

METODE AKTIVNOG UČENJA NA ČASOVIMA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA KAO STRANOG

ACTIVE TEACHING METHODS IN ESL CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

Active Learning,
Teaching,
Methodology, Esl

This article represents a methodological overview of how active teaching and learning methods by Ivić et al. (2001) can be applied in the ESL classes with the psychology students at the university level. Each element of the active teaching methodology will be placed in the context of the English Language class with the students of Psychology. These key elements include student interaction, student initiative, explorative talk, methods of revision and evaluation etc. The aim of the paper is to discuss possibilities of incorporation of various ESL class activities and resources that correspond to the active learning model which as a result can contribute to a higher level of learning and engagement of the students. Additionally, the emphasis will be on the main language skills which include reading, listening, writing and speaking that are developed in the setting of active teaching methodology.

SAŽETAK

Ključne reči:
aktivno učenje,
predavanje,
metodologija,
Engleski jezik kao
strani

Ovaj rad predstavlja metodološki osvrt na način na koji se aktivne metode učenja (Ivić et al. 2001) mogu primeniti na časove Engleskog jezika kao stranog kod studenata psihologije na univerzitetskom nivou. Svaki element metodologije aktivnog učenja će se staviti u kontekst časa Engleskog jezika sa studentima psihologije. Ključni elementi uključuju studentsku interakciju, studentstu inicijativu, istraživački razgovor, metode ponavljanja i evaluacije itd. Cilj je diskusija mogućeg korišćenja različitih aktivnosti i resursa Engleskog jezika kao stranog koji odgovaraju modelu aktivnog učenja i koji mogu da doprinesu većem nivou učenja i uključivanja studenata u sam proces učenja. Naglasak će biti na glavnim jezičkim veštinama koje uključuju čitanje, slušanje, pisanje i govor i način na koji se one razvijaju u kontekstu aktivnog učenja.

Introduction

The focus of this article represents an overview of how the methodology of active teaching/learning by Ivić et al. (2001) can be applied in the ESL classes with the psychology students at the university level. The first part of the paper will present different researches which discuss the effect of the traditional teaching style at the university level. Furthermore, the structure of the paper will follow the main aspects of active teaching methodology, primarily the methods that are used in the different parts of the class in the context of the English Language class with the students of Psychology. The idea is to incorporate various activities in ESL class that can correspond to the active learning model which as a result contributes to a higher level of learning and higher engagement of the students in the learning process itself. In addition, the emphasis will be on the main language skills such as reading, listening, writing and speaking that can be practiced in this context of active teaching methodology. As a result, active teaching and learning methods in the foreign language course at the university level can contribute to the higher engagement of the students, greater use of the speaking skills and a generally more positive in-class atmosphere.

The structure of the paper is the following, firstly, the theoretical overview is presented by comparing and contrasting the traditional way of teaching, primarily through frontal teaching style and a fixed curriculum. Another important element that is mentioned are the downsides of this teaching style, being the most dominant at the university level. Furthermore, the methodology of active teaching/learning will be explained based on the manual *Active Teaching* (Ivić et al., 2001). The explanation contains the advantages of the active teaching method as well as its key components. The theoretical overview also contains different researches which are predominantly focused on the teaching methodology at the university level. Following the theoretical overview, the paper will discuss concrete examples of how active teaching methods can be applied in ESL classes based on the different segments of the class and key elements of active teaching methodology. The application of this methodology was performed in English Language classes with the first and second-year students of Psychology (56 students in total) at the Faculty of Sport and Psychology in Novi Sad.

Traditional Learning vs Active Learning

In the first section of this paper, the main characteristics of traditional teaching style at the university level will be presented. This teaching style is considered to be

the most dominant teaching style when higher education is concerned, typically resulting in a lack of motivation among the students. This was confirmed in research done by Fuzi (2019). In her paper, she researched the connection between the teaching style and student motivation and concluded that teachers at the university level have a general problem motivating the students. The respondents from her research concluded that the use of digital tools, interactive activities, and practical examples have the most motivating effect on students' engagement. Her conclusion was that despite the best intentions of the lecturers, the actual motivation of students in the university classrooms is often missing and the reason for this may be the lack of pedagogical and methodological knowledge of the teachers.

One of the main characteristics of the traditional teaching style is a fixed predetermined teaching plan with the curriculum which does not offer many opportunities to deviate. This is the type of curriculum that is not changed or adjusted during the course of the semester. The lecturing method is primarily a frontal model where the teacher gives a lecture to the students without the possibility of any real interaction between the students themselves or the teacher and the students. The teacher represents the only active participant, while the students' role is mainly to listen and memorize the information the teacher delivers. The assessment system is in the form of the tests or exams which evaluate the amount of information and data the students learned and memorized. As a result, the students in this context are primarily motivated extrinsically by grades instead of having an inner motivation. The downsides of this method of teaching are the lack of free activities, as well as the fact that the role of the student's activity is marginalized and their participation is severely lacking, therefore resulting in a lack of motivation. In her paper, Jármai (2015) suggested that the teaching methods in higher education should be reassessed. She mentions the existence of the generational gap between the students and the teacher-centered teaching methods. For effective teaching and learning, she stresses that the teachers have to gravitate towards the student-centered approach.

The concept of active teaching published in the manual *Active Teaching* (Ivić et al., 2001) was formulated as a criticism of traditional methodology which was focused more on the teacher's role in the learning process. Active teaching as a concept can be defined as "a student's mental activities aimed toward the creation of the content of the course in interaction with the teacher or independently from him/her" (Milin, 2012:5). Even though

this method does not negate the importance of the teacher's role, it is considered that the emphasis should be on the activities of the students. Some authors such as Merseur and Littleton (2007) confirm this claim and consider that the quality of learning is proportional to the quality of active participation of the students.

The main focus of the active teaching method is on the student as an active participant in the teaching process, making this a student-centered approach. Based on the manual *Active Teaching* (Ivić et al., 2001) the key characteristics of the teaching and learning process will be mentioned. They represent students' initiative and interaction among students. The student's initiative is defined as the initiation of an activity that the teacher did not plan, but was suggested by the students. This is an initiative primarily based on the students' motivation to learn more. Brofi (2004) claims that students' initiative in a class can, as a result, contribute to a more relaxed class atmosphere. Interaction between students is the crucial element and can be either spontaneous or planned and has to be connected to the course content.

As far as the curriculum is concerned, it is not fixed and completely predetermined, it rather represents the starting point and a framework for the teacher and therefore it is flexible. The content of the curriculum can be adjusted to the interests of the students and it is important that it is connected to their experience and future career. In her paper, Đorić (2020:8) mentioned that "the curriculum should put students in different situations and contexts where they will have real-life simulations of the different situations from their area of expertise or future career". The goal of the classes is the development of individuality and skills, not only learning the content of the course. The teacher's role is that of a motivator and an organizer of the class as well as a partner in the learning process. The students are assessed in comparison to their starting point, their motivation and interest in their studying. (Ivić et al., 2001)

Research such as the one done by Khalid (2013) demonstrates the positive effects of such teaching methods. She explored what classroom activities and teaching styles raise students' interests in higher education. She

interviewed the teachers who were considered to be the best by their students and asked them about their teaching methods. She came to the conclusion that the students are more interested in real-life tasks which require creativity and their own research. Additionally, students are more involved if they can sense a link between the topic of the course and their own career goals. In another research, Ollé (2010) has come to the conclusion that digital tools are good for motivating the students in the class, but they cannot fully substitute contact activities and interaction among students.

Application of this methodology in ESL classes

The aim of the paper is to discuss possibilities of incorporation of various ESL class activities and resources that correspond to the active learning model which as a result can contribute to a higher level of learning and engagement of the students. These examples and the application derive from the experience with the first and second-year students of Psychology at the Faculty of Sport and Psychology in Novi Sad. The book that is used in the curriculum was specially designed for the students of Psychology and is called *Career Path: Psychology* by Jane Dooley. The book itself is divided into three separate sections covering a range of topics from psychology, varying from Classical Conditioning to Mental Disorders. This book provides a perfect guideline to covering different topics from Psychology and its digital format, as well as other tools such as videos or interactive quizzes represent a great foundation for active learning ESL methodology.

The main language skills which will be in focus are reading skills, writing, speaking and listening. Reading and listening are viewed as passive language skills, while speaking and writing are more productive language skills. The aim of this overview is to connect the principles of active teaching to the development of the aforementioned language skills through concrete in-class activities. As Harrison and Shi (2016) claim in their article regarding university-level ESL students, their research confirmed that at the university level, the biggest problem for students learning a foreign language represents overcoming

PART OF THE CLASS	ACTIVITY	LANGUAGE SKILL
• INTRO	group mini quiz asking each other questions in pairs brainstorming	READING, SPEAKING SPEAKING, LISTENING SPEAKING, WRITING

Table 1 ESL activities in the introductory part of the class

inhibitions and shyness necessary to speak in class and communicate more effectively. Furthermore, they claim that the focus of ESL classes should be primarily on de-

veloping oral skills as well as the ability to ask questions and give clear coherent answers. It is also emphasized the necessity of the creation of an authentic academic

classroom with a lot of materials and provides an environment where the students will be highly motivated.

When the organization of students in the ESL class is concerned, the interactive component of the learning process is crucial. Frontal teaching style, where the teacher gives a lecture on a specific topic is avoided or decreased to the minimum, while group work and cooperative learning is encouraged in a way that will be explained in the continuation of the article. As far as the organization of the groups is concerned, group work and pair work are most commonly used. Another format of the class that can have a positive impact on the active learning environment is the workshop which has many benefits including developing communicative abilities, developing active listening, and developing a competitive spirit.

The introductory part of the class is very important because active learning emphasizes the importance of determining and evaluating prior knowledge. In the context of the students' of Psychology, it is important that in the introductory part of the class students revise the terminology and the content studied in the previous classes. The activities can vary, such as mini-quizzes where groups can participate or pair work questioning, where the purpose is to ask one another and provide the appropriate answer. In this way, the students engage as a group or a pair in revising and explaining the psychological concepts covered in the previous lecture, practicing their speaking skills. Another important activity in the introductory part of the class is brainstorming, which represents uncensored, spontaneous bringing out new ideas. The teacher can mention to the students the topic they are going to

cover next and they can either write or orally state all their previous knowledge related to the topic (e.g. Social Psychology) or it can be a word brainstorming. The important part of the active learning method is the follow-up of this process, where the entire group can discuss, select the best ideas or even do a logical analysis of them.

In the main part of the class it is emphasized, based on the guidelines, that the student's activity should be promoted in the entirety of the class. This reflects the environment in which the class is student-driven. In the context of psychology students, the students are divided into groups of three or four. Each group is assigned a separate set of notions (e.g. different types of mental disorders) which they have to research first by using Internet sources or textbooks. Afterward, they should discuss about the materials they found in groups, and make them concise and understandable. Then, they have to write these ideas in the written format as notes or a short paragraph and afterwards, present them as a group to the other students. In this way, many of the skills are incorporated into the learning process including reading skills and comprehension of the materials, writing a concise analysis and overview, oral skills in discussion within the group, and oral presentation to the entire class. Besides the development of these multiple skills, the students are completely involved and invested in the entirety of the learning process.

Another important aspect of the process is the revision of the student's knowledge. There are many ways in which revision can be incorporated into the learning process of the ESL class and active teaching. One of the ways that

PART OF THE CLASS	ACTIVITY	LANGUAGE SKILL
● MAIN	research task discussion writing notes presenting	READING SPEAKING WRITING SPEAKING, LISTENING

Table 2. ESL activities in the main part of the class

was used is the revisions of the lectures from the students themselves. The format of this activity is in-class mini-presentations which provide an overview of the lectures covered in class, but the biggest difference is that students can make a short version of the lecture containing only the key points. This is crucial both for revision and the understanding of the lectures and this activity also presents a possibility to practice many language skills. Giving feedback is an important part of this process because it provides students with an insight about their strengths and the space which requires improvement. The feedback can come from the teacher, but also peer feedback can

motivate students to listen more and in this way practice listening skills. Another suggestion regarding revision in the context of active teaching is via role-playing activities. The most frequent dynamic used with the psychology students during the role-playing activity is between a counselor and a client. The aim of this activity is to practice the vocabulary and the topics covered in class but in the context of the counseling set

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PART OF THE CLASS	ACTIVITY	LANGUAGE SKILL
● REVISION	mini-presentations role play exploratory talk	READING, SPEAKING SPEAKING, LISTENING SPEAKING, LISTENING

the ESL class and active teaching. One of the ways that was used is the revisions of the lectures from the students themselves. The format of this activity is in-class mini-presentations which provide an overview of the lectures covered in class, but the biggest difference is that students can make a short version of the lecture containing only the key points. This is crucial both for revision and the understanding of the lectures and this activity also presents a possibility to practice many language skills. Giving feedback is an important part of this process because it provides students with an insight about their strengths and the space which requires improvement. The feedback can come from the teacher, but also peer feedback can motivate students to listen more and in this way practice listening skills. Another suggestion regarding revision in the context of active teaching is via role-playing activities. The most frequent dynamic used with the psychology students during the role-playing activity is between a counselor and a client. The aim of this activity is to practice the vocabulary and the topics covered in class but in the context of the counseling setting and use terminology and phrases important for their future career.

Another method in active teaching which can contribute to the development of speaking skills but also other social competencies is called exploratory talk. It is defined as a critical, but constructive relationship toward the ideas of the other participants in the conversation. This is completely different from typical ESL discussions which consist of short exchanges or dialogues containing arguments and counterarguments. This type of conversation and speaking practice is a typical part of ESL classes having a debate for and against a specific topic. In the exploratory talk, the participants are included in the interthink which is the interaction where the students think together on a specific topic. The result of this process is that the students express their opinion freely, and engage in critical thinking. One of the important components of this activity is argumentation, cooperation and negotiation.

Additionally, there are other components in the model of active learning that should be incorporated into the ESL class. In these activities, the speaking activity is predominant, but also subcategories of speaking skill such as expressing opinion, argumentation and assessment are crucial.

a) Asking questions

Asking questions is encouraged in the process of active teaching, however the students should be encouraged to ask the questions which have the qualities of critical thinking and creativity in contrast to just typical informative questions. Some of these questions can lead to group discussions about a certain topic or can even be the topics of a research paper. The students in the class were encouraged to ask different questions to their colleagues or the teacher and sometimes in this way initiate a research project.

b) Evaluative behavior of the students

The students can be also included in the evaluation process, such as giving the feedback to the students who are presenting in class, evaluation of the teacher or the content of the class. In the evaluative behavior, student's impressions about the workshop or presentation can be included. In this way, they practice speaking skills as well as argumentation and expression of ideas. Students' evaluation of other students' presentations or projects provided them with valuable feedback on the content of the project as well as their language abilities.

c) Atmosphere of the group

Due to the high level of interaction among students and their bigger involvement, the classes resulted in a better and more collaborative atmosphere. The heightened engagement of the students and the topics that they find interesting and relevant for their future career increased the interest in the class. The emotional tone and the quality of the relationships among students themselves have an important impact on this notion. Students can give their opinion whether they liked something and what is their general impression of the class. The students' feedback and their personal preferences of certain topics changed the time devoted to different units and therefore resulted in their greater commitment and activity in class.

To conclude, the experience involving first and second year students of Psychology and the active teaching methodology demonstrated great results and the increase in both students' language abilities as well as their

motivation. However, for more exact results a more comprehensive research is required. There was an increase in other abilities not strictly related to language such as argumentation, critical thinking and presenting skills.

In summary, the active learning methodology can be adapted in the context of the ESL class where the students would have the opportunity to develop various language skills in a more effective way. The suggestion for further research can be the creation of an experiment to see whether there will be an increase of students' different language skills and motivation in the ESL class as a result of this learning methodology. Besides language competencies, this methodology offers a variety of other competences such as decision making, presentation, capacity for group activities which can result in the increase of the motivation, involvement of the students, as well as to use different professional skills. In this way, the capacity for acquiring knowledge both from the foreign language, but also from their subject matter will be increased.

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