



Univerza v Mariboru

UNIVERSITY OF MARIBOR
Faculty of Education
Elementary education

SEMINAR PAPER

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
- LEARNING ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

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Student: T. R.
Mentor: prof. dr. M. B.
School - year: 2009/2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this seminar paper is to find out what are the extracurricular activities, that we can use to improve our knowledge of foreign languages, for example English, outside the classroom.

There are many reasons to learn a foreign language; from working abroad to discovering your roots, through intellectual curiosity, romance, travel or simple wish to know something more. But finding time to study a language can be quite a challenge. On the other hand it's surprising how many spare moments we have during a typical day, and they can really add up to a useful amount of study time. No, not study time; let's call it extracurricular activities, which can help us to improve our knowledge and skills of foreign language in more efficient and certainly more amusing way.

So in this seminar paper I was "investigating" which are these extracurricular activities and how can we turn them into practice (without too much pressure on our free time of course). My assignment contains a collection of advice, suggestions, tips and techniques for learning languages that also I will test, because I find them really useful.

*In this seminar paper the word language will be used only for foreign language, not involving the tongue (mother language).

2. LANGUAGE LEARNING

Learning foreign language takes time and commitment, what sometimes represents a serious obstacle. That's when the reasons for learning language take place; some are practical, some aspirational, some intellectual and others sentimental, but whatever your reason is, having a clear idea of why you are learning a language can help to motivate you in your studies.

Here are some reasons why people decide to complement their collection of knowledge with expertise in foreign languages:

□ **FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

If your partner, relatives or friends speak a different language, the communication can be limited to only a few words you know, so learning a language they speak can give you the opportunity to really know what they are talking about and give you a chance to take place in a relaxed conversation. It can also help you to understand better their culture and way of thinking.

□ **WORK**

Nowadays the world tends to unite in order to increase the collaboration between countries; consequently your work might involve regular contact with speakers of foreign languages.

When you lack of knowledge in this domain, there are three things that can happen to you:

- o If you are unemployed, you have less possibilities to find a job.
- o If you already have a job, your boss might demand you to take some language course, so you will be able to complete the task.
- o If you are not prepared to take some classes you might even get fired.

□ **EMIGRATION**



When you move to another country, knowing the local language can help you to communicate and integrate with the community.

□ **STUDYING ABROAD**

If you plan to study at a foreign university you will need a good knowledge of a local language. Of course you can go and study abroad also if your ability in language is not so good, because the institution will provide you some preparatory courses

□ **STUDY OR RESEARCH**

It's a shame that you can't use an information because the book is written in some other language, so when you have lots of literature about subjects you are interested in, in some particular language, maybe it would be a good idea to learn that language, so next time you will have access also to those materials.

□ **CULTURE**

Maybe you are interested in the literature, poetry, films, TV programs, music or some other aspect of the particular culture and if you know the language you can gain a better understanding of that culture.

□ **TRAVEL**

A basic competence in foreign language can help you to order food and

drink, find your way around, buy tickets, souvenirs, etc. A more advanced knowledge of the language can even give you opportunity to experience a conversation with a native-speaker.

□ **SOUNDS GOOD TO ME**

Perhaps you just like the sound of a language when it's spoken or sung and even that can be a good reason to start a language course.

□ **CHALLENGING YOURSELF**



There are also people who enjoy the challenge of learning languages; they like to choose languages as Chinese or Japanese.

(www.omniglot.com/language/why.htm)

1. Which language should I learn

To some extent we can say, that the choice depends on reasons for learning language. But sometimes they are not enough.

To make the decision easier, I propose the four factors in consideration:

① **AVAILABILITY**

It might be difficult to find resources and classes for the lesser-studied languages, but for more popular, such as English, French, German or

Spanish, this shouldn't be an issue.

② **USEFULNESS**

If you want to learn a language with a large number of speakers and which is spoken in many countries, the ones to choose in order of "usefulness" are: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), German, Japanese, Portuguese and Hindi/Urdu (available on www2.ignatius.edu/faculty/turner/languages.htm).

③ **DIFFICULTY**

Each language has its own challenges; numerous verb conjugations, noun declensions and genders, etc. But generally we can say the more a language differs from your tongue or other languages you know, the harder it is to learn. Some of the most difficult languages to learn are Arabic, Japanese, Chinese and Korean.

④ **LANGUAGES IN DEMAND BY EMPLOYERS**

Sometimes people wish to improve their employment/promotion prospects by learning a language. If that is so the best way is to find out which languages are in demand by the employers.

(www.omniglot.com/language/which.htm)

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3. LEARNING ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

1. LEARNING ENGLISH

Many people choose to learn English as their foreign language. Some take part in English classes, other learn it in school, where English is an obligatory subject; and there are also those who don't really attend any classes but still they seem to improve in their knowledge of English. How come?

As any other thing, also English can be learned through organized programs or through experiences and other extracurricular activities. But best it would be to combine these two possibilities, because the more exposure you have to English, the faster you will learn it, and a few hours of classes a week is not very much.

2. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

There are many things we can do to increase the amount of English we hear, read and speak during the day.

Here are some things worth trying them out:

○ LISTEN TO THE RADIO

But not just any radio. Nowadays with all the computer technique and the WorldWideWeb it's easy to access for example the NPR (National Public Radio) and for those who prefer listening to British accent also BBC radio; these are only two of many that are available. Try finding out the one that has program you are interested in.

Advantages

- Its good for your pronunciation.
- You get used to accents.
- You hear the native speakers.

Disadvantages

- ☐ You might not be interested in the content of show.
- ☐ For the beginners the host might be talking to fast.

○ ENGLISH TV, ENGLISH MOVIES and CARTOONS

CNN, CNBC, TNT, MGM... but believe it or not also Slovenian programs (POP TV, Slovenia 1 and 2, Kanal A...) are pretty useful because they show movies in the original with subtitles. Or we can go to the cinema or watch DVD's. But there is one thing we forget about. It's no good for improving English if the subtitles are ON. Next time get the courage and watch the movie without the subtitles, if that is possible.

Advantages

- ☐ We all love watching movies; this is like a free-time activity, because we find them interesting.
- ☐ Children like watching cartoons, even if they don't understand everything; they are more into pictures. But in time they start to connect the content with speech (words).
- ☐ We can watch movies or cartoons for a long time without getting bored.

Disadvantages

- ☐ If we watch movies with subtitles it can happen that the subtitles are wrong or inappropriate; that often happens when the context is very scientific.
- ☐ It is very irresponsible to let the child watch movie without supervision, because they can get influenced by inappropriate content or words.
- ☐ Sometimes it would be healthier to take a walk or do some other activity outside.

○ ENGLISH SONGS

You can learn quite a lot from lyrics, but the problem is that we usually pay more attention to the melody. Try sometimes to hear what the song is.

Advantages

- ☐ You get familiar with the pronunciation.
- ☐ Listening to the music can be very relaxing.

Disadvantages

- ☐ A lot of hit songs have really stupid lyrics.

○ ENGLISH BOOKS

Why not to read the book in it's origin. It's so much that gets lost in the translation and we don't even know it and the books come in every level; from books for beginners to books for advanced speakers.

Advantages

- ☐ You get in touch with the tenses that are not in use in spoken English.
- ☐ It's easier to learn a new word in its context; sometimes you even can figure out the meaning.
- ☐ It's good for the vocabulary.

Disadvantages

- ☐ Some people don't like reading books; this is usually also a big problem with children.
- ☐ Even though you understand everything, the pronunciation might be wrong.

○ ENGLISH PAPERS AND MAGAZINES

There are dozens of English language periodicals and magazines available. On the scholastic.com there are different magazines (such as

Art, Current, News...) that publish articles written by native speakers. Or National Geographic for example; why not to read the English version.

Advantages

- In the magazines are usually topics we find interesting.
- Reading magazines is not so stressful as reading books might be, because the articles are not so complicated.

Disadvantages



- The language used it's not so sophisticated.
- You don't know where to buy magazines in foreign language.

○ THE INTERNET

Probably the best source of English articles on every topic. For news and short news videos, check out CNN (www.cnn.com) or (www.literacynet.org/cnnsf), where you can find stories with comprehension questions and vocabulary exercises.

There are also sites for language learners. Check out www.onestopenglish.com for activities and links to many self-learning English sites.

You can also listen to radio shows, famous speeches, short stories and audio books. Try out the History Channel website (www.historychannel.com) or one of the open source audio book archives (www.audiobooksforfree.com).

You could also join a chat-room, if that is your sort of thing, go surfing in search of any topic that interests you or play online games.

(www.uni-graz.at/~pommer/uaoutside.html)

Advantages

- Internet refreshes almost every day, so there are new information available each day.
- Almost everything is available for free.

Disadvantages

- Especially for children there are lots of inappropriate websites.
- We must be critical, because not all information are true and verified.
- Especially children can start to neglect the outside world, like school.

But these are not the only ways to learn English outside the classroom. Some learners decide to take part in

o ENGLISH LEARNING CAMPS

There are English learning camps here in Slovenia, but you can also travel abroad. This is a great experience also because you meet new people and make new friends.

In Slovenia you can join Berlitz language learning camp. It takes place on Mariborsko Pohorje or in Osilnica ob Kolpi.

Language learning camps offer the variety of activities in combination with language course. This can be a good idea for interesting, active and also educational vacations.

Disadvantages

- ☐ It is very expensive.

For those who are more patient and self disciplined there are language classes available on

○ DVDs

DVDs help you learn how to write, how to talk (pronounce words). They usually also contain games that help us to expand the vocabulary.

Advantages

- ☐ Learning language step by step.
- ☐ You don't need any help, because the program is leading you through course.
- ☐ It is less expensive than language camps.

Disadvantages

- ☐ You need to be self-disciplined.

3. How people learn English outside classroom

This is a mini-research project carried out under the guidance of dr. Marsha Bensoussan, who is an lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages at Haifa University (Israel). With the help of several experts, she was researching the effects of different activities on learning English.

3.1. Dora - the explorer

- ? Pre-schoolers watching Dora and developing positive attitude towards English language, and English language use.

Study question: Is there a relation among pre-school children's watching Dora, their English use, and positive attitude towards the English language?

The overall analysis of the data shows that parents believe that there is a positive influence of watching Dora, towards developing a positive attitude to English language, and English language use.

Dora provides visual aids, authentic language input, communicative activities, and systematic repetition of vocabulary by chunking, singing, role playing, and games. In addition she offers a lot of positive reinforcements which encourage participation.

The input of Dora can be a very good basis for constructing the basics of the English language for pre school children.

Even though that is an Israeli research I believe that educational English cartoons can have a positive effect on learning English also in Slovenia.



3.2. Computer games

? The effect of computer games on EFL learners.

Playing computer games in English does effect EFL learners vocabulary in all 4 skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Boys play computer games more than girls therefore they feel their English is better especially in speaking.

3.3. Music

Music plays a significant part in the life of many teenagers and growing ups. For many young people it is important not only to listen to the tune and the rhythm, but also to be able to understand the lyrics of a song. This can be a great motivating factor for young people to improve their knowledge of the English language and to enlarge their vocabulary.

? Can the use of popular songs in the ESL (English second language) classroom promote the learning and the motivation in second language acquisition in junior high school or high school classes?

It is the researchers assumption that there is a correlation between listening to the lyrics of popular music (in English) - and vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence structure knowledge in English.

3.4. The internet as learning tool

? Can the internet be a medium for a learning environment.

Internet has a wide range of uses; it provides many opportunities for indirect acquisition of the English language.

(www.google.si/search?hl=sl&source=hp&q=learning+english+outside+classroom&meta=&aq=f&oq=&rlz=1R2ADRA_sISI343)

4. CONCLUSION

There are many different activities that a person can do to improve their knowledge of language. Some are even so common and everyday that we don't percept them as extracurricular activities anymore. After writing this seminar paper, I will pay more attention to what I do for my English, because it's better to maintain the knowledge, than to learn something all over again.

5. DICTIONARY - Synonyms

LANGUAGE; (1) mother language = (mother) tongue; (2) foreign language = language

CLASSROOM; schoolroom

REASON; aim, argument, cause, excuse;

WORK; labor, job, action, activity;

EMIGRATION; out-migration, departure, exodus;

CULTURE; civilization; society

INTERNET; cyberspace, WWW (world-wide-web);

SONG; carol, chorus, melody, track, poem;

MOVIE; motion picture, film, video;

BOOK; textbook, daybook, note;

MAGAZINE; periodical, journal, paper;

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hl=sl&source=hp&q=learning+english+outside+classroom&meta=&aq
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