

THE NECESSITY OF PRACTICING COLLOCATIONS THROUGH THE ACTIVITY GIFT GIVING AT UNIVERSITY

«БЕЛЕК ТАРТУЛОО» КӨНҮГҮҮСҮ АРКЫЛУУ, УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ИЧИНДЕ СӨЗ АЙКАШТАРЫН ИШ ЖҮЗҮНДӨ ПАЙДАЛАНУУ ЗАРЫЛЧЫЛЫГЫ

НЕОБХОДИМОСТЬ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ НА ПРАКТИКЕ СЛОВСОЧЕТАНИЙ В УНИВЕРСИТЕТЕ ПРИ ПОМОЩИ УПРАЖНЕНИЯ «ДАРЕНИЕ ПОДАРКОВ»

Abstract: The article suggests a new approach to teaching collocations through the process of gift giving. It reports on an action research study that was conducted with the aim of understanding the role of positive emotions, giving gifts, and collocations in class. This article gives a description of the main activity of the course, namely Gift Giving. In this regard, it provides an illuminating discussion of how the activity could improve students' speaking and writing skills. The action research study aims at investigating how students could prepare discussion questions based on students' presentations, write creative paragraphs, and exchange memorable gifts. This article was written in an attempt to illuminate the idea that positive emotions during students' presentations lead to their active learning of collocation.

Key words: collocations, gift giving, different contexts, creative paragraphs, formulating and asking questions, presentations, an exchange of ideas, photos, communication, positive emotions.

Аннотациясы: Берилген макалада сөз айкаштарын белектердин жардамы менен өтүүгө дайындалган жаңы ыкма сунушталат. Бул макала англис тил сабагындагы сөз айкаштардын, жагымдуу эмоциялардын жана белектердин ролу жөнүндө өткөрүлгөн эксперименталдуу изилдөөнү сүрөттөйт. Макалада семестрдин башкы көнүгүүсү сүрөттөлөт, тактап айтканда "Белек берүү". Ошол эле учурда, макалада бул көнүгүү студенттердин жазуу жана сүйлөө жөндөмдөрүн кандай жол менен жакшыртууга жардам берээри жөнүндө толук баяндама берилген. Эксперименталдуу изилдөө студенттердин презентациясына ылайыкталган талкуулоо үчүн суроо берүүлөрүн, чыгармачыл абзац жазуусун жана эсте калуучу белектер менен алмашуусун максат коёт. Макала презентация учурундагы студенттердин жагымдуу эмоциялары сөз айкаштарын эффективдүү окууга алып келерине кызыктыруу үчүн жазылган.

Түйүндүү сөздөр: сөз айкаштары, белек берүү, түрдүү контекст, чыгармачыл абзац, суроо түзүү жана суроо берүү, презентациялар, пикирлер менен алмашуу, сүрөттөр, сүйлөшүү, жагымдуу эмоциялар.

Аннотация: Данная статья предлагает новый подход к преподаванию словосочетаний при помощи подарков. Статья описывает экспериментальное исследование, которое было проведено с целью понимания роли позитивных эмоций, подарков, а также словосочетаний на уроках английского языка. В статье дается описание главного упражнения в обучении, а именно Дарение Подарков. При этом статья дает детальное описание того, как данное упражнение может помочь студентам развивать их навыки письма и говорения. Экспериментальное исследование ставит перед собой цель изучить то, как студенты могут готовить во-

просы для дискуссий, которые основаны на презентациях студентов, а также как можно написать креативный параграф и обменяться памятными подарками. Статья была написана с целью привлечения внимания к тому, что позитивные эмоции студентов во время презентаций приводят к результатам эффективно-го изучения словосочетаний.

Ключевые слова: словосочетания, дарение подарков, различный контекст, креативные абзацы, задавать и формировать вопросы, презентации, обмен идеями, фотографии, общение, позитивные эмоции.

Introduction

This article focuses mainly on the action research study with regard to teaching collocations through the activity Gift Giving, which was created by the author of this article. The action research draws particular attention to the importance of giving the class a strong sense of direction in selecting and using appropriate collocations. Another essential characteristic of the study is to investigate the essence of ongoing guidance and support during the classroom procedures. In light of this, the study aims at exploring the benefits that the activity Gift Giving offers to learners so that they could have a positive self-image. Furthermore, the article presents effective techniques for generating learners' interest in each other's stories through well-selected strategies of the activity. A vital element of the action research is to arouse educators' curiosity so that they could incorporate the activity into their teaching. Fundamentally, the principal goal of the action research is to provide an illuminating discussion on the following research question: How can the activity Gift Giving create a supportive classroom environment so that university students could practice collocations in speaking and writing?

Literature Review

Essentially, the activity Gift Giving was created with a specific focus, namely to practice collocations in writing and speaking. Learners have multiple opportunities to develop these two skills during one class. Since students have ten minutes to write a paragraph with collocations and ten minutes to answer questions with collocations after a speaker's presentation, they develop the ability of selecting and using collocations in fundamentally different situations. In other words, students learn how to manage their time and how to control the quality of collocations when they speak and write. In this light, Hedge (2005) considered that "Students need time in the classroom for writing. The teacher's task is to select or design activities which support them through the process of producing a piece of writing" (p.13).

Another significant element of the activity Gift Giving is that it highlights students' personal values and life experiences. Learners share their knowledge of gift giving with each other through writing and speaking. Not only do students have an opportunity to speak about their old and recent gifts, but they also discover new reasons for receiving dream gifts. Students' ten-minute paragraphs have thought-provoking ideas. They give speakers considerable incentives for taking their dream gifts seriously. Therefore, learners find a way to consider their dream gifts as realistic and achievable items. In this regard, Gebhardt and Rodrigues (1989) maintained that "Writing about your life, your ideas, and your experiences can help build your self-awareness and increase your personal insights" (p.162).

Asking questions with collocations, which are based on a speaker's presentation, leads to a greater understanding of the speaker's attempts for selecting two particular gifts. Therefore, it is important to stress the importance of training learners to formulate questions. Students have an active role as learners when they ask questions and this definitely facilitates high levels of efficiency. Dobson (1992) asserted "...if he [student] merely answers a question, the subject of conversation has already been predetermined, whereas when he is the one to ask the question, he takes the initiative and establishes the subject of conversation (p.25).

The value of written works, which are produced inside and outside the English classroom, tends to be low when they do not have a personal touch. White (1998) claimed "Term papers and student essays in general, are among the least valuable products in a world of waste paper; only a tiny percentage of them are saved, and only a miniscule percentage are published" (p.83). In this context, a personal focus plays a major role in the activity Gift Giving. Students' paragraphs can be successfully used for the purpose of creating a considerable connection to speakers' lives. Therefore, these paragraphs become even more precious to them, because they contain thoughts that are meaningful to them. There is little likelihood that learners will dispose of those paragraphs in the nearest future. In other words, the paragraphs give students good reasons to reread them from time to time and relive positive emotions again.

Furthermore, the activity Gift Giving fulfills a necessary role at English classes, namely it gives students a particular type of audience and important reasons with regard to practicing language skills. In other words, a combination of giving gifts and learning English is a vehicle for creating profitable learning situations. Every student has two principal roles over the course of the activity. More specifically, students have an opportunity to perform in front of the audience and be a valued member of the audience. When students perform, they connect their current knowledge of the world to a new classroom experience. They have a higher chance of gaining authentic insights into speaking about their life stories and practicing English. This experience makes a positive impact on their sense of achievement, because even a familiar audience gives fundamentally different emotions during presentations. In this regard, Axelrod and Cooper (1991) maintained "We obviously are not exactly the same in every situation, and don't necessarily want others to respond to us in the same way all the time" (p.17).

Methodology

The participants of the action research were seventeen students of the fourth course and seventeen students of the second course. As for the age of the participants, there were thirty four learners aged between eighteen and

twenty two. Both groups of students studied EFL at Bishkek State University named after K.Karasaev. The participants of the action research, who were pre-service teachers, were informed about their participation in the action research. With regard to data collection and analysis, it covered a period of two years. Initially, the activity was implemented with the fourth course students from September 2017 till April 2018. After that, the second year students had an opportunity to experience the activity from September 2018 till April 2019. Since the activity takes the whole class, which is one hour and twenty minutes, every learner had a chance to perform. Each student was able to participate in the activity over the course of two years. Each participant answered a questionnaire, which consisted of sixteen open-ended questions. Students could take questionnaires home and bring them back one week after their presentations. Additionally, five students of the second course submitted their favourite paragraphs, which they had received from their groupmates. Their assignment was to write a short description of why they found those paragraphs appealing. The groupmates' paragraphs together with the students' comments were also collected one week after the learners' presentations. Finally, photographs from students' presentations and teacher's notes related to the activity were essential elements of the action research data.

Findings and discussion

The activity Gift Giving encourages students to be creative when they choose gifts for their groupmates. Such thoughtful and personal presents allow students to have new perspectives on the process of giving and receiving gifts. Here is the list of some of students' presents for each other: a group photo in a picture frame, a notebook, a lip liner pencil, a photo album with some memorable photos, a handmade bracelet, a keychain, socks, chupa chups lollipops, a bar of chocolate, a pink balloon, a hand towel, a bookmark, a colourful candle, a handmade envelop with an inspirational quote, a fridge magnet.

The following students' comments from the questionnaire indicate that they had specific purposes for presenting their original gifts:

1) Student's gift: a highlighter: "We use highlighters every time when we highlight collocations. We have been practicing collocations for almost two years and I cannot imagine learning English without highlighters."

2) Student's gift: a creative handmade card with an inspirational quote: "I was thrilled at the prospect of making the card and finding quotes that would describe me or my dreams."

3) Student's gift: a hand cream: "I think that a hand cream could give positive emotions to my groupmates and it could be useful for them."

4) Student's gift: A handmade card with the name of my groupmates. "I found out that every person's name has a deep and interesting meaning. I wanted to remind my groupmates that they have great names."

Students displayed a strong interest in each other's lives and at the same time they made interesting discoveries about their values and beliefs. Students used their imagination and came up with the gift ideas that were connected to their values and beliefs. By presenting gifts to each other, students derived a wide range of personal benefits. In addition to receiving a physical element of

memory of the class in the form of the present, students developed their language skills and creative thinking. Furthermore, their gifts acted as an encouragement to transform usual objects into valued possessions.

Another positive advantage of the activity Gift Giving is that it gives students a sense of self-encouragement. This guiding force adds enthusiasm into the learning process and helps students to maintain a strong interest in learning English. One of the learners maintained: "The fact that we talk about personal things makes the speaker more interested and engaged in the process." This comment illustrates the point that a personal focus of the activity has a positive influence on learners' emotional state. In other words, students become aware of the significance of a personal involvement into the activity and their engagement increases.

With regard to a significant benefit of the activity Gift Giving, it is important to note that the process of experiencing positive emotions continues even when students are not in a classroom. Students find the ideas of sharing the details of the activity with their friends or relatives worthwhile and effective. Some of the students use social networking websites; for example, Instagram in order to share some of the photos from their presentations. This way they create an interesting content on their pages and disseminate information about the activity that they find truly original. The following comments give an idea of what students experience when they share information about the activity with their close people: Student 1: "Some of my followers on Instagram asked me questions about this activity. They have never heard about it before. Several of the followers were upset, because they did not have a chance to go through such emotions." Student 2: "I told my mom [about the activity], because she was curious where I got the bracelet from. Student 3: "Even if I did not tell anybody about this activity, my roommates wondered why I was so happy." Student 4: "I have told about this activity to my mother, because she teaches English too. She can use this activity with her students." Learners acknowledge the importance of encouraging each other to learn English through experiencing positive feelings. The above mentioned comments explained how students' positive emotions and gifts have a strong influence on their close people. Receiving presents over the course of one semester and showing them to close people engages students into a lively and unusual learning experience.

Students have a strong background in practicing collocations in writing and speaking; however, anxiety during a ten-minute presentation causes a major concern for them. At the same time, such extreme situations help students to discover their strengths. For example, the following comment of one of the students demonstrates that in spite of not using new collocations from the notes, she was successfully looking for the old collocations in order to express her thoughts. In other words, that was the speaker's personal triumph: "When I was under a lot of stress at the beginning of my presentation, I forgot all collocations, which I wanted to use, but I used our old collocations automatically and I did not notice them. It was a really interesting experience." That classroom engagement illustrates significant features of a successful manipulation of collocations that led to genuine communication. More specifically, the student managed to deliver

a speech despite the fact that she was nervous to speak in front of her groupmates. Traditionally, students tend to use those vocabulary items that give them a sense of security. However, that classroom situation demonstrated that the speaker was able to use vocabulary items that she had been practicing over the course of two years.

Furthermore, the speaker abandoned her original plan to use collocations from the notes and she was able to use other unplanned collocations effortlessly. The key factor here is that the student was unaware that she was using those spontaneous collocations successfully. Under no circumstances should we consider the fact that the student did not use collocations from the notes as an indication of failure. On the contrary, this learning process proves the fact that the student was able to use previously learnt collocations skillfully.

This insightful experience indicates that the student had the necessary level of training in order to form her opinion with the help of vocabulary that she had been practicing over the course of two years at university. She paid more attention to collocations of the course rather than to her vocabulary repertoire that she had had before starting the experience of practicing collocations. Another student's experience showed the following outcome with regard to the implementation of collocations in speech: "It was not difficult for me to use collocations, because I think that we have trained them and got used to them." Both students had the opportunity to construct sentences with previously learnt collocations. This established in speakers a belief in the ability to use collocations spontaneously and to be engaged in a genuine communicative setting. Moreover, it suggests the fact that speakers can use collocations that they had been using regularly for two years in a wide range of situations. Students' ability to use collocations on the spot improves the quality of the students' vocabulary and it develops an increased level of motivation to keep using collocations in speech.

Furthermore, the activity Gift Giving deals with taking photos. There are three main categories of the photos, namely the photos from speakers' presentations, the photos of speakers' gifts, and a group photo at the end of the class. Here is an illuminating detail of one of the students' comments with regard to taking photos: "You can use these photos in your future documentary movie about you. It is a pity I do not have so many photos from my school years." This student's viewpoint confirms the fact that this part of the activity has relevance and importance to students' lives even when they graduate from university.

The process of speaking in front of a group of people entails a variety of benefits for speakers. The activity Gift Giving creates new opportunities for students to engage productively in a communicative environment. Specifically, students' academic attainment is improved through their active participation in the question-and-answer session. In this context, the time factor is significant since there are only ten minutes to ask the speaker questions with collocations. In other words, communication tends to improve its interactive quality when students ask and answer questions with new collocations. Additionally, students can ask questions with those collocations that they have been continually practicing throughout two years. In fact, students gain an entirely new perspective

on the ways familiar collocations function in fundamentally different contexts. Going beyond basic vocabulary in the question-and-answer session encourages students to maintain an active interchange of thoughts in class. One of the most compelling features of this step of the activity is that students come up with answers on the spot. In light of this, an important part of the questionnaire data deals with the next student's comment: "This activity prepares us for a great interview on TV or for some local newspapers and I love that moment when my groupmates ask questions. I feel that I am the main hero. It prepares me for the biggest interviews in my life. I love it. I never experienced it when I was at school." Fundamentally, the learner finds the activity Gift Giving beneficial in order to maintain a sense of dialogue during the question-and-answer session. Responding to groupmates' questions exposes the speaker to a nonthreatening environment that enhances her self-esteem. Moreover, the student approaches the question-and-answer session seriously since it is an excellent engagement into answering questions that come from several groupmates. In essence, this step of the activity proves to be a helpful speaking experience that trains students to improve interview skills.

It is undoubtedly true that the more students make interesting and effective presentations, the more confident they become. Gift Giving is the second serious activity in students' experience that puts a lot of emphasis on developing their presentation skills. One of the students maintains that: "This presentation was easier for me to do, because I already had some experience with my previous presentation [the activity A Self-Portrait Gallery]. This time was easier for me emotionally. I knew what to do and I knew people for whom I made the presentation." Furthermore, it is essential to draw attention to the fact that students experience fundamentally different feelings before and after the activity. The following student's comments are considered to be a particular thought-provoking piece of data: [before the presentation] "I stayed up late preparing my speech. So, I felt a bit sleepy and tired. I was afraid of my mistakes. [after the presentation] That was amazing. It was easy and I felt calm. I received a lot of support and love. So, I wish I could perform again." A supportive classroom atmosphere gave this particular student a sense of enthusiasm for presenting again. In this context, it reinforces the idea that the activity Gift Giving invites students to maintain a climate of trust among each other.

Students' questions and paragraphs contain strong messages that create new perspectives on the speaker's dream present. This form of interaction is a crucial element of the activity, because it contributes directly to the realization of students' dreams. One of the students discussed her plans after the presentation: "I learned many new ideas why I need exactly this dream present and I will keep them for my future use." In this context, the class helped the speaker to bring more focus to the dream gift and to extend the speaker's understanding of the ways in which the fulfillment of the dream gift might be more effective.

The activity Gift Giving creates efficient conditions for students to actively seek new opportunities of using collocations. This helps them to continue exploring the essence of collocations in different context. In other words,

these insights remain the focus of students' presentations. Since the activity puts a lot of emphasis on training students to use collocations, they become empowered to formulate their ideas effectively. The following students' viewpoints can help us to understand the process of using collocations during the activity Gift Giving:

Student 1: "It was not difficult for me to use collocations, because I think that we had enough training and we got used to them. Moreover, collocations help us to express thoughts more clearly." Student 2: "Even though I had prepared a list of collocations that I was going to use in my speech, I was able to use more than those seven collocations on the spot." Student 3: "The activity teaches you how to express your ideas. You learn how to give answers quickly, because you do not have enough time to think over your reply. It differs from writing, because when we write a paragraph, we spend a lot of time thinking about every word." In this context, the activity Gift Giving creates a space, where students feel comfortable with developing their own thoughts and students share their thinking without special efforts. This engaged form of learning collocations is relevant to students' lives and leads them to use collocations in authentic ways. More specifically, collocations create a particular learning pathway that encourages students to have a new understanding of familiar collocations.

The next significant part of the action research data suggests an introduction to students' active involvement in completing a homework task. More specifically, at the end of each student's presentation he/she receives a set of cards with paragraphs that are related to dream gifts. The task is to choose one most appealing paragraph and write a brief description for his/her choice. The following paragraphs belong to five students of the second course:

An important piece of information

The speaker's dream gift is a car. A piece of data from the classroom paragraph that was produced by one of the students: "I think that you are tired of waiting for a trolleybus and you do not ride minibuses." Student one liked that particular statement and offered the following explanation: "Once I told her that I do not use minibuses. It was a long time ago and I even forgot what I said. I was very surprised that she remembered such an insignificant detail." This item of data illustrates a remarkable point, namely students demonstrate their ability to remember minor life details over a long period of time. Fundamentally, acquiring information about each other and using it at English classes is considered to be a high level of interaction.

A surprising turn of events

An iPhone is the speaker's dream present. An important piece of information from one of the students' paragraphs: "You want to get an iPhone, because you want to develop your creative skills: dancing, taking photos, painting. I have got a lot of respect for you." Student two was surprised by the above mentioned insights and provided the following reasons for her viewpoint: "I chose this paragraph, because she assessed my skills and talents. I did not expect it from her, because I thought that she always underestimated me, but I was wrong. Her thoughts make me happy." In this sense, some students might have a wrong idea of what their groupmates think about them. When they discover that their talents are recognized, they

begin to be less critical of each other and this acts as an ideal vehicle for stronger relationships in a class.

Common interests

The speaker's dream present is a book. A detail from the classroom paragraph that belongs to one of the students: "If I were you, I would choose this present too." Student three considered the above mentioned viewpoint significant: "We have common interests. In my point of view, this is the main aim of this activity: to get to know more about each other and build relationships with groupmates and a teacher." In essence, students develop the ability to pay particular attention to details from one another's lives. This becomes even a more enjoyable process when they find things that unite them. Noticing such connections reinforces students' desire to appreciate the usefulness of the activity Gift Giving.

Pleasant associations

A beach house is the next student's gift. The following student's statements from the classroom paragraph are considered to be essential for the action research: "I associate you with the ocean. You can be as quite as it is and your emotions might be like a storm in gloomy weather." Student four found the above mentioned opinion extremely appealing: "I experienced unusual emotions when I read the association of my character with the ocean. It was amazing." Not only are the authors of these two viewpoints groupmates, but they are also good friends. As human beings, they experience a wide range of emotions. In light of this, the activity Gift Giving invites them to share their knowledge of each other with us.

A considerable incentive

The speaker's dream present is a globe. Here is a piece of information by one of the students that is worth analyzing: "You proved that you are a truly magnificent person with a big heart and a unique inner world. I can say with total confidence that you will achieve everything, at least, you deserve it." Student five was inspired by the above stated detail and provided the following explanation for her positive approach to the paragraph: "I am very happy that she thinks I can achieve my goals. She can motivate and support me. Her opinion plays an important role in my life." This particular feedback suggests that the student was elated by the thought that there is someone around her, who is committed to encouraging her. The student received a certain level of motivation to strive for success in reaching her goals.

Conclusion

The activity Gift Giving is a wonderful vehicle for focusing teachers' attention on training university students to use collocations in writing and speaking. Students are exposed to effective learning conditions that encourage them to deepen their understanding of collocations. They are motivated to use those insights when they encounter a diverse range of views at classes. Every step of the activity enables learners to link their ideas to their groupmates' thoughts and this creates an illuminating experience, which facilitates an exceptional team spirit.

The activity places an increased emphasis on enhancing students' genuine interest in learning collocations and their enthusiasm to deliver effective presentations. This combination of skills creates incentives for learners to strive towards successful results in producing collocations. At the same time, students continue to maintain a

considerable interest in learning more about one another. On the whole, the activity Gift Giving reminds students that their opinion either in a written or oral form is of particular significance. Exchanging crucial ideas, asking and answering fundamental questions, and leading useful discussions allows students to have a considerable amount of engagement with English in an EFL context. In this regard, the activity Gift Giving acknowledges the value of creative teaching. It promotes active learning and students become empowered when they consider alternative perspectives and feel comfortable to explore a wide range of new ideas.

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