

TITLE

Speaking Skills development and intercultural communication promotion

INSTITUTION

Yerevan State Linguistic University after V. Brusov, Armenia

NAME and CONTACT DETAILS

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SUMMARY

The overall goal of the project was to prepare students to speak, express their thoughts, ideas and concerns in English, as well as through language skills learn, compare and contrast native culture, communication styles and national values with foreign civilizations.

In the frame of intercultural communication English language teaching is accompanied by acknowledgment of cultural diversities, peculiarities of English language speaking countries including historical background, social development phases, existing cultural stereotypes and traditions.

Methods of implementation/Tools: Supplementary materials were used for more effective and interesting process of teaching and speaking skills development. Audio, video tapes, interaction discussions, disputes on hot issues, role-playing, brainstorming, ice-breaking games were used to encourage interaction.

All the additional materials and diverse teaching methods are aimed at the promotion of improved speaking skills, and intercultural communication skills development.

Evaluation and Project Sustainability: Peer critique mechanism was used for the evaluation of the project. Each student was responsible for demonstration of speaking and presentation skills and evaluation and critique of other students.

There are future plans and perspectives for further project continuation and sustainability for a more wide range of professions. The further development of the program will be implemented in the frame of Adult Education. A program "Language speaking proficiency and intercultural communication" program will be designed for those people who are interested in English language learning and intercultural communication.

TARGET GROUP

Average number of students: app. 25

Age: 18-23

Gender: 80% female, 20% male

Nationality: Armenian

Language Proficiency: B2 -55%, C1-45%

LANGUAGE

English language is used as a medium of instruction for the target group.

ACTIVITIES

The course is designed for 20 classes within 5 months. One session is held per week. Introductory Part: General introduction of discussion topics, presentation of students through ice-breaking activities, brainstorming. Various ways of introduction and presentation are used by students.

Body: The instructor holds the classes but he/she just facilitates the sessions but never leads it. Students themselves make interactive discussions, hold disputes, and cover different interesting topics and issues.

The timetable of all activities and topics for dispute [or argument] are included in the syllabus of the course. The syllabus is designed based on the suggestions and brainstorming activities by students.

For each session one student is given the chance to be the facilitator of the current discussion. He/she should beforehand design his/her session making it interesting and productive.

The series of all activities, including video and audio tapes, educational materials are attached to the syllabus of the course.

METHODOLOGY

The following teaching methods are applied:

- Class/small group discussions; giving feedback
- Handouts for the related topics, interesting materials
- Students' presentations - individual or in pairs
- Discussion after watching video tapes on different cultural issues
- Different icebreaking model activities, role-playing
- Dissemination of evaluation forms, questionnaires and peer critique reports

EXAMPLES

Three complete educational manuals with appendixes have been prepared for the above mentioned course:

1. Traveling /handouts, tapes, discussion topics, vocabulary stock, etc./
2. Homes /handouts, tapes, discussion topics, vocabulary stock, etc./
3. Health issue /handouts, tapes, discussion topics, vocabulary stock, etc./

OUTCOMES

The course helped students develop their speaking skills, know more about intercultural communications and improve their presentation and public speaking skills. The feedback by students on the possible ways of course development and improvement is also a sign of successful completion of the course. Students took initiatives and facilitated different sessions. The atmosphere in the class and relations between students became very relaxed.

In the course students had the freedom to choose the topic of the session and be the facilitator and instructor of the session. Foreigners and native speakers were invited to discuss various hot issues and observe them in the context of intercultural communication. Peer critique also proved its effectiveness.

As for me the main accomplishment of the course is the positive feedback of the students

and the evident experience they gained in public speaking. When the participants express their interest and commitment to the course, it unanimously speaks of the productivity of the course.

CONSTRAINTS

I would like to mention two major difficulties which I faced in the implementation phase of the project:

1. Different level of knowledge in English language. Sometimes active leader in the group tried to prevail over the other students but thanks to the instructor's methodology the balance in the class was kept.
2. Usage of peer critique in class. Armenians are offended when their ideas and thoughts are criticised by others. They usually personalize the critique. During our course the students learned and realized that they criticised not the person but just disagreed with the expressed idea.

If possible, please specify how your good practice relates to the aims of CHAGAL:

The goal of the project covered several areas of CHAGAL project as it dealt with language proficiency and intercultural communication promotion.

The course fully met the following goals of CHAGAL project:

- An innovative and inclusive curriculum: Curriculum which is sensitive to the students' diverse backgrounds and not only promotes positive student experience and success, but also reflects the host country's acceptance of the benefits these students have to offer.
- A student-centred approach: Students need innovative and effective teaching and learning methods to acquire the necessary skills to cope with the specific academic requirements. Otherwise, they most likely will not reach their full potential. Failure to succeed will have a negative impact on the students' experience and is a waste of institutional resources.