

CREATIVITY IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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According to J.C. Richards, “one quality among the many that characterize effective teachers – the ability to bring a creative disposition to teaching”[1]. Creativity, as well as innovation, cannot be called new concepts in foreign language teaching, but the development of technologies give teachers great opportunities to enter a new level.

Nowadays ESL university teachers usually face two major problems: students’ lack of motivation and multi-leveled groups, where there are students who possess a high level of language competencies, have the experience of foreign language communication, for instance, while traveling, and those whose language competencies are comparatively low. Levels may vary from A1 to B2, causing certain difficulties, misunderstandings, and even psychological barriers. In fact, these problems are overlapped, as far as each of them can be the reason for the other one.

Creativity, which is necessary for both a teacher and students, seems to be one of the ways to overcome both problems.

First of all, a teacher should get the attention of the audience, so the first task is to create an effective, friendly and stimulating learning environment: a well-chosen ice-breaking activity, an original design of a padlet board, and/or a relevant video can be a good start.

Besides that, it is difficult to overestimate the power of visuals. Using such tools as Spark Adobe (<https://spark.adobe.com/sp>), Canva (<https://www.canva.com/>), PowerPoint or an interactive tool Quizlet (<https://quizlet.com>) can be of great help in explaining grammar, introducing new vocabulary or a topic for brainstorming discussion. Such online applications as Quizizz (<https://quizizz.com>) can make formative assessment less stressful and more effective.

Motivation can be also enhanced by the tasks, which provide a challenge not only to students’ language competencies but to their creative thinking as well. The range of tasks can be rather wide: from generating word clouds using such applications as, for

instance, Wordart (<https://wordart.com>) to producing a video podcast (an advertisement, for example, in terms of Business English course, using Powtoon (<https://www.powtoon.com/home>) or any other application).

Creative tasks provide the opportunity to give the learning process a personal touch, as far as students have a chance for self-expression and, as a result, for self-development. “Weaker” students may find creating animated stories (on such platforms as Voki (<http://voki.com>) or MySimpleShow (<https://www.mysimpleshow.com/examples/>) less difficult than presenting their ideas in the classroom, while those who are “stronger” may get more challenging tasks for using their talents. In both cases, students of any level receive possibilities for making progress.

It goes without saying that technologies, though being very useful, are not the only way to implement creativity at a foreign language lesson. A group discussion or an individual project demands no less creative skills and can become a great source of inspiration.

References

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