

The work "Harry Potter" by J.K Rowling

Гуйджова Гулджемал Дженбаргелдыевна

Student (bachelor)

Туркменский национальный институт мировых языков имени Довлетмаммета Азади,
Ашхабад, Туркменистан

E-mail: gujovaguljemat@gmail.com

Reading is, and has been, an integral part of teaching and learning foreign languages. From the 18th-century grammar-translation method, where students were required to read texts and books and to translate, to modern-day classrooms where students utilize special textbooks specifically created to teach languages, language acquisition does not go by without reading. Second language acquisition (SLA) through reading proves to be very effective.

For starters, reading materials, whether they be simple texts, educational articles, or interesting novels, offer you the chance to study two very important elements of a language simultaneously: grammar and vocabulary. In language acquisition, grammar and vocabulary go hand in hand. If we think of vocabulary, and each singular word in it, as the building blocks of our speech, then we can consider grammar as the paste holding them all together in one place. By offering you the chance to study the two at the same time, reading proves to be very beneficial for students as they sometimes may tend to focus on one while overlooking or neglecting the other. Thus, reading is a great way to ensure the balance between studying grammar and studying vocabulary.

Yet, not all reading materials may be effective and beneficial for SLA. It is important to provide students with reading materials that are relevant and cater to their interests. This happens to be the case with most textbook-based reading materials. Textbooks often focus on comprehensibility and integrating necessary grammar points and necessary vocabulary to maximize the student's language acquisition, and while it ought to be a very comprehensive and efficient method for learning a language, should the context of the text fail to cater to the student's interest, motivation will be lost, which may result in the student choosing not to engage with the material at all.

Literature, and literary works, on the other hand, can be much more powerful in keeping the students' interest, and thereby their motivation, intact while still offering all the benefits a textbook does. One particular and very well-known piece of literature, which can also act as a very efficient tool for SLA, is the worldwide famous Harry Potter book series by J.K. Rowling. This paper explores Harry Potter as a powerful pedagogical tool for SLA.

Firstly, why opt for literature? Collie and Slater argue four major factors for using literature in SLA: authentic material (literature provides texts closer to real life in which language is used in a more authentic manner in contrast to textbooks where texts may feel superficial), cultural enhancement (literature allows students to learn about the culture of their target language), language enhancement (students are exposed to the different ways grammar is used and to diverse vocabulary), and personal participation (stories or characters of a book can resonate with students personally, leading them to engage with the book more). [Collie, Slater: 3] Combined, these factors make literature a very useful tool for SLA.

Secondly, why Harry Potter? It is perhaps not very easy to find a person who hasn't read the Harry Potter series or at least watched the movies. It is a series we all know and love. That feeling of familiarity, combined with nostalgia, makes the experience of reading it pleasurable, even if it is in a foreign language we may not fully understand. Even for those who have not experienced the magic of this series yet, the book's engaging storyline and well-written

characters make it hard to put it down. So, the series' engaging nature ensures that students stay consistent with their reading and studying.

While motivation is a key factor in the effectiveness of the Harry Potter series for SLA, empirical evidence further supports its impact. McQuillan (McQuillan: 129) analyzed the efficiency of vocabulary acquisition by comparing the rate at which new words are acquired through reading versus direct instruction, measured in terms of words acquired per minute, and found that reading the Harry Potter series proves to be more effective than explicit vocabulary instruction, which shows the power of immersive reading in enhancing language acquisition.

In addition to vocabulary acquisition being more effective than explicit instruction, the Harry Potter series presents vocabulary in meaningful contexts, ensuring that newly acquired words are reinforced and easier to recall later on.

Furthermore, Harry Potter uses lots of slang and idiomatic expressions, even in its translated versions. By being exposed to such authentic variations of a language, students enable themselves to understand and use their target languages in a more native-like manner.

The audiobook version of Harry Potter can be used to improve students' listening skills while rendering their pronunciation more correct. Furthermore, audio versions of the books can be a fun alternative for students wishing to find an alternative to reading, while remaining just as effective.

Harry Potter has a large online community as well in which fans hold discussions, write fan fiction and analyze the books in different ways. By engaging in these online platforms, students get to practice their writing skills, take part in interesting discussions and in interactive learning outside of the traditional classroom.

In conclusion, while it may be regarded as simply a famous children's book, Harry Potter has lots of potential to be a highly effective pedagogical tool that instructors can benefit from. It ensures that students' newly acquired vocabulary is not just memorized but reinforced as it shows vocabulary in various, meaningful context. The engaging storyline also helps keep students' motivation intact. With its engaging reading experience, language immersion and cultural insight, Harry Potter remains to be an exceptionally effective pedagogical tool for SLA.

References

- 1) Collie, J., & Slater, S.. Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities. Cambridge, 1990
- 2) McQuillan, J. Harry Potter and the Prisoners of Vocabulary Instruction: Acquiring Academic Language at Hogwarts // Reading in a Foreign Language. 2020. Volume 32, No. 2. P. 122–142