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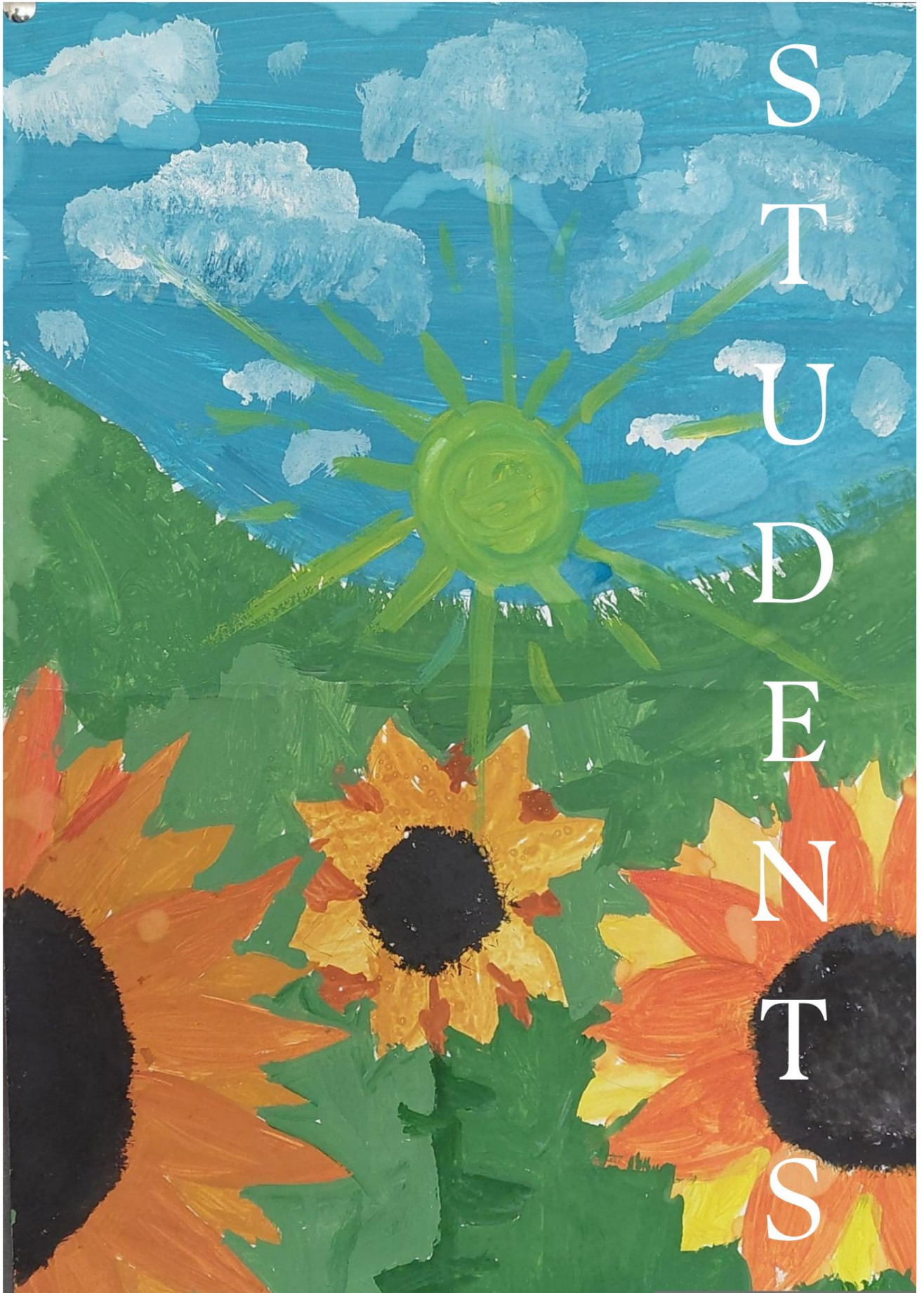


Illustration by Melania Popeci, Școala Gimnazială Sâmbotin

I am - But who am I?

*Dinu Alexandra, Liceul Tehnologic Turceni
Profesor coordonator, Raluca Rișcă*

I am the sky's shades of blue from early in the morning,
I am the wind that's blowing through your hair,
I am the rays of sunshine peaking through your windows,
I am the blood running through your veins.
I am the pieces of paper lying on the ground,
I am the sound of my pen every time I try to write my feelings down,
I am the poem that comes from pain, I am the story with an happy ending,
I am my mind who wants to forgive and forget, I am the heavy heart I'm carrying.
I am the spitting image of my father, who's intelligent and kind,
I am the soul my mother has given me, among the gift of life,
I am the creator of my path, the maker of my own world,
I am the result of what my parents wish they were.
I am a photo that's vanished, kept safe in an invisible locket,
I am the memories that haunt me when everything goes quiet,
I am the ghosts of the people I used to want to be,
I am stone and I am fire, but I will never be me.

Below the surface

*Popescu Eugen
Școala Gimnazială "Gheorghe Tătărescu" Târgu Jiu
Profesor coordonator, Raica Alina*

It was a beautiful morning as always. I woke up to the same familiar view as any other day: Cherry trees who've blossomed, flowers in the royal garden looking pretty as always, children playing in the streets, and of course, my wife and queen of the kingdom, Caroline, sleeping next to me.

I went out for a morning jog, to get adrenaline rushing through my veins, to get my blood pumping, when a tree called me over. Yes, you heard that right! In this magical kingdom, impossible is a regular Tuesday. Plants and animals can talk and, more importantly, we shared this mystical piece of land with a race called "The Monsters". No, not the scary kind of monsters, they are extraterrestrial beings that have immigrated to our soil. For thousands of years, us and the monsters were at peace, but what this tree was about to tell me would later crush it.

"Listen, I haven't told anyone yet, but I saw two monsters killing Steve" he said. "What? No way, he has to be lying" I told myself. First stage of grief: Denial. But Steve, my beloved nephew, never came back. I barged into the monster's castle, confronting their king. I

eventually, made him a deal: Either they let me do an investigation on their share of the land, or we go to war. And to war we went..

I got my mercenary team of wizards, among them: my dear Caroline, ready, and when the clock struck midnight, we attacked. Their alarms sounded, and the once thought to be eternally peaceful land turned into chaos. People casting spells on each other left and right, monsters and humans dying everywhere, it all went to hell.

We were going to win, we were going to avenge Steve, when..! I hear two bodies thudding to the floor, turn back to see them... at the feet of Caroline! "Guys like you are always just fools.." she says turning to me. She was our most powerful wizard, with her now by the monsters' side, we were powerless against them.

She saved me for last, going fully genocidal on everyone else. "Death is too good for you", she said. "Any final words?". Before finishing my sentence, she used a spell, one that cast me and the children left alive into the bowels of the earth.

Still don't know why she did it, she loved everyone, or perhaps it was all a lie. Hope one day someone exploring this cave stumbles upon this letter, I wish humanity won't forget me.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

***Drosu Rebeca Maria
Liceul cu Program Sportiv Tg.-Jiu, clasa a VII-a
Profesor coordinator, Tămîși Mirela-Maria***

"Detective Harper!" The Sargent shouted. "Come to my office, I have a new case for you."

Harper grabbed her clipboard and soon lying was standing in front of the Sargent's office. She quietly entered and closed the door behind her.

"Good morning, Sir." Harper said as he handed her the case file.

"There is a new criminal in the city, a bank robber. So far 10 banks have been robbed in the past 3 months. We have to catch him, the city is going wild, so please move as quickly as possible."

"Yes, sir. However, may I ask, shouldn't we just let him turn himself in? Maybe he will get tired of all this chasing around?" The Sargent laughed at this.

"That is the most idiotic thing I have ever heard come from your mouth! Look, there is no time for jokes."

"Yes, but I wasn't joking."

The Sargent stood up from his chair.

"Is this case going to be a problem for you, Detective Harper?"

"No."

"Then get out of my office." And with that, Harper walked out and started looking at the case file. No leads so far. As she kept looking through, she suddenly heard someone running behind her.

"Sargent?" The Sargent was running towards her.

"Another bank has been robbed last night, we just got the call, hurry!"

As the police car parked in front of the bank: Harper, a crime took place here! The windows were broken and there was glass everywhere, the door was no longer there and there were police cars everywhere. Harper and the Sargent walked into the bank.

“What happened?” The Sargent asked the security guards at the bank.

“We are not sure, the robber struck again, but he got away, let me take you to the crime scene.

When they entered the vault, sure enough, there was no money in sight.

“How much was stolen?”

“£10 million.” That’s a lot of money. The Sargent started to walk around, being carefully not to disturb anything. Suddenly he stopped.

“What’s that?” Security rushed over and picked up what looked like a card.

“IT’S AN ID CARD!” The Sargent went to investigate. He turned to Harper.

“DETECTIVE! Should you be noting this down.”

But Harper didn’t move. The Sargent ignored her and picked up the ID. Everyone froze. The ID belonged to Harper...

The day

Buza Roberta Elena

Școala Gimnazială “Gheorghe Tătărescu” Târgu Jiu

Profesor coordinator, Raica Alina

Let me tell you a story about a boy who used to be mean...

His name was James. It was a normal Monday for him. He went to school and as always, he started bullying other people. James told one boy that his shirt is ugly, pulled a girl’s hair and made jokes about other people. When James arrived home, he took a shower and went to sleep. In his dream. He saw the boy crying over his shirt, the girl thinking that her long hair is ugly and the other kids feeling sad because of his jokes. The next day, he felt bad, so he decided to say sorry to the kids he bullied. When he arrived to school, he saw the boy wearing the same shirt. James apologised, but the boy was confused, because he didn’t know for what he was sorry. James realised it was the same day as yesterday, so he thought that his actions didn’t matter. James did the things he normally does. He made fun of other people. But when he arrived home and went to sleep, he dreamed about the kids again, but this time, he was the one getting bullied. When James woke up, he realised his mistakes. He checked the date and started worrying, because the date still did not change. He thought that maybe if he was nice with others, the day will stop repeating itself. When James arrived to school, he complimented the boy’s shirt, helped the girl to braid her hair and had fun with the other kids from his school. The next day, he checked the date and realised that he broke the cycle! James went to school, being so happy!

James stopped bullying people since then and became the nicest friend anyone could have!

The impact of beauty standards

***Ciobanu Alexia
Școala Gimnazială Godinești, Gorj
Profesor coordinator, Alina Roxana Bordînc***

Hi, my name is Alexia Ciobanu and I am going to discuss about beauty standards and their impact on us. In today's society, everyone has access to social media and the little kids take advantage of it and without even realizing, they become obsessed, spending an important amount of time and damaging their brains as well.

Social media can be very useful in some situations and can help us communicate or learn. However, it has brought some unrealistic beauty standards, making kids or even adults believe that they should be perfect to be appreciated or loved. Social media platforms are overwhelmed with flawless people, without any imperfections when most of the time the pictures are heavily edited, causing insecurities and low self-esteem.

People that spend the majority of their time lost in this ocean of hate and unrealistic beauty standards may not even realize that this is damaging to their mental health, creating insecurities and low self-esteem. After they consume their daily dose of dopamine, children, especially because they are the most impacted by this, create fake problems, try to grow too fast or just think about how to become prettier, how to be perfect.

They won't realize that they are already beautiful in their own way and most of all they won't enjoy the most beautiful moments of their life. The beauty standards will make the world a boring place, where everyone tries to be the same. The majority of the information on the internet suggests that only a certain look is acceptable and appreciated.

In conclusion the excessive beauty standards portrayed on social media create a toxic environment for children, and more people should promote a more realistic representation of beauty and teach kids to be proud and love themselves for who they are, to accept that everyone is different and also to look at everything with love.

Video games - pros and cons

***Mariescu Ionuț
Școala Gimnazială Godinești, Gorj
Profesor coordinator, Alina Roxana Bordînc***

Hello, my name is Ionuț and I will talk about one of my favourite things, video games. Video games are a part of today's society and we cannot pretend they are not important. I play video games and I like it a lot, but I cannot say they are totally benefic and positive. There are many types of video games, such as story mode, puzzles, combat, etc. Some can be played by one player and some by two or more players on the same server.

From my point of view, the benefits of video games are problem-solving (because it stimulates critical thinking and logical reasoning), social-skills (communication, behaviour control,

making friends). Video-games can reduce stress, boost mood, they can make a better heart-rhythm and relieve emotional problems. Another positive effect is that you can learn other languages and even computer sciences. In fact, you can also learn and find new information from a lot of different areas, according to the game you are playing.

But, on the other hand, I can agree that there also have negative parts, such as aggression (especially among children) and insomnia (because the games give us sleeping difficulties). I also agree that when I stay up late to play games, I have headaches and backaches, so gamers often suffer from poor physical health. It is not my case, but it is proven that many children that spend a lot of time online on video games, face the issue of obesity, lack of motivation, and more.

In conclusion, if video games are used for limited time, then it does not affect our physical, mental or emotional health and they can be beneficial and useful in many ways.

The violin - my passion

***Pogonici Luca
Școala Gimnazială Godinești, Gorj
Profesor coordinator, Alina Roxana Bordînc***

Hello my name is Pogonici Luca and today I am going to talk about my passion, the violin.

The violin is a string instrument known for its rich, melodic sound. It typically has four strings and is played with a bow, creating music through the vibrations of the strings. It's a crucial instrument in classical music but it is also versatile, finding a place in various genres. The violins are crafted from various types of wood, with spruce often used for the top and maple for the back and sides. The instrument's sound quality depends on the wood's quality, craftsmanship, and the skill of the manufacturer who constructs it. Stradivarius and Guarneri are renowned violin makers from the 17th and 18th centuries, and their instruments are highly valued today. The violin has evolved over time, with electric violins now providing modern variations suitable for contemporary music.

Playing the violin involves placing the instrument between the shoulder and chin while supporting it with the left hand. The strings are tuned to G, D, A, and E. Notable violinists, like Niccolò Paganini and Itzhak Perlman, have left an indelible mark on the instrument's history. The violin's versatility extends to various musical styles, from classical and folk to jazz and rock. Additionally, the violin is often featured in ensembles, chamber music, and as a solo instrument, showcasing its adaptability across diverse musical areas.

From my point of view, playing the violin makes me feel relaxed and important. I started playing the violin at the age of 10 and stopped at 13 but continued again at 14. Since I started playing it, I have become more involved, I feel more appreciated and important. It has increased my self esteem because I am always part in school activities, plays, contests. I have won some awards in competitions all over the county and that makes me feel like I can do even more. It has also made me popular among the students in my school and this has increased my communication skills. I usually play folklore, because the village I come from is known in Romania for the skillful and talented violin players, and I am working hard to learn other music genres. I really believe that I can use it in my future, I don't know if I am going to have a career as a violin player, but for the moment I consider it a passion and I want to become a better version of myself by playing the violin.

Friendship

***Popescu Balanescu Bogdan
Școala Gimnazială Godinești, Gorj
Profesor coordinator, Alina Roxana Bordînc***

Hello, my name is Bogdan and the subject I want to talk about today is friendship. Friendship is a cherished bond that adds meaning and richness to our lives. It is a connection that goes beyond mere acquaintances, creating a sense of belonging and understanding. True friendship is built on a foundation of trust, loyalty, and mutual respect.

One key aspect that I consider important is trust. Friends confide in each other, sharing thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment. Trust forms the base of a lasting relationship, creating an environment where individuals can be as they really are. Knowing that there's someone who believes in you, creates a sense of security and comfort.

Loyalty is another important element of friendship. True friends stand by each other through good or bad, offering support during both easy or difficult times. This loyalty creates a bond that passes the tests of life, making friendship a reliable source of strength and companionship.

Mutual respect is the glue that holds friendships together. It is about recognizing each other's individuality, accepting differences, and celebrating similarities. In a true friendship both parts bring unique qualities to the relationship, and these differences make the connection better.

Friendship is not just about laughing and good times; it is also about being there when we have problems. True friends give support to one another during bad times, offering a listening ear, a helping hand, or simply a shoulder to lean on. This journey through life's ups and downs deepens the bond and makes friendship last for a long time.

It is hard to make friends, especially at young ages, because, for now, we only rely on our passions, hobbies, common interests. My parents have always told me that a true friend is for life, and I hope that the friends I have now, will be there even when I will be 40.

In conclusion, friendship is a valuable treasure that enriches our lives in many ways. Trust, loyalty, and mutual respect are the pillars that sustain this special connection. Through the highs and lows of life, friends offer company, understanding, and support, and these make our lives enjoyable and meaningful.

Body diversity

***Student: Pogonici Aida
Școala Gimnazială Godinesti, Gorj
Teacher Alina Roxana Bordînc***

My name is Aida and today I will talk about body diversity. A positive body image is a topic of great importance in contemporary society. Although beauty ideals have varied over time and across cultures, it is crucial to recognize and celebrate diversity in the shapes and sizes of the human body. We need to learn to love and accept ourselves as we are, despite social pressures and false images promoted in the media. Each human has his own value, which is not determined by the size of the clothes we wear or the numbers on the scale. Even though we may be tempted to criticize our appearance or compare ourselves to society's imposed standards, it is important to remember that our body is a miracle in itself. It provides us with mobility, the ability to feel, think, and create. It is the space where we have the power to experience love and connection with others.

It is important to have people around us who remind us that we are loved as we are and who tell us how valuable we are in their eyes because it helps boost our self-confidence. In a world

where social pressure and beauty standards can create insecurities, emotional support from the loved ones is vital in building positive self-worth.

Learning to love ourselves unlocks the power of authenticity and inner joy. Through self-acceptance and compassion, we build a deep and healthy connection with our own being.

True love is accepting people as they are, valuing who they are inside more than how they look outside. Real connections happen when we love people just as they are. What's inside truly makes each person special and valuable.

We all see how media puts pressure on people by promoting the idea of perfection, by editing photos in order to become flawless, and this has a great impact, especially on teenagers.

So, don't stress about what others think. It's important to love yourself as you are, no matter how you look. Nobody's perfect, and that's fine because being human means having imperfections. Let's focus on being real and accepting, that's what makes us beautifully human.

LOST IN MY IMAGINATION

Taşcău Livia Andreea

Constantin Şandru Technological Highschool

Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina

Once upon a time, somewhere far across the land, where the sky ends and the rainbow begins, there lived a little girl called Rachel who was full of stories and endowed with a rich imagination. There were dragons, unicorns, princesses, fairies and a magic place, a hidden home, where she could escape from when some creatures came too close or the monsters gave chase. And these fantasy stories filled the little girl with laughter and magic and that sense of wonder that belongs only to childhood.

One day, she decided to go to the forest alone, which was forbidden for children. When she was there, she felt as if someone was watching her, but being a brave girl, she didn't panic and continued to adventure further into the forest.

Suddenly, something touched her back, something clammy-cold. She screamed in fright and turned around, noticing a tiny fairy was floating in front of her with her delicate wings quivering. She was scared too. The two exchanged smiles and glances and struck up a conversation that lasted a long time. The fairy's name was Vera. She loved to flutter around the forest, spreading joy and magic wherever she went. They soon became friends and embarked on an adventure through the enchanted forest. They journeyed through the shimmering streams, past the glowing mushrooms and beyond the whispering willow trees. As they ventured deeper into the forest, they encountered the goblins with hazelnuts on their heads and the little leaf horses.

Time passed by and the little girl turned into a young lady. She came to the forest less and less. One day, she wanted to meet her magical friends, but she could no longer see them: her imagination vanished.

She soon became a mother, giving birth to an adorable girl. She decided to show her daughter the beauty of the place where she grew up. While she was lost in deep thought, the child came happily and told her that she had made a new friend: Vera. Our character was filled with joy because she could share memories with the most loved person. Finally, she promised to herself to come more often to the forest.

THE STORY OF A BOOK

***Popescu Patricia Maria
Constantin Şandru Technological Highschool
Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina***

There was once a girl, a book lover, whose steps were guided by her passion and who used to go quite often to a place where her soul ached to wander: school library. On a rainy day, she decided to stay in the library longer than she normally would, waiting for the rain to stop.

Meanwhile, all those books were waiting to be read. It is said that you don't choose a book the book chooses you. It is true indeed. Silence could be heard, and the smell of old books equated with the smell of knowledge. She saw an old, big book with leather cover in a dark corner. She approached full of curiosity and tried to take it out, but to her astonishment she didn't succeed. She tried harder and harder with all her strength.

Falling to the ground with the book in her arms, the girl entered a dark room. Slowly, as her eyes adjusted to it, she noticed a light. At first she was afraid, but being very curious, she stepped in to see what was in that secret room. She was shocked and mesmerized to discover a real world of stories: all the characters were brought to life: Alice in Wonderland, Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz, even Aslan from Narnia or Harry Potter. This land of stories was endless. They were acting as if nothing was going on and that no one was observing them. The girl explored every corner of the room without intervening in the process of creation. She was a part of it without actually realizing. She was the main pawn.

She forgot everything; who she was, where she was and even how to escape from there. She got lost in the illusion of a real world and became one with the book. Nobody has seen her ever since, but I have the strange feeling that she is alright.

Lose yourself in the magic of books!

JOBS

***Mariescu Ionut
Şcoala Gimnazială Godineşti
Coordinating teacher Alina Roxana Bordînc***

Hello, my name is Ionuţ and I will talk about one of the most important things in today's society, jobs. Even if I'm just a child, I can understand the fact that they are very important in human life.

People should have jobs for many reasons. One of them is that it will help you financially support yourself and your family. Another reason could be that you can gain professional experience, and you can become better, too. You can also learn other skills and abilities, which you can use in your everyday life.

Some teenagers get part-time jobs. That means they work during the week after school. Most of them choose to work as waiters at restaurants, at fast-foods and cafés. In my opinion that could be a good idea if it doesn't affect their studying and health.

Some people choose to work more after the usual work program to earn more money, but I don't see this as a good thing because it limits your free time.

Before you can start working you need to go through an interview. The interview is basically a conversation between two or more people where questions are asked by the interviewers to obtain some information from the interviewed person.

Working from home is an option in some jobs that mostly use computers or deal a lot with paper-work. Workers use this option when they are sick but they need to do their job. It seems that some of them have better results when they work from home and society in our days has changed in such a way that there are more and more people that have remote jobs.

Of course, not everyone can work for various reasons, like people with problems because they can make a mess or get hurt, but there are also jobs for people with Down syndrome, for people in wheelchairs or autistic people, jobs that allow them to use their abilities to the best.

We should all try and find our strengths and weaknesses when we choose our jobs, to see what we like and what we are good at, because scientists proved that a person who likes his job, does it better.

The power of music

Luca Pogonici

Școala Gimnazială Godinești

Coordinating teacher Alina Roxana Bordînc

Music has a special way of healing people, no matter their age or the type of music they enjoy. From classical tunes to today's hits, each kind of music brings comfort and peace to listeners in its own way.

Classical music artists like Beethoven or Mozart have a calming effect on the mind and heart. With their beautiful melodies that have been touching peoples' hearts for centuries. Then, there's jazz, which brings a sense of freedom and creativity. Jazz music lets people express themselves and let go of their worries through its lively rhythms.

Rock and roll makes the energy with its powerful guitars and drums. The emotion in rock music helps listeners confront their struggles and feel stronger. Nowadays, hip-hop and rap are the most significant in telling popular stories and connecting with listeners on a personal level.

Popular music or Romanian's folk music is a very popular genre of music among every age but more popular with the older . "Musica populara" contains various instruments like the violin, the piano or the keyboard and of course the lead singer of the group. Romanian's folk music is a very special genre of music among every Romanian heart.

Manele, is a genre which has stirred up both excitement and controversy. Mixing romani traditions with modern pop, it captures the joys and struggles of everyday life, especially for marginalized communities, but, one cannot criticize music of any kind, as long as it gives life a meaning.

All music genres speak of the challenges of everyday life, making people feel understood and heard.

For me as a violin player the Romanian folk music holds a special place in my heart because I started getting more involved in this genre when I started going out to shows, started meeting new people and forming connections among the community of violin players.

From my point of view, music's healing power brings us together, no matter what kind of music we prefer. It speaks of our emotions, lifts our spirits, and reminds us that we're not alone in this world, it gives us strength when we are sad and it accompanies us in happy moments, at weddings, birthdays and parties.

Women and society

Aida Pogonici

Școala Gimnazială Godinești

Coordinating teacher Alina Roxana Bordînc

Stereotypes are ideas that some people have about a group, and they can affect how we think and treat each other. When it comes to women, stereotypes can have a big effect on how they are seen and treated in the world.

Some people used to think that girls might not be as good at certain things as boys, like being great at math or playing sports. This can make girls feel like they can't do well in these things, even if they really enjoy them. Another idea is about how girls should look. Sometimes, people think that girls should always be pretty and wear specific clothes. This can make girls feel like they have to look a certain way to be liked. However, it's important to understand that women are just as awesome as men. Imagine a big box of crayons – each color is unique and brings something special to the drawing. Similarly, women bring their own special talents and strengths to the world, making it a more colorful and exciting place.

Women can do all sorts of things. They're smart, strong, and really good at many activities. Whether it's sports, school, or any job, women can shine bright. We should never think that one gender is better than the other because everyone has unique talents. And guess what? Without women, we wouldn't even be here. Moms, sisters, and teachers are like the superheroes of our lives. They help us grow, learn, and become the best versions of ourselves. It's like having a team of amazing cheerleaders always cheering us on.

Sometimes being a girl can be a bit tricky. Balancing all the roles, like being a sister, a teacher, or a mom, can be challenging. That's why we should make sure everyone is treated fairly and with kindness. We want every girl to feel happy, confident, and proud of whom they are. In the end, it's like having a big family where everyone is equal, and each person is like a shining star. Let's celebrate how amazing women are and make sure everyone gets a chance to be their fantastic selves. When it comes to women, stereotypes can have a big effect on how they are seen. Some people used to think that girls might not be as good at certain things as boys, like being great at math or playing sports. This can make girls feel like they can't do well in these things, even if they are great!

Music: the importance of it and the effect it has on us

Student: Delia Cucu

**TEACHER: SIRBU IONELA-BEATRICE
SECONDARY SCHOOL NUMBER 1 ROVINARI**



Music in general has many roles in our lives. It can keep noise in the background while doing chores around the house, or simply reinforce emotions that we want to manifest and maybe we don't know how. Many people use music as an escape from their issues and brings comfort from different aspects, but it has a huge effect and impact on our lives.

It is proven that our mood can change depending on what we listen to, just like our opinions on a supposed argument can change if we are exposed to proofs of different actions. If someone were to have a bad day, they could listen to sad music with slow and comforting lyrics that feel like a warm supporting blanket protecting them from the world, or they could choose to sing along some cheerful lines and dance with the rhythm, to forget about their problems.

On the other hand, artists channel their feelings, thoughts and most importantly: they expose themselves, their soul to the world, through meaningful lyrics and melodies. Many of them want to tell stories, show a meaning behind the words they put together, creating an experience to raise the same deep emotions to their listeners that make the song special to them and the artists themselves.

Music taste is also something important to note. A music taste is developed since childhood, depending on what you were exposed to listen as a child, or even from childhood experiences. In my case, as a child I went through many things, bad and good, which shaped me to now enjoy more than anything in a song: deep and meaningful lyrics, but also very calm and slow melodies with a hint of instruments in the background like an electric guitar or a saxophone, that create a calm yet rhythmic atmosphere.

I believe that music shapes us as humans, as souls, changes our lives even. It can be something that we use as a coping mechanism to escape from stress, or simply something that we enjoy to do as a form of entertainment. Which is why, music is an important aspect of our lives and can impact us, even if we don't notice it.

The Haunted Night

Daria ADAM

Telesti Secondary School

Co-ordinating teacher: Anca-Sînziana Daraban

I walked the dog after dinner last night and when it was time to return home, I decided to take a shortcut through the woods. At the edge of the wood a deserted house stands still as a graveyard. When I walked past that house I heard a strange noise. Suddenly, my dog dropped dead,

hitting the cold ground. A purple fog started covering it like a cloak. I picked up the body of my dearest friend, Bella, with shaking hands and tears in my eyes. The fog started to rise and became thicker. My heart was beating very fast, almost bursting up out of my chest. The noise got louder and louder. I was so scared that I couldn't move my feet anymore.

The moon's light was strong enough to create shadows and a huge and dreadful one was approaching me that very moment. I found the strength to hide behind a bush, shaking and crying, trying to remain silent. Through the dead leaves, I had a quick peek and saw Death itself. Enormous and horrifying, all black, with a skull instead of head. The strong smell of putrefaction and cemetery he was carrying suffocated me. By mistake, I let a sigh leave my mouth and, unfortunately, Death heard it. He looked in my direction and I froze again. He levitated in my direction slowly and hungrily for another soul.

In the blink of an eye, a white shred of glow covered me. It was warm and comforting, I felt as light as a feather. I thought it was the end; that I died hugging Bella, the most innocent and pure soul, but I was wrong. A gorgeous angel with marvellous wings appeared in front of me and took me in his arms, holding me tightly. My dog came back to life and started licking my tears. Then, the angel kissed me on the forehead. I felt my body exhausted and soon fell asleep.

After a while that seemed to me like centuries I woke up in an unknown bed. It was a king-sized bed, all white. I could barely remember what had happened. I noticed Bella wasn't with me anymore and I started freaking out. I tried to move, but everything hurt, so I started screaming for help.

A few moments later, my dog jumped on me. She was wagging her tail and seemed happy. I forced my hands to hug her. Then, through a huge white door with many sculptures, a boy walked towards me; it was the angel that saved me. His hair was brown and so were his eyes. He brought me a bowl of hot chicken soup. The angel was smiling at me, but he didn't say a word. He helped me get up and fed me the soup. After that he kissed me on the forehead as usual and, again, I fell into a deep deep sleep.

On opening my eyes, I found myself standing on a cold old wooden bench under the full moon above. Bella was resting next to me. I picked up her leash and took the way home. I couldn't figure out if all these eerie moments really happened or if all was just a dream, but I knew, somehow, that I wasn't supposed to say anything to anyone...and that I had to be thankful for being alive, all safe and sound.

That's why I'll never forget the angel that saved me.

Handball

*Dorobanțu Selena
Liceul Teologic Roșia-Jiu, Fărcășești
Profesor îndrumător, Loga Andreea Patricia*

Handball is a team sport, a difficult sport but if you know how to practice it, it will be easy. In this sport, there are three different positions for players; the first one is the winger (right or left) who must stand in the corner of the field, both in defense and in attack. The next important role is that of the midfielder who plays and stays in the center of the field. The coordinator has another important role because he is the one that says when to take the ball, how to remain calm, no matter the situation. In other words, he has to set the tone of the team.

Handball game has also pivots, the ones who defense by standing behind the center and in attack bind the opponents. The last position is that of a goalkeeper, who must catches the goals.

conclude with I would say that I chose this sport because it is my favorite sport and I have been practicing it for 2 years.

Easter Celebration

***Ciocioman Giulia Roberta Slawomira
Școala Gimnazială "Gheorghe Tătărescu" Târgu Jiu
Profesor Coordonator, Raica Alina***

Easter is one of the most important holiday in many countries and it is celebrated with joy and excitement. It is Christian holiday that marks the resurrection of Jesus. Easter represents hope, new beginnings, and the promise of eternal life. People celebrated Easter indifferent ways, depending on their traditions and culture.

In my country, Easter is very special, it is celebrated in spring, when nature is waking up, and everything is blooming. One of the most important things we do for Easter is going to church.

On Easter Sunday, people attend church services to pray and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. The church is beautiful decorated with flowers, and many people light candles to show faith.

One of the most popular tradition in my country is decorating Easter eggs.

We dye the eggs in bright colors, such as red, blue and yellow, and sometimes we paint them with beautiful designs. Eggs are symbols of new life and resurrection, that is why they are so important for Easter. After decorating eggs people often start an egg fight.

The trend

***Robert-Marian Florescu
Secondary School Nr 1 Rovinari
Teacher: Sirbu Ionela-Beatrice***

Due to the constant evolution of our world, most things can be done more efficient and a lot more quickly. An example of this is communication through the internet. Thus, more and more people take up a lot more bad things and bad habit unless they succeed in making a difference between GOOD OR BAD.

One of these bad habits is gambling. Gambling addictions have increased alarmingly in the last six years and World Health Organization mentions that at least 12% of adults have a gambling addiction. However, these numbers keep rising and the ones who are at risk to become a gambling addict are mostly youngsters due to a few reasons.

How easy is to gamble right now!!! Most gambling sites can be accessed by youngsters very easily and that is on purpose. If it weren't for them, their profits would fall in the long run. But this is neither about casinos nor about gambling websites, but also about video games too. Nowadays, most video games have a gambling aspect which is developed to tempt the gamblers.

Another one is the use of drugs which seems to be the biggest problem that teenagers face.

The use of drugs has risen to over 292 million people and that was only in 2022. Most of the users are in their mid-teens through their mid-twenties and the age people start use any kind of drug

keeps getting lower. The internet isn't as much of a factor in the rise of drug usage as in gambling problems but it still has a hand into it. Its part is to familiarize the use of drugs and given the drug dealers a much easier way to contact or get new clients. However, not all drugs are the same: there are not only legal drugs such as alcohol and nicotine, but also illegal ones that we all know like marijuana (which is the most used drug according to WHO) ,cocaine and fentanyl.

All in all, this evolution has brought us a lot of new and interesting things, but there is always "a downside", meaning a negative part.

Halloween Party

***Popescu Maria Patricia
Constantin Şandru Technological
Highschool
Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina***

It's really Halloween! - boo
The werewolves are going like - awoo
Blood is pouring – bloop, bloop, bloop
Eyes are rolling – pog, pog, pog

Bones are cracking – crack, crack
Ghosts are clapping – clap, clap

It's really Halloween - woo
A season like you never seen – hoo

My funny Halloween

***Barb Andreea Denisa
Constantin Şandru Technological
Highschool
Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina***

It is raining cats and bats – rush
I'm brave! I have a lot of hats - poo
It's a very funny day – bash
Because I want to spy a grave - boo

I will catch the moon - clink
When a cat scared me - meow

Go to hell - plink
I tried to yell – pow

October night

***Andreescu Maria Eliza
Constantin Şandru Technological Highschool
Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina***

In the October night so dark and cool - grrr
Underneath the glowing harvest moon's -
wow
Witches on broomsticks, cats that meow
Halloween's here, come join us now! - brrr

Jack-o'-lanterns with faces so bright - trach
Light up the streets on this spooky night - boo
Trick or treating, laughter, and cheer – blach
Halloween's here, come join us now! - poo

Shivers

Taşcău Georgiana Valentina

Constantin Şandru Technological Highschool

Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina

Bushes quiver - brrr
Where shadows lean - gush
And not a sliver - grrr
Of moon is seen - blush

Near the river - hush
Some goblins - pop
With a witch in front - slush
And a ghost in between –blop

Childhood

Cucăilă Ciulică Maria Ştefania,

Şcoala Gimnazială „Sfântul Nicolae”

Childhood is a gift from God
I love it and I miss it
I miss my old friends
And playing in the park daily.

Those rainy days I wanted
to go outside are gone.
So is primary school,
And don't forget about the Barbie dolls
I used to play with.

Where are all my old pets?
Where are the summer breaks
I didn't stress about anything and everything?
Where's my best friend that I used to call
daily?

All of a sudden
They're all gone
And just like that
Childhood's gone.

White Ghost

Taşcău Livia Andreea

Constantin Şandru Technological Highschool

Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina

White ghost, white ghost, what do you see? -
hum
I see a black bat looking at me - boo
Black bat, black bat, what do you see? - dum
I see a spider on the door – shoo

Dear witch what do you do? - wow
I'm doing a potion for you – brrr
It's pumpkin time - pow
Pumpkins with faces are scary – grrr

Halloween sounds

Alionescu Andra Nicoleta
Constantin Șandru Technological Highschool
Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina

It's really Halloween! - boo
The werewolves are going like - awoo
Blood is pouring – bloop, bloop, bloop
Eyes are rolling – pog, pog, pog

Bones are cracking – crack, crack
Ghosts are clapping – clap, clap
It's really Halloween - woo
A season like you never seen - hoo

MY SHADE OF BLUE

Dinu Alexandra, Liceul Tehnologic Turceni
Profesor coordinator, Raluca Rîșcă

Coconut scented skin, smooth like vanilla ice cream,
Big wondering eyes, blue like the waves in which I fearlessly swim
Aurora borealis' green, through my eyes, seems like a dream
But the silence's getting loud, makes me want to run and scream.
I kept on battles going, started and finished wars,
I was fighting for a future where our paths were forever crossed
I gave you my all and you kept asking for more,
It was never enough because you were always keeping score.
I am ashes on the ground, where your fire started to burn
And my petals, they fell off as they were growing back as thorns .
Now my sun doesn't shine even though it did before,
You loved to call me by my name, now I can't remember yours.

A life in light

Guest writer, Rusu Mariuca
Clasa a IXa, 15 ani, Colegiul Național " Radu Negru ", Făgăraș, Brașov.

The morning sun begins to rise,
And paints with gold the open skies.
The world awakes with gentle cheer,
A brand-new day is drawing near.

The flowers bloom without a sound,
And spread their beauty all around.
A breeze that dances through the trees
Whispers of calm and peaceful ease

The laughter shared, the small moments,
Are truly life's best gift of all.
A friend who listens, hands that hold,
Are worth much more than gems or gold.

In every challenge we may find
A lesson carved with care and kind.
Through ups and downs, we learn to see
The strength within, the will to be.

A starlit sky, a moon so wide,
The sea that sparkles with the tide-
All speak of wonder, deep and true,
Of magic life can offer you.

A simple song, a heartfelt smile,
Can make the world feel sweet awhile.
With kindness spread and love sincere,
We shape the world year after year

So even when the clouds appear,
There's always something bright and clear
Behind each shadow lies and a ray
That softly guides us on our way.

Let's treasure every breath we take,
Each step we climb, each path we make.
For life, though fleeting, shines so bright-
A gift of joy, a spark of light.

Daylight

**Dinu Alexandra, Liceul Tehnologic Turceni
Profesor coordonator, Raluca Rișcă**

I always thought it was normal for me to feel this way
But I stare at everyone while they're enjoying every sunny day
And I'm the only one seeing life in different shades of grey
It's supposed to be golden like daylight or pink like roses bloomed in May.
But how can I make myself believe it's supposed to be like this?
When my world is ruled by the darkness of my thoughts and failed dreams.
Constantly trying to draw all the attention to myself
So everything I say sounds like a cry for help
Getting lost in the mess that's in my mind
Desperately looking for the door that keeps my memories locked aside
And searching through them all, only to find
A way to feel again some things twice.
But slowly I'm getting caught up in the lies that I make myself believe
Now looking back, my past seems like a stranger to me
And I'm unable to tell the difference between what's true and what's not
So all my memories feel like weapons aiming at my heart.

Stay

**Dinu Alexandra, Liceul Tehnologic Turceni
Profesor coordonator, Raluca Rișcă**

Your eyes were the key to the freedom I haven't dreamt of getting back,
Walking along the shore with our bear feet in the cold sand
Guided by the stars shining brightly over our heads
I whispered words of worship for the love we both shared.
How the sky's black the waves' blue combined got me in a trance,
But the only thing more beautiful there was the look on your face

I captured that moment and buried it deep in my soul, trying to keep it safe
I've never seen something more loveable, never before and never since.
Now I'd trade the world to feel the warm touch of your hand again
To have you near, to be able to love you without causing any pain
But it takes time and, sadly, the only thing I do is push you away,
Punishing you for my problems, but hoping you'd beg me to stay.
I still hold so many words inside that I would like you to hear,
But it's foolish of me to expect that with all of this, you'd still hold on to me
And if we'll never speak again, you'll feel your presence throughout all of my poetry,
This story didn't end for me and it will never be.

MUM

**Dinu Alexandra, Liceul Tehnologic Turceni
Profesor coordonator, Raluca Rișcă**

I catch myself wondering where you have gone or if you ever think of coming back.
Do you secretly miss not holding me into your arms enough or reading me stories to bed?
Will I ever fill the void that's now full of pain and regret?
Will you ever understand what it meant for me the day you decided to leave?
The words we share are countable, they hurt and leak meaning.
You look deep into my eyes, but you can't recognize the child you're seeing
I'm restless just thinking how cruel this joke of a connection can be
How can you be proud when you know your name is the only thing you share with your kid?
First days of school, birthday parties, Christmas Eves
Every occasion to make a wish, but mine never seemed to come to life
As I got older, I fought the urge of finding answers to my haunted what ifs
But I knew the child inside was still teary eyed when seeing other happy families.

There was no one to receive flowers on Mother's Day from my little hands,
No one to help me with homework, no one to ask me how my day went,
You assume I know nothing just because I'm young.
But I know that my kid will never hear this heavy silence after saying "mom".

SPIRITUAL QUEST

**Zglobiu Maria Ingrid Adina
Constantin Șandru Technological Highschool
Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina**

To bloom or not to bloom, that is the question. STOP! I am not Shakespeare. Who am I? That is my life's most defining question. How can I find my true self? How do I know what my destiny is?

We sometimes compare ourselves to others. We think that we are not good enough, that we are not where we should be in life. The point is that we cannot force our growth. We cannot choose the exact time or day when we are going to bloom.

Now, think of a flower! It all starts with a tiny seed. Due to a good environment, a rich soil and water it will become a beauty. This process is not going to happen overnight because it takes time, patience and care. Let's imagine you are a flower. How did you start? Like a tiny, fragile seed. You needed love, care and patience to grow and bloom. I think that we and the flowers are alike. You may ask me why I am making this comparison. We may not have the same appearance on the outside, but we both started like fragile seeds which slowly grew and eventually bloomed. We cannot bloom unexpectedly, it is impossible because it takes time to find the best environment and the right path that were destined for us. Remember that growth cannot be rushed. It requires time, dedication and persistence. But we do have our own path. It's normal to be afraid, to feel the fear of the unknown, because you cannot predict the future, you don't know whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing. I will tell you a secret: I am scared too! But I will never back down or let the fear stop me! I will continue fighting and making choices that bring me happiness and joy. I will bloom in silence and I won't let anyone tell me what to do.

We will definitely make mistakes. There should be no shame in admitting we are not perfect. Yet, we will learn from our mistakes. Without them it's impossible to grow. Our successes and failures may help shape us, but they are not our identity. It is not a race, everyone will bloom eventually. We need to have faith in the path we choose and be patient. That unique path is going to make you bloom. Bloom where you are planted! If nature does not hurry, why should we? Believe in tomorrow because everything happens in its own time.

THE BLOSSOM

Pătrășcoiu Daria Ștefania
Școala Gimnazială Sâmbotin
Prof. coordonator, Șarapatin Irina Nicoleta

It is cool, a little windy,
The flowers are sleeping outside,
The moon laughs at some joke
Told by the golden stars.

Inside, the children are lying in bed,
Dreaming about fairies and elves,
Imagining fantastic worlds,
Swords, castles and much more

But somewhere, in a green corner,
There stands a little, fragile blossom;
It is small and colorful,
Beautiful, calm and wonderful.



MUSIC

Taşcău Georgiana Valentina
Constantin Şandru Technological Highschool
Prof. Popescu Flori-Alina

What is music? For me, music is special, being a communication between people and myself. Music is not good or bad, it's just art – the art of the soul and senses. You don't just have to know how to sing, you have to know how to listen to it. Music chills me, inspires me, and makes me see the world with different eyes. It changes my mood.

Music has this unique ability to connect people, to make us feel understood, even when no words are spoken. It's a universal language that transcends culture and background. Music is there to lift us when we are feeling down, to inspire us when we have lost motivation. So, whenever you are down, remember the power a song holds to speak to you and enhance the beauty and resilience of the human spirit.

I like listening to music in any circumstances and transform the songs into steps of dance. I love music! I love what it conveys. My deepest feelings, from sadness to joy, are shared through music. My favorite songs take me into the past, awaken my memories or make me dream of the brightest future. There is a song or a type of music for everyone: rock, pop, rap, chill out, classical. My favorite artist is Taylor Swift. For example, her song, Kid in the crowd, gives me the ambition to pursue my dreams: "I remember the time/I was a kid in the crowd/With a dream in my eyes/Realizing is crying out loud".

This is good music: it puts a smile on my face, gives peace to my mind and soul. It's timeless! I'm sure that in ten years' time I will still be listening to the same songs.

Music is a way of life for me!

The magical ballet shoes

ALESSIA GHEORGHE
Şcoala Gimnazială "Alexandru Ştefulescu"
Teacher: Roşca Simona-Angela

A baby girl was born forty years ago. She was a well known ballerina and an ordinary man's daughter. She looked drop dead gorgeous from the moment she was born, so her parents called her Esmeralda, because they thought she was the most precious thing they had ever seen, just like an emerald, when they first saw her.

When Esmeralda was five years old, her mother got sick and after a few months she unfortunately passed away. She and her father got really sad, but as she grew up she could not remember anything about her, except that she was a well known ballerina.

One day, when she turned ten years old, she wanted to find out more about her mother, so she asked her father about her. He told her that she had had a heart of gold and always helped people in need. Then he asked her to go to the attic with him to show her the CD tapes her mother had left him. She was mesmerized by how good of a ballerina her mother was. No sooner had she seen the tapes, than she fell in love with ballet. She had been asking her father for over a year to let her take up classes after she had seen what a nice sport ballet was, but her father couldn't financially afford that.

Esmeralda was sad that her dreams couldn't come true, so she studied harder to get a scholarship to afford ballet lessons. At the end of the year, she had the best grades in her entire school and her hard work finally paid off. She got a scholarship which made her afford ballet lessons at the best club in her town. As a gift, her father gave Esmeralda her mother's ballet shoes, which he saved up knowing his daughter might follow her mother's footsteps.

At her first lesson she wore the ballet shoes that were gifted from her father. She was taught all the primary steps and when it came to the parts that others take years to fully learn and do well, she did them perfectly from her first try. After a month she was sent to the best ballet school in the country where she was every teacher's favourite. Something didn't feel right though, because every time she didn't wear her mother's ballet shoes she wasn't as good as she was when she wore them, so she came to the conclusion that they were magical. After a year of ballet she got casted the main role in a play. Her team won first place and she got popular in her country for it.

After the success she got with the first play, her ballet school was asked to perform the play in more places from all over the country, so they did.

People talked about Esmeralda all the time, not only was she known for her ballet moves, but also for her beauty. She got interviewed by many journalists and always told them the same story, how the ballet shoes from her mother were magical and that she wouldn't be at the level she was then without them.

After two years of dancing ballet in all parts of the country she got in the best ballet school from all over the world. Every time she danced she got better, so she didn't need her magical shoes anymore. Even though, after three years of use, the ballet shoes weren't in the best shape, she kept them to remind her of her mother and her first steps into ballet.

Now, at the age of forty, Esmeralda is a ballet teacher at the school she once learned at and everyone who goes there gets popular for being taught ballet by the best ballerina in the world. She still has her first pair of ballet shoes and will always do, because they will remember everyone how passionate Esmeralda and her mother were about ballet.

The saddest day of them all

CARINA BOIAN

Școala Gimnazială "Alexandru Ștefulescu"

Teacher: Roșca Simona-Angela

I remember the last day I saw my mother. It was a nice sunny day and we were both laying down on the hot sand, waiting for the sun to give us a little bit of tan. Suddenly, the water disappeared. It went far away. I remembered watching a documentary about the ocean and it said, and I quote, "If it looks like the water has disappeared, run, a tsunami is coming your way. Be safe and careful! Protect yourselves and your dearest ones!"

I told my mother, however she did not believe it and told me to stop joking about these things, because they are actual dangerous things that people fear. Despite of what she told me, I insisted.

She took off her sunglasses and looked me dead in the eye:

"When will you ever stop? she asked. I get it, okay? You are worried something might happen to me. Well, guess what; nothing will. I am and will be perfectly fine. If you are that worried, why won't you go back to the hotel room and take a nap?" she said.

"Fine!" I told her as I was putting a towel around myself, because I clearly did not want to walk around in my bathing suit.

I was petrified. What if it really was a tsunami?

I opened my phone and it immediately started buzzing. An extreme alert. It was announcing everybody about the upcoming tsunami. By the time I finished reading everything, I was already in front of the hotel and a small wave hit my bare feet. The tsunami already hit. I sprinted as fast as I could to my mother's place of tanning and she was nowhere to be found. I immediately started sobbing. "What if she isn't alive anymore?" That was the thought that was constantly running through my mind.

My father and brother were sleeping in the hotel room while I was full on crying, trying to find my mum. I called dad. No answer. He probably had his phone on "Do not disturb". I didn't have a key to our hotel room, so, desperately, I called 911. They told me that they'll do whatever they can to find my mum.

By the time my dad had woken up, I got a text from mum saying she was okay and that we should not look for her anymore. For a reason or two, I believed it. Mum had done this before a few times, so I wasn't surprised.

Three days ago, I woke up with mom on my front porch. She was all dirty and wet, because the day before it had rained all day and she must have stayed outside. I cooked her a warm meal and told her to explain everything to me.

Turns out she had been carried away by the water and it actually the hotel receptionist who sent me that text.

Mom apologised for not believing me when I warned her about the tsunami and she promised not to doubt me ever again.

For me, this story ended really well and, just like my mother, I told myself I would never doubt other people if they ever warn me about anything else.

The world of fashion

**Negomireanu Adelina Izabela
Liceul Tehnologic Roșia-Jiu, Fărcășești
Profesor îndrumător - Loga Andreea Patricia**

Fashion, over time, has set off many controversies and many trends that have influenced the world.

There are so many things to say about fashion, so let's talk about some of them.

Fashion has a very long history. As time goes by the evolution of technology and new designers, the fashion has evolved very quickly in the 21st century.

Over the years, until now, there have been a lot of changes in terms of fashion, because it is a way of expressing yourself, people come with new ideas and after all it is an art, isn't it?

Before the Industrial Revolution, clothes were made, designed and customized by hand. This was similar to creating classical art forms, like painting or composing music.

Fashion has recently become a source of entertainment for the masses. There are a lot of fashion magazines, influencers and 'Who Wore it Best' comparisons that seek to capture people's attention, which make people think it is more consumer culture than artistic culture.

But with all these things being said, many persons agree, even myself, that fashion is definitely an art form. There are plenty of fashion designers who make other kinds of art in the true sense of the word. The creative expression of making fashion is the same as any art form and moreover, not only designers flaunt their creativity but normal people can also consider their clothes an artistic expression and an extension of themselves.

Many artistic and inspirational creations have also been left behind many famous people who have influenced fashion since today.

Some of them would be:

Marilyn Monroe became famous in the '40s as the most successful woman of the time. She is remarked for her glamorous outfits, the dresses that have remained in the history and for the fact that she was the one who gave the start in the '50s to wearing blue jeans for women. They were worn only by men at the time, but today they are not missing from a woman's wardrobe, being an essential piece.

Princess Diana was also a fashion princess with an unique still in the '80s and '90s, her iconic outfits and her aesthetics continues to be in trend. Her outfits can be found in various museums nowadays. I love Diana very much, I would like to visit at least one museum dedicated to her because she is definitely an inspirational source.

Christion Dior , Alexander McQueen and Coco Chanel are also just a few of the successful designers who still dominate the fashion world with their unique creations.

In conclusion, fashion is truly an art, a way of expression and has no rules, as Alexander McQueen said ' It's a new era in fashion, there are no rules.'

Portofino

Lătărețu Cristina-Loredana, Școala Gimnazială Sâmbotin

Prof. coordonator, Șarapatin Irina Nicoleta

My favorite city is Portofino, Italy. This city is a picturesque town located on the northern cost of Italy. It has fewer than 500 inhabitants because it is a small place. It does not have many tourist attractions, but it is an elegant, small, and luxurious town, known for the celebrities who live there, wealthy people, the luxurious atmosphere, and the spectacular scenery.

The Romans who founded Portofino named it „Portus Delphini” because of the large number of dolphins in the Middle Ages. Portofino even inspired themed places in the USA.

This town was once a fishing village under the control of Genora and the Republic of Florence. Portofino opens onto the Ligurian Sea and has welcomed many famous visitors, including Elizabeth Taylor, Madonna, Beyoncé, and George Clooney.

Today Portofino is considered one of the most romantic places in Europe.

I'm very found of it because just hearing it's name makes me think of beauty and refinement. This town brings joy to the hearts of Italians and even to Romanians. My love for this place will never change. I love everything that this picturesque and artistic town represents.

I love it for its simplicity, its amazing history and beauty. When I imagine Portofino, I see colorful houses along the harbour, boats gently floating on the sea, and narrow streets filled with flowers and charm. It feels like a dream that has come to life.

Even though I have not been there yet, I feel a strong connection to it, as if my story and soul belongs there.

One day, I hope to visit Portofino, to walk along the coast, to watch the sunset over the hills, and to experience the luxury and elegance that it offers.

Until then, it will remain in my heart as the place I love the most.

Portofino is not just a city, it is a dream, peace of mind and a symbol of beauty.

Spring

Ecobici Cristiana Raisa
Scoala Gimnazială “Gheorghe Tătărescu“
Profesor coordonator: Raica Alina

Spring is one of the most beautiful seasons of the year. This amazing season brings an end to the cold days of winter, giving us lots of warm and sunny days. The nature feels reborn and everything comes back to life. All the fields are covered with beautiful flowers which bring an amazing smell to the fresh air and a bright view. All the animals have awoken from the winter sleep and are searching for fresh food throughout the green forests. The little birds are returning to their homes, filling the air with cheerful songs.

The days are becoming longer making the sun shine more over us. The kids' energy is becoming stronger, making them want to play more outside, in the lovely weather. This amazing energy in the air is making people more creative, giving them ideas for new projects. Everyone is enjoying this wonderful season doing many activities, like sports, little walks in the park or painting the colourful pictures that mother nature has offered us.

In spring there are many holidays like Mother's Day or Easter which bring families back together. Mother's Day is on the 8th of March while Easter doesn't have a specific date. These two important holidays make spring a happy season for everyone.

Spring is filling people's heart with magic, joy and most importantly hope.

My country

Olaru Adelin, Liceul Tehnologic Roșia-Jiu, Fărcășești
Profesor îndrumător – Loga Andreea Patricia

Romania is an European country, situated in the eastern part of the continent. It is also a country with a long history, starting from the most distant times, up to the present moments. The Romanian culture is admirable, as far as, the folk costume is 'ia'. There is also a variety when speaking about food. Geographically, the country's shape is that of a fish.

In my country, there are a lot of fascinating places visited by many people every year. The Danube Delta is one of the most beautiful places. In the center of the country are the Carpathians Mountains which are divided in three groups: Eastern, Southern and Western. The biggest mountain in the Moldoveanu Mountain with a height of 2544 meters.

Romania's history is also fascinating. Throughout the years, Romania became an important country in Europe. The capital of Romania is Bucharest. In the 19th century in Bucharest, but also in Iasi, another important city in our country appeared the first universities.

My country is divided in 41 counties and different historical regions such as Oltenia, Transylvania, Moldavia, Muntenia and Dobrogea.

I chose to write about my country because it is the country where I grew up and which offered me everything I wanted.

I love my country !

Swimming

Udrescu Daria Cristiana
Școala Gimnazială Sâmbotin,
Prof. coordonator, Șarapatin Irina Nicoleta

Swimming is my favorite hobby of all time. I love swimming because it's good for my health and personal development.

From when I was younger I liked this sport because I saw many professional swimmers on TV. For example: David Popovici is a professional swimmer at just 20 years old! It was really inspiring to see him work with a lot of determination and self-confidence. He is never afraid of losing a competition. He says that failure motivates him and helps him learn more about himself and his limits.

The first time I saw David Popovici swimming made me think that I can swim too. I started taking swimming lessons about four or five months ago, together with my sister and friends. I like that I can learn new things everyday and I really enjoy learning.

I also love that our swimming coach is kind to us and talks calmly with all of us. It is really easy to take up a sport if the people you work with help you all the way. It also helps if you practice that sport with your friends!

Swimming is also a skill that can save your life. If you fall into the water, it is really important that you know how to swim, float, but also to stay calm so that you can save yourself.

In my opinion swimming is the best sport for your health and your body, plus it's super fun! All kids should practice sports; it helps with their self-confidence and social skills too. I love swimming!

Media influences the teenagers more than parents and teachers

**Petcu Alexandra Florentina – Liceul Tehnologic Roșia-Jiu, Fărcășești
Profesor îndrumător – Loga Andreea Patricia**

The Internet became an essential presence in our lives and its influence on teenagers is seen more and more. While parents and teachers are guiding their children to new beginnings, the Internet offers them more possibilities which seem more attractive, either because of its way of informing or its negative way which can affect their decisions.

Due to the diversity of information, the Internet is a source of various content, but at the same time, it can be a faster way of connecting people, no matter how distant they are. The Internet offers the possibility of creating new friendships and self-discovery.

The Internet can also be a negative factor in teenagers' life who do not know to choose only the good parts of it. The exposure of successful people can cause an inferiority feeling, making them to believe that everything is just like they see on social media, developing them a major interest for luxurious life of those persons. At the same time, the Internet can create addiction because of its interesting and various topics, giving people what they want to see.

So, the Internet influences teenagers more than people from real life. The most important thing for them is to choose the good from all content and not being influenced by the unknown. Teenagers have to be independent and they have to understand that it is important to work in order to have success and to gain certain things in life.

My favourite sport - horse riding

**Roșca Anisia – Liceul Tehnologic Roșia-Jiu, Fărcășești
Profesor îndrumător: Loga Andreea Patricia**

Horse riding is my favourite sport from a very young age. Every time, I had the chance to ride a horse, I took it right away.

I have started to train at an equestrian center for about a month or so and it is great. There are four horses, two stallions called Amadeus and Hercule and two mares called Nobela and Star.

I always wanted a horse for myself, but it is really expensive and I need to take really good care of the land I am just an eleven year old girl.

At the equestrian center where I am training, I ride only Nobela and Hercule, but Hercule is getting really old and I like Nobela more because she is really fast and well trained and after all she is a girl.

I go to horse riding lessons at the equestrian center during the weekends so it cannot affect my school timetable. The last month was so fun and exciting with the horses and with all my friends.

My trainer said that I am very good at it and soon I can get to harder things like jumping, but now I am learning the basics and how to ride correctly.

The night I could have challenged my fate

Mladin Sebastian Alexandru

Telesti Secondary School

Co-ordinating teacher, Anca-Sînziana Daraban



I walked the dog after dinner last night, and when it was time to return home, I decided to take a shortcut through the woods. On the edge of the woods stands a deserted house. When I walked past the house, I heard a strange noise. Suddenly, faint whispers seeped through the cracked, grimy windows.

Startled, I froze, forcing myself to hear something. The whispers were low, unintelligible murmurs, like a secret being passed just beyond my understanding. Then they grew louder and louder, twisting into an eerie laughter that echoed through the still night. My dog Max, stopped in his tracks, his ears pinned back and

a low growl rumbled in his throat. The moonlight flooded the house with light, its peeling paint and broken shutters giving it a haunted Halloween look.

Then I saw it. Something moved in the upstairs window—a shadow, quick and fleeting, yet unmistakable. A chill crawled up my spine. I tugged at Max's leash, but he wouldn't budge. Instead, he stared at the house, his growl turning into a whimper. The front door creaked open slowly with a groan that pierced the silence. The whispers stopped, being replaced by an oppressive tranquillity. My heart pounded as the air turned icy, so cold that my breath became visible. Then, a figure emerged from the doorway—a pale, gaunt face with hollow, lifeless eyes. It stared at me, unblinking, before raising a thin, skeletal hand and pointing directly at me.

I stumbled backwards, pulling Max with me, but the figure began to move closer, gliding rather than walking. The sound of its hollow laughter filled my ears, loud and disorienting. I turned and ran, dragging Max along the path. The forest seemed to close in around us, the branches clawing at my arms like humanized fingers.

The laughter followed us, growing louder as a thunder as if the house itself was alive and mocking at my escape. When I finally burst out of the woods and into the safety of the streetlights, the sound stopped. The night was silent again, except for my pounding heartbeat and Max's frantic panting.

As I looked back to the woods, the house that scared me to death stood still and dark now, as if it had never come alive at all. I never took that shortcut again, and every night since, I've wondered what would have happened if I hadn't run away to escape, if I had chosen the other path...that of witnessing the dark, the unknown.

Would I have challenged my fate?!

The history of Fărcăsești

Șovâlgău Radu – Liceul Tehnologic Roșia-Jiu, Fărcăsești
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Once upon a time, in the land of Gorj, there was a cosy little village known as Fărcăsești. It was nestled between rolling hills and green forests, with weird cottages dotting the landscape.

Long ago, Fărcăsești was founded by a group of settlers seeking a peaceful place to call home. They stumbled upon the fertile land of Gorj and decided to build their village there. Over time, more families joined the land Fărcăsești grew into a tight-knit community.

Life in Fărcăsești was simple yet fulfilling. The villagers tended to their fields and gardens, raising crops and livestock to sustain themselves. They traded goods with neighbouring villages, forging bonds of friendship and cooperation.

But Fărcăsești was not just about hard work, it was also a place of celebration and joy. The villagers held festivals and gatherings throughout the years, honoring the changing seasons and celebrating bountiful harvests.

As the years passed, Fărcăsești faced its fair share of challenges. There were harsh winters that tested the resilience and occasional conflicts with neighbouring villages over land and resources. Through it all, the villagers remained united, supporting one another and finding strength in their community.

As generations passed, Fărcăsești continued to thrive its story got noticed in the history of Gorj. It became a place of legends and folklore with tales of bravery and kindness passed down from one generation to another.

And so, the story of Fărcăsești lives on a testament to the enduring spirit of community and the timeless beauty of life in the village of Gorj.

Bobby

Vilceanu Raisa – Nicoleta
Teacher: Sîrbu Ionela-Beatrice
Secondary School Number 1 Rovinari



It was the winter holiday, a week before Christmas and you could feel the Christmas vibe into the atmosphere. My parents and I visited my grandparents in the countryside and when I looked out of the window I could see the winter landscape and the big snowflakes falling from the sky.

My first thoughts were to go sledding on the hills nearby and just because I didn't want to go alone I took Bobby with me. You may wonder who Bobby is...well, Bobby is my grandparents' dog - a great, adorable and friendly puppy.

The snow was fluffy so I decided to do an angel shape, Bobby was running around me like a little child enjoying the snow. It was wonderful!

Then, in the adrenaline of the moment, on the slide I decided to close my eyes to feel everything with even more intensity. Suddenly, I opened my eyes and surprise!...in front of me there was a big hole which I tried to avoid , but unfortunately I was not able to and so I ended up in it with no chance to come out by myself. At that point I heard Bobby running away and I was so sad and scared to be there left alone.

After a while I made out a barking sound far away and when I looked up I saw my beautiful and smart puppy at the edge of the hole with a rope in his mouth , not long after I could listen to my grandparents' steps as the snow was crunching under their feet..

All three of them saved me .I was so happy to be finally safe .Together we went home and I thanked to my grandparents and of course to my lovely and courageous Bobby for his loyalty. Bobby received a big snack and a huge cuddle, being treated like a king.

Christmas is my favourite holiday, but this year it was even more special in the countryside with my favourite people, my grandparents and my special dog Bobby. We had a very tasty dinner and Bobby was the special guest , everyone being grateful to him for his help with my incident. Once the danger gone we were able to laugh about it.

I love Bobby very much and he will always be a very dear friend to my soul.

Erasmus+ Opportunities for Pupils: Building a European Future from a Young Age

VLADESCU SERGIU-DUMITRU

COLEGIUL NATIONAL TUDOR VLADIMIRESCU

PROF. POPESCU LUMINIȚA-MILI

The Erasmus+ programme is widely recognized for its role in supporting university students across Europe, but its benefits extend far beyond higher education. One of the most important aspects of Erasmus+ is its support for pupils in primary and secondary schools, providing them with international opportunities to learn, grow, and connect with their peers across Europe. For Romanian pupils, Erasmus+ represents an exciting chance to discover new cultures, practice foreign languages, and prepare for future studies or careers in an interconnected world.

What is Erasmus+ for Pupils?

Erasmus+ for schools focuses on enhancing cooperation between European educational institutions and creating opportunities for young learners to engage in international experiences. Unlike higher education exchanges, which often involve individual mobility, school projects usually take place in the form of group exchanges, partnerships, and collaborative projects between schools in different countries.

This approach ensures that pupils as young as 10 or 11 can benefit from intercultural education, even before they reach university age. Erasmus+ also integrates digital collaboration through platforms like eTwinning, enabling schools to work together virtually on shared projects.

What Does Erasmus+ Offer Pupils?

1. Short-Term and Long-Term Exchanges

Pupils may travel abroad with their classmates and teachers to a partner school in another country. These visits usually last between a few days and a few weeks, although in some cases, long-term mobility (lasting several months) is also possible.

2. Joint Educational Projects

Schools can develop joint projects on themes such as environmental protection, technology, arts, or European identity. Pupils from Romania work together with their peers abroad to research, present, and exchange ideas.

3. Virtual Collaboration: eTwinning

Through the eTwinning platform, pupils can collaborate with others across Europe online. They exchange messages, create joint presentations, and even produce digital magazines or videos.

4. Youth Exchanges and Camps

Some Erasmus+ projects include international camps or workshops, where pupils from different countries come together to learn, play, and build friendships.

5. Inclusive Participation

Special support is provided for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring equal access to international experiences.

Benefits for Romanian Pupils

For Romanian pupils, Erasmus+ brings a wide range of advantages that go beyond academic learning:

- **Language Development:** Exposure to foreign languages at an early age helps pupils improve communication skills and gain confidence.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Meeting peers from different backgrounds fosters tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity.
- **Teamwork and Social Skills:** Pupils learn how to work with others, adapt to new situations, and share ideas in collaborative environments.
- **Personal Growth:** Travelling abroad, even for a short time, strengthens independence, adaptability, and self-esteem.
- **Future Opportunities:** Pupils who participate in Erasmus+ often feel more prepared for future studies abroad and more motivated to pursue international careers.

How Can Romanian Pupils Apply?

Since Erasmus+ projects for pupils are organized at the school level, individual applications are not required. Instead, the process usually works as follows:

1. **School Participation** – A Romanian school applies for and wins funding for an Erasmus+ project in partnership with schools abroad.
2. **Project Announcement** – Teachers inform pupils and parents about the opportunity.
3. **Selection of Pupils** – Depending on the project, selection may be based on motivation, academic results, interest in the topic, or language skills.
4. **Parental Approval** – Parents or guardians must agree to the participation, since pupils are underage.
5. **Funding and Support** – Erasmus+ covers travel, accommodation, and activity costs, so participation is free or very low-cost for families.

Conclusion

Erasmus+ is more than an education programme—it is a powerful tool for shaping Europe’s future generations. By offering Romanian pupils the chance to study, collaborate, and travel abroad, Erasmus+ helps them become open-minded, skilled, and confident young citizens. These experiences prepare pupils not only for academic success but also for life in a multicultural, globalized world. Through Erasmus+, Romanian pupils can discover that learning is not limited to the classroom but is enriched by the shared experiences of a united Europe.

Note:

This article has been written with the sole purpose to inform the first year pupils in high school about their possible European perspective. Consequently, the paper lacks original contribution or personal assumption. It is rather a summary of all of the opportunities it can offer to all the pupils of the European Union as well as the chances they can benefit if taking part in this program.

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Teachers

THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING ENGLISH FROM AN EARLY AGE

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Nowadays, learning English is crucial as it's become a universal language for communication, and it's crucial to start teaching English to kids at a young age. Suhendan (2013) states that there is a far greater likelihood of foreign language proficiency—that is, speaking like native speakers without an accent—for kids under the age of eleven or twelve. According to Suyanto (2005), the early years—often referred to as the "golden age"—are crucial for a child's intellectual development. These years span from 0 to 8 years old. Instead of just being repetitious, the development process proceeds throughout this time in a more sophisticated and irreversible way. It is imperative to acknowledge that this stage, sometimes referred to as the "golden age," is extremely important for promoting the best possible development in every area of a child's development. Drawing from Berk (1992, p. 18) The term "early childhood" refers to the period between 0 and 8 years old, during which time there is a swift and varied advancement in all facets of human existence. Before this golden age ends, it is imperative that youngsters be introduced to all facets of language

The ideal time to start learning English as a second language is before puberty. Chomsky, an authority on English, asserts that there is a neurologically based "critical period" that ends around puberty and during which total mastery of a language is achievable. Individuals have a sensitive time, also called the "critical period," during which language acquisition is simpler and occurs more quickly, according to Chomsky. The process of teaching a foreign language includes teaching vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, among other language elements. Suyanto goes on to say that learning activities for foreign or second languages entail the development of language competencies and skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Instead of just copying what they see around them, children create their own learning process. Piaget maintained that because children are naturally curious about their surroundings, they continually try to understand them by asking questions. The four main stages of a child's cognitive development—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational—correspond to escalating complexity and advance with age, according to Piaget (quoted in Mukhlisah, 2015). Every kid goes through these phases in a particular order, according to Piaget, with each stage building on the one before it. Although the speed at which children move through these stages may vary, no child can completely skip a stage. Piaget's stages of cognitive development can be summarized as follows:

1. Sensorimotor stage (0-2 years): During this stage, children develop the ability to form concepts and manipulate objects. They progress from reflexive behaviours to goal-directed behaviours.
2. Preoperational stage (2-7 years): In this stage, children start to use language. However, their thinking remains egocentric and centered on their own perspective.
3. Concrete operational stage (7-11 years): In this stage, children show improvements in logical thinking. They acquire the ability to perform reversible operations and their thinking becomes less centered and limited by egocentrism. However, abstract thinking is still challenging.

4. Formal operational stage (11 years old - adulthood): During this final stage, individuals develop the capacity for abstract thinking and can use purely symbolic representations. They can solve problems through systematic experimentation and engage in hypothetical and deductive reasoning. The ideal time to start learning English as a second language is before puberty. Chomsky, an authority on English, asserts that there is a neurologically based "critical period" that ends around puberty and during which total mastery of a language is achievable. Individuals have a sensitive time, also called the "critical period," during which language acquisition is simpler and occurs more quickly, according to Chomsky. The process of teaching a foreign language includes teaching vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, among other language elements.

Children are active learners and thinkers, in Piaget's view. They actively look for answers to the issues they run into and engage in constant social interaction with their surroundings. Instead of just copying what they see around them, children create their own learning process. The four main stages of a child's cognitive development—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational—correspond to escalating complexity and advance with age, according to Piaget (quoted in Mukhlisah, 2015).

Every kid goes through these phases in a particular order, according to Piaget, with each stage building on the one before it.

I. Total Physical Response (TPR) Method Total Physical Response (TPR) is a teaching approach that stresses the synchronisation of verbal and physical activities, according to Richards and Suhendan (2013). It entails involving pupils in educational activities that require them to listen as well as respond by acting. When the instruction was "sit down," for example, in the TPR technique, every child would physically sit down and listen to the instruction at the same time. In a similar vein, they would get up in response to the command to "stand up". According to Ummah (2017), a study carried out at RA. Nurul Hikmah Pamekasan found that when teachers included physical response activities, most kindergarten pupils showed a better degree of enthusiasm in learning English. For kindergarten students, the Total Physical Response (TPR) paradigm of English instruction is considered appropriate and productive. Ratminingsih (2017) discovered that the Total Physical Response (TPR) approach consists of seven essential features: The principal aim of this approach is to facilitate students' acquisition and proficient usage of the target language in pleasurable and engaging contexts. Compared to training adults, teaching English to young children—especially in kindergarten—presents unique problems. Teachers need to be persistent and patient with their students.

II. The Game Method Teaching language to kids through games is a fun way to do it. Children can learn more quickly and easily with the use of games, according to Huyen and Nga (quoted in Wulanjani, 2016). Additionally, games foster a relaxed and stress-free atmosphere that improves children's retention of educational content. By using spelling games as an instructional strategy, teachers may help students reach their full potential in terms of their physical, mental, and intellectual capacities. Through interactive spelling games, this method actively involves kids in the learning process.

III. The Storytelling Method The storytelling method is not only a traditional approach but also a modern learning tool that serves a dual purpose. It not only aids in teaching language and providing enjoyable experiences but also plays a crucial role in guiding and fostering the psychological and physical well-being of children, helping them become well-adjusted individuals in their social environment (Isik, 2016).

Arinoviani, Pudjawan, and Antara (2016) conducted research on the implementation of the Storytelling Method to enhance the English skills of a specific group of children in extracurricular activities. Gagne and Briggs (1975) identified various learning media that encompass physical tools used to deliver teaching content. These tools include books, tape recorders, tapes, video cameras, video recorders, films, slides, photographs, pictures, graphics, television, and computers. Ideally, English learning in early childhood should employ enjoyable methods that incorporate media with audio, visual, and interactive features.

CONCLUSIONS

The positive effects of learning English in early childhood can be summarized as follows: The primary advantage of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method is that it is a fun way to learn the English language. When kids can actively participate in TPR activities, they get motivated and involved in learning English. It has been demonstrated that using the TPR method, which promotes oral expression and active participation through repeating and retelling, improves language skills in kindergarten pupils (Widiputera, 2004). Rokhayati (quoted in Nuraeni, 2019) lists the following benefits of incorporating TPR into English language learning activities:

TPR can be used in both large and small classes;

(a) it is entertaining and enjoyable for kids during the teaching and learning process;

(b) it aids in students' memory of English words and expressions;

(c) it can be applied in both situations;

(d) it is appropriate for both adult and young learners; and (e) it is appropriate for active learners in the classroom. The game approach is the next advantageous effect. The game method is an entertaining way to teach kids language. Huyen & Nga (quoted in Wulanjani, 2016) state that games have been shown to help kids learn more quickly and easily. Furthermore, games foster a relaxed and stress-free atmosphere that helps students retain the information they are learning.

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A Study on Enhancing Vocabulary Acquisition through Visual Storytelling in Primary EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

This study explores the effectiveness of visual storytelling as a pedagogical tool for enhancing vocabulary acquisition among primary school learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Grounded in both cognitive and communicative language learning theories, the research investigates how the integration of images, narratives, and learner-created visual content can support vocabulary development in young learners. The study was conducted in a primary education context, using a series of classroom-based activities such as picture-based storytelling, comic strip creation, and multimedia presentations. Data were collected through classroom observations, vocabulary assessments, and learner reflections at Liceul cu Program Sportiv, Târgu Jiu. Findings indicate that visual storytelling significantly enhances vocabulary retention, contextual understanding, and learner engagement. Moreover, the approach supports multimodal learning and accommodates diverse learning styles, particularly benefitting visual and kinesthetic learners. The study concludes by recommending practical strategies for implementing visual storytelling in early EFL instruction and highlights its potential to foster both linguistic competence and creativity in young language learners.

1. Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in primary education has gained increasing importance in the European educational landscape, particularly following the recommendations of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2001) and national curriculum reforms that promote early foreign language learning. In Romania, the inclusion of English from the first or second grade reflects a strategic effort to align with European standards and to offer students a competitive advantage in an increasingly globalized world.

Young learners, typically aged 6 to 10, represent a unique demographic in foreign language education. They are cognitively, emotionally, and socially different from older students, which necessitates pedagogical approaches tailored to their developmental stage. These learners are curious, energetic, and eager to interact, but they also have limited attention spans, developing literacy skills, and emerging metacognitive abilities. Therefore, the teaching of English in primary education must integrate playful, sensory-rich, and socially engaging activities that prioritize oral language, listening skills, and implicit acquisition over formal grammar instruction.

This study aims to examine the theoretical foundations, classroom strategies, and contextual challenges associated with teaching EFL in primary schools, with particular reference to Liceul cu Program Sportiv, Târgu Jiu. It also discusses examples of effective practice, including the integration of songs, stories, games, and routines, and concludes with pedagogical recommendations for early language teachers.

Objectives of the Study:

- To explore age-appropriate approaches for teaching EFL in primary education
- To analyze common challenges and propose practical solutions
- To describe effective teaching strategies through real-classroom examples
- To provide insights into the role of routine, creativity, and formative assessment in young learners' language development

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Language Acquisition in Young Learners

Teaching English to primary-aged children must be grounded in a strong understanding of how young learners acquire language. The field of developmental psychology and second language acquisition provides useful frameworks to inform instructional decisions.

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development suggests that children in primary education (roughly aged 6–11) move through the preoperational and early concrete operational stages, during which their thinking becomes increasingly logical but remains rooted in concrete experiences. This implies that language learning must be tactile, visual, and connected to real-life contexts. Abstract grammar explanations, for instance, are less effective than hands-on activities, storytelling, and visuals that relate new language to their everyday lives.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and scaffolding in learning. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is particularly relevant: learners benefit most from tasks that are slightly beyond their independent level but achievable with guidance. In the EFL classroom, this translates into collaborative tasks, teacher modeling, and peer support—all of which are vital for building language skills.

In terms of second language acquisition, Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) posits that children learn language when they are exposed to comprehensible input—language that is slightly above their current level ($i+1$). Importantly, this input must be delivered in a low-anxiety environment where the focus is on meaning and enjoyment rather than accuracy or correction. Songs, rhymes, and animated storytelling provide rich sources of input that are enjoyable and unthreatening for children.

Furthermore, Scott and Ytreberg (1990) and Cameron (2001) emphasize that children learn language holistically. They do not analyze grammar explicitly but pick up chunks of language through repetition, rhythm, interaction, and routine. They need to hear, see, and use language in meaningful contexts.

2.2. Characteristics of Young Language Learners

As highlighted by Pinter (2006) and Shin and Crandall (2014), primary-aged learners are:

- Eager to communicate, even with limited vocabulary

- Responsive to praise and motivation
- Highly influenced by routine, play, and imagination
- Developing literacy skills in their first language, which can support or hinder L2 development
- Sensitive to classroom climate and teacher behavior

These characteristics suggest that language learning activities must be short, varied, engaging, and filled with movement and fun. Visuals, puppets, songs, physical actions (TPR), and classroom rituals (greetings, weather chats, calendar routines) are not just enjoyable—they are developmentally appropriate vehicles for learning.

2.3. Justification for Early Language Learning

The rationale for teaching English at an early age includes:

- "The earlier, the better" hypothesis: Younger learners have greater neuroplasticity and may develop better pronunciation and intuitive understanding of the language.
- More time for cumulative exposure: Starting early gives students more years to build fluency.
- Lower affective filter: Younger children are less inhibited and more willing to take risks in speaking.
- Cross-linguistic transfer: Learning a second language can reinforce awareness of language structures, which supports first-language literacy and cognitive development.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that early exposure alone does not guarantee success. The quality of instruction, continuity across levels, and trained teachers are essential components (Edelenbos, Johnstone, & Kubanek, 2006).

3. Methodology and Contextual Considerations

3.1. Research Context: Liceul cu Program Sportiv, Târgu Jiu

This study draws upon classroom observation and reflective teaching practice at Liceul cu Program Sportiv in Târgu Jiu, a Romanian school with a strong emphasis on both academic and athletic excellence. English is introduced in the second grade, in alignment with national curriculum requirements, and continues as a core subject throughout primary education.

The school enrolls children from diverse social and linguistic backgrounds, including students with limited exposure to English outside of school. Class sizes range from 15 to 20 students, and English lessons are taught once a week in grades I-II and twice a week in grades III-IV. Some children participate in extracurricular English clubs, while others rely exclusively on classroom instruction for language input.

3.2. Data Collection and Observation Focus

The methodological approach employed for this study is based on:

- Non-participant observation of 10 English lessons across grades I–IV
- Field notes documenting learner reactions, participation patterns, and classroom dynamics
- Reflection logs maintained by the teacher-researcher over the course of one semester
- Informal interviews with two primary English teachers at the school

The aim was to identify successful teaching practices, typical challenges, and learner behavior that might inform a developmentally appropriate EFL methodology for young learners.

3.3. Teaching Approaches Observed

Several key strategies emerged from classroom practice:

a) Routines and Rituals

Each lesson begins with greetings, songs, and calendar talk (“What day is it today?”, “What’s the weather like?”). These rituals establish classroom structure, reduce anxiety, and provide repeated exposure to useful language chunks. Children are often invited to lead parts of the routine, fostering autonomy and speaking confidence.

b) Storytelling and Picture Books

Stories such as “*Brown Bear, Brown Bear*”, “*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*”, or “*We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*” are central to instruction. Teachers employ total physical response (TPR) techniques and visual aids to scaffold comprehension. Vocabulary is introduced through repetition, gestures, and dramatization.

Example: In a third-grade lesson on food vocabulary, “*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*” was read aloud using flashcards and realia. Children acted out the food items and later created their own food diaries, reinforcing vocabulary through personal expression.

c) Songs, Rhymes, and Movement

English songs with repetitive lyrics (“*Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*”, “*If You’re Happy and You Know It*”) are used to consolidate vocabulary and promote pronunciation and rhythm. Movement is integral to these activities, making them especially engaging for kinesthetic learners.

d) Game-Based Learning

Games such as Simon Says, Bingo, Memory Match, and Board Races are frequently used to review vocabulary and grammar. They introduce peer interaction, motivation, and healthy competition while recycling learned content in enjoyable formats.

e) Project Work

Although limited at the primary level, mini-projects such as “My Dream House” or “My Animal Booklet” allow children to personalize language learning. These projects often combine drawing, labeling, and speaking in short presentations, integrating multiple skills.

3.4. Challenges Identified

1. Limited Exposure Time: One or two lessons per week are insufficient for immersive learning, especially for students with no home support.
2. Classroom Management: High energy levels and short attention spans necessitate frequent activity changes and clear behavioral routines.
3. Heterogeneous Abilities: Some children are already attending private English classes, while others are absolute beginners, making differentiation essential.
4. Resource Constraints: Access to interactive whiteboards or language labs was limited until last year, so many materials were teacher-made or improvised.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Effective Practice for Enhancing Young Learners' Engagement and Learning Based on observations and teacher reflections at *Liceul cu Program Sportiv Târgu Jiu* - several instructional strategies were found to be consistently effective in supporting language acquisition in primary EFL classrooms:

a) Routines Promote Security and Repetition - Young learners thrive on predictability. Opening each lesson with a familiar set of expressions and structures (e.g., greetings, date, weather) not only helps build confidence but also increases language retention through repeated exposure. This aligns with Krashen's notion of comprehensible input delivered in a low-anxiety setting. Furthermore, such rituals provide valuable classroom management structure.

b) Storytelling Encourages Imaginative Engagement - Children responded enthusiastically to narrative-based learning, especially when stories were paired with visual cues, props, and gestures. For example, while teaching adjectives and animals through "*Brown Bear, Brown Bear*", learners spontaneously started mimicking the animal sounds and movements, demonstrating deep involvement with meaning rather than surface-level repetition.

Story-based lessons foster:

- Vocabulary retention (through contextual repetition)
- Listening skills
- Imaginative thinking and emotional response
- Intercultural awareness, when stories are drawn from diverse backgrounds

This supports Cameron's (2001) view that storytelling connects language with learners' emotions and imagination, fostering long-term memory and positive attitudes toward learning English.

c) Songs and Rhymes Support Pronunciation and Rhythm - The integration of songs with actions and visuals contributed to improved pronunciation, intonation, and memorization. Learners enjoyed the predictable structure of songs, often requesting to repeat them. Teachers reported that students with weaker language skills were more likely to participate in songs than in structured dialogues, indicating the inclusive potential of music in EFL instruction.

This also aligns with multiple intelligences theory (Gardner, 1993), which values musical and bodily-kinesthetic learning as valid modalities in language acquisition.

d) Active Learning Increases Motivation - Game-based and movement tasks generated high levels of student participation. “Simon Says” and action-based vocabulary games allowed students to process meaning through their bodies, reflecting Asher’s Total Physical Response (TPR) method. These tasks were particularly effective with active learners and those who struggled to focus during more sedentary activities.

e) Cross-Curricular Integration Reinforces Learning - Teachers incorporated content from science, art, or math to reinforce both language and content knowledge. For example, in a third-grade class, students created weather charts using English terms, connecting linguistic structures with mathematical graphing. Such activities align with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), offering authentic reasons to use English beyond isolated drills.

4.2. The Role of the Teacher

In primary education, the teacher plays a central role not only as a language model, but also as a motivator, facilitator of play, and emotional anchor. Observations revealed that effective teachers:

- Use gestures, visuals, and exaggerated expression
- Encourage student autonomy through role-switching (e.g., “student-teachers” leading songs)
- Scaffold learning with simple instructions and visual support
- Praise effort generously to build self-esteem
- Are sensitive to emotional states, adjusting the pace or type of activity accordingly

This supports the view (Shin & Crandall, 2014) that teaching young learners is a specialized skill requiring training in child psychology, language development, and pedagogical creativity.

4.3. Differentiation and Inclusivity

The students were found to be highly mixed in terms of language ability in these classes. Some students had prior exposure through private tutoring or English-language cartoons, while others had never encountered English before entering school. Teachers who offered tiered tasks, flexible grouping, and peer support reported greater success in engaging all students. For example, in a labeling activity on classroom objects:

- Stronger learners wrote full sentences (“This is a pencil.”)
- Beginners matched pictures with words or used oral production only

This inclusive practice aligns with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the need to provide multiple means of expression and engagement.

5. Addressing the Needs of Learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

5.1. Inclusion in the Primary EFL Classroom

In line with Romania’s inclusive education policy and the European Union’s directives (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018), children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are increasingly integrated into mainstream classrooms, including EFL lessons. At *Liceul cu*

Program Sportiv din Târgu Jiu, several primary students with mild cognitive delays, speech-language disorders, or attention-related difficulties participate regularly in English classes.

5.2. Challenges in EFL for SEN Pupils

Teaching English to SEN pupils poses unique challenges, particularly because:

- Foreign language learning requires metalinguistic awareness, which may be underdeveloped.
- Many SEN learners face difficulties with memory, processing speed, or phonological discrimination.
- The pace of instruction may be too fast without adapted content.

Teachers reported that SEN students often experienced frustration during whole-group choral repetition or fast-paced games, especially if they had trouble with auditory processing or task-switching.

5.3. Inclusive Strategies Observed

However, with appropriate scaffolding, SEN students can thrive in EFL environments. Observations and teacher interviews identified several effective strategies:

a) Visual and Multisensory Input - Teachers used flashcards, realia, gestures, and color-coding to present vocabulary, which helped students with memory or language-processing difficulties. One teacher prepared an individualized set of laminated vocabulary cards with both image and word for a student with dyslexia, enabling him to follow along at his own pace.

b) Predictable Structures - SEN learners benefited from routine-based lessons, which reduced anxiety and cognitive load. The repetition of formats (e.g., always starting with a greeting song, moving to vocabulary review, then a game) created a sense of safety and structure.

c) Peer Pairing - Mixed-ability pairings were used to promote peer tutoring. For instance, in a vocabulary game involving classroom objects, stronger students modeled pronunciation and gestures while their peers with SEN repeated after them and pointed to real objects in the classroom.

d) Flexible Assessment - SEN students were often assessed through oral responses, drawing tasks, or gesture-based activities rather than written quizzes. One learner with motor difficulties presented a vocabulary booklet orally with picture prompts instead of writing full sentences.

e) Collaboration with Support Staff - In cases where students had a formal diagnosis and a support teacher, the English teacher coordinated closely to adapt objectives and teaching materials. While such support was limited, team-teaching moments were particularly effective.

5.4. Reflections on Inclusion - Teachers emphasized that inclusive practices in EFL require:

- Additional planning time
- Access to differentiated materials
- Ongoing professional development in SEN pedagogy

However, they also highlighted the emotional and social benefits for all students when SEN learners were included respectfully. In one case, a third-grade student with Down syndrome led the class in a greeting song, with visible pride and peer encouragement.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Key Findings

This study has explored the multifaceted nature of teaching English to young learners in Romanian primary education, with a focus on instructional strategies, classroom realities, and inclusive practices. Through literature review, classroom observations at *Liceul cu Program Sportiv, Târgu Jiu*, and teacher insights, several conclusions emerge:

1. Young learners acquire language most effectively through play, movement, stories, and songs. These methods are not only age-appropriate but also aligned with principles of second language acquisition such as comprehensible input and emotional engagement.
2. The role of the teacher is paramount. In the absence of well-developed learner autonomy, primary students rely on the teacher for linguistic modeling, emotional support, and classroom structure.
3. Inclusive teaching is not only desirable but essential. With proper adaptations, learners with SEN can participate meaningfully in EFL lessons. Visual aids, routine structures, and peer collaboration are central to inclusive pedagogy.
4. Differentiation and flexibility are key to managing heterogeneous classes, where learners arrive with varying levels of language exposure and readiness.
5. Assessment at the primary level should be formative, low-stakes, and play-based, focusing on progress and participation rather than accuracy.
6. Cross-curricular integration strengthens both content and language learning, providing meaningful contexts for English use.

6.2. Recommendations for Practice

Based on the analysis above, the following recommendations are made:

- Teacher training programs should include dedicated modules on teaching English to young learners, with a focus on early childhood psychology, activity design, and inclusive strategies.
- Schools should allocate time and support for teachers to create differentiated materials, especially for mixed-ability and SEN-inclusive classrooms.
- Classroom environments should be rich in visuals, labels, and routine charts to support literacy development and behavior management.
- Teachers should incorporate diverse methods (e.g., TPR, storytelling, music) and avoid over-reliance on worksheets or grammar drills.
- Assessment practices should be diversified to include portfolios, oral presentations, drawings, and learning games, providing a fuller picture of learner progress.
- Schools should foster collaboration between English teachers, support staff, and homeroom teachers to ensure consistent support for learners with special needs.

6.3. Final Reflections

Teaching English in primary education is not a simplified version of secondary-level instruction—it is a specialized, creative, and emotionally intelligent endeavor. At this formative age, students are not only learning a language but also forming their attitudes toward school, learning, and self-efficacy.

An effective primary English teacher must be part performer, part psychologist, and part language expert. When done with care, EFL teaching at the primary level can empower children, enrich their cognitive development, and open doors to global communication.

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TO USE OR NOT TO USE GRAPHIC NOVELS IN EFL CLASSES

THIS IS THE QUESTION!

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The evolution of the contemporary society has determined a breach between school and the socio-professional demands of the adult existence. The dynamism of technology has led as well to an unfavourable perception of pupils regarding literature. They consider it to be obsolete, therefore uninteresting, time consuming but, what is worse, time wasting.

The themes approached in the literary works stipulated by the current national school curriculum do not create emotional effects anymore and they do not inspire children of any age, whatsoever, fact which inevitably has a negative impact on the students, making them become uninterested in literature of any kind.

Then, why not digitalizing literature? This refers to the process of converting literary works into digital formats that can be accessed and read using electronic devices such as computers, tablets, and e-readers. It involves the creation of electronic versions of printed books, as well as the publication of literature that is originally written and published in digital format.

The digitalization of literature has had a significant impact on the way people read and access literary works. It has made literature more accessible to a wider audience, particularly those who may not have had access to physical books due to geographical, financial, or other constraints. It has also made it easier for readers to find and purchase books online, and has provided authors with new opportunities to publish and distribute their work.

In addition to making literature more widely available, digitalization has also facilitated new forms of literary expression, such as interactive e-books, hypertext fiction, and multimedia works that combine text with images, video, and sound. These new forms of literature have the potential to engage readers in new and innovative ways, and to explore the boundaries between traditional literary forms and emerging digital media.

No matter what kind of didactic method the teacher uses, be it traditional or modern, he or she is restrained when selecting the literary texts, and the only effect of this limitation is the educator's failure in getting students closer to the text, lecture and culture itself. This way, the new vision of the Ministry of Education for the following years of study is nothing but a salutary one. According to this, the teacher will be the one entitled to select deliberately the literary texts which are to be studied in class, both from the Romanian and from the universal literature, taking into consideration the students' age, intellectual capacity and preferences. Stimulating the individual act of reading, determining the children to develop the ability to make the difference between valuable books and commercial ones, turning something, which previously was a real burden for all the actors involved in the process, into sheer passion, is every educator's dream come true. The ludic vision of the literature classes, full of dynamism, representation and imagination is now a new reality looming on the horizon, not only for primary school teachers but also for secondary and high school educators.

Consequently, keeping in mind the fact that we should change pupils' opinion about literature (most of them consider reading a waste of time and take it as a harsh punishment on behalf of their

teachers and parents) we could make use of the latest version of literature, the so called “graphic novels”. Some notable examples of these are: “Persepolis” by Marjane Satrapi, awarded at the prestigious Comic Strip Festival at Angoulême (France), “Maus: A Survivor’s Tale”, by Art Spiegelman, awarded with a Pulitzer Prize and “Anya’s Ghost” by Vera Brosgol, whose graphic reminds us of the cartoons in our childhood.

The impact of these revolutionary books on children of various ages was an overwhelming one. They realized that reading a valuable book can be a pleasant and joyful activity if the text has this type of structure and format.

The previously mentioned books seem to be, at first, funny and relaxing but, beyond the childish drawings, they present serious problems of humankind. “Persepolis” is an autobiography which depicts the writer’s life from early childhood to adulthood; therefore, the series is not only a memoir, but a Bildungsroman. The haunting image of the Holocaust is sugar-coated by the author in “Maus: A Survivor’s Tale”, by using the adorable little mice as allegorical characters while in “Anya’s Ghost” adolescence is described from the perspective of an introverted social misfit teenager. The possibility of offering the students such a structure and image of the literary text has triggered a spectacular increase in the number of those who are willing to read. The comic strips which accompany the characters’ replies have enabled a better understanding of the text and, to a certain extent they even rendered a different interpretation of the intended message.

The comprehension and the analyses of these literary works by the pupils has been a great satisfaction for every teacher. The argumentation of their vision is a great accomplishment as well, since they are able to support their ideas with examples which are obviously filtered through their own system of literary and cultural values and information.

Getting to understand such a reading, the pupils become capable of perceiving and appreciating the literary message transmitted through a new, modern, accessible means. If we take, for example, “Maus: A Survivor’s Tale”, we can notice that the allegory in this literary work certainly influences the pupils from an affective point of view. The image of the Holocaust is a terrifying one for all the readers, regardless their age, but, by using animals for characters, the pupils’ psychic is protected and still they get to know facts about this horrifying episode in the history of humanity. The allegory gains spectacular significances when different peoples are embodied by animals. This way, the Nazis are cats, which are known to be very sly animals; the Jews are the mice, emphasizing this people’s obedience and so on. But above all these aspects, all the categories are surprisingly humanlike. Such a book could be the bridge towards the Romanian literature classes when teachers must present and discuss the “Hieroglyphic History” of Dimitrie Cantemir, which, so far, has been a very difficult subject to approach.

“Persepolis”, on the other hand, have determined students to become interested in learning more about cultural diversity, about the Muslim world, this social context being little known by the pupils who have data only from mass media, which is entirely non-fictional information. Catching their attention with this novel, the teachers could also recommend the students other novels which approach similar topics, for instance Khaled Hosseini’s novels “The Kite Runner”, “A Thousand Splendid Suns”, “And The Mountains Echoed”.

The third title, “Anya’s Ghost”, is a teenager’s diary which presents pleasant and less pleasant experiences in a girl’s life. The image of a character who lives a life full of emotions just like theirs, makes them read more of this genre, because they recognize themselves in the young characters. The illustrations in the novel make the characters’ words stronger and together with each and every reply, the readers manage to perceive the slightest details of the message. And just like all the other

two novels, this one is also a good exercise to persuade students into reading some others, which are not as new, but they are as valuable, if not more. Therefore, students will surely appreciate Eliade's "The Novel of a Short-Sighted Teenager", "The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War" by Camil Petrescu, "Anne Frank: The Biography" by Melissa Muller and many others.

In conclusion, the intergenerational education is present at an unconscious and involuntary level, within the school literary framework, motivating readers of all ages to think outside the box and turn reading into a passion, entering the world of books through childlike manners, that one of comic strips specific to younger ages. The interest aroused this way, makes the readers want to read more on the same topic and therefore they will end up reading traditional books in order to quench their thirst of knowledge.

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Project-Based Learning in the English Classroom: Fostering Engagement and Autonomy

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In today's interconnected world, language education must evolve to meet learners' diverse needs and interests. Project-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as a powerful instructional approach that shifts the focus from rote memorization and passive learning to active exploration and collaboration. In the English language classroom, PBL offers a meaningful way to engage students in authentic language use, foster learner autonomy, and develop key 21st-century skills.

Project-Based Learning is a student-centered methodology where learners gain knowledge and skills by working overtime to investigate and respond to a real-world question, problem, or challenge. Rather than following a textbook sequence, PBL emphasizes inquiry, creativity, teamwork, and reflection. In the context of English language teaching (ELT), it encourages students to use English purposefully in completing tasks such as writing plays, preparing interviews, or creating multimedia content.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) offers a range of pedagogical advantages in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom by fostering deeper student engagement, authentic communication, and holistic skill development. One of the most significant benefits is the increased motivation and engagement that arises when learners are actively involved in producing meaningful, tangible outcomes. The purposeful nature of projects enhances students' willingness to use English communicatively and to collaborate with peers. Moreover, PBL naturally integrates the four core language skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking—within authentic, task-based contexts. Rather than relying on decontextualized drills or worksheets, students engage in real-world tasks such as researching, negotiating, and presenting, which mirror actual language use. In addition, project work promotes learner autonomy and responsibility, encouraging the development of time management, goal-setting, and self-assessment skills that are vital for lifelong learning. Finally, PBL facilitates the integration of language and content, often involving themes from other subject areas such as geography, science, or history. This interdisciplinary approach aligns with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) principles, enriching both linguistic and cognitive development. Overall, PBL represents a dynamic and effective strategy for enhancing English language teaching and learning.

The following are representative project examples tailored to different educational stages, illustrating how Project-Based Learning can be effectively adapted across age groups:

At the primary level, Project-Based Learning (PBL) should be highly visual, interactive, and developmentally appropriate. Activities at this stage should focus on fostering vocabulary acquisition and encouraging spoken English in a playful and low-stress environment. One effective project is “My Dream House”, in which pupils draw and color their ideal house, label its parts (e.g., bedroom, bathroom, garden), and describe it using simple sentences such as “This is my bedroom. It is blue. There is a bed and a lamp.” This task builds basic vocabulary and supports early speaking and writing skills. Another engaging project is “Our English Zoo”, where students work in small groups to select animals, research basic facts, and prepare posters for a classroom “zoo exhibition.” Each group presents their chosen animal in English, promoting teamwork and oral communication. A further creative option is “Storybook Creators,” in which students write and illustrate simple picture stories in pairs, present them orally, and compile them into a class library. These projects encourage storytelling, reading fluency, and imaginative expression, all while reinforcing foundational language skills in a meaningful context.

In lower secondary education, learners are capable of engaging with more abstract ideas and managing tasks that involve simple research and structured communication. Projects at this stage can extend beyond the classroom and connect to real-world topics. One example is “City Guides”, where student groups create brochures or videos about English-speaking cities such as London, Dublin, or New York. These projects include research on local landmarks, cultural highlights, and

travel tips, integrating writing, speaking, and digital literacy. Another effective activity is “School Podcast in English”, which tasks students with scripting and recording short podcast episodes that might include teacher interviews, book reviews, or music recommendations. This fosters collaborative planning and speaking fluency in an engaging, media-rich format. Additionally, the “Cultural Calendar” project invites learners to explore and present monthly celebrations from English-speaking countries, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, or St. Patrick’s Day. By designing a classroom calendar and presenting each celebration, students build presentation skills and develop intercultural awareness through authentic language use.

At the upper secondary level, students are equipped to take on complex, multidisciplinary projects that involve critical thinking, formal writing, and advanced communication in English. A project such as “Career Day Simulation” allows students to explore real-life applications of English by researching potential career paths, writing CVs and motivation letters, and participating in simulated job interviews conducted entirely in English. This type of project supports the development of functional language skills and prepares learners for professional contexts. Another academically rich project is “Global Challenges Debate”, where students research pressing global issues—such as climate change, poverty, or education—and prepare structured arguments for a formal classroom debate. This not only fosters academic vocabulary and persuasive language but also cultivates analytical thinking and teamwork. Finally, the “Short Film Festival” project engages students in scripting, filming, and editing short original films in English. Through role assignment, dialogue writing, and peer presentation, students apply language creatively while developing media literacy and collaboration skills. These high-level projects encourage learners to use English as a tool for meaningful, real-world expression and critical inquiry.

Despite its well-documented benefits, the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in English language classrooms presents several practical challenges. One of the most significant obstacles is time management, as projects typically require extended periods for planning, execution, and reflection—both during and beyond regular class hours. Additionally, assessment in PBL contexts can be complex, particularly when attempting to evaluate both group outcomes and individual contributions fairly and consistently. Another common difficulty lies in student readiness; some learners may feel overwhelmed by the open-ended nature of projects and struggle with self-direction or collaboration. However, these challenges can be effectively mitigated through strategic planning. Teachers may begin with short, clearly structured projects to build students’ confidence and familiarity with the format. The use of detailed rubrics with transparent assessment criteria—such as language accuracy, creativity, and collaboration—can guide both teaching and evaluation. Moreover, offering consistent guidance, feedback, and support throughout the project cycle ensures that students remain engaged and on track. With thoughtful scaffolding, PBL can become a manageable and rewarding approach to language instruction.

In conclusion, Project-Based Learning offers English teachers a flexible, meaningful approach that turns classrooms into spaces of discovery and creativity. By tailoring projects to learners' levels and interests, and by embedding authentic communication tasks, PBL promotes both language development and life-long learning skills. Whether teaching primary, secondary, or high school students, PBL is a pathway to deeper engagement, real-world competence, and learner autonomy.

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Building Speaking Confidence Through Interactive Methods

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For many learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking is the most anxiety-inducing skill to develop. Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires real-time processing, immediate vocabulary recall, and the courage to make mistakes publicly. This is particularly challenging in educational contexts where oral performance is often assessed and learners fear judgment. Thus, developing speaking confidence is not only a linguistic goal but a psychological one. Interactive methods—such as role-plays, games, pair work, drama activities, and debates—can play a transformative role in helping learners overcome hesitation and speak with increased fluency and self-assurance.

The development of oral skills in a second language is grounded in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes meaningful interaction over mechanical drills (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985) emphasizes that learners acquire language more effectively when they are relaxed, motivated, and free from anxiety—conditions created through engaging and interactive tasks. In addition, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) underscores the importance of modeling and peer interaction in skill acquisition, which further validates the use of group-based oral activities.

Confidence plays a pivotal role in the development of speaking skills in EFL learners, as it directly influences their willingness to communicate, take linguistic risks, and engage in spontaneous interaction—key components of communicative competence. Learners who feel confident are more likely to take part in conversations, make errors without fear, and engage in spontaneous speech, all of which accelerate language acquisition.

A range of psychological and pedagogical factors can inhibit the development of speaking confidence among EFL learners, often limiting their active participation in communicative tasks. One of the most pervasive barriers is the fear of making mistakes, which can lead to hesitation, avoidance, and reduced risk-taking in oral communication. This fear is often intensified by limited vocabulary, as learners may feel unequipped to express their thoughts fluently or accurately. Negative peer comparisons can further erode confidence, especially in classroom environments where students perceive others as more proficient or fluent. An overemphasis on linguistic accuracy—at the expense of communicative effectiveness—can also discourage learners from speaking freely, as they become preoccupied with grammatical correctness rather than conveying meaning. Finally, the lack of authentic speaking opportunities within and beyond the classroom can prevent learners from developing the fluency and spontaneity necessary for real-world communication. Addressing these barriers requires a supportive, low-anxiety learning environment that prioritizes meaning-making, encourages gradual risk-taking, and offers frequent, authentic opportunities for spoken interaction.

The following instructional strategies are designed to enhance learners' speaking confidence through interactive and communicative practice:

In primary school, learners are naturally expressive and enjoy physical and imaginative play. Confidence is built by using fun, non-threatening speaking opportunities. Examples:

- Action Songs & Chants – Students sing along to simple English songs with gestures, reinforcing vocabulary and pronunciation.
- Puppet Conversations – Using puppets, children simulate greetings, short dialogues, or describe their favorite animals.
- “Show and Tell” – Each week, a student brings an item from home and describes it using prepared phrases.
- Speaking Dice – Dice with picture prompts (e.g., apple, cat,) spark simple sentences: “I can see a cat.”

These activities focus on oral participation over correctness, reducing pressure while building fluency.

Pre-teens (secondary school) often become more self-conscious, so activities must balance structure and creativity, encouraging speaking without fear of ridicule. Examples:

- Role-Plays – Scenarios like “At the Restaurant” or “At the Doctor’s” give students scripts and the chance to improvise.
- Information Gap Activities – In pairs, students describe pictures, give directions, or solve problems based on different sets of information.

- Board Games with Prompts – Spaces contain speaking tasks (e.g., “Describe your dream holiday”).
- Video Dialogue Creation – Using platforms like Flip (formerly Flipgrid), students record short dialogues and share them in a safe digital space.

Tasks at this level help learners develop conversation strategies, such as asking for clarification or expressing opinions.

High-school learners benefit from intellectually stimulating, authentic speaking tasks that prepare them for real-world communication. Examples:

- Debates – Students research and argue both sides of a topic (e.g., “Social media does more harm than good”).
- Oral Presentations – Students give mini-talks on topics of interest (e.g., hobbies, famous people, future careers), with peer questions afterward.
- Problem-Solving Discussions – In groups, students tackle hypothetical situations (e.g., “You’re stranded on an island—what do you do?”).
- Mock Interviews – Students take turns being job applicants and interviewers, simulating real-life speaking scenarios.

At this level, teachers can provide feedback on pronunciation, register, and argumentation, while maintaining a supportive tone.

Moreover, supporting shy or anxious learners in developing speaking skills requires intentional strategies that reduce pressure and create a psychologically safe environment. One effective approach is the use of pair work prior to plenary sharing, which enables students to rehearse their ideas in a low-stakes setting before addressing the whole class. Similarly, the Think–Pair–Share technique offers structured time for individual reflection and peer discussion, helping learners formulate their thoughts before speaking publicly. Sentence frames—such as “I believe that...” or “In my opinion...”—can provide essential linguistic scaffolding, allowing students to begin speaking with greater confidence and fluency. Additionally, the use of visual prompts like images, comic strips, or mind maps reduces reliance on memory and encourages descriptive, supported speech. Positive reinforcement also plays a critical role; praising effort and participation, rather than focusing solely on accuracy, helps learners feel validated and more willing to take communicative risks. Collectively, these strategies foster a supportive classroom culture where even the most hesitant learners can gradually build confidence in their spoken English.

Additionally, establishing a classroom culture where mistakes are welcomed as learning opportunities is essential to building confidence.

To avoid discouraging learners, speaking tasks should be formatively assessed using rubrics that reward participation, effort, and communication strategies—not just grammar accuracy. Peer

assessment can also be integrated with simple prompts such as: “My partner spoke clearly,” or “I learned something new.”

Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) may face additional barriers when it comes to speaking in English—such as speech difficulties, processing delays, social anxiety, or reduced memory retention. To support them, teachers can implement scaffolded speaking tasks, break down instructions into manageable steps, and provide visual or tactile prompts (e.g., picture cards, realia). For instance, a student with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) might respond better to structured, routine-based dialogues, while a learner with a speech delay may benefit from voice recording tools that allow for rehearsal before public speaking. Pairing SEN students with empathetic peers, using non-verbal response options (like gestures or pointing), and celebrating even small speaking efforts are key to building their participation and confidence. Collaboration with support staff and differentiation according to individual education plans (IEPs) ensures that speaking tasks remain accessible and empowering for all learners.

In conclusion, confidence in speaking English does not come solely from vocabulary acquisition or grammar mastery—it is cultivated through positive experiences, repeated practice, and meaningful interaction. By employing interactive methods tailored to students’ developmental stages and emotional needs, teachers can transform the speaking classroom into a space of empowerment and expression. As students build their confidence, they not only improve linguistically but grow in self-esteem, creativity, and interpersonal skills—qualities that extend far beyond language learning.

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Emerging Technologies in English Language Teaching: A Practical Overview for Modern Educators

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Introduction

The landscape of English language teaching has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years, driven by rapid technological advancement and the need for more engaging, personalized learning experiences. As educators, we find ourselves at the intersection of traditional pedagogical methods and innovative digital tools that promise to enhance student outcomes and address the diverse needs of 21st-century learners. This paper examines several key technological innovations that are reshaping English language instruction and offers practical insights for their classroom integration.

Artificial Intelligence and Adaptive Learning

Artificial intelligence has emerged as one of the most significant innovations in language education. AI-powered platforms such as Duolingo, Grammarly, and ChatGPT provide students with immediate feedback, personalized learning paths, and round-the-clock language practice opportunities. These tools analyze individual learner patterns and adapt content difficulty accordingly, creating a customized experience that traditional classroom settings struggle to replicate at scale.

Research by Chiu et al. (2023) demonstrates that AI-driven chatbots can significantly improve students' conversational fluency by providing a low-pressure environment for practice. Students who might hesitate to speak in front of peers often engage more freely with AI conversation partners, leading to increased confidence and reduced language anxiety. However, educators must remain aware that AI tools should complement rather than replace human interaction, as the nuanced cultural and emotional dimensions of language learning still require human guidance.

Virtual and Augmented Reality

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies are creating immersive language learning environments that were previously impossible. Platforms like ImmerseMe and Mondly VR place students in realistic scenarios—ordering food at a restaurant, navigating an airport, or participating in a business meeting—where they must use English in context. This experiential learning approach bridges the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application.

AR applications overlay digital information onto the physical world, allowing students to point their devices at objects and receive instant vocabulary, pronunciation guides, and contextual usage examples. The kinesthetic and visual elements of these technologies cater to diverse learning styles and create memorable learning experiences that enhance retention (Parmaxi, 2023).

Gamification and Interactive Platforms

Gamification principles have proven highly effective in maintaining student motivation and engagement. Platforms such as Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Classcraft transform language learning into an interactive, game-like experience complete with points, levels, and rewards. This approach taps into students' intrinsic motivation and competitive spirit while making the acquisition of vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills more enjoyable.

Digital storytelling tools like Book Creator and Adobe Spark enable students to create multimedia narratives that integrate writing, speaking, and digital literacy skills. These platforms encourage creativity while providing authentic purposes for language use, moving beyond traditional essay formats to encompass podcasts, digital books, and video presentations.

Collaborative Technologies

Cloud-based platforms such as Google Workspace and Microsoft Teams have revolutionized collaborative learning. Students can now co-author documents in real-time, provide peer feedback asynchronously, and engage in project-based learning that mirrors professional workplace environments. These tools are particularly valuable for developing writing skills, as they make the revision process visible and facilitate meaningful peer interaction.

Video conferencing technologies have expanded beyond emergency remote teaching to become valuable tools for connecting classrooms globally. Virtual exchange programs allow students to interact with English speakers from different cultures, promoting both language development and intercultural competence (O'Dowd, 2021).

Challenges and Considerations

Despite their promise, these technologies present certain challenges. Digital equity remains a significant concern, as not all students have equal access to devices and reliable internet connectivity. Teachers must also invest time in learning new tools and developing digital literacy skills alongside their students. Additionally, the rapid pace of technological change can make it difficult to evaluate which tools offer genuine pedagogical value versus those that are merely trendy.

Privacy and data security concerns require careful attention, particularly when working with younger learners. Educators must critically evaluate platforms to ensure they comply with data protection regulations and use student information ethically.

Conclusion

Emerging technologies offer tremendous potential to enhance English language teaching through personalization, engagement, and authentic communication opportunities. However, their effective implementation requires thoughtful integration into pedagogically sound practices. Technology should serve as a tool that amplifies good teaching rather than a replacement for it. As educators, our role is to critically evaluate these innovations, selecting those that align with our students' needs and learning objectives while maintaining the human connection that remains central to effective language education.

The most successful approach combines technological innovation with established pedagogical principles, creating learning environments where students develop not only language proficiency but also the digital literacy skills essential for thriving in our interconnected world.

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Teaching literature- types of activities

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Although literature hasn't been a compulsory component of English language teaching and assessment for a few years, there are many nostalgic voices among high school teachers. The first reason why literature is appreciated is that it represents valuable teaching material: it is authentic, enjoyable and very educational. Moreover, it encourages learning, creativity and emotional as well as intellectual involvement from the part of the students. It goes without saying that, by practising reading skills, students also improve the interpretative abilities, cultural understanding and critical thinking, not to mention the benefits to their personal development.

High-school literature in foreign language classes has an important role in teaching reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, which should never be taught in isolation, but in an integrated way. The use of children literature (especially stories) promotes language acquisition by making the learning process more authentic and enjoyable for the readers.

2. Teaching literature- types of activities

What types of activities should we use when dealing with novels?

In issue no.7 of the "Romance" magazine (May, 1997), Gabriela Grigoriu suggests a whole range of "Activities for teaching and interpreting literary texts" divided into warm-up, pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities.

The author's suggestions for the warm-up or brainstorming stage of the reading lesson include identifying the things our students already know about the author and his time, about the story and the characters, things they don't know and would like to find out etc. Encouraging students to make predictions is another very good way to begin a lesson.

For the pre-reading stage the teacher can present the characters, give some details about them and some hints about the conflict or the difficult situations they have to experience and ask the students to imagine how those characters are to react; present a conflict or a difficult circumstance in the story and ask the students to think what they would do in that situation; or choose some key-words from the text and ask the students to write a story with them.

While-reading activities can include jigsaw reading, when the text is cut into paragraphs and the students have to work in groups, summarize their paragraph in one sentence and then tell it to the class and together they have to find the right order. Another possibility is to ask the students to

extract information from the text in terms of advantages and disadvantages, good and bad aspects, pros and cons, to discuss the behavior of a character etc. Checking predictions is a compulsory activity during this stage as the students need to see if their earlier predictions match the events/ideas/words in the text and comprehension questions are very useful when we want to check understanding of the text.

The post-reading activities offer a wide range of choices: discussing the significance of the title, describing the characters, identifying figures of speech, finding the moral of the text, comparing and contrasting the society of the book with the students' background, matching definitions, synonyms or antonyms of words and changing the end of the story or presenting the story from another character's perspective.

In an article published in issue no. 16 of "Romance" (March, 2002), "Teaching Literature Through Drama", Anca Florina strongly recommends "working with drama" as it "helps students come up with different interpretations, and can be the first step to make them feel at ease with literature, to adapt literature to the needs and previous knowledge, in order to prepare the acquire of new knowledge." (Florina 2002:24).

Even if sometimes adapting literature to dramatic purposes is difficult, there are story sections which can easily be turned into drama. For instance, some fragments from Tess D'Urbervilles seem to have been written for stage performance other than silent reading.

We should keep in mind, however, that books also have an educational role, and that, apart from information, they provide formation resources under the generic name of values. Needless to say that, if teachers create the proper environment and give their students the freedom to "dig in" they will discover a myriad of more or less hidden messages. What is essential for the teacher is not to start from the assumption that "this is the text, these are all its possible interpretations" but to save some mysteries for the students to decode as well. Literature, after all, is supposed to be an individual, not a collective means of education.

While "witnessing" the events of a novel, the student will experience a large variety of emotions, feelings and thoughts and by performing the characters' roles, the students' direct participation will be guaranteed. It is also true that students' subjective involvement into the activities cannot always be measured, that they often feel and think more than they express, but ultimately, our role as teachers is to prepare the grounds for reflection, to encourage initiative and provide students with challenging contexts in order to enable them to develop their critical thinking, argumentation and problem solving skills.

Another idea is that literature should be taught in a student-centered way rather than in the traditional teacher-centered way.

Students should be stimulated to jump into the story with outfastening their seat belts, feel free to make their own interpretations and follow no rules while exploring this new world. It is the teacher's responsibility to allow them to create their own paths through their reading. However, it is also compulsory for the teacher to supply initiation, guidance and also control of the entire situation. But they should do this without threatening students' creativity and imagination. In addition to these, managing students' emotions is the teacher's responsibility as well, as sometimes, reading a tragic story can become very frustrating and, when facing this, the teacher should provide

the students with the opportunity to make amends. They should be given the permission to change the end of the story if it is too sad, too depressing or too “unfair”. They may also want to put new words into the characters’ mouths, delete previously spoken utterances or change their minds completely about a wrongful decision they made.

A contemporary adjustment has to be made as well in the attempt to establish more familiar means of communication between the students and the fictional characters. They should be allowed to imagine telephone conversations between them and the characters, exchange e-mails or send sms messages when they do not want to face a prompt reaction. If trying to get more personal opinions, it is also interesting to let the students play their own roles when meeting their fictional “friends”, assuming their own feelings, emotions, ideas and language choices.

My experience as a student showed me that teachers tend to emphasize the aesthetic value of a novel in the detriment of its moral content. To them, it was more important to teach narrative technique, plot, character, setting and figures of speech than focus on the great wisdom and human experience provided by each story.

Nevertheless, I brainstormed a list of “all the things” my students learned from the novel *Tess D’Urbervilles* and this is a small part of what I found:

- It is important to give second chances if you want to receive any; (about Angel Clare);
- One’s parents have no right to choose for their children when it comes to their future career or who they should marry;
- Leaving (for Brasil) does not lead to the solution of your problems;
- An educated girl has more opportunities in life and also the chance to make informed decisions;
- When you love somebody, accept them the way they are; don’t care what people say;
- It is not always good or good example to sacrifice ourselves for the others;
- “Passivity” is not the keyword for good life management;
- Nobody has the right to judge us for our past; we don’t owe anyone explanations for our personal choices;
- Committing a serious crime takes away your freedom and this is why we should never break the law;
- Accepting the punishment for our guilt with dignity makes our sin less hideous etc.

Taking all this into consideration, although it is true that some students may have no interest in some literary texts, considering them irrelevant and boring, good teachers will always know how to solve this problem and, usually, it is mainly about designing activities and strategies that increase students’ interest and involvement.

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Teaching Young Learners

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Teaching English to young learners means more than just providing language input, it contributes to the child’s broad conceptual development. When working with children, we are first of all teachers who are responsible for the overall development in our care. Our role is to introduce activities, materials and values which deepen their awareness and understanding of the world around them and the relationship with it.

When teaching young learners you have to consider the following things:

- Main differences between adults and children
- Motivation
- Different ages-different abilities
- Silent period
- Learning styles

Teaching young learners is very different from teaching adults because of the amount of energy children have. Knowing how to channel this energy or when to “stir” and when to “settle” children will help you achieve balanced lessons without children becoming over-excited on the one hand or bored on the other. Thus, an essential thing when planning your lessons is to think of the activities you are going to teach in terms of stirrers and settlers and alternate them. Stirrers(energizers) are activities which are designed to energize the students while settlers (coolers) are meant to calm students down.

We might want to use stirrers in order to:

- Make our students feel energetic and enthusiastic
- Lift the energy level of the class
- Motivate our students, especially if they are tired, bored or just do not feel like doing anything at all

We might want to use settlers in order to:

- calm our students, especially if they have become over-excited or too noisy
- give our students the chance to “breathe” after a competitive game or after a TPR activity
- enhance learning-there is often need to allow our students a quiet time into the lesson in order to help them prepare for learning.

Here are some examples of stirrers and settlers that can be used in an English class:

- 1. Chinese Whisper 1-** the teacher and children all sit down on the floor in a circle; the teacher starts whispering a word to the child next to her/him, then that child whispers the word to the next child and so on until the last child in the circle is whispered the word; he/she has to say out loud the word, to see if it is the same word that the teacher whispered at the beginning. The game goes on until everyone has had the chance to come up with a word.
- 2. Chinese Whisper 2-** the children form two lines facing the board and the first child in each line has a marker in their hand; the board is divided in two; the teacher whispers a word to the last child in each line at the same time (the three of them go at the back of the classroom so that the other players will not hear the word, then come back in the lines); the children in each team whisper the word until it gets to the first child in the line, who runs to the board and writes it down, then goes at the back of the line; the game continues until everyone has had the chance to be the first in line.
- 3. Musical Chairs-** the chairs (one fewer than the number of players) are arranged in a circle (a double line can be used if there is not enough space) facing outward and the children form a circle just outside of that; the teacher plays some music and the children walk around the chairs while the music is on, but when the music stops everyone must race to sit down in one of the chairs; the player who is left without a chair is out of the game and one chair is also removed in order to ensure that there will always be one fewer chair than there are players, the music resumes and the cycle repeats until there is only one player left in the game who is the winner.
- 4. Statues-** the teacher plays some music and all the children move or dance around; when the teacher stops the music they all have to freeze, if they move they are out; the game stops when there is only one winner.
- 5. Simon says-** the children listen and carry out the instructions only when Simon tells them to. Whenever they hear "Simon says" + the instructions (clap your hands/run to the board/touch your head) they have to perform the action, but if they do the actions without "Simon says" they are out; the teacher can then let one child at a time give some of the instructions.
- 6. Roll the ball-** the children sit down on the floor in a circle; the teacher rolls the ball to the first child and asks "What is your name?"; the child answers and then rolls the ball to another child and asks them the same question and so on until all the children have had the chance to ask and answer. Depending on the vocabulary you are practicing you can use different questions ("How old are you?/ What is your favourite colour?")
- 7. Who am I?-** the teacher sticks on each child's back a card with an animal name/picture on it; children walk around the class asking questions to find out what animal they are; this game can be played with colours/ food/means of transport etc.
- 8. Classifying-** the children are divided into 3 or 4 groups; each group is given a name (The colours group; the food group; the clothes group; the animals group) and several magazines, handouts or catalogues, the groups have to cut out and stick on a large piece of paper the pictures that correspond to their topic, the teacher then displays their work on the wall. If the children are old enough to read, the game can be played with words instead of pictures.

It is important to keep in mind that the difference between stirrers and settlers is not always clear, sometimes it depends on how we decide to do the activity.

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The Role of AI in the Classroom

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing various sectors, and education is no exception. As technology continues to advance, AI is increasingly being integrated into classrooms worldwide, offering opportunities for personalized learning, automation of administrative tasks, and enhanced student engagement. This essay explores the benefits, challenges, and future potential of AI in the classroom, providing insights into how it can transform education.

Personalized Learning

One of the most significant advantages of AI in the classroom is its ability to offer personalized learning experiences. Traditional classrooms often struggle to cater to the diverse needs of students, especially in large class settings. AI-powered tools can analyze individual student data, such as learning styles, progress, and areas of difficulty. Based on this analysis, AI can provide tailored learning resources, such as customized quizzes, tutorials, and even interactive learning environments. For example, platforms like AI-driven educational apps can adapt in real time to a student's pace, offering more challenging material when a student excels or providing additional support when they struggle.

This adaptability helps bridge the learning gap for students with varying abilities. It ensures that each student is learning at an optimal pace, fostering better comprehension and retention of the material.

Automating Administrative Tasks

AI also alleviates the burden of administrative tasks for teachers, allowing them to focus more on teaching and less on paperwork. Automated grading systems, for instance, can instantly assess assignments, quizzes, and exams, providing immediate feedback to students. This reduces the time spent on grading and enables teachers to monitor student progress more effectively. AI can also assist with attendance tracking, scheduling, and even lesson planning, offering suggestions for improving instructional methods based on student performance data.

With AI handling routine administrative duties, educators can dedicate more time to engaging with students and fostering a productive learning environment.

Enhancing Student Engagement

AI can further enhance student engagement by offering interactive and immersive learning experiences. Virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) applications powered by AI can transform a traditional classroom into an interactive space where students can explore complex topics in 3D, such as biological processes or historical events. These technologies not only make learning more engaging but also help students visualize and understand abstract concepts more effectively.

Moreover, AI-driven chatbots and virtual tutors are becoming increasingly sophisticated, providing students with a 24/7 resource for answering questions, clarifying doubts, and offering additional learning materials. These tools can guide students through assignments, offer hints, and even create educational games, fostering a more dynamic and fun learning environment.

Addressing the Challenges

Despite the numerous benefits of AI in education, there are challenges that must be addressed. One of the primary concerns is data privacy. AI systems require large amounts of student data to function effectively, raising questions about how this data is stored, protected, and used. Ensuring that AI platforms adhere to strict data privacy and security regulations is essential to prevent misuse of sensitive information.

Another challenge is the potential for over-reliance on technology. While AI can enhance learning, it should not replace human interaction. Teachers remain crucial in guiding students, fostering critical thinking, and offering emotional and social support, areas where AI still falls short. Balancing the use of AI with traditional teaching methods is key to maximizing its potential without diminishing the role of the educator.

The Future of AI in Education

Looking ahead, AI will continue to evolve and become more integral to education. As AI systems become increasingly intelligent, they will be able to predict learning outcomes with greater accuracy, allowing teachers to intervene early when students are at risk of falling behind. AI can also support lifelong learning, offering personalized educational opportunities for adults seeking to upgrade their skills or pursue new interests.

Moreover, the integration of AI in education will likely result in a more inclusive learning environment. AI has the potential to support students with disabilities, offering assistive technologies that help with reading, writing, and communication. Text-to-speech software, AI-driven sign language recognition, and other tools can provide students with disabilities the resources they need to succeed in the classroom.

Conclusion

In conclusion, AI holds the potential to revolutionize education by offering personalized learning, automating administrative tasks, and enhancing student engagement. While challenges such as data privacy and the risk of over-reliance on technology exist, the benefits of AI in education are undeniable. As AI continues to evolve, it will play an increasingly vital role in shaping the future of education, offering more equitable and effective learning experiences for all students. To fully harness its potential, educators, policymakers, and technologists must work

together to address the challenges and ensure that AI is used responsibly and effectively in the classroom.

LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH WATCHING MOVIES

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Around the world, the cultural heritage of a nation is the language. During the last decade, learning languages has become more important. Learning a new language not only develops individual intelligence, but also it gives learners, permission to enter and gets learners near to another culture and prepares them with the essential skills to succeed and change their behavior in a rapidly changing world (Chan, Deborah, 1999). But Sometimes students get bored or find it difficult to learn English because it is too much explanation and difficult to understand because its is different from our main language is Indonesia, different in pronunciation and in writing, such as writing for past tense, present tense. To answer this problem, senior highschool teacher is expected to find a creative strategy to apply in the teaching and learning process. Teacher is challenged to be able to apply an attractive strategy in his/her English class. There are some ways to make an attractive teaching and learning process. Teacher can use flash cards and English songs to teach and involve students to learn English. This strategy of using English movies for teaching and learning activity also considers about its benefit. Therefore, this paper also states the benefits of using English movie as an attractive teaching and learning strategy.

The Implementation of English Movie in Classroom

To conduct an attractive English teaching and learning process for Senior high school students, teacher can use English movie. In the implementation, before teacher starts conducting teaching and learning activity by using western movie, there are some points to consider.

The points are:

1. First, the teacher should choose the movie that suitable for students in senior high school, so the teacher should watch first that movie before showed to the students.
2. Second, teacher should consider the content of the movie. Teacher should be careful to play movie containing certain religious or race issue. If teacher still wants to play the movie in any reasons, before turning the movie on, teacher can give some notes to students. It aims to avoid the misconception and misunderstanding among students in responding the movie.
3. Thirdly, the teacher must do the editing for the movie because it is not possible to watch the whole movie in the class and also edit in some unimportant parts. So students can quickly get the main points of the film.
4. Fourth, teacher should consider the relation between movie and the syllabus of Senior high school. Teacher should be creative in relating the movie and topic discussed based on the syllabus. For example, when the basic competence states the topic discussed is asking for

information, teacher can play certain scene which shows how people ask for information. Thus, it is no doubt that the movie really supports the syllabus.

5. Fifth, teacher should consider time of course and time needed to play the movie.

Since it is Senior high school, time allocation for one meeting is 45 minutes. Let's say that in a certain day, English subject has 2 meetings. It means that the subject can be conducted in 90 minutes. By realizing that fact, it is almost impossible for teacher to play the entire movie. It is based on the consideration that commonly movie lasts for 90 minutes 14 or more. If teacher still forces to play an entire movie, then there is no time for class discussion. Teacher should remember that teacher is not showing the movie, but by the movie teacher is teaching English to Senior high school students. Besides, it is possible for students to get bored. Because of that, teacher should choose a movie which less in less than 90 minutes. Another possibility is that teacher can only play several scenes which have strong correlation to the topic discussed in the meeting.

6. Sixth, teacher should consider the existence of supporting media to play the movie.

Before starting the lesson, teacher should make sure whether the supporting media such as computer set or LCD has already been provided or not; whether the supporting media can work well or not.

In the application, teacher can use English movies to teach four skills. They include listening, speaking, and also writing skill. By using English movie, teacher can also teach grammar and introduce new vocabulary for students.

Listening Skill

Since the movie also produces audio element, so through movies students can increase their listening skill. According to Nuwongsri in (Namwong, 2012) findings that the development of listening skill by selfstudy through audio movies, could improve and develop the samples' listening skill. They were more confident in listening as well as satisfied with development of listening skill by this technique further. In this case the teacher can make class into three parts activity, namely prewatching, while-watching and postwatching. In pre-watching, teacher asks students, whether they are already watching that movie or not or some information or spoiler from that movie. In while-watching students watching the movie without subtitle and students should take some note from the movie. In post-watching teacher will give questions which are related to the movie.

Speaking Skill

Through English movie, students can hear the correct pronunciation from the dialogue between the actors and actress. Students can also observe the expression of the actor or actress then imitate it. Just like in listening skill, in its implementation, teacher can also divide the class activity into three parts. They are Prewatching, While-watching, and Postwatching. Since the objective in speaking skill is for the students to be able to speak English accurately, fluently and contextually, teacher should focus more on students' speaking activities.

Writing Skill

Through English movie, students can write the dialogue in the movie, then try to correct the grammar, diction, and spelling. Teacher can also implement same activities of pre-teaching and whilst-teaching such as in speaking skill (Brown, 2007). However, in the post watching, students can have different assignment to do.

Grammar

It is obviously seen that by using English movies, teacher can teach listening, speaking and writing skill. Nevertheless, in spite of those three skills, teacher can also use English movies to teach grammar (Harmer, 2001). For Senior high school students, learning English grammar has its own challenge. Since there are many grammar rules to remember, students often experience stress. In addition, grammar teaching which focuses only on the grammar theory and exercises will rob the students of the chance to have fun grammar learning. The stressful environment, therefore, influences negatively on their success to receive the lesson.

Students who are already in stressful and boredom environment will not be easy to receive the lesson.

If they are bored, unconsciously, they will refuse the lesson. Then, they will ignore the lesson and prefer to do an activity they like, such as falling asleep in the middle of lesson, chit-chatting with friends, or even skipping the class.

Realizing that fact, teacher should find a strategy to attract students' attention to learn grammar. Same like in writing skill, students can write the dialogue from the movie and then correct the grammar or try to guess what grammar that use (Adnan, 2014).

New Vocabulary

Implementing English movies in teaching English as a Foreign Language to Senior high school students can also improve students' vocabulary (Gushendra, 2017). Students not only get fun learning environment, but they also get new vocabulary from the movie they watch.

Learning English through English movies also has advantages.

Advantages Learning English through movies teacher can teach students in several skills, including listening, speaking, writing, grammar and also get new vocabularies. In the application also get other benefits. They are:

- a. English movies show natural language, because they are from native speakers. So students can speak the correct pronunciation.
- b. English movie provides a lot of content that can help the students learn how to use some expression correctly.
- c. The student did not get bored easily while to learn English because they are love watching movies.
- d. Students can also learn about the English culture.

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The motivation angel

**Prof. Șarapatin Irina Nicoleta,
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Just outside of Gateshead, England stands a great statue built by Antony Gormley in 1998. The work is entitled *Angel of the North* and stands for motivation, desire to achieve the greatest, liberty to succeed in one's endeavors.



Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

The motivation angel is built from six individual pieces, each representing a particular aspect of motivation. In this respect, we have the foundation on which the statue rests. The foundation / base stands for the extrinsic motivation. Alan Rogers states that initial motivation cannot survive without permanent support from the outside, and this opinion can be illustrated by

the motivation base encountered in Gormley's work. Sustainability is the key word in maintaining a good sense of reason for acting one way or another, in view of acquiring success.

The next piece to put together carries the name of "affect" and is directly linked to teachers and their roles and participation in motivating learners. Affect immediately draws attention to the words "feelings", "consideration", "self-esteem". For learners of all ages, having a good relationship with the teacher consists sometimes of simple things such as being on a first name basis, or being able to discuss a multitude of issues that concern the students, quite often that means subjects that do not pertain to school. Teachers that constantly show interest in their learners' evolution, teachers that praise any degree of effort and success, teachers that recognize failure and acknowledge the fact that it does not always have a negative influence on their commitment to the learning process, those are more likely to have a bigger impact on a learner's attitude towards school and the educational process.

Further on, the next brick in the building of the statue is "achievement", which conducts our discussion towards the opposition above mentioned, success vs failure. Learners need to experience success, to have a sense of achievement, no matter the extent of it or degree. They need to experience success at least once in order to strive for it constantly. Furthermore, a teacher's job is to be able to provide an appropriate level of challenge at any given time, so that the learner is constantly driven by desire to achieve things. Guidance is also a crucial aspect of this particular section, as teachers are to play the part of guides through activities, to show learners what was right and what was wrong, and to teach them how to do better next time. (Harmer, 2007)

Attitude is the following stone in our construction and that relies on the fact that knowledge is undeniably accompanied by an appropriate attitude towards work. The confidence that we as teachers display in front of students must denote the fact that we do know what we are doing, that there is also a finish line to everything we start, that we have a reason behind every activity we engage our students in, that there is a purpose for learning. When teachers display confidence in class, and that sense of confidence is backed by strong knowledge, learners will know that standing in front of them is a person that not only is qualified, but is also committed to what he/she is doing.

In what concerns the next step in building the motivation angel, we encounter the use of suitable activities. In order to stay motivated, learners need to participate in activities that have a meaning, a purpose, an outcome for their future. Meaningless tasks that are only designed to fill the time required per class will only make the learners misunderstand the process and reason for the educational system. As we discussed above, learners need to be given appropriate activities to

engage in, i.e. activities that are suitable for their age and level, and also for their interests and needs.

Agency is the last segment to put together in building the motivation angel, and it concerns the participation of learners in the design of lessons for the classroom. Jeremy Harmer, among other specialists, discusses the need to include the learner in the creation of their lessons. They are the recipients of content, therefore it is advisable for teachers to give some liberty to the students as well, to value their input in building a lesson. Including learners in lesson planning empowers them to “take a more active role in the course design” (de Sonnevile, 2005)

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Creativity and Pedagogical Originality: Perspectives

**Prof. Șarapatin Irina Nicoleta,
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Creativity, originality, initiative, and spontaneity are concepts that define our professional identity, representing either our current state or our imminent aspirations. For several decades, a dichotomy has existed between traditional and modern approaches, prompting discussions regarding the optimal balance between the two across various fields. This paper examines the identity of education in relation to its past, present, and future. The primary objective is to highlight educational best practices that foster optimal relationships between students, families, and contemporary society.

The Romanian educational system is undergoing a continuous transformation. The relationships between school, family, and society are constantly evolving to adapt to the modern era. Our current generation is defined by extensive technological advancement and digitalization; daily activities are now largely contingent upon mobile phone and internet access. While the massive impact of digitalization on daily life is a subject of ongoing debate, with some critics decrying its influence, others emphasize its significant advantages.

Regarding education, recent years have favored the development of practices based on modern teaching and learning tools. Today, interactive lessons can be delivered via smartboards, and information can be accessed instantaneously through the internet. The digital era enables greater spontaneity, as technological means provide the freedom to improvise while remaining creative and original. For instance, activities in preschool and primary classes are now dependent on integrating interactive stages into every lesson. Alongside rigorous content organization, moments of improvisation and spontaneity from the educator are essential. Infinite examples exist where a creative moment—even a simple spontaneous idea—can completely transform the course of a lesson. For example, an English teacher teaching colors to beginners can find inspiration in any surrounding object, creating unique, personalized activities through group or team games.

The 21st-century educator possesses an array of tools and infinite sources of information. The internet allows for the rapid acquisition of classroom activities from specialized websites. However, true originality and creativity are not merely products of technological proficiency or the ability to improvise quickly. Instead, they stem from the freedom to choose and the courage to modify established rules when they are no longer relevant or suitable for the students.

A child's imagination must be encouraged from an early age, as the imaginative process relies deeply on the freedom granted by those around them. Creativity in a child is comparable to a smoldering volcano waiting to erupt; children are capable of becoming independent, creative, and spontaneous if given the opportunity. Contemporary European educational perspectives aim for the development of children integrated within society. Human values highlighted in both school and extracurricular activities, practical skills, and the school-family-society relationship form a complex system that transforms the child into a functional 21st-century adult.

This context underscores the importance of interdisciplinarity. Modern subjects are closely interrelated; knowledge is no longer confined by the limits of a single topic but extends through the capacity for integrated understanding. Consequently, school subjects are viewed as interconnected rather than standalone entities, offering students the chance to be independent, creative, and original in their daily activities through integrated knowledge.

Lowenfeld emphasizes the importance of stimulating creativity from early childhood. Developing receptivity to various activities and the perception of the world fosters a child's understanding and their ability to apply concepts within society (apud. E. Landau, 1979, p. 99). It is often stated that those who know two or more foreign languages gain multiple perspectives on the world. Knowledge of other cultures provides vast opportunities for analysis and the construction of new

concepts. This leads toward multiculturalism and the adoption of a modern, effervescent lifestyle that stimulates creativity.

Creativity is inextricably linked to inspiration. An inspired teacher can entirely redirect a lesson when a pre-established plan is no longer effective. A creative teacher allows students to propose activities, thereby shifting the lesson's dynamics. While granting students the freedom to create or propose activities is not easy for everyone, it is important to recognize the infinite creative possibilities that such freedom entails. A free child will be significantly more active and creative, often producing surprising results. Both the educator's and the student's creative processes are conditioned by freedom - a freedom offered by developed thinking and access to modern information.

While the product of creative activity is a novelty for a child discovering the world, an adult perceives such success as a result of repetition and sustained effort. From a social standpoint, the value of this creative product differs between children and adults; however, from a psychological development perspective, its value increases based on its individual relevance.

To effectively develop a child's imagination, educators must account for individual learning styles, characteristics, and needs, while maintaining the ability to motivate the student in any situation. Activities should be tailored to age and knowledge levels. For example, preschoolers require activities involving movement and diverse, colorful didactic materials. Conversely, adults are inspired by existing affinities that help them reach their creative potential.

Within the classroom, educators can utilize both proposed didactic materials and existing resources, such as using colored pencils for counting or a clock to demonstrate circular shapes. An educator's spontaneity and departure from pre-established rules encourage students to unleash their own imaginations and create beyond given patterns. Tools such as images, flashcards, songs, games, and riddles are useful in generating constant ideas.

Experience shows that a simple question can change the course of an entire activity. Therefore, educators are advised to periodically consult students regarding their learning preferences and necessary exercises. This grant of freedom results in positive imaginative outcomes and the acquisition of coordination and negotiation skills. Ana Stoica notes that every creator possesses a unique profile based on their endowment, experience, and level of creativity; there is no single "creator type," but rather specific individualities.

Harmer highlights the importance of diversity in educational practices, emphasizing the use of technological and digital resources to complement traditional materials. Furthermore, Harmer identifies the student as the primordial resource in education, with each individual serving as an infinite source of experiences that contribute to the educational process (2007, p. 176).

In conclusion, the concepts of creativity, originality, spontaneity, independence, and freedom are central to the desired identity of the Romanian school system. To achieve this, the educational process must be viewed as a complex whole where every element is essential.

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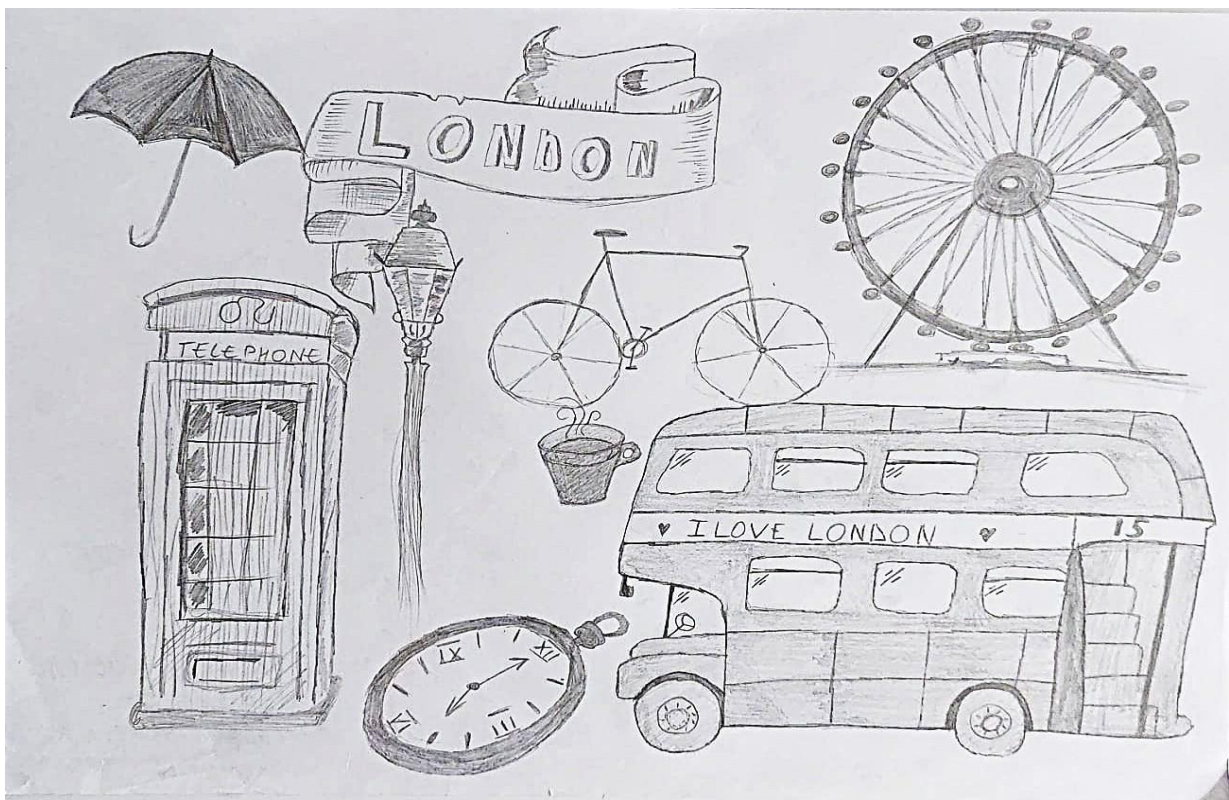


Illustration by Violina Asandi, Școala Gimnazială Sâmbotin

Living Heritage of Algemesi

Prof. Mihaela Huică

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"Erasmus+ opens minds" – a simple phrase that encapsulates the transformative power of cultural exchange. During our Erasmus+ Accreditation project in Spain, I had the extraordinary opportunity to visit Algemesi, a small Valencian town that would forever change my understanding of community, tradition, and human potential. What I witnessed there was far more than a local festival; it was a living testament to the power of collective spirit and cultural heritage.

Every September 7-8, the small Valencian town of Algemesi transforms into a spectacular showcase of human towers during the Festivity of 'la Mare de Déu de la Salut' (Virgin of Health). This remarkable celebration, recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2011, involves nearly 1,400 participants in a unique blend of theater, music, dance, and the breathtaking formations known as human towers or 'muixeranga'.

The Tradition

The festival centers around three religious processions honoring the Mare de Déu de la Salut, but the human towers capture the most attention. These formations involve around 200 men standing on each other's shoulders in successive stages, sometimes reaching six to ten levels high. Each structure requires precise coordination, with participants forming the base , trunk levels , and culminating with a child who crowns the tower.

Community Significance

For Algemesi's residents, human towers represent far more than impressive spectacles. They embody fundamental community values including teamwork, courage, trust, and mutual support. The practice creates a powerful metaphor for social cohesion, requiring participants of all ages and backgrounds to work in perfect harmony. The tradition serves as a direct link to ancestors, maintaining cultural continuity across generations while reinforcing local identity and pride.

Preparation and Training

The spectacular September formations result from year-round dedication and rigorous preparation. Training involves developing exceptional physical conditioning, technical skill, and psychological preparation. Participants must build absolute trust in teammates while mastering weight distribution, timing, and specific positioning techniques. Young participants receive special attention, particularly those serving as the tower's crown, with training programs emphasizing agility, fearlessness, and mental fortitude.

Practice sessions occur regularly throughout the year, where castellers perfect their techniques and strengthen the cooperation bonds essential to their art.

Cultural Impact

The UNESCO recognition has brought international attention to Algemesi's treasured tradition, but for locals, this external validation simply confirms the irreplaceable value of their cultural expression. The human towers function as powerful symbols of resilience and unity, providing enduring values and collective strength in an era of rapid social change.

The tradition demonstrates how intangible cultural heritage can remain vibrant in contemporary society. Unlike static museum artifacts, these traditions live through active community participation, adapting to modern circumstances while maintaining their essential character. The real guardianship lies with Algemesi's people themselves, whose commitment to maintaining the tradition, training new participants, and celebrating their heritage ensures future generations will continue witnessing these remarkable formations.

The Soul of a People

Algemesi's human towers represent UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage at its finest – traditions existing not in objects but in living communities' hearts, minds, and bodies. They demonstrate how cultural practices can simultaneously serve as artistic expression, spiritual devotion, community building, and identity formation.



Building Stronger Erasmus+ Support Networks:

My Experience at the International Seminar on Long-Term Cooperation

Erasmus+ Ambassador Cucăilă-Ciulică Mădălina
Școala Gimnazială “Sfântul Nicolae”, Târgu Jiu

As an Erasmus Ambassador, I had the privilege to participate in the international seminar **“International Support Networks and Services – Laying the Groundwork for Long-Term Cooperation”**, organized under the framework of Erasmus+. This interactive event brought together participants from several European countries, all with relevant experience in education, Erasmus+ projects, mentoring, and beneficiary support activities.

The seminar was exceptionally well organized and structured. The agenda was clear and balanced, combining plenary sessions, thematic workshops, and networking activities. Supporting materials were provided both digitally—through a dedicated Padlet platform—and during the working sessions, including presentations, worksheets, case studies, and reflection resources. The trainers and facilitators were experts in the Erasmus+ field, including representatives of National Agencies and European support networks. Their approach was open, participatory, and strongly oriented toward the real needs of practitioners.

My participation was carefully prepared. I analyzed the context and objectives of the Long-Term Activity dedicated to Erasmus+ support and mentoring networks. I reflected on my own experience as an Erasmus Ambassador, particularly in information, mentoring, and dissemination activities. I also identified key challenges encountered while working with institutions and teachers involved in Erasmus+ projects and formulated clear expectations regarding the transfer of good practices and the development of mentoring competencies. This preparation enabled me to engage actively and meaningfully throughout the entire event.

The first day focused on establishing the general framework of the seminar and facilitating exchanges of experience among participants. Activities included presenting the seminar’s objectives and agenda, networking sessions, presentations of existing Erasmus+ support and mentoring models at European and national levels, and group discussions on the role of Erasmus+ mentors and beneficiaries’ needs. I actively contributed by sharing insights from Romania, highlighting the important role of Erasmus Ambassadors in supporting institutions at the beginning of their Erasmus journey.

The second day centered on collaborative working activities. We participated in thematic workshops on Erasmus+ mentor competencies, analyzed challenges in project writing and implementation, worked on case studies, and contributed to defining the principles of a European mentoring framework. I emphasized several recurring difficulties, such as limited involvement of institutional leadership, insufficient project management competencies within teams, and the continuous need for professional development among teachers.

The final day was dedicated to synthesizing results, formulating common conclusions, establishing next steps for long-term cooperation, and strengthening collaborative networks among

participants. I was actively involved in discussions regarding the sustainability of results and the importance of disseminating outcomes at national level.

This training activity directly responded to my professional development needs. It allowed me to deepen my understanding of my role as an Erasmus Ambassador and mentor, to explore European models of institutional support, and to further develop my competencies in analysis, counseling, and facilitation. It also strengthened my strategic vision regarding the impact of Erasmus+ at institutional and community levels.

On a personal level, the seminar expanded my professional network and reinforced my confidence as a facilitator of change within the educational system.

Throughout the seminar, several common challenges were identified—many of which are also present at national level: limited involvement of institutional leadership in Erasmus+ projects, lack of experience in project writing and implementation, competency gaps within project teams, insufficient follow-up and sustainability measures, and weak collaboration between schools and NGOs.

This seminar represented a highly valuable European-level reflection and cooperation framework. I strongly believe that its outcomes can significantly contribute to improving Erasmus+ support systems in Romania, by capitalizing on the experience of Erasmus Ambassadors and fostering the active involvement of all educational stakeholders.

As an Erasmus Ambassador, I consider it both my responsibility and my commitment to transform the knowledge gained into concrete actions that strengthen long-term cooperation and enhance the quality and impact of Erasmus+ projects in our educational community.

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*"There is a tide in the affairs of men
which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures."*

— William Shakespeare , Julius Caesar