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LIMERICK AS A USEFUL TEACHING TOOL

The word limerick firstly appeared in printed form in 1892. There are a lot of hypotheses concerning the origin of this word. Some researchers believe that in the 18 century Irish poets meeting in pubs wrote poems very similar to modern li-mericks. There is also a supposition that the word “limerick” has its origin not from the name of the Irish city as lots of people think but from Irish words “laoi meidbreach” or “a merry lay” that means “merry song”.

Edward Lir used the form of limericks in his poetry. It became very popular. Lir is the author of 212 limericks. Many poets and prose-writers are the authors of limericks. Their names are Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, John Galsworthy, Mark Twain, Arnold Bennett. But a lot of limericks are anonymous. Why are they so popular? We can remember them thanks to their simplicity, elegance, ease of sonority and characteristic marked rhythm. The use of neologisms is the most favorite method of the authors. This verse form which appeared 150 years ago and was revived by Lir got further development nowadays. New limericks continue Lir’s best traditions. Limericks are written for people of all ages and people of all ages and professions write them.

Limericks are not only the models of English “absurd” humour but they demonstrate excellent material for producing correct phonetics and in particular the strongly marked rhythm.

From my own experience, I must admit that limericks help a lot during the lessons in practical phonetics. The students learn them by heart, they are proposed to sing or play them. They are very useful in training such sounds as [θ], [ð]. For example:

Thomas thinks of terrible things,
And to the troubled teacher brings
Things that sing and things that sting,
Things which swing and things which cling,
Things that ping and ring and fling.

Limerick is one of the most effective ways to expand students’ vocabulary. The structure of this verse form is easy to be learnt.

A dinner while dining at Crew
Found a rather large mouse in his stew.
Said to the waiter, “Don’t shout”,
And wave it about,
Or the rest will be wanting one, too”.
There was a young lady of Venice,
Who used hard-boiled eggs to play tennis.
When they said, “It seems wrong”.

There was a young lady of Lynn,
Who was so uncommonly thin
That when she essayed
To drink lemonade,
She slipped through the straw and fell in.

The use of limericks to improve lexical material is possible both at the stage of introduction and practice.

At the stage of introduction a teacher presents prepared limerick which contains lexical and speech samples obligatory for learning. Originally learners' attention is directed to the oral interpretation of a limerick and its intonation. It is pronounced to yourself, in a whisper and finally aloud.

Then you can use different voices with comic implication, gesticulation and face expressions, rhythmical changes. Such aggregate of methods of work contributes to easier, faster and more solid learning of language material.

A very interesting kind of work with limericks is their translation. They were translated and are translated into many languages. It can be illustrated by following examples:

There was a young lady of Niger,
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside
And the smile on the face of the tiger. (Cosmo Monkhouse)

It was translated by S.Marshak:

Улыбались три смелых девицы
На спине у бенгальской тигрицы.
Теперь же все три –
У тигрицы внутри,
А улыбка – на морде тигрицы.

As a beauty I'm not a great star,
There are others more handsome by far,
But my face, I don't mind it,
Because I'm behind it –
'Tis the folks in the front that I jar. (Antony Euwer)

Я красой не блистал никогда,
Я не роза, скорей лебеда.
Это мне не обидно –
Мне себя ведь не видно.

Вот для встречных так, правда, беда.

The students not only translate limericks but write them too. Some of them even add their funny pictures illustrating the humour of these verse forms.

In conclusion it is necessary to underline the idea that these short humorous masterpieces which constitute inseparable part of linguistic culture of many countries will be useful in learning English and especially its specific rhythm and stress.

Fanciful humour of the comic verse will be appreciated by everyone who loves sound laughter, the work of mind and imagination.

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