

DEVELOPING CREATIVITY AT ESP CLASSES FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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Creativity is one of the major competences expected from a professional in the 21st century economic environment [1]. For engineers, though, the ability to produce innovative knowledge has always been their every-day job. On the other hand, latest success in the development of AI [2], which spreads further into intellectual spheres, challenges professionals to be more competitive. At University, future engineers gain the required skills and knowledge mainly from the teachers of special subjects. But can we consider the possibility of contributing to this task at English classes? It does not mean that English teachers are to deviate from the established forms and methods of teaching, but rather render them flexibility adding room for the students to think outside the box [3].

Following is an example of how we can modify a conventional exercise in a more creativity-stimulating one. Consider a well-known exercise “Odd one out”. A classical solution implies choosing only one correct option out of several similar items based just on one selection criterion. But any object has a series of different characteristics, which, in their turn, could be taken as a basis for comparison. In each case, the answer may be different. Take, e.g. a list of metals: aluminum, copper, iron, steel. Students (and the English teacher as well) are expected to have definite prior knowledge on the properties of metals. Possible solutions are: a) the selection criterion: pure metal or alloy – the answer is steel; b) the selection criterion: colour – the answer is copper; c) the selection criterion: hardness – the answer is aluminum etc. Such modified exercises are definitely designed not for tests, where only one solution is possible. They rather provide the possibility to practice professional vocabulary, to engage students into a discussion, even to invent a new criterion, as in this example – to be the material for an interplanetary spaceship.

After introducing such practices into English classes we made a survey asking students to select the activities that stimulate their creativity. The results show that in general students are really interested in thought-provoking practices and give priority to such activities as brainstorming ideas and answering open questions such as “Why in your opinion ...?” (> 40%) as well as word puzzles, role plays, describing visuals and project work (> 30%).

References :

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