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CREATIVE

E N G L I S H
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The ELT profession changes constantly in every region, striving to meet new challenges and thus adopting new methodologies. In every country, the transition from one epoch to another represents both a period of skepticism and uncertainty as well as a time of hope presenting an opportunity for change, calling upon the maximum potential of teachers.

The territory of Serbia and Montenegro currently falls into the category of countries in transition. The significant reforms being made to the educational system require from the teaching staff great commitment, expert knowledge and above all a willingness to engage all of their skills and abilities to produce change and reach the aims of the reform. This reform is as crucial at the elementary level as it is at the academic level.

At the Faculty of Philology and Arts, Department of English language in Kragujevac, Serbia, such a reform – of methodological approaches – was more than necessary. The results have been more than rewarding and the feedback absolutely positive.

As a lector of essay writing and conversation at the Department of English language and literature, last year I allocated space for imaginative work and the incorporation of new techniques in my classes without departing from the obligatory syllabus. I was more than willing to forward efforts to provide students with new experiences to enable them to perceive ELT in a completely new light.

During the year, as a result of mutual cooperation and the exchange of opinions, a new concept emerged that was developed by the students and me. The new program that was thus created acquired the name "Creative English". First, second and third year students at the Department of English language and literature were assigned various activities and were required to prepare topic-based sessions. The presentations required the use of all language learning skills, translation work and called on a myriad of their other talents. They presented numerous sketches based on the knowledge they acquired during year. A courageous learning attempt ventured by the second year students was their translation of various scenes taken from a well-known Serbian film. A final touch to the year's accomplishments was the

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work of our freshmen who were more musically inclined, and gave a presentation that compared and contrasted Serbian folk tunes with Anglo-American music.

Two groups of third year students opened the program with a thorough, lively debate on the question of whether people are healthier in today's society. Some arguments were based on data from the medical field, while others touched on relevant local health issues that have emerged in recent years. The preparation stage required that they gather as much information as possible on the arguments they were to defend. That meant conducting various interviews with full-time doctors and amassing data from articles, encyclopedias and the Internet. Charts and tables were drawn up and presented via an overhead projector, familiarizing us with shocking statistics. Further supplementary material ranged from the contrasting attire of the two groups to visual aids, including artificial arms and legs. The aim to engage all of their abilities in this multimedia task was fully satisfied – to the extent that both groups made a balanced argument and an impassioned and meaningful discourse with a fixed purpose was present. Second year students addressed issues related to tourism and film. The first group did a sketch of a visit to a tourist agency, choosing to take us to the distant destination of Russia – preparing a rich and descriptive presentation of Russian history and culture. With its additional humorous elements, the sketch was more than entertaining. The students participating in this sketch were encouraged to imitate the pronunciation of BBC news readers, which they did successfully.

The second group was responsible for a rather difficult task: to transfer the humor of a domestic film into English without losing the meaning or the depth of the expressions. Carried away by this stimulating idea, the students went as far as to translate the soundtrack, which was met by vigorous applause from the audience. The students proved themselves capable of translating Serbian into English without affecting the meaning or the form of either language.

Finally, the promising, young future-colleagues put the finishing touches on the year's work. The freshmen prepared a humorous sketch based on a short story selected from the required syllabus. We saw some interesting hints of potential talent in both acting and directing.

The more numerous second group of first year students, as previously mentioned, gave a presentation comparing and contrasting Serbian folk music with Anglo-American rock music of the same period. Besides the oral presentation, the evening ended with several dance performances by a Serbian folklore dance group, made up of our students, as well as a rock band, also consisting of future English teachers! The whole program ended with a final singing performance given by one of our ambitious students who, in addition to attending our university, is simultaneously pursuing a music career and has already represented our country at international festivals. Our star, Jelena Tomasevic, performed some Serbian folk songs and Beatles' hits, the most representative rock group of its time.

The primary aims of this educational but above all entertaining program was to present and confirm all of the opportunities that knowledge of this international language provides. Knowing English does not only enable the production of English, but more significantly enables the use of it in everyday exchanges and for communicative purposes in a vast field of demanding topics.

This report needs no conclusion. Anonymous comments from student-participants and audience members will more than suffice as a summary of their experiences and an account of the project's success.

'The festivity we experienced this semester was the first of its kind at this University. It was a successful attempt to assemble all of the generations present at this Faculty. I hope there will be another event of this kind.'

'In my opinion the idea was very good, original and definitely something new. It made our studies much more interesting. And if it continues next year it will make the English Department more appealing. It is great because it gives students a chance to contribute, to develop their own ideas and to express their creativity.'

'It seems that something has changed in our education system. A great idea – to combine student creativity and education – has finally come into being. CREATIVE ENGLISH is a good way to enhance student results by broadening their views on the use of the English language. I am proud to have been a part of the first group of students to prove that learning is not just hard work, but also a very interesting experience.'

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