

Developing Human Values Through the Cross-curricular Approach by Addie Kostakou, Author - Publisher

According to the latest research, an ELT teacher should take into account the students' social and cognitive identity in order to be efficient and regarded as fair by his / her students. Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is, more than anything else, an interdisciplinary area, and this is the reason why these teachers should be aware of their students' background: social, psychological and cognitive.

Teachers should transfer knowledge as a whole, rather than just fragments, because, when knowledge is fragmented, students don't become critical thinkers. The crucial point nowadays is not how much I know but whether I know how to search for the things I want or need to know. That's why, when encouraging students to develop projects, we are also helping them develop other skills necessary for critical thinking. Critical thinking covers several areas of ability, but definitely involves the respect of human values.

In fact it's the teacher's responsibility to bring these values to the surface and help students show understanding and tolerance of "otherness". To be more specific, Greece has already become a multi-cultural country, like all the other European countries. People of different ethnic origin have settled here and have become part of our society. It's this new type of society which the young generation should get used to and cope with. But how xenophobic or racist are these young people? If we look at the findings of the National Centre of Social Research, we'll realize that young people's attitude towards different ethnic groups is not encouraging. Many of them are stuck in the old stereotypes and reject the "others".

How can teachers of English change this xenophobic attitude? All educationists involved in ELT have been bombarded by the cross-cultural and multicultural approach as well as the cross-curricular approach. We should bear in mind that the cross-cultural approach is related to the differences between cultures, and bridges the gap between them, whereas the multicultural approach refers to a society made up of many distinct cultural groups and to the policy of accommodating these cultures without prejudice or discrimination.

The cross-curricular approach focuses on learning through a combination of two or more disciplines. In this way, learners explore an area of knowledge from different sides. According to the findings of the PISA project, 15-year-olds in Greece are below average when assessed in reading literacy – retrieving information from a text, interpreting a text, the reflection and evaluation of a text. Consequently, it's the teacher's responsibility to help students develop their skills and abilities so that they can learn from different sources, understand the changing world, and respect the different people they have to cooperate with.

The English language teacher should take the initiative and assign projects that help students to look beyond the borders of a classroom and investigate the real world. The projects can be individual or carried out in groups. Both types are important and should be given alternatively. The project groups should consist of mixed ability students and students of different origin and background.

Before teachers assign a project they should specify the following:

- Topic of project:
- Type of project:
- Number of students:
- Level:
- Number of hours to complete the project:
- Deadline:
- Aims: 1) Personal & social development
2) Types of life skills
3) Language skills
- Related subjects:

We realise that English-language teachers with a Greek educational background are not used to the idea of assigning projects but, at the same time, we want to encourage them to try, and then to proceed to self-assessment. Life-long learning is important, both for us and the students we want to teach.