

TEAM BUILDING CREATIVITY

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Rezumat

Creativitatea presupune idei care, uneori, pot fi transformate în activități extraordinare desfășurate în echipe: jocuri, simulări, poezii, activități artistice și culturale. Activitățile de dezvoltare a creativității desfășurate în echipe are multiple avantaje: eficientizează comunicarea între elevi/studenti, dezvoltă imaginația, spiritul de colegialitate, stimă reciprocă, convingere, negociere, care pot duce și la descoperiri științifice, la crearea de noi produse, metode și procedee îmbunătățite, stiluri inovatoare în pedagogie și psihologie.

Schools want teachers who are dedicated, well-qualified, have a good command of English, who work well with their colleagues, who can engage and motivate their students and who are committed to helping their learners succeed. But above all they want individuals who are good teachers. The notion of what it means to be a good teacher is a complex one, since good teaching draws on many different qualities that teachers bring to their classes – reflecting the knowledge, skills and understanding they have built up from their professional education and from their experience of teaching. One quality among the many that characterize effective teachers is the ability to bring a creativity to teaching.

Ministries of education in different parts of the world have encouraged schools to focus more on creativity in the curriculum across all subject areas – something that is believed to have widespread consequences. For example a recent report in the UK concluded that „Britain’s economic prosperity and social cohesion depended on developing a national strategy for creative and cultural education”. Creative teaching is said to increase levels of motivation

and self-esteem on the part of learners and to prepare them with the flexible skills they need for the future. Developing the capacity to be creative is believed to have the potential to enrich lives and help contribute to a better society [2, p. 19].

Many of the language tasks favoured by contemporary language teaching methods are believed to release creativity in learners – particularly those involving student-centred, interaction-based, and open-ended elements, and are therefore in principle ideally suited to fostering creative thinking and behaviour on the part of learners. Creative intelligence seems to be a factor that can facilitate language learning because it helps learners cope with novel and unpredictable experiences. Communicative teaching methods have a role to play here since they emphasize functional and situational language use and employ activities such as role-play and simulations that require students to use their imaginations and think creatively.

Creativity is usually described as having a number of different dimensions:

- ◆ the ability to solve problems in original and valuable ways that are relevant to goals;

- ◆ seeing new meanings and relationships in things and making connections;

- ◆ having original and imaginative thoughts and ideas about something;

- ◆ using the imagination and past experience to create new learning possibilities [3, p. 83].

Some of the features that Dörnyei identifies as productive language learning tasks can also be seen to promote creative responses:

Challenge: tasks in which learners solve problems, discover something, overcome obstacles, or find information.

Interesting content: topics that students already find interesting and that they would want to read about outside of class, such as stories we find about sports and entertainment personalities we find on YouTube and the internet.

The personal element: activities that make connections to the learners' lives and concerns.

The novelty element: aspects of an activity that are new or different or totally unexpected.

The intriguing element: tasks that concern ambiguous, problematic, paradoxical, controversial, contradictory or incongruous material stimulate curiosity.

Individual choice: they look for tasks which give students a personal choice. For example students can choose their own topics to write about in an essay or choose their own topics and group members in a discussion activity.

Tasks that encourage risk taking: they don't want their students to be so worried about making mistakes that they feel reluctant to take part in activities. Reward them for effort and not only for success.

Tasks that encourage original thought: activities that require an original response. So instead of comprehension questions after a reading passage that test recall, they seek to use tasks that encourage a personal and individual response to the what the student has read.

The fantasy element: activities that engage the learners' fantasy and that invite the learners to use their imagination for creating make-believe stories, identifying with fictional characters or acting out imaginary situations [3, p. 107].

Team Building Creativity Games

Going to New York

Students are divided into working teams (desirable 2,4 or 6). They are told that they are going on holiday and have to decide what

ten objects to take with them. They will have to reach a consensus on these objects.

Stage 1. Each team has to write down the ten items they would choose to have in their luggage if they were going to stay in New York for two weeks.

Stage 2. When all the teams have completed their lists they have to justify their choices and negotiate with the other team a new/common list of ten items.

Stage 3. When the teams have completed their lists they have to negotiate a new list that all four teams can agree to.

Stage 4. Teams can now be joined together and the lists re-negotiated.

Stage 5. When the teacher thinks the activity has gone on for long enough a feedback session is conducted with the whole class in which they explain and justify their choices.

This activity can be used from the elementary level upwards and is great fun, produces a lot of English, makes students listen to each other, cooperate, persuade, give reasons for their choices, work on a team. Of course there is no particular reason for selecting New York as the destination. Other places can be used.

Job Prestige

Students work in teams.

Step 1. The teacher outlines the task. „You are going to be given a list of 14 occupations. You have to rank them according to two criteria. First arrange them in the order in which these jobs are regarded and paid for in our society. Secondly make a list in which you show how important you think each job should be.”

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. dentist | 6. nurse |
| 2. accountant | 7. teacher |
| 3. taxi driver | 8. shop-assistant |
| 4. actor | 9. policeman |
| 5. secretary | 10. librarian |

11.lawyer

13.journalist

12.engineer

14.farmer

„Work with your neighbour team. You should — as far as it is possible — reach agreement in both rankings. Where you cannot agree, mark the difference of opinion on your list”.

Step 2. The results are presented by the teams and noted on the board. The first list will probably be very similar in each case, with clusters of high prestige and low prestige job emerging clearly. The ranking of the jobs according to the importance may differ wildly and should stimulate a discussion on the criteria for „upgrading” or “downgrading” certain occupations.

Desert Island

Students work in teams.

Step 1. The teacher tells the situation and sets the task: „You are on a desert island in the Pacific. All you have is the swim-suit and sandals you are wearing. There is food and water on the island but nothing else. Here is a list of things you may find useful. You have 8 minutes to choose the eight most useful items and rank them in order of usefulness.

a box of matches

a blanket

a magnifying glass

a watch

an axe

a towel

a bottle of whisky

a pencil and paper

an atlas

some metal knitting-needles

a transistor radio with
batteries

a nylon tent

a camera and five rolls of film

ointment for cuts and burns

a saucepan

a knife and fork

20 metres of nylon rope

Step 2. Teams present their solutions and defend their choices against the others' team arguments and try to persuade the other team on their choice. Finally they have to make up a common list of items.

Qualities

Students work in groups of three or four students.

Step 1. The teacher presents the group with the following list:

reliability

being a good listener

strength

honesty

intelligence

generosity

caution

being funny

stubbornness

helpfulness

Each group should think about how important they consider each quality. Then they rearrange the list in order of importance, starting with the most important quality.

Step 2. The team renegotiates their list with the other team until the whole class agrees about the same order of the quality.

Variations: The same procedure can be followed for different lists, which have been adapted to group interests and the age of the students. Suggestions: reasons for wanting/keeping a pet, things to make a holiday worthwhile, qualities a good car should have, reasons for watching TV, qualities of good parents/friends/politicians/scientists/nurses/doctors, etc.

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