

AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE WORKSHOP AT SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS HIGH SCHOOL “YANE SANDANSKI” – GOTSE DELCHEV

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Abstract. The paper gives an example of a language workshop, which can help students overcome their anxiety. Also, it gives students the opportunity to use real-life communication skills.

Keywords: presentation, language workshop, English, foreign language education, interactive methods

Speaking is a determining skill in the process of learning a foreign language. It is the product of the classroom and thus it is far different from real-life communication. So, what are the ways to organize and conduct speaking tasks, keeping them as close to realistic every-day scenarios as possible, and simultaneously making them useful and interesting for students?

Effective communication includes going beyond language competence, such as using gestures, body language, intonation and other poetic elements. However, why are so many teachers afraid to implement a different teaching style? How and when should dramatization be used in the classroom, in order to turn studying into an unforgettable experience. Tanya Trap, an author and methodologist, from Pearson Education shares:

“Speaking is a key skill in communication-oriented approaches for teaching foreign languages. This skill, however, is a product of the classroom; therefore it is far from real-life communication.”

To overcome the difference between communication in class and in every-day life and to bridge the age gap between the students, we have set up an after-school workshop with students between 5th and 12th grade. The experience and knowledge that led to this idea were gathered throughout our numerous participations in competitions, such as Speaking and Communication Skills Competition, DARBY’s Quiz. Our play “CINDARELCHO” has been performed not only at the Regional Acting Olympiad in Blagoevgrad several times, but also presented in front of a number of foreign students visiting our school. The speaking tasks given are as close to real-life situations as possible and are extremely useful and interesting to students as they develop and enhance students’ communication skills.

A couple of days ago we were filled with pride by the accomplishment of our national team on British English. We were indefinitely pleased by the path we have chosen and are currently following, now that the team's teacher has shared that they needed time to come to the conclusion – how important are presentational skills to the colleges and international Olympiad jury. These skills are enhanced though persistence, foresight, motivation and putting all your heart into one interesting, consuming and difficult task but rewarding with emotions and personal development.

We present to you a short summary of:

Workshop

Couch Potatoes

“One Ordinary Family's Evening ”

Keywords: presentational skills, communication, speaking skills.

1. Used technology and materials:

– Computer

– Projector

– Portable Screen

– Microphones

– Experts' presentations

– Decorations for living room, TV studio, discussion studio, a protest, TV receiver

– Posters

– Up-to-date videos of real events, carefully chosen to be actual pressing news during the time of the simulation on TV show in the studio.

2. Used methods

– Simulations

– Role play

– Debate

3. Main objectives

Development of social skills:

– For communication;

– For cooperation;

– For conflict solving;

– For independence;

– For transfer of knowledge;

– For teamwork;

– For competitiveness;

– Aiding students to create an active viewpoint on certain pressing problems;

– Guiding students to properly give arguments and to provide more in depth defence to their point of view;

- Helping students to be more tolerant and democratic when expressing their opinion and be more accepting to the contrary;
- Building a sense of compassion and smoothness in body language via taking in their specific role in the simulation;
- Feeling greater freedom when expressing thoughts and opinion in front of a wide audience;

Development of the four main skills in English—reading, writing, speaking and listening. The above mentioned methods of tutoring are effective to make students prepared for their roles and apply what they have learned so far. Furthermore it helps them fit better into their roles, especially the news team, the interviewees in the riot and the eleven participants in the debate. It also helps them implement their research approach to perfect their language skills in a non-typical environment. This way they have the motivation and enthusiasm to naturally and unforcefully reach a higher level of language.

4. Description of the WORKSHOP

- Scene 1 – Coach Potatoes
- Scene 2 – news –PMG channel
- Scene 3 – family commenting politics
- Scene 4 – weather forecast
- Scene 5 – family comment
- Scene 6 – riot in front of the parliament against building a new nuclear plant in Bulgaria
- Scene 7 – family comment
- Scene 8 – TV studio debate: for and against nuclear energy
- Scene 9 – Family comment and an attractive closing to the family dinner

5. Participants – The workshop is possible thanks to students from 5th to 12th grade. It was a challenge for the teachers to synchronise the actions and efforts of all the participants. They put their hearts and souls into the following roles:

- The family – mother, father, grandmother, two daughters and a son.
- News crew – News presenters (man and woman).
- Weather forecast – weather forecast presenter (woman).
- Riot against NPP – journalist, 2 active and 7 background protesters.
- TV studio debate – TV host, expert “for”, expert “against”, ministers of labour, finances, representative of the business, chemist-specialist of nuclear waste, Eco-activist, a specialist on renewable energy sources, representative of citizens engineer on energy.

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