LEXICAL ACTIVITIES IN LEARNING SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract
During long time in studying and teaching of foreign languages the grammar occupied a leading role. Formation of lexical skills has been pushed the background. In the article the role and the place of formation and development of lexical competence on studying Spanish as a foreign language is considered. The provision on what teachers has to not only train in lexical units moves forward, but also offer strategy which will help better and long-term fixing of new lexical swore the learned foreign language. Also the emphasis is placed on need of teaching not separate lexemes, but the whole semantic connected lexical associations as words are not used separately and out of a context. With a support for works of Higueras García (2008; 2013) and Ugarte Maíz (2013) the basic elements entering the concept "lexical unit" are considered. Using classification of Moreno Ramos (2004) are allocated four types of the exercises directed to formation of lexical skills in Spanish: traditional, game, in-put and dramatization exercises. Each of types of exercises is followed by the comment and examples of the author.

Keywords: competence, intecultural communication, lexical unit, lexical associations, activities, teaching, methodology, Spanish as a foreign language.

1 INTRODUCTION
The modern teaching methodology of foreign languages is characterized, as we know, by purpose on communicative approach in teaching that assumes formation at students of ability to intercultural communication. Achievement of a stated purpose requires mastering by the studying of some competences, including linguistic within which mark out grammatical and lexical competences [1, p. 107-109].

As for a formation of lexical competence on Spanish material, it becomes complicated owing to wide territorial variability of Spanish and not identity of cultures of the Spanish-speaking people.

Marta Higuera García – professor of the University of Madrid and the specialist in teaching of Spanish as a foreign language – makes some hypotheses concerning the process of studying of language. On the one hand, it is proved that studying of lexicon of the native language continues till the adult period while studying of grammar and phonology comes to an end earlier. On the other hand, in the adult period certain informative functions, with which studying of lexicon becomes more fruitful, develop. According to M. Higuera García these functions are expressed in the following: "... perception of syntactic, semantic and conceptual links of words. Ability to generalization and abstraction which allows adults to understand and make metaphorical designs and to show more expressivity is also well developed" [2, p. 111].

Also it is necessary to add that in a case of studying the second foreign language, most of students are adults who already know at least one language. From here, it is possible to assume that already since the first moment of training they will try to organize the received lexicon thus which will allow them to store and reproduce it with the greatest efficiency and speed.

Consequently, the teacher has to teach a certain strategy which would allow to remember words and to use them as appropriate in a concrete context. In other words, to teach not only words, but also lexical associations. For the choice of the most expedient strategy it is necessary to understand in what way there is a process of saving words in our memory. There is a good exercise answering the question posed: we choose a certain word, for example, "familia" ("family") and we write all related words which come to our mind. From here, we come to a conclusion that all words are connected with each other in different semantic fields. Therefore, on having learned lexicon, we must relate expressions to others to assure its storage.

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1 Hereinafter our translation. – A. Noskova.
2 METHODOLOGY

In this article the following methods of scientific research have been used: studying and analysis of pedagogical, psycholinguistic, linguistic, methodical literature on a research problem; pedagogical observation of educational process on Spanish as the second foreign language; control sections; consultation, individual conversations, testing of students of the second, third and fourth courses of the Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of KFU; skilled training.

3 RESULTS

At first it is necessary to define what does it mean to know a lexical unit? In the following analysis we implied as fundamental the viewpoints of M. Higueras and D.M. Ugarte Maíz [3; 4; 5].

1 Pronunciation and spelling (the form): to recognize, to be able to pronounce and write the word.
2 Morphology (structure interns): to know the forms: prefixes, suffixes, derivations, compositions.
3 Syntax (the use): to use it in a context.
4 Semantics (the meaning): to know the different senses: denotative and connotative meaning, figurative sense, metaphorical uses.
5 Pragmatics (the concept): to use it for different intentions.
6 Sociolinguistics (the register, frequency): to know dialectal forms, frequency of its use.
7 The cultural content.
8 The syntagmatic combinations (the associations): what other words make us remember the word?
9 The belonging to institutionalized expressions.

All this is important because as more aspects about lexical unit we know the deeper is its domain. Therefore, the teacher has to consider several activities. Besides the most important four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) we must reinforce the cognitive, linguistic, phonetic and semantic activity between others.

Speaking about the exercises, which can be applied in a process of teaching lexicon in Spanish lessons as a foreign language, we should mention that this type of activities has to be aimed at the development of four main skills. At the same time, exercises have to promote understanding of different communications between the lexical units presented in contexts (situation) and in co-texts (linguistic situation) [6]. Besides, the teacher has to intensify the cognitive strategy facilitating teaching process: to identify, to choose, to order, to connect, to compare, to give a shade of meaning and to classify. The Spanish methodologists Carmen Soriano and Isabel Ginés offer the following examples [7]:

− To identify: in the text about holidays look for words or expressions (...).
− To select: to recognize and to take some decision about a series of words.
− To connect: to recognize and to pair the word with an image or with other words.
− To classify: to arrange the words in different categories.
− To order: to arrange the words in a type of gradation.

Also, in our opinion, it is necessary to input in the content of lesson a cultural component and creative activity to maintain interest and attention of students in the studied subject.

To realize all these proposals we can choose between several methods. The most frequent are: translation, selection of synonyms/antonyms, giving definition, using of visual means (photos, video, objects, program of presentations PowerPoint, graphs, pictures), dramatization, games (crossword, word search, Scrabble, Taboo, Memory, dominos), cards with words (flashcards), etc.

Professor of the University of Murcia Jesús Moreno Ramos distinguishes four types of the activities: conventional, playful activities, input-activities and of dramatization [8]. The conventional activities are the traditional ones. They are few contextualized and quite mechanical. For example: to classify, to
relate words to its definition, to set in alphabetical order, to indicate synonymous or antonyms. For example:

**Tabbo.** The teacher prepares cards in which appears a word and three others related to it. The students work in groups. A member of the group must define the given word without using of three others. The rest of the group has to guess it.

**Metaphors.** The teacher delivers to the students words with which they have to formulate metaphors (using the characteristics of the meaning of the word). For example: eres como una antena porque lo captas todo.

**Contextualization.** The teacher puts in context the expressions. So the student is able to deduce the meaning without teacher's solution and help. Example: Look attentively the underlined phrases. What does each of them express?

A: Por cierto, ¿sabes algo de Diego? No sé si sigue estudiando, porque no lo veo por la facultad…

B: Si te soy sincero, su vida ni me va ni me viene. Desde que tuvimos aquel problema no he vuelto a saber de él, y tampoco es que me interese mucho, la verdad.

A: ¿Sabes que Julia está saliendo con Antonio?

B: No tenía ni idea. ¿Pero Antonio no estaba saliendo con Ana?

A: ¡Qué va! Lo dejaron hace tiempo. Veo que no estás al día en algunos temas…

B: Lo mismo digo. ¿Cómo te va?

A: ¿Sabes que Julia está saliendo con Antonio?

B: No tenía ni idea. ¿Pero Antonio no estaba saliendo con Ana?

A: ¡Qué va! Lo dejaron hace tiempo. Veo que no estás al día en algunos temas…

B: Lo mismo digo. ¿Cómo te va?

A: No me quejo… liado, ya sabes… mucho trabajo…

B: ¿Complicado? Vaya tela… responder a quince preguntas y hacer un ensayo en un ahora es casi imposible. Además, las preguntas eran bastante difíciles…

**Cultural contents.** Activity in base of deduction. Example: What ideas collaborate in Spanish with the word “verde” in these phrases?

1. Nos contó un chiste verde.
2. Pertenece a un partido verde.
3. Ese jugador está muy verde todavía.
4. Aquel señor es un viejo verde.
5. Me han puesto verde por lo que hice.

The context of the playful activities depends on the task but they are provided with a cooperative work and with an agreeable ambience due to the game (all kinds of games). The game creates another more familiar ambience in which the students feel more relaxed and it motivates them to use a studied language. This type wakes up the creativity, breaks the monotony of the revisions and, also, contributes to the spirit of the group. For example:

**I go on a trip.** Activity to revise the pertinent thematic lexicon. The first student starts with the phrase: me voy de viaje y pongo en la maleta un traje de baño. The following one says: me voy de viaje y pongo en la maleta un traje de baño y el pasaporte. This way successively every student repeats the words earlier said and adds other one until the words should become exhausted. If someone does not remember he remains out of the shift.

**Animated circle.** The students put in a circle and invent phrases to which they add gestures. Those who come after repeat the phrase and also the gestures. For example, if the topic is La rutina diaria it might be like that: me levanto a las seis (saying with a gesture that demonstrates how he gets up). The following one: me levanto a las seis, luego me lavo la cara (with the gest of washing his face).

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2 All the given examples are used by the author in educational process in department of Romance Philology of KFU.
**Evolution game.** The pupils define five levels of the evolution (for example: egg, crocodile, bird, dog and superman). They move in classroom and on having met another person, play a game of rock, paper, scissors. Who wins raises a level, who falls loses a level. Every student can play with the persons of the same level, so while they move they must say constantly their level. The purpose of the game is to become superman or superwoman.

The input-activities are based on the relations of the lexical units. For example, associations, mental maps, words rain. Namely to produce words from a generating input. On the other hand, these tasks are very good for the preparation of a written or oral vocabulary exercise.

**Words rain.** From a generating input, the students enumerate other words related to the above-mentioned input, realizing this way the associagram or a words tree.

**Story.** Every student receives a card with three words (a verb, a noun and an adjective). The whole class must count a story using given words. The first student says from one to three phrases using the words in his card. The following one continues the story using his three words and this way successively forming a story.

**What is in my backpack?** The teacher prepares previously a backpack with different objects related to the topic that he wants to revise. The students work in groups. Every group extracts an object and has to say or write everything what he knows about it: objective and its parts, visible characteristics and contents, materials, colors, adjectives, verbs, uses, to form words (to increase, to diminish, compound words), set phrases etc.

With the dramatization activities we integrate the lexicon in the verbal and not verbal language (to put in scene the situations). With the gestures and the mimicry the memorizing will be even more effective.

This is about all kinds of games of rolls. The most important thing is to put the students in real situations. If the improvisation is still difficult, the teacher can write cards of rolls with instructions for every personage on how it must act. Also it can be added different moods, so the students will identify more with its role. All this helps to deepest learning by means of the visualization. For example:

The teacher counts a history previously prepared and the students are the protagonists who decide how they act in the story. Each one has a definite character (it depends on fantastic history: for example, Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings, etc.).

4 **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, it is possible to say that in Spanish lessons there are no learned only words but lexical associations, which need to be considered from different aspects, not only linguistic. To facilitate the learning process, the teacher must select precisely the taught lexicon and present it across creative activities that assure the storage in the long-term memory.

REFERENCES


