DEVELOPING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS THROUGH EFL ACTIVITIES.

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Abstract. This article is about the importance of developing 21st-century skills through EFL (English as a Foreign Language) activities. In modern education, learning English is not limited to grammar acquisition, but also includes the development of essential competencies such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, literacy skills, and life skills. The article explains how interactive EFL activities such as role-plays, discussions, project-based learning, storytelling, and technology-based tasks help learners improve these abilities. Furthermore, it highlights the role of literacy skills, including information, media, and digital literacy, as well as life skills such as decision-making, flexibility, leadership, time management, and emotional intelligence. The article concludes that integrating 21st-century skills into EFL classrooms prepares students for real-life challenges and increases their interest in language learning.

Keywords: EFL, 21st-century skills, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, literacy skills, life skills.

Introduction.

It is quite obvious that English has become as a “Lingua Franca” that everyone wants to learn. Some people learn English for studying, others for working, travelling, using the latest technologies and so on. Therefore, grammar learning is no longer as workable as in the past. Nowadays, society needs new demands from learners who are studying new language. Taking these needs into account and the concept of “Developing 21st century skills” is suggested as an effective approach by educational organizations in order to make learners not only study English language, but also developing the skills that will be useful in their life. It is suggested that they are not taught in educational places with the help of lectures or seminars, here EFL (English as a foreign language) classes also play a vital role in improving those skills through interactive activities.

21st century skills have three main categories: learning skills, literacy skills and life skills. The first category, which is called learning skills includes “4Cs”. The second category involves literacy skills such as information literacy, media literacy and technology literacy. The third category is named life skills and consists of decision-making skills, flexibility, time management, leadership skills and emotional and social skills.

In order to integrate 21st century skills in education, we should know about “4Cs”. These include communication skills, collaboration skills, critical thinking and creativity.

Communication is described as the main part of language learning. In order to improve this skill, students should do more role-plays, presentations, make dialogues. For example, here students may perform different dialogues together, such as job interviews, customer service interactions in order to speak with each other, and it also helps them to enhance their pronunciation and fluency.

Collaboration skills develop their teamwork and cooperation among learners. Activities such as project-based assignments, group presentations encourage students to work together, share responsibilities, learning new strategies from each other, listen and respect one another.

Critical thinking helps learners to analyze information logically. It can be developed through problem-solving tasks, discussions and debates. Here students think deeply, analyze issues, give questions, find solutions for example. It helps them to increase their cognitive abilities.

Creativity helps students to improve their imagination. Story-telling would be a good example here, it not only makes lesson enjoyable, but also boosts student's confidence.

Literacy skills help learners to understand, evaluate and use information correctly. For example, information literacy encourages finding information, analyzing it and use correctly. Here students can understand, research effectively by themselves. Media literacy helps us to distinguish fake news from correct ones. And last but not least, digital literacy supports learners to use computers, smartphones correctly for lessons, ppts, educational apps and so on. In order to improve these skills reading articles from different sites, doing research tasks online, watching English news and making ppts would be great examples here.

Life skills help people to cope with everyday life problems. For example, learning decision-making skill helps people to decide wisely in different and difficult situations. Flexibility allows to adapt in difficult situations and challenges easily. In time management students learn to use and organize their time effectively. Leadership skill is the ability guide and organize everything for others. Emotional and social skills are also considered one of the powerful 21st century skills, because if students learn this skill, they will easily manage their emotions and build good relationships anywhere, at work, at university, for example. Group activities which are mentioned above, problem-solving tasks can improve and match with life skills.

It can be concluded that developing 21st century skills through EFL activities helps to solve problems of our daily life in modern world and with the help of these skills teachers can also create marvelous lessons and students also enjoy the learning process simultaneously, that they both acquire language quickly with interest and learn necessary skills for their life.

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