

Hrvatsko udruženje profesora engleskog jezika
Croatian Association of Teachers of English

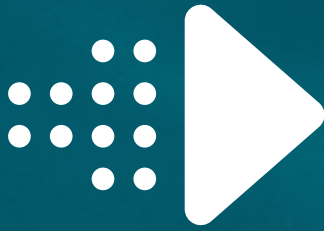


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HUPEzine

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Editor's Note

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the winter issue of our HUPEzine. We hope it will inspire you with new teaching ideas, give you a fresh new spark, and fuel you through the longer part of the school year.

In this issue, we present your articles that tackle the world of language learning with a spotlight on creativity, empathy, storytelling, CLIL, and the intersection of language and technology.

We are pleased to announce that our story-writing competition resulted in substantial participation and we are truly thankful for the effort you and your students put into this competition. We are looking forward to 8 March - the date when we announce the most successful writers with the best stories.

If you would like to contribute to the Newsletter on a more regular basis, please contact us. We would like to have you on board!

We invite you to send your articles, stories, comments, or reviews to hupe.newsletter@gmail.com.

Do not forget to write your name, surname, affiliation/institution and address at the beginning of the text. Photographs are also welcomed, but make sure you send them separately from the text.

We hope you enjoy reading your HUPEzine.

Ivana Kasunić

HUPE editor

Impressum

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CLIL : the perfect tool to successful participation in the global educational community

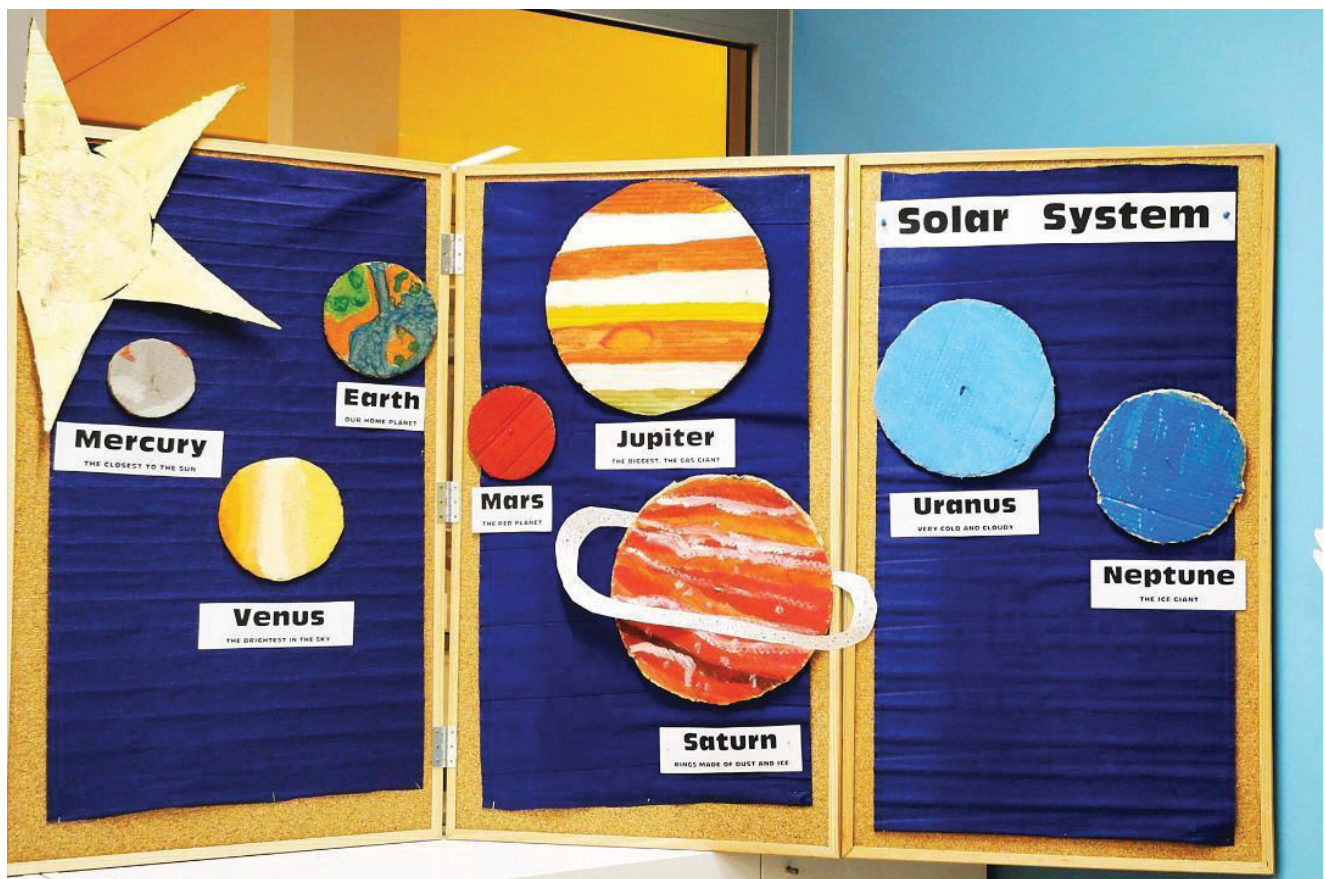
Ana Kodrić Ivelić, prof.

Elementary school Pujanki, Split

Twenty-first-century learning allows English teachers to incorporate CLIL, ICT and digital learning platforms in their classrooms and introduce their students to the global educational community. We have the opportunity to gain insight into how the English language works in real-life multilingual and intercultural contexts and prepare students for their future professions by teaching them 21st-century skills and by integrating cross-disciplinary topics simultaneously in various school subjects. One of the wonderful tools for integration which we have in our "school kit" is the CLIL method.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is an increasingly widespread educational method developed in 1994 by Professor Do Coyle and Dr David Marsh. It means studying a non-linguistic subject matter in a foreign lan-

guage and thus integrating: using the foreign language to learn the content and at the same time learning the language itself. The content that is taught can be a lesson in maths, science, history, geography, literature, art, music, PE, ICT, citizenship or any other subject that your school curriculum provides, while the target language can be any foreign language the students learn, most often English. It can be used in a single lesson/topic (soft CLIL) or during a whole course (hard CLIL). CLIL can be performed by the content teacher or by the language teacher, but usually both teachers cooperate in order to share methodologies, relevant vocabulary, and to coordinate the lesson. If it sounds like a challenging task, let me reassure you! You have already encountered the method before, maybe not even knowing it, because although the term CLIL is modern, the method was used in your language



class every time you studied about the history and geography of English-speaking countries and cities, music genres, cooking, science (ecology) etc. Nevertheless, in order to properly apply it and start creating our own CLIL lessons we need an understanding of the theory behind it. In this paper, the basic principles, aims, benefits and difficulties of CLIL will be presented, as well as some practice examples.



Main features

The main features of CLIL are (1) acquisition of new skills and knowledge of the content, (2) usage of language to learn as well as to communicate, (3) development of higher-order thinking skills, and (4) development of social and intercultural awareness. Why is it used in the classroom? Because the benefits of CLIL are numerous! It activates cross-disciplinary skills, increases students' motivation, improves general language proficiency and communication skills, helps gain specific content knowledge and develops intercultural and cooperational skills. In this way, CLIL prepares students for future studies and working life in the context of the Global education and labour market. No matter which career they pursue one day, in the aspect of lifelong education and professional expertise, they all will sometimes need a language other than Croatian to participate in professional development seminars, training programmes, conferences, job shadowing etc. That is

why CLIL is effective and useful for students of all ages. Furthermore, research and my own practical experience so far have shown that CLIL students tend to improve their scores in both the language class and subject area class.

Creating a CLIL lesson plan

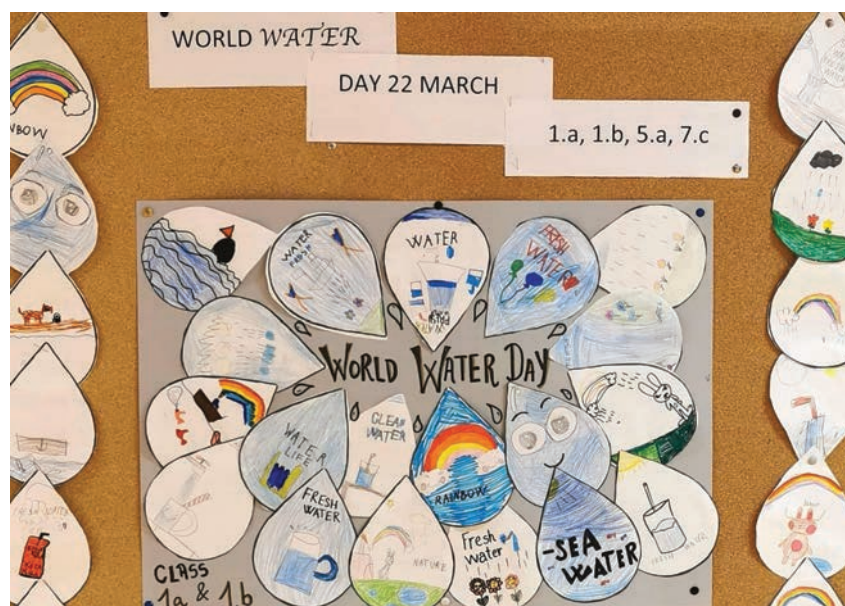
In designing a successful CLIL lesson the teacher has to take into consideration the four Cs and model it step by step. (1) Content – decide on the topic and subject matter, the specific knowledge they will acquire. (2) Communication – decide which vocabulary, functional language and grammar related to the topic you will teach, and use language scaffolding if required. (3) Cognition – design tasks starting from lower-order thinking skills to higher ones. (4) Culture – find real-life examples from intercultural contexts so they can relate. Finally, I suggest adding (5) Assessment – think of formative and summative assessment techniques which you can use in accordance with the educational outcomes set by your curriculum. One should be careful with assessment and keep in mind that although content and language are equally important in CLIL, fluency should come before accuracy when evaluating in a language class.

CLIL in Croatian elementary schools

In Croatia, there are already faculties and vocational schools with partial or whole courses performed in English. However, there are certain difficulties in the implementation of CLIL in Croatian primary schools. Firstly, there is a lack of consolidation of subjects' curricula as it is designed on a national level. What I specifically mean is that the content of one subject is autonomous and usually not synchronised with the content taught in other subjects. For example, if I were to teach the comparison of adjectives shortly after they had studied it in their mother tongue, the subject matter would undeniably be more familiar and easier to comprehend. If the Music, Art, History and language teachers in their respective classes simultaneously taught e.g. the 20th century, or the Renaissance, or the Second World War the students would gain a wide cross-disciplinary knowledge of the same topic. At this point, the attempt to nationally consolidate the curricula at such a large scale might sound utopian, although I believe achievable, but what we, as English teachers who have fairly autonomous approaches, can do is to consolidate subject topics at our own school level. Does this sound utopian, too? Let me demonstrate why the answer to that question can be "no".

Example lessons

Example 1: Let's say the educational outcome for the month (or lesson) is for your sixth-grade students to write and talk using the Past Simple Tense. The course book of-



fers a well-written text about a boy's last holiday in Spain. You use it, but you additionally talk to the History teacher who tells you that they are studying the Middle Ages at that time. So, you find a text or video on medieval Spain (or Europe), they explore and acquire vocabulary and get a task e.g. "Describe and discuss life in that period" using the Past Simple.

Example 2: Your educational outcome is for your fourth-grade students to write and talk using the Present Simple. You find out from their class teacher that they are learning the process of planting a bean plant in their Science class. You can find an educational video or prepare a worksheet by yourself "Growing a bean plant" with the basic vocabulary and verbs (take, put, plant, water, grow) that they acquire and ultimately your students present their plant using the Present Simple in English. You can broaden the topic even more and introduce the story of Jack and the Beanstalk.

Example 3: Your eighth-grade students talk and write using Future tenses and in your course book you may have a text "What the future will look like", but you find out that they are learning about fossil fuels and global warming in Chemistry class. You can find a text, a video, a song or a worksheet to introduce the topic, vocabulary, and functional grammar. Have them draw, write, talk and sing about it and you will have amazing results! Last year my students were perfectly capable of describing the Carbon Cycle, talking about renewable energy and making future predictions in fluent English. Moreover, most of them amazingly got an A on the Chemistry test! All thanks to the fact that both teachers covered the same topic at the same time.

Using the CLIL method in our English class we learned many other topics in consolidation and simultaneously with other subjects - the Water Cycle in first and fourth

grade, Parts of the plant in third and seventh, House engineering in sixth, the Solar System in sixth, and Global warming in eighth. We also had integrated lessons for Mathematics Day, European Language Day, Safer Internet Day, Earth Day, International Forest Day, Women's Day, Remembrance, etc.

Not a mission impossible

All described entails planning and cooperation between the English teacher and other subject teachers, but I believe that seeing the outcomes is worth the effort. So, at the beginning of the school year talk to your colleagues, consolidate some lesson topics, think of small-scale tasks, lessons or school projects and insert them in your curricula. If you find that achieving such cooperation is difficult in your working environment or that creating your own materials is too time-consuming, you can find ready-made materials on educational online platforms or use the wonderfully designed CLIL lessons provided in your course book. I urge you not to skip them! They are great for spicing up everyday teaching and having fun in the classroom while creating the most unique opportunity for your students to learn specific content in English and master it!

Chemistry – English; Global warming Project



Storytelling and social inclusion with Erasmus+ and eTwinning

Branka Lamza, II. osnovna škola Čakovec

Traditional teaching aids and media are now augmented by modern technology to make both learning and teaching easier. However, the instant accessibility of information has caused a shorter attention span among children and teenagers, who find it hard to concentrate on larger chunks of information and have problems with memorisation and mastering basic skills, especially literacy. Another problem is the lack of human interaction, which is being overtaken by social media. At this point, we are facing the need to introduce a balance between technology and traditional teaching and learning aids. Storytelling and related activities are powerful tools to engage all levels of pupils, regardless of educational, cultural, social, health and geographic obstacles, to reach their full potential.



Our Erasmus+ KA229 project Stories Bring Us Closer was started in September 2020, as a partnership of primary schools from Croatia, Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden. It was planned to be finished two years later. However, due to restrictions caused by the pandemic, the project was extended to June 2023. The partners also carried out three similar eTwinning projects. There were storytelling activi-

ties with kindergartens, retirement homes for elderly people, schools for children with special educational needs and societies involving people with disabilities. Visits to these institutions and mutual participation in the project activities with their users encouraged our pupils to embrace different age and social groups. This made them able to learn accompanied by diversity in all forms. This article will share ideas on organising activities to strengthen literacy skills and promote social inclusion.

One of our first project activities was a meeting of residents of The Retirement Home for the Elderly - Novinščak and first graders from our school, II. osnovna škola Čakovec. Initially, this meeting was planned as a visit of pupils and teachers to the home, but due to the previously mentioned restrictions, we decided to organise an online meeting.



As we were approaching Christmas, we asked the retirement home residents to tell us stories of how they used to spend Christmas holidays as children, which they gladly did. The children learnt about traditions in their home region and other parts of the country. They could also compare how people spent their holidays in the country and the city. In the following part of the meeting, the children performed two songs, which they rehearsed especially for this occasion.



Furthermore, we invited parents, grandparents and other members of our pupils' families to read or tell us Christmas stories. Unfortunately, hosting them all at school was not possible, so some joined us online. Some grandparents decided to share true stories about Christmas traditions from when they were children. Parents and other family members read Christmas stories for us, which they chose mainly for this occasion. As a follow-up, we had art activities: painting and making Christmas decorations and cards.

Another motivational activity was a virtual meeting of pupils of Centar za odgoj i obrazovanje (a school for SEN pupils from Čakovec) and our sixth graders. This meeting was planned to mark The International Day for Tolerance in November. In both schools, we often talk about the importance of tolerance, not only on special days, and this was one of the occasions. Our pupils read "Manuel", one of the stories they wrote last school year for our project publication. The story talks about a Muslim boy who moves to Europe from Syria and the challenges he faces. The pupils discussed the story and the messages which can be drawn from it.

Also, the pupils from the school for SEN pupils told us about posters they recently made, displaying things that make them happy. Both teams talked about what makes them happy: their family, friends, good grades and hobbies.

Our first graders hosted a group of preschool children from Žibeki, a local kindergarten. Together, the children listened, told and acted out stories in Croatian and English. First, they watched an animated film in English, *The Fox and the Stork*. After that, they learnt keywords in

English. The first graders acted out the fable in their mini puppet theatre. In the following part of the meeting, the kindergarten children and their teacher told stories like "The Little Zebra Who Lost Her Stripes" and "A Kindhearted Ant". The activity was very motivating and fun for both groups.

Our fourth graders had a video meeting with Nevena, a young educator-rehabilitator employed in Zamisli, the association for the promotion of quality education for young people with disabilities, in Zagreb. Despite using her wheelchair daily, Nevena graduated from a university and found a permanent job. She told the pupils about the difficulties people with disabilities face. She was one of the organisers of *The Ride for a Quality and Independent Life in Zagreb*, an initiative for young people. Their goal is to make the public aware of the needs of people with disabilities, especially the need to introduce legislative changes regarding personal assistants.



People with disabilities, especially young people, do not wish to spend their lives in special homes where care is provided and they don't want somebody else to do everything for them instead of doing it themselves - they want to work, earn a living and do everything they can do on their own. Therefore, the state has to do everything possible to enable personal assistants, not only on weekdays

but daily, to be there for them and help them do everyday chores.

Nevena taught the children some rules of etiquette for people with disabilities. It is always advisable to ask if there is anything you can do and how you can help - only help if being asked first. Nevena was very kind to answer the children's questions, even though some of them were rather personal - for example, they wanted to know how Nevena moved in buildings without an elevator and what it is like to deal with people who do not understand the needs of people with disabilities. As we wished to end the meeting in an optimistic atmosphere, the pupils read a story with humorous elements, "The Spitting Image", written by Ephraim Kishon, an Israeli author, dramatist and screenwriter.

Fortunately, in the third year of our project, the pandemic measures were lifted, so we organised live meetings with the institutions with which we previously had online meetings. To mark *World Storytelling Day*, on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, our fourth graders visited the Society of Persons with Physical Disabilities DOSTI of Međimurje County. The pupils read the story "The Elephant and Generosity", after which they all drew parts of the story together. In the end, with the help of pictures, they told the story using the *kamishibai* technique (an old Japanese way of telling stories). The meeting took place in a cheerful atmosphere.

In May, our school participated in an event called *A Day Without Connection (Dan BezVeze)*, a day dedicated to ac-



tivities that do not require ICT. On this occasion, we had a special visit from Novinščak, a retirement home for elderly people. Our fourth graders and retirement home residents spent time telling stories and sewing together.

All the mentioned activities were beneficial and helped us achieve the aims of our project: to increase pupils' motivation for reading, develop pupils' competence in applying knowledge into practice in literacy education, increase the self-esteem of pupils with fewer opportunities and strengthen pupils' empathy towards different age and social groups.



Teaching in the Era of AI: Current landscape of AI integration and use in European schools

(research report)

Dajana Jelavić, teacher mentor at Jure Kaštelan High School, Omiš
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Introduction

The significance of AI in education cannot be overlooked; accordingly, we must focus on harnessing its potential in productive and beneficial ways. AI literacy emerges as every educator's critical skill and moral responsibility nowadays. This international research aims to gather feedback directly from school staff to analyze perspectives on the integration and use of artificial intelligence within educational institutions. This could significantly contribute to bridging the digital skills gap, which was the driving force behind conducting such research – assessing the current state, attitudes, and experiences in European schools. The survey consists of eight thematic units: Participants' background; AI awareness; Attitudes towards AI integration; Training programs; Support and regulations; Accessibility; Concerns and Opportunities; and Insights.

The research was conducted during October 2023, through an online survey sent via email to eTwinning and Erasmus partners, with request to forward it to their colleagues or make it available to as many participants as possible. The invitation to participate in the research was also posted on social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn.

251 educators from 27 European countries responded to the survey. The research was conducted by Dajana Jelavić, an English and Italian Language teacher mentor at Jure Kaštelan High School in Omiš, Croatia.

1. PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND

Where are you from?

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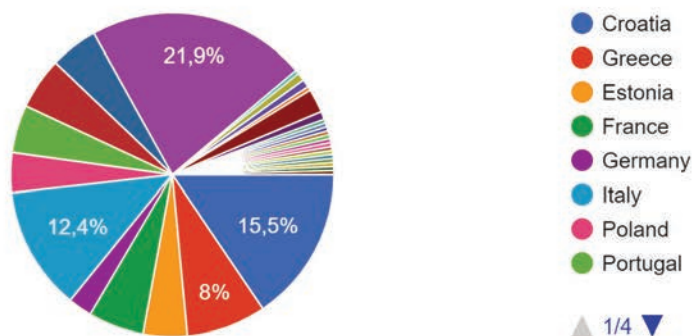


Chart 1: Participants' country of origin

Romania(21.9%), Croatia(15.5%), Italy(12.4%), Greece(8%), France(5.6%), Slovakia(5.2%), Spain(4.8%), Portugal(4.8%), Estonia(4.4%), Poland(4%), Albania(2.4%), Germany(2.4%), Cyprus (0.8%), Belgium (0.8%), Lithuania(0.8%), North Macedonia, Hungary, Finland, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Austria, Moldova, Latvia, Malta, the UK, Ukraine, Slovenia.

School type

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Chart 2: School type

The responses to the question about the type of school where they work show that 49.4% of the participants are employed in secondary schools, 20.3% in primary schools, 13.1% in vocational schools and 1.2% in special education.

What's your role in education?

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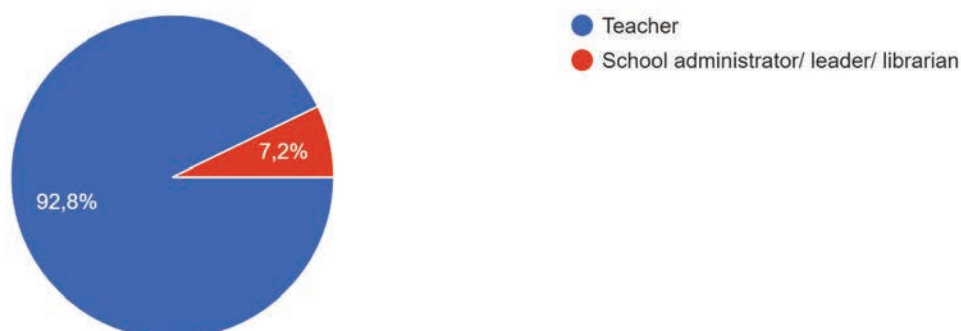


Chart 3: Role in education

92.8% of the participants are teachers, while 7.2% are members of non-teaching school staff, such as school administrators, librarians, and headmasters.

Years of experience in teaching (or related field)...

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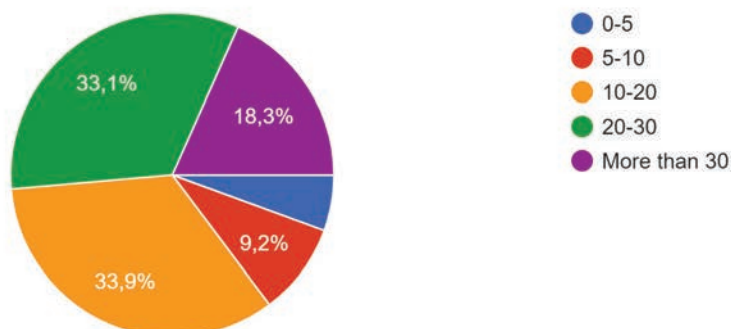


Chart 4: Years of work experience

The majority of participants (33.9%) have between 10-20 years of work experience, and 33.1% have 20-30 years of experience, while 18.3% have more than 30 years of experience in education.

2. AI AWARENESS

Are AI tools currently being used in your classrooms?

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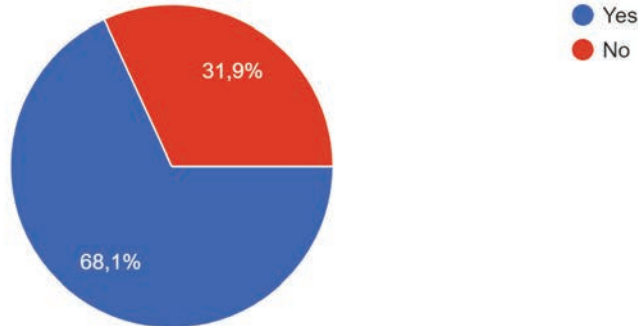


Chart 5: AI Application

Currently, 68.1% of the participants are utilizing AI tools in their classrooms, while 31.9% do not use them.

If yes, what are they used for ?

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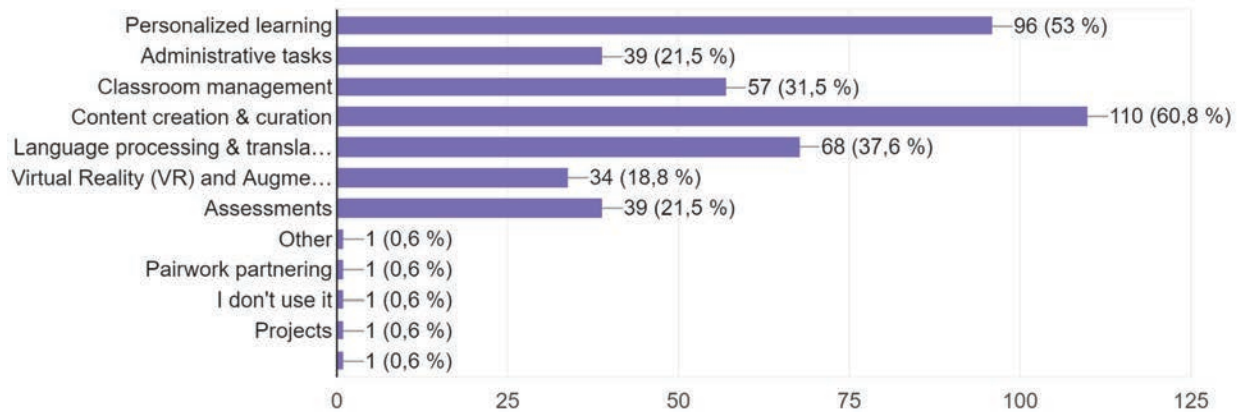


Chart 6: Types of AI application

According to those who are utilizing AI tools (68.1%), the majority utilize them for the purpose of content creation and curation (60.8%); personalized learning (53%); language processing and translation (37.6%).

3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS AI INTEGRATION

What do you think about the impact (benefits & challenges) of AI on student learning and teaching methods?

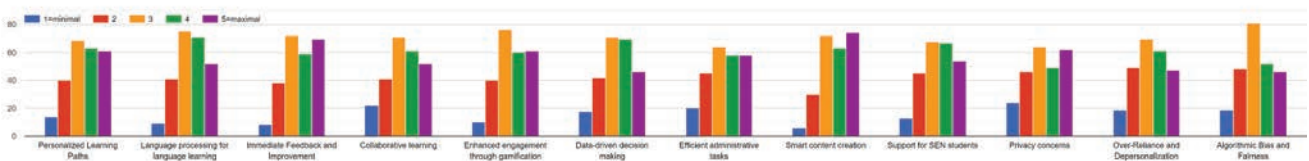


Chart 7: The impact of AI on learning and teaching

Table 2: The impact of AI

In summary, the feedback highlights the varied impact of AI in education, emphasizing its strengths in personalized learning, language education, immediate feedback, collaborative learning, gamification, data-driven decision-making, and efficient administrative tasks. It appears to be mostly moderate, except for smart content creation, where the impact is seen as either maximal or transformative.

What challenges do you face when integrating AI into your teaching methods?

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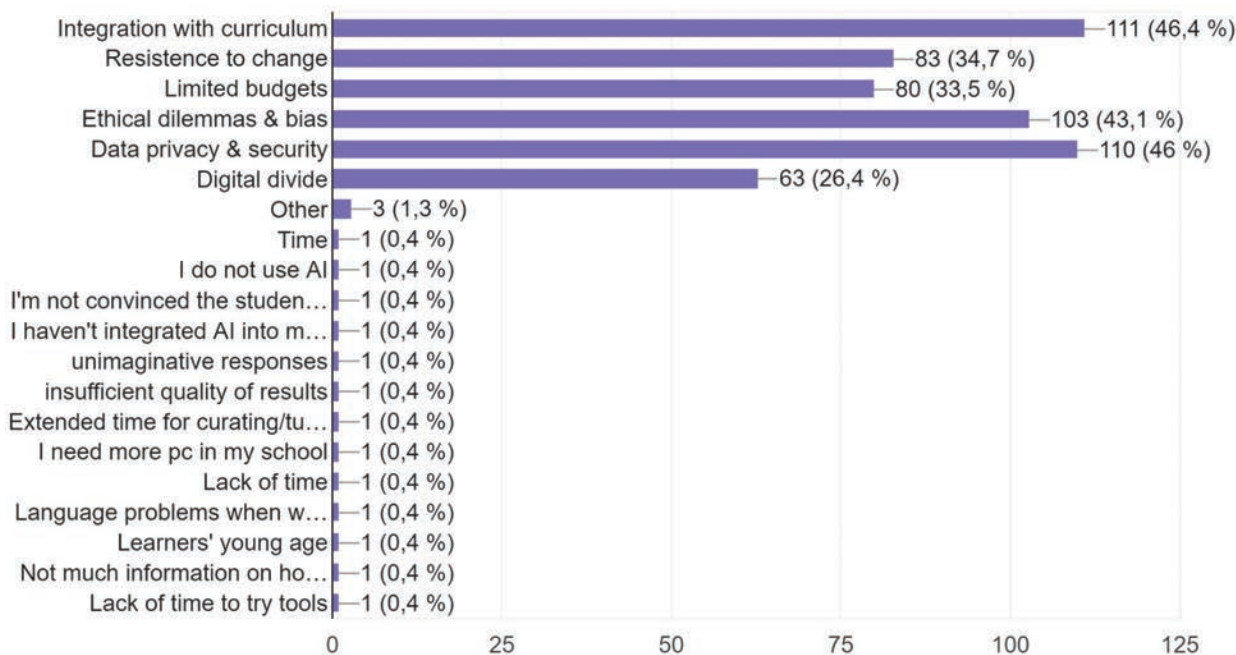


Chart 8: Challenges faced while integrating AI

For 46,4% of educators incorporating AI tools, a significant challenge revolves around integrating them seamlessly into the existing curriculum. Overcoming this challenge requires innovative strategies, collaboration, and continuous adaptation to merge traditional teaching methods and cutting-edge technology. Second challenge is data privacy and security (46%). Schools should establish strict data privacy policies ensuring that student's information remains secure while using AI tools. Third challenge is ethical dilemmas and bias (43,1%). Educators should have training on ethical considerations related to AI, emphasizing the importance of unbiased content and decision-making.

4. TRAINING PROGRAMS

Do you feel the need for training programs to effectively use AI tools?

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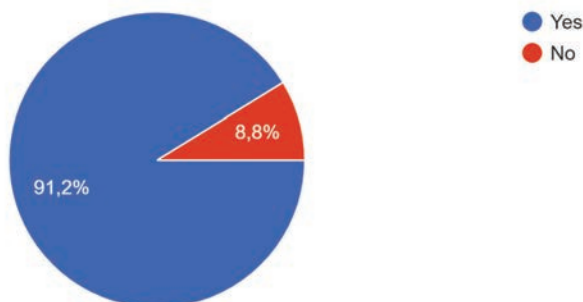


Chart 9: Need for training programs on AI

91.2% of respondents express the need for training in order to effectively use AI tools. There is obvious willingness to embrace AI but at the same time, there is a necessity for tailored training programs to bridge the knowledge gap.

If yes, what format of PD would you prefer?

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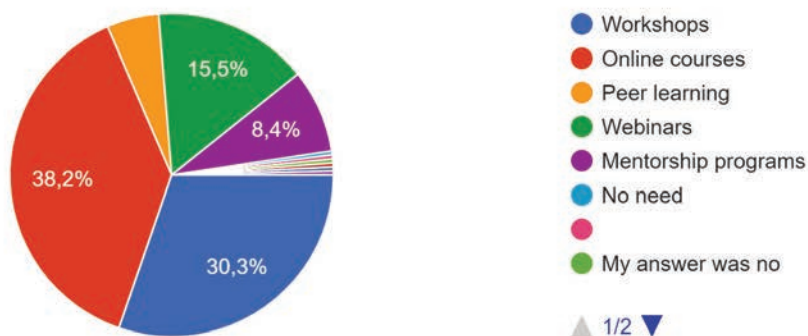


Chart 10: Preferred PD format

Online courses are favored by 38.2% of respondents, highlighting the importance of flexible and accessible training. Workshops, chosen by 30.3%, signify the value of hands-on, interactive experiences. Additionally, 15.5% opt for webinars, emphasizing the significance of real-time, expert-led sessions.

5. SUPPORT AND REGULATIONS

Is there adequate institutional / educational authorities support concerning AI integration?

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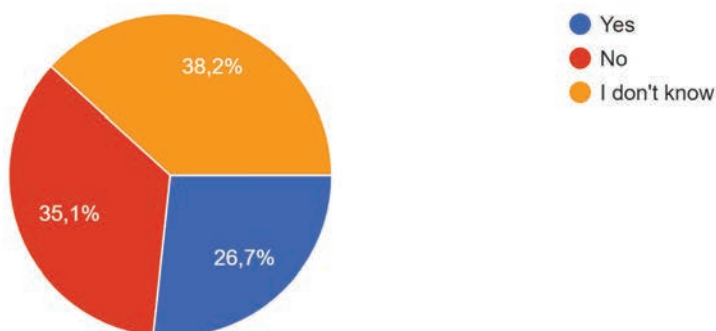


Chart 11: Adequate support for AI integration

The data illustrates a mixed response regarding the adequacy of support for AI integration in education. While 26.7% of respondents affirm receiving some kind of support, 38.2% don't know anything about it. Furthermore, 35.1% express a lack of adequate support.

Are you familiar with any policies and regulations to ensure ethical and responsible use of AI in education?

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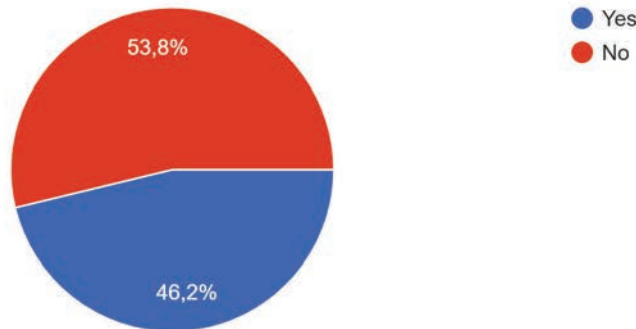


Chart 12: Awareness of AI policies and regulations

The survey results reveal a gap in awareness concerning AI policies and regulations in education. A majority of respondents, 53.8%, are not familiar with existing policies ensuring ethical AI use in education. On the other hand, 46.2% of participants demonstrate an awareness of these policies and regulations.

Are you familiar with the age-appropriate use of AI tools?

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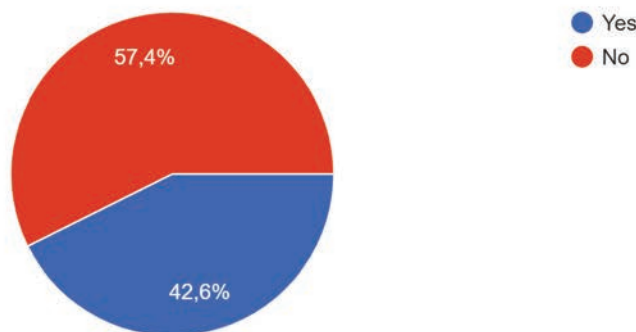


Chart 13: Awareness of AI age restrictions

The survey findings emphasize a certain lack of awareness among respondents regarding AI age restrictions. A majority of 57.4% admit to being unfamiliar with the age restrictions associated with AI usage. In contrast, 42.6% of participants indicate some level of awareness.

Should regulations require periodic assessments of the long-term impact of AI on the education system?

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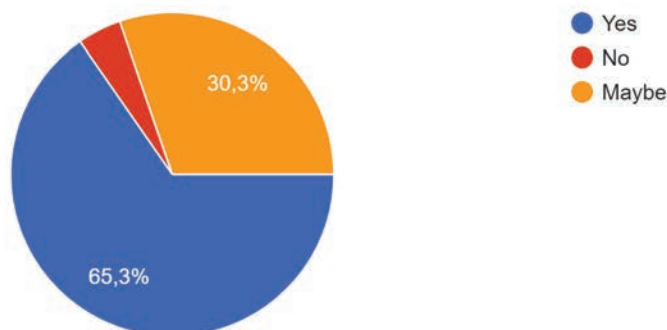


Chart 14: Assessment of the long-term impact of AI

The findings indicate different opinions regarding the necessity of periodic assessments on the long-term impact of AI in education. A majority, 65.3%, supports the idea of conducting these assessments, underscoring the importance of monitoring AI's influence on education over time. On the contrary, a small percentage, 4.4%, opposes the need for such evaluations. Interestingly, 30.3% remain uncertain, suggesting a need for more information and discussions on this topic.

6. ACCESSIBILITY

Are AI technologies accessible to all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographic location?

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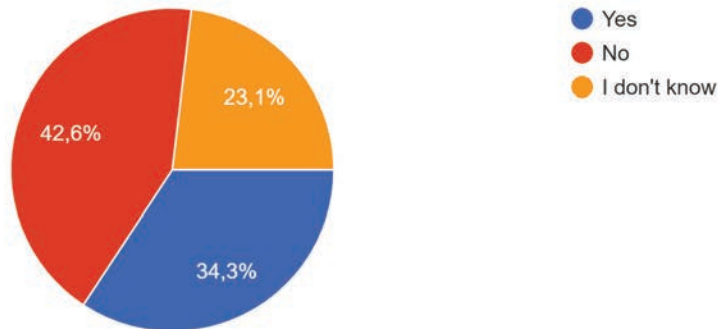


Chart 15: Accessibility of AI technologies

The survey findings highlight diverse perspectives on the accessibility of AI technologies in education. 42.6% deny the accessibility of AI technologies, indicating potential disparities in the availability. In contrast, 34.3% believe that AI is accessible to all students evenly. Meanwhile, 23.1% remain uncertain about the issue, indicating a need for further investigation and clarification on this topic in order to achieve more equitable and inclusive education.

Have you tried AI tools to cater to diverse classroom needs (SEN or gifted students)?

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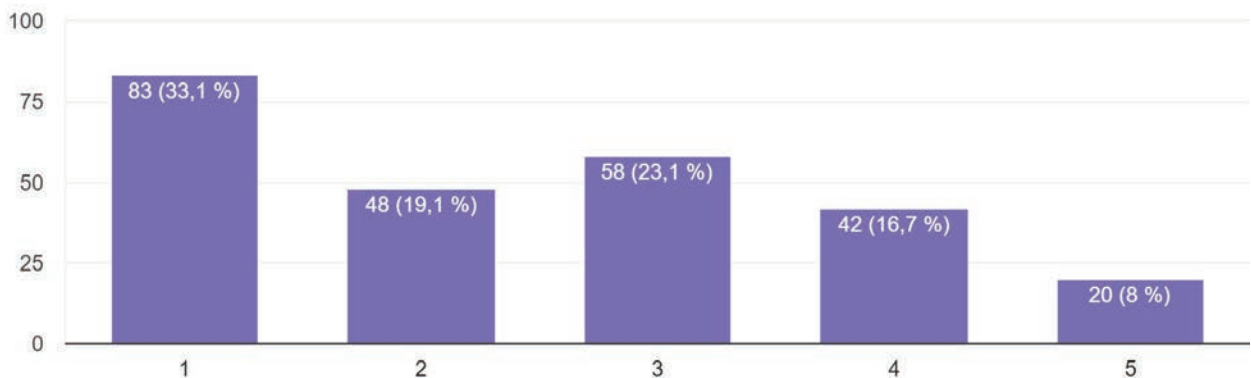


Chart 16: AI for inclusion

The survey reveals varied experiences among educators regarding the utilization of AI tools to address diverse classroom needs. 33.1% admit to never trying these tools to facilitate the learning of SEN or gifted students, indicating a gap in their implementation. Additionally, 19.1% rarely use AI tools, while 23.1% use them occasionally. Furthermore, 16.7% state they do not use AI tools very frequently, and 8% report using them often.

What are your greatest concerns about using AI?

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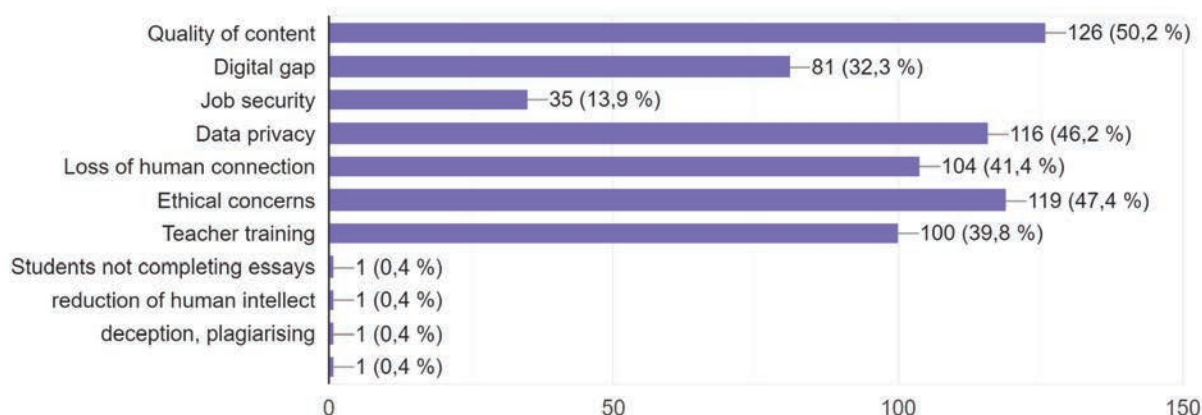


Chart 17: Concerns about using AI

The majority, 50.2%, are worried about the quality of content generated by AI tools. Ethical concerns are a significant issue for 47.4% of educators, followed closely by worries about data privacy at 46.2%. Additionally, 41.4% fear the loss of human connection in classrooms due to AI, while 39.8% express concerns about adequate teacher training. The digital gap is a concern for 32.3% of educators. A smaller percentage, 13.9%, has job security concerns.

What opportunities do you see for future AI applications in education?

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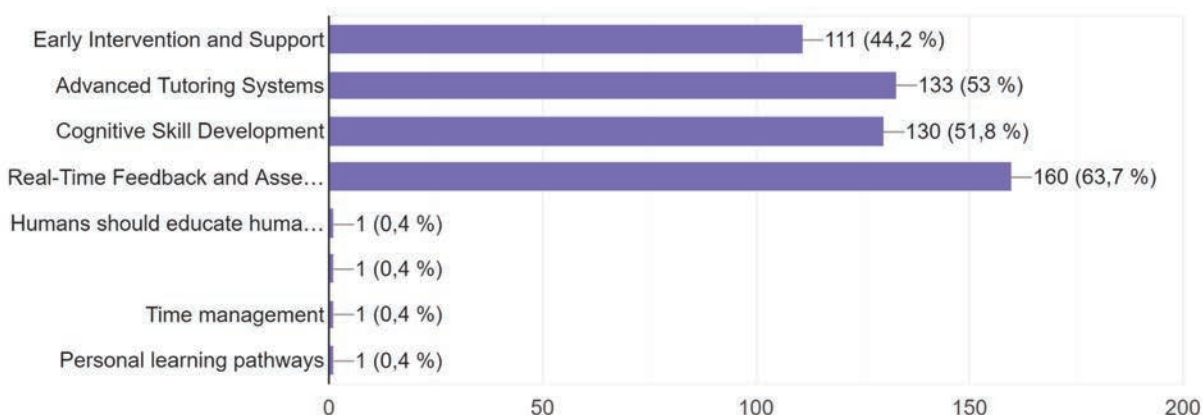


Chart 18: Future opportunities of AI application in education

63.7% of respondents recognize the potential in real-time feedback and assessment, indicating the value of immediate insights into students' progress. Advanced tutoring systems are seen as beneficial by 53% of educators, highlighting the advantages of personalized learning experiences. Cognitive skills development is seen as an opportunity by 51.8% of respondents, emphasizing the importance of enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Early intervention and support are valued by 44.2% of educators, emphasizing the significance of timely assistance for struggling students.

8. INSIGHTS

Summary of the participants' insights on the survey's topic:

The respondents' perspectives on education in the age of AI are varied. Many participants realize AI's potential for improving learning experiences, giving individualized feedback, and automating administrative work. AI can also help teachers and students collaborate and communicate more effectively. However, there are widespread concerns regarding AI's reliability, ethical questions, and the necessity for sufficient training. The digital and linguistic divide is a big barrier to accessing AI tools. Overall, there is an agreement on the significance of bringing AI into education, but with the caution that technology should not be used to replace human talents and that teachers must be properly trained to use it.

Conclusion

At this moment, education stands at a significant crossroads. It is a crucial moment to introduce AI into schools in the right way and to halt the aimless wandering of both teachers and students through the vast possibilities offered by AI. How our students will use AI depends on us and our readiness for change and learning.

By gathering evidence about the current situation across Europe, we have the power to positively impact our future lives and the way we teach. The responsibility lies with us, now more than ever, to act wisely and shape the future of humanity.

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FLIPPING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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The innovative pedagogical model of the flipped classroom has become an important paradigm in education during the past decade. This approach has changed the traditional way of teaching, encouraging students to have their first contact with new material outside the classroom through reading or watching video material, and allowing them to use the time in the classroom for a deeper understanding of the material, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The basic idea of the flipped classroom is: that what is traditionally done in the classroom is now done at home, and what is traditionally done as homework is now done in the classroom.

The theory of the flipped classroom is in accordance with the revised Bloom's taxonomy, which is manifested in enabling students to achieve the first levels of cognitive work (acquiring knowledge and understanding) outside the classroom, while in the classroom they focus on higher levels of cognitive work (application, analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation). Integrating Bloom's taxonomy with the flipped classroom emphasizes the connection between the acquisition of foundational knowledge outside the classroom and focusing on higher-level cognitive skills inside the classroom. Additionally, research indicates the positive impact of the flipped classroom on various language aspects, including grammatical structures, reading skills and vocabulary use in the development of communication skills, storytelling and dialogue. Increased motivation, active student participation and improved preparation for classes highlight the potential of this innovative approach in shaping a deeper understanding and application of language content.

Advantages of the flipped classroom

The advantages of this method are numerous and varied, while the most noticeable one is the personalization of learning. As students can and should look at or read the material prepared by the teacher before class, they can do it at their own pace and when it suits them, which is especially beneficial for students with learning difficulties since they can repeat the content as many times as they want, and in their own context. Equally, more advanced students can process the prepared content at their own

pace and possibly do additional research according to the teacher's instructions. If the group is heterogeneous, this model will allow the students to prepare different and diverse questions for the lesson, which contributes to better content processing and more active discussion.

Furthermore, in addition to the fact that students actively learn about the content using this method, they also learn to actively research independently, and develop a critical way of thinking and a deeper understanding of the content. An increase in student creativity and student motivation for learning, research and collaboration with other students and the teacher is expected, both in the classroom during the lesson and outside the classroom.

One of the important advantages of the flipped classroom method is its easy application with various modern teaching strategies, such as collaborative learning, and it can be combined with other teaching systems, such as project and problem-based teaching. Collaborative learning can be achieved when students first study the material independently and individually before the lesson, while during the lesson they work together in pairs or groups on a task whose purpose is to deepen what they have learned: joint work on a presentation, project assignment, demonstration, discussion, additional work on the text and textbook, content creation (podcast, video materials, digital content, etc.), additional research on the Internet or in the school library, etc.

The interaction between the teacher and the student changes and improves: as the student has already processed part of the content at home, the student's engagement is improved, i.e. the student is ready to work in class and is familiar with the material. By leveraging student preparation, teachers can devote more time to opportunities to integrate and apply their knowledge through various student-centred learning strategies, such as conducting research or working on projects with colleagues. Teachers can also use class time to check each student's understanding and, if necessary, help them develop procedural dexterity.

It is also necessary to emphasize the advantage of using various digital materials as a supplement to the textbook,

which can lead teachers to create their own curriculum and materials, and even to the creation of entire digital systems for e-learning. Hence, the model is easily applicable as part of hybrid classes and online classes and fits perfectly into teaching for the 21st century.

Disadvantages of the flipped classroom

The flipped classroom assumes that students will independently review materials and prepare before coming to class, but we know that independent learning largely depends on how motivated the student is. Some students, especially those with lower motivation or less developed organizational skills, may face difficulties in meeting these expectations and this may lead to them doing less and putting in less effort. In order to ensure that students have the preparation necessary for productive time spent in class, a task-based system in which students produce work (writing, assignments, etc.) before class is preferred. This way students receive feedback through processing activities that take place during class, reducing the need for teachers to provide extensive written feedback on student work.

In a flipped teaching system, teachers are more important than ever and are often required to be more involved than in a traditional system. They must determine when and how to transfer direct instruction from the group to the individual learning space, and how to maximize face-to-face time between teacher and student. The real question teachers should ask themselves is not whether they should adopt a flipped classroom didactic system, but how they can take advantage of the system to help students gain conceptual understanding as well as procedural skills when required. During their time in the classroom, teachers are constantly observing their students, providing them with immediate feedback, and constantly assessing their work. Teachers are reflective in their practice, network with each other to improve their craft, accept constructive criticism, and tolerate controlled disorder in the classroom. Although teachers remain very important, they take on less visible roles in the flipped classroom.

A major challenge in applying the flipped classroom method lies in finding high-quality video materials, which often requires considerable effort and time on the part of the teacher. It is extremely important to develop customized resources that will carefully support students' preparation for classes, offering them quality information outside the classroom. However, the possible lack of interest, desire and motivation of teachers to use the technology is likely to be one of the problems that will be experienced in connection with the spread of the flipped classroom system.

Lack of access to resources and insufficiently developed digital skills of students can represent serious obstacles

for its successful application in teaching. At a time when most students own computers, smartphones, tablets or some other device, some students do not have these devices. If all students have devices that they would use for education, in rural parts of the country the problem may be the lack of Internet or low Internet speed. Hence, an increasingly common concern with the flipped classroom system is the potential widening of the "digital divide" between those with access to technology and those without, although this is not an insurmountable obstacle and it can be overcome with a little creativity and resourcefulness.

All of these shortcomings point to the need for adequate planning, resources and support to maximize the benefits of this approach. The flipped classroom has the potential to be an extremely effective method when used with an understanding of its strengths and limitations. For successful implementation, teachers should put effort into creating high-quality materials for out-of-class learning, and also consider how to actively communicate with students to support them and keep them motivated. In addition, it is necessary to ensure access to technology and resources for all students to avoid inequalities in access to education.

Examples of possible activities

- 1) video material for grammar instruction: before the class, students watch video lectures on grammatical rules, and in the classroom, they work on exercises and engage in activities that reinforce their understanding
- 2) reading assignments: before the class, students read literature passages, and in the classroom, they engage in discussion, analysis, and critical thinking related to the readings
- 3) listening comprehension: before the class, students listen to podcasts, interviews, or short audio clips, and in the classroom, they engage in discussions, vocabulary development, and activities based on the listening material
- 4) student-created content: before the class, students create multimedia presentations, blogs, or videos on a particular topic or literary work, and in the classroom, they present and discuss their creations
- 5) creative writing: before the class, students write prompts or essay topics, and in the classroom, they provide feedback, conduct peer reviews, and engage in writing where they can collaborate and improve their writing skills

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HOW STUDENT-CREATED VIDEOS KILLED MONOTONY IN MY CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The article offers theoretical and practical ideas and advice on how to integrate student-created videos in lessons. It presents two uses of student-created videos and explores multiple benefits of the activity from creating material for CLIL or English for specific purposes and empowering students to become digitally literate to enhancing creativity and motivation and making lessons more dynamic.

Keywords: video creation, upper secondary education, technology integration, English for specific purposes, digital literacy, peer feedback.

Introduction

Teaching English in upper secondary school programs of computer science and electrical engineering, the increasing demand to include 21st century skills in our curriculum, and the experience of distance learning lessons in Covid time, encouraged me to ponder, design and assign an activity that would address the needs of my students. Gradually, the initial intuitive “free-style” beginnings turned into more structured assignments. The activity taught me the importance of planning ahead and giving clear instructions to students.

After outlining theoretical premises and practical ideas of integrating student-created videos in lessons, I will focus on two uses or projects which will be supported with background information and advantages for students.

Integrating student-created videos in lessons – theoretical premises

Before assigning a task, the teacher should consider the following concepts: purpose, context, reward, and educational goal.

In the case of my students, the purpose of creating videos was literally to display instructions or demonstrate how to do something and to retell an experience. There are, of course, other uses, such as retelling a story, recording a speech or debate, a book or article review, a tech tutorial, a project log, an advertisement, etc.

Next, I believe that videos per se without a clear context can hardly serve any educational purposes. Thus, as with other kinds of tasks, it is wise to assign it while discussing

a specific topic or practicing a certain skill. This way, students can relate to it better and find it relevant to their daily life, hence be more eager to accomplish it. However, often it is the reward or bonus that propels students into action. For example, my students were rewarded with a grade and points on a test paper.

Moreover, a video or a short film achieves its educational purpose when the process of teaching or learning is enhanced and augmented, which means it is more efficient and the students more challenged. According to the SAMR model of technology integration (Terada, 2020), there is no functional improvement if an activity merely substitutes another method, e.g., if a video is a direct substitute for a Powerpoint presentation. Again, the teacher should evaluate if or how incorporating technology improves the educational goal. For instance, you would probably not ask your students to create a video essay instead of writing it on a piece of paper or in a Word document, or would you? Also, overuse of the activity should be avoided, as it might result in monotony and boredom for both the students and the teacher.

Finally, in a secondary technical or vocational study program, the teacher is supposed to cover a certain number of lessons in CLIL or English for specific purposes. This activity can provide for it as it includes valuable field-based vocabulary, grammatical structures, and functions. These elements are embedded in the stages of the process: from the teacher's instructions on creating a video, students designing it and presenting it, to their classmates evaluating it.

Integrating student-created videos in lessons – practical advice and ideas

“My manual” on how to assign the task and how to approach a video presentation in class relates to: content elements and assessment criteria, tool choice, peer feedback and activities in class before and after watching the video.

First of all, when presenting the task to the students, it is vital that the teacher gives clear instructions regarding the content and assessment criteria. This should preferably be done early enough, giving the students at least two weeks. As it is important that students know exactly what information to include in a video, they should be given a

list of content elements. Also, the teacher should explain how information is organized and presented. The teacher should also inform them about assessment criteria, e.g., the number of points they achieve for a specific element of the content or the number of points they lose if they do not include that element. It definitely adds value to the task if the teacher manages to develop the grading criteria together with their students, or if students formulate the grading criteria by themselves.

Secondly, bearing in mind that the youth of today are comfortable with all things digital, I feel that the choice of tools should be left to them. Our secondary school students, especially our computer science students, have a wider knowledge than many teachers do, of what filming and editing apps to use and are more skillful in using them. On the other hand, a primary school teacher should select a suitable user-friendly tool for their pupils.

After the video has been presented in class, the feedback session starts, in which students provide oral or written feedback on their classmates' work. The teacher then summarizes their oral evaluation or collects feedback cards and ensures that all the content and grading criteria have been considered. Thus, at this stage, the teacher is solely a medium who channels students' feedback. In my opinion, formulating the grade or sum of points gives the students a feeling that they are overseeing the process of grading.

Additionally, video projection lessons could be equipped with pre- and post-viewing activities. The teacher or the students could design Kahoot quizzes or questions in Google Forms or the like that assess students' prior knowledge or comprehension. A video projection could also be followed by a class debate, discussion, or group work.

Use 1: Internship/ practical training through work video report

The project of retelling practical training through work was first assigned two academic years ago. In March 2021, before my third-grade electronics students received practical training and work experience at a company, they were told that they would create a video report based on it. In the form of a recorded speech, it had to contain the following elements: the name of the company, its location, what the company produces, what tasks or activities they performed at the company, what they learnt and what they liked best. They also needed to include the company's logo and photos or videos of the company premises and work processes. The length of the video was set from 30 seconds to 1 minute maximum. We also agreed beforehand that the video would correspond to 10% of the grade in the upcoming test paper. They were supposed to upload their videos to a Google Drive folder and show them during Zoom lessons and then regular

'live' lessons. After the video presentation, each "author" was given feedback by his classmates, who stated what they liked best, and what could be improved. All the students produced a video, yet not all of them obtained all the points or maximum percentage for they did not include all the elements.

I repeated the project this academic year, in October 2022, with the third-grade computer science students. This time the video report could gain them 20% of the grade on their test paper. Namely, it was longer, at least one minute long, and it included additional content elements: the importance of the company for the local community or region, payment, and the relationships between workers. Again, all the students uploaded their videos to my Google Drive folder, however, not all of them included all the content elements.

GRADING CRITERIA

- **company information:** name, what it produces/does, importance for the region/ local community **6 P (6 %)**
 - **tasks** you did/performed, what learnt, what liked best **6 P (6 %)**
 - **photos** **4 P (4 %)**
 - **company logo** **1 P (1 %)**
 - **vocabulary and grammar** **3 P (3 %)**
- Points/percentage total: **20 P (20 %)**

Figure 1: Content elements for practical training through work video report 2022

CONTENT

- **company information:** name, what it produces/does, importance for the region/ local community
 - **tasks** you did/performed, what learnt, what liked best
 - **photos** (company, offices, tasks, colleagues?)
 - **company logo**
- (department you worked at, payment, working conditions, working hours,...)

Figure 2: Grading criteria for practical training through work video report 2022



Figure 3: A screenshot from a student's practical training through work video report 2022

Creating practical training through work video reports proved beneficial for my students in many ways.

First, struggling students could write their speech and practice as much as they wanted to before recording it. Moreover, students enriched their vocabulary and deepened their field-based knowledge. Since they wanted to explain the subject matter to their classmates, they first needed to understand it.

Regarding technology, some students displayed excellent editing skills.

Unexpectedly, the topic of sociological issues was mentioned by few students. In their video, a student talked about the local economy, claiming it is of huge importance that a company provides jobs for the local community. Another one mentioned interpersonal relationships, declaring good relationships between workers and proper working conditions boost a company's production.

Finally, the majority of students had certain expectations of peer feedback and were eager to receive a positive or relevant evaluation of their work from their classmates.

Use 2: Video recipe

The video recipe is an example of "how to do something", by giving instructions. It usually complements the topic of food, more exactly, preparing food, being an upgrade of a written recipe. I have been assigning this task to the final graders for more than ten years.

The students could opt between two forms: a recorded speech, where the procedure is explained by the actor, or with subtitles including instructions. The mandatory elements include the name of the dish, ingredients, instructions and preparation time, and credits consisting the name and surname of the cameraman, editor, actor and author of the recipe. It was also established that the video recipe should incorporate music.

In my class, the task was optional, and a video was given an A grade if it included all the content elements and contained mainly correct intermediate-level grammar and vocabulary. Before showing it in class, the students would send it or share it with me, and if necessary, they were asked to correct grammar or vocabulary or add missing information.

After a student shared a video recipe, the teacher and classmates would interview them. Questions included what filming and editing software they selected and their reasons for it, where they found the music, why they selected a specific song or tune, what the most difficult and the easiest task was, and finally, what task they enjoyed doing best. Then, the classmates reflected on what they liked best and what could be improved. We could afford to have longer interviews due to the small number of video recipes produced by the students.

Another follow-up activity could be a group project in which students search for the origins of recipes. Alternatively, the student presenting the recipe could prepare a gap-fill task and while watching, their classmates complete the gaps.



Figure 4: A screenshot from a student's video recipe in 2021 - instructions



Figure 5: A screenshot from a student's video recipe in 2021 - credits

II. Instructions

Choose the best option.

First _____ the nettles. *

- wash
- pick
- select

Then _____ the herbs. Keep the nettles and other herbs separate. *

- grind
- mince
- chop

Figure 6: A screenshot from a Google form exercise 2022

An advantage of creating video recipes includes the revision of vocabulary, grammar, and functions such as food items, units of measure, giving instructions, or using the passive voice.

Secondly, weaker students are given an opportunity to prove themselves to their classmates. They can use spell-checking tools on instructions in subtitles or practice their speech multiple times before recording themselves.

Next, experimenting with sci-fi sound and visual effects, including hilarious comments, or selecting proper letter font and size, photos, shots, sound, and music, some students showed high levels of creativity, imagination and humour.

Students' digital literacy skills were as well developed, since they had to select a proper filming and editing application or tool, insert subtitles and captions, credits, or opt for a piece of music that is not protected by copyright law and integrate it into the video, etc.

The conversations that followed the video viewings offered fascinating ethnographic details, for example, other variants of the recipe, the importance of local ingredients, and the role of traditional recipes in our diets.

Lastly, an interesting fact is that when introduced to the task, almost every student was enthusiastic to prepare their own video recipe. Later, however, the initial determination would decrease, leaving only a few students presenting the video in class. Therefore, the assignment seems to spark curiosity and motivation, yet as it is time-consuming, taking 5 or more hours to produce it, only few accomplish it.

The only negative aspect regarding the videos, in my experience, is that it triggers hunger, especially when viewed and discussed before the lunch break.

Conclusion

In their videos, the students presented instructions and retold personal experiences. Among the many benefits, they deepened their knowledge of field-specific vocabulary, practiced describing processes and tasks, and practiced giving instructions. They therefore present a valuable source for CLIL or English for specific purposes. To give the activity more importance, the video content could be used to prepare students for the oral part of the 'matura', 'vocational matura' exam or another kind of final examination.

What is more, the activity can equip students with digital literacy skills. Before designing and producing video materials, they need to find a suitable filming and editing application and learn how to use it. As a result, students become competent in creating digital content. When they share it with the teacher, e.g. via Google Drive, they revise or learn how to share digital content.

Then while presenting the videos in class - in front of their peers and answering their questions, they overcome some stage fright and improve their performance skills.

My students also helped each other with technical issues such as choosing a proper filming app, shooting a speech, inserting captions, etc. Additionally, they provided peer feedback in Zoom or 'live' lessons, all of which belong to collaborative learning.

Finally, by adding sociological and ethnographic features, witty remarks and humour to their videos, students gave wings to creativity and imagination and initiated in-depth class discussions.

To conclude, in the process of video creation, the students were challenged, absorbed in their work and active. Watching videos in class proved to be more entertaining and attention-grabbing than listening to a student reading an account. Therefore, I believe that from time to time the students should be given the chance to learn and be entertained at the same time.

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Erasmus + mobility project in Ireland

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First, let me introduce myself! I work as an English and German teacher at the Vladimir Nazor Primary School in the lovely picturesque village of Trenkovo near Velika. If I had to describe myself in one short sentence, I would probably say something along the lines of being highly focused on learning in all walks of life, personal and professional. It's no secret that applying for and taking part in an Erasmus+ project has always been one of my hidden desires. Having discussed these types of projects with my colleagues and our headmistress, I came to understand that Erasmus+ projects have a very powerful and broad aim – to strengthen internationalization of education which enriches people's lives and opens their minds. Finally, in the school year 2022/2023 we put together a team of enthusiastic colleagues and wrote our first-ever Erasmus+ project proposal. The name of our project is School – the place we love and where we are welcome!



I visited the beautiful breathtaking Ireland and participated in the Europass Teacher Academy training course **Instructional Strategies to Address the Diverse Needs of All Students** delivered by the one and only Jackie McCann. Dublin is an energetic, and culturally rich city. I enjoyed visiting its excellent eateries, beautiful parks, and spectacular tourist attractions in my free time. In this 30-hour structured course, which took place from Monday, 27th March to Friday, 31st March, the participants who were from many European countries (Spain, Italy, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, etc.) explored the basic principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the interrelationship between Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI). While UDL is an over-



arching framework for designing effective lessons aimed at meeting diverse learner needs, DI is a teaching approach in which teachers tailor lessons based on learners' strengths, preferences, interests and struggles. This course was a perfect choice for teachers who want to learn more about creating an accessible educational framework that caters for all students' educational and social needs. The six steps to planning successful UDL lessons are: having clear SMART learning goals, considering learner diversity and assessment variability, selecting effective methods, materials, and media that add value, assessing teaching and learning by means of flexible, informative assessments and improving student learning by modifying fu-



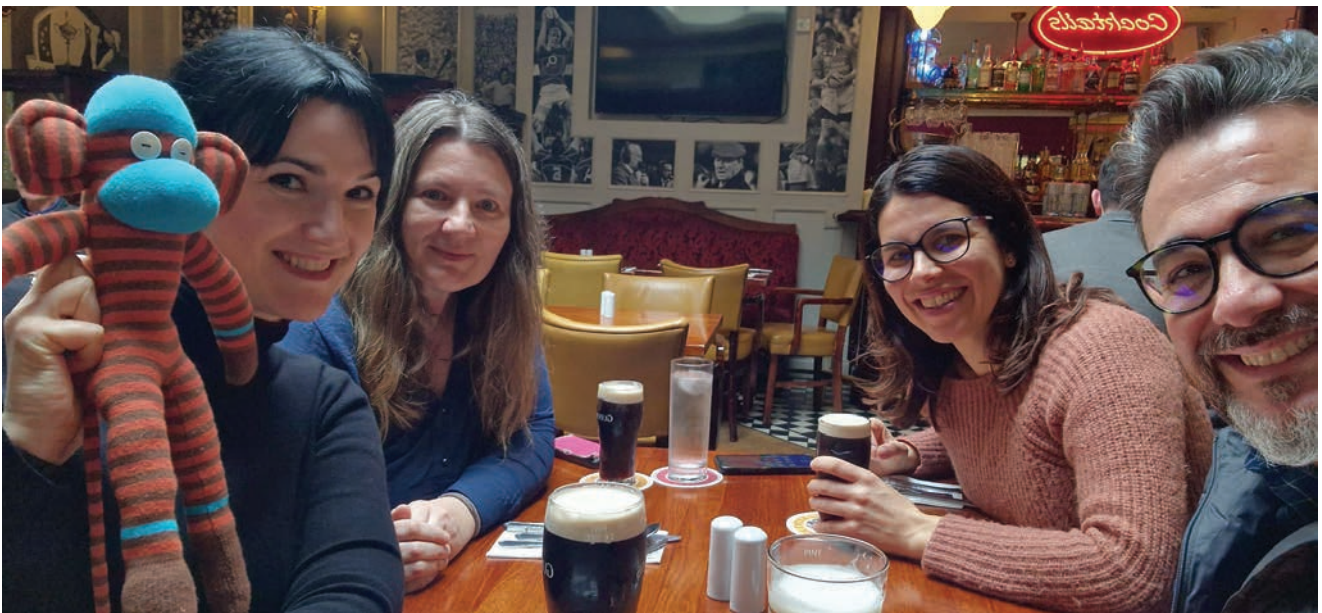
ture lessons. In this course, we explored many interesting practice techniques, and strategies, such as the Orange dilemma activity, Creating a packing list if fleeing from home was a necessary activity or Everyone who...(likes



a noisy environment) (go to the left corner) activity, for promoting active participation and motivation in today's diverse classrooms. Additionally, we built our understanding of learners' preferences, strengths, and diverse needs and how they impact teaching and learning (diversity bingo). Moreover, by working in pairs, we applied UDL principles and Differentiation techniques to improve some of our previous lesson designs and support high levels of en-



gagement for all learners. I plan on promoting and implementing diversity and inclusion activities not only in my classroom but also with my colleagues because they help to build a happier workplace. I intend to pay even greater attention to the needs of my learners and implement activities such as the Kapla game, rethinking SMART goals, and Potato activity in order to address their learning and variability. I highly recommend this course!



discovering the appearance of Vashti's drawings, Vashti herself, her teacher and the young boy. Listening and reading along in this way during the second session enables students to actively engage with the text and visuals presented in the story. Otherwise, the focused participation might not occur in later listening instances because of the potential lack of engagement during subsequent readings.

You can also practice vocabulary through various digital/interactive games (Wordwall, Learning Apps, Kahoot). If necessary, you can also pre-teach vocabulary. After students have engaged in substantial vocabulary practice, they are well-prepared to retell the story by using handouts with sequencing words: First, Next, Then, After that, Finally. This is a great method to foster both oral and written language as students practice retelling the story again and again. Teachers can also challenge students to practice their language skills by incorporating low-frequency words in the text, but also phrases, collocations and complex tenses. After mastering the story's vocabulary and sequence of events, students can explore the characters in greater detail. Character analysis in reading comprehension significantly contributes to understanding a story's depth. It promotes empathy, as students connect with characters' emotions and motivations. This deepens comprehension and fosters critical thinking, making reading a richer experience for young learners. Vashti starts out as an angry little girl who makes an angry dot. Yet over time, she changes. While practicing adjectives describing a character, teachers can also introduce opposites and practice word formation: pleasant-unpleasant, happy-sad, imaginative-unimaginative, responsible-irresponsible... A Venn diagram proves highly beneficial as a valuable visual tool for character analysis in this context, enabling easy comparison between Vashti's characteristics at the beginning and end of the story. Moreover, it highlights the overlapping traits that remained consistent throughout the narrative. This visual representation effectively illustrates the development of Vashti's character.

The story can further be practiced through personalized tasks. A great idea is the "This is me" activity. Students draw themselves on a small round piece of paper and pass their paper to the person beside them. The next student writes a positive adjective describing the peer and passes the paper along. In the end, these papers, showcasing students' positive traits, are displayed in the classroom. Another effective activity is "Making connections": the teacher asks questions: "Describe how Vashti felt when she thought she couldn't draw. How did you feel? Describe your feelings at that time." This activity encourages students to relate the story to their own experiences, fostering deeper comprehension and empathy.

There are also other cross-curricula activities that teachers can introduce in the classroom in order to teach pupils empathy. Encourage students to create their own dot-inspired poster or artwork and display it somewhere in the classroom. Students and teachers can also wear something with a polka dot pattern or listen to the Dot Song and do TPR movements together. Another great idea is introducing Wassily Kandinsky's artworks "Circles" and "Circles in a Circle" where Kandinsky represents art as a form of personal expression. In "The Dot," Vashti begins her artistic journey by making a simple dot. This concept aligns with Kandinsky's belief that art can start with basic shapes and forms.

Conclusion:

Teachers play a vital role in empowering students' self-confidence and empathy by: creating a supportive environment, encouraging individuality and self-expression, offering constructive feedback, promoting collaboration and teamwork, modeling empathy, incorporating empathy into the curriculum, and engaging in community service and service-learning projects. International Dot Day is a special time in schools to help students learn about empathy. By celebrating creativity and self-expression, teachers can make schools more understanding and caring. Activities that involve working together and sharing stories help students celebrate their uniqueness and understand the different viewpoints of their classmates. This helps create a group of kind and caring individuals who can make good contributions to their communities and the world.



Learning and Teaching Strategies for Young Learners of EFL

Melinda Tupek

I have been an elementary school teacher for over 34 years and it has been my experience that teaching young learners can be very rewarding, yet at the same time, quite demanding. On the one hand, young children are naturally inquisitive, energetic and eager to please, however on the other hand, they have a short attention span and tend to forget things relatively quickly. Hence incorporating appropriate teaching strategies to suit their needs and level of development is vital.

According to Piaget, very young learners are cognitively at a stage of concrete thinking and cannot understand abstract thought. Therefore, it is very difficult for them to understand topics such as grammar which are based on abstract concepts. This suggests that we must not teach a lot of unconnected rules which must be memorized in order to be applied. Instead, we should focus on the meaning of language and use concrete examples which are familiar to them. In this way, grammar should be taught in chunks which is connected to the vocabulary and to the context. This approach makes sense to young learners and one way of achieving this goal is through the use of repeated patterns where the patterns are obtained from a comprehensible and familiar context. Young children, unlike adolescents or adults, have the ability to work out most basic rules for themselves. This is why it is important to use things like songs, chants, and stories with repetition. The popular children's book "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" (Bill Martin Jr / Eric Carle, 1996.) is a prime example because it repeats the question "What do you see?" and the structure "I see a ___ (colour + animal) looking at me." By repeating and playing with this pattern, the children internalize it.

Young learners also need a lot of visuals (like pictures, colour, and flash cards), concrete materials (like toys, and objects) and movement (due to their high energy level). T.P.R. or Total Physical Response should be incorporated into each lesson through the use of mime (acting out, or pretending), games, action songs, and incorporating movement into chants and rhymes. Not only is this type of teaching suited to their cognitive development, but it is also fun! Children perceive this type of learning as playing, not work. If learning is playful and fun, children

will want to repeat it over and over again, thus reinforcing the concepts being taught. They develop a love of language, they want to learn and to be successful, and it paves the road for life-long learning. This type of teaching is also memory friendly. Repetition and review, colour, sound, objects, rhythm, rhymes, and movement, all aid in developing a child's long-term memory of the concepts.

Young children also need to feel safe, secure and have some level of success in order to take on new challenges in language learning. Teachers should therefore create such an environment in their classrooms. In order to achieve this, teachers should be patient, incorporate lots of games, pictures, and movement in their lessons. However, it is important that children clearly know the rules because good discipline will allow everyone to have fun with the activities without things getting out of hand. Discipline can be achieved simply by keeping them busy with interesting learning tasks and activities. Tasks should be flexible so that all pupils can accomplish them at their own rate and according to their individual abilities. For example, when learning about farm animals in the first grade, the children can be asked to draw the animals. Most will draw the animals while some may draw and copy the beginning letter of each animal, and a few may be able to draw and copy the whole word. They should be allowed to work together on some tasks, and individually on others. Work can be checked with peers before they call the teacher, this saves a lot of time and students must look over the work more than once. Yet they don't realize it and they feel important because they are helping someone.

Children like to know the rules, to follow routines, to be treated kindly, to be smiled at, to be listed to, to be treated fairly, and to feel safe. Reading, singing, or chanting in unison allows them the courage to try without being afraid of making a mistake (because if they do, no one will hear them). I believe that if a few minor mistakes are made, they should be ignored, in order to develop a sense of security and to focus on the concept to be learned because making mistakes means that they are making learning steps in their cognitive development. In addition, learners need time to answer; the younger the

child, the more wait time they will need in formulating an answer to your task or question.

Most young children enjoy actively participating, but there are always those who are quiet learners, or those who are afraid to participate, especially at the beginning of the school year. If this is the case, give them time for this 'silent period'. Give them time to adjust and don't force them, they will come along better with gentle coaxing rather than a hard push. Just listening to the language provides useful opportunities for the learner to pick up the language. Furthermore, puppets and toys can be used when speaking for it is easier for them to talk to their toys rather than to a new stranger/teacher. Once they do start joining in, I pretend not to notice. Remember, they are shy and don't want attention drawn to them. Let them get into the routine of participating, then quietly praise them when the other children are working. Everyone likes to be praised, and every student is good at something. You just have to find it.

Developing speaking skills is a challenge as well, but one which everyone can achieve. Teachers should begin with pre-communicative activities such as listening, T.P.R., chants, rhymes, songs, or a reconstruction of the text. The second step is simulations which are games, dialogues, mime, role playing and drama. These help to review the vocabulary and are important for they develop deep positive emotional attitudes within the children which has the power to facilitate pronunciation and language development. And the last step is real communication where there is classroom discourse (even if the pupils are only capable of using a few English words at this stage), creating stories together (where teachers draw the vocabulary out of the pupils), and allowing them to say whatever they want as long as they attempt it in English. If this formula is followed, every child will be able to experience success.

Music-Based Creative Writing

Danijela Radić, English and French language teacher, teacher adviser

Ivana Bokavšek, English and Italian language teacher, teacher adviser

Music has an enormous capacity to start a complex imaginative system that is often asleep due to our daily lives and routines. Since imaginative thinking develops different levels of one's cognitive processes, from sharp perception and memorization abilities to focusing attention therefore, it is obvious that music can be a useful medium to ignite that spark for writing. It is inevitable to find yourself driven into the world of imagination just by listening to your favourite soundtrack. Certainly, you have a favourite type of music that gets you into a state of flow.

When it comes to "illustrating" feelings and images in a written form, then creative writing could become quite demanding and often the least enjoyable way of expression. Teaching writing seems more challenging then, but it can be enhanced and facilitated by different techniques that motivate students to be imaginative and productive in their written expression. "Seasoned" by music, writing becomes an enjoyable activity that encourages students to dive into the world of infinite creativity.

Music has the power to make us dream and help us express our feelings, impressions and images we see. It inspires us to imagine the world we are in and enhances our writing ability; it transfers us into the writing zone! Music can be applied in all phases of the writing process: the pre-writing stage, where students get involved in the topic, by recognizing theme songs or a film genre, to setting the scene, then in the development of the story, and finally the climax of the story. When this process is reinforced by teamwork, then teaching and learning results are guaranteed! The gamification part comes to its peak when students find themselves competing for the best storytelling. They have the opportunity to participate in the script competition for the best lifetime offer...a screenplay adaptation!

The following refers to all parts of a lesson or more, depending on how much you are going to focus on the whole process of getting your students to work on their writing driven by listening to music or how well your students can react to these learning steps, that could be taken as essential elements of a lesson plan. The main objectives of this lesson are: to use descriptive language and to write a short story for a film magazine competition based on a music extract. The gamification element, followed by necessary peer assessment, will add additional value to this lesson if students are told that the best story is going to be adapted into a new film by a famous film studio.

The word limit ranges from 80 to 100 words if targeting students in the final class at elementary school. You can adjust this number to the level you teach.

SETTING THE SCENE

Step 1: 1st listening

Every lesson should start with a motivating warming up, and this one includes some fun elements. Start with listening to different music extracts that should be matched to their film genre equivalents. It is recommendable to use only royalty-free samples that can be downloaded from this excellent website, Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/no/music/search/trailer/>.

Now, your students are ready to set the scene. Since the most difficult part is the introductory one, they need to make their reader picture the scene before drawing characters in the main action. After listening to a music extract that you have previously prepared, they need to imagine a film trailer. This phase makes the students more warmed-up for a writing task and their imagination is now already lit, enough to make them wish to "see" more.

Step 2: 2nd listening

A brainstorming activity fits very well here in this stage, and if it is done using a digital tool like Answergarden <https://answergarden.ch/>, the more interesting it can become. Students like to see each other's answers and this brainstorming cloud needs only to be refreshed as your students submit their answers. It is shared easily by the link or QR code, and is accessible in the same way, by clicking on the link or scanning the QR code. You do not need to register to use this tool, and the same applies to your students, so, in other words, it is GDPR worry-free! You can also make your students analyse the answers by asking them why some answers appear a certain number of times. Students listen to the same piece of music and write down words (i.e. adjectives, verbs, nouns) that will help them set the scene.

Step 3: 3rd listening

Play the same music sample again, let your students use the list of the words from the brainstorming cloud to write an opening sentence using the Past Simple and the Past Continuous Tense.

Step 4: 4th listening

Students, while listening to the same music extract, find the answers to the basic questions:

Who? What? Where? When? How?

Step 5:

WRITING A SHORT STORY PLAN

At this point, students fill in the columns with their ideas as they are exposed to the same piece of music.

Time	Place	People	Events	Climax Event	Ending	Feelings

All the tasks are meant to be done in pairs or groups of three to maintain students' motivation and engagement at a higher level.

Step 6: WRITING A STORY




This phase is supposed to be completed for homework. Students need to write a short story with a limited number of words using the opening sentence and their notes based on the music extract they were listening to at school. They need to think of a captivating title as well. The title should be short, simple, attractive, and well-matching.

A three-part structure is expected here: introduction (one-two sentences would be enough to set the scene since the students are not skilful enough to clearly recognize the blurry line between the introduction and the main part by themselves), main part, where the events need to be described and retold. Here, direct your students to build the plot, like weaving a fine cloth, mixing the tempo of the plot: a short, sudden action with a long, continuous action to get the sense of dramatic exchange in the story and keep the reader's attention, and finally the ending where the story comes to its closure and the writer's feelings are finally revealed as well as the reader's. Here, again, more than two sentences are not acceptable, because the third one can easily be repetitive, and repetition needs to be avoided at any rate.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND SELF-CHECK

Prepare a formative assessment rubric with all elements that are going to be assessed: structure, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation and their descriptors. Be sure the descriptors are easy to understand and student-oriented.

Writing a short story for screen adaptation (80-100 words)

A formative assessment rubric to assess your writing skills	 Well done!	 Good, but more effort is necessary!	 Help needed and more work as well!
Grammar (Past Simple / Past Continuous)	The Past Simple and the Past Continuous are mostly used correctly.	There are some mistakes in usage of the Past Simple and the Past Continuous.	There are many mistakes in usage of the Past Simple and the Past Continuous.
Spelling and punctuation (CUPS)	Most of the words are spelled correctly. There are no or just few mistakes in punctuation.	There are some mistakes in spelling and punctuation.	There are many mistakes in spelling and punctuation.
Vocabulary (a variety of adjectives, adverbs, linking words: while, and, but, suddenly, eventually)	I have followed the writing plan completely. I've added a lot of new elements- adjectives, adverbs and linking words.	I have mostly followed the writing plan. I have added new elements- adjectives, adverbs. I have used some of the linking words.	I have partly followed the writing plan. I have added few new elements. I haven't used the linking words.
Structure Title (Introduction/ Main Body/ Conclusion)	The structure is clear and the parts of the story are clearly divided. The word order is correct. All the parts of the topic are present.	The parts of the story are partly divided. The structure is partly clear. Some parts of the topic are present.	The parts cannot be recognized. A precise and clear structure is missing. Most parts of the topic are missing.

It is important to guide the students to their autonomous self-check by giving them instructions on how to do it. Use a nice, catchy abbreviation to make them memorize the elements they always need to be aware of while writing a text: CUPS (capitalization, usage, punctuation, spelling). Tell them to complete the self-check grid after writing the story.

SELF-CHECK

Tick if you have done a certain part.

I have...	
paid attention to the structure of the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>
used the Past Simple and Past Continuous Tense to express different types of action.	<input type="checkbox"/>
double-checked spelling and punctuation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
used vocabulary connected to the topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>

PEER ASSESSMENT

The whole picture of this activity is completed if the gamification part is fulfilled, such as the best story “contest” which can be elegantly done through peer assessment. Since peer assessment is crucial for students’ social skills development and their self-reflection, it should be implemented, if not on a regular basis, at least as frequently as possible, this writing activity naturally ends this way. Here you can also use the digital tool, Tricider <https://www.tricider.com/>, to adjust this process to its fullest for your students. It is also free to use, no registration is needed and it is shared by using the link. Your students are completely active and highly interested in peer assessing, but of course, under the condition that they assess only by following the rubric and using its descriptors. They need to be objective and give their arguments to justify their opinions. They learn how to choose the best option properly and also to vote.

In conclusion, writing requires a well-prepared teaching plan, and if it is delivered to the students in a motivating and inspiring “package”, then learning outcomes are sure to be obtained, which is every teacher’s priority.

THE USEFULNESS OF TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Nina Mom, English teacher at Primary School Draga Kobala Maribor, Slovenia

«Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.»

-Flora Lewis

As teachers in schools, we have witnessed how the emergence of new technologies can have a positive impact on learning a foreign language. Teachers and students suddenly have many new tools at their disposal for learning for all language abilities. Of course, technological progress can also have a negative impact on language learning if it isn't used properly.

Shadiev (2023) writes that education is being revolutionized in the modern age and the field of language learning is no exception. Many factors impact education and transform it into something new. For example, the emergence of new educational technologies and the development of existing ones have speeded up the transformation of pedagogical practices in the context of language learning. Emerging learning technologies refer to tools, concepts, innovations, and advancements. Examples of emerging education technologies include artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality, robotics, learning analytics tools, and adaptive learning systems. One of the most promising applications of emerging learning technologies is personalized language learning. Machine-learning algorithms can analyse data on student performance, allowing teachers to gain a deeper understanding of individual students' strengths and weaknesses. With this knowledge, teachers can tailor their instruction to meet the unique needs of each student. In addition, natural language processing and computer vision can create interactive and engaging learning experiences such as virtual reality simulations and intelligent tutoring systems.

Gary Motteram, editor of the British Council publication, explains how the arrival of digital technologies in the classroom has helped learning. Motteram argues that digital technologies are ideally placed to help teachers working with learners, and learners working independently, which makes their language development possible. We are talking here about doing things with language rather

than just learning about language. We must engage with other people using language and try to make meaning together. Whenever we speak or write something, if we don't produce language with someone else in mind, we have no way of knowing whether others can understand what we say or write. Of course, we need to read and listen as well, but unless we progress to this later stage, we can't complete the process.

Furthermore, Motteram talks about the ability to write. If we take writing as a starting point, technology in the form of word processors allows us to work at the language. We go through a process of creating and re-creating text until it is fully comprehensible to others and is accurate. We can create a draft, show it to others and, based on feedback, can make changes to improve the text. The tools can also help us by showing that our spelling or grammar needs work, too. Technology makes this much easier and makes it more likely that learners will engage with the editing process to produce the highest-quality text that they can.

Motteram also talks about the ability of speaking. Trying to find ways for people to engage in meaningful spoken language practice in a class can be very challenging. Linking your class to other classes around the world, using tools such as video conferencing, can give learners a reason to ask questions and then to try to understand the responses. It might also provide support for the teacher, too. The technology mediates the process, getting language out there and giving feedback that shows whether someone has or hasn't understood what you have said.

Motteram discusses the issues that can put teachers off using technology in language learning. There is the question of the reliability of new technologies for classroom use. This can discourage teachers from making use of technology as often as they would want to. Its compounded by the fact that, if these teachers are working in schools, they are faced with classes of learners who may, on the surface at least, appear to be more digitally competent than their teachers are. On the other hand, technological progress makes it possible to improve English skills, you just need to take advantage of the opportunity.

Cafuta (2010) states that children adopt new media much faster than adults. Sometimes it happens that a child shows an adult how to use a certain medium. However, we must be aware that children are naive and vulnerable and therefore need protection and adult supervision, as everything shown in the media is not suitable for children. Cafuta further explains that depending on the goal of the activity, we distinguish three ways of using computers. These are learning, preparation for later professional needs and use in free time (playing games, drawing...).

As teachers, it is probably best if we use modern technologies thoughtfully and in moderation in the learning process. We should not forget the old analogue way of teaching, which certainly has its advantages. Students probably gain the most from combined teaching methods.

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Teaching and learning through stories and poetry

Marinela Boras, prof. mentor

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As students of Trade and Commercial School "Davor Milas" Osijek participated in "HUPE in Storyland" competition and achieved great results, they decided to present their work at the Open Day that was held on 19th May 2023. There were numerous workshops in various subjects such as Marketing and Entrepreneurship, and one of the foreign language workshops was "Storyland".

Gabrijela Levačić wrote "A little moment of eternity" and was in the top 5 in the category of secondary school and Ante Vekić wrote "A geek and a gal". They decided to read their stories to their peers, students, parents and other interested public. The audience could listen to the most interesting parts of their stories, but they could also visit the

book corner. Books in English were all over the classroom and the students could take one, sit comfortably in the book corner and enjoy reading.

After the reading of the stories, the audience could ask authors questions about the stories so both students talked about their passion for reading, motivation for writing stories and topics of their presented stories. The discussion served not just to motivate students for writing their own stories, but also to motivate them to read books as the new generations unfortunately read less and less.



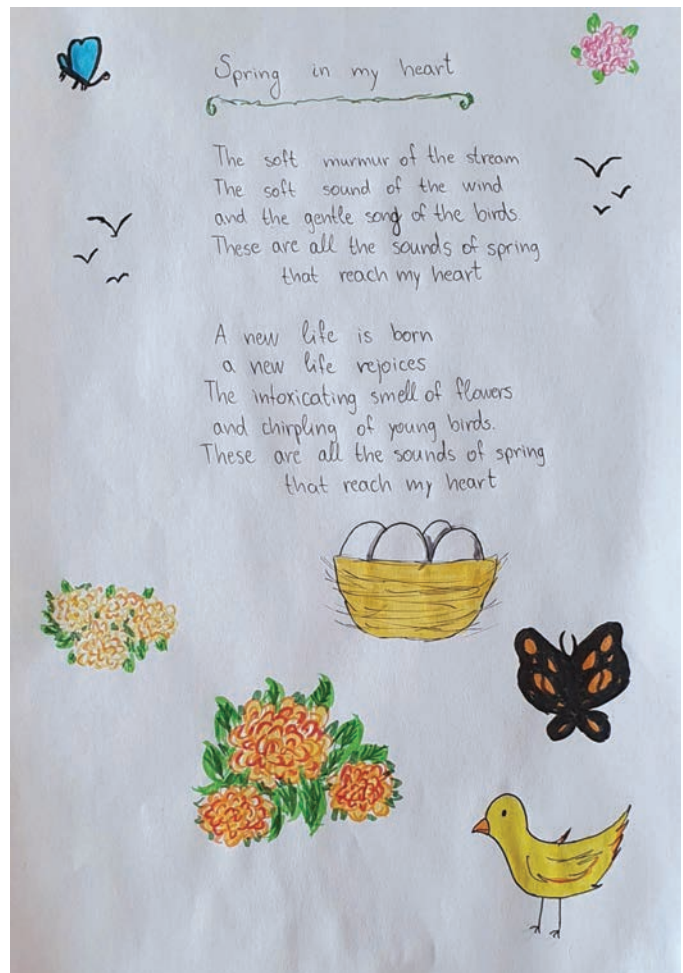
In the school year 2022/2023, students of different classes of Trade and Commercial School "Davor Milas" Osijek learned how to write a story. They had writing workshops during their English lessons. They wrote not only stories, but they also tried writing poetry. As this was their first time of writing poems in English, the topics were love and spring. The results were wonderful poems that were presented on World Poetry Day 2023.

Writing stories and poetry can be used in teaching English as a foreign language so that the students go out of their



comfort zone. They actively learn by trying out something new to them, and the topics can be adapted to every level of English learners.

This is also a good way for shy students to shine as they are usually not fond of presenting, but they can write interesting stories and beautiful poems. As English teachers already use stories in their lessons, I would recommend using poetry. It produces not just great results in learning the English language, but the students can be creative and develop their imagination.



To SOL or not to SOL – is it really a question?

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Those teachers who are lucky enough to attend the 31st HUPE Conference in Poreč will have the opportunity to hear the experience of attending this wonderful course. Teachers who have been at HUPE conferences for years already know everything about SOL. According to their official page, Sharing One Language has existed as an educational charity for over 30 years. It grew into an international school and training centre. SOL is providing support for those teaching and learning English in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe through courses for teachers and students in England and abroad.

The teacher course “Good practice in the English Teaching Classroom” lasted from 2nd to 13th July 2023. The founder and CEO of SOL Grenville Yeo welcomed teachers in London. Teachers from thirteen different countries attended this twelve day course led by Fiona Mauchlin. After living almost 30 years in Spain and teaching English there, this writer, teacher, speaker and consultant is now teaching at



the University of Oxford. She is also successfully training teachers in England and abroad.

Teachers learned about contemporary approaches that share good practice. They spent time in the classroom at Bridge Chambers, but also around beautiful Devon.





On the way from London to Barnstaple they made a few stops – at Stonehenge, Windsor and Salisbury. They had a guided tour of Barnstaple, a lovely town where the whole classroom course was held. They had different tasks in Saunton Sands, Croyde, Clovelly, Ilfracombe, Woolacombe, Lynton, Lynmouth, Tintagel, Hartland Quay and a place of their choice – Exeter, Torquay, Appledore...

Teachers learned about eight main principles of good practice:

1. Students as teachers: the student-led classroom
2. The safe, rich learning environment
3. "The Learning Tree" – from input to output
4. Incorporating transferable skills
5. Authenticity
6. Active learning
7. Collaboration
8. "Whole learning"

Teachers learned that the students learn best not by discussing or practice doing, but by teaching others. They had to brainstorm and plan activities for students, create the tasks that incorporate principles of good practice and present them on the last day of the course. All teachers had wonderful ideas like making a mini museum for primary school students or going on a scavenger hunt for secondary school students.

Other tasks during the course included micro-teaching, active learning, doing collaborative projects, creating quizzes, making videos, using cinema in the classroom, using senses to enhance learning, as well as writing short



stories and poetry which will be published as the Course Proceedings. All of these activities can be applied in the English language classroom.

The SOL courses are highly recommended for all teachers and students who would like to deepen their knowledge, practice their English language skills, learn more about the British culture, meet peers from different European countries and make English teaching and learning fun.

Facilitating communication in a neurodiverse classroom

Josipa Kardum, Osnovna škola Benkovac

Neurodiversity is the diversity of human minds, the infinite variation in neurocognitive functioning within our species (*Neuroqueer Heresis, Nick Walker*). These differences in neurocognitive functioning are a normal human variation that should not be seen as something pathological. There is no “right way” of neurocognitive functioning and the time has come for things to change and for teachers to adapt.

The question is how to adapt to so many demands?

Many teachers nowadays have a diverse population of pupils in their classroom, ranging from ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism etc. There is a belief that with so many “labels” a teacher must develop different teaching styles to accommodate each student. All within each lesson.

This is a massive task to accomplish. We often lack support, information and resources.

What now?

The first thing to do is “ditch the label” and focus on communication. Ditching the label does not mean disregarding the label, it means not putting the pupils in the box that YOU think their label is. Not all pupils with ADHD have poor organizational skills, not all autistic pupils find it difficult to work with others, not all dyspraxia pupils have untidy handwriting etc.

We often assume or expect too little of our pupils due to their “label”.

Try to start small. Thinking of all the accommodations each label needs can be overwhelming. Start by thinking of what your neurodiverse class has in common.

For example, many pupils have similar difficulties/differences that you must keep in mind and try to accommodate. This accommodation will benefit all pupils in the classroom.

When preparing for a lesson also keep in mind that pupils may have problems with working memory – how pupils remember verbal information and/or executive functioning skills – organizing, planning, prioritizing, managing time etc. Just trying to accommodate these two things can make a huge difference.

Communication and language are the core of learning. Communication affects everything that we do, it is both listening and writing.

We may find communication easy but for our neurodiverse pupils it consists of several steps that can be challenging. Let’s break it down:

1. Paying attention to what the person is saying.
2. Understanding what the person is saying.
3. Processing what is being said.
4. Using our language to respond to what was said to us.

We must consider what our neurodiverse pupil needs for communication to be effective.

Here are some ideas for supporting the processing of communication with your neurodiverse pupils:

1. Try giving your pupils a questionnaire about their way of learning.
2. Think of the distractions happening during your lesson and remove them, such as background noise and visual distractions.

The room can be too bright, too dark, too noisy... Think about what can be changed to make a more calming environment.

Sometimes we tend to put too much on our classroom walls and everything that is on our walls becomes just wallpaper, background noise with no purpose. Keep your walls simple, stick to simple language, relevant information and key points.

3. When giving instructions be clear and follow a logical order. Give one instruction at a time.

Open your books on page 56. *Wait.* Read task 1. *Wait.*

It is a good idea to put the outline of your plan on the board.

Brainstorming

Reading p.56

Listening p.57

Writing – notebook

- workbook p.33

Recap

When working cross off what has been done. You can also use symbols instead of words, for example an ear for listening.

4. When asking a question/giving instructions - use names.

Ante, please read the first sentence.

5. Think about whether you are talking too quickly and whether your tone is appropriate- monitor your speech.

Talk slower and use a calm voice.

6. Use visual support when needed.

We tend to use a lot of visual support thinking that it benefits our pupils, but we have pupils that cannot focus with too much visual stimulus.

For some pupils it is necessary. For them you can print out the materials, use flashcards or mind maps.

7. Repeat and simplify.

"If a student does not appear to have understood, it can be tempting for us to immediately try to rephrase what we have said in an effort to help the student understand. However if the language was at an appropriate level for the student, the problem may be that they simply need some additional time to make sense of what they have heard. By rephrasing we may in fact compound the problem by giving the student two different things to process. Allow at least 10 seconds after speaking if the student hasn't yet responded or indicated that they have understood, repeat using the same language. If there is no response after your repetition, then try simplifying what you said." (*The neuro-diverse classroom*, Victoria Honeybourne)

8. Check understanding.

When checking understanding don't ask the students do they understand because the response will probably be a *yes* or a *no*, (most likely *yes*). Encourage pupils to rephrase the instruction/question in their own words.

Marija, can you repeat the instruction (one step at a time)?
Antonio, what was the question?

9. Give your students time/prompts to prepare their answer.

"Give students the option of not answering all the questions when completing comprehension- check exercises from the coursebook. Instead, let them decide which ones they would like to tackle, with the condition that they have to answer an agreed minimum number of questions, perhaps half of those listed." (*Mixed-ability teaching*, Edmund Dudley and Erika Osváth)

10. Use "brain breaks".

"Make a note of how long your class can concentrate for and build a "brain break" when you reach the limit. (...) They can give their brain a short break by:

- standing up and stretching
- doing a different task before returning to their previous one
- closing their eyes and resting their heads on the desk
- massaging their head."

(*Special Educational Needs*, Marie Delaney)

Use checklists.

Don't use checklists just for pupils, use them also for yourself when preparing for a lesson.

Example of a checklist:

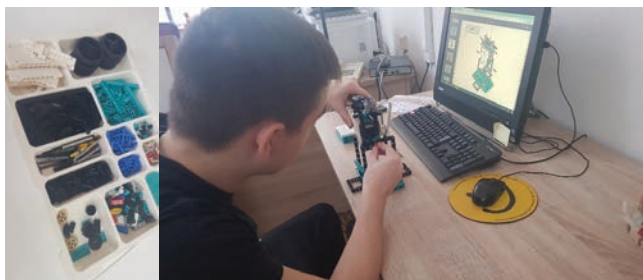
	yes	no
Did I remove all distractions?		
Does my classroom environment help communication?		
Did I speak slowly and clearly?		
Did I give instructions one at a time?		
Did I wait 10 seconds before expecting a response?		
Did I use the pupil's name when asking a question?		
Did I check understanding?		
Did I give my pupil time to prepare their answers?		
Did I use a check list?		
Did I give a "brain break"?		
Did I give my student a checklist?		

STEAM and AI in Srednja škola Prelog

Maja Labaš Horvat i Tanja Baksa, Srednja škola Prelog

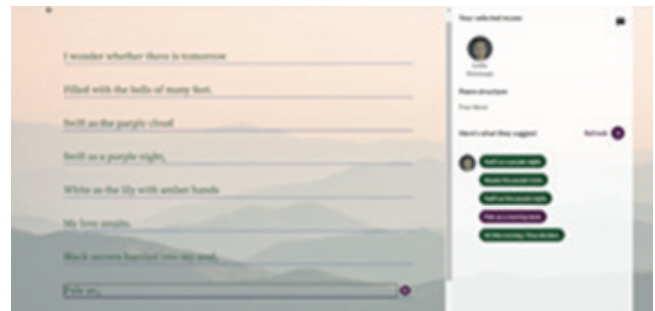


Since we have both been interested in science for some time, we didn't dwell much when working on creating new activities for our students this year. The idea was to incorporate STEAM into our work through English and German classes throughout the entire school year. The year started with the work on robotics and ecology so our hardworking students created a robot which can do some air, soil and water measurements and help preserve our eco-system. We have been working on it for the past four months and are looking forward to the national competition where our students will present Waldy 321 robot to other students and teachers.



Pictures 1 and 2. Waldy 321 in parts and our student Ivan working on assembling it and programming it

Our school has been a part of the ERASMUS+ project Digital transformation with STEAM in a safe environment for a year and a half so we have both visited our project partners and have been working on the creation of a new STEAM curriculum and our idea is to introduce AI to our students through various activities, like using AI for writing poetry, helping our students with grammar and vocabulary of English and German, using it to create art and helping us in our everyday work. We are also introducing ChatGPT to our classrooms and teaching our students to use it for finding data, not trying to find shortcuts in their work.



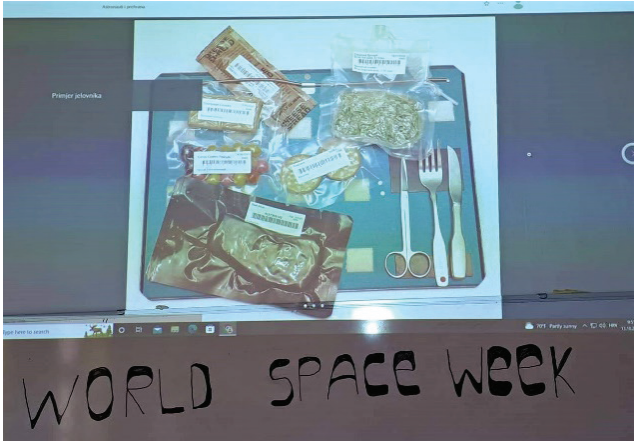
Pictures 3 and 4: Using AI in classes for writing poetry



Picture 5: STEAM project meeting and working with chips and programming

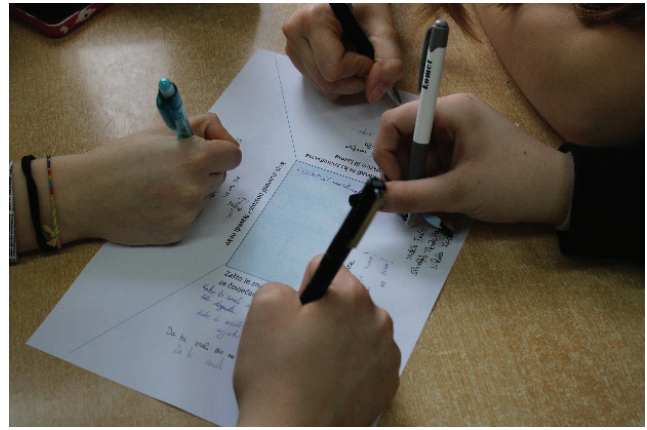
It's an ongoing project and we are currently working on creating short videos which will guide students through our curriculums connected to different areas of STEAM in the classroom.

The students have taken part in World Space Week where they have done some research into activities that are going on with space exploration and have then created their presentations using Storymap tool, which is a part of Arcgis programme, a scientific programme used by companies and scientists around the globe.



Pictures 6 and 7: Space week in our school

We also try to present our activities to other schools, so this year, the idea behind the Science Fair week was to introduce various activities to our students who then became group leaders and do workshops in other schools. The topic was the importance of science in the 21st century, famous inventions and inventors and the role of women in science. The first activity was a placemat with four different questions which led students to the conclusion why science is important for our everyday life. The next assignment was to divide sciences into natural, social and other sciences, where students showed excellent knowledge of the topic and then did a quiz to find out what various sciences study and how we use them in our lives.



Pictures 8 and 9: students working on answering questions and sorting out different types of sciences

Then their job was to connect various inventors to their inventions through a LearningApps matching activity and learn something more about famous female scientists and do a quiz on their inventions. Our group leaders then went to Primary school Prelog and did a workshop with seventh graders which was a real success, so our plan is to conduct something similar in the upcoming school year as well.





Pictures 10-13: student activities

Our final stage of the Science Fair will include a Zoom lecture by scientist Nikola Sakač, who has been a part of the group of scientists who have created a quick test for detecting corona virus and HIV. Students are already working on questions for our guest speaker and are looking forward to other STEAM and AI activities.



KEEPING OUR STUDENTS ACTIVELY ENGAGED – A(N) (IM)POSSIBLE TASK?

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Abstract

Learning becomes more effective when teaching practices support learners to become active agents in their learning. Agentive learners are motivated not only to learn but also to take responsibility for managing the learning process. This article addresses the questions of why and how to include learner agency in EFL classrooms. By incorporating the concept of learner agency teachers can help their students grow in confidence, meet with success, and become lifelong learners.

Keywords: learner agency, L2 teaching, teaching practices

1. Introduction

Nowadays, students are exposed to sensory overload and because of that, they can become exhausted and passive, even (or especially) during classes at school. Many teachers put a lot of effort into getting their students actively engaged by making the tasks interesting or funny, and by including movement and action - sometimes to little or no avail. Another challenge for teachers is students who are less academically successful. What is comforting is that teachers can, through different teaching practices, improve the performance of students who are struggling by giving them the means by which students can take control of their learning process and become more self-directed and effective learners.

This article first discusses the reasons for and benefits of incorporating learner agency into EFL classrooms and continues with introducing different ways of developing learner agency. It illustrates a range of teaching practices on a continuum from low agency to high agency and offers some enabling conditions and example activities. Beyond the classroom, learners can use their agency in positive ways to shape both their personal and professional lives.

2. The concept of learner agency and its importance in EFL classroom

According to Larsen-Freeman et al. (2021), the concept of learner agency refers to the feeling of ownership and

sense of control that students have over their learning. This already sheds some light on the reasons why it is important to develop learner agency: learning becomes more *effective and efficient* when teaching practices support learners to become active agents in their learning. What are the characteristics of agentive learners? Agentive learners are learners who:

- believe that they are in control of their learning and that they have the ability to learn and improve,
- take initiative, seizing and even creating opportunities to learn,
- take risks, confident that they can learn from their mistakes,
- are also resilient; they have the ability to adapt and persevere in order to overcome setbacks,
- take delight in learning.

The important aspect to consider here is the fact that agentive learners take control of their own learning and development which shifts the *perspective of agency* from the teacher *to the student*. It is the student that holds control over learning, not the teacher. One must note that learner agency is not about teachers giving over control to learners - in fact, teacher agency is essential in promoting learner agency. Instead, it is about understanding that learning is more effective and efficient when teaching practices support learners as active agents in their learning. In short, promoting learner agency means not doing for students what they can do for themselves.

Learners can take responsibility for their learning, play an active role in the classroom, and become more confident in their potential. Therefore, we can see that at the root of this policy, there is the *growth mindset*. That means teachers and (with or because of them) students believe they *can improve* and become better at language learning.

The following quote nicely summarizes the main idea of learner agency:

“...it is the learners’ job to work on the language and the teacher’s job to work on the learner.” (Caleb Gattegno in Larsen-Freeman et al., 2021)

3. Classroom activities that help develop learner agency

When designing classroom activities, it is important to keep in mind that all learners have the potential to develop their agency (further) and that all teaching can be designed with learner agency in mind. However, it is not necessary that all activities promote learner agency. Teachers should be aware of the **spectrum of low- to high-agency practices** and use a **blend** of them at different times and for different purposes.

The following sections give examples of activities that promote learner agency. The table in each classroom activity presented shows an example of low and high-learner agency activities.

3.1. Setting S-M-A-R-T goals (Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Relevant – Time-abound)

Setting goals in language learning is very important, namely, students who set their own learning goals have more confidence in taking on challenging tasks and sustaining their learning. Here, students think about their class goals and write them down.

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
Teacher specifies goals, and objectives for the course/ lesson.	Students are invited to set meaningful personal goals in partnership with their teachers.

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Goals We Can Measure

Before individual goal setting, have students think about how to write goals that can be measured. This can be done in small groups or as a class discussion. Begin with an example and then offer a series of goals that cannot be measured. Ask students to reword the goals to make them measurable:

Prompts	Make it measurable	How I will measure
I will do better in Math		
I will get organized		
I will work faster		

- In 5 steps:
1. Brainstorm: at least 3 goals
 2. Are my goals realistic and specific?
 3. How will I decide if I achieved my goal?
How will I measure if I'm successful?
 4. Prioritize your goals
 5. My final list of goals

Write your final goal(s) and how you will measure them below. Aim for three final goals.

My goals	Time frame to complete	Goal measures

3.1.1. Individual goal setting

STUDENT ACTIVITY: Individual Goal Setting

Name: _____

Keeping in mind my strengths and needs:

	My strongest skill	Skills I need help with...
Academic Skills		
Cognitive Skills		
Personal Skills		

What do I want to achieve in ___(subject)___ over the next ___(time period)___?

3.2. Students choose or co-design the topics

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
Content is derived from the curriculum/ course-book.	Students generate their own content.

Content should also be determined by what students find relevant to their own lives. The element of *choice* is very important in establishing learner agency because most students value having choices - even a simple choice, such as being given different topics to choose from when completing a writing task.

E.g.: When discussing music/literature in class a student comes up with an artist/band/novel. The teacher can ask students to bring to class English lyrics from their favourite music artist/group or share an activity that they enjoy, such as reading graphic novels.

3.3. Learner-centered topics/activities

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
Teaching is teaching-centered.	Teaching is learning-centered.

To make lessons more learner/learning-centered, the teacher can carry out an activity before the start of a new unit to find out what students know about the topic (e.g. if the unit is on question formation, the teacher can prompt students to ask questions by bringing in a 'mystery box' and asking them to guess its contents or by pretending to be a 'mystery guest' and asking students to guess their identity).

Moreover, students can go through what is covered in the coursebook and decide which of the activities they would like to do and which not and in what sequence (as long as this does not interfere with the cohesion of the unit/s).

3.4. Responsive and mindful teaching

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
The teacher follows a fixed lesson plan.	The teacher responds to what is taking place in the lesson.

Responsive and mindful teaching is the ability to listen

to, connect with, and be guided by what is going on in the class at the moment. An example of high learner agency activity is the following: a teacher at a university in Portugal noticed that his students were using vocabulary that he had not taught but they had learned from playing video games in English. He asked them to record themselves playing a game for five minutes and bring the language that they used to their next lesson for analysis (Larsen-Freeman et al., 2021).

3.5. Open-ended activities

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
Activities are closed.	Activities are more open-ended.

Learners' opinions are invited and respected when discussing an issue. Tasks do not always have an obvious single solution, and they allow students to apply skills such as critical thinking. The following four examples are those of high learner agency activities:

a) Open-ended questions

Teachers use open-ended questions on classroom topics and encourage students to question and analyse. For example, teachers ask older learners to consider:

- What is the most serious environmental issue in our town/region/country?
- What causes this issue? Who is responsible for it?
- What can we, as individuals, do about it?

Teachers can use tasks that allow for multiple responses. For example, a task that says 'Write the past simple form of these verbs: *go, buy, see, drink, eat.*' has just one correct answer; a task that says 'Tell me four interesting things you did on a recent holiday.' elicits the same language—past simple verbs—while opening up opportunities for interpretation.

b) Reliability report

An example of a task which promotes critical thinking is to have learners prepare a 'reliability report' on a controversial issue such as climate change by working through a list of online sources, evaluating their reliability, and comparing the information they contain.

c) Finding and describing images

Teachers ask learners to find or create an image which reflects their interpretation of a topic.

For example, they ask older learners to think of an environmental issue, find an online photograph about it that they feel is powerful, and note the reasons for their choice

to share with the class. For younger learners, the topic focus could be on caring for animals. Alternatively, older learners could use their mobile phones to take a photo of an environmental issue in their area and share that with the class.

3.6. Students ask questions

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
The teacher asks all the questions.	Students are encouraged to ask questions of the teacher and each other.

When working on a text, students can be more motivated if they are the ones who come up with reading comprehension questions. An example of high learner agency activity is the following: students are split into two groups, A and B. Each group is given a different text and creates a reading comprehension activity based on that text for the other group. They exchange texts and questions.

3.7. The opportunity for self-correction

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
The teacher corrects students' errors.	Students are not penalized for making errors and are encouraged to self-correct when they do.

Students are more engaged when they are the ones who correct the mistakes, as in these two examples:

a) The opportunity for self-correction

The teacher indicates a problem with something the student has said by repeating it with rising intonation and giving the student an opportunity to self-correct.

b) 'Correcting the teacher'

The teacher writes sentences containing sentences from previous lessons on the board and invites the students to find the mistakes that the teacher has deliberately made (mirroring the mistakes that students made in the previous lessons).

3.8. Seeking answers together

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
The teacher answers all the students' questions.	The teacher and students seek answers together.

Students can be more active when they:

a) Develop metacognition by asking themselves questions

Teachers can use these questions to help students think about their learning process. They can encourage students to pick three strategies they will find most useful, read about them, and add them to their Learning Plan (see section 1. above):

1. "Do I understand better when I read or when I see a picture or diagram? Will combining pictures or visuals with words help?" (draw pictures of word problems, visualization or mind movies)
2. "Do I fully understand the topic? How can I be sure?" ("W" questions to encourage deeper analysis)
3. "How can I apply what I already know to help me learn this subject more easily?" (make connections to previously learned information, activate prior knowledge, diagramming similarities and differences)
4. "Do I learn better when I work with someone else? How can I learn best when I study with my classmates?" (peer teaching, study groups, convince a skeptic)
5. "Do I often cram and then sometimes forget on the test?" (spaced repetition, mix up content to improve learning & retention)
6. "After I think I've finished studying, how will I be sure that I really know it?" (restate/stop & summarize, re-read and re-write notes; use of images)
7. "What do I do when I get 'stuck'?" (read the problem to an adult; restate/stop & summarize)
8. "How will I keep track of what I don't understand so I can get help later?" (save questions for teachers)
9. "How will I plan ahead for long-term projects or bigger assignments to make sure I'm not scrambling at the end?" (daily reflection, lists to check work)
10. "Before I get started, do I have everything I need to be successful? How can I avoid realizing I forgot something at the last minute?" (homework routine, develop a system)

b) Think aloud

The teacher models the process of monitoring by thinking aloud, e.g. "Is this making sense? What's the main idea here?" Students can monitor their progress by writing or recording their reactions to a text to indicate their understanding of the main idea, questions and opinions.

3.9. Giving feedback

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
The teacher decides how to give feedback to students.	Students have more responsibility for directing the feedback they receive from the teacher.

Students benefit from 'driving' their own feedback. Learner-driven feedback is given by the teacher, but students indicate how and on what they would like to receive feedback.

Where possible, students choose between various modes of feedback on their written work: in-text corrections, correction symbols, handwritten feedback, email, audio recording, or face-to-face consultation.

3.10. Students-teachers

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
The teacher teaches.	Students teach one another (and the teacher).

Students are highly engaged when they are the ones who teach. Teachers can ask them to:

a) List learning strategies

This makes students aware of all possible learning strategies at their disposal, such as **imagery** (e.g. learners are asked to find or create an image which reflects their interpretation of a topic), **flashcards**, **having a parent quiz them**, **saying words out loud**, etc. Students should share the strategies they use with their schoolmates.

b) Create an extensive reading blog

Learners are asked to create weekly blog posts as a fictional character in a novel they're working on, giving that character's perspective on the story as it develops. Teachers can encourage learners to comment on each other's blog posts as other characters in the story.

3.11. Self-referential assessment

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
Assessment involves comparing student work with the norms of Standard English.	Self-referential assessment is used.

This strategy highlights students' capabilities rather than their deficiencies. Assessing what students know or can do now that they did not know or could not do before encourages them to persevere.

Teachers can use the following forms of self-referential assessment:

a) I can...statements

I can ... speak with less hesitation.

I can ... read longer pieces of text before I need to consult a dictionary. I can use 10 new words.

I can ... write a short paragraph.

I can ... better understand what the teacher and my classmates say.

B) Language portfolio

Students can create a language portfolio, where they collect their work during the course. From time to time, students can reflect on what they are learning, as the portfolio provides a personal history of their language learning experience.

3.12. Self-assessment

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
The teacher assesses students.	Students assess themselves.

Another form is self-assessment which can also be very productive and encouraging for students. Examples of such self-assessment activities can involve the use of different websites:

a) www.podomatic.com

With this website, students are able to record and create podcasts using the L2. It is a useful tool in helping them improve their speaking, especially pronunciation. This website also facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of student language production as podcasts can be played back and evaluated by the student. Additionally, students can keep track of their communicative progress throughout the year.

b) www.proboards.com

It is a hosting site for forums on the internet. Teachers can create a class forum and assign regular writing assignments which students must post to the forum. They are then encouraged to engage in discussions with each other online using the L2 by commenting on posts and giving feedback. This allows students to take a more active role in their learning process. This website also facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of student (written) language production.

3.13. Students’ reflections

← Learner agency →	
LOW	HIGH
Teachers reflect on whether or not the lesson has been successful.	Students learn how to reflect on the lesson and share their reflections.

Students are motivated when they are invited to share their insight into how they find the lesson and what they have learnt, giving them an opportunity to influence the structure and content of the lessons in the future. Four examples of how to do that are:

a) Exit ticket

Students are asked to write three things they learned in that lesson, two things they want to learn more and one question they still have.

b) ‘One-minute essay’ in response to one or more questions that the teacher asks at the end of class, e.g.

What have you learned today?

What helped you learn?

What was the most useful part of today’s class?

What is something that you could or should put into practice?

What did you find most challenging in today’s lesson?

Was there anything that made learning difficult? What can you do about it?

c) Model reflection

Students share out loud thoughts on a lesson or discussion on what they might do differently next time. Reflection could be related to time management, class participation, or connection of information to previous topics. When teachers model and explain their own thought processes necessary for completing activities and assignments, students are more apt to understand and begin to use those same processes on their own.

d) Shout-outs

Teachers allow for student “shout-outs” at the end of class where students call out something positive that a classmate did that day. They can add that to a shout-out wall to encourage positivity and a supportive environment.

Conclusion

To sum up, the aim of incorporating learner agency into teaching practices is to *make learning meaningful to students*. This can be achieved because learner agency refers to the feeling of ownership and sense of control that learners have when they believe themselves to be active authors of their learning experience rather than passive recipients. Agentive learners are not only motivated to learn but also take responsibility for managing the learning process. With a *sense of agency* and *purpose* students can achieve greater success at school and have a much more rewarding experience in general, because they are emotionally involved in the learning process.

In addition, students who develop agency are prepared not only for success as language learners but also for the challenges and opportunities in life beyond the classroom, in the present and in the future.

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