CREATIVE APPROACH TO ENGLISH TEACHING AT UNIVERSITIES

Natalia Balatska  
associate professor, PH.D.  
Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine

Iryna Kozeletska  
senior lecturer  
National Aviation University, Ukraine

Creativity is the ability to use your imagination and produce new ideas, things, etc. in order to make the teaching process more effective and efficient. It is an integral part of the 21st century skills called four C’s, including communication, collaboration and critical thinking. Creativity helps us to deal with changes, and as the world changes continually, more creative solutions are required. Creativity in language teaching serves as a role modeling method aimed at motivating students to look at different things from different prospective, i.e. “think outside the box”, to master their language competence and professionalism that is of high demand.

Since language remains the only universal basis for thinking, knowledge of a foreign language should be considered as improving intellectual abilities (memory, imagination, critical, logical, creative thinking). Creativity is the highest manifestation of human mind development. Creativity is the ability to wonder and study, the ability to find solutions in non-standard situations, it is the focus on discovering new things and the ability to be deeply aware of one’s experience. Creative activity fosters the development of person’s potential and self-actualization for further growth.

The creative process involves the creation of a psychologically safe atmosphere for students that leads to the implementation of creative projects, contributes to the development of intellectual, emotional and speaking activity, effects positive thinking, develops initiative and independence. Linguistic creativity, in particular, is so much part of learning and using a language that we tend to take it for granted.

To make teaching English an interesting process which can involve students in the amazing atmosphere of mastering the language a teacher should be a creative personality who is constantly searching something new and is interested in the subject, generating new methods of teaching and sharing his or her innovative visions. In order to organize a creative English teaching process, the teacher/tutor should act as a facilitator for the students. He or she arranges cooperation with students, making them equal participants in the process, encouraging them to be as active as they can, proposing their visions and prospects. For this, putting as many questions as possible is the best way for interaction between a student and the teacher/tutor. Questions help students figure out solutions to a problem. Of course,
there should be a two-way communication, and the student shouldn't be afraid of putting questions. Trying new ideas, asking questions and making mistakes are a natural part of learning. In addition, the teacher/tutor should show the students what good is about their work and what should be improved. For instance, apply the 3Ws approach, i.e. “What worked well?”

The mutual understanding they’ve gained forms the basis for teaching English creatively. The teacher/tutor presents the same conception by different means. For example, a teacher/tutor gives the task of reading a certain text on the topic. The students have to identify unfamiliar words, learn them and understand the content of the text. After working with the text, the creative English teacher offers the assignment to watch the video on the same topic for the students to better memorize the active vocabulary, grammar and the informational content.

Another feature of the creative teacher is her or his ability to develop students’ critical thinking. It’s especially important nowadays because challenging environment makes young people quick and rational decisions. The teacher puts the problem for solution, offers different situational blocks which can stir students’ imagination and develop their critical thinking.

Playing different linguistic games is a proven tool of English teaching creativity that brings satisfaction from learning, brushes up speaking skills and suggests new ideas. While playing, endorphins are produced improving brain performance and stimulating creativity. Playing is interesting for people of different ages. This method of English teaching is not only for small children, but for university students as well. A teacher gives students different playing roles, immerses them in exciting linguistic projects and situations where students are capable of developing their communicative skills, critical thinking and creativity.

A role-play debate encourages students’ creativity and sets various objectives from assuming the roles of various stakeholders, considering a variety of issues to be prepared for the debates to assessing their group-mates’ performances in the debate. The development of such skills and qualities will be handy for their further professional activity and career promotion.

Story-telling is another game which can be used in university classes. For instance, while doing the “Alternative identity” exercise, the student imagines himself or herself being someone else and makes up the life story of that person [4]. The first stage includes drawing the picture of an imagined person and writing the details of his or her life. The second stage is presentation of the student’s new image to the group. The third one is answers to group questions. So, all these games aim to develop communicative skills, improve fluency and make the language learning process more enjoyable and easier.

We’d like to point to an effective “real grammar” teaching and learning method where a teacher explains some grammar rules in the class and then gives creative home assignment to find in films or songs the same grammar examples. This activity stimulates creativity and critical thinking, because students have to choose the material for watching and listening. The positive moment of this assignment is that there are no “winners” and “losers”. Everyone will be a “winner”. Because even the students who haven’t found the examples of certain grammar structures, but will show the worked out material will be successful. The reason of everyone’s success
is the fact that it makes students spend time on thinking over and concentrating on certain grammar structure in films or songs, and finally in a real life situation. It makes learning more efficient, interesting and funny [4].

So, teaching foreign languages is effective through the integrated application of the means of the latest innovative technologies and it depends on the ability of the teacher to apply a humanistic approach to learning and abandon the authoritarian methods. Creative approaches help reveal students' potential and capabilities, and contribute to their development and improvement during the educational and communicative process.

The foreign language teaching process is not an automatic insertion of training material in students' heads. It requires intense mental work both a learner and a teacher. This can only be achieved by active learning with the help of innovative educational technologies. Moreover, it's worth noting that the creative teacher is a person creative beyond his or her professional activity, a person who is interested in science, art, music, literature, etc. and share it in his/her classroom.

References:


