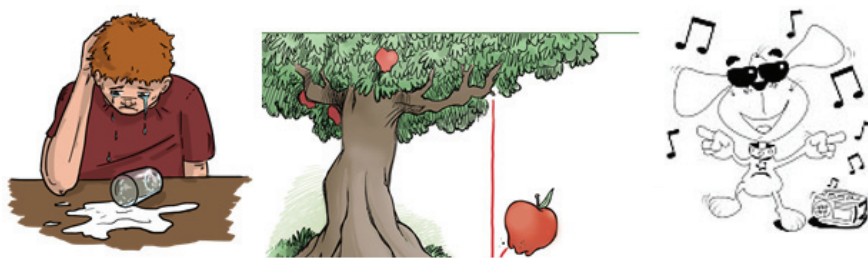
Find the ending of the proverbs.

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Promise little | A. before you've caught it. |
| 2. While there is life, | B. better than riches. |
| 3. A bird in the hand is worth | C. but do much. |
| 4. Honey is sweet, | D. and I'll scratch yours. |
| 5. Don't sell the bear's skin | E. two in the bush. |
| 6. It is no use crying | F. until trouble troubles you. |
| 7. Scratch my back | G. the sun shines. |
| 8. Don't trouble trouble | H. there is hope. |
| 9. Make hay while | I. over spilt milk. |
| 10. A good name is | J. but the bee stings. |

Fig. 1. Example tasks of practising idioms and proverbs at the lead-in stage of the lesson

The experience with second-year students doing the minor course “English for International Communication” has shown that involving visual materials into the lesson provides a trustworthy atmosphere between students and the teacher. Classroom activities include memes, which help not only practise paremias but also encourage students’ motivation. For example, in the following task students should match the meme with the proverb (Fig. 2).

For the follow-up stage of the lesson, teachers can assign homework tasks that require students to further explore and use the paremias introduced in class.



Answers: *It's no use crying over spilled milk; An apple never falls far from the tree; Money makes dogs dance.*

Fig. 2. Example tasks of incorporating visuals with paremiological content into the ESL context

This could involve writing short essays or stories that incorporate a certain number of expressions, or even creating their own paremias based on personal experiences. Students can then share their work in the next lesson, providing an opportunity for peer feedback and discussion on the different ways the expressions can be used.

Overall, incorporating paremias into classroom activities is a valuable way to practice and reinforce English language skills. By engaging students in creative and interactive exercises, teachers can help students to not only understand the meanings of the expressions but also to use them in a natural and fluent way.

This approach adds an element of fun and culture to the language learning experience, making it more memorable and enjoyable for students of all levels.

Conclusion

The nature of paremias reflects their enduring relevance and power as a form of traditional wisdom, making them a valuable resource for understanding the human experience. Paremias are commonly used expressions that add color and richness to the language, which is the reason why they are an engaging way to learn and practice a foreign language.

In a classroom setting, incorporating paremias into activities can help students improve their language skills while also expanding their cultural knowledge. By studying paremias, students can develop critical thinking skills, improve their vocabulary and grammar, and become more confident and effective communicators. Introducing paremias into English language teaching can be a highly effective strategy for improving learner motivation and engagement. Visual aids can also be incorporated to boost students' engagement, critical thinking abilities, vocabulary expansion, and grammar proficiency. Proverbs are a powerful tool that can inspire curiosity, spark discussion, and encourage critical thinking, making them a valuable resource for language educators looking to create dynamic and engaging learning environments.

In conclusion, paremias are a valuable tool for language and cultural learning. They offer a unique window into a culture's values and beliefs, and provide a concentrated dose of language learning in a single phrase. By studying paremias, students can develop critical thinking and communication skills, improve their vocabulary and grammar skills, sociocultural competence, and gain a deeper understanding of the world around.

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Использование паремий в процессе преподавания английского языка как иностранного

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Ключевые слова: коммуникативные навыки; контекст иноязычного обучения; преподавание иностранных языков; межкультурная коммуникация; среда обучения; паремия; социокультурная компетенция.

Аннотация: Рассмотрен вопрос использования паремий в процессе обучения иностранному языку. Паремии интерпретируются как народные изречения, характеризующиеся краткой, лаконичной формой и богатым культурным и лингвистическим наполнением. Лингвистическая природа паремий в соответствии с основными тенденциями языковых исследований анализируется в разных лингвистических плоскостях, в том числе с позиций лингвокультурологических, дискурсивных и сопоставительных исследований. Паремиологические единицы описываются как полезный инструмент для обучения иностранному языку, поскольку они помогают развивать словарный запас и грамматику учащихся, критическое мышление и коммуникативные навыки, социокультурную компетенцию, а также повышают мотивацию студентов, создавая динамичную и увлекательную среду обучения. Описаны наиболее продуктивные типы заданий с использованием паремий в контексте иноязычного обучения, нацеленных на совершенствование навыков владения иностранным языком.

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