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Croatian Association of Teachers of English



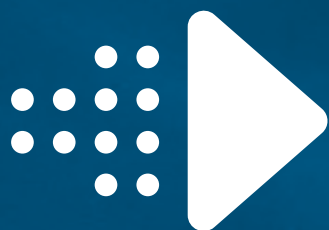
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HUPEzine

No. 20 · spring 2025

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Editor's Foreword

Welcome to the latest issue of the HUP Ezine. We are glad to meet you on these digital pages where we aim to provide a platform for educators to share their experiences, insights, and innovative practices that inspire teachers and students. In this issue, we offer a range of themes, insights, and ideas from our teacher colleagues' experiences and practices.

The publication of this issue overlaps with the final stages of HUPE in Storyland competition. Following this, you will find an insightful article on storytelling, exploring its power in the classroom and how it can enhance student engagement and learning.

Additionally, we cover a variety of subjects within the field of teaching English. Articles include strategies for "speak dating" to enhance communication skills, valuable advice for young teachers and presenters, and tips on conquering fears and presenting confidently. We also highlight the significance of emotional intelligence in the classroom and share student perspectives that offer a fresh look at learning experiences. The issues of assessment are ever-burning in the ESL world, therefore, we covered this topic as well.

We are also pleased to present articles that showcase the results of research carried out in ESL classrooms; on learning grammar, on enhanced input on acquiring phrasal verbs and on understanding the needs, interests, and struggles of our students.

Among the projects featured, one particularly stands out: a creative exploration of Shakespeare, showcasing how his works can be brought to life in modern classrooms. We also analyze challenges that may occur in conducting projects in ESL.

Should you have any questions about the choice between e-book and printed book, there are some insights into that, along with suggestions about the app to enhance English learning and teaching.

Finally, thank you for your dedication to the field of education and your commitment to your students.

Happy reading and teaching!

Your HUP Ezine editor,
Ivana Kasunić

Impressum

Issue No. 20 April 2025
ISSN 1332-1005
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Crafting Creativity through Storytelling: Practical Techniques for Language Teachers

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Introduction

Storytelling is a timeless and universal method of communication that holds immense value in the language classroom. It enriches the learning process by combining linguistic practice with creative expression, critical thinking, and collaboration. Integrating storytelling techniques into teaching practice not only enhances students' language skills but also fosters a classroom environment that encourages curiosity, empathy, and engagement. The insights and techniques discussed in this article are based on the Erasmus+ funded teacher development course *Boosting Creativity and Problem Solving* conducted by Europass Teacher Academy in Amsterdam. By combining theoretical frameworks of creative thinking with practical storytelling exercises, educators can create dynamic lessons that inspire and motivate students.

Theoretical foundations: convergent and divergent thinking

At the core of effective storytelling in language teaching lies the balance between **convergent** and **divergent** thinking. Convergent thinking focuses on finding a single, correct solution or outcome. In the context of storytelling, this might involve structuring a narrative logically or adhering to grammar rules and syntax. Divergent thinking, on the other hand, involves generating multiple ideas, possibilities, and solutions. In storytelling, divergent thinking is essential for brainstorming creative plots, imagining various character perspectives, and exploring multiple ways to convey a message.

Both types of thinking are necessary for developing storytelling skills. For example, while divergent thinking can help students generate a wide array of story ideas, convergent thinking is needed to refine these ideas into a coherent narrative. Activities that blend these thinking styles offer students a holistic approach to language learning, enhancing both their creativity and analytical skills.

Brainwriting as a tool for idea generation

One practical method for incorporating divergent thinking into storytelling is **brainwriting**. Brainwriting is a form of non-verbal brainstorming where students generate ideas in writing before sharing them with the group. Each student writes down three ideas related to a storytelling theme or prompt within a set time limit. These ideas are then passed around, and each student builds on or elaborates the ideas they receive.

This technique is particularly effective in language classes where students might feel hesitant to speak up due to language barriers or confidence issues. Brainwriting allows for the inclusion of all students, giving them time to process their thoughts and contribute meaningfully. Furthermore, it encourages collaboration by allowing students to build on each other's ideas, ultimately leading to richer and more diverse narratives.

For instance, if the prompt is "a mysterious event in a small town," students might write initial ideas such as "a power outage during a festival," "a stranger arrives with an old map," or "a series of unexplained noises from the forest." As these ideas circulate and are expanded upon,

they can evolve into more detailed plotlines, characters, and settings, which can then serve as the foundation for group storytelling projects.

Collaborative storytelling techniques

In addition to brainwriting, several collaborative storytelling techniques can be used to enhance student engagement and creativity. These methods promote teamwork, active listening, and the co-construction of narratives, which are essential skills in both language learning and social interaction.

One effective technique is **“Once upon a time there was...”** In this activity, students create a story one word at a time. Each student contributes a single word to the narrative, building on the previous word offered by their classmates. This activity requires students to listen carefully, think quickly, and use their vocabulary and grammar knowledge in real-time. It also highlights the importance of coherence and syntax, as students must construct sentences that make sense while keeping the story flowing.

For example, a story might begin with:

Student 1: “Once”

Student 2: “upon”

Student 3: “a”

Student 4: “time”

Student 5: “there”

Student 6: “was”

Student 7: “a”

Student 8: “dragon...”

This technique can lead to humorous and unexpected narratives, making language learning enjoyable and less intimidating. It also reinforces the importance of sentence structure, as each student must consider how their word choice fits into the overall narrative.

Another technique that integrates movement and storytelling is **“We Play Monster.”** In this activity, one student narrates a story or describes a routine, while another student stands behind them and mimics their gestures. The physicality of this exercise adds a kinaesthetic element to learning, which can be particularly beneficial for students who learn best through movement. This technique encourages students to think about non-verbal communication and body language, both of which are essential components of storytelling and effective communication.

For example, if the narrator says, “I woke up and stretched my arms,” the student behind them mimics the stretching motion. This exercise can be adapted to various contexts, such as describing daily routines, retelling scenes from a story, or improvising short narratives. It adds a layer of

fun and engagement to the learning process, helping to break down barriers and encourage participation.



Thinking Routines to Develop Critical and Creative Thinking

Storytelling can also be enriched by incorporating **thinking routines** that promote critical and creative thinking. One such routine is **“See, Think, Wonder.”** This routine encourages students to observe an image or scenario, articulate their thoughts, and pose questions based on their observations. It can serve as a powerful pre-writing activity for storytelling.

For instance, a teacher might present an image of a deserted street at night. Students begin by describing what they *see*: “I see empty buildings and a single streetlight.” They then express what they *think* about the image: “I think something mysterious is happening here.” Finally, they share what the image makes them *wonder*: “I wonder why the street is empty and where everyone has gone.” This routine helps students generate ideas, develop curiosity, and lay the groundwork for rich and engaging narratives.

Another effective thinking routine is **“Beginning, Middle, End.”** In this routine, students are shown an image and asked to imagine what happens if the image represents the beginning, middle, or end of a story. For example, if the image shows a child standing at the edge

of a forest, students might imagine that it represents the beginning of an adventure, the middle of a journey where the child is lost, or the end where the child finds their way home. This routine helps students practice narrative structure and sequencing, which are essential skills in storytelling.



A particularly powerful thinking routine for fostering creative thinking is **“Creative Questions.”** This routine encourages students to generate imaginative and thought-provoking questions about a topic, image, or object. It helps students move beyond straightforward observation and engage in divergent thinking by exploring different possibilities and scenarios. The process begins with students brainstorming simple, descriptive questions, and then transforming these into more imaginative ones.

For example, if the chosen theme is “a lost key,” initial questions might include: “Who does the key belong to?” or “Where was it found?” These can then be transformed into creative questions such as:

“What if the key opens something magical?”

“How would the story change if the key could talk?”

“What would the world be like if this key opened every door?”

Students can respond to these questions by writing stories, drawing illustrations, or creating dialogues. This routine not only stimulates creativity but also helps students practice forming and answering complex questions in English, enhancing their language skills and imaginative capacities.

“Figure Storming” is a thinking routine that helps students approach problems or storytelling themes from different perspectives. In this activity, students choose a well-known figure — such as a historical figure, fictional character, or public persona — and discuss how that figure would approach the problem or story. For example, they might ask: *“How would Sherlock Holmes solve this mystery?”* or *“What would Harry Potter do in this situation?”* This routine encourages students to step outside their own viewpoints, promoting empathy, creativity, and fresh ideas. It also helps them develop characters and plots that are richer and more diverse, expanding their narrative possibilities.

Creative problem-solving through storytelling

In addition to narrative construction, storytelling techniques can be used for **creative problem-solving**. The concept of **“Pizza Solutions”** is a useful exercise for encouraging students to think resourcefully. In this activity, students identify objects or resources in their environment that are underutilised and brainstorm creative ways to repurpose them. This exercise not only fosters divergent thinking but also highlights the importance of adaptability and innovation.

For example, an old newspaper can become a prop for a historical reenactment, a prompt for a mystery story, or a material for creating costumes for a storytelling performance. By encouraging students to think creatively about their surroundings, teachers help them develop problem-solving skills that extend beyond the classroom.

Conclusion

Storytelling, supported by creative thinking strategies, offers a versatile and engaging approach to language teaching. Techniques such as brainwriting, collaborative storytelling, and thinking routines provide students with opportunities to develop their linguistic skills, think creatively, and work collaboratively. By integrating these methods into their practice, teachers can create dynamic and inspiring learning experiences that go beyond traditional language instruction. Storytelling not only helps students learn a language but also equips them with essential skills for communication, critical thinking, and creativity, preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century.

The Effects of Enhanced Input on Acquisition of Phrasal Verbs in EFL

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Abstract

Unlike most previous research that focused on the effect of enhanced language input on noticing the morphological and syntactic structures in a foreign language, this study will shed light on the effects of enhanced language input on noticing (Schmidt 1990, 2001) and acquisition of formulaic sequences in English as foreign language. The main goal of the proposed study is to examine whether enhanced language input promotes noticing of target formulaic sequences and subsequent learning of the target forms. This study is an experiment with a pretest-posttest design, involving two treatment groups that differed with respect to the type of input exposure – enhanced or unenhanced. A computer-assisted reading task and a note-taking task was used to measure noticing and Vocabulary Knowledge Scale was used to measure acquisition. The results are consistent with Schmidt's noticing hypothesis that second language readers do not notice unknown formulaic sequences in the unenhanced group. The group who received input enhancement failed to show measurable gains in learning despite the positive gains of enhancement on the noticing of the target forms in the input.

Keywords: enhanced (language) input, output, noticing, acquisition, lexical awareness, lexical items, formulaic sequences

Introduction

Enhanced language input, as proposed by Stephen Krashen's Comprehensible Input Hypothesis (1985), and implicit attention mechanisms in language output, based on Merrill Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985), are two prominent approaches in second language acquisition that aim to draw students' attention to word forms and meanings. Recent research has explored these methods' effects on noticing morphological and syntactic struc-

tures in English language learners. This study specifically addresses the challenge of learners noticing unknown formulaic sequences, utilizing Levelt's lexical processing theory (1989) as adapted by de Bot, Paribakht, and Wesche (1997) to model Schmidt's noticing hypothesis. The goal is to enhance learners' ability to perceive formulaic sequences as single lexical units, since failure to do so impedes their processing and learning. Typographical salience is employed to make these sequences stand out, encouraging their recognition as whole units, which is crucial for effective language acquisition. The core aim of input enhancement is thus to direct students' attention to difficult aspects of input to facilitate their learning, as emphasized by Izumi (2002).

Theoretical background

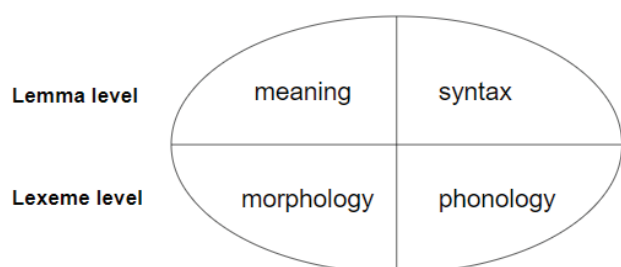
The role of consciousness in second language acquisition is complex and essential, as argued by Schmidt (1990), who posits that consciousness, particularly in the form of awareness or „noticing,” is necessary for learning. Noticing involves the awareness of linguistic features that learners can report verbally and is critical not only for grammar but also for vocabulary and pragmatics. However, studies indicate that noticing different linguistic features, such as grammar and vocabulary, may involve distinct cognitive processes (Hegelheimer & Chapelle, 2000). This paper focuses on the noticing of formulaic sequences—pre-constructed word strings that native speakers use effortlessly but second language learners struggle with. These sequences are advantageous because they free cognitive resources by bypassing the need to apply syntactic rules to individual words. Native speakers often use the idiom principle (prefabricated strings), whereas second language learners rely more on the open choice principle (combining individual words), leading to slower processing and less accurate language use. Schmidt's noticing hypothesis suggests that what learners notice is what

they learn, and if they fail to notice formulaic sequences, they are unlikely to acquire them. Incidental learning through reading is a crucial source of vocabulary acquisition, so not noticing these sequences while reading may significantly contribute to the difficulties learners face with them.

Processing words according to de Bot et al.'s model (1997)

Processing known words according to de Bot et al.'s model (1997) means accessing the meaning of the word. In de Bot et al.'s model, when a word is processed during reading, a number of things must happen. First, the orthographic pattern must be recognized as such and matched with a lexeme (see Figure 1.). When a match is made with a lexeme, the form must activate a lemma, thereby accessing appropriate syntactic and semantic representations.

Figure 1. Internal structure of an item in the mental lexicon (Levitt 1989: 182)



When word level comprehension occurs, the semantic content of the lemma matches a concept. However, when second language readers process an unknown word, there is a greater chance that problems will arise at some level prior to its comprehension, especially if there is no assistance of a glossary.

Comprehension requires not only a sequence without an error, combining orthographic data with lexeme and lemma representations, but also conceptual understanding of the broader message. Therefore, a failure at any level can affect comprehension of the reading text. For example, problems emerge when the written form is unknown, which means this word's orthographic form is not represented at the lexeme level, even though the spoken form might be familiar. Difficulties at the lemma level can be semantic or syntactic in origin.

Methodology

This study investigates whether participants notice unknown formulaic sequences less frequently than equivalent words and examines the different cognitive processes involved in noticing words versus formulaic sequences. It also evaluates whether making these sequences typographically salient in reading texts enhances noticing and whether these sequences are less well learned compared to equivalent words. The experimental study, conducted in a natural classroom setting with a pretest-posttest design, involved two treatment groups: one with regular unenhanced input (-IE) and the other with enhanced input (+IE), both performing a note-taking task. Noticing was measured through glossary consultation for unknown vocabulary during reading and note-taking scores during the input phases. Immediate vocabulary uptake was assessed using an adapted Vocabulary Knowledge Scale.

Procedure

Forty-eight upper-intermediate EFL high school students were pre-tested on their knowledge of target vocabulary items, including 12 formulaic sequences (phrasal verbs) and 12 low-frequency synonymous words, using a Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS). Reading levels, assessed via the Gray Silent Reading Test, showed no differences between the two groups. A month later, participants were assigned to either a treatment or control condition, with the treatment group receiving a text where formulaic sequences were typographically salient (bold font). During the reading task, participants could click on glossary links for target vocabulary, with each click recorded as an instance of noticing. After reading, participants made notes to use for retelling the story, with the target items noted by the researcher as evidence of noticing. To ensure a comprehensive assessment, the study used multiple measures: online reading task tracking, students' written story reconstructions, and VKS. Additionally, stimulated recall interviews were conducted to identify factors like motivation and learning styles that might have influenced the results.

Results and discussion

Participants who engaged in enhanced input activities outperformed those who received unenhanced input, particularly in noticing formulaic sequences during the reading task. Enhanced input led to more frequent glossary consultations for these sequences compared to single words (significant at $p < .05$). However, during the note-taking task, participants in both groups noticed fewer formulaic sequences, with no significant difference between the groups ($p = .3125$). Although enhanced in-

put increased the noticing of target sequences, it did not result in measurable gains in learning ($p = .09692$). The study's findings align with Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, indicating that noticing alone is not sufficient for learning, as processing formulaic sequences involves complex and parallel cognitive processes. Factors like developmental readiness and working memory limitations likely influenced the outcomes, and presenting a lengthy text may have overtaxed participants' attention, potentially disrupting their reading and comprehension. Thus, the hypothesis that enhanced input has a comparable effect to unenhanced input on acquisition was not supported.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are consistent with the claim that formulaic sequences are complex lexical structures and noticing them is not sufficient to acquire them. However, enhancing the input in the form of typographical salience promotes the noticing of the salient forms by increasing the readers' motivation to seek the glossed words. Glossing the target words might also contribute to increased comprehension of the target forms and engaging students in more output activities might eventually improve their retention.

For students to acquire a new lexical form they must understand it and understanding requires a correct combining of orthographic data with lexeme and lemma representations. As previously stated, difficulties at the lemma level can be semantic or syntactic in origin and a failure at any level can affect comprehension of the reading text.

Finally, this is a small-scale experimental study and it would be risky to make generalizations regarding the effects of enhanced input on the noticing and acquisition of formulaic sequences since many internal and external factors might have influenced the outcomes. Incidental learnability of a certain linguistic structure is dependent not only on the nature of the lexical item but also on the readiness of the learner to acquire the form at a particular point in time. It also depends on the type of the instruction, the learners' mental state and learning style. Based on the insights gathered from the data, a number of constraining factors should be considered in the future studies, since they potentially confound with the treatment effects and this is relevant for everyday teaching.

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Research on Learning English Grammar Among Eighth-Grade Students at Primary School Župa Dubrovačka

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Introduction

How do eighth-grade students approach learning English grammar? Do they pay sufficient attention to it despite the absence of dedicated grammar tests? How effective is regular classroom instruction in helping them master grammatical rules? These questions have been central to discussions among the English teachers at OŠ Župa Dubrovačka committed to providing their students with the best possible learning experience. To gain a deeper understanding of these challenges, two of the teachers, Davorka Bronzić and Nataša Bebić Bačan, conducted a study involving 80 out of 133 eighth-grade students.

Since the introduction of the new English Curriculum in 2019, our teachers have observed a shift in student achievement. While students are demonstrating

stronger overall language skills and achieving higher grades, their understanding of grammar has notably weakened compared to previous generations. This change may be linked to adjustments in assessment methods within the curriculum - traditional grammar tests, which once encouraged systematic studying, have been replaced by integrated language assessments. As a result, students rely more on intuition rather than fully internalising grammatical rules. This trend has raised concerns among the teachers, who aim to understand how these changes have impacted students' approach to grammar learning.

Motivated by their dedication to enhancing teaching and learning, the teachers explored students' attitudes toward grammar learning, their study habits, and the

effectiveness of current instructional methods. Using an anonymous survey created in *Microsoft Forms*, they examined how seriously students approach grammar, how they prepare for assessments, and how effective they find classroom instruction. Parental consent was obtained before conducting the study.

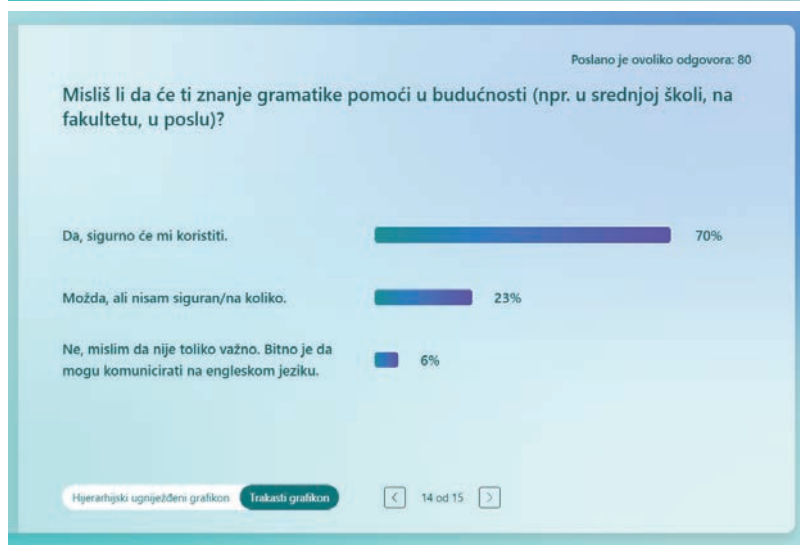
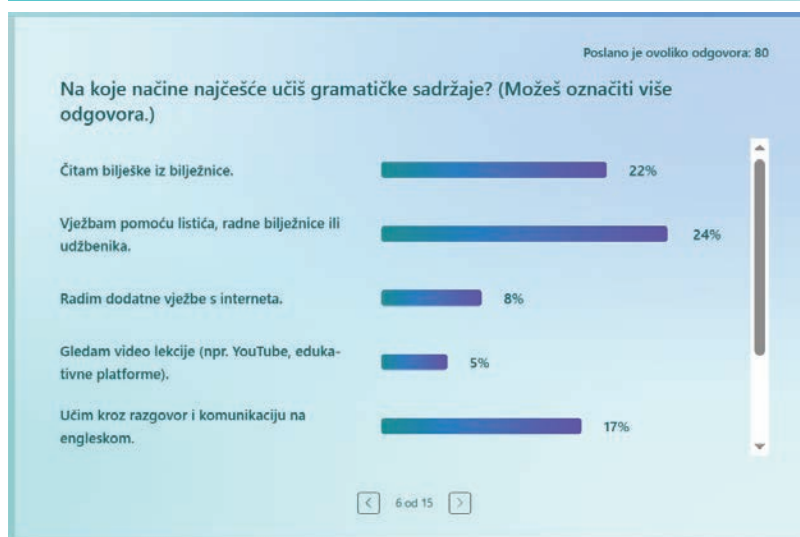
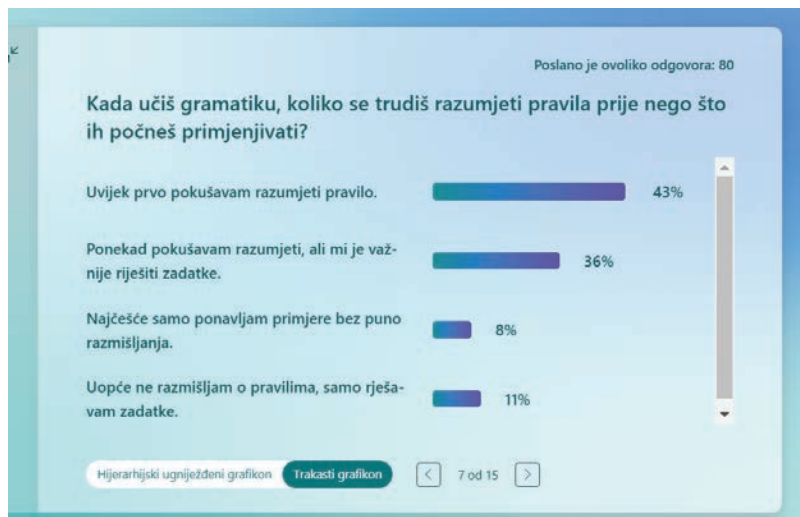
The results of this study will help improve teaching methods and refine approaches to grammar instruction in everyday school practice. Additionally, they will support lesson planning by ensuring more effective grammar acquisition during regular classes and providing additional support for students who need it.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted using an online questionnaire created in *Microsoft Forms* consisting of fifteen questions: thirteen multiple-choice and two open-ended, where students shared their opinions and suggestions for improving English grammar lessons.

In total, 34 boys and 46 girls participated, with an average completion time of approximately five minutes. The anonymity of the survey encouraged honest responses, providing a more objective insight into students' attitudes.

The key advantage of *Microsoft Forms* was its automated data processing, which enabled a quick analysis of multiple-choice responses. Open-ended answers, where students freely expressed their thoughts, required additional processing and were later themed.



Results and Data Analysis

1. General Student Attitudes Toward the Importance of Grammar

More than 70% of students consider English an important or quite important subject, and a similar percentage report achieving excellent or very good grades in English. Students also emphasise the significant role of grammar in learning a language and recognise its importance for their future education and careers.

2. Students' Grammar Learning Habits

Only 30% of students regularly study and practice grammar, while 28% do so only before an announced assessment. A concerning 43% admit that they rarely or never study grammar outside regular classes.

When asked about learning methods, 47% of students rely solely on notebooks, workbooks, and textbooks, while only 30% use online resources and applications. A smaller portion, 17%, believe practising conversations in English is the most effective way to learn grammar.

When asked about the biggest challenges in learning grammar, 75% of students reported struggling the most with irregular verbs and verb tenses.

3. Preparation for Formative Grammar Assessments and Student Attitudes Toward Grammar Testing

Only 11% of students regularly study and review the material when preparing for formative grammar assessments, while 46% begin studying once the assessment is announced. An additional 18% review their notes just before the test, and 25% admit they do not prepare for grammar assessments.

Only 44% of students say they first try understanding a grammar rule before applying it to exercises. This suggests that over half of the students do not focus on understanding the grammar rules before attempting exercises. As a result, they may rely on trial and error, which can lead to re-

peated mistakes. This lack of deeper understanding could explain why many students struggle with grammar.

Regarding formative assessments, 35% of students find them particularly important for evaluating their understanding, while 41% consider them useful but believe they do not significantly influence their learning. On the other hand, 21% of students view them as unimportant because they are not graded, and only 3% see them as completely irrelevant.

When asked whether separate grammar tests should be introduced, 79% of students feel grammar is already sufficiently covered in existing assessments. Additionally, 58% see no need for grammar tests, arguing that there are already enough different forms of English assessments.

4. Student Perception of Grammar Instruction Quality

As for the quality of grammar instruction, 29% of students believe that regular lessons provide everything they need to learn grammar effectively. However, 58% feel they acquire most grammar concepts in class but still require additional review at home. Meanwhile, 14% say they need even more self-study or extra help to fully master grammar rules.

Students also offered suggestions for making grammar lessons more engaging and effective. Most students proposed incorporating more interactive and fun activities, like games and quizzes. The most frequently mentioned were *Kahoot* quizzes, which are already used for vocabulary and culture-related content, and students find them helpful for reviewing grammar concepts.

Discussion and Interpretation of Results

Comparison of Data with Teacher Expectations and Experience

Teachers have observed that students engage more actively in understanding and practising grammar when assessments include grading. Unlike students, who believe grammar is sufficiently assessed through existing tests, teachers feel that separate grammar tests would lead to better learning outcomes. Teachers believe such tests promote systematic study and foster a deeper understanding of grammatical structures rather than relying on last-minute cramming before exams.

Trends in Independent Grammar Learning and Preferred Methods

The study highlights a range of approaches to grammar learning among students. Despite their prior experience with digital learning tools during online schooling, only 30% of students use online resources for grammar practice, which is surprisingly low from the teachers' perspective. Teachers would like to see a greater adoption of digital tools as they can enhance learning by providing diverse and engaging grammar exercises and encouraging students to take greater ownership of their studying.

Possible Reasons for Lower or Higher Student Engagement in Grammar Learning

Based on our analysis, we assume that students who demonstrate high engagement in grammar learning are often motivated by good grades, an awareness of grammar's importance for future education, and a supportive learning environment. On the other hand, lower engagement may result from a lack of interest, the belief that language can be learned without a strong grammar foundation, and the absence of dedicated grammar tests that encourage systematic learning. Furthermore, students who find grammar particularly challenging may lose motivation if they do not see immediate progress. Teachers believe structured assessments would foster greater engagement by providing clearer expectations and helping students understand the importance of grammar mastery in the broader context of language learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Improving Teaching

Summary of Key Research Findings

The study reveals that while most students appreciate English as a subject, their approach to learning grammar varies. Many students study grammar only before assessments or not at all. Despite having prior exposure to online schooling, online resources remain underutilised. While students do not see the need for separate grammar tests, teachers believe that such assessments would improve learning outcomes.

Suggestions for Enhancing English Grammar Instruction

Improving classroom technology by equipping schools with smartboards and tablets would provide better access to digital learning tools. Investing in educational apps which require paid subscriptions would support

grammar learning. Currently, many teachers personally cover these costs to ensure students have access.

Teachers should also more frequently check grammar through interactive quizzes, such as *Kahoot* grammar challenges, to encourage consistent learning. Raising student awareness of the role of lexical and grammatical structures in language learning is crucial for improving their overall language proficiency.

Providing Additional Support for Struggling Students

Although remedial English lessons currently support students struggling with grammar, attendance remains low. To enhance support, it would be beneficial to organise grammar workshops at more accessible times, allowing students to ask questions and practice targeted exercises. Additionally, offering concise grammar guides with summarised explanations and examples would help stu-

dents review grammar at home. Greater emphasis should also be placed on promoting mobile applications like *Duolingo* and *Quizlet*, which offer engaging, and interactive grammar practice to daily support self-study. Making remedial sessions mandatory would provide students with more consistent opportunities to reinforce their understanding of grammar.

Guidelines for Future Research

Future studies could examine the impact of various teaching methods on grammar acquisition, compare traditional and digital approaches, and explore strategies for enhancing student motivation and fostering greater responsibility for independent grammar learning.

| Source: original survey research |

Stations as a Management Tool in the English Classroom

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Abstract: This paper explores the benefits and practical implementation of the station method as a teaching strategy in the English classroom from personal experience. It begins by defining stations and highlighting the advantages. The paper also provides a guide for organizing a station-based lesson, offering two main modalities and practical tips for success. Emphasizing the student-centered nature of this approach, the paper concludes that station teaching is an effective, flexible method suitable for both small and large classes, enabling teachers to create diverse, active, and engaging learning experiences.

Why I Turned to Stations

In my opinion, one of the advantages of being a teacher is that at the beginning of each new school year, there is a chance to start fresh, abandon old practices that weren't effective enough and to embrace new teaching strategies. However, station teaching is one of those methods I have always kept in my toolbox. If I had to define this method, I would say that it is a teaching strategy in which the classroom is divided into different activity areas (or stations) and students work on them, usually by walking around the classroom from one station to another, in pairs, groups or individually. Each station focuses on a specific skill, topic, or activity, which allows for a variety of approaches within a single lesson.

As a teacher with over 20 years of experience, I have used stations for a long time, and it has proven to be the single most efficient method throughout the years and the one which I do not see abandoning any time in the future. There are many reasons for that, and I will try to list them here based on my experience.

From time to time, I have felt that my classroom is too teacher-centered, even when the students were working with partners or in teams. An efficient seating arrangement helped a little with that, but I still had a strong sense that students were focusing too much on me and my instructions and that they had little independence to work at their own pace or even to choose which activities they would like to do and at what time. I sometimes felt that I did not give much autonomy or choice to students,

despite the choice boards or topics to choose from for their writing assignment. So, when I first came across stations, I felt it was exactly what I was looking for.



The Benefits of Using Stations in a Language Classroom

One of the first things that immediately comes into focus when using stations as a teaching method is that there is an element of movement which takes care of the kinesthetic students' needs, but also an element of surprise as students usually don't know what is waiting for them at the next station. Students are definitely more active than during a teacher-focused lesson, and it is an easier way of incorporating differentiated tasks for different levels of language. This way a student can choose the level at which he or she wishes to do the task, and it is done in a more inconspicuous way so as not to bring focus to students who need more practice or who choose to work on a lower level of language.

Another upside to this method is that students can be given a choice to either work alone or with someone else. Although we need to encourage students to communicate in order to advance in their language, there are some situations that can be allocated for some alone work time, especially for students who prefer to work that way. Also, by working on stations, students learn how to take more responsibility for their work, and they develop their

independence. They do need to finish all the tasks, and this can be challenging, but with proper planning and feedback, students have to push themselves rather than being pushed by the general pace of the lesson, which teaches them to be more independent in their work.

When such a lesson is well-planned and structured, students will be more engaged and won't get off-task, especially if this method is applied regularly. In this way, stations provide a predictable routine, which helps maintain order in the classroom. Incorporating digital tools e.g., listening to podcasts or doing interactive grammar games, which enhance student engagement is quite easy with the stations method, and it also helps them be more motivated for work.

One other reason why I find stations extremely useful is that it gives the teacher some extra time to work with students individually, offering more personalized feedback. When using stations, I always have a teacher station, and I make it mandatory. Students can approach me any time during the lesson and ask questions, get additional help, or just showcase their work.

Finally, stations can work well with small as well as large classes with appropriate planning, and they can be designed for various topics, themes, or skill levels, making them versatile for any classroom, not just a language classroom.

Designing Stations for Success in the Classroom

The way I organize my lessons as stations is that I usually choose a topic that I would like my students to work on. The lessons are more or less comprised of the same types of activities as in any conventional lesson: tasks for the development of different skills, language and grammar tasks, critical thinking assignments, creativity development tasks, games or quizzes, videos or podcasts, all depending on the topic. The most prominent difference between a conventional lesson and the stations method is that it shifts the focus away from the teacher as the central figure in the classroom to the student who is an active participant.

In a conventional lesson, the teacher leads the instruction, while students mostly listen, take notes, or perhaps participate in some pair or group work activities. This way, the teacher controls the pace of the lesson, and all the students typically engage in the same activity at the same time.

In a station-based lesson, the focus shifts to students. The classroom is divided into multiple stations where students engage in a variety of tasks, which can be or-

ganized as independent or teamwork activities, and they can work at their own pace. The teacher acts as a facilitator, providing guidance and feedback as needed.

I usually use two main modalities in stations. The first one gives students more choice, and they can spend as much time as they need on each station. This way, they don't need to stress about timing, and they can work on a certain concept until they have managed it. However, the major issue with this approach is that some students will finish their work more swiftly, so it is important to have extra tasks ready for fast finishers.

The second modality is more controlled, because I time each station. I usually do this by displaying a count-down on the interactive board, so the students know exactly how much time they have before moving to a different station. The downside of this approach is that I have to organize another final lesson at the end of all activities, during which students finish up what they haven't had enough time for during station work.



Why You Should Try Stations in Your Classroom

In my experience, there are some mandatory elements for a well-conducted stations lesson. First off, make sure that you either give a worksheet to students or that they take note of their work in notebooks. This seems to be an obvious and extremely efficient way of making sure students are on task because they will be asked to show their work to the teacher.

The second thing is that one of the stations should always be the teacher station, where students bring their worksheets or notebooks to the teacher to show their work. Also, the teacher station is a valuable space in the

classroom because the teacher can have one-on-one time with students when and if necessary.

Last, but not least, it is quite possible that students will go through more material and finish more activities this way, so the teacher should always be prepared for that and have extra work for fast finishers. This extra activity needs to be something fun because students should be motivated to do their work on time.

Conclusion

Station teaching is an engaging and effective method that can transform a traditional classroom into a dynamic, student-centered environment. By providing opportunities for movement, choice, differentiation, and collaboration, stations encourage students to take ownership of their learning while allowing teachers to address students' individual needs. Although this method requires careful planning and organization, the benefits far outweigh the effort, so that is why I encourage teachers of any subject to use this method.

STATIONS WORKSHEET |

topic	date
name	class

STATION 1	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
STATION 2	1. 2. 3. 4.
STATION 3	1. 2. 3.
STATION 4	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
STATION 5	1. 2. 3.

SnapWords: A Fun and Effective Way to Teach Vocabulary

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Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to primary school students presents unique challenges. Young learners often struggle with vocabulary retention, reading fluency, and spelling. Traditional rote memorization can be tedious, leading to disengagement. However, a method known as SnapWords can transform vocabulary learning, making it more engaging, visual, and memorable.

What Are SnapWords?

SnapWords are specially designed sight word cards that incorporate visual cues and movement-based learning. Each word is embedded into a meaningful illustration, allowing children to connect the spelling and pronunciation with an image. This multisensory approach enhances retention by engaging different learning styles—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

For example, the word *jump* might be illustrated with letters forming a figure in mid-air, visually reinforcing the meaning. Along with the image, children are encouraged to use gestures or actions related to the word, helping them internalize its meaning through movement.

How SnapWords Help EFL Learners?

1 Enhancing Memory Retention

One of the biggest challenges for EFL learners is remembering new vocabulary. SnapWords capitalize on the brain's natural ability to remember images more easily than abstract letters. The combination of words and pictures helps young learners recall vocabulary faster and more accurately.

2 Developing Sight Word Recognition

Many English words don't follow phonetic rules, making them difficult for young learners to decode. SnapWords allow children to recognize these words as whole units, improving reading fluency and confidence. Once students

recognize a word by sight, they can read more smoothly and focus on comprehension rather than decoding.

3 Supporting Different Learning Styles

SnapWords cater to multiple learning styles, making them especially effective in diverse classrooms. **Visual learners** benefit from the embedded images. **Auditory learners** reinforce learning by saying words aloud and listening to their pronunciation. **Kinesthetic learners** engage with physical movements that accompany the words, making learning more interactive.

4 Boosting Confidence and Motivation

Young learners often feel frustrated when they struggle with vocabulary acquisition. The playful nature of SnapWords makes learning less stressful and more enjoyable. Children experience a sense of achievement when they can quickly recognize and use words correctly, leading to greater confidence in their language skills.

How Can SnapWords Be Used in the Classroom?

Creating SnapWords can be a fun and interactive activity for young learners, helping them take ownership of their learning while reinforcing vocabulary. Here's how learners can make their own SnapWords:

Material needed: paper cards or pieces of thick paper, colored markers or crayons, scissors (if needed), glue (optional, for collage-style images).

Step-by-Step Guide to Making SnapWords:

1 Choose a word - teachers can provide a list of common sight words or let students choose words from a lesson's vocabulary. Learners could also pick any words they want to learn.

2 Write the word - on one side of the card, students write the word in large, clear letters. They should be encouraged to use bold colors to make it visually engaging.

3 Create a picture around the word - incorporating the meaning into the word's design is the key to SnapWords.

Learners should:

- turn letters into shapes that reflect the meaning (e.g., making the "o" in "look" resemble eyes).
- draw a picture around the word that represents its meaning
- use colors to emphasize important parts of the word.

4 Add a gesture or action - SnapWords work best when paired with movement. After creating the card, learners can think of an action that represents the word (e.g., jumping for the word jump). This helps reinforce the word kinesthetically.

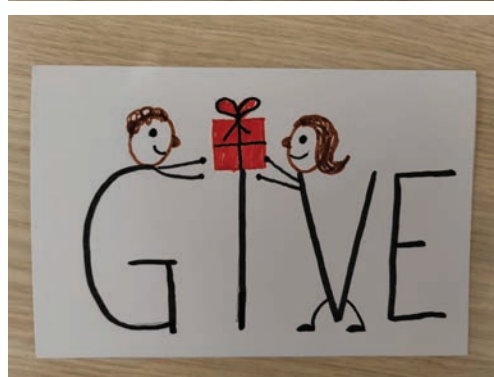
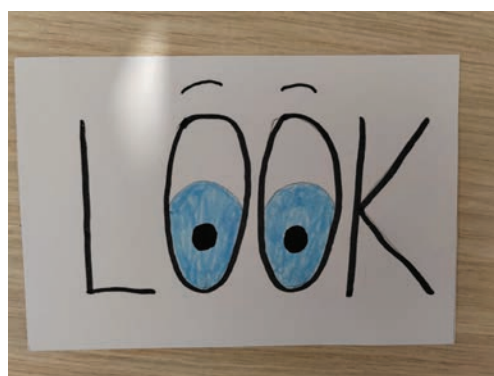
5 Practice and share - learners can practice by showing their SnapWords to a partner and explaining the image, using the SnapWords in a sentence or playing a game where they act out the words while others guess.

Additional Ideas for Making SnapWords:

- Digital SnapWords: Students can create digital versions using drawing apps or online tools like Canva.
- Collage Style: Instead of drawing, learners can cut out pictures from magazines and glue them onto the word card.
- Group Activity: Each student creates one SnapWord, then the class compiles them into a shared learning resource.

Conclusion

SnapWords offer a dynamic and effective way to teach vocabulary to young EFL learners. By making their own SnapWords, learners engage with vocabulary in a creative, hands-on way, making English learning more meaningful and fun. Teachers who incorporate SnapWords into their lessons can expect to see improved vocabulary retention, increased reading fluency, and, most importantly, students who are excited about learning English.



European Day of Languages – Speak Dating

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To celebrate the European Day of Languages 2024, we organized a Speak Dating event to show our students the diversity of languages and highlight the benefits of knowing more than one. The idea was inspired by a similar event we attended in 2023, hosted by our friends from Ban Josip Jelačić High School in Zaprešić.

Speak Dating involves learning multiple languages in five-minute intervals through simple activities. After each session a bell signals a station change and students move on to the next language. This fun and dynamic approach allows participants to grasp the basics of a language or build on their existing knowledge through short, engaging and interactive activities.

Involving students in the preparation

For our Speak Dating event, in addition to English and German which are taught in our school, we also selected languages spoken by our teachers and students. We wanted to involve students in the preparation process as much as possible and enable them to lead activities during the event, and in the end, we succeeded.

We divided the participants into language teams, each consisting of one teacher and several students. Each team had the freedom to design and prepare an activity for their language as they wished. A total of twenty students from grades 5 to 8 and six teachers participated in the preparation.

As a result, we presented seven languages along with our regional Kajkavian dialect. All activities were prepared by students with the guidance and support of teachers, but during the event, the students led them independently, which was highly successful and engaging for everyone.

International Participation

We also invited our partner school Globoko from Slovenia as guests. They participated with about fifteen students, teachers and the principal, so the event also took on an international character.



Speak Dating - How It Worked

We started the program with greetings and instructions in Croatian and Slovenian, which our guests from Slovenia were very pleased with.

Students then took seats at tables in small groups of 2-3 and began learning. Every five minutes, at the sound of a bell, they moved to the next table and learned another language.

The Language Learning Stations

Spanish

The art teacher worked with students to prepare every-day expressions in Spanish. They practiced short dialogues using picture cards.

Slovenian/Croatian

A student whose second mother tongue is Slovenian prepared a fun game with the librarian where participants guessed the meaning of words in Croatian and Slovenian. Each correctly guessed word earned them a token.

Russian

A student fluent in Russian taught the names of colours using flashcards. At this station, anyone interested could also try writing their name in Cyrillic.

English

We offered well-known tongue twisters categorized into three levels of difficulty. The shorter ones had to be repeated several times as quickly as possible. It was both fun and a great way to practice pronunciation.

Polish

The music teacher prepared a list of false pairs in Polish and Croatian. Students had to guess the true meaning of the Polish words, leading to some hilarious and incredible surprises.

German

Students played a memory game and learned or revised words and expressions related to free time and sports.

Italian

Students interested in Italian focused on the names of fruits and vegetables. They led teaching activities and games using picture cards.

Kajkavian Ikavian dialect

Students played a word-matching game in our native dialect with explanations in Croatian.

The Kajkavian Ikavian dialect is our native speech and is also an intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Croatia. It is unique in that it preserves both Kajkavian and Chakavian elements. At our school, we encourage children to cultivate this speech through extra-curricular activities – writing poetry, reciting and acting.



Evaluation

At the end of the Speak Dating event, students wrote on a poster about something they had learned and remembered, or simply their impressions of the event.

The students were thrilled! They talked about Speak Dating for days, saying how educational and fun it was and that they would love to have similar events more often. They especially enjoyed being actively engaged and appreciated the high level of interaction.

A total of 90 students participated, along with some teachers who joined in as well. This created a **flipped classroom** experience—students became the teachers, which was an incredibly valuable opportunity for them.

We also reflected on ways to improve the event. Some students mentioned that five minutes per station felt too short, and they wished they had more time to practice each language. Based on this feedback, we could extend the activity or allow students to spend two rotations at a single station, focusing on fewer languages. This way, students might remember more than if they were introduced to too many languages at once.

I hope that this example of good practice inspires some of you to develop new and even better ideas for celebrating the European Day of Languages and promoting multilingualism in your classrooms.



Why teach emotional intelligence?

By **Barbara Hanjilec**, Škola za umjetnost, dizajn, grafiku i odjeću Zabok

When we walk into the classroom, we often see our students as just that—students. As educators, we focus on teaching grammar, vocabulary, literature, or other topics. While chasing curriculum, plans, and programmes, we choose engaging topics, discuss world issues, exchange opinions, and often share laughter. However, we often forget that our students are young individuals, struggling in a world very different from the one most of us grew up in. As a Millennial, I often forget that my students are deeply emotional, easily distracted, and above all, stressed to a level my generation experienced a lot later in life. GenZ students challenge me and other teachers, members of older generations, in various ways.

What are Gen Z students like?

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is often referred to as “digital natives.” While they are highly connected online, they face unique challenges, including being labeled as the loneliest and most stressed generation. Mental health issues have taken center stage in their lives, and addressing these challenges has become an essential part of our role as educators.



Why Should We Focus on Mental Health?

Gen Z students are often perceived as lazy, privileged, or emotionally immature individuals who avoid responsibility and stress. These perceptions are reinforced by troubling statistics, such as the high levels of school absenteeism among Croatian students in both primary and secondary schools. Students and parents alike openly admit that school-induced stress is a significant reason for avoiding attendance.



This issue cannot be overlooked. As teachers, we must help students build emotional resilience bearing in mind that while they openly share their struggles and seek guidance, we are not psychologists or counselors. Yet, there are steps we can take to support their emotional growth, helping them become stronger individuals capable of navigating life's challenges.

What is the Role of Emotional Intelligence

Daniel Goleman, a renowned psychologist, defines emotional intelligence as encompassing five key pillars: self-regulation, motivation, social skills, empathy, and self-awareness. These components are essential for developing emotional resilience. Although schools put a lot of focus on social skills and empathy, more attention should be given to self-awareness, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation.



Simple activities can encourage students to reflect on their inner selves and take steps toward personal growth, ultimately contributing to their future success in both personal and professional spheres.

Paint and Talk: A Case Study

Having learnt all that through various activities and courses, especially after having conducted an Erasmus+ project 'Innovative approaches to Gen Z', we at Škola za umjetnost, dizajn, grafiku i odjeću Zabok introduced an extracurricular initiative called *Paint and Talk*. This monthly workshop, lasting 90 to 120 minutes, is a collaborative effort involving English, Art, and Psychology teachers. It provides a safe space for students to explore their emotions creatively while learning vital self-awareness and self-regulation skills.

The objectives of Paint and Talk are to encourage emotional expression through art, to use visual tools to externalize thoughts and experiences, and to build self-awareness and self-regulation, which are met through various activities, such as Self-Portrait: Exploring Identity, I as a Superhero: My Strengths and Aspirations, Fractal Drawing: Representing Inner Emotional Processes, and Nightmares: Processing Fears and Anxieties.

Last year, we invited 11th-grade students to participate, and the turnout exceeded our expectations. Therefore, this year, we expanded the program to include students from various grades. While the Art teacher coordinates the activity, English is the primary language used, offering students multiple benefits beyond emotional expression.

How to Integrate Emotional Intelligence into the Classroom

Recognizing the need for emotional intelligence workshops, some of us at ŠUDIGO Zabok, myself included, have started incorporating similar activities into regular

classroom settings. These activities blend art and emotional intelligence concepts to help students connect with their inner selves. I am providing several hands-on activities that can easily be done with little preparation.

1. Mandala Creation

Drawing mandalas, symbols of wholeness, encourages students to reflect on their sense of balance and completeness.

2. Fractal Drawing

This technique helps students explore the emotional impact of colors and patterns, translating inner states into abstract designs.

3. The Cup Analogy

This activity uses the metaphor of a "cup" to help students understand their emotional capacity and the importance of self-care.

- **My Emotional Cup:** Represents energy, patience, and emotional capacity. A full cup signifies readiness to help oneself and others, while an empty cup can lead to burnout and stress.
- **The Capacity Cup:** Teaches students to categorize stressors by intensity and role-play solutions, emphasizing stress management before emotional breakdowns occur.

Conclusion

As educators, our role extends far beyond teaching academic content. By addressing students' emotional needs and fostering emotional intelligence, we prepare them to face life's challenges with resilience and confidence. Initiatives like Paint and Talk, and classroom activities that integrate emotional awareness offer practical tools to achieve this goal, ensuring that we not only educate but also empower the next generation.

Sources:

BOOK: Daniel Goleman, *Emocionalna inteligencija*, 1996, Znanje

ONLINE RESOURCE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Z

- Materials given at the course on Mental health awareness for teachers and students (Dublin, Ireland, 2024)

The assessment journey - how to involve students?

Maja Labaš Horvat, Srednja škola Prelog

Martina Grgac, Gimnazija "Fran Galović" Koprivnica

With the latest school system reform "Škola za život" well under way, involving secondary school students in the assessment of their own and their peers' tasks still remains a challenge, as different teachers turn to different assessment methods in order to encourage the development of their students' language skills. Being aware of the fact that students need to enhance their learning experience and also foster a sense of responsibility and self-awareness, regardless of the CEFR level they are on, we have decided to conduct a survey and create tasks that would make this outcome achievable in our classroom.

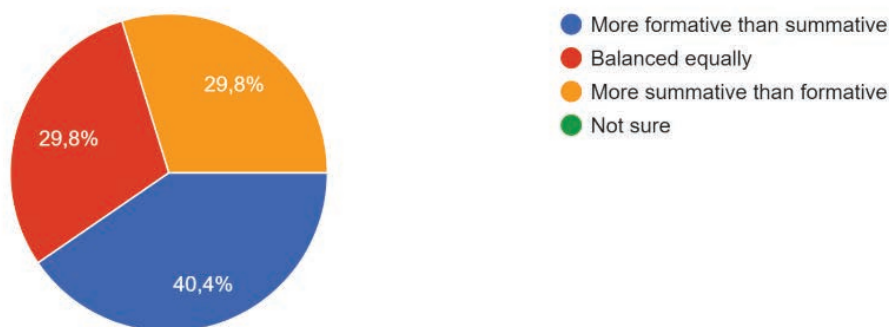
The first step was a small-scale survey for students and teachers with a special focus on the speaking and writ-

ing skills. 47 teachers and 264 students answered questions about their general assessment practices, the use of checklists and rubrics, feedback experience and the understanding of the purpose of summative and formative assessments.

The results of the survey were somewhat unexpected, showing that, although all the participating teachers regularly give ongoing feedback to their students, 10% of them do not use checklists for formative assessment of writing tasks. Only about a third estimate that they use more summative than formative assessments and 90% of teachers believe that using checklists and rubrics improves student performance in writing and speaking.

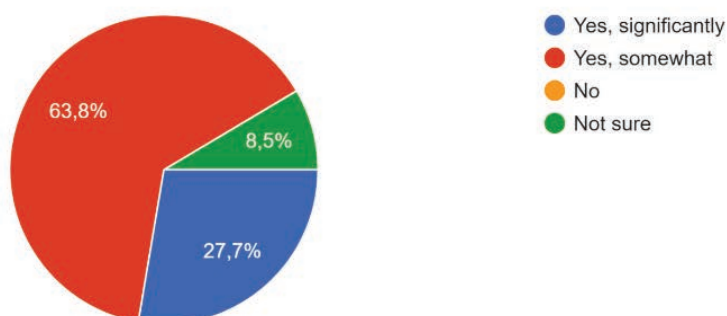
How do you balance formative and summative assessments in your teaching practice?

47 odgovora



Do you think using checklists and rubrics improves students' performance in writing and speaking?

47 odgovora

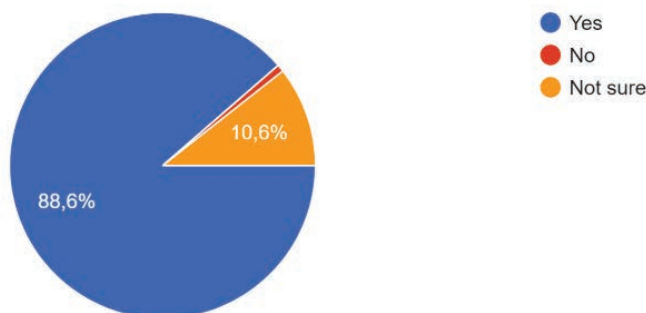


These results are compatible with students' results, which show that 10,6% of students do not differentiate between formative and summative assessments, while

44,7% of those who do find both assessment methods equally useful for their learning and progress.

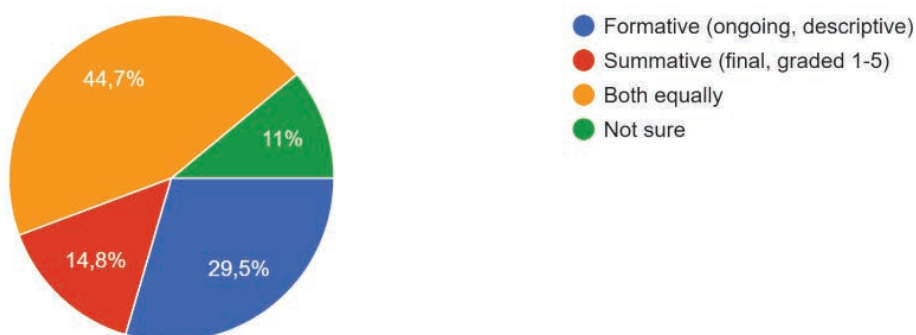
Do you understand the difference between formative (ongoing, descriptive) and summative (final, graded 1-5) assessments?

264 odgovora



Which type of assessment do you find more helpful for your learning and progress?

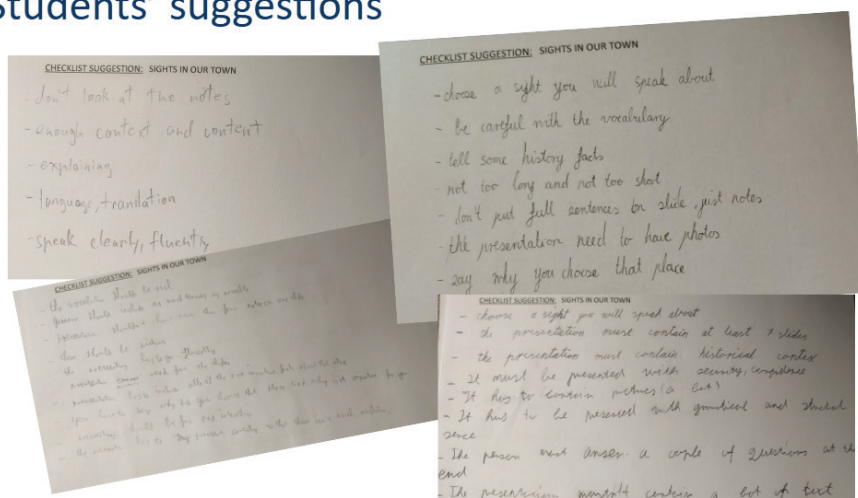
264 odgovora



As it is nowadays very practical and fast to use AI tools as help while creating rubrics and checklists, it is also more than ever before possible to involve students in the assessment process. We asked a class of students to come up with a checklist for a speaking and a writing task to be assessed. After a while they performed both tasks on their own but confirmed that during their self-regulated

learning in the future they will be using AI assistance. However, as experienced teachers, we have noticed that both checklists and rubrics created with most AI tools are too generic, so it is crucial that we tailor them to the needs of each class of students and their specific activities in order to be fully useful.

Students' suggestions



Peer assessment is a valuable aspect of the learning process in the EFL classroom. By evaluating their classmates' work, students gain new perspectives and insights that can be applied to their own tasks. Peer feedback also fosters a collaborative learning

environment, where students feel supported and motivated by their peers. Teachers play an essential role in guiding this process, providing clear criteria and rubrics to ensure that assessments are constructive and objective.

Oral Presentation Rubric: Local Landmark PowerPoint Presentation – year 1

Criteria	5 Points	4 Points	3 Points	2 Points	1 Point
Grammar	Consistently uses advanced grammatical structures with near-perfect accuracy; no noticeable errors	Uses complex grammatical structures with minimal errors	Demonstrates generally correct grammar with some minor mistakes	Shows basic grammatical understanding with frequent errors	Significant grammatical errors that impede communication
Vocabulary	Uses sophisticated, varied, and context-appropriate vocabulary	Employs diverse vocabulary with some advanced word choices	Uses adequate vocabulary with some repetition	Limited vocabulary with basic word choices	Very limited vocabulary that restricts understanding
Pronunciation	Extremely clear pronunciation with intonation and stress	Clear pronunciation with minimal accent interference	Generally clear pronunciation with some noticeable accent	Pronunciation challenges that occasionally impede understanding	Pronunciation significantly impacts comprehension
Posture & Audience Interaction	Very strong eye contact, confident body language, actively engages audience	Strong eye contact, confident stance, good audience connection	Consistent eye contact, adequate body language	Minimal eye contact, somewhat uncomfortable presentation	Poor body language, no audience engagement
Presentation Design	Visually appealing and clear design with a balance of text, images, and information	Well-designed slides with clear, relevant content and appealing visuals	Adequate slide design with some visual appeal	Basic slide design with minimal visual interest	Poor design that distracts from presentation content

Incorporating student involvement in assessment also benefits teachers. It allows educators to better understand their students' thought processes, strengths, and challenges, enabling them to adjust their instruction to meet individual needs. This approach can save time and resources as well, since students take on a more active role in their own learning.

In conclusion, it is undeniable that involving secondary school students in the assessment of their writing and speaking tasks is a powerful educational strategy that

benefits both students and teachers. It encourages self-reflection, teaches collaboration, and improves the overall learning experience. What is even more important, students achieve a level of insight and responsibility for a deeper understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement. By integrating this approach into classrooms, we not only help students develop essential skills for academic success but also prepare them to become confident, self-reliant learners who are ready to face the challenges of the future.

Improving English Learning: Insights from Student Perspectives

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Introduction

With 18 years of experience as an English as a foreign language teacher, I have realized that while I possess expertise in teaching, gaining deeper insight into my students' experiences with learning English is equally important: Understanding what they enjoy, what they struggle with, and which teaching and learning methods help them most helps me support them better, build their confidence, and make learning more enjoyable and effective.

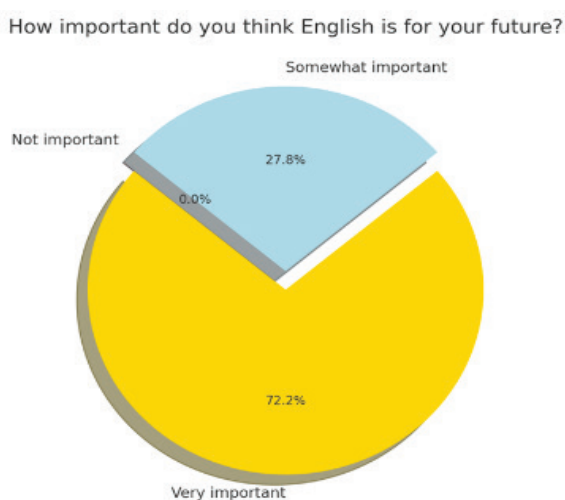
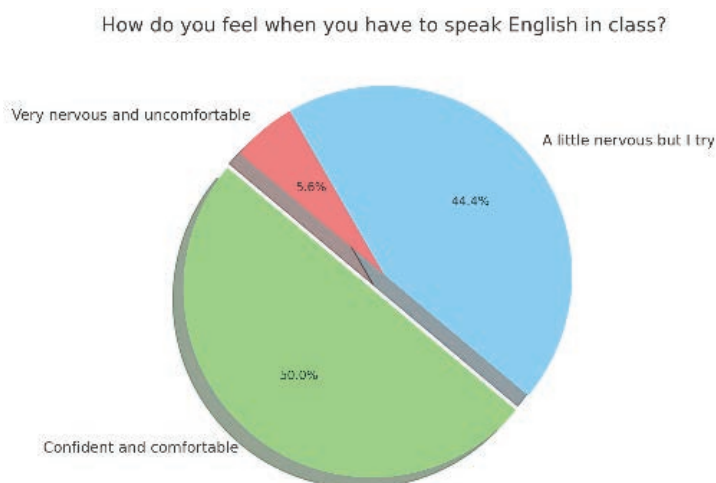
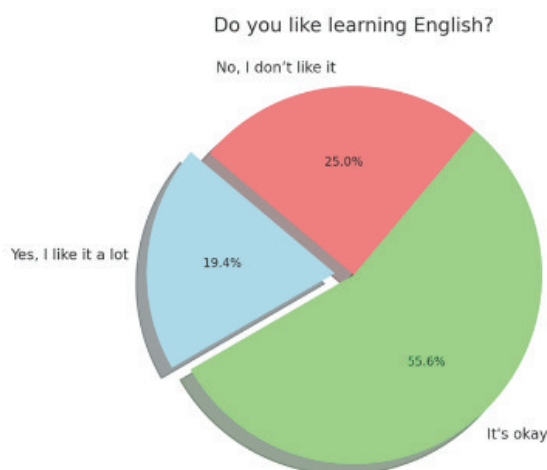
My goal in conducting this research was to gather honest insights that could give clues on making English classes more enjoyable and more effective. To achieve this, I conducted an anonymous survey which consists of 15 questions, among 36 middle school students with different grades and language skills. The survey aims at exploring their learning preferences, difficulties, study habits, and classroom experiences. By analyzing their responses, I can make decisions on how to enhance their learning experience in the future.

General Attitudes Toward Learning English

Interest in English: Most students (20) think English is "okay," while 7 enjoy it a lot, and 9 do not like it.

Speaking English in Class: 18 students feel confident, 16 feel a little nervous but try, while only 2 feel very uncomfortable.

Importance of English: A vast majority (26) believe English is very important for their future, with only 10 considering it somewhat important. No students think English is unimportant.



Conclusion: Most students acknowledge the importance of English, but their enthusiasm for learning varies. Many feel somewhat comfortable speaking in class, although some still experience nervousness.

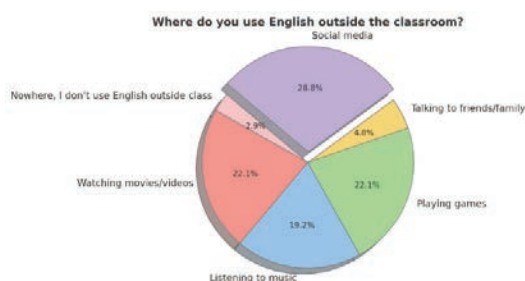
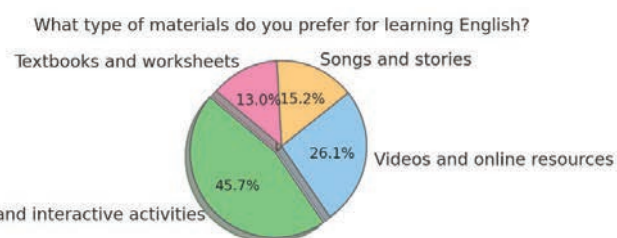
English Usage and Learning Methods

Preferred Learning Activities: Listening to music or videos (28 students) is the most effective activity, followed by speaking (12 students). Traditional grammar exercises and writing are the least preferred.



Preferred Learning Materials: Games and interactive activities (21 students) are the top choice, followed by videos and online resources (12 students).

Where Students Use English: social media (30 students), watching videos (23), and playing games (23) are the most common places English is used. Only 3 students do not use English outside of class.



Conclusion: Students engage with English mostly through entertainment and social media rather than academic activities. Interactive, media-based learning methods are preferred over textbooks and grammar exercises.

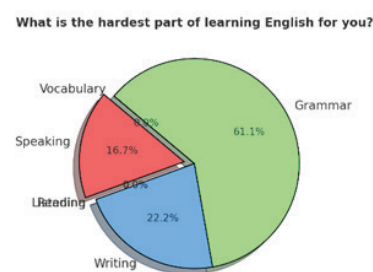
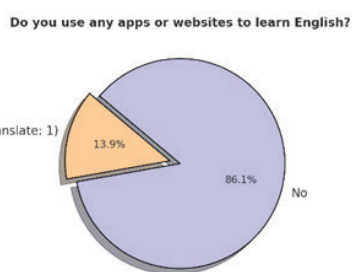
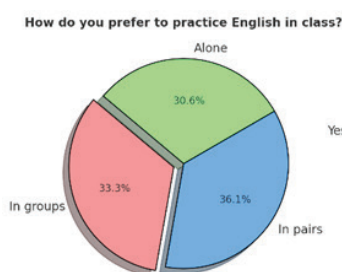
Classroom Preferences and Challenges

Preferred Practice Methods in Class: Students prefer working in pairs (13) or groups (12), while 11 prefer working alone.

Use of English Learning Apps/Websites: Only 5 students use apps (such as TikTok and Google Translate), while 31 do not use any apps.

Biggest Challenges in Learning English: Grammar is the most challenging aspect (22 students), followed by writing (8) and speaking (6).

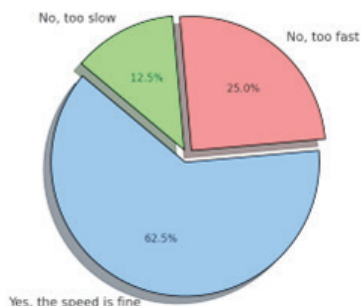
Conclusion: Working together with other students is considered a bit more preferable than working alone. Few students use digital learning tools, and grammar remains a major difficulty.



Learning Speed and Nervousness

Class Speed Perception: Most students (31) think the pace of the class is fine, while 2 find it too fast and 3 find it too slow.

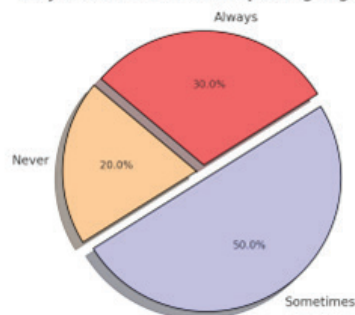
Do you think English classes move at the right speed?



Nervousness When Speaking: 25 students sometimes feel nervous, 9 never feel nervous, and 2 always feel nervous.

Conclusion: Most students feel the class speed is appropriate, but nervousness is unfortunately still a factor when speaking English.

Do you feel nervous when speaking English?



Study Habits and Technology in Learning

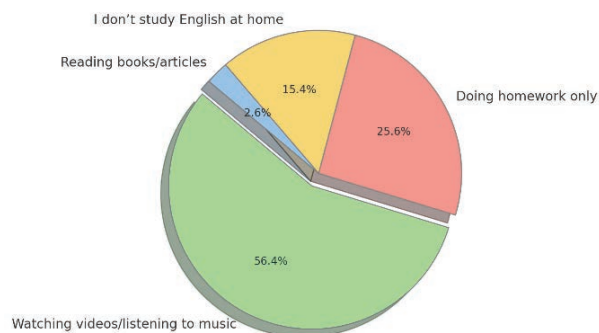
Study Habits at Home: Most students (22) engage with English through videos and music, while 10 rely only on doing homework, and 6 do not study English at home.

Regarding the use of More Technology in Class: 23 students think technology would help, 12 are unsure, and only 1 disagrees.

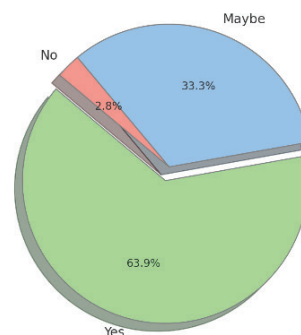
Suggestions for Improving English Class: The most common suggestions include more games (8 students), Kahoot (6), more videos (6), and more group work (4). Some students also requested less grammar, more music, and online activities.

Conclusion: Many students do not study English beyond passive engagement with entertainment. There is a strong preference for incorporating technology, games, and interactive methods into the classroom.

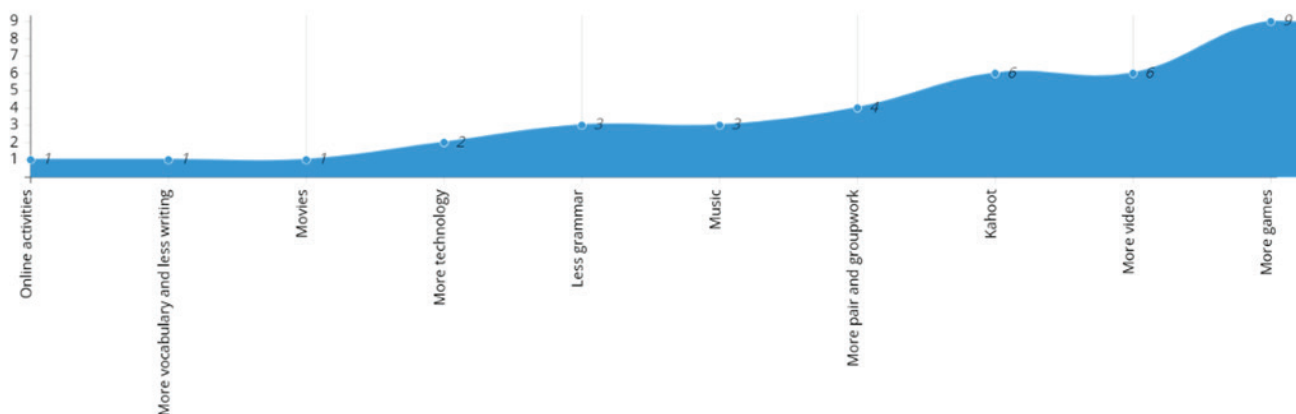
How do you usually study English at home?



Do you think using more technology in class would help you learn better?



What would make English class better for you?



Made with Livegap Charts

Final Conclusion

The survey shows that while students understand the importance of English, they mainly engage with it through digital media instead of in classroom environments. Grammar is the greatest challenge, and many students experience nervousness when speaking English. They prefer interactive, technology-based learning methods over traditional textbook methods.

To improve English learning, adding more games, videos, and interactive activities could increase both engage-

ment and confidence. Furthermore, dealing with grammar issues through fun, practical methods instead of standard exercises might help students overcome their biggest challenge. Therefore, by incorporating more student-friendly methods, we could help students feel more comfortable, confident, and motivated to improve their English skills.

The question is: how can teachers integrate innovative techniques with traditional methods to create a balanced and effective language learning environment?

Transform Learning with Goosechase Adventures

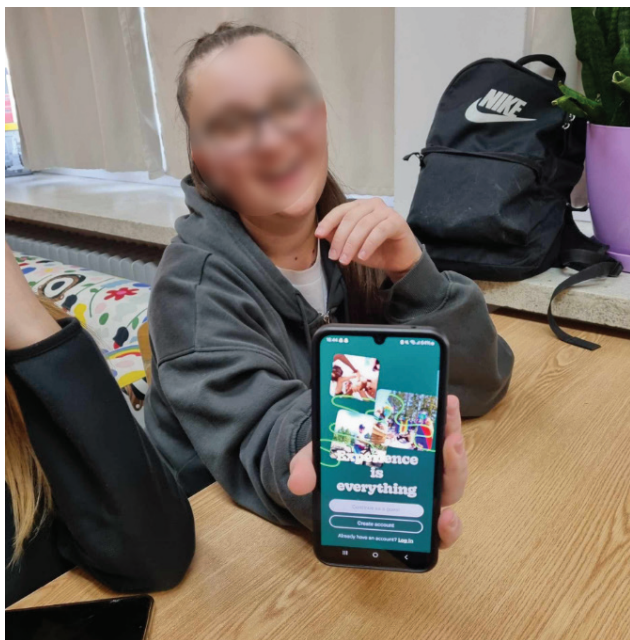
Ivana Hrastović Mandarić, prof.

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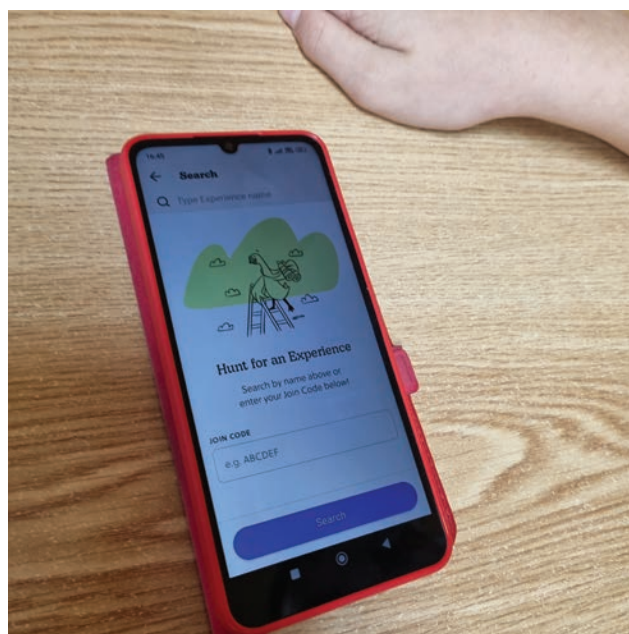
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Education is constantly changing, and digital tools are becoming increasingly valuable for English teachers. While traditional teaching methods remain the cornerstone of learning, digital innovations offer new ways to make teaching more effective, adapt lessons to meet each student's needs and prepare learners for a technology-driven world. In this article, we will explore the possibilities of a tool that has gained popularity for its interactive and fun approach. Inspired by scavenger hunts, Goosechase is an online platform that helps you run real-world interactive experiences for your students.



Learning English works best when it is creative, interactive, and connected to real-life situations. The Goosechase app integrates all these elements, making it easier for students to use and enjoy the language in practical and fun ways. It transforms academic tasks into engaging games. Goosechase allows teachers to design and manage scavenger hunts by assigning missions. These missions can involve photos, videos, texts, or location-based



submissions. For example, students can capture humorous photos of their team, various places in their town, or their free-time activities. They might also photograph themselves or their family members performing household chores. Furthermore, they can find and photograph objects in the classroom that represent specific vocabulary, such as "Find things made of wood/ glass/metal". Students can also create a short video on a given topic, such as free time activity, favourite movie/book/singer or write a short poem about their surroundings using sensory language: „I can see..., I can smell..., I can hear...". For more challenging tasks, teachers can use other tools to create puzzles, mirrored texts, secret messages, or other educational activities, and link them to Goosechase. Points are awarded for every completed task, and students can see a live leaderboard, which adds a competitive component to the activity. The app is suitable for both individual and team-based activities, making it adaptable to any classroom size or setup. To add an element of excitement,

goosechase

HUPE2024

CREATE

PUBLISH

REVIEW

DETAILS

MISSIONS

BROADCASTS

BRANDING

JOIN CODE ?

79VVXL

Crazy photo

Take a crazy group photo (all members included)!

5 PTS

PHOTOS ONLY

HIDDEN IN FEED

My favourite free time activity

Record a video in which the youngest member of the group should answer the question: "What is your favourite free time activity?"

10 PTS

VIDEOS ONLY

HIDDEN IN FEED

Answer the question

Write the answer to this question:
What place of furniture is always piled high with papers, books, and the occasional coffee mug in a classroom?
NOW GO TO THAT PLACE TO GET YOUR FIRST CLUE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

15 PTS

Accepted Answers

TEACHER'S DESK

APPROXIMATE

Puzzle

Which part of the body is hurting in the picture?
Write the answer here and in the crossword under number 1.

20 PTS

teachers can create innovative names for the teams, such as Team 1: „Comma Chameleons“, Team 2: „Syntax Sages“, Team 3: „Vocabulary Virtuosos“, Team 4: „Punctuation Professors“, Team 5: „Literary Legends“. Every team then decides on the roles of each team member. The Tech Wizard is someone proficient with mobile phones and can type fast. The Cheerleader-in-Chief motivates team members and gives a positive vibe to the team. The Clue Whisperer is knowledgeable and insightful, while the Puzzle Prodigy excels at logical thinking. Various scavenger hunt elements can be incorporated, such as finding hidden objects in the room, searching for specific items, solving clues and puzzles while moving around, or completing tasks that lead to subsequent challenges.

There are many ways to use Goosechase for language learning: introducing new topics, revising and reinforcing material, fostering collaborative learning, exploring cultural contexts, and more. Starting a new unit can be difficult, but Goosechase can make it more exciting. Use scavenger hunts to introduce key vocabulary and concepts in an engaging manner. For instance, if you are beginning a unit on food, create missions where students must find and photograph different food items or use new vocabulary in sentences. You can integrate links to other tools like Wordwall, LearningApps, Quizizz, and others. Revising previously covered material is crucial for learning, and Goosechase offers a fun way to do this. Students can practice describing people or places in the target language. They may find a person in the classroom from a written or recorded description and take a selfie

with them, or they may find a place in the school or town from a description and take a photo or tag the location. Students can also record a video explaining the most important things they learned about a specific topic, such as the present simple tense or adverbs of frequency. This way, they can learn from each other. Teachers can also assess students' ability to give and understand directions in English. Learners would need to follow written or oral directions to various places around the school/town where they would have to take a photo or complete a task to prove they had followed the directions correctly. Another mission could prompt them to give directions to someone else. Goosechase encourages collaborative learning through group missions. Students work with their team to create a short poem/story using at least five new vocabulary words. They practice speaking and listening skills in a collaborative setting. Teachers can create scavenger hunts that explore the cultural aspects of English-speaking countries. This can include finding information about holidays, traditions, or famous landmarks. Students might find a picture of a famous landmark in an English-speaking country and write a short paragraph about its history or simply describe the place. This helps students learn about cultural contexts while practicing writing skills. A Christmas Goosechase, for example, can send participants on a jolly journey to complete holiday-themed missions.

Assessing student performance in Goosechase activities can be both fun and effective. Create a detailed rubric that outlines the criteria for each mission, including as-

pects such as creativity, accuracy, completeness, and language use. Share the rubric with students beforehand so they know what is expected. Encourage students to review each other's work (peer assessment) and to reflect on their own performance (self-assessment). As students complete their missions, observe their participation and engagement. Take notes on their behavior, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, e.g., How actively is the student participating in this activity?, Is the student collaborating effectively with their peers?, How well is the student applying the concepts learned in class? Goosechase allows students to submit photos, videos, and text responses. Review these submissions to assess their understanding and application of the material. Watch the videos to evaluate pronunciation and fluency. Check the photos for relevance and creativity. Read the text responses for grammar and vocabulary usage.

Goosechase offers a Template Library with over 250 pre-made experience templates. These templates can save you time and provide inspiration for creating your own scavenger hunts. Whether you are looking for a ready-to-use activity or a starting point to customize your own activity, the Template Library has something for every topic and age group, such as „Word Families“, „Thanksgiving Trivia“, „Christmas Week“, „Fairytale History“, „Earth Scavenger Hunt“, and many more.

The Goosechase app also promotes active learning. Students are highly motivated to succeed in a game and reach the highest score. Additionally, the app appeals to diverse learning styles. It develops students' critical thinking and cognitive skills. For example, problem-solving



Nov 16, 2024 at 2:27pm

The Literary Legends completed Crazy photo

5 PTS



ing skills are enhanced as students analyze tasks, plan, and solve them creatively. Decision-making is practiced as students decide on team roles and strategies for completing missions effectively. Creativity and innovation are fostered through open-ended missions that require students to think outside the box. Collaboration and communication are strengthened as students brainstorm ideas, discuss and share responsibilities. While students are completing their missions, the teacher receives immediate feedback and can check the submissions of all teams. By integrating Goosechase into your teaching toolkit, you can transform traditional lessons into dynamic, interactive adventures that inspire and engage students, making learning both effective and memorable.

Example of a custom rubric („Describing People“):

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Creativity	Highly original and vivid descriptions	Some original and vivid descriptions	Few original and vivid descriptions	Lacks originality and vivid descriptions
Accuracy	All descriptions are accurate and detailed	Most descriptions are accurate and detailed	Some descriptions are accurate and detailed	Few or no descriptions are accurate
Completeness	All required aspects of the person described	Most required aspects of the person described	Some required aspects of the person described	Few or no required aspects of the person described
Vocabulary	Uses many new words correctly and spelled accurately	Uses some new words correctly and spelled accurately	Uses few new words, with some spelling errors	Uses few or no new words, with many spelling errors
Grammar	Excellent use of personal pronouns and the verbs "to be," and "have got"	Good use of personal pronouns and the verbs "to be," and "have got"	Satisfactory use of personal pronouns and the verbs "to be," and "have got"	Poor use of personal pronouns and the verbs "to be," and "have got"

E-book or printed book?

Nina Mom, teacher of English and Slovene language at Primary School Draga Kobala Maribor, Slovenia

Keywords: e-book, printed book, teenagers, reading

I work with young people, more precisely with students in primary school from the 4th to 9th grade. Like most teachers, I see a decline in interest in reading among teenagers. Teenagers are reading less and less, either in their mother tongue or in a foreign language. As an English teacher, I asked myself how to further motivate students to read. Would greater use of e-books contribute to greater motivation for reading? Or do students still prefer to read classic printed books?

I decided to investigate this and ask the opinion of the students at our school who are in the 7th, 8th and 9th grades (12- to 14-year-olds). I asked the students of the mentioned classes to complete an anonymous online questionnaire on this topic. The question was: Which books do you prefer to read (electronic books or classic printed books)?

But before I present the result of my research, let's ask ourselves what are the characteristics of the reader and what are the factors that influence reading comprehension.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE READER

Reading comprehension is influenced by the reader with his own characteristics. Effective readers are those who are active while reading. They are aware of why they are reading; they have expectations regarding the text, they connect the presented ideas with each other and with prior knowledge while reading, they help themselves in understanding by predicting, creating questions and using visual representations. The reader's intelligence contributes to reading comprehension. Those with higher general intelligence and better verbal skills will have an easier time comprehending what is read. Among the reader's characteristics that affect reading comprehension is also reading technique, since a reader who reads automatically can focus more on the content and understanding of what is read.

One of the characteristics of the reader that affects how we understand the text is also the purpose of reading. An individual can read to pass the time, learn about the course of the story, obtain information that helps him

solve tasks or answer questions. Depending on the purpose, the reader then directs his attention to those parts of the text that seem most important to him.

(<https://www.center-motus.si/bralno-razumevanje-kaj-je-in-kako-se-razvija/>, obtained on 6.1.2024)

WHAT IS AN E-BOOK?

An electronic book, e-book, or digital book is a book publication published in digital format. It can be a standalone or a version of a classic printed book. Instead of the book being published in physical form, it is accessible on a computer device. In the beginning, the term e-book was used only for classic books that had been converted into electronic form.

(https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektronska_knjiga, obtained on 31.1.2024)

COMPARISON OF ELECTRONIC BOOK AND PRINTED BOOK

Electronic books currently have several advantages, as well as disadvantages, compared to printed ones. The memory of a modern portable reading device can store several thousand books. The reader buys a book online or downloads a work whose copyright has already expired practically free of charge, which is more convenient than going to a bookstore or library. E-book readers that are made for the purpose of reading are still somewhat cumbersome and of limited use, but technological progress in this area is lightning fast.

(https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektronska_knjiga, obtained on 31.1.2024)

The e-book is relatively ecological, always within reach, does not take up physical space, and does not collect dust. If we delete it from our device, we won't feel the guilt and anxiety that comes with throwing away a printed book, because e-books have a sense of ephemerality. Printed books allow disconnection, a moment for yourself, disconnection from other stimuli. When we read a printed book, we focus only on the content of the book,

and at the same time train our concentration, which is becoming more and more dispersed due to new technologies.

(<https://homocumolat.com/2020/03/02/tiskana-knjiga-ali-e-knjiga/>, obtained on 4.2.2024)

ELECTRONIC READERS

Electronic readers (e-readers) are special electronic devices used for reading. E-books have an ink screen that closely mimics the look of a book, giving the reader a paper reading experience. E-readers use less energy, put less strain on the eyes and are very light and thin, making them very convenient.

An e-reader is otherwise very similar to a tablet computer. The tablet has an LCD screen and much higher image refresh rates, so it is more useful for computer work. However, an e-reader is more useful for reading.

(https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elektronski_papir, obtained on 31.1.2024)

POSITIVE FEATURES OF ELECTRONIC READERS

E-readers have many positive features that attract readers to use them. Positive features of e-readers:

1. Portability and convenience are very important features as e-readers are designed to be light and compact and therefore easily portable. No matter what you do, an e-reader gives you a wide selection of books without having to carry them from the library.
2. Flexible font and lighting is also important, as the reader can adjust the size of the letters and the brightness of the screen.
3. E-readers also have a positive impact on the environment. There is no need to print, package and ship physical books.
4. Search functions to help find a specific paragraph or chapter. In addition, many e-readers offer built-in dictionaries that allow users to interpret words.
5. E-readers provide access to a library of e-books, including many free contemporary bestsellers, academic texts, and self-published works. With an Internet connection, users can browse, buy, and download e-books from various online stores, providing them with a wide selection of material to choose from.

(<https://www.student.si/zabava/knjiga/5-prednosti-in-slabosti-e-bralnikov-ki-jih-mora-poznati-vsak/?cn-reloaded=1>, obtained on 12.02.2024)

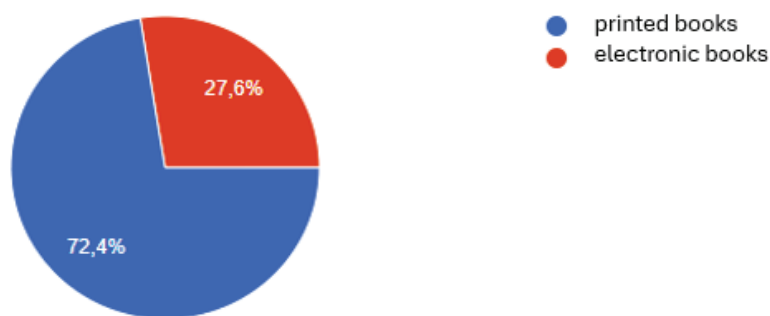
NEGATIVE FEATURES OF ELECTRONIC READERS

Despite many positive features, electronic readers also have negative features. Negative features of e-readers:

1. Screen glare. E-readers use backlit screens, like phones and tablets, which can emit blue light and strain the eyes. Although some e-readers use e-ink technology, it is still not the same as reading traditional printed books.
2. Dependence on technology. E-readers require battery power to operate. If the battery runs out, the device does not work properly and there may also be a technical problem. Readers cannot access their e-books until the problem is fixed or the battery is charged.
3. Limiting physical interaction. Some readers enjoy being able to physically hold and flip through books. E-readers do not have such a function and thus limit the experience that the weight and smell of the book can bring.
4. Disorders. E-readers are often equipped with an Internet connection. They have applications, recording or even browsing the web enabled. While these extra features can be convenient, they can also be a distraction during reading with messages and notifications that detract from the reading experience. (<https://www.student.si/zabava/knjiga/5-prednosti-in-slabosti-e-bralnikov-ki-jih-mora-poznati-vsak/?cn-reloaded> , obtained on 12.2.2024)

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, I decided to research what types of books the 7th, 8th and 9th graders of our elementary school prefer to read. The question was: Which books do you prefer to read (electronic books or classic printed books)? 89 students answered and here are the results graphically shown.

Graph 1: Showing which types of books students prefer to read.



It turns out that students prefer to read traditional printed paper books (72,4 % of students answered that) rather than electronic books (only 27,6 % of students). I must admit that the answer surprised me a little, because I secretly expected that in these modern times of screen use, the electronic book would beat the printed book. This actually makes me happy, because it shows that the desire and motivation to read classic printed books remains present among young people.

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Nina Mom is a professor of Slovene and English languages. She graduated from the University of Maribor, Slovenia. She has taught the English language for fourteen years at a Primary School. Before that she had taught adults at Maribor Adult Education Centre, where she had also taught the Slovene language to foreigners. In addition, she carried out Exams of Slovene for foreigners who wanted to obtain an official certificate of Slovene.

ADVICE FOR YOUNG (AT HEART) TEACHERS

Amela Ojdanić, Osnovna škola Turnić, Rijeka

We all sometimes find ourselves in a situation where we have to present our lesson in front of others. It is stressful, isn't it? No matter how experienced we are, no matter how successfully we have mastered the teaching principles, the expected reaction of a conscientious teacher is a feeling of nervousness and anxiety followed by careful planning of the lesson. And what a stress it must be for young teachers who are still honing their teaching craft when they are faced with the necessity to perform in front of someone else, may it be their colleagues, superiors, mentors, or AZOO advisors.

Working with students and trainees, I have noticed some recurring mistakes that are mainly caused by an inadequate teaching approach itself. I would like to share my observations, hoping that they will help, primarily young teachers, but also those who are more experienced, in terms of confirming their own teaching practise rather than in terms of giving advice on how to teach.

The beginning and the end of every lesson preparation are the outcomes. It is well known that outcomes must be SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-framed. It is very easy to find the recommended and 'forbidden' verbs to express the outcomes based on Bloom's taxonomy. However, the number of planned outcomes must be carefully determined. Too many outcomes for a lesson do not enrich the lesson but contribute to the lesson's failure. The outcomes must be in line with the goal of the lesson. I always advise setting fewer, three to four, more easily achievable outcomes instead of listing numerous outcomes and thus creating the situation in which one cannot see the forest for the trees. After setting the outcomes, the next step is to ask the only relevant question: How? How do I achieve the set outcomes? With which activities? What do I need to prepare to achieve the outcomes? What do students have to do to achieve the outcomes? Simple questions which help in attaining the objective of your lesson.

Another problem that I have often witnessed is an 'over-ambitious' lesson plan. Young teachers would like to show everything they know and can, to display all their creativity that includes various teaching techniques on a single occasion. You need to make a good selection of activities, considering the skills required to carry out these activities, bearing in mind that sometimes less is more.

The role of the teacher has changed over the years. I like the one which defines the teacher as a moderator. I think it gives a useful piece of advice to teachers on how to reduce their input during the lesson. Excessive teacher's input means insufficient student involvement, and we do not want that. The teacher is there to announce the topic, ask a question, direct the students, give instructions, and help if it is necessary. Let the students do everything they can instead of the teacher. The teacher gives the task, sets an example and shifts the spotlight to the students.

Today's teaching is based on the freedom and autonomy of the teacher. Freedom and autonomy are wonderful, but they impose more responsibility on us. On the other hand, today's textbooks and supporting materials are excellent, publishers are competing to make teachers' jobs easier. Everything is already written and prepared, it is only up to the teacher to use it by following the instructions. Such a way of working or even consistently adhering to the textbook and workbook, including the teacher's book, is a bit disappointing if it is part of a sample lesson that the teacher presents in order to be assessed. In addition, the fact that something is in the textbook does not mean that it is good teaching material. The teacher must be critical of the materials he uses. The main criterion is whether a specific exercise contributes to the achievement of the set outcomes.

Recently, grammar and grammar teaching have undergone substantial change in English language teaching practises. Grammar rules are no longer a set of isolated definitions that are taught separately from the language context. Therefore, we have changed the way we assess and evaluate grammar in the class. It is more difficult for teachers, but in my opinion, more logical. Students' knowledge of language rules does not guarantee their fluency. On the contrary, insisting on learning language rules by heart and applying them in isolated sentences sometimes hinders students' oral and even written performance because they are afraid of making a mistake while speaking or writing. Students of English who are doing their teaching practise at school, but also young teachers, sometimes have difficulties in planning and teaching grammar lessons. According to their claims, it is hard for language students to move away from the theory and put themselves in learners' place and explain, for

example, a verb tense without bookish language rules and metalanguage. I advise young or future teachers never to ask questions such as: How would you say *on ima kratku kosu*? or How do you change this sentence into a question? In contrast, make sure that students speak the language they are learning instead of talking about the language they are learning. Such rules are usually followed by a question for learners: Do you understand? to which students usually answer affirmatively, regardless of whether they really understand it or not. My advice: check if they understand, do not ask them. Instead of exposing the learners to artificial language constructions, put them in situations in which they have to use the language, provide the realia, flashcards, pictures, provoke them to get a reaction, a verbal reaction.

The activities we prepare should encourage students to develop their language skills: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking and writing. The problem arises when the teacher is not sure what the goal of a particular activity is, or to be more precise, which skill the students will use to solve the task. In other words, completing a text with the words or sentences given does not require writing skills but listening or reading comprehension. On the other hand, listening to the text, watching the video or reading the text must be accompanied by an assignment for students that will make them interested in the topic itself and that will contribute to the achievement of the set outcomes. Writing assignments imply the use of thematic vocabulary, knowledge of the targeted language structure(s), clear instructions, a writing template, guidelines or questions to be answered. If all this is taken into account, it is clear that the writing assignment during one lesson is time-consuming. It is not a task that will be done casually in 5-6 minutes of the lesson.

Group work is a challenge for every teacher, especially for young teachers. Due to the failed attempts of group work that I have witnessed, I advise young teachers not to do it or to really plan it and prepare it the best way they can. Not enough time for group work is a recipe for failure. Dividing students into groups, if it is a lesson in a class that is not yours, is a challenge of its own. Dividing and organizing students into groups takes time and a teacher should not forget it when planning the lesson. The next step is the task itself, whether it is the same one for all the groups or different, the instructions must be clear, precise and concise. Do not forget that each group member must contribute to the task within their capabilities. The

point of group work is that each group presents its work, so timing is crucial. The groups should listen to each other, and they will listen if they have a corresponding task. It can be a task in which they need data from other groups to complete a text or a fact file. A listening task with the purpose of assessing other groups and choosing the best one is also quite reasonable.

The amount of material presented must be well measured and students must be given the opportunity to recycle the presented material in multiple ways during the lesson in order to retain what they have learned as much as possible. When preparing for the lesson, teachers should put themselves in the role of students and their way of learning new material. Young teachers ignore the fact that even if students have seen new words and written them down, it does not mean that they have already memorized and learned them. A grammar rule just presented does not mean that students will be able to apply it successfully right away. Excessive expectations from students regarding the acquisition of new material are not a good basis for a lesson. Activities following each other and just providing new input instead of recycling and practising what was presented or taught in the previous activity do not contribute to the achievement of outcomes. Handouts printed from the Internet, that are sometimes vaguely connected to the topic but not properly adapted for the particular lesson, may leave the impression of good preparation for the class, but they are often nothing more than the path of least resistance. Be careful with the number of handouts you prepare for the learners and make sure their use is justified and purposeful.

The closure of the lesson should show whether students have achieved the set outcomes or not. Therefore, the final part of the lesson must be designed so that the last activity comprises and combines the presented material and the students' ability to apply that material in oral or written form. In doing so, students should not be prevented from using anything that can help them, a textbook, a notebook, a blackboard, any source of information. Finding the information and using it properly is what we need to teach our learners. It does not matter if, at the end of the lesson, they do not know all the new words or if they do not know how to correctly form a sentence in the new verb tense, it is important that they know where and how they can find what they do not know. It is important to teach them how to learn.

How I conquered my fears and started presenting

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I have always wanted to present at conferences, but I have never believed I was good enough. Things changed for the better when I joined the EVE-HUPE mentoring programme for empowering women to present at conferences. Through this mentoring programme, with the help of my mentor Sinem Daridere, I have created my first real presentation, Classroom Management – How to Survive in the Primary Classroom. With it, I applied to the HUPE call for presenters for the ELTA Albania International Conference. I was really surprised when I got an e-mail that I was the chosen one. I accepted. Everybody around me feared how I would get there by myself, but I was determined. Good motivation was the fact that the costs of accommodation would be covered by ELTA and a part of the travelling expenses would be covered by HUPE. There were no direct flights. I had to change flights in Munich (departure) and Vienna (return). Luckily, there were no problems on the trip. From Tirana airport to the Tirana town centre, I travelled by overcrowded bus that cost me 4 euros. The bus driver didn't speak English very well, so we had trouble understanding each other. I decided to walk from the town centre to my hotel. That was a bad decision because it was really warm, and it took me an hour to get there. Still, I had time to get some rest before the conference. It started at 2 p.m. on the 10th of May, 2024. It was organized at the Faculty of Foreign Lan-

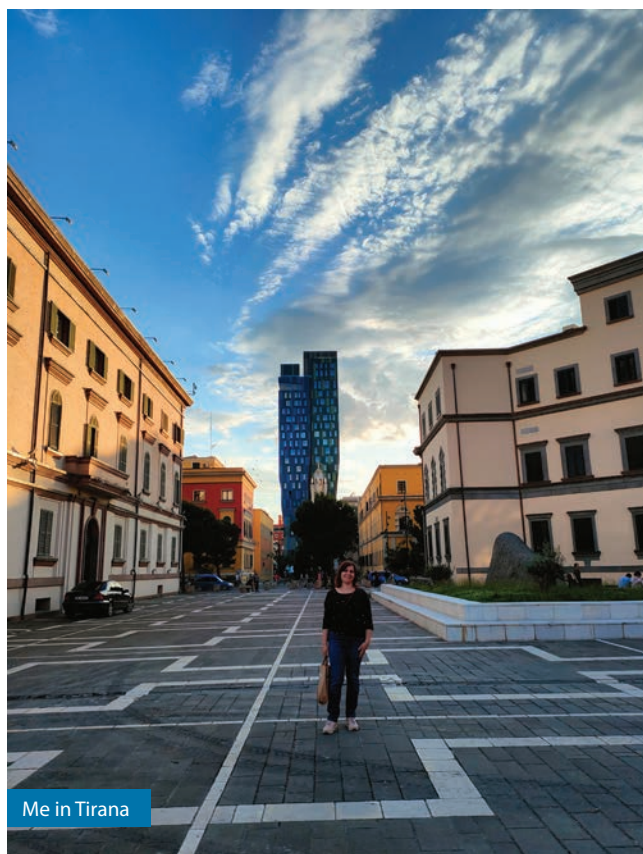
guages University of Tirana, which was a 5-minute walk from my hotel. Dr. Elona Kolaj, ELTA Albania president, welcomed me as if I was her old friend. It seemed as if all of the presenters and organisers were a big happy family. The programme was wonderful. We heard plenaries by Dr. Anita Caprice Powell, Katerina Mantadaki, Erika Os-vath and Grzegorz Spiewak. I felt at home with fellow teachers from all over the world. We finished at 8 p.m. on the first day. My presentation was the next morning. There were three parallel session groups. I was in the second one, so I wasn't able to hear speakers from other groups. I was pleased with how I presented and how everybody participated. After the conference, I had some time to see the city. Tirana is really beautiful, with lots of new modern buildings and big avenues. I was especially fascinated with the Pyramid of Tirana, from which you could see the whole city. It was built on 14 October 1988 as the Enver Hoxha Museum, but after the fall of communism, it became a conference centre, and now it is turned into a youth IT centre for Creative Technologies. I also visited the Bunk 'art 2 Museum, a massive bunker built by the communist dictator Enver Hoxha converted into a museum, where you can see the crimes that were committed under the communist government. In the past, it was used by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It introduces the Albanian military life and the communist police. During my stay, there was a street food festival, so the streets were crowded with people. In the evening, it was



time for RIM, TIM, TAGI, DIM. I wasn't going to miss out on Croatia performing in the Eurovision Song Contest. Too bad Baby Lasagna didn't win. My flight was leaving on the 12th of May. The hotel staff was kind enough to print out my plane tickets and call a taxi to the airport. A walk to the town centre and a bus ride weren't options because I was afraid I would get lost and miss my flight. The taxi to the airport was 23 euros, a small price for saved nerves. I was sad to leave Tirana but proud of myself because I managed to present at such an important conference. This was just the beginning. Thanks to HUPE and EVE, my self-esteem rose. In the year 2024, I had two more workshops at the international conferences, and this year, I'm travelling to Slovenia, Scotland and Serbia.

About the author

My name is Ivana Devčić. I was born in Sisak, but I moved to Čazma in 2017. I have been teaching English for 19 years in Primary School Čazma. I'm a proud member of HUPE and IATEFL, and I do my best to develop and grow as a teacher. That's why you can see me at many conferences.



Me in Tirana



Me at the conference



The pyramid

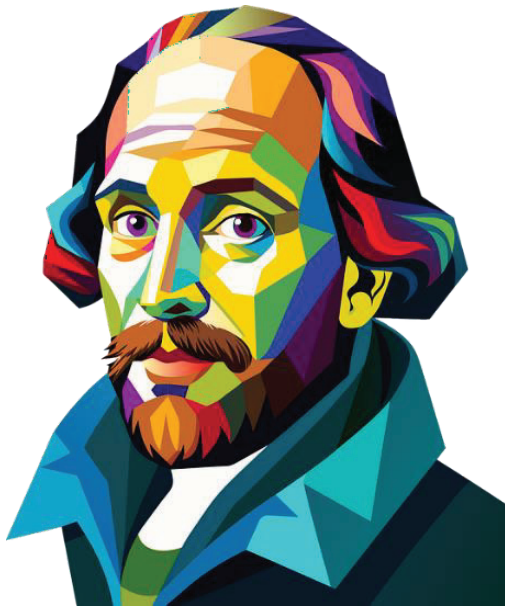
Looking Forward to Shakespeare

Ante Žderić, prof., učitelj izvrstan savjetnik
OŠ Cvjetno naselje, Zagreb

'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.

They have their exits and their entrances.'

(As You Like It)



Why not honor the Bard, the most celebrated playwright of all time, by bringing his legacy back to life on the 410th anniversary of his death? In 2026, students can immerse themselves in his timeless works through the 'Welcome, Shakespeare!' school project.

Designed for eighth-graders and secondary school students, this project runs from September to April, with students working together to create posters on key topics, which will be featured in an exhibition in April. The topics are as follows:

- Shakespeare's Life
- Shakespeare's Tragedies
- Shakespeare's Comedies
- Shakespeare's Histories
- Shakespeare's Language
- The Elizabethan Age
- Famous Quotes
- School Play Announcement
- A Theatre Poster
- Literature in Advertising

(Some posters may resemble classic theater announcements, while others might creatively turn Shakespeare's quotes into slogans for modern products.)



To add a theatrical element, three students (with alternates) will stage a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* and present two of Shakespeare's best-known sonnets.

Throughout the school year, all students will take part in activities that explore Shakespeare's works, including:

- Describing characters' appearances and personalities
- Discussing ethical dilemmas in the plays
- Creating a mini-saga version of a play in 50 words
- Imagining alternative endings to a play
- Designing a problem page for a magazine

From April 8 to April 22, students will have the opportunity to view the posters. On April 23, the anniversary of Shakespeare's death, a special performance will take place. Two students will portray *Romeo and Juliet* in the famous Act II, Scene II, set in Capulet's orchard. The third student will play the role of an intruder who humorously interrupts their love scene with a sketch, including a rap/hip-hop rendition of the "To be or not to be" soliloquy from *Hamlet* (adapted for this occasion as "To love or not to love").

This 'nameless intruder' will also host a quiz on Shakespeare's life and works, with answers drawn from the exhibition posters displayed in the school's entrance hall. Each class will have a team of three contestants competing for points.

Following the quiz and the Act II, Scene II performance, Romeo and Juliet will recite two of Shakespeare's most famous sonnets in both English and Croatian. A student will play music from Shakespeare's era throughout, while others deliver modernized versions of the dialogue and sonnets. The project can be organized with support from music and Croatian language teachers.

The project goal is to introduce students to Shakespeare in a hands-on way, blending traditional methods with creative activities that build language skills and deepen their understanding. No digital tools are allowed! However, falling in love with Shakespeare's words is most welcome!

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Project Challenges in ESL

Melinda Tupek, EFL Teacher, Mentor
Sesvetska Sopnica Primary School

Abstract

This paper explores the challenges faced by upper primary students during project work, the benefits of a cross-curricular approach, and the impact on their skills in English and geography.

Introduction

Teaching English has become increasingly demanding over the past few years since students have varying levels of language proficiency as early as the first grade of primary school, and this gap seems to be widening as they grow older. Due to this range of abilities, some students struggle with reading and comprehension, while others are more advanced, making it difficult to design lessons that meet the needs of all learners. Additionally, many students rely on the internet for information, often copying directly from online sources without fully understanding or processing the material. Furthermore, with the rise of digital devices, social media, and constant stimulation, students' attention spans seem to have shortened, making it harder to keep them focused during lessons or presentations.

In an attempt to overcome these challenges and develop language skills, as well as enhance 21st-century skills such as communication, creativity and critical thinking, our class often works on projects that involve presentations. However, I have encountered several recurring issues that affect the quality of these presentations.

Challenges

While projects are designed to be both creative and educational, several challenges emerged as students worked through them.

Copying from the Internet – A recurring issue is that some students resort to copying information directly from online sources rather than paraphrasing or fully understanding the material.

Reading the Presentations – Many students struggle with reading their presentations, rather than engaging with the content. Those who simply read their slides make their delivery boring and less engaging for the rest of the class.

Reading Difficulty – Since some of the content is copied, a few students struggle with pronunciation or reading specific words, which can hinder communication.

Lack of Understanding – Some students don't fully understand the text they are presenting due to its complexity or unfamiliar vocabulary. As a result, they are unable to explain or to answer questions.

Group Work Issues – While most students enjoy group work, the division of tasks is not always equal. Occasionally, certain students do most of the work, while others contribute minimally. This imbalance may lead to tensions within groups. Additionally, this uneven participation raises questions about fairness in evaluation.

Boring Presentations – Despite the creative potential of projects, many of the presentations lack excitement and fail to engage the class. This makes it difficult for the audience to stay focused or actively participate. The presentations can feel monotonous, with little interaction between the presenters and the audience.

These challenges significantly impacted the overall effectiveness of our class projects, presentations, and skill development.

A Possible Solution

To address these challenges, I decided to approach the next project differently. To minimize time spent on research, I chose to integrate other subjects into our EFL class. Integrating geography into English activities saved time on research and enhanced student engagement while improving skills in both English and geography. As the students were studying national parks and landmarks in geography, I saw it as a perfect opportunity to connect this to our English lessons.

The Task

The goal was to get students excited and motivated through a project where they would work in groups to create and present a travel agency proposal. This proposal included a leaflet and a commercial promoting a travel destination of their choice that they had already learned about in geography class. In other words, the project was

designed to encourage Grade 6 students to use their geographical knowledge in an English language context. Each group was assigned the task of creating a travel agency to promote a destination such as a national park, a famous city, or a landmark in Croatia. The project had two main components:

Leaflet Creation – Students were required to create a leaflet containing factual information, such as the destination's name, location, attractions, activities, pictures, and additional details (e.g., accommodation, food, prices, transportation some of which could be fictional if so desired). They could create the leaflet by hand or use an online tool like Canva <https://www.canva.com/p/templates/EAFo8Uitiys-white-simple-hiking-trifold-brochure/>. The aim of this task was to evaluate their writing skills.

Commercial Production – Groups were asked to produce a commercial showcasing their destination through dialogue, acting, and group participation. This component aimed to assess their speaking skills, requiring every group member to contribute to the creation and presentation of the commercial. They had the option to film the commercial (to be shown later) or to present it live to the class.

Group Work

To motivate the students, they were organized into small groups, each one becoming a travel agency.

The Travel Agency – The students had to name their travel agency, which encouraged creativity and collaboration from the outset. This helped to set the stage and the students were excited and eager to begin.

The Destination – Students selected a destination from their geography studies, ensuring they had some prior knowledge and would not need to spend excessive time researching. This allowed them to focus more on completing the tasks and on developing their English skills.

The Leaflet – Students designed a leaflet featuring the destination's name, location, pictures, and tourist attractions, along with other useful information. This encouraged the development of writing skills, particularly the use of verbs, adjectives and descriptive language.

The Commercial – Each group wrote a dialogue, created skits, and had the option of filming their commercial. All groups chose to film their commercials so they could view and re-film them as necessary, leading to much better results compared to past live performances. This component was used to evaluate their oral proficiency and encouraged teamwork and creativity.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the students' work was multifaceted, with rubrics created in collaboration with students to ensure clarity of the expectations. The evaluation included:

Self-Evaluation – Students reflected on their individual roles within the group and evaluated their personal contributions in writing and speaking.

Group Evaluation – Students assessed how well their group collaborated, considering the division of tasks and the extent of participation. They also reflected on group dynamics and any issues faced during the project and how they solved them.

Peer Evaluation – Each group evaluated the commercials and leaflets of other groups, providing feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.

Teacher Evaluation – The teacher evaluated both oral and written work based on predetermined specific criteria, including language accuracy, oral proficiency, vocabulary use, presentation quality, creativity, and teamwork.

Benefits and Drawbacks

While the project presented some drawbacks, it also produced numerous benefits:

Benefits

Creativity and Engagement – The project fostered creativity, making the learning process enjoyable and engaging for all students.

Active Participation – Every student was required to participate in both the creation of the leaflet and of the commercial, ensuring that everyone contributed in their own way to the best of their ability.

Cross-Curricular Learning – Students applied their geographical knowledge in an English context, reinforcing the connection between subjects.

Development of English Skills – The project helped students improve their writing, speaking, and presentation skills, boosting their confidence in using English in a practical context.

Teamwork and Collaboration – Working in groups helped students develop important skills in collaboration, problem-solving, creativity and communication.

Excellent Results – The final products were high-caliber. Students demonstrated an improvement in both their language skills and in the retention of material studied in geography. Furthermore, most groups produced engag-

ing and informative commercials and leaflets of a high quality.

Drawbacks

Preparation Time – The project required significant preparation, including introducing helpful vocabulary, reading sample materials, reviewing leaflets, watching commercials, and preparing rubrics. This led to a substantial amount of time spent on organizing and reviewing materials before the actual project began.

Time Management Issues – Despite thorough preparation, some students struggled with time management. Class time alone wasn't sufficient to complete the projects, so some work had to be done at home. However, not all students prepared the necessary materials needed for the next class, affecting the use of class time and readiness for project completion.

Misunderstanding Expectations – Some students did not fully understand the expectations, as the format was quite different from previous assignments. This led to confusion and required additional time for revisions and corrections.

Imbalance of Group Work – Unequal participation was a challenge in some groups. Some students did not take their responsibilities seriously, which led to difficulty in group-dynamics and in completing the project on time.

Conclusion

While the travel agency project presented challenges, such as time management issues, participation, and misunderstandings of expectations, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. The students were motivated and actively engaged, using their geographical knowledge to enhance their English skills. The project also helped students develop important presentation skills as well as critical thinking, creative thinking and teamwork abilities. Ultimately, the project was a success, providing valuable learning experiences for both the students and the teacher.

Are students missing out on language exposure?

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Introduction

In a world where every song, YouTube video, football transfer article or even your favourite meme is in English, it is easy to assume that we are all born with a universal second language. English is everywhere; your Instagram feed, the latest Netflix hit and the apps you love. So, when it comes to teaching English, people often wonder: "How hard can it be? Everybody speaks English, right?"

However, despite all resources available, not everyone speaks English, at least not fluently or accurately. While English may be the global lingua franca, teaching it is far from a walk in the park. Whether it is telling "affect" and "effect" apart, or navigating through rough seas of phrasal verbs and idioms, teaching English requires more than just playing your favourite song and hoping for the best.

This article examines the beliefs of vocational students about learning English and considers how exposed to the language they really are, through media and education. Analysing these beliefs could help understand what it means to be learning English in modern society and how we can improve the teaching methodology to make students more motivated and successful.

Importance of beliefs about language and exposure to language

Students' beliefs about foreign language learning play a crucial role in the acquisition process, as they can directly influence motivation, attitudes and learning strategies. Richardson (1996) defines beliefs as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true". Assessing beliefs that language learners bring to the language classroom is important because "beliefs are predispositions to action" (Rokeach, 1968). Students who believe that language proficiency can be achieved with effort and persistence

are more likely to stay committed. Negative beliefs, such as thinking that language learning is only for certain people or that success is purely innate, can lead to frustration and abandonment of learning.

Many studies on language exposure highlight the consensus in second language acquisition that exposure to authentic, meaningful language input is critical for learners to develop proficiency and achieve fluency in a second language. Stewart (2015) explores the role of cultural products like books, movies and music in language learning, focusing on how they offer learners authentic exposure and help understand idiomatic expressions, slang and cultural context. Bland, J., and Nemet, G. (2018) examine how video games can provide language exposure and how the use of language in virtual environments supports vocabulary acquisition and problem-solving skills.

Research methodology

This research was conducted in a secondary vocational school, educating students in the sector of mechanical engineering and the sub-sector of electrical engineering through three- and four-year programmes (technical programme and industrial crafts programme). A two-part survey was given to 79 three-year students and 71 four-year students. The first part employed the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory developed by Horwitz (1988) and translated by Mihaljević Djigunović (1998) to assess the beliefs of students about learning a foreign language. BALLI employs a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Minor modifications were made in order to ensure the instrument reflects the present context.

The second examined students' exposure to the English language. It included questions about the habits of students regarding listening to music, watching movies and TV series, reading books and articles, playing computer games, etc. in English, and how often they got the opportunity to communicate with native or other foreign

speakers of English, orally or in writing.

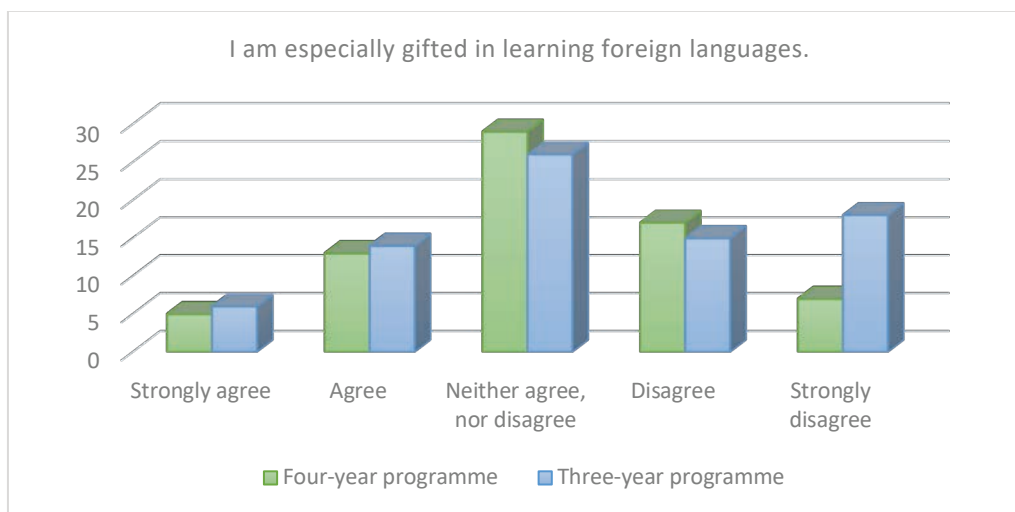
Participation was completely anonymous and voluntary. The answers were analysed quantitatively, comparing the results of three- and four-year students where a considerable difference was noted.

Research results

Only 8.5% of the students from the four-year programme and 14% from the three-year programme think that English is difficult to learn. As many as 53% of students

think that learning a foreign language is different from learning any other subject. 54.8% think that people who speak more than one foreign language are very intelligent, and consequently, 79 % think that some people are more apt to learn foreign languages than others. When it comes to self-assessment, an almost equal portion of students from both programmes consider themselves gifted in learning foreign languages, but there are more than twice as many who do not consider themselves gifted at all in the industrial crafts programme.

Chart 1. How gifted am I?

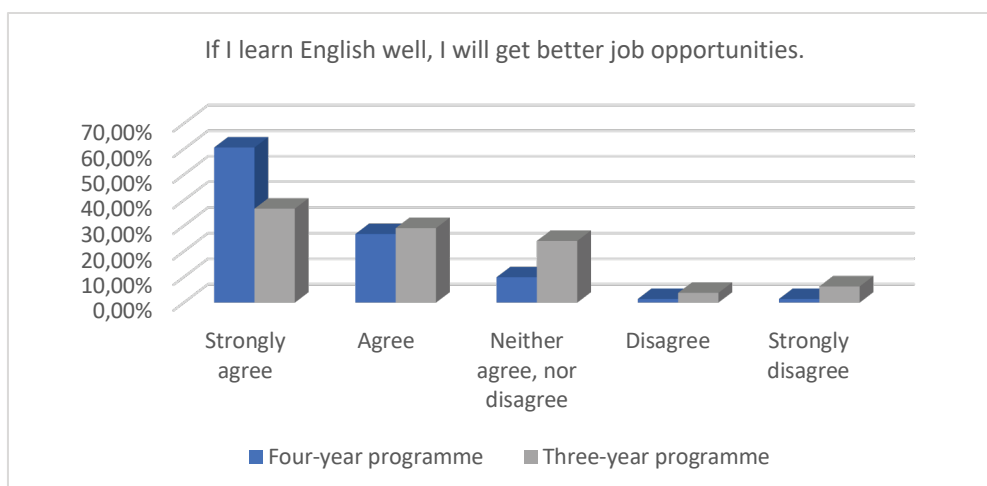


Source: The author

Another considerable difference was noted in the portion of students who think that speaking English is important for a good job (60.6% to 36.7%). It is interesting to see such a divide in students' opinions about the importance of English for securing better job opportunities. The fact that 60.6% of four-year students believe English is crucial for a good job highlights the global relevance

of the language, especially in industries like business and technology. Yet, only 36.7% of three-year students agree, while the rest may feel that other factors like skills or experience outweigh language proficiency. This suggests that while English can open doors, it is not the only key to success, and some students believe they can achieve career growth without it.

Chart 2. Job opportunities



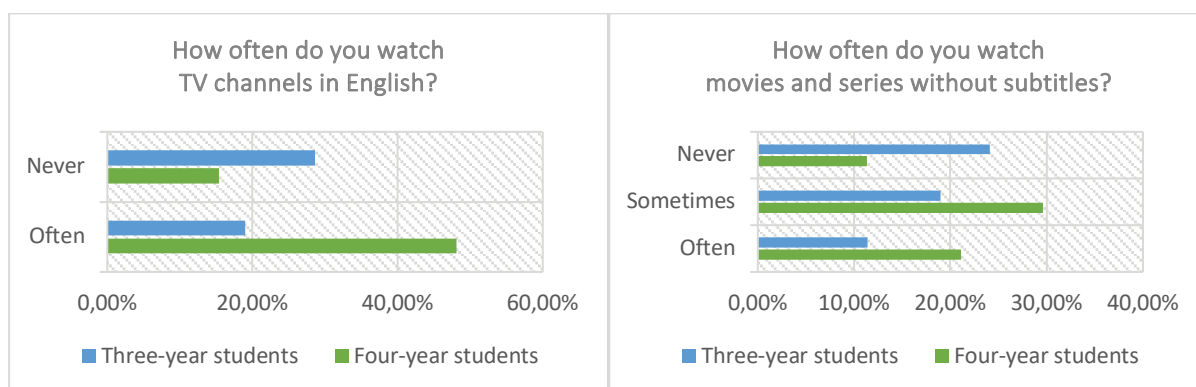
Source: The author

Regardless of how significant the students consider English to be when looking for a job, as many as 78.8% want to learn to speak English well. The problem probably lies in their lack of self-confidence, particularly if they have faced challenges in language learning before, because only 26.6% of three-year students strongly agree that they will be able to master English, while in the four-year programme the number reaches 50.7%. Some students might lack confidence due to limited exposure; if students are surrounded by others who do not speak English, they may feel less motivated or supported in their

language learning. So, how exposed are our students?

Watching video content featuring native English speakers in the form of TV programmes, movies or series exposes learners to authentic language use, various accents, and real-life conversational patterns. This immersive approach not only aids in developing listening and comprehension skills but also enriches vocabulary and improves pronunciation. Still, only half the students from the four-year programme say they do it often or sometimes, and even fewer from the three-year programme (30%).

Chart 3. TV channels, movies and series

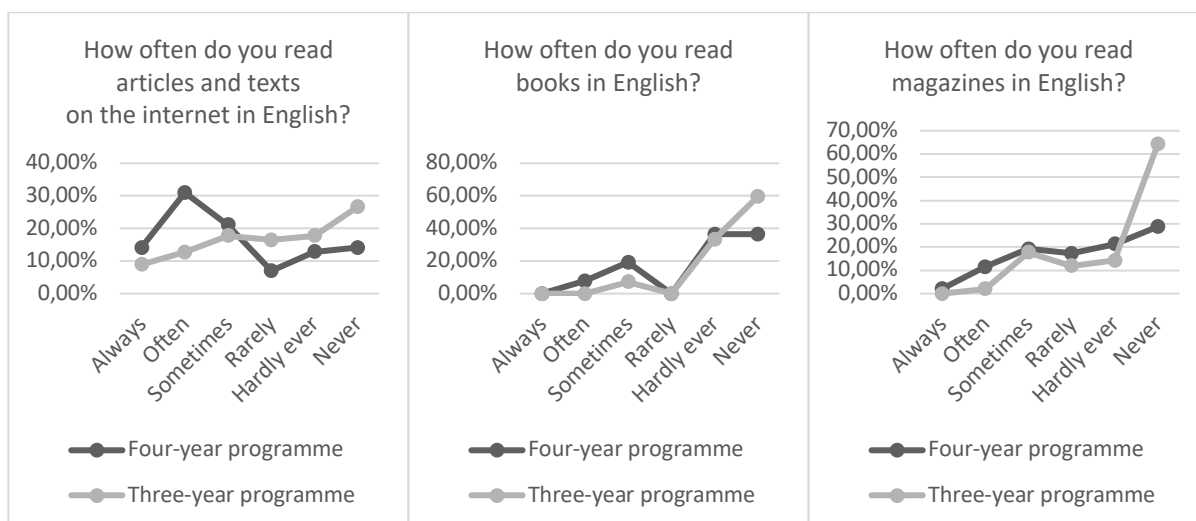


Source: The author

The general reading habits of secondary school students can vary widely depending on factors like culture, personal interest, socio-economic background and education system. Many students are more inclined to read digital content (articles, blogs or social media posts) over printed books. The internet offers instant access to information and stories, which is more appealing. The increasing use of social media, video platforms and other digital

content has contributed to shorter attention spans. Many students may find it difficult to engage with longer, more complex texts, especially in a foreign language. However, some students enjoy reading contemporary authors in English, particularly those who write young adult fiction or reflect modern issues such as social justice, identity or relationships.

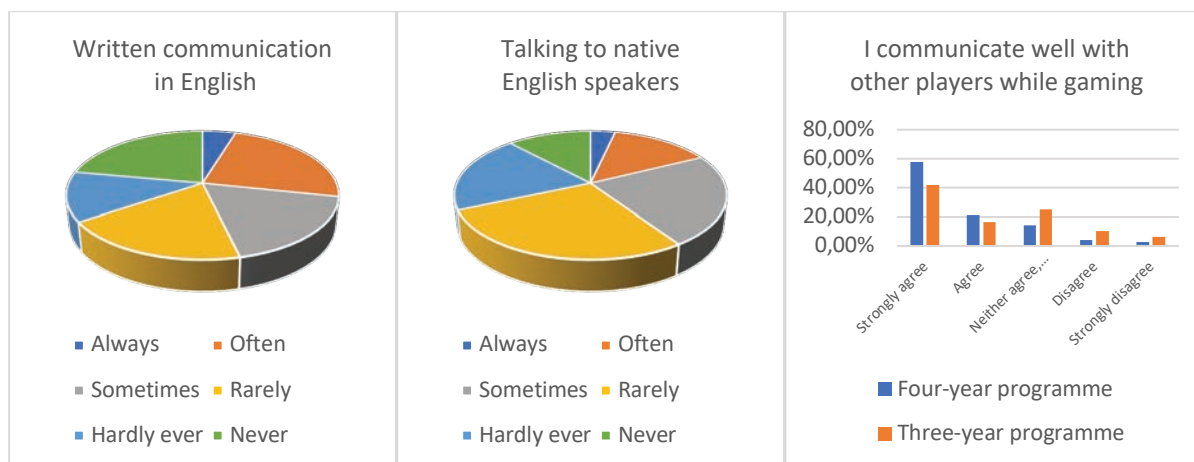
Chart 4. Reading habits



Source: The author

It is motivating to see better results when students are put into more active roles and contexts. The primary goal of all communication is to get a message across, is it not?

Chart 5. Communication



Source: The author

Conclusion

Students' beliefs about foreign language learning significantly shape how they approach the process. Positive, growth-oriented beliefs encourage active engagement, persistence, and the use of effective strategies, essential for language acquisition. If students believe they can successfully master a foreign language, they are more likely to take risks and use the language in real-life situations, which is critical for developing fluency. On the other hand, negative beliefs, such as thinking language learning is too difficult or that they lack the ability, can result in a lack of confidence, causing students to avoid speaking or engaging with the language.

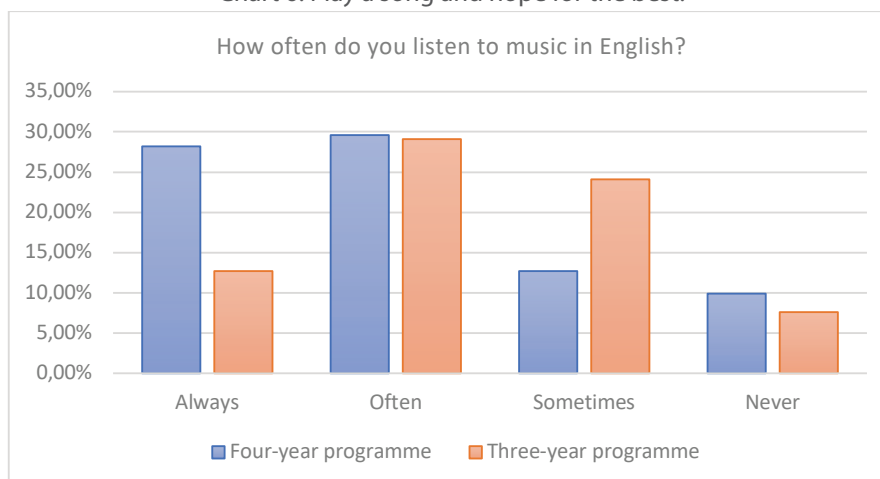
Exposure should be significantly improved, both at home and in the classroom, by introducing new methods and technologies, incorporating multimedia, using games, authentic materials, cultural exposure, project-based learning, peer collaboration and creating an environment simply rich in English. English teachers will be delighted

to hear that 70% of students think **everyone can learn a foreign language**. And the music? Oh, the music!

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Chart 6. Play a song and hope for the best!



Source: The author