

Joanna Madej

Selection and analysis of lesson plans for teaching vocabulary related to British customs and traditions

I. Lesson plan no 1

“A calendar of British festivals and special days”.

The aims: Teaching vocabulary related to the names of the British festivals:

- expanding the knowledge of vocabulary through guessing the meanings of the words from the context
- developing speaking skills using the names of the British special days

Anticipated problems: the students might not understand the reason for organising some British festivals, because they can not find Polish equivalents.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: a photocopy of a text based on “Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture” p.793-795; a large piece of card

Level: pre-intermediate

Procedure:

1. Greeting a class, checking the register and homework (5 minutes)

2. Introduction and warm-up (5 minutes)

A teacher revises the names of months and festivals celebrated in Poland by asking the learners for instance:

“When do we celebrate Easter?”

“What day is it today?”

Then he / she gives students the xero-copies of the texts.

The aim of the first stage of the lesson – is to introduce students to the subject of festivals, the teacher elicits information about the names of the months by asking

questions. At this stage the teacher encourages pupils to take part in the lesson and arouses their interests.

3. Presentation (15 minutes)

Before reading the text, the teacher asks questions concerning the pictures, the students analyse pictures and try to guess what festivals they represent. The teacher introduces the topic of the lesson, divides the class into two groups and distributes a big piece of paper. On the card each group should draw a timeline for six months (group A = January – June, group B = July – December) marking in each week (4 weeks a month). The teacher draws an example of the timeline on the board. The students fill-in their timelines with all the British festivals that happen in their six-month period for instance St. Valentines' Day – 14th February. After finishing, every group A works with a group B in pairs. The two groups swap their cards, so that group B has a chart for January – June and group B a chart for – July – December. Each student from the group that prepared the chart will describe a festival without giving its name (for example a student from group A reads the description of St. Patrick's Day). The group with the chart has to guess which festival it is. They can guess three times. The group with the most points wins.

In the presentation stage students get to know some unfamiliar vocabulary connected with the names of British festivals such as Shrove Tuesday – Pancake Day, Palm Sunday, August Bank Holiday, Guy Fawkes' Night – Bonfire Night etc. The teacher, using visuals, presents a variety of those festivals in the group work.

4. Controlled practice (10 minutes)

The teacher gives the students pieces of paper with true/false questions which allow to check the comprehension of the text and its vocabulary for example:

“Is the 15 March a national day of Ireland?”

“Are hot-cross buns eaten at Easter?”

“Is a song Auld Lang Syne sung at the 1st of January?”

“Do people sign a Valentines’ card?”

“Does Notting Hill Carnival take place in July?”

“Did Guy Fawkes try to destroy the Houses of Parliament with gunpowder?”

“Does Lent precede Christmas?”

The teacher asks the learners to justify their opinions if their answers are false – referring to the text. The teacher monitors the activity.

5. Free practice (5 minutes)

The students in groups decide which British festival is in their opinion the most important in the year. They discuss and have to give arguments for their choice.

6. Round-off (5 minutes)

The teacher revises all the British festivals which were introduced to the students. Then he/she thanks the whole class for participation, gives pluses to the most active students and sets homework. At home the learners are requested to make British festivals’ calendar. The best works will be displayed in the classroom and highly marked.

7. Conclusion

In such a kind of the lesson the students learn a lot of vocabulary related to the British names of the festivals through visuals aids. Coloured pictures, timelines serve as a material for better remembering new words. The festivals’ calendars,

hand-made by the students may be used in the revision lesson. This type of activity “shows learners how to make use of contextual clues ... gives them confidence to deduce meaning” (as cited in R.Gairns,S.Redman 1986: 105). The main aim of the lesson relies on teaching names of British festivals and their characteristics. The teacher relates to the learner’s knowledge of Polish festivals before introducing the subject. The technique of guessing the names of the festivals serves as a tool for students to be acquainted with new vocabulary.

In order to consolidate the words the teacher introduces true/false questions. That activity also shows how the learners understand the text and if they are able to guess the meaning of words from the context. In the production or free practice stage the students speak about British festivals they consider to be the most vital.

The use of words in a productive way helps the learner’s retention. In that part of the lesson the teacher plays a role of the consultant, while the students communicate with each others using the names of the festivals.

The lesson - “A calendar of British festivals and special days” widens the pupils’ knowledge of vocabulary connected with British celebrations. The students practise vocabulary through reading, listening (guessing the names), speaking and looking at pictures. Audio-visuals used in the lesson reinforce presenting and practising new items.

II. Lesson plan no 2

“Festivals in Britain”

The aims: Teaching vocabulary connected with the British festivals through intensive listening:

- collecting information about British traditions, holidays
- making dialogues on the subject of one chosen festival

Anticipated problems: Listening comprehension problems may appear while the learners are watching a video.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: a video "Window on Britain" Oxford University Press

Level: Pre-intermediate

Procedures:

1. Greeting the class, checking the register (5 minutes)

2. Introduction and warm-up (5 minutes)

The teacher revises British festivals from previous lesson, asks students if they can guess what the film is going to be about. The students tell the teacher if they have watched films, programmes in English version and consider potential problems they might face watching video. Then the teacher divides a class into six groups.

Before the presentation stage the teacher tries to make the learners involved in the lesson referring to their experience in watching video in English.

3. Presentation (10 minutes)

The teacher explains to the students that they will be watching a film about British festivals and each group has to concentrate on different one (for instance "Halloween," "St. Valentine's Day", "Christmas", "Pancakes", "Guy Fawkes' Night", "New Year's Eve"). The groups are given various cue sheets. First the students are instructed to watch and listen without stopping the video. While all groups are watching the film they have to pay special attention to the festival that is of their interest. The learners would focus for the second time on the information they need, as they get familiar with the video. Watching for the first time the whole material prepares students for completion of the task they are going to do.

4. Controlled practice (15 minutes)

The pupils - watching video- have to elicit specific information and fill in the cue sheets. Each group watches the part of the film and completes the task. The teacher stops the film using a freeze frame button and allows students to put down the information. Afterwards the students present their answers, the teacher corrects if it is necessary. The cue sheets are fastened to the board so that everyone in the classroom could see them. The teacher wants the students to do exercises on pronunciation and intonation of new words. He/she stops the film and the rest of the class repeats a given model of expressions, sentences, dialogues. In the controlled practice the students develop their ability for listening for specific information – they must concentrate on the date of the festival, the reason and some characteristics. They learn how properly pronounce the words and structures which they will use during the next stage.

5.Free practice (8 minutes)

The students in pairs prepare a dialogue, which describes one of the British festivals. One of them is an interviewer, another plays a role of an expert in the area of British festival. The role play is short, based on the video material. An example:

Interviewer: When do you celebrate Christmas ?

An expert: of course, on December 25th

Interviewer: What are the traditional meals at Christmas?

An expert: It is a Christmas' turkey and a pudding.

6. Round-off (2 minutes)

The teacher thanks the class for being active during the lesson. As not every pair has had an opportunity to present their dialogues, the students are asked to be prepared for the next lesson.

7.Conclusion:

At the beginning of the lesson the teacher shows the students the whole film about festivals. It was done to make the learners confident of understanding the spoken language and to focus them on more detailed information further. The students watching the video for the second time have to do the exercise of filling the table. It teaches them how to select information and choose the target one. The teacher uses a freeze frame technique to give the pupils time for writing and also that technique helps the learners to polish the pronunciation of English words and structures. Video is a useful tool for memorizing words.

At the pre-intermediate level the students are able to form the questions and answers freely with a little help of the teacher so making a dialogue at the end of the lesson would be adequate to their possessed skills. Taking a part in a role play motivates the boys and girls to express their ideas spontaneously. They use the words they have just been taught, but also can invent their own questions connected with the festivals. Using words connected with the festivals aids retention.

Video as an audio-visual material is a valuable source of teaching vocabulary related to British customs, traditions. In the lesson plan no 2 only some video techniques, which involve the learners in acquiring vocabulary are described. The lesson entitled "Festivals in Britain" relies on active viewing, which "can increase the enjoyment and satisfaction gained from viewing, as well as maintain the learners' motivation" (J.Lonergan 1990: 11). The students may convey the meaning of the words listening and watching at the same time.

Non – verbal features such as facial gestures, mimes also influence better comprehension of video films. The chosen topic of British festivals is a valuable source of information about British culture and video seems to be a suitable material for increasing students' vocabulary on that subject.

III. Lesson plan no 3

A Christmas song: "Mistletoe and wine" by Cliff Richard

The aims: Teaching vocabulary related to Christmas through the song

- revising Christmas symbols
- teaching new words through intensive listening
- creating new lines to the song

Anticipated problems: the students may have difficulty in understanding certain expressions while they are listening to the song. Some of them may not know how to create new lines.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: a photocopy of a song, a cassette or a CD, a cassette player

Level: pre-intermediate

Procedure:

1. Checking the register and homework (6 minutes)

2. Warm-up (7 minutes)

A teacher plays different kinds of carols, Christmas songs that students have already known and asks them to guess the titles. Then she / he writes the titles on the board adding that they are going to learn one more Christmas song. The teacher introduces a friendly and warm atmosphere of Christmas

3. Presentation (10 minutes)

The teacher asks students what the symbols of Christmas they know, students respond as for instance: a Christmas tree, Santa Claus, gifts etc. Then he/she shows some pictures of Christmas symbols with a written word.

If there are unknown and difficult words in a text, the learners are going to listen to the teacher key words/phrases beforehand (for example: rejoice. numb, cease).

Before giving the xero-copies of a gapped version of the song, the teacher plays

the song for the first time. The learners discuss if they have heard that song before and afterwards the teacher sets a task and distributes the handouts.

4. Controlled practice (12 minutes)

The students listen to the song for the second time and fill in empty spaces. The teacher pauses the cassette if the learners want to listen to the particular word once more. He/ she monitors the activity and checks the answers. Then the class discusses what words appear to be novel and puts them on 'the wall word',

adding the previous taught ones. In this way the teacher writes words mistletoe, logs, laughter, rejoice, numb, cease etc. The students sing the song together.

To emphasise the knowledge of new words the teacher gives on small pieces of paper definitions and the students have to match them with the correct names, for instance:

- a plant with white berries and leaves that are green at all times of the year (a mistletoe)
- somebody who sings a Christian religious song at Christmas (a caroler)

5. Free practice (7 minutes)

In groups of four students invent new lines to the song – using words they have just learnt and each group presents its version loudly at the end of the lesson.

In that stage of the lesson the learners use their imagination and creativity to devise another part of the song. Some weaker students can only change one word in a line, others may add their own version.

6. Round-off (3 minutes)

The teacher thanks the class for participation. He/she sets the homework: the learners are requested to make a 'spidegram' on Christmas topic, including words they have acquired in the lesson.

7. Conclusion

This type of lesson combines cultural aspect of learning with its educational role. The students learn new words through listening in context. Group work encourages them to practise new vocabulary. They can create something on their own. In the relaxed atmosphere of singing songs they acquire vocabulary quicker, their motivation for learning increases. The language used in the song is authentic and many teenagers who listen to music want to understand the lyrics of song.

(A.Majchrzycka 1998:215-216).The Christmas song "Mistletoe and wine" is adequate for the learners at the pre-intermediate level.The lesson's overall goal is to teach vocabulary related to Christmas through the song. During the lesson the students practise other skills – speaking, listening, writing and reading. It teaches them that in the learning of a foreign language integrated skills are important. The cassette, 'word wall' are audio-visuals that facilitate learning vocabulary. They "add variety and interest to a lesson, help make the associated language memorable, on permanent display (posters, charts,etc.) they can make a classroom a stimulating and attractive place in which to work".(as cited in R.Gower,D.Phillips 1995: 70).

In conclusion, the students in such a kind of the lesson acquire lexical items better and quicker in the relaxed atmosphere of singing a song.

IV. Lesson plan no 4

"Almost everything about eggs at Easter"

The aims: Enriching students' vocabulary of English Easter customs

- guessing the meaning of the words from the context (reading comprehension)
- retelling the story using the names of Easter egg's competitions

Anticipated problems: The students may not identify the names of all egg's competition, as there are many, unknown words for them. The problems might also refer to the pronunciation of the words.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: a photocopy of a text "Easter" (from a book by J.Jedzok "British &

American Holidays"), pictures of various English eggs' competitions, real objects

Level: pre-intermediate

Procedure:

1. Checking the register and homework (5 minutes)

2. Introduction and warm-up (5 minutes)

A teacher points to some real objects such as: a basket, an egg, a rabbit – toy and asks students what associations they have got looking at those things. He / she elicits the word 'Easter'.

The teacher starts a lesson showing some realia in order to make students interested, elicits a word they have already known ('Easter') and introduces the topic of the lesson.

3. Presentation (10 minutes)

The teacher asks the students to look at the title of the text, pictures and discuss what they are going to read. The teacher gives some 'key' words, which will make the reading easier. In pre-reading stage the teacher tries to motivate the learners for reading, explains some (but not all) words as to help in better comprehension of the text.

4. Controlled practice (17 minutes)

The teacher distributes handouts, asks pupils to read the text quietly and quickly for the first time concentrating only on the first two lines of each paragraph. Then they have to choose the appropriate answers – the teacher writes that exercise on the board, as in an example:

The first competition is:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. pace-egging | 3. dyeing eggs |
| 2. the egg-shackling game | 4. the egg hunt |

i. Who lays Easter eggs:

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. a hen | 3. a rooster |
| 2. a rabbit | 4. a turtle |

The students check in pairs the answers and then with the whole class. Next they try to guess the meaning of the rest, unknown words reading the text for the second time. The teacher sticks pictures of eggs' competitions to the board. The class has to name them and put in the order according to the text. Afterwards they complete the tasks on the xero-copies. In while-reading stage the learners acquire vocabulary through different ways of reading: skimming and scanning and guessing through the context. New words connected with Easter's eggs customs are introduced in this way.

5. Free practice (6 minutes)

In groups the pupils first retell the story about Easter's eggs competition in Britain and then compare English Easter's customs with Polish ones: they are talking about differences and similarities.

6. Round-off (2 minutes)

The teacher rewards the most active participants giving them pluses. As homework the pupils have to compare British and Polish Easter's customs writing 5-6 sentences.

7. Conclusion

Visuals, that are used in the lesson, help the learners in understanding new vocabulary related to customs celebrated at Easter in Britain.

At the beginning of the lesson the teacher shows some real objects to arouse students' interest and make them think about associations with the items they can see. The pictures let the youngsters discover the sense of different English names of Easter eggs' competitions. The students try to guess the meaning from the context of the text, supported by illustrations. Visuals, which "encourage vocabulary learning"(V.F Allen 1983: 33) not only help to teach new words, expressions, but make the lesson more attractive, interesting for the learners. The chosen text concerning Easter is suitable for the pre-intermediate students and adequate to their interests. The most difficult words are given in advance not to discourage the pupils from involving in the reading. The teacher checks how well the learners have understood the overall reading by setting guided questions. The students practise the usage of new words doing a vocabulary-matching exercise and making sentences. In free practice stage the pupils retell the story, which "gives learners the chance to productively retrieve the vocabulary and ideally make generative use of it" (as cited in A.Joe, P.Nation 1996: 4) and they are asked to talk about similarities and differences between British and Polish Easter's customs.

All in all the lesson "Almost everything about eggs at Easter" brings the student forward the British Easter customs by means of visuals, reading and speaking

activities. The learners enrich and master their vocabulary related to a special holiday of the year – Easter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, V.F.(1983). Techniques in teaching vocabulary. Oxford University Press
- Gairns, R., & Redman S. (1995) Working with words. Cambridge University Press
- Gower, R., Philips, D., & Walters, S.(1995) Teaching Practice Handbook. Oxford: Heinemann
- Jedzok, J.” British and American Holidays”. Idea sp. z o. o
- Joe, A., Nation, P. & Newton, J. (1996) “Vocabulary learning and speaking activities” English Teaching Forum, vol.34 no1
- Lonergan, J. (1984) Video in language teaching. Cambridge University Press
- „Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture”
- Majchrzycka, A.(1988) “Jak wiele może piosenka” Języki Obce w Szkole nr 3. Bydgoszcz: WSiP
- “Window on Britain “ Oxford University Press (a video)