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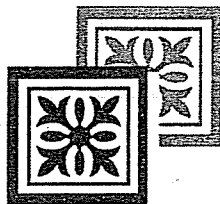
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Сборник содержит статьи по проблемам английского языка, методики его преподавания на различных уровнях образовательной системы, литературы, страноведения и культуры англоязычных стран, которые были обсуждены во время Международной конференции, состоявшейся 16-18 ноября 2006 г в МГЛУ.

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TOPIC MAPS AS A KIND OF SCHEMATA TO TEACH ESP

Modern language textbooks abound in schemata, which belong mainly to two types: 1) taxonomies (often multiple); 2) diagrams and charts.

The first type, usually represented by "spider maps", is very useful in ordering names of concrete fragments of semantic continuum, especially in more or less clearly identified sectors. These maps are used to introduce and consolidate nominal language items and thus to establish certain databases in the learners' inner lexicon. Usually relying on basic general knowledge and personal experience they are very effective to interiorize closed lexical groups (e.g. office equipment, household appliances, etc.). These are the reasons why the activities with "spider maps" often include brain-storming: they do not require any preparation. This kind of grouping also enhances memorization, storage and retrieval of both separate lexical items and the whole group. It naturally occurs in the initial stages of language learning (Levels Beginner - Pre-Intermediate).

When the semantic continuum has been mostly mapped out as a number of taxonomies, the time comes to establish the connections and interactions between various segments, to go beyond basic taxonomies into other paradigmatic sets and more complex representations of reality in other kinds of cognitive structures such as frames, scripts and scenarios [1]. They are modeled as tables, charts, graphs, etc. and are based not necessarily on the learners' previous first-hand experience but increasingly on indirect knowledge acquired from books and other media in the process of general and professional education. This acquisition requires developed cognitive skills, especially since information and comprehension may come in several languages as well as through non-verbal means. For these reasons the use of this kind of schemata comes at a later stage in language acquisition (Intermediate-Advanced) or in the text-books for ESP students.

For more advanced techniques of the mental lexicon storage learners turn to such word field diagrams as lexical trees and grids which highlight the relationship between the items [2]. The combination of techniques is individual depending on the learners' preference.

While the importance of schemata at the lexical introduction and storage stage has been extensively researched, less has been said about their role at the retrieval and especially speech production stages - one of the few examples is thefew examples is the article by Mohammed A. Zaid [3]. It has been suggested that learners retrieve information in the same cognitive models in which it has been originally stored [2].This appears to be true up to a point, when it involves reproduction. But in the case of creative reproduction and especially information (content) production the models themselves have to be created individually by the learners to be efficient for interiorization.

These theoretical considerations contribute to the rationale underlying the teaching/learning technique developed for the Intermediate Advanced learners of English for International Relations [4].

The semantic mapping technique under discussion involves a large fragment of reality, a concept, a phenomenon as a complex entity. It may appear on the syllabus as a "topic", or a simulation activity and thus require modeling in extended charts, complex tables or scenarios. On the syllabus they are represented as "Globalization Issues", "A New Geopolitical Order", "The EU Social Policy", etc.

"To Learn a Topic" for the students of International Relations usually means that they should be able to read extensively on the topic (textbooks, academic papers, documents) and cull the relevant language from the texts; to speak on the problem in at least 2 registers (give a formal/academic speech; hold a panel discussion); write an analytical (position) paper or a document on this theme; listen to the news for quick updating or opinion analysis.

Starting a new "topic", students are reminded to use various kinds of linguistic input to build up the mental map of the problem/phenomenon. Students are usually put through intensive work in various modes (reading of all kinds, listening and note-taking, reading and commenting, various kinds of translation and vocabulary tasks. This stage may involve up to 12-15 texts (written and oral)

set into a module with a centre-periphery structure, while training goes on students identify the linguistic units which form the nodes of the mental map structure they in going to draw for this topic. So, engaged with the task from the beginning the learners is plot the map as they go along.

We suggest the following learning steps and Activities.

Steps:

1.Begin with more traditional charts, spider maps of a text (on the blackboard).

2. Combined reading - filling in the chart prepared by the teacher (at home).

3. Suggest/Give the task of preparing their own charts of 2-3 texts on one topic.

4. Expand the information base (several texts in 2 languages + opinions/comments).

5. Create individual mental topic maps.

Activities:

• discuss in pairs (choose pairs with different approach);

• reordering/using different approach;

• develop a mode/spin off some sub-problem;

• use/vary linkers to establish the type of connection between the events/ components;

• paraphrase/use synonyms for the mode information.

It should be emphasized again that the structure of the map is of the students own devising. Most of the students tend to one particular pattern of mental mapping, but quite a few vary the patterns according to the topic under study. The majority of the topics include some evolution/history/dynamics component, a lot of the topics explore the complexity and interaction of the components, some suggest scenarios of future development. The task of the teacher is to prompt the linguistic means — not merely words, but the whole array of linguistic units - to express the recurrent mental connections. In this way students are taught the skills of using the resources of general English for the ESP purpose [5]. The schemata students produce may look like extended plans or trees of spider maps or a mix of tables with flow charts with bits of language for every item and connecting arrow. They form a part of the students portfolio after they were discussed with the teacher and are usually a great help in preparing papers for conferences and topic presentations at final exams.

Being essentially student-centred and individualized this technique can also be used for team-work as the resulting maps are extended and varied enough to incorporate several patterns.

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