

ESP CLASSES: EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING GENERATION Z STUDENTS.

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Teaching is a complex process involving a great many aspects and demanding the educators to adapt quickly to the special needs of different learners. Over the recent years, however, there has appeared a new challenge due to the solid place taken by technology spread in all spheres of life where education is far from being an exception: it has become an object for great changes and shifts towards the development a completely different approach to education.

The curriculum for the subject “English as a first foreign language” at the Faculty of International Relations in the Belarusian State University embraces such aspects as: GE and ESP which in its turn includes studies of geography, history and culture of the Republic of Belarus, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

Generation Z is defined as people born since the late 1990s and early 2000s who are seen as tech-savvy, pragmatic, open-minded, individualistic but also socially responsible and fast decision makers. This generation has information at their fingertips, which defines the relative easiness with which they find and extract information, and which also has to be considered when it comes to choosing the teaching strategies and methods. Gen Z are incredibly good at multitasking, and you could be amazed at the number of things they perform simultaneously: listening to music, chatting on the social media, surfing the net and while doing their homework. At the same time, this ability to shift attention quickly towards another activity seems to have shortened the attention span, resulting in the inability to focus on one task for a long time, which in its turn requires a teacher to change activities more often, or to split one bigger activity into several stages so as to create a whole picture from chunks.

Centennials are also viewed as preferring pictures / emogies to the written text, and forming a new type of mental activity — clip-thinking, which makes facilitators choose other than traditional sources of presenting information giving priority to *short videos, pictures, presentations, mind maps*. They are also great team-players who like to learn by working with peers and by building knowledge from each other, which allows to incorporate team-work activities during the lesson, thus promoting collaboration and social interaction of students.

With Gen Z students little importance is given to the teacher’s authority, which is why some of traditional teaching principles are no longer effective. The best way to educate the centennials is to provide them with ‘edutainment’ methods by incorporating interactive games and fun activities (*Quizlet, Kahoot, multimedia software, etc.*) into the traditional academic learning and curriculum. As for the traditional classroom layout, it tends to promote a teacher-focused mode with rows facing the tutor, though now this idea proves not to be effective as it doesn’t encourage peer interaction. Considering the necessity for student-centered mode of learning, and the overwhelming nature of technology use among the youth, the layout of the classroom should be arranged in such a way as to promote social stimulation, engagement and interaction between learners.

Today’s employers are no longer concerned with the education itself — they require job-related skills. In the light of modern realities and basing on the peculiarities of the channels and speed of obtaining information among the Gen Z students, their abilities to perform multiple activities simultaneously, and basing on the experience of teaching at the Faculty of International Relations in Belarusian State University it is obvious that academic undergraduate education has taken a shift towards the development of one of the most important skills — critical thinking skills.

The Critical thinking has been defined as comprising the Lower Order Thinking Skills (remember, understand and apply) and the Higher Order Thinking Skills (analyze, evaluate and create). Remembering (recalling the information), understanding (the skill of explain the ideas or concepts) and applying the information (using the information in another context / situation) must be developed prior to the Higher Order skills which are: analyzing (break the information down into its component parts), evaluating (assessing), and creating something new with the given input.

Among the activities that have proved to be effective are first of all the ones that require pair work or team work (*case studies, think-pair-share, six thinking hats, putting students in the position of decision-makers (through role-plays or discussions)*), tasks encouraging disagreement in a cooperative atmosphere, problem solving, project-oriented tasks, and other instruments of engaging learners in creativity and collaboration, whether it is spontaneous or structured. Asking questions

encouraging arguments is at the heart of a lesson plan of an academic teacher: open-ended questions, questions encouraging learners to analyse causes and effects, advantages and disadvantages, to make inferences, generalizations, and evaluations, to outline problems and find solutions.

A modern classroom environment should not be teacher-led but student-centered. As teachers, we possess a wide range of resources to make use of in the classroom and connecting them with the issues under discussion, as today's academic education should encourage students to make those connections and to study widely to explore important issues further and deeper.