

УДК 37.016:811.111

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH STORYTELLING IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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The article reveals the traits and the specificity of social-emotional learning of English via storytelling, outlines its main functions during classroom work.

Key words: *storytelling, narrative, social-emotional learning, self-organization.*

“I’d like to share a story with you...” This phrase magically influences a class by motivating them to focus not only on the teacher, but on themselves as well. The power of storytelling in an English Language classroom has been proved to have both methodological and emotional value. Sal S. Buffo determines four key advantages of this method: getting students’ attention and focusing on the lesson; setting a platform for students to interact and comment; providing a stronger connection in the classroom; involving and encouraging struggling and shy students to participate [2].

L. Harter emphasizes that narrative based pedagogies effectively foster learning in a transformative way, such as entering into the stories of others, listening to the stories of peers, and creating a story together through problem-based and community learning [3].

However, the most significant function storytelling performs is that of providing a comfortable and inclusive environment in the classroom. It has been scientifically proved that when individuals’ needs are being met and they feel a sense of security and trust, their environment is more conducive to academic development. Recently this idea has been worded as “Maslow before Bloom”, i.e. the paramount task of a teacher is to firstly provide sense of security and then facilitate learners’ academic discovery of a subject. Philosopher James Stevens wrote “The head does not hear anything until the heart has listened. The heart knows what the head will understand tomorrow”.

J. Zepeda argues that storytelling allows teachers to enter the lives of students as they’re forming a sense of self-identity, it promotes a sense of community and belonging, enables relationship networking, allows participants to engage in sense-making, helps develop empathy and self-confidence, and facilitates learning [5].

Actually, all the above mentioned aspects refer to key competences of social and emotional learning, an approach to teaching, which is gaining its popularity these days. The fact is largely determined by social and political conditions we are facing now, such as pandemics and war. These factors brought about social distancing, increased anxiety, stress and insecurity



among individuals. Consequently, teachers are facing more challenges, as teaching has transformed from formal interaction aimed at achieving particular academic goals into a process that involves emotional and social interaction aimed at arming learners with vitally important soft skills.

Social and emotional learning is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions [4]. SEL reflects the critical role of positive relationships and emotional connections in the learning process and helps students develop a range of skills they need for school and life. They are articulated in five key SEL competencies. Let's view them from the perspective of storytelling as a methodological tool:

1. *Self-awareness* (identifying emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence, self-efficacy). Creating a story our brain “connects the dots” of our personal experience making a whole picture out of the episodes, systematizing it, thus raising self-awareness and promoting self-analysis.
2. *Self-management* (impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal-setting, organizational skills). Stories develop critical thinking and evaluation skills helping to draw conclusions of life lessons and to alter individuals' behaviour.
3. *Social-awareness* (perspective-taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, respect for others). Listening to stories of others and commenting on them, or through case study and simulations we develop empathy and respect to others.
4. *Relationship skills* (communication, social engagement, relationship-building, teamwork). Creating group stories collectively boosts the sense of community and teamwork.
5. *Responsible decision-making* (identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, ethical responsibility). The very process of designing a story requires from learners to follow a certain pattern or structure, choose appropriate topic, vocabulary, plot as well as encourages them to make proper decisions.

It is natural for humans to share stories, thus by designing a class as a narrative we increase students' interest, empathy, trust and sense of connection. Moreover, telling stories in the class helps enter into experiences of others through case study and simulations [1].

Finally, we should consider the gains of storytelling for language practice. It fosters vocabulary learning by assigning stories on certain topics with particular lexical units, employing contextual semantization of new vocabulary. Stories require thoughtful and elaborate choice of grammar structures as well (e.g. *Have you ever..., I was walking...*), proper sentence



sequencing, usage of superlatives, adjectives and adverbs along with linkers and time markers.

To sum up, using storytelling in an English language classroom not only fosters development of learners' linguistic competencies by involving particular academic topics and strategies, it also incorporates SEL as an essential part of equipping learners with soft skills. Stories help individuals make sense out of the world and their place in it, realize who we are and that thing that makes us human.

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Kondratieva Tetiana. Соціально-емоційне навчання засобами сторителінгу під час навчання англійської мови

У статті схарактеризовано особливості соціально-емоційного навчання англійської мови засобами сторителінгу, окреслено його основні функції під час аудиторної роботи.

Ключові слова: сторителінг, наратив, соціально-емоційне навчання, самоорганізація.

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УДК 811.111'36:616.31

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