

‘ELT for a Global World’



FSA
2015

Global Issues through ELT

A seminar course for MA in ELT
students

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Financed from the support ELTE won from the ‘Restructuring Higher Education’ Fund of the Hungarian Government

Session 11

From active learners to active citizens

Session Overview:

- We will explore the notion of active learning
- The transmission view of education will be contrasted to learning by doing
- We will also consider the way taking the initiative *in* the classroom can lead to initiative-taking and activism *outside* the classroom

The transmission view of education

A global issue in our society is student passivity. It is no accident that a university student in Hungary is called a 'hallgató', a listener. This reflects the assumption that you learn by listening and brings to mind the 'jug and mug' view of education: the student is the empty mug to be *filled with knowledge*.

Engaging with global issues requires a active, initiative taking, responsible mindset.

The methodology of bringing global issues into the ELT classroom

This is not a course in methodology. You will find a great variety of work modes in different books and articles on teaching techniques and methods. Perhaps you have already done a course in ELT methodology and have become familiar with a range of individual, group and whole-class work format.

However, a few work formats will be reviewed here – the ones that are especially suitable for developing communication skills in general, and for exchanging ideas on issues that matter in particular.

Encouraging students to take the initiative

- The methodology we use in the classroom is crucial in encouraging an active, initiative-taking mindset. It is important for students to see themselves as initiators of change.
- It is also useful to explore the topics of *change* and *leadership* with secondary school students.

Thinking task:

What were the main methods used in your secondary school English lessons?

Encouraging students to ask questions

Here are some ways to do this:

- Everyone formulates a question during student presentations
- Students write their own comprehension questions after listening / reading activities – they then put these questions to the rest of the class, or to the other groups
- Reward student questions
- Ask students to think of a question they want to think more about at the end of a session

Use a variety of work formats

Round

The group decides on a question or a discussion question is chosen by the teacher and written on the board. Then the students take turns commenting, sharing their ideas.

Note:

It is OK to pass, though everyone should feel the responsibility for making a contribution. It's important to point out that at this stage students should not take issue with each other's viewpoints. They should just listen and appreciate the emerging richness of perspectives.

Use a variety of work formats

Debate

If the topic is well chosen and the students are prepared, this is a highly energetic work format. It is useful for getting students to formulate good arguments, think of evidence and examples to back up their views. It can range from an informal, improvised for-and-against setting, to more formal and elaborate structures.

Note:

A debate should not be an end in itself. It is good for generating energy, ideas, creating interest. However, global issues are infinitely complex and can only be understood through discussion and dialogue.

Use a variety of work formats

Mingle

This is a kind of 'market place' activity. Students stand up, walk around talk to another student for a short while, then move on to someone else. They mingle, the way they would at a party.

Note:

This format is particularly suitable for a 'survey' task. E.g. give each student a survey question and give them 5-10 minutes to get responses from as many people as they can. It builds the skills of initiative-taking – a student needs to go up to someone and start a conversation.

Use a variety of work formats

Open discussion

Ideally, students are sitting in a horse-shoe or semi-circle. It requires a starting point which is seen by the group as relevant and worth discussing. This could be, for example, a video, an article, or some shared experience. The discussion is more likely to gather momentum and have depth if students have already done some initial thinking/reflection.

Note:

An open discussion requires sensitive facilitation. The best way to facilitate is to model the behaviours you want to see in others. Above all, be a good listener.

Work formats: reflect and share

- Which were the key work formats used in your secondary school?
- Did the work formats differ in your English lessons? If yes, in what way?
- Which were the most engaging formats? In what way were they engaging?

Reflect on your own, and then be ready to share your ideas in plenary discussion.

Focus on *change* and *leadership*

Resources on the topic of 'change' and 'leadership'

The Global Issues Special Interest Group of an international association of teachers (IATEFL) has a website where you will find some useful resources.

Here is the link: <http://gisig.iatefl.org/>

In particular, the following two video-clip based lesson ideas provide a good starting for to thinking about these issues:

<http://gisig.iatefl.org/elessons/what-makes-a-good-leader>

<http://gisig.iatefl.org/elessons/generation-waking-up>