

## ON EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES FOR CREATING STUDENTS' AUTONOMY THROUGH VIDEO RECITATION COMPETITION IN ENGLISH

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### **Abstract**

*The article considers extracurricular activities as an effective means of developing students' creative independence on the example of a video recitation competition on a subject in English. The article outlines the relevance of developing creative autonomy and describes the conditions necessary for it. The main steps, activities and results of video production are presented. The authors describe a personal experience of video recitation competition at extracurricular English classes and suggest it as an effective way to develop creative independence.*

**Keywords:** *creative autonomy, foreign language learning, extracurricular activities, recitation, video competition, learning process*

### **Rezumat**

*Articolul se referă la activitățile extracurriculare ca mijloc eficient de dezvoltare a independenței creative a studenților pe exemplul unui concurs de recitare video în limba engleză. Articolul subliniază relevanța dezvoltării independenței creative și descrie condițiile necesare pentru aceasta. Sunt prezentate principalele etape, activități și rezultate ale concursului de declamație video. Autoarele descriu experiența lor personală de desfășurare a unui concurs de declamație video în cadrul orelor extracurriculare de limba engleză și sugerează că aceasta este o modalitate eficientă de dezvoltare a independenței creative.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *autonomie creativă, declamație, învățarea limbilor străine, activități extracurriculare, recitare, concurs video, proces de învățare*

Modern higher education pedagogy focuses on the inner potential of the future language specialists and on educational environment creation fit to conduct the creative self-development of the student. It is believed that the effectiveness of a future specialist's professional activity equally depends on the professional knowledge and skills acquired at university, and on the formed ability for further professional and creative self-development.

One of the main tasks of modern higher education is to develop students' creative independence, which is the desire to use new techniques in solving

the given language problem and to find unusual ways of overcoming difficulties, the need to introduce new elements into the process of performing tasks (Кудряшова & Горбатова/ Kudrjašova & Gorbatova, 2015, p. 583).

However, the development of a future specialist's creative independence is a complex process that must be realised in educational institutions under such conditions that will make the student constantly strive to realise his or her creative abilities:

- creating quasi-professional situations<sup>1</sup> aimed at solving social or professional problems that approximate real-life situations (see works of M. Makarčenko, J. Fricko, E. Nadtočeva);
- orienting/ guiding the student towards the real outcome of his or her activity, which increases the motivation to learn a FL;
- the choice of active learning forms based on the principle of activating the creative potential of students (different language competitions, language festivals, Olympiads, poem recitations, etc);
- providing pedagogical support, that will coordinate learners' activity and increase the level of students' autonomy.

English language teachers, researchers, methodologists and educators agree that English lesson is one of the most effective platforms for developing creative independence. A number of authors (Edge, Garton, Fujita, Gurbuz) have been carried out to reveal productive ways to improve students' communicative skills, how students can use English efficiently and naturally, and how to help students express themselves accurately and fluently. One of these ways proposed by many researchers is utilizing extracurricular activities inside as well as outside English language classrooms to enhance students' communicative skills informally.

The literature review shows that the extra-curricular activities were just as necessary for building academic and social skills as the regular classes. A number of authors have recognized that the extra-curricular activities have become an inseparable part of the context of second language teaching and learning in the universities and colleges (Campbell, Housen, Beardsmore). Oates and Hawley suggested involving the native speakers of the target language in delivering extra-curricular activities, such as meetings, videotaped interviews, role-playing, individual presentations, newspapers and language weekends.

Extracurricular activities are those activities that fall outside the realm of the curricula or syllabi. Inside as well as outside of the English classroom there is an opportunity to maximise the use of creative tasks, encouraging students to work independently and to use the language material studied to express their thoughts, ambitions, dreams. The value of extra-curricular ac-

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<sup>1</sup><https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/construction-of-quasi-professional-tasks-for-the-methodical-training-of-foreign-language-teachers/viewer>.

tivities in second language teaching was reinforced by the requirements of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) – the ability to communicate, which includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Hornby states that extracurricular activities fall "outside the regular course of work or studies at a school or college" (Hornby, 1995, p. 409). K. Fujita traces the history of extracurricular activities stating that their development was slow in the beginning; however, "Eventually people, including educators, began to see the benefits of extracurricular activities, but it took a while to injure themselves to them. In fact, before 1900, educators were skeptical of participation in extracurricular activities, believing that school should focus solely on narrowly defined academic outcomes. Afterwards, much more care was paid to them" (Fujita, p. 2). This has been discussed by a great number of authors in literature. In Russian literature we can find several classifications of extra-curricular activities (see at Kudrjašov, Egorov, Holod, Tumanov, etc). Some Russian authors divided extra-curricular activities into four groups: *competitions*, *mass media* (school newspapers, radio, etc.), *cultural* (holiday celebrations and any other cultural events, trips to museums, exhibitions and galleries, etc.) and *political* (debates, focus groups, discussions). M. Andreeva divided them into three groups: *academic and common interests circles*, *mass events*, *individual work*, *correspondence with students from other countries*, *language clubs* (Andreeva, 1958).

The reported advantages of extra-curricular activities for language acquisition include: improvement of student-teacher relationship as well as of student-student relationship, improvement of school/university morale, improvement of academic community relationship. Some researchers point at enhancing social interaction, leadership, healthy recreation, self-discipline, and confidence (Rombokas, Astin), while others highlight the improvement of the academic performance (Marsh and Kleitman, Darling, Caldwell and Smith).

Besides, integration of extracurricular activities into the foreign language curriculum is supported in the context of culturally oriented communicative language teaching. Extracurricular activities provide language teachers and students with multiple opportunities for creating the target language environment, and exploring different cultural issues of the country of the target language. Cultural values, social norms and etiquette are reflected in and through the language, and therefore have to be reflected in the process of foreign language acquisition, as L. Harklau states. In case the students go deeper into the target cultures, participating at diverse extracurricular activities they develop their intercultural competence, i.e., they raise their awareness of their own and target cultures, they develop social skills, tolerance and patience required for intercultural communication.

Russian methodologists N. Holod and O. Egorova state that for effective organisation of extracurricular activities, certain methodological principles should be followed. The main principles of extracurricular activities are:

- the principle of linking learning to life, which ensures a close relationship between extracurricular activities and real-life conditions;
- the principle of communicative activity of learners, which is based on the creation of situations and conditions that bring communication in a foreign language closer to communication in natural conditions;
- the principle of combining team/group and individual forms of working to maximize the effectiveness of learning activities if well-organised (Холод & Егорова/Holod & Egorova, 2014, p. 110).

According to S. Krashen (1981), the success of language acquisition depends on two kinds of language exposure – outside the formal environment of the classroom and sheltered curricular exposure within the classroom. Extracurricular activities provide the necessary experiential language exposure outside the language classroom.

Undoubtedly, the students' extracurricular activities promote their creative independence. Pandemic caused by the outbreak of Coronaviruses disease (Covid-19) around the world in 2020 has changed not only our daily life but the process of teaching as well. The change of face-to-face learning inside the classroom into online learning has made us rethink even the process of organizing extra-curricular activities with our students. Despite the fact that shifting from inside to outside language classroom provides a number of challenges and difficulties for the teachers and students, it gave us a chance to adapt our teaching techniques and strategies to this new life situation.

The procedure of organizing online extracurricular activity – *Online Video Recitation* - was timed to coincide with *English Language Day* (April, 23<sup>rd</sup>) and with *International Book Day*. The date of the celebration was the birthday of William Shakespeare, the great English poet, writer and the world's most famous playwright. We shall describe the procedure and results of the online video recitation with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students from the Faculty of Pedagogical Science, Psychology and Arts. The activity involved the preparation of videos in English using active vocabulary within the topic of study ("Sonnets by W. Shakespeare" and "The Book that impressed me much").

The process of creating any product involves three main stages: preparatory, main and final. During the preparatory stage of video production, students read *Sonnets* by W. Shakespeare in English and Romanian or Russian translation, chose the sonnet that was the most attractive for them, and created video presentation. The main stage involved synthesis, analysis, synthesis and systematisation of ideas, while the final stage was devoted to preparing the final product - the video. In the final stage, the students filmed

the videos and designed them technically. The teacher acted as a coordinator and an adviser in the preparation of the activity.

Before the first stage of creating the video, several lessons were dedicated to the topic of the research. The aim of the lessons were - developing the cognitive activity of the students, activating their thinking activity by engaging them in creative exploration and research, awakening their interest in the work of William Shakespeare. The objectives of the lessons were:

- to familiarise students with the spiritual heritage of Renaissance culture;
- to form independent analysis skills of the text, the ability to express their attitude to what they have read;
- to promote high aesthetic and moral feelings, ideals of beauty and harmony;
- to develop imagination and fantasy in the process of recitation/ storytelling.

The lesson procedure:

- 1) Reading and comparing the original variant and the translation of Shakespeare's lines:

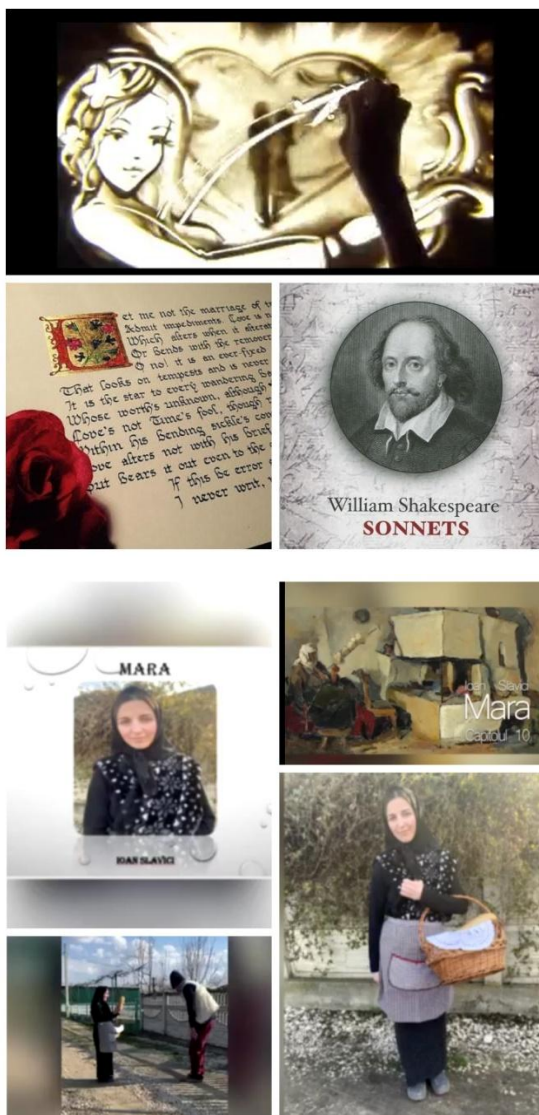
*When wasteful war shall statues overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn  
The living record of your memory.*

- 2) Teacher's information about Renaissance, the difference in the concept of revival in different European countries;
- 3) Students' information about The Renaissance and the development of the human personality, a powerful increase in human activity, initiative and talent;
- 4) Teacher's information about the new direction - humanism when the main content of art becomes man, his earthly life and his struggle for happiness. Some students present information about William Shakespeare, Giovanni Boccaccio, Miguel de Cervantes, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci;
- 5) The group of students (2-3) are the guides and invite the rest to Great Britain, to a small provincial town of Stratford, motherland of William Shakespeare;
- 6) The teacher's information about sonnets and their types<sup>2</sup>;
- 7) Two students present information about well-known translators of Shakespeare's sonnets - Boris Pasternak and Samuel Maršak.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://literaryterms.net/sonnet/>.

As a result of this extracurricular activity we have got rather interesting and creative *Online Video Sonnets' Recitations* and *Online Book Presentations*. The criteria for the assessment were: diversity of language and vocabulary; originality of plot; linguistic correctness; the technical execution of the video; overall impression. Here are some of the videos of our 2<sup>nd</sup> year students:



Facebook's popularity worldwide can be integrated in EFL teaching and learning as it provides interaction with people of different countries and cultures. Besides, it has a positive impact on the users' popularity. Therefore, all the final videos we published on one of the most popular social media application and the feedback was of great importance to the students. Their crea-

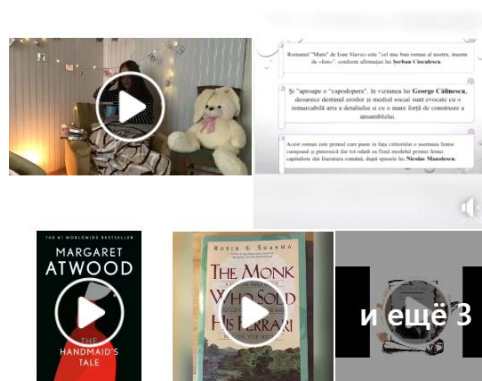
tive videos boosted students' motivation to learn English and increased their positive experiences.

The results of video creation and presentation showed that such extracurricular activity helped students to understand and consolidate the material on the studied topic better; increased their interest to English language and motivated them to master some topics independently; and allowed them to realise their creative potential.

iubitori de CARTE. Acest eveniment își propune să atragă atenția studenților de la USARB (și nu numai) asupra cărților și să le inspire dragostea pentru lectură.

Îi mulțumesc dragei mele colege pentru posibilitatea de a demonstra că și studenții de la alte facultăți cu specialitatea Limba engleză sunt amatori de Carte!!!!

Barbara Tuchman spunea: "Cărțile sunt cărăușii civilizației. Fără cărți, istoria e mută, literatura nu are glas, știința paralizată, iar gândirea și meditația suspendate." Respect studenților care citesc....!!!



To sum up, our assumption about the effectiveness of extracurricular activities in the development of students' creative independence is correct, because they fully meet the conditions necessary for its development, i.e.: they allow applying forms of active learning; they allow using the principle of connection between education and real life; they present effective results of his/her activity; they provide pedagogical support. Such extracurricular independent activities are seen as important reserve of language training, as a means of realizing teaching and educational tasks and a source of creative development of a person.

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