

Creativity Pathways. PPS and video presentations in the ESL classroom

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Abstract:

We are all creative in our own way, in how we perceive and present ourselves to the world, in how we make sense of the world. Teachers' and students' creativity intertwine in the ESL classroom. Teachers can empower students' creativity by giving them clear tasks based on the students' interests and that rely not so much on their textbooks but on bringing new media and project work into focus.

Creativity occurs whenever a person says, does or makes something that is new, either in the sense of '*something from nothing*' or in the sense of giving a new character to something. Creativity occurs whether or not this process leads anywhere. It is present both in the *thought* and in the *action*. It is present when we dream of paradise, when we design our garden, when we read etc. We are being creative when we write something, whether it is published or not.

We are all creative in our own way, in how we perceive and present ourselves to the world, in how we make sense of the world. Some kinds of creativity tend to be done in private, even solitary circumstances, while others require and flourish in a group, both situations being equally creative.

In the school environment we have many kinds of interaction, between people that are potentially creative: the students, the teacher. But in order to develop creativity one should be aware of its puzzle-like structure. Creativity with pre-adolescents and adolescents is a problem of how much the teacher himself is creative and about how his or her creativity in building an activity, and furthermore the whole methodological process, is challenging for the students, meaning how well the two creativities correlate and enforce each other.

Our purpose is a plea for creative teaching and for the maximisation of the creative potential in schools. One of the reasons for doing this is the desire to encourage the subjects to be

more inventive, more flexible, in all aspects of the extracurricular life. The creative approach should be a gain for both individuals and society.

Creative education is intended to promote and encourage learning and development through original or self-expressive activity on the part of those being taught.

Creative education is needed in this post-modern epoch in which every invention is vital for the adaptation to the forever-changing society.

The creative activity is one of the biggest challenges in life and it triggers great rewards. The joy of creation is unique. So, why should not we try to teach others how to benefit of and handle this gift from heavens. Our minds and our lives are too precious to waste them.

How do video and PPS presentations enhance students' creativity?

In the majority of cases students just 'watch' the multimedia content available on the net. Working on projects forces them to track back the road from product to process and see what it takes (as matters of knowledge, enthusiasm, artistic skills, holistic view and time) to create such nice pieces of 'moving images, text and sound' that others can enjoy. Obviously, if involved in such a project they would better evaluate and appreciate the work of other people in the world.

Their critical thinking will be developed on comparing the different variants their own project can take over time and even the structure and artistic impact of their colleagues presentations. They would learn to favour originality in these presentations as watching in class some similar ideas and presentations could very easily get them bored, which in this case is a good thing. After having gained some experience in 'watching clips' they would try to let original ideas prevail in matters of choosing how to 'speak', 'write' and 'orchestrate' (choose the soundtrack, colour themes, slide movement schemes, a.s.o of the presentation) their presentation in order to be pleasant and grab the viewers' attention.

'The World of the Future' Project

I carried out a project, for six editions now, that proved to be successful as the children were very happy to create PPS and short video clips (moving pictures with sound) on the theme of 'The

World of the Future'. They had various ideas and covered various fields of this future. My students were eager to involve and think on such matters as the future of our planet, their own future, the future of technology and fashion, the future of music, the future of art, etc. There were also one or two presentations regarding 'the future of our souls'. These came from 8th grade students.

At the end of our project we presented the best presentations to a group of students and teachers in our school. For both teachers and students it was a memorable experience. The students involved in creating the slideshows will surely remember the work they had done if later in their lives they will come across a folder in their PC's entitled 'Future in my eyes' or even 'Power Point Project Work'.

In this case we had a double assessment of the project work. The first assessment was done by students among themselves by using an evaluation grid designed by the teacher.

Another assessment was carried out by a group of English teachers. With some exceptions the evaluations were similar which proves that students have a strong 'eye culture' and they can evaluate well some aspects of their colleagues' presentations.

On creating their digital projects the majority of the 8th grade students and a few of the young ones used English for communicative purposes and were happy about their final products. I was happy and I encouraged them by giving them some hints and tips on what they could do next (explore other topics and the Powerpoint software in order to get a better knowledge of its possibilities). Some students were reluctant and it was harder for them to fit in and find their pace but on seeing the enthusiasm of their peers they started valuing our activities and did their best to involve as much as possible.

I recommend these activities to my colleague teachers on the condition they bear in mind that every activity must be carefully planned in order to get the most out of it. They also must be aware of the fact that technical issues may arise. For this reason it is a good idea to have some smaller tasks in mind, that can be done without using the computer, and that can help your project grow such as warm ups, choosing your topic, language and sketching some ideas. At times teachers need to be able to sacrifice their break time in order to install the working

environment or leave this task to some carefully chosen students. You as a teacher must be up to date with what happens with technology and come with easier solutions, if they exist out-there.

All in all PPS and video are a motivating and effective way to bring variety into ESL classes. Using short, sharp sequences with a clear linguistic focus, students will go away from class with more than if you sit them down in front of the screen and hit "play"!

References

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Casandra Ioan has been an English teacher for 16 years now. She is currently teaching at „Axente Sever” Primary and Lower Secondary School, of Aiud. She is also a writer and

therefore she is very keen on the subject of creativity which she wants to develop in her students. Over the years she has been part in several Erasmus and Comenius projects. The latest project she and her students enjoyed very much is an e-twinning project called „In the Paths of Christian Art”.