

**Muldagalyieva A.A.<sup>1</sup>, Okusheva G.T.<sup>2</sup>, Orazbekova I.G.<sup>3</sup>,**

<sup>1</sup>PhD, A/Professor, <sup>2</sup>PhD, A/Professor, <sup>3</sup>PhD, A/Professor  
of al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan,  
e-mail: gulnarok.kz@gmail.com

## **FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS THROUGH STORY READING**

The article considers the effective ways of inculcating environmental awareness through foreign language learning. Integration of environmental topics into language learning process can be very useful for developing both language and content knowledge. Teaching language simultaneously with environmental issues enables students to enhance their abilities for critical thinking and to develop their communicative competence. This paper focuses on developing ecological awareness through environmental story reading activity. Story reading helps students to think critically about what they have read, discuss their opinions, understand their social functions and develop as responsible citizens. Besides, story reading activity is a powerful source of developing reading, retelling, translating and word enrichment skills.

**Key words:** Story reading activity, environmental awareness, critical thinking, foster, content and language integration.

Молдағалиева А.А.<sup>1</sup>, Окушева Г.Т.<sup>2</sup>, Оразбекова И.Г.<sup>3</sup>,

әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университетінің  
<sup>1</sup>доценті, ф. ф. к., <sup>2</sup>доценті, ф. ф. к., <sup>3</sup>доценті, ф. ф. к.,  
Алматы қ., Қазақстан, e-mail: gulnarok.kz@gmail.com

### **Әңгіме оқуға негізделген сабақта экологиялық білімге ынталандыру әдістері**

Мақалада шетел тілін оқытуда экологиялық білім берудің тиімді әдістері қарастырылады. Экологиялық тақырыптарды тіл үйрету үдерісіне енгізу тілдік құзыреттілікті дамыту үшін және экологиялық білім беру үшін өте пайдалы. Ұсынылып отырған әдістеме студенттердің сыни ойлау қабілетін және шетел тіліндегі коммуникативтік құзыреттілікті дамытуға мүмкіндік береді. Бұл мақалада қоршаған ортаға қатысты шығармашылық мәтіндерді, соның ішінде ағылшын тілінде жазылған әңгіме оқу әдісін қолдану арқылы студенттерге экологиялық білім беруге көңіл бөлінеді. Ағылшын тіліндегі әңгімелер студенттердің оқығандары туралы сыни ойлау, әртүрлі пікірлерді талқылау дағдыларын дамытуына, олардың өздерінің әлеуметтік позицияларын түсінуіне және жауапты азаматтар болуына көмегін тигізеді. Сонымен қатар, әңгімелер оқу әдістемесі, ауызша сөйлеудің, аударма және сөздік қорын жетілдірудің қуатты көзі болып табылады.

**Түйін сөздер:** әңгімелер оқу, экологиялық білім, сыни ойлау, білім беру, тіл мен мазмұнды біріктіру.

Мулдағалиева А.А.<sup>1</sup>, Окушева Г.Т.<sup>2</sup>, Оразбекова И.Г.<sup>3</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>к. ф. н. доцент, <sup>2</sup>к. ф. н. доцент, <sup>3</sup>к. ф. н. доцент  
Казахского национального университета им. аль-Фараби,  
г. Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: gulnarok.kz@gmail.com

### **Содействие экологическому образованию на основе использования story reading**

В статье рассматриваются эффективные способы экологического образования на уроках иностранного языка. Интеграция экологических тем в процесс изучения языка может быть очень полезна как для развития языковых компетенций, так и экологического просвещения.

Преподавание языка одновременно с изучением экологических проблем позволяет учащимся развивать критическое мышление и коммуникативную компетентность. В данной статье основное внимание уделяется развитию экологических знаний через чтение художественных текстов об окружающей среде. Чтение историй на английском языке помогает студентам критически мыслить о том, что они прочитали, обсудить разные мнения, понять их социальные позиции и быть ответственными гражданами. Кроме того, процесс чтения историй является мощным источником развития навыков чтения, устного изложения, перевода и обогащения словарного запаса.

**Ключевые слова:** чтение историй, экологические знания, критическое мышление, воспитание, интеграция языка и содержания.

## Introduction

The seriously exacerbated contemporary environmental crisis compels that universities need include ecologic education into a higher education curriculum and pedagogy to enhance understanding and addressing environmental problems and issues by students. It is an inevitable task of colleges and universities to train students who are capable of acting responsibly toward the environment. The first and foremost aim of environmental education is raising the ecologic literacy of students and focusing on advancing their understanding of interconnections between the Earth's natural systems and human systems [1].

It should be noted that environmental education is interdisciplinary by its nature and it can be implemented through a wide variety of disciplines and professions. Such mode of environmental education will contribute to developing and encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, awareness, motivation, and sensitivity amongst students to take actions toward environmental improvement. Environmental education includes a big variety of issues concerning the endangerment and protection of the environment due to human activity. These issues are: global warming, greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, species extinction, poaching, habitat destruction, desertification, air (water, soil) pollution, water crisis, etc.

Environmental topics can be incorporated to every subject. Integration of environmental topics into language learning process can be very useful for developing both language and content knowledge. Teaching language simultaneously with environmental issues will give the students many benefits. Students will be able to enhance their skills and abilities for critical thinking and to develop their communicative competence. We fully agree with Rivers who had pointed out that «As language teachers we are the most fortunate of teachers...all subjects are ours. Whatever [our learners] want to communicate about, whatever

they want to read about, is our subject matter» [2, 96].

«Besides, .... we, the English language teachers and teacher trainers, are citizens of the world and like any conscientious citizens, we have the duty to be committed to the world's crises. It is worth noting that most of the world's hazards have been caused by humanity and it is the responsibility of humanity to resolve them before passing them to the forthcoming generations. So, like other professionals like geographers, science teachers, lawyers or teachers of social workers we, the English teaching professionals have also in one way or the other contributed in the degradation of the environment, and so since we can, we should embark on the use of the English language teaching and teacher training profession not only to develop the communicative skills of our learners but also to empower them with knowledge, know-how and attitudes that would impact on the world's problems in general and on the protection of the environment in particular» [3].

## Materials and discussion

In this paper we intend to share our experience of maintaining environmental education through the English language discipline, namely through environmental story reading activity.

Reading a story can be taken as an independent activity with the goal to enhance not only vocabulary enrichment, reading and speaking skills, but also to develop students' critical thinking skills. Story reading and discussion of the author's message help students to think critically about what they have read, discuss their opinions, understand their social functions and develop as responsible citizens. Likewise, Kohanand, Pourkalhor and others mention some advantages of teaching English through short stories: «they make the students' reading task easier, they help students to be more creative, they raise cultural awareness, they reduce students' anxiety and help them feel more relaxed, they manage universal language and they involve

fiction» [4, 3]. In fact, these ideas guide teachers' work with meaningful activities that contribute greatly to students' learning.

«Story reading activity is also one of the most effective techniques of cultivating environmentally literate students with the deeper sense of moral responsibility towards the Earth, who know how and can take positive actions to improve the ecological situation. Not only do such stories offer a source of inspiration, they also contain a potential for understanding the many ways in which we value and devalue our beautiful green and blue planet. Stories provide us with practical insight into approaches to our most persistent environmental difficulties.» [5,1].

The story under consideration is the story by Jesse Stuart with an intriguing and attractive name «Love» which is devoted to one of the crucial problems of the present time – preservation of animal diversity on earth. The author's goal in writing this story is to raise awareness of ecologic problems, to foster people's consciousness about saving and protection of species and to think of the role of human activities in solving the questions of environmental conservation.

Prior to starting reading the story we think it right to provide the students with the brief information on Jesse Stuart's biography and creative activity.

Jesse Hilton Stuart (August 8, 1906 – February 17, 1984) was an American writer, school teacher, and school administrator who was born in Greenup County, Kentucky. He is the author of short stories, novels and poetry. In his literary works he mostly relied on his birthplace. He also wrote sonnets and the first line of his sonnet «I am a farmer singing at the plow» sounds like an epigraph to most of his stories, which are devoted to nature and man-nature relationship. He published 460 short stories in which he narrates about the strength and affirmative view of life of his people and their love for their love for the land.

The plot of the story «Love» centers around the killing of a snake.

*Father and son and their dog Bob came to their corn field to plan a fence. It was a dry spring. The ground squirrels dug up rows of corn and ate the sweet grains on their roots. The dog saw a snake and father orders him to kill it. The author describes in detail the terrible scene of killing the snake through the boy's eyes. Bob had killed twenty-eight copperheads that spring. He knew how to kill a snake. He wouldn't rush to do it. He would take his time and did the job well.*

*The boy could see the snake didn't want to fight the dog. It wanted to get away but Bob didn't let it.*

*He hated to see the dog take the snake by the throat. She was so beautifully poised in the sunlight. Bob grabbed the white patch on her throat. He cracked her long body like an ox whip in the wind. He cracked it against the wind only. The blood spurted from her fine-curved throat. Something hit against his legs like pellets. Bob threw the snake down. The boy looked to see what had struck his legs. It was snake eggs. Bob had slung them from her body. She was going to the sand heap to lay her eggs, where the sun is the setting-hen that warms them and hatches them.*

*Next day father and son came to the field and to their great amazement they saw a bull black snake lying beside his dead mate. The male snake had trailed her to her doom and found his lover dead. He had come in the night, under the roof of stars, as the moon shed rays of light on the quivering clouds of green. He had found his lover dead. He was coiled beside her, and she was dead.*

When taking a story reading activity one thing to be taken into account is that the vocabulary and sentence structure of the story should be suitable to the level of the students. We consider it desirable to take this story with the Intermediate level of students.

Story reading can be a powerful and motivating source for a wide range of language learning activities aimed at development of reading, retelling, translation skills and vocabulary enrichment.

### Vocabulary enrichment.

As vocabulary is at heart of learning foreign language and speaking in it, before starting reading the story we consider it necessary to do a vocabulary work. As a rule, we make a list of the active vocabulary containing the words that are useful for comprehension of the story and help students easily share their minds and express their ideas. The list of active vocabulary for this story, basically, includes the terms related to the parts of the plant (e.g. *stubble, corn bulk, stalk of corn, wilted dried roots, sweet grains, tender roots, green weed, chestnut oaks, etc.*), names of the species (e.g. *ground squirrel, blacksnake, copperhead, quail, butterflies, bull blacksnake*), words and word-combinations used by the author for the description of the scene in which the dog kills the snake (e.g. *take the snake by the throat, grab, crack, throw, viciously, sling, snap, strike etc.*). Of course, students can pick out the unfamiliar words on their own and learn them independently, since vocabulary learning is an exclusively individual endeavor and mostly it takes

place at home out of classroom setting. We consider it right to ask students to keep a vocabulary notebook where they can write down all the unfamiliar words and combinations and which they can internalize them at their wish and will.

### Reading

A story is an excellent material for enhancing reading skills. After vocabulary work, we recommend that the students read the story aloud passage by passage as a chain activity paying attention to correct pronunciation of each word, intonation, word and sentence stress patterns and through this, the students can better understand the meaning embedded in the text. Reading aloud is the foundation for literacy development. It makes complex ideas more accessible to students and exposes them to vocabulary and language patterns that are not part of their everyday speech. This, in turn, helps students understand the structure of books when they read independently [6].

### Translation

We do not fully support the idea that all class should be «English only» [7]. It should be noted that nowadays using the native language is no longer a taboo. As Owen puts « However, as the data on inter-language and language transfer show, it is highly probable that L2 learners will always think most often in their L1, even at the advanced level» [8].

The advantage of doing translation of the story into native language is that this activity enables students to be creative, resourceful and, what is most significant, it fosters a sense of language. In the process of translation, students need to find the right equivalents in their own language in their effort to attain precision and adequately convey the information. Since they are not allowed to change the context of a text, their main aim is to find the right solution and appropriate words in order to accurately reproduce the source text. This being one of the most valuable benefits of doing translation because students can learn L2 vocabulary and also the teacher identifies the words and structures that need to be practiced.

Translation can be a very interesting and creative activity in class, which sometimes involves the whole group of students; it can promote classroom discussion among students that allows choosing the best equivalent thus improving the quality of translation. All of this instills confidence in their

own abilities and, most importantly, provides them with skills they can use outside of the classroom.

### *Post-reading activity*

After the story is thoroughly read, translated and the vocabulary work is over, there comes the time for discussion of the message or theme of the story. This part of activity requires creative attitude on the part of the teacher. Before starting discussion we consider it right to tell students that authors write stories not only to write a good story but they also intend to give the readers something to care about (Being a better writer). Jesse Stuart in his story «Love» pursues the aim to cultivate a sense environmental awareness among younger generation. The theme of the story is «Everyone is responsible for the safety of the surrounding environment». The questions for discussion should be developed so that they stimulate communicative purpose and communicative desire of students to express their ideas and opinions. There mustn't be direct answers to the questions in the content of the story. Students should make their independent inferences on the basis of the information they have drawn from the reading of the story. Namely the answers to these questions are aimed to foster critical thinking skills and first and foremost to develop the students' skills to communicate their ideas in English. The content of the questions should stimulate the students' desire to express their personal ideas. It will be good for the students if the students work in the groups of 3 or 4. The questions may be written in the blackboard to guide students in their discussion. Each group should be given 2-3 minutes for discussion of each question and choose the spokesperson to express the opinion of the group and share it with the rest of the class. Here are some sample questions:

- Why do you think the boy asked his father not to kill the blacksnake?
- What school subject do you think he was good at?
- What feelings did the boy experience when Bob was killing the snake?
- Why do you think the author describes in detail the process of killing?
- Why do you think the author gives a detailed description of the dog's state when they were returning home?
- How many snakes were all in all killed that summer?
- Why do you think the author mentions the fact that «it was late for a lark to sing»?

- Does the end of the story promote the feelings of optimism in the hearts of the readers?
- Why do you think Jessy Stuart called his story «Love»?
- Namely which environmental issues does the author raise in this story?

### Conclusion

Environmental topics can be incorporated to every subject. Integration of environmental topics into language learning process can be very useful for developing both language and content knowledge. Teaching language simultaneously with environmental issues will give the students many benefits. Students will be able to enhance their skills and abilities for critical thinking and to develop their

communicative competence. In this paper, we share our experience of using story reading for inculcating in students the profound sense of empathy and unity with nature.

Story reading can be taken as an independent activity with the goal to enhance not only vocabulary enrichment, reading and speaking skills, but also to develop students' critical thinking skills. There is a big variety of activities teachers can do with stories. To achieve efficiency in the use of stories as a learning material several conditions should be satisfied: the vocabulary and sentence structure of the story should be suitable to the level of the students; all students should be involved in at every stage of the activity; the teacher should do his/her utmost to make a story-based lesson an educational and enjoyable experience for students.

### References

- 1 Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). Annual Report. 2014. Christie B.A. (2015). «Environmental sustainability in higher education: What do academics think?» *Environmental Education Research*, Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 655-686. Fisher P.B., McAdams E. (2015). «Gaps in sustainability education: The impact of higher education coursework on perceptions of sustainability.» *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, Vol 16 No. 4, pp. 407-423. Holweg K.S. (2011). *Developing a Framework for Assessing Environmental Literacy*, North American Association for Environmental Education, Washington, D.C. Hsu S.J. (1998). «An assessment of environmental literacy and analysis of predictors of responsible environmental behavior held by secondary teachers in the Hualien area of Environmental Literacy in Environmentally Themed Higher Education Courses.
- 2 Rivers W. *Speaking in many tongues: Essays in foreign language teaching* (2nd edition). Rowley, MA: Newbury House. 1976. P. 96.
- 3 Nkwetisama C.M.. *EFL/ESL and Environmental Education: Towards an Eco-Applied Linguistic Awareness in Cameroon* www.sciedu.ca/wje *World Journal of Education*. Vol. 1. No. 1. April 2011.
- 4 Kohan N., Pourkalhor O. *Teaching Reading Comprehension through Short Stories in Advanced Classes*. *Asian Journal of Social and Humanities*. 2013. No 2(2). Pp. 52-60.
- 5 Gersie A. *Earthtales: Storytelling in Times of Change*, Green Print, London. 1992. P. 1
- 6 Fountas I. C., Pinnell G. S. *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 1996.
- 7 Krieger D. *Teaching ESL Versus EFL, Principle and Practices*, Forum, 2005. Vol. 43, No 2.
- 8 Owen D. *Where is the treason in translation? Humanising Language Teaching*. 5(1). <http://www.hlomag.co.uk/jan03/mart1.htm>. 2003.
- 9 Litvinov S. *Translation: Is it a Science or an Art?* Article source: <http://EzineArticles.com/5970088>.
- 10 Reulier O. *The Art of Translation*. <http://www.creativeprocess.info/new-blog-1/2016/6/12/the-art-of-translation-by-olivia-reulier>.
- 11 Muldagaliyeva A., Okusheva G. *Story reading as an effective tool of developing English language fluency*. – *Central Asian Sciences and Humanities*. 2017. Vol. 1, No. 1-2. Pp. 79-83.