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# The Role of Active-Participative Methods in the Teaching and Learning of Morphology in Primary School

Cristina Loredana BLOJU<sup>1</sup>

## *Abstract*

*The changes both at the content level and also at the dynamics of teaching and learning concepts related to Romanian language activities involves also the improvement of the methods and learning processes seen as general ways of organizing the knowledge content, depending on the objectives, on the type of lesson, on the nature of the education and on the age of children. Once with the development of education, the methods also experienced improvements and revaluations, progress and diversification, by referring constantly to both teachers (what the teacher makes and how he proceeds, in relation to students who he instructs and educates), and also at students (the student being subject and object of the educational process). The educational processes came nearby methods. They have allowed a rapid transition from one activity to another, have stimulated the affirmation and development of initiative and innovation, making the class activity more dynamic and more attractive. This paper makes a survey of active-participative methods in terms of theory, having also a few examples detached from the lessons of Romanian language, more exactly those that cover the elements of morphology. And to distinguish the methods used by primary teachers in teaching, learning and consolidation of morphology notions, was appealed the focus group technique by discussions with the teachers from primary school. After analyzing the questionnaires proposed to the target group members were found the methods used, especially in the teaching-learning concepts of morphology.*

**Keywords:** active -participative methods, morphology, primary education.

## 1. Introduction

The methods are classified according to certain criteria. In the teaching-learning-evaluation of Romanian language and literature each method practiced has its role, which usually is associated with another or even more, for the reasons of ensuring the efficiency of the students activity in the classroom. The classical or traditional methods, much debated by teachers, are not excluded or ignored, but permanently enabled by combining them with the new ones.

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But in the recent years we witness to an obvious preference for a new category of methods, the interactive ones involving group activities. Some experts say these ones are only some processes which are based on the traditional methods. For others, they are modern ways to stimulate learning and personal development since the early ages, becoming teaching tools that favors the interpersonal exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge. The concept of interactivity assumes learning through communication, through cooperation, leading to a confrontation of ideas, opinions and arguments in an constructive way, creates learning situations centered on the availability and on the willingness to cooperate of children, on their direct and active involvement, on the mutual influence inside of work micro-groups, on social interaction of the group members.

Using this category of modern teaching tools involves an accumulation of qualities and availabilities from the teacher: receptivity to new, teaching style adaptation, mobilization, desire for self-improvement, reflective and modern thinking, creativity, intelligence to accept the new and a great flexibility in concepts. This implies an extra effort from the teacher, but the effect on children's motivation and the attractiveness of grammar lessons will be guaranteed.

Because being engaged in the work to play, the student will have the impression that he is: *an actor, an protagonist and not a spectator, which fits well with the dynamism of thought, imagination and his emotional life, to the inner necessities of action and affirmation* (Cerghit, 1980, p. 141).

## **2. The integration of active-participative methods in Romanian language lessons**

The active-participative methods develop children's intrinsic motivation, involves the whole group of pupils/students, the child becomes subject and object of the act of training and education, harmoniously combining the individual learning with the social learning, establishing relations of cooperation and communication. Among the factors hampering the activity of this type can be reminded the opposition of goals, interests and habits of the group members, communication difficulties, coordination difficulties which increase as the groups are larger, and the excessive dependence on others can be encouraged by the group activities. To total implicate the one that is the subject of learning, these methods focus on the knowledge process rather than on the knowledge products. It is about ways to help him to search, investigate, to find solutions by himself, to process information and to systematize them. But, *in order to get an accurate diagnosis of*

*the student, the teacher needs to know him well, because mistakenly applied treatment not only has no results, but also has side effects that are hard to solve* (Molan, 2014, p. 47).

Whether it's about traditional or classic methods, whether it's about new ones like modern or active-participative methods, what it's targeted is the oral or written expression that is designed to trigger the intellectual effort of the students. The classifications that we propose in the lines below are not intended to draw a boundary between old and new, but to follow the teaching process of the Romanian language and literature in his complexity. Following the model proposed by Corneliu Crăciun (2001, p. 20-25) we find ways of transmitting and acquiring knowledge. These methods focus on the one hand on oral communication, and on the other hand are based on the reading of the written text. In terms of oral communication we can distinguish:

- *expository methods* (storytelling, description, explanation, demonstration);
- *dialogue or interactive methods* (conversation, the collective discussion, brainstorm method or brainstorming, problem solving, aquarium or observed interaction method, mosaic method, cube method).

Also, are distinguished development and discovery methods (which can be guided or unguided):

- *direct exploration of objects and phenomena methods* (*systematic and independent observation*);
- *indirect exploration methods* (demonstration starting from images, projections).

In the category of focused on dynamism methods, Crăciun includes:

- *methods of learning through real action* (exercises, operational algorithms);
- *learning methods through simulated activities* (the didactic game, dramatization).

After the main teaching function, the interactive group methods and techniques can be classified (after Silvia Breben, 2002, p.423-425):

- *methods and techniques of interactive teaching and learning in groups*: the mutual teaching/learning method, the mosaic, the lotus technique, the double bubble, the support partner method, the cube, the rotating communication, pair changes method, the mysterious trip, the aquarium method, the learning circle method, the figured map;
- *fixation, consolidation and knowledge evaluation methods*: the pyramid and diamond method, the cluster method, comics, sorting assertions, the emblem technique, Venn diagram, the snowball method, the gallery tour method, the tournament of questions method, the quintet, the tournament of utterances;

- *methods and techniques of creativity*: brainstorming, the technique of dreams, the group interview, the 6/3 /5 technique, the Philips 6/6 method;
- *problem solving methods*: thinking hats, the case study, the cause and effect diagram, the interview, the starburst method, the Frisco method;
- *group research methods*: the project, the reportage, the experiment, interdisciplinary exploration, the common investigation.

Among the active-participative methods we mentioned above, we have selected some that are suitable for the morphological concepts teaching, some of the most frequently mentioned by the primary school teachers that they use in teaching-learning concepts of morphology.

### **2.1. The mosaic method**

The mosaic is a collaborative learning method which aims to develop and practice thinking, the responsible involvement of each student in acquiring and transmitting accurate information to their colleagues, which at one point became auditorium. Each student will have to learn the lesson, but will only become expert in one of the parts of the lesson that he will teach others.

For example, based on this method we can conduct a lesson in order to enhance knowledge about parts of the speech (noun, adjective, pronoun, verb). The students are divided into groups of four. Everyone gets a number 1, 2, 3 or 4 and one individual worksheet (each sheet contains by case the following ones: items about the noun, adjective, pronoun, verb). Students are regrouped according to the number that they received. For example, all students who received the number 1 form a group, all students who received number 2 form another one and so on until it is four distinct groups.

Grouped in this way they work in their team, consults where they do not know or have any questions, are assisted by teacher if they need. The requirements are varied, from identifying some parts of the speech, to their analysis, their inclusion in new sentences. After completing the worksheet, students are regrouping as they were at the beginning and become EXPERTS in their group. They display to their colleagues the content of their sheet, give them the necessary clarifications where necessary. The teacher has the role to monitor the work of students and to intervene with explanations where appropriate.

## 2.2. The Lotus Technique

It is an active learning method, an interactive group method which involves the deduction of connections between ideas, concepts, starting from a central theme. The technique can be conducted successfully in groups, as an exercise to stimulate the creativity and self-evaluation. In a lesson which aims to strengthen the parts of the speech learned, the children are divided into eight teams corresponding to the eight petals of a lily. In its center is the theme of the game: "The parts of the speech". To each petal /team corresponds a requirement:

1. Give one example of developed sentences that begin with the following nouns: *the tear, the word, the sadness, the joy, the song*.

2. Turn the nouns: *tear, word, sadness, joy, song* into verbs in the third person, no. sg., past-tense and make sentences with them.

3. Establish the following nouns plural: *tear, word, sadness, joy, song* and compose sentences with them.

4. Turn the nouns *tear, word, sadness, joy, song* into adjectives, plural number and make sentences with them.

5. Build one sentence in which the word *joy* to be:

a) the subject;

b) other part of the sentence than the subject;

c) accompanied by two adjectives;

d) accompanied by a verb in the present tense, third person, no. singular .;

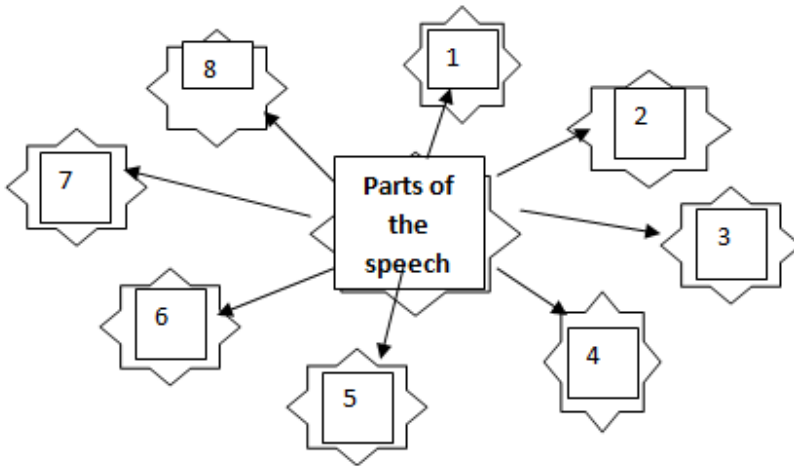
e) turned into an adjective, masculine, no. pl.;

6. Find for the words *tear, word, sadness, joy, song* two suitable adjectives.

7. Associate the verbs: *was saddened, talk, will weep, have enjoyed, will sing with* proper pronouns.

8. Morphologically analyze the following sentence: The child tearfully spoke cheerfully about the grade received at school.

Table 1



### 2.3. The Cube

The cube is a teaching strategy which highlights the activities and operations of thought involved in learning a content, that can be used both at the evocation, and in the reflection. The method can be used during a lesson for fixing the morphological concepts (noun, adjective, pronoun, verb). The students are divided into six teams, each of which must solve a requirement, according to what is written on the six faces of a cube.

Those who receive the task **DESCRIBE**, will tell their name and a quality that should suit them, which begin with the same letter of the surname. (Example: Adi-ambitious). It is specified that each surname is a proper noun, and the adjectives are qualities.

The students in the second team **COMPARE** the underlined words from some sentences and say what parts of speech these are.

Their colleagues, the third team, analyze the words morphological. The following team associates nouns in the first column with the adjectives of the second column, then make sentences with the obtained expressions. Those who have the requirement **APPLY** must find the indicated pronoun and to form sentences with them. The last team gets the task to correct spelling and orthoepic mistakes in a text, then **ARGUES** the made choices.

### 2.4. The emblem Technique

The emblem technique involves filling the compartments of a sketch with drawings, chips, words or sentences showing the synthesis of a real aspect. This technique aims to identify the characteristics of a theme in

ansymbolic or written form, as well as achieving a common task in a given time, in a relaxing and cooperative atmosphere. In a knowledge-building lesson about the noun, each student receives a work-sheet with an emblem as in the image below.

They work individually for five minutes, filling in the blanks with the definition of the noun with examples of its kind, number and its genre. Then starts to work the bank colleague, comparing the definitions of the noun, but also the examples chosen. In this way the children verify one another but at the same time learn from each other. The technique can be adapted for the recapitulation of others parts of speech.

**Table 2**

**THE NOUN**

**Definition**

**Common nouns**

**Proper nouns**

**Singular number**

**Plural number**

**Masculine**

**Female**

**Neutral**

**3. The methodology of research**

- *Research objectives*

The purpose of the study meant to identify if the primary school teachers use active-participative methods in the teaching-learning of the morphology elements.

- *The hypothesis of the research*

The hypothesis from which this focus group idea has started it is that although frequently teachers in primary school states that they use active-participative methods in teaching-learning the morphology lessons, in reality they are in a smaller measure approached

- *The organization of research*

Subjects: To verify the hypothesis of the study was organized a discussion session with a group of 20 teachers for primary education, with over 15 years experience in the field, and didactic grade one gained.

As a tool, it was used a listing of open items, based on which subjects have identified and proposed methodological approaches of active-

participative methods in the context of educational activities targeting morphological elements.

- *The results of research*

The study realization was started from the premise that active-participatory methods not only provide a casual setting for caring out the morphology teaching-learning lessons, but lead, obviously, to the identification and optimization of the main competences targeted by the curriculum for primary education at the level of Romanian language and literature discipline:

- Receiving oral messages in different communication contexts;
- Expressing oral messages in various communication situations;
- Receiving text messages in different contexts of communication;
- Writing messages in various communication situations.

\* It is essential not only for students to learn optimally the component notions of morphology, but also to use them in new contexts. Equally, they must communicate authentically and naturally with others, to understand, by intuition, then by reflection, the importance of really listen to the other one, to be attentive to his needs, to empathize and to not judge, forming some real skills of active listener. Therefore, the made inside the classroom contexts should be similar to those in real life, age-appropriate and to respond the wishes of the group of students.

Equally important it is to emphasize the importance of opening some paths for reflection on the rules governing the language elements joints. The competences targeting the notification of some regularities or irregularities in a speaker's language expression lead to the awareness of the Romanian language system and the significance of its components. This acquisition is strengthened through the development of some similar skills in receiving the written messages. Following the open discussions with the group of subjects was concluded that the active-participative methods are widely used in lessons for strengthening/consolidation of the construction elements of communication.

Their predominance is reduced when it is a teaching-learning lesson. However, teachers said that students participate much more dynamic in interplay conducted lessons, being more motivated to participate in the educational process.

#### **4. Discussions and conclusions**

What must be understood is that any method, traditional or active-participative, is extremely effective if it can be applied to our class of students

and helps us achieve our goals. Eventually, as the professor Neacșu Ioan said “the method is a deliberate way of organizing the taught content, oriented to direct learning, as a result of a teacher's relationship, involvement and interaction with his students”(Neacșu, Nuță, & Sârbu, 2008, p. 31) The active-participative methods should be used with caution, but we need to recognize their value for boosting the learning process and for motivating students.

By using these methods, learning becomes transformative in that it stimulates the students personalized interpretation, assigning new significances, achieving critical evaluation, decision-making, raises the argumentation, synthesis, conceptualization, atypical tasks solving, which defines specific elements of competence.

For students, using active-participatory methods represent a new way of interacting with new information, facilitates the discovery and training the intellectual structure by own efforts. After a unanimous opinion expressed, these methods support the teaching process through the methodological contribution (offers the possibility of learning based on simulation, modeling, cooperation, visual and auditory elements etc.); they provide for students opportunities to access different sources of information, provided by the teacher. Both these methods open the opportunity of combining text with different images, if sound with movement and with grammar elements. Therefore, the Romanian language classes may become more attractive than we imagine!

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