

METHODS USED IN TEACHING THE VERB IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Mihaela Badea

Assoc. Prof., PhD, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești

Abstract: In the study of language in the primary education system, there are two stages that follow each other, but also go in parallel. In the first stage, pupils operate with grammatical notions without naming and without defining them (grades 0-2), while in the second stage they acquire language skills by means of rules and definitions (grades 3-4). Through the systematic application of interactive methods and techniques in Romanian language and literature one can notice improvement in the development of pupils' oral and written communication skills as well as development of vocabulary. The purpose of the paper is to show the advantages of using methods and techniques of stimulating creativity in teaching the verb to 3rd and 4th graders.

Keywords: method, teaching, games, primary education, Romanian language

Introduction

The Romanian Language and Literature subject plays an important role in the primary school students' personality, helping them to develop skills and abilities necessary to ensure their post-school access to lifelong learning and active integration into a knowledge-based society. As a mother tongue, Romanian language is spontaneously learned from the first years of life, in the social cohabitation, in the relations between children and adults, practice being the initial basis of language learning.

As a subject of study in the primary cycle, Romanian language has a special importance in the students' development, ensuring their intellectual evolution, their proper training in other subjects and their integration into the social life. The general functions and objectives of the primary cycle are largely achieved by this subject, which is attributed approximately one third of the total number of hours taught during a week. An essential contribution in improving each student's language is brought about by the study of verb as a part of speech.

The study of the Romanian language grammar in grades 0 – IV follows the scientific substantiation of the students' correct way of expressing themselves. Language is the main means of communication between the members of a collectivity and it is made up of the grammar and lexical system. Grammar is an ensemble of rules that determine the change of the form of words, their juxtaposition into simple sentences, and simple sentences into complex ones. From this perspective, there are two kinds of rules that represent the two constituent parts of grammar: morphology and syntax. Morphology includes the rules regarding the form of words and the formal changes of the words studied as parts of speech, while syntax includes rules regarding the combination of words in sentences and rules regarding the combination of simple sentences in complex ones.

The study of grammar has as a fundamental goal the cultivation of language, by language understanding the process of expressing ideas and feelings through. In this respect, it should be understood that, although it is an abstract subject, it has a pronounced practical character. All oral or written activities provide an opportunity for controlling and enriching orthographic,

orthopedic, grammatical and lexical knowledge and the study of the Romanian language is an important factor in the intellectual formation and development of the primary school pupils.

Theoretical Background

Ignorance of grammar rules can lead to serious oral and written errors that will harm students in the future. Without a correct and consistent expression, students will not be able to present their knowledge clearly, fluently and pleasantly. It would be great if at the end of the second grades, all the students were able to express their ideas and opinions in an aesthetic manner. The key to success must be looked for and found here on the fertile ground that belongs to these little schoolchildren and if in the 3rd and 4th grades primary school teachers pay enough attention to the improvement of the automatisms required by the correct writing, surely at the end of the primary cycle the issue of writing and correct reading is fully solved.

The verb, along with the noun, is a basic grammatical notion. The primary school curriculum indicates that the verb definition should be provided to students in the 3rd grade (definition, recognition, number and person) and in the 4th grade this is completed with tense of the verb. The new tendencies of modern didactics focus their attention on the subject of education, the learner, and not on the teacher, because teaching is not an end in itself, but it focuses on the formative changes in the children's personality.

The formation of grammatical categories indicated by the Romanian language curriculum may start from highlighting the actions that can be updated - inductively, deductively and dialectically - and from the series of stages that lead to the formation of grammatical notions:

1. The stage of conscious acquaintance with the grammatical phenomenon; the activity consists in the *intuition of the grammatical phenomenon* through a series of concrete examples, which lead to the shaping of *grammatical representations*;

2. The stage of analysis and distinction of the grammatical plan from the logical one; through heuristic conversation and analysis the activity aims to allow students "*to attribute a grammatical value not to the object signaled by a word, but to the word itself*";

3. The stage of learning rules and definitions; activities aim at comparison, classification, generalization and synthesis and are meant to lead to the acquisition of rules and definitions;

4. The stage of consolidation and superior operation with acquired language concepts; activities aim at applying knowledge in exercises, classroom activities or homework. (Goia, 2002, pp. 38-39).

The subject in which students systematically learn a set of elementary rules about the forms of words and how to combine them into sentences is grammar. By studying grammar, students understand the logic of their language, its richness and they learn to use correctly and consciously a proper vocabulary and correct expressions both in speech and writing, By studying grammar, students are able to better understand the thoughts of others and to use language as a means of communication and of acquiring new knowledge

In the study of the language in the primary cycle, there are two stages that follow, but go in parallel. In the first stage, pupils operate with grammatical notions without naming and defining them (preparatory, 1st and 2nd grades). At this stage, students are familiar with simple language patterns, which they use in communication, reading and writing.

In the second stage, students acquire language skills by means of rules and definitions. For this purpose, the linguistic experience acquired in the first stage mentioned above is essential as it represents the basis for learning rules and definitions.

An essential feature of acquiring language concepts is the revision, at a higher level, of what has been learned before, whether this was done through oral-practice or grammar rules and definitions. This system of knowledge sharing and learning of grammar is considered to be a concentric one. According to this system, students acquire grammatical notions and develop their ability to express themselves correctly orally and in writing, gradually adding new elements of language to what they know. This means selecting the methods and procedures, the teaching material and the means to achieve the established objectives.

The National Curriculum for Primary Education promotes a new vision on the acquisition of Romanian language and literature by pupils in primary school. The model of organizing and developing the new vision of the teaching process in the learning of Romanian language and literature is communicative-functional. The whole approach is part of the curricular reform, which centers the didactic process on the concept of curriculum. Broadly speaking, curriculum designates “all the educational processes and learning experiences the pupil goes through during his / her schooling”, and in a narrow sense, a “set of those regulatory school documents, in which the essential data regarding the educational processes and learning experiences are recorded” according to Ionescu (1998), Ungureanu (1999), Cucuș (1998), Cristea (2000), and Dumitru (2001).

The process of studying Romanian language and literature is built on communication, a fundamental human dimension, which finds the widest space of development in the subject that is dealt with by the present paper and has the purpose of developing communicative and cultural competences.

Among the components of the communicative competence (verbal, cognitive, encyclopedic, ideological, literary, socio-emotional etc.), the verbal component, considered representative, is realized as follows: the *linguistic* dimension (knowledge and use of all phonetic, lexical, morphological and syntactic aspects) is aimed at by the *language* field, or *elements for constructing communication patterns*, and the *textual and discursive dimensions* (knowledge and use of rules to organize a text or those rules that determine the use of language in the context of “written communication” and “oral communication”. The literary component of the communicative competence is mainly achieved through the study of literature. (Pamfil, 2003, pp. 6-22).

The elements for constructing communication patterns, as called by the new curriculum, are the contents of learning for this field and they belong to different compartment of the language: phonetics, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, language history etc. Special mentioned should be made of the fact that great importance is given at present to the study of syntax and vocabulary, which are revised and enriched according to the concentric principle of the grammatical notions. Acquiring and valuing language elements contribute to the formation and development of students’ linguistic competence in order to be able to use language correctly and effectively in different communication situations.

In order to understand and grasp the grammatical notions (phonetics, vocabulary, morphology etc.) the student has to perform certain thinking processes such as analysis, comparison and generalization. Because grammar knowledge “are abstractions that generate other abstractions”, the learning of the Romanian grammar is done through “the permanent activation of the pupils’ abstraction power” (Radu, 1991, pp. 171-177).

This process begins in the early years of school when language becomes a subject of study. When starting school, the child masters the basics of the mother tongue; grammatical

speech precedes the conscious acquisition of grammatical notions and definitions. (Goia, Drăgotoiu, 1995).

The acquisition of grammatical notions implies their procedural learning, respecting the concentric principle of studying the Romanian language: according to this principle, each learning sequence begins with the updating, systematization and deepening of the previous knowledge.

There are three stages in the grammar acquisition process, depending on the pupils' age:

1. The stage of language preparation (in which students become familiar with language notions) corresponds to the least year spent in kindergarten, preparatory, 1st and 2nd grades. At this stage the grammatical notions (word, sentence, syllable, sound etc.) are guessed, they are not defined and language models are practiced intuitively, and orthopedic and orthographic norms are introduced.

2. The stage of the first notions of language (corresponding to the 3rd and 4th grades) is the period in which the grammatical notions are introduced and defined: noun, adjective, pronoun, numeral and verb, subject, predicate, attribute and complement, linking word, simple sentence, complex sentence; also, some explanations regarding some words written with a hyphen are provided to the students.

3. The stage of organized study of the language system (grades 5 to 8). During this stage, fundamental notions of phonetics and vocabulary are taught and learned; the grammatical notions are completed (according to the concentric principle) so that, at the end of the 8th grade, they are completely taught in a functional manner. In high school, grammatical notions are used in communication lessons. (Goia, Drăgotoiu, 1995)

Practical recommendations

Starting from the idea that the concrete, intuitive material from which to begin learning a grammatical notion are the word and the text (and not illustrative images, objects) that guide the child towards the right thinking, it can be stated that the grammatical notions represent abstractions of other abstractions. It is precisely from these particularities of the grammatical notions that there are inherent difficulties related to the process of their acquisition by the young learners. Thus, the use of interactive methods in teaching grammar can be of real help for both the teacher and the pupils.

The lapbook method

An interactive method of working with students to help them synthesize what they have studied both in Romanian language and literature as well as in visual arts and practical skills is the development of a lapbook, as it represents a funny way to apply the theoretical aspects related to the verb. This method also develops pupils' creativity and critical thinking skills. They can create "mini-books" that include the knowledge they master in a period of study in order to present what they learn. The materials used in order to create a lapbook are: colored paper for the mini-books, post-it, scissors, glue and crayons. The lapbooks are effective learning tools that incorporate educational activities that can accompany any lesson. Original, different and distinctive creations can be created by the pupils who can personalize their creations

During the teaching of the verb, the instructors may also use various types of games that young learners definitely enjoy. Such activities may include: games for stimulating creativity, games for stimulating fluency, games for stimulating originality, games for stimulating the synthesis capacity and games for improving and enriching vocabulary. Some examples of such activities are provided below:

About the words

Four groups of students are formed. Each group writes on one note: a noun, a verb, an adjective, a numeral and a pronoun. The notes are exchanged. The group must build a sentence containing the words written by the other group as soon as possible. The winners are those who finish first.

Say it in a different manner (vocabulary development)

The teacher brings a basket containing 40 pieces of paper on which four words are written. Each student takes a piece of paper and needs to find other verbs for the words on the paper as soon as possible. The winners are those who finish first.

What or how shall I do?

The game is used to make the correct agreement between the subject and the predicate. Based on charts, on which subjects and predicates are written, students should formulate sentences by choosing the appropriate predicate for each subject. (<http://www.rasfoiesc.com/educatie/didactica/JOCURI-DIDACTICE-SI-EXERCITII-84.php>)

Conclusions

Through the systematic application of interactive methods and techniques in Romanian language and literature lessons teachers will notice improvements in the development of pupils' oral and written communicative skills, activation and consolidation of vocabulary, as well as improvement in the teacher-student relation, which becomes a modern and democratic one, students enjoying freedom, communication based on cooperation, collaboration and mutual help.

Also, the pupils' initiative is encouraged, they can ask questions, without being afraid of making mistakes and they can understand the effectiveness of such methods and the steps to be taken to achieve them. By using methods and techniques meant to stimulate creativity, both individually, frontally and in groups, the following benefits can be observed:

- ✓ students acquire new knowledge more easily;
- ✓ students' confidence increases and they can decode and understand content, both on their own and in groups;
- ✓ students definitely want to be involved in the learning process and do not show signs of fatigue because they are consciously, willingly, actively and logically involved;
- ✓ students make real progress in their learning, showing creative imagination, originality, fluency, flexibility in expressing their ideas and opinions;
- ✓ using teaching-learning strategies by combining traditional methods with modern methods ensures increased learning efficiency;
- ✓ teamwork has beneficial effects, both in terms of learning and psychosocial climate in the classroom;
- ✓ active and interactive learning leave a trace on the learning style of each student.

According to the educational reform, each teacher can contribute to the modernization of the learning process by applying the best teaching strategies in the classroom. "Instead of promoting a theoretical, abstract learning, insufficiently connected to the child's communicative needs, the new curriculum aims at connecting the study of the Romanian language to the everyday communicative realities. The emphasis laid on memorizing, repeating and learning rules, concepts, etc. has moved towards procedural learning, structuring of personal strategies and procedures for solving problems, exploration and investigation, which are characteristic of the communicative activity" (Duțu, 2002, p. 14).

As a conclusion, it can be stated that three qualities are indispensable for the primary school teacher: love for the language, thorough knowledge of the language, pleasure and craftsmanship in teaching. The teacher has to give this pleasure to his pupils by his/her personal example, using a rich, precise language, using each word in the right place and at the same time uttering it very correctly as teaching and learning Romanian is a priority in all cycles or stages of education.

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