

Morska Liliya, Skibska Joanna

The University of Bielsko Biala (Poland)

## **LEARNING AND TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES:**

### **WHERE TO HEAD FOR**

Nowadays, no one would deny the fact that foreign language teaching has gained common popularity anywhere in the world, be it English, Chinese, German, or any other. Moreover, both students and teacher keep seeking for the most efficient methods and techniques to satisfy the needs of students who are speeded up by the overall trend of “the culture of instant”. To manage under such a pressure, teachers should at least be aware of what is available at their disposal so that to be capable of selecting the most approachable resources for their students.

First of all, it’s important to mention the types of learning as applied to teaching foreign languages. These are: traditional, blended, hybrid and online:

traditional—the predominant model where all contact hours take place with teacher and students together in one classroom

- blended—a traditional classroom that uses online learning to complement the coursework. The online portion of the class does not replace any of the contact hours, but rather may serve as a tool within the classroom or a method of completing homework outside of class.

- hybrid—a method of instructional delivery that assumes the students will spend a portion of their course contact hours in a physical classroom, and another portion of their instructional hours working on a computer. The exact proportion of online to contact is widely variable.

- online—a delivery method where the classroom is an online space and teacher and students conduct all class activities related to the course contact hours in that online space. Some online classes may require an initial orientation meeting or additional in-person meetings with the instructor or a test proctor. However, the weekly contact hours are fulfilled entirely online.

Another important issue to remember is the way teachers select and use the resources and materials they have access to, or create on their own. A sensitive

awareness of the characteristics and potential of the media and materials available to the teacher can lead to ideas which are fresh, relevant and efficient.

At the same time, it is important to note that an ingenious use of the media or materials is normally not enough. We have to combine this with ways of engaging the students. Broadly, ways of engaging the students can be summarised by:

- challenging them (to identify something difficult to identify; match things objectively or subjectively, group, order, sequence and remember things)
- inviting them (to hypothesise, create and share)
- showing you care about the content of their contribution more than the language forms.

One more idea to draw the attention of teachers is creativity. They should find the ways to boost it in the classroom. The language teacher must help the students to use the target language for purposes which they care about. In this way, the students experience the language rather than merely studying it, and this helps to make the language meaningful and memorable. With this aim, the language teacher must first of all be an ‘event maker’: events which the students want to be part of.

Fostering learner creativity is a vital role for any teacher, as doing so can help learners to develop predictive, analytical, critical and problemsolving skills, to develop confidence and to develop self-esteem. Fostering creativity is even more important for a teacher of a second or foreign language as it can help to achieve the affective and cognitive engagement vital for language acquisition as well as helping learners to understand language used for natural communication and to use language for effective communication themselves.

Last but not least, an urgent issue is the use of coursebooks in the classrooms. It can often be heard (from school teachers in particular) that the major problem the teachers face in their professional activity is the lack of “good” textbooks. But when asked a question what coursebook they believe to be good, they are very unlikely to describe a coursebook which hasn’t been invented yet.

Which means most language teachers still rely on coursebooks to provide the activities they will use in the classroom and most coursebooks do not typically provide activities which foster creativity (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2013). It is therefore important that teachers make use of their coursebook as a resource rather than follow it as a script and that they develop the confidence, awareness and creativity to adapt coursebook activities in ways which can foster creativity.

To conclude, language teachers of today face lots of challenges, but they need to be proactive and look for better ways to get their students involved in what they do in the classroom to make the learning process meaningful, goal-directed, and make them prepared for the global everchanging reality.

#### *References*

Tomlinson, B and Masuhara, H (2013) Adult coursebooks. *ELT Journal* 67/2: 233–249.