

## INTERACTIVE TEACHING METHODS FOR PRE – SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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**Abstract:** In the following study, we have tried to reveal the advantages of using interactive methods in English classes, at pre-school and primary school pupils. We have presented a series of interactive methods, briefly stating their purpose and giving short instructions. We have also presented an experiment that aimed at revealing the benefits of using interactive methods in the English classes.

**Keywords:** interactive method, critical thinking, abilities, primary school pupils.

The successful outcome of integrated content teaching at pre-school pupils very much relies on the structuring of the contents. The teachers have to aim at certain finalities, at the achievement of some skills, at a natural learning on the one hand, and learning according to a rigorous curriculum based structure, on the other hand. The parameters of integrated curricular structure can be: transmitted concepts, developed skills and abilities and applied exercises.

Learning by cooperation is a structured training strategy, where small groups of children work together to achieve a common training goal. The premises of learning by cooperation is that the subjects that work in team are capable of applying and summering up the knowledge in various and complex ways, at the same time learning more thoroughly as an individual. The learning by cooperation techniques involve active role assigning to children. They have to show mutual support within the learning process, to communicate and relate to other classmates. This involves developing each child's personal competences when he is within a group, namely teaching each child to be a part of the whole "*learning to be and work together*". "The pedagogic quality of the didactic method involves its change from a teacher proposed way of knowledge into a learning method undergone by pre-school pupil, pupil,

and student within a formal and non-formal training, with opening towards a permanent education”(Sorin Cristea: 97).

The desire to modernize and improve the didactic methodology aim at enriching the *active character of educative methods*, at applying methods with a strong *formative character*, at revaluing new *training technologies* (e-learning), with the purpose of developing the pupil’s whole potential.

“Group learning trains the capacity of decision-making and initiative, assigns a more personal character to work, but also a higher degree of complementarity to abilities and talents, assures a more vivid, a more active participation, sustained by many mutual emulation elements and fruitful cooperation.” (Ioan Cerghit: 54)

Interactivity involves both cooperation – defined as “motivational form of self – affirmation, including the activity of self – promotion where the individual rivals with the others in order to obtain a better social situation or superiority” – and competition, which is “a socially oriented activity, within which the individual collaborates with the others to reach a mutual aim”. They are not antithetic activities; both imply a certain degree of interaction, as opposed to individual behaviour.

The advantages of interaction:

- stimulates effort and individual’s productivity;
- it is important for the self-discovery of one’s own abilities and limitations, for self-assessment
- there is an intergroup dynamics with favourable influences on the personality;
- the subjects that work in team are capable of applying and synthesizing their knowledge in various and complex ways, at the same time learning more thoroughly than at individual work;
- it develops multiple intelligence, *linguistic intelligence* specific abilities (the ability to speak and write; ability to use the language effectively, to use rhetoric and poetic language, the ability to remember information), *logical-mathematic intelligence* (it involves the ability to logically analyse problems, to do mathematical operations and to scientifically investigate the tasks, to make deductions), *spatial intelligence* (refers to the ability, the potential of recognize and use spatial patterns; the ability to create different, not only visual representations), *interpersonal intelligence* (the ability to understand one’s intentions, motivations, and needs, by creating opportunities in

collective work), *intrapersonal intelligence* (the ability of self-understanding, proper self-appreciation of feelings, motivations, fears), *environmental intelligence* (that makes the human being capable of recognizing, classifying and letting himself be inspired by the environment), *moral intelligence* (related to rules, behaviour, attitudes).

Among the most common group methods we would like to mention:

*Group interview* – stimulates critical thinking and is fit for story practice. The method is applied as follows: a child sits on the “interviewee chair” playing the part of a character s/he chooses. The children are “the reporters” and ask him/her questions from the story. Monosyllabic answers of YES/NO type are not taken into consideration.

„*Mind-map*” – is a method that involves identifying logical connections between ideas. It can be used especially for synthesis activities and knowledge evaluation activities. Children are asked to give as many information as possible on the discussed topic. Everything is written down – children draw lines between the images that seem related. Everything is written down, ideas are not judged and the activity stops when we ran out of time. This activity stimulates the creation of new associations and allows the pupils to know their own way of understanding a certain topic. (Oprea Crenguta: 43)

*The cube* – is a method used when we want to find out more information related to a topic. Children “study” the topic and the teacher makes a cube on whose sides draws a topic related aspect. The pupils are asked to describe, compare, analyze, associate, apply, argument. The activity offers the teacher the opportunity to develop competences required for a complex approach of a certain topic.

*ATA* {answer, throw, ask} – is a common method used for consolidation activities. It aims the development of communication ability, pronunciations, creativity and efficiency.

*Thematic project* – is a research method and an efficient way of training and self-training. Once the topic is chosen, children collect information materials and present the information orally. Through this method, children develop their intellectual work abilities, identify problems and look for solutions.

*I know/want to know/have learnt* – it is an extremely easy method, but at the same time relevant and efficient because it can be used as discovery grid for significant information regarding phenomena and situations of high complexity. Pupils sum up what they already

know on a certain topic, in small groups or with the whole class and then questions are asked. The answer should be found in the lesson.

Instructions for this activity:

a) pupils are grouped in pairs in order to increase efficiency in learning activities;

b) the teacher tries to bring about a stimulative climate, favourable for active participation, receptiveness and cooperation;

c) the usage of support-materials: texts, thematic articles, documents, quotations, diaphragms, charts, audio-video cassettes, etc.;

e) drawing a chart with three columns on the blackboard.

In order to use this method, you can undergo the following stages:

At the beginning, children are asked to form pairs and to make a list with everything they know on the topic under discussion. Then, the teacher draws a tabel with the following columns on the blackboard: I know/want to know/have learnt, like the one below:

<b>I KNOW</b>	<b>I WANT TO KNOW</b>	<b>I HAVE LEARNT</b>
WHAT DO WE THINK THAT WE KNOW?	WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW?	WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?

“*Brainstorming* means expressing as many ideas as possible – no matter how unrealistic they might sound – as answer to a given situation, according to the principle quantity generates quality. According to this principle, it is necessary a highly productive creativity, in order to reach viable and original ideas”.

An activity like this involves a series of advantages:

- active involvement of all participants
- the development of the ability to experience certain situations, analyse them, and make the proper decision;

- expressing the personality;

- liberation from prejudices;

- practising creativity and open attitudes within the group;

- the development of interpersonal relations by revaluing each one`s ideas;

- the creation of a fresh and emulative environment.

*The tour of the gallery* – is a specific interactive method, focused on a problem or problem situation, which is materialized in various

solutions, with the aim of stimulating and developing critical thinking. Due to its manner of organization and the way it is carried on, this method aims not only to influence positively the cognitive dimension of the participants, but also the affective “infrastructure”, the attitudes and the uttered opinions.

As any other method applied to dynamic groups, the tour of gallery can be used only if certain conditions are fulfilled:

a) the class is divided into as many heterogeneous and functional groups as possible, each team containing three-four members;

b) each teams is actively involved in the teacher monitored discussion. It materializes the results from various perspectives and argumentatively consolidates its solutions;

c) the teams` report one to the other has a deep critical character, aiming at identifying the weak points of the other team;

d) the teams` activity has a profoundly formative character, but includes also competitive moments.

*The jigsaw* is a method used for learning by cooperation and is based on dividing the class into several working-groups under the coordination of a teacher. With the help of “expert” pupils, the teacher can synthesize the information, having the opportunity to revalue a high degree of knowledge in a short amount of time.

The jigsaw method has a profoundly formative character, because it stimulates pupils` self confidence, it develops argumentative communication abilities, develops logical, critical and independent thinking, educates and stimulates individual and group responsibility.

Apart from these modern methods, we also want to mention other methods often used in the instructional-educative activities: drama, role-play, work in small groups, learning by discovery, case study, problematization, heuristic conversation. All these methods have a deep active-participative character.

The option for a method or the other is closely linked to the teacher`s personality, the level of education, the degree of preparation, mood and learning style of the group s/he works with.

Interactive methods offer the proper framework for an active learning, based on exploration, teamwork and individualized learning.

In order to show that the interactive methods are more efficient than the traditional ones, we have undergone an experiment. The subjects of our experiment are pupils of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade from the Adam Muller Guttenbrunn High-school of Arad.

We have established the following *objectives* for our experiment the usage of different interactive methods, considered a factor of progress;

- significant, noticeable, measurable evolution, the increase of pupils' performance;
- the development of collaboration ability and;
- the increase of study motivation by correlating learning to real life situations;
- exceeding boundaries, learning difficulties through a systematic approach of didactic methods and procedures.

*The premises of the experiment*

We have started from the hypothesis that the usage of interactive methods, involves the pupils more in the learning process than the usage of individual or frontal approaches. Once involved, the pupils want to share with the others what they experience and this leads to new connections

As general hypothesis, we consider that if we rule out the overlaps of concept and the abilities from different fields, we assign the learning process a real context. Using a real context, we increase the pupils' self – confidence, motivation for learning, cooperation with the others, reduction of anxiety and disruptive behaviour.

By promoting integrative teaching/learning strategies we assure a better understanding of the studied phenomena/concepts, by acquiring a global and unitary vision and fulfilling the knowledge transfer.

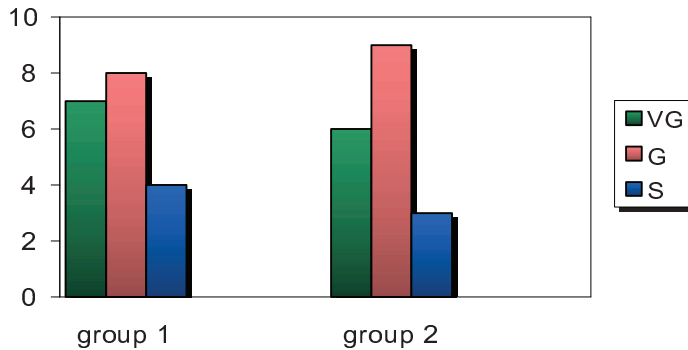
A favourable learning climate aims at achieving a better pupil' socialization and the increase of their autonomy and responsibility level.

*The stages of the experiment*

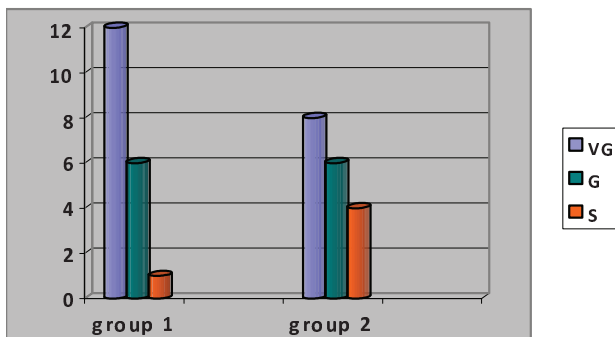
The formative psycho-pedagogic experiment based on the usage of interactive methods at pre-school and primary school pupils was carried out in the following stages:

- *Pretesting stage*, necessary to establish the initial level of knowledge, the usage of knowledge in real life situations, the usage of critical thinking and of learning by collaboration.
- *Formative stage* or how the teaching/learning process is carried out when using interactive methods.
- *Post-testing stage*, necessary to establish the degree of organization and development, registered after the introduction of educational progress factors.

We have used two groups for our experiment. Both groups belong to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The first group was taught based on interactive methods, while for the second we have used traditional methods. The results of the initial test were the following:



After using interactive methods, the results of the test group have improved, situation revealed by the following chart:



As shown above, the usage of interactive methods has improved pupils' scores, the number of pupils scoring "very good" increasing from the initial test to the final test, whereas for the other group, the one using traditional methods, the scores improved, but without any spectacular changes. The pupils acquired supplementary knowledge but not all of them obtained the highest mark. As a result of the experiment, of the results and their interpretation we can state that interactive methods, used as main teaching method, are efficient and provide better results than the traditional methods. We have observed that games,

songs, poems and images attract children and help them understand better the vocabulary of the English language. Through interactive methods, we have correlated learning to real life situations, so that test pupils have acquired new vocabulary in a pleasant and interesting way, different from the witness group that was taught using traditional methods. Due to this diversity and interactive exercises, pupils have developed their linguistic abilities and their capacity to work in team or in groups. Their creativity has also increased because they were asked to make connections, to express themselves freely and to get involved in the learning process. All objectives have been fulfilled, proving that interactive methods are efficient for teaching English as a foreign language.

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