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ASOCIAȚIEI CUSTOMISED ENGLISH (O.N.G.) BRAȘOV

By Prof. Raluca Ioana DAVIDESCU

O colecție anuală de articole științifice pe tema educației, redactate de profesori de specialitate și o selecție de creații literare scrise de cei mai creativi cursanți ai asociației.

Din cuprins:

Profesorii noștri voluntari:
- The Personal Methodology in the AI Era - prof. Davidescu Raluca Ioana
- Psihologia activității ice breaker - prof. Gagiu Georgiana-Cristina

Partenerii noștri educaționali:
- Metode non-formale ce pot fi aplicate în școli - prof. Simona Grigorescu

Profesorii noștri invitați:
- Modern methods of teaching writing skills - prof. Ludu Elena Marcela
- The Power of Music in Teaching English at Palatul Copiilor - Ana-Maria Ilieș

Cursanții noștri:
- The Surprise- Story- Strimbu Matei
- Some people say that school holidays are too long, and school students should only have a three-week break in the summer- Essay- Dârstar Amalia

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CUPRINS:

Profesorii noștri voluntari:

- The Personal Methodology in the AI Era
  - prof. Davidescu Raluca Ioana pag. 4
- Psihologia activității ice breaker
  - prof. Gagiu Georgiana- Cristina pag. 6

Partenerii noștri educaționali:

- Metode non-formale ce pot fi aplicate în școli
  - prof. Simona Grigorescu pag. 8

Profesorii noștri invitați:

- Modern methods of teaching writing skills
  - prof. Ludu Elena Marcela pag. 12
- The Power of Music in Teaching English at Palatul Copiilor
  - prof. Ana-Maria Ilieș pag. 16
- Importanța metodelor moderne de predare a matematicii aplicate în tehnica de calcul la Palatul Copiilor
  - prof. Mihaela Verdes pag. 19
- Warming-up games and activities
  - prof. Ilă-Gaşpar Carmen pag. 23
- Behavioural Cha(lle)nges- viable educational strategies
  - prof. Spuderca Lorena-Mirela pag. 26

Cursanții noștri:

- The Two Friends Couldn't Believe their Luck!- Story
  - Costea Izabela pag. 30
- The Surprise- Story- Strimbu Matei pag. 30
- An Unexpected Reunion- Story
  - Zaharia Maia pag. 31
- Some people say that school holidays are too long, and school students should only have a three-week break in the summer
  - Essay- Dârstar Amalia pag. 32

- **PROFESORII NOȘTRI VOLUNTARI**

The Personal Methodology in the AI Era

Davidescu Raluca Ioana

Profesor Limba Engleză

The emergence of AI in ELT is a relatively new topic and its proper use in English classes is constantly undergoing mutations as both teachers of English and students are adjusting to its novelty. Nowadays, there is a huge debate and even concern worldwide whether the artificial intelligence is ought to replace jobs currently done by people. It is not out of the question that in the future, human teachers will be substituted by virtual trainers.

However, until this becomes reality, specialists from Cambridge recommend teachers to never accept the output of a generative AI tool as it is, and to ensure they evaluate, refine, and modify it, or the prompt, to suit their objectives, in other words, to be the "human in the loop". As underaged students are unable to discern information, AI can be very dangerous for them because pupils do not possess the ability to select information. According to the same specialists from Cambridge, "all generative AI tools are susceptible to hallucinations and can, therefore, generate inaccurate or misleading information." AI apps, such as Chat GPT, Gemini, etc. are very useful for adults only, because they are tools which can provide information quickly. However, even an experienced person, such as an adult should exercise caution when using them since the information can sometimes not be accurate. These apps, at least their free versions, are not constantly updated, hence, the required ability of a discerning adult to discriminate amongst different pieces of information.

One way of making sure your students will not appeal to AI tools such as Chat GPT, Gemini, etc. in doing their written assignments such as articles, essays, stories, etc. as homework, is to make use of the Flipped learning framework. In a flipped classroom, the students watch the presentation videos for writing points and do some ICT tasks as homework and do the actual piece of writing in the classroom while the teacher acts as an advisor. 'It is an environment

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where learners take responsibility for their own learning where the teacher is not the "sage on the stage", but the "guide on the side".' Bergmann (2011: 268)

In other words, it consists of moving the homework into the classroom and doing the "teaching" (i.e. presentation of grammar rules, of new vocabulary items, etc.) at home. According to Dooley (2021: i) 'These videos, together with ICT tasks, provide a means of mediation either intralinguistic (in the same language) or interlinguistic (between two different languages) and aim to develop Ss' receptive, productive and interactive skills.'

The mediation skill is brought forth in the CEFR (2001: 34-35) as one of the four models of communication in a foreign language residing from the combination of reception, production and interaction skills and being responsible for making 'communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly.' Thus, translation, interpretation, paraphrase or summary will provide for a third party a reformulation of a source text be it written or oral, to which this third party would not have direct access to.

Recommended mediation language activities in the ELT classroom are reprocessing of existing texts by translating them, be them to or from the target language. Translation activities for children in the English class were long marginalised as belonging to the traditional Grammar-Translation teaching method in which, according to Scrivener (2011: 31), 'The teacher rarely used the target language. Students spend a lot to time reading texts, translating them, doing exercises and tests, writing essays. There is relatively little focus on speaking and listening skills.'

Therefore, contemporary teachers were directed towards using the exact opposite approach, i.e. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where students learn by doing communication tasks with a limited role for explicit teaching and learning traditional vocabulary and grammar activities. On the one hand, using the Grammar- Translation Method, students were deprived of listening and speaking skills, on the other hand, using the strong Communicative Language Teaching, students were lacking the grammar, vocabulary and mediation skills.

Finally, just as Scrivener (2011: 33) pointed out, experienced, passionate teachers of English use the personal methodology or the principled eclecticism 'constructed from their selection of what they consider to be the best and most appropriate of what they have learned about.' Therefore, lately, I have noticed that English teachers are encouraged to use translation activities in their lessons as a means to develop the student's mediation skills.

In conclusion, it is my firm belief that the teachers of English in the AI era should possess the ability to aptly include and balance in their personal methodology, activities that promote the development of receptive, productive, interactive and mediation skills. This is because the teacher's final aim is to develop the students' life competences and global citizenship, making them well-adapted, well-adjusted citizens of the world.

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Psihologia activității icebreaker

Profesor Georgiana – Cristina Gagiu

Școala gimnazială numărul 2 Diaconu Coresi, Brașov

Fără să ne dăm seama, introducerea unui *icebreaker* în orice tip de proces contează într-o mare măsură pentru a face auzită vocea tuturor din grup. O activitate de tip *icebreaker* are menirea de a asigura un sentiment de confort și integrare colectivă, determinând construirea unui spațiu sigur și colaborativ din punct de vedere psihologic pentru toată lumea implicată în agenda de activități a orei de curs.

Sub forma unui contract social nescris, un *icebreaker* eficient, care stimulează randamentul și productivitatea elevilor, trebuie să respecte o serie de reguli, precum

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atractivitatea constructului; parametrizarea corespunzătoare nivelului de studiu; claritatea și precizia instrucțiunilor și simplitatea procedurală.

Folosit drept un *energizant*, care să susțină fluiditatea interacțiunii dintre cei implicați, *icebreaker*-ul stimulează creativitatea și încurajează inteligența generală, alături de oferirea unui binemeritat moment de distracție și veselie.

O astfel de activitate este ***The Hot Seat***, dedicat revizuirii itemilor de vocabular.

Durată: 10-15 minute.

Mod de organizare: Așezați un scaun în fața clasei, cu spatele la tablă. Acesta va reprezenta *The Hot Seat*, pe care va lua loc un elev voluntar. Apoi, scrieți un cuvânt pe tablă (în cazul elevilor mai mici, le puteți indica și categoria, precum mâncare, animale, obiecte școlare etc – ideal ar fi să fie itemi din vocabularul studiat la clasă). Studenții din clasă trebuie să construiască enunțuri cu ajutorul cărora elevul de pe scaun să ghicească itemul de pe tablă, însă fără a fi pronunțat acesta.

De exemplu, în cazul selectării categoriei *Animale*, cu cuvântul *girafă* scris pe tablă, câteva exemple care să trimită în această direcție pot fi cele de mai jos:

1. Este un animal mare.
2. Trăiește în savană, alături de lei.
3. Are gâtul foarte lung.
4. Are pete.

Principiu: Pe baza unei astfel de activități de ghicit, elevii își manifestă entuziasmul și spiritul competitiv pentru câștigarea jocului. Evident, se pot grupa în echipe pentru un plus de competiție. Dorința de câștig îi va determina pe aceștia să uite că le era înainte teamă să vorbească în limba engleză.

Obiective: Acest exercițiu ajută grupul să revadă teme și itemi parcurși în cadrul lecțiilor anterioare într-un mod inteligent și jucăuș.

De reținut că *icebreaker*-ul funcționează ca o poțiune magică, pe bază de ingrediente simple, dar esențiale pentru setarea tonului orei de curs. În plus, ajută la consolidarea raporturilor sociale, reducerea anxietății și stabilirea unei atmosfere plină de încredere și optimism, atât de vitale în orice lecție de curs. Poate părea un exercițiu de suprafață, însă constituie o ancoră către pasiunile, motivația, cunoștințele sau experiențele trecute ale elevilor. De multe ori funcționează ca un traducător al vulnerabilității, cu acces către autenticitatea celor implicați în exercițiu. De aceea, se recomandă utilizarea *icebreaker*-ului care se potrivește cel mai bine cu nivelul, vârsta, domeniul participanților pentru maxim de eficiență.

- **PARTENERII NOȘTRI EDUCAȚIONALI**

Metode non-formale ce pot fi aplicate în școli

Prof. Simona Grigorescu

Palatul Copiilor Brașov

Plecând de la premisa că esența educației non-formale este : **ÎNVĂȚĂM FĂCÂND,** David Kolb a colectat teoriile lui John Dewey, Jean Piaget și Kurt Lewin și a conturat teoria învățării experiențiale. În această teoria, Kolb a oferit experienței concrete și observației reflexive rolul central în procesul de învățare.

Învățarea experiențială este învățarea care are loc în urma reflecției asupra a ceea ce se face, ceea ce se află în contradicție cu învățatul "pe de rost" sau învățarea didactică. Învățarea experiențială este înrudită cu educația experiențială, învățarea prin acțiune, prin aventură, prin liberul arbitru, prin cooperare.

Ciclul de învățare experențială conține patru faze:

Activitatea și experiența concretă presupune ca elevii să interactioneze și să experimenteze efectiv. Aici ei trebuie să fie în mijlocul acțiunii, unde lucrurile se întâmplă.

Reflecția constă în a observa ceea ce s-a întâmplat, a identifica punctele importante și erorile. Simpla participare la o experiență nu are ca rezultat o învățare la parametrii optimi - învățarea este eficientă când elevii au timp să reflecteze la evenimente, au capacitatea de a-și pune cât mai multe întrebări.

Conceptualizarea abstractă reprezintă efortul de extragere a unei teorii pe baza a ceea ce au observat, a alcatui o "lecție" din concluziile aferente stadiilor precedente. Experiența se transforma în informație structurată.

Experimentarea activă se referă la schimbările pe care le pot introduce astfel încât să genereze un rezultat mai bun.

Un exemplu de învățare experiențială este mersul pe bicicletă. Conform acestui exemplu, în stadiul *experienței concrete*, cel care învață are contact fizic cu bicicleta, experimentând "aici și acum". Această experiență creează bazele pentru *observație și reflecție*, iar elevul are posibilitatea de a lua în considerare ce funcționează și ce nu (observarea reflexivă) și să se gândească la metode de îmbunătățire pe care să le aplice la următoarea încercare (conceptualizarea abstractă). Fiecare nouă încercare de a merge cu bicicletă este influențată de modelul ciclic alcătuit din experiența anterioară, gândire și reflecție (experimentarea activă).

Tipuri de activități în care putem aplica elemetele teoriei lui Kolb

1. **Activitate pe grupe**

Fiecare grup primește 7 caracteristici ale activității non-formale (de ex. centrată pe elev, flexibilă, voluntară) și 7 foi A4.

Sarcină: Folosind imagini din reviste și foile A4, creați 7 colaje, câte unul pentru fiecare caracteristică; fiecare colaj trebuie să conțină imagini ce descriu caracteristica corespunzătoare. De asemenea se pot adăuga cuvinte cheie.

La final se afișează colajele realizate și fiecare grup trebuie să ghicească despre ce caracteristică este vorba. Profesorul ghidează copiii prin cele 3 etape ale teoriei lui Kolb (Observarea reflexivă, Conceptualizarea și Aplicarea).

2. **Activitate - Desen**

Se împart participanții în grupuri de 4-6 persoane.

Sarcină: Gândiți-vă la un animal care descrie cel mai bine școala (clasa) dvs. Desenați animalul!

La final se afișează desenele realizate și fiecare grup încercă să ghicească de ce grupele vecine au ales animal desenat! În încheiere fiecare grup explică motivele pentru care văd școala (clasa) ca acel animal.

3. Conectori forțați

1. Notați pe 2 cartonașe roșii cuvinte aleatorii, câte unul pe fiecare cartonaș (să fie obiecte / elemente concrete și nu concepte abstracte). *De exemplu:* vânt, ou, câine.

Cartonașele sunt strânse într-un bol în care se adaugă cartonașe verzi (deja scrise) pe care sunt trecute concepte, gen prietenie, educație, etc.

2. În perechi, extrageți 4 cartonașe roșii și 2 cartonașe verzi.

3. Combinați 1 concept de pe cartonașul verde cu numele a 2 obiecte scrise pe cartonașele roșii, găsind elemente de legătură între cartonașul verde și cartonașele roșii. Apoi fiecare grup citește frazele scrise.

4. Notați 4 metafore noi (una pentru fiecare cartonaș roșu) folosind următoarea construcție:

[Conceptul – cuvântul de pe cartonașul verde] este ca [Cuvântul de pe cartonașul roșu] pentru că...

De exemplu:

Prietenia este ca o piatră pentru că poate fi foarte puternică și poate dura mult timp.

Educația este ca o portocală. Ambele pot fi acre, dar dacă alegi portocala potrivită, ea este foarte dulce și foarte bună pentru sănătate. În mod similar, dacă găsești un profesor care face educația distractivă, înțelegi cât de benefică este educația pentru viața ta.

În final profesorul formulează câteva întrebări de genul: Această activitate a deschis noi linii de gândire? Cum ne poate ajuta observarea și forțarea conexiunilor să dezvoltăm idei creative?

Ca și concluzie finală putem afirma că activitățile experiențiale sunt printre cele mai eficiente instrumente de predare și de învățare. Învățarea experiențială necesită inițiativă din partea elevului, o "intenție de a învăța" și o "fază activă a învățării".

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- **PROFESORII NOȘTRI INVITAȚI**

Modern Methods of Teaching Writing Skills

Ludu Elena Marcela

Colegiul Național „Radu Negru” Făgăraș

Writing habits have certainly changed significantly during the last few decades. Handwriting is slowly becoming rare practice as digital devices are being used for making shopping lists, writing reports, or sending text messages. Moreover, digital technologies have somehow conquered the world of teaching as well. A. Healy states that "we can no longer call it exclusively ‘writing’ as this is too simple for what text has become" (Healy 2008, p. 26). This is due to the fact that technologies have enabled the emergence of a wide range of texts and literacy practices, which challenge traditional writing techniques as well as notions of communication and meaning-making.

When it comes to modern methods of completing any task in any foreign language, most people direct their thoughts on the use of technology. They are right in assuming that technology use is a modern way to teach any skill, writing included. Exploring the effectiveness of digital tools in teaching writing is very important as it shows how the resources pupils use contour their writing. At the beginning of the 21st century John Dewey claimed that “if we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow” (Dewey, 1915, p.30). The book he published decades ago developed his educational philosophy and support for progressivism. His vision is now as valid as it was back then. According to Dewey, education ought to be flexible and adaptable to the shifting demands of the community. He maintained that the passive learning techniques of traditional education were out of date and unable to prepare students for the demands of the modern world. He thought it was critical to modify teaching strategies to suit the needs of modern students and get them ready for possibilities and difficulties in the future. In his time modern teaching implied an approach to education that was more experiential, hands-on, and encouraged pupils to interact with their surroundings, collaborate with others, and think critically about the world around them. Nowadays it has to do with understanding how technology can be of great use to teachers and students alike.

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The use of smartphones in class has been carefully analyzed in various studies. The findings demonstrate that motivated students utilize their smartphones to take notes, access course materials, and learn more about discussion subjects. However, students use their smartphones as sources of distraction when teachers are unable to make the material relevant, easy to learn, or interesting. Results suggest that rather than being considered a sign of students' distraction or indifference, smartphone use may be seen as a reflection of teaching strategies and a method by means of which classes can be conducted:

> "Students engage in a complex range of activity and interaction on their smartphones in writing classrooms, not solely activities that remove or distract them from course content. That is, not all smartphone use is distracted smartphone use." (Green, McKinley. 2019, p 91)

Smartphones can be put to good use. Teachers resort to platforms like Kahoot and manage to combine teaching with students' motivation and drive. Kahoot is often used during English lessons and proves extremely useful for developing students' vocabulary. This only highlights the vast array of learning platforms and tools available to support language instructors in their efforts to build long-lasting learning environments. As Green concludes:

> "….. the results call for further research to address how changes in writing technologies and changes in student's access to digital composing devices—like smartphones—might inform how writing instructors teach, not only what they teach."

These days, students are referred to as the "digital generation" because they have been growing up with easy access to technology and information. Consequently, they have different expectations of the learning environment and often ask to participate more actively in the learning process (Jo et al. 2018). At the same time, gamification has emerged as a popular approach to boost student motivation by incorporating game elements into the educational process. Gamification is a cutting-edge educational tool, an interactive approach that has to do with increasing learners' engagement and creating interactive learning contexts. It seeks to draw students to the learning process by creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere. Badges, awards, cumulative scores provide students with incentives but competition should not be the main element when designing gamified activities. Instead, elements such as collaboration and

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meaningful feedback should be highly regarded. Nevertheless, gamification is "a double-edged sword". Students who are reluctant to learn may find some motivation in incentives, but students who dislike games may suffer if gaming elements are present in their learning environments (Nicola Whitton, 2007). The competitive element that decides a game's winner or loser can have a negative impact on learning, and the game's high degree of amusement may interfere with the attention and questioning processes needed for initial learning (Jo et al., 2018). Still, the benefits of gamification in writing outweigh the downsides so it is an instrument worth considering.

The rationale for using games to teach must be that they can embody sound educational principles and have the potential to create experiential, immersive and engaging, problem-based learning
experiences that appropriately map the curriculum. If a game is perceived as being the most effective way
to learn something then students will be motivated to use it to learn, not simply because it is a gam

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It goes without saying that technology is a godsend to the writing classroom if managed carefully and the widely available technologies provide real support in improving writing skills. Common programs like PowerPoint are very useful when teachers ask students to create an outline of their writing task. Students often use PowerPoint to create presentations for their project work or to make mind maps which will be meant to demonstrate that various arguments may be organized by using visual shapes. PowerPoint is not the only tool for creating mind maps. MindMup, Prezi or Bubbl.us are other free options which perform very well. Programs such as PowerPoint can surely be used for various educational tasks, especially when it comes to illustrating how different types of writing can be completed. On the other hand, platforms such as Audacity and online tools such as Canva or Piktochart support audio and visual production. Since writing is not merely a textual attempt but often completed in podcast form, audio production becomes part of the writing process. Teachers can very well teach organization and structure by assigning audio compositions specifically linked to school.

Possible activities would be recording a voiceover for a PowerPoint or Canva presentation or interviewing friends and then edit the recording so as to tell a cohesive short story. Essays can

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also be reworked by creating photo essays with captions where students write about their choices or intentions. Canva and Piktochart provide templates with numerous features that support redesigning book covers or posters, writing blogs or websites. Nowadays visuals often accompany written content. Such visual aids offer students starting places and diminish the amount of anxiety they experience when faced with a new task.

Undoubtedly, students are learning new literacies and technological competencies. Since word processing software and online resources are readily accessible and students report using them extensively for their writing, long-standing practices are being called into question. Needless to say, the digital characteristic sometimes distracts students who find themselves writing in a flow without paying attention to grammar accuracy, punctuation or spelling. Nevertheless, writing must adapt to a new reality: from printed text to the screen. As writing appears more often on the screen, the logic of writing will soon be reshaped by the logic of image.

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The Power of Music in Teaching English at Palatul Copiilor

Ana-Maria Ilieș
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Music has long been a universal language, capable of transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. At Palatul Copiilor, a well-known nonformal educational institution in Romania, harnessing the power of music to teach English has proven to be a dynamic and effective approach, engaging students while enhancing their linguistic skills in an enjoyable and memorable way.

Research has consistently shown that music can significantly aid in language learning. Songs often contain repetitive phrases and catchy melodies, which help in memorizing vocabulary and grammatical structures. For young learners at Palatul Copiilor, music makes the process of learning English more natural and less daunting as, through songs, students can grasp pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation, which are crucial components of effective communication.

Incorporating music into the English learning environment at Palatul Copiilor involves a strategically planned approach. Educators select songs that are age-appropriate and relevant to the students' language levels, including classic children's songs, contemporary pop music, and educational songs written specifically for language learners. Each song serves a specific pedagogical purpose, such as introducing new vocabulary, practicing grammatical structures, or enhancing listening skills. For example, using the song "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" helps younger students learn body parts in a fun and interactive way, while older students might engage with contemporary pop songs, analyzing lyrics to understand idiomatic expressions and slang. This diversity in musical selection ensures that all age groups and proficiency levels are catered to, making the learning process inclusive and comprehensive.

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Music-based learning at Palatul Copiilor is not confined to passive listening; interactive activities and games are integrated to reinforce the language skills acquired through songs. Karaoke sessions, for instance, encourage students to practice their pronunciation and intonation in a supportive environment, while creating their own lyrics to familiar tunes helps them apply new vocabulary and grammatical rules creatively. Additionally, musical games such as "Lyric Gap Fill" or "Guess the Song" sharpen listening comprehension and critical thinking skills, transforming the classroom into an engaging and lively space where learning English becomes synonymous with having fun.

One of the significant advantages of using music in teaching English is the cultural exposure it provides. Songs often reflect cultural nuances and contexts, giving students insights into the lifestyles and traditions of English-speaking countries, which fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of the language.

Moreover, music has a profound emotional impact. Songs can evoke feelings and memories, creating a strong emotional connection to the language. This emotional engagement enhances motivation and retention, making the learning experience more impactful. At Palatul Copiilor, students often find that their favorite songs become the gateway to mastering complex language concepts, simply because they form a personal connection with the material.

Using music as a methodological approach in language teaching draws on various theoretical frameworks. The Multiple Intelligences theory by Howard Gardner, for example, posits that individuals have different kinds of intelligences, including musical intelligence. By integrating music into language teaching, educators can cater to this type of intelligence, making learning more accessible and effective for musically inclined students.

Furthermore, the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach, developed by James Asher, emphasizes the importance of physical movement in language learning. Music naturally incorporates rhythm and movement, aligning well with TPR principles, and songs with actions or dance routines can help reinforce language concepts through physical engagement, making learning more holistic.

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory also underpins the use of music in language learning. According to Vygotsky, social interaction plays a crucial role in cognitive development. Music, being a social activity, encourages interaction among students, facilitating language acquisition through collaborative learning.

The impact of using music to teach English at Palatul Copiilor is evident in the success stories of its students, many of whom have shown remarkable improvement in their language skills, exhibiting greater confidence in speaking and comprehension. Parents and teachers alike have observed that students are more enthusiastic about attending classes and participating in activities. For instance, Ana, a 10-year-old student, struggled with English initially. However, Ana has musical talent, and thus, through the musical approach, she found a love for English through songs and began to actually be very good at it. Her pronunciation improved, and she started to use new vocabulary confidently in conversations. Ana's story is just one among many that highlight the effectiveness of this innovative teaching approach.

Using music as an alternative approach to teaching English at Palatul Copiilor has transformed the language learning experience, making it enjoyable, effective, and culturally enriching. This method leverages the universal appeal of music to break down linguistic barriers and foster a deeper connection with the English language. Palatul Copiilor stands as a beacon of how education – nonformal or otherwise – can successfully adapt to meet the needs of diverse learners through various approaches that engage children's creativity and imagination.

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Importanța metodelor moderne de predare a matematicii aplicate în tehnica de calcul la Palatul Copiilor

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În peisajul educațional în continuă evoluție, instituțiile nonformale precum Palatul Copiilor din România joacă un rol crucial în completarea structurilor educaționale tradiționale. Aceste instituții oferă un mediu unic în care metodele moderne de predare a matematicii aplicate pot fi utilizate eficient pentru a spori implicarea și înțelegerea elevilor. Valoarea intrinsecă a acestor metode și impactul lor asupra competenței matematice a elevilor fac obiectul acestui articol.

Educația nonformală, spre deosebire de cea formală, se caracterizează prin flexibilitate, adaptabilitate și o abordare centrată pe elev. Instituții precum Palatele și Cluburile Copiilor oferă activități extracurriculare care promovează în rândul elevilor plăcerea de a învăța prin metode practice și atractive. Predarea matematicii aplicate în astfel de medii este deosebit de importantă, deoarece ea face legătura între cunoștințele teoretice și aplicațiile practice.

Metode moderne în predarea matematicii aplicate în tehnica de calcul

Metodele pedagogice moderne în predarea matematicii aplicate pun accent pe învățarea interactivă, centrată pe elev. Aceste metode includ învățarea bazată pe proiecte, învățarea colaborativă, utilizarea tehnologiei și activitățile de rezolvare a problemelor din viața reală.

1. Învățarea Bazată pe Proiecte

Învățarea bazată pe proiecte (ProjectBasedLearning) este o abordare educațională care implică elevii în realizarea unui proiect pe o perioadă extinsă de timp. Această metodă permite elevilor să exploreze probleme și provocări reale, promovând o învățare mai profundă și aplicarea practică a conceptelor matematice. La Palatul Copiilor, PBL poate fi folosită eficient pentru a

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preda matematica aplicată, implicând elevii în proiecte care necesită modelare matematică, analiza datelor și competențe de calcul. De exemplu, elevii ar putea lucra la proiecte legate de științele mediului, economie, inginerie, sau de orice alt domeniu curricular, unde să folosească instrumente matematice pentru a analiza date și a face predicții.

2. Învățarea colaborativă

Învățarea colaborativă este o metodă adună laolaltă elevii care lucrează împreună în grupuri pentru a rezolva probleme, a finaliza sarcini sau a crea proiecte, promovând astfel comunicarea, munca în echipă și împărtășirea de experiențe și perspective diverse. În contextul matematicii aplicate, învățarea colaborativă poate fi deosebit de benefică. Elevii de la Palatul Copiilor pot lucra în echipe pentru a aborda probleme matematice complexe, a împărtăși diferite strategii de rezolvare a problemelor și a învăța unii de la alții. Acest lucru nu doar că le îmbunătățește competențele matematice, dar îi și pregătește pentru mediile de lucru colaborative unde vor activa în viitor.

3. Integrarea tehnologiei

Integrarea tehnologiei în predarea matematicii aplicate oferă numeroase avantaje. Instrumente precum calculatoarele grafice, sistemele de algebră computerizată și software-ul interactiv pot îmbunătăți experiența de învățare prin furnizarea de vizualizări și simulări ale conceptelor matematice. La Palatul Copiilor, tehnologia poate fi folosită pentru a aprofunda subiecte precum calculul diferențial și integral, algebra liniară și statistică. De exemplu, software-ul precum GeoGebra sau MATLAB poate ajuta elevii să vizualizeze funcții, să rezolve ecuații și să analizeze date într-o manieră mult mai eficientă decât prin metodele tradiționale.

4. Rezolvarea problemelor din viața reală

Activitățile de rezolvare a problemelor din viața reală leagă conceptele matematice de aplicațiile practice, făcând învățarea mai relevantă și atractivă pentru elevi. În instituții nonformale precum Palatul Copiilor, profesorii pot proiecta activități care implică rezolvarea problemelor din viața reală folosind principii matematice. De exemplu, elevii pot participa la activități care implică bugetarea, designul arhitectural sau analiza datelor științifice. Aceste activități le îmbunătățesc elevilor competențele matematice și vin încă o dată să demonstreze valoarea practică a matematicii în viața de zi cu zi.

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Implementarea metodelor moderne în predarea matematicii aplicate are un impact profund asupra învățării și implicării elevilor. Aceste metode fac matematica mai accesibilă și plăcută, reducând anxietatea legată de matematică și promovând o atitudine pozitivă față de această disciplină. Elevii dezvoltă gândirea critică și competențele de rezolvare a problemelor, calități necesare și chiar esențiale pentru viitorul lor succes academic și profesional. În această privință, se demarcă următoarele direcții de impact al acestor metode:

1. O capacitate de înțelegere și retenție sporită

Metodele moderne de predare pun accent pe învățarea activă, unde elevii sunt implicați activ în procesul de învățare. Această abordare duce la o mai bună înțelegere și reținere a conceptelor matematice. Prin munca la proiecte, colaborarea cu colegii și utilizarea tehnologiei, elevii de la Palatul Copiilor pot dezvolta o înțelegere mai profundă a matematicii aplicate și pot reține informațiile mai eficient decât prin predarea tradițională bazată pe prelegeri.

2. Competențele esențiale se dezvoltă

În plus față de competențele matematice, metodele moderne de predare a matematicii aplicate ajută elevii să dezvolte competențe esențiale precum: gândirea critică, creativitatea, imaginația, munca în echipă și colaborarea în vederea rezolvării de probleme. Aceste competențe sunt cruciale pentru succesul profesional al omului secolului XXI și sunt foarte apreciate de angajatori. Prin învățarea bazată pe proiecte și activitățile de rezolvare a problemelor din viața reală, elevii de la Palatul Copiilor își pot perfecționa aceste competențe și pot deveni indivizi plenar dezvoltați.

3. Motivația intrinsecă și implicarea cresc

Unul dintre principalele beneficii ale metodelor moderne de predare este motivația și implicarea sporită a elevilor. Când elevii văd relevanța matematicii în viața reală și au oportunitatea de a explora subiecte de interes, sunt mai predispuși să fie motivați și implicați în învățare. Natura interactivă și practică a metodelor moderne face ca învățarea matematicii să fie plăcută și captivantă pentru elevii de la Palatul Copiilor.

Valoarea metodelor moderne de predare a matematicii aplicate în tehnica de calcul în instituțiile nonformale precum Palatul Copiilor este incontestabilă. Aceste metode sporesc

implicarea, înțelegerea și reținerea conceptelor matematice de către elevi, dezvoltând în același timp competențe esențiale pentru succesul lor în momentul inserției pe piața muncii. Prin adoptarea învățării bazate pe proiecte, învățării colaborative, integrării tehnologiei și activităților de rezolvare a problemelor din viața reală, instituțiile nonformale pot crea un mediu de învățare bogat și stimulant, care cultivă dragostea pentru matematică și pregătește elevii pentru provocările lumii moderne.

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Warming-up games and activities

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It is easy to forget, when working with a group, that each person enters the room in a different mood: some may be elated, others despondent, some tense, others relaxed, some alert, others bored. And some - just indifferent. If the group is to .work together, it needs to be in harmony. The introductory exercises, simple though they may appear, are not 'games' to distract weaker students, they are essential activities for preparing any group to approach the most exacting tasks later to be demanded of them. Their first purpose is to help all members of the group approach the later exercises in the same frame of mind - to calm the excited and to invigorate the lethargic. Their second purpose is to direct the students' thought and feelings towards the exercise to follow. Some example of introductory exercises would be:

- Non-verbal exercise

Breathing

What to do

a) The students stand in their own space, close their eyes and breathe deeply. Then release breath slowly. Each time, the period during which the breath is held should be lengthened.

b) The same exercise, this time as they exhale the students sing a given note for as long as they can.

c) The same as in b), but this time the note starts strong and gradually fades away. Alternatively, it can start weak and rise to a crescendo.

d) The same, but with two groups. One starts strongly and gradually fades away, the other starts weakly and builds up a climax, all on the same note.

Remarks: Suitable for all levels.

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Apart from being good exercise in controlling the breathing, it also develops concentration and produces a feeling of pleasant relaxation.

Keeping eyes closed may seem fanciful, but it does help to restore inward calm.

- Verbal exercises

Becoming a musical instrument

What to do

Students form pairs. Each pair must 'become' a new musical instrument and demonstrate the sound it makes. If they wish, one person can be the player, the other the instrument. Otherwise, both will perform as one instrument, with an imaginary player.

Remarks: Suitable for all levels

This is a good bridging activity. Language is involved in discussing the shape and sound of the instrument, but the musicians' attention will be focused on the sound produced. If members of the class seem willing, it is possible to suggest at the end that they perform in concert, playing a well-known melody.

The sun and the moon

What to do

The whole class stands in the middle of the room. The organizer calls out a pair of words, pointing to one or the other end of the room as she/he tells them (e.g. 'Sun! -left end, 'Moon!' right end). The members of each group formed in this way then discuss among themselves the reasons for choosing the word.

Some pairs of words which work well are: sun/ moon, fire/ ice, rose/ thorn, red / green, night / morning.

Remarks

Level: elementary upward

This is a very good ice-breaker. Care should be taken to ensure that the word is chosen without hesitation, on impulse.One variant is to ask group members from one end of the room to work with a partner from the other end of the room and to try to persuade this person that he or she made the wrong choice of word.

Something in common

What to do

Each person is asked to note down four things, such as the following:

- a superstition (in which you either believe or do not believe);
- a mechanical device that annoys you;
- anything that evokes a powerful childhood memory (a song, a street name);
- tics or habits that irritate you or the others.

This should take not more than two or three minutes. Now, each person should go round and comparing his or her list with those of the others in the class. Everyone should try to speak to everyone else, while remembering who had similar responses to the four items. Those with similar responses should discuss the points they have in common and the points on which they differ.

If the exercise is to be used only for warming up, it can be stopped after discussion. There is, however, an interesting extension which is well worth trying if time permits. If the exercise is to continue, in the second stage, groups of four or five are formed; each group, there should if possible be two points in common, each of which is shared by two or three members of the group. The groups are now asked to prepare a scene from a documentary film on, for instance, industrial safety measures, life insurance, or foreign trade. In the sequence they devise, one of each of the four elements must be introduced. This means that a group might come up with the following: a black cat, a pile-driver, buttered toast, and clicking the top of a ballpoint. These four elements must feature - even if transformed in some ways - in the sequence. The groups then present their sequence to the others, who try to interpret what happens and identify the four elements.

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Behavioural Cha(lle)nges

- viable educational strategies-

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IF you have the feeling that life is an emotional roller coaster, EDUCATION is Disneyland, the theme park that comprises lots of hopes, requests, expectations and personal projections, in a more or less fictional environment, in a hectic pace of living. And, if this is not enough, you were forced, at a certain moment in your life, to wear real, not metaphorical masks. Being hidden behind of them, we changed our behaviour for at least those two incredibly long years that were equal to eternity. We were fervently preoccupied with our own protection, without thinking about the long-term consequences of this context on education.

The students sometimes asked their teachers if they were going to be deeply affected by the new educational environment and, undoubtedly, if their levels of preparation for the future careers would be of a lower quality than those of the previous generations. Probably, some teachers were optimistic because the students did not seem to be oblivious of the importance of their implication in education. All the students were happy to come back to school without masks, but how many lerners did geniunely leave them at home? How many of them have still comfortably hidden themselves behind these metaphorical masks? Did wearing the masks represent a new start in education or an additional wall between students and their teachers?

If we really care about our students, we adapt the educational strategies to them. Fortunately, the universal recipe for ideal education has not been invented yet, so we are invited to be creative and innovative in order to improve our students' knowledge and skills. Unfortunately, some of our greatest enemies seem to be: technology, AI, superficiality, some of the students' superliciousness and, briefly, the lack of curiousity or interest in anything that is out of their fast-changing and sometimes shallow world.

Unbalanced situations. We, the teachers, are the protagonists of *Mission Impossible* or *The Myth of Sisyphus*, or a pendulum between them. What can be done to face the new professional

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challenges? Leaving the comfort zone is usually a problematic situation, but the effort should be done by both teams: students and teachers. Ideally speaking, the teacher should "counter-attack" the devastating effect of the gadgets on the students who are actually addicted to them, identifying and adapting the suitable pedagogic strategies.

Many years ago, I tried to answer some specific questions. How can I effectively involve my students in their education because, naturally, most of them are exclusively interested in the ephemeral results, not in their own progress? How can I help them to be more self-confident and less stressed during the tests? I have not invented the English language or methodology but, luckily, I have identified some strategies, some viable solutions to these long-term problems. I used to think about some scenarios and, fortunately, their viability was confirmed by specialists and by my students. We should also not neglect the fact that we have taught and assessed skills not only knowledge and we have had access to innovative methodology specific to teaching English all over the world, so all these things were beneficial to our students.

Everybody has high and sometimes unrealistic expectations about education. Some people, who are involved in this area, even claim to be experts in it. This is a utopian point of view, especially if you do not actually work with students; you cannot be expert in the ever-changing and challenging domain of education. All carefully designed educational strategies require the teachers' creativity, involvement or work, and they are usually time-consuming, but highly rewarding for both parties: students and teachers. Gamification, AI, online platforms or a diversified assessment system, doubled by the teachers' and students' enthusiasm and sense of humour can improve the linguistic acquisition. Teachers and students have to change their attitudes and perspectives and to adapt to new and challenging educational background, because the general tendency is to work less, but to expect more. And this is another unrealistic idea. Like the vast majority of the teachers, I have noticed that some activities increase the students' motivation that is vital for learning. So, we can revise some of them.

I design special word searches for most of the chapters in the course books, but with a more challenging task, encouraging my students to identify the words giving them only the first letter or some letters of the words, not the whole words specific to this well-known activity. The results of these activities can be used to revise the useful vocabulary for all skills.

If we refer to the writing tasks that are less agreeable for most students and teachers, technology can be turned from a potential foe into a friend. The students' and teachers' points of view regarding the interference of Chat GPT in assessment has been, obviously, fundamentally

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different: the students have lived a dream that came true, while the teachers have had an apocalyptic vision on education, particularly on evaluation. Even from the beginning, Chat GPT was perceived, especially by teachers, as an educational Frankenstein that initially can help their inventors, then coordinate and, ultimately destroy them. But the teachers quickly understood that the system was going to be an irreversible trajectory that would overwhelm the students' minds and encourage their lack of implication in their own intellectual evolution. So, if we take into account the words attributed to Julius Caesar: "If you can't defeat your enemy, have him as your friend", we can use AI to improve our students' writing skills, for example, asking them to fulfil a task, then generate a similar one using Chat GPT and compare the results. If the students have a lower level, they can see an objective model generated by a machine; if they are advanced, they can notice that they are better, more creative writers and it is pointless to use this technology.

Chat GPT can help the teachers and students in the consolidation of knowledge and evaluation. The teacher can generate the suitable contexts for revision and assessment according to the topic and the learners' level and post them on different platforms that can be easily accessed by students. If they are reluctant to using these educational resources, the teacher can tell the students that some of the exercises are going to be part of the tests in the future, so the students can be more motivated to do them.

Sometimes, the laborious, even gruelling assessment process can be very frustrating for teachers and students: the teachers are concerned about the students' lack of interest in feedback and evaluation, and the students are almost exclusively interested in the result of it - the marks. Thus, I have been implementing, especially when I assess the writing skills, a strategy that can help my students to correct their mistakes and internalise the assessment process. I assess their papers and give them a mark, according to the previously established criteria then, for the 9th and 10th graders, I underline the mistakes and for the older students I put a minus for every mistake on each line of their writing tasks and encourage them to correct their mistakes, in five minutes, a process that can allow them to improve their final marks up to two points. This is a little bit time-consuming process, but it is beneficial for the students, who are less stressed by the writing assessment, are aware of their own mistakes and become more self-confident.

Regarding the assessment, I have been using for years a horizontal evaluation of the writing skills, particularly if the students have to fulfil two different tasks (e.g. an email and an essay). This is another time-consuming activity, but it is relevant to evaluation, because it helps the

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teacher to avoid having biased opinions, a fact that was carefully explained by Daniel Kahneman in his book, *Thinking Fast and Slow**. In this way the teacher is not substantially influenced by the evaluation of a very good task one in the evaluation of the second task (if task one is written in a very good way, the assessor is highly tempted to consider the second task to be a good one too and to pay less attention to the mistakes or the inaccuracies). On the other hand, the teacher can see what kind of writing task must be better prepared in the future.

For enhancing the students' self-confidence, I have been using a Flexitest (flexible test) assessment strategy since the online assessment during the pandemics. For example, at least one task comprises a larger number of contexts/sentences and the students are allowed to choose a particular number of sentences that are going to be fulfilled (10 sentences out of 12, for example). The value of the system should not be minimalised: the students are not allowed to do whatever they want, because the contexts have a similar level of difficulty. They are invited to take decisions and assume their responsibility for choosing those who are more suitable for them. Sometimes it is possible for the learners to understand only a part of a context, because of a word or some words they are not familiarised with, but speaking a foreign language cannot be reduced to a couple of words. Again, the students' level of stress before the assessment sessions are significantly diminished and the students are focussed on their knowledge (not on the lack of it) and progress.

Adapting to a new, ever-changing educational environment does not mean to make compromises, encourage lenience and diminish vigilance or the quality of the teaching-learning-assessing process, on the contrary; it should be an invitation to creativity, empathy and juxtaposition of the traditional and innovative strategies.

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- **CURSANȚII NOȘTRI:**

The Two Friends Couldn't Believe their Luck!- Story

Costea Izabela
Cls. a VI-a (Nivel B1 Preliminary for Schools)
Prof. Coord. Davidescu Raluca Ioana

They won two phones just by playing an easy game. Both of them were really happy, so they decided to go to a restaurant to eat a big meal.

When they got home, they told their mum and dad what happened and the parents were really happy to find out about that. When the friends got to sleep, they still couldn't believe the luck they had.

For them, that was the best day that anyone could have and it was the best experience. The next day, they met in a park and had a picnic with their parents.

"Yesterday was the best day ever!", one of them said.

The Surprise- Story

Strimbu Matei
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The twins discovered a box of old letters in their granddad's garage. They wanted to see what he has written. The two found an old letter for their grandma.

In the letter they found the sentence: ''it's a treasure to be here.'' At first the two kids were confused and didn't understand the message, but, after a while they thought that there was a hidden treasure in the house, so they started searching all over the place. They hadn't found anything for a while but then they saw a chest. They opened it and it was full of wool.

They were disappointed until their mom told them something. Their grandad always switched the letters p and t so the letter said "it' s a pleasure to be here.' They both started laughing.

An Unexpected Reunion- Story

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It was his neighbour going down the stairs. A moment later he was pounding on the door rapidly, eager to enter.

The boy opened the door. In front of him a tall man, with a beard who seemed rather tired and with his youth taken from him by time, was standing. He claimed to be Harry's dad.

The boy never knew his father, he lived for years only with his mother. He asked his dad to sit down and brought him a cup of coffee. The man refused to talk about his history and just handed him a box then he asked if he could crash there for the night. Harry accepted and went upstairs to see what his present contained. He wasn't very excited to open his dad's gift but after a long time he managed to convince himself.
Inside, there were a few tiny pieces of paper. When he flipped them over, they revealed photos of his father and himself when he was a baby. Harry rushed down the stairs to go and hug his parent.

Unfortunately, the house was empty leaving the boy on his own. Harry dropped on his knees and started crying. He regretted getting his hopes up.

Some people say that school holidays are too long, and school students should only have a three-week break in the summer- Essay

Dârstar Amalia
Cls. a VII-a (Nivel B2 First for Schools)
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School has always been a very important part of everyone's being, mostly because our whole existence depends on how much we study and because our knowledge lasts a lifetime.

Because school is very tiring, students have breaks every summer, but some people think that three months might be a bit too long. So should students only have a three-week break?

Well, I think three months of holiday is the ideal amount of time. During the school year, everyone must repeat the same routine: waking up early, going to school for seven hours, doing their homework and repeating it all every day, and even though having a routine is important, it should not leave children exhausted. Because of that, most children would not be able to handle all the stress, so the risk for mental illnesses would increase significantly. With this holiday, they will be able to relax and play outside, while the weather is still nice.

Although students have a lot to learn and study, for every subject, they would not be able to keep up with their work unless they take breaks, as their brain would not have the same ability to process information, slowing down the learning process.

In conclusion, even though the summer break might look too long to some people, it is necessary for a healthy life and learning environment, and it is an important part of the efficient learning process.