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A combined approach to teaching English and entrepreneurship

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Abstract

"Having an entrepreneurial mindset" is as important as "speaking English well" for a successful career. These two qualities can be learned together in school. Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe, which requires systematic and effective actions to be taken to promote entrepreneurial mindsets in society, suggests some proposals to realize this. Some of these can be applied in an EFL class, thus making it a dual-purpose one, which is both teaching English and creating an entrepreneurial mindset. The aim of this paper is to show that a lesson can be designed in a theme-based way to make this possible. In this study, entrepreneurship-based exercises have been used in the class for a certain period of time and the attitudes of the students towards entrepreneurship have been compared before and after the activities. It was promising to see that there was a positive change in their attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The study revealed that embedding theme-based activities on entrepreneurship in EFL classes can be a way to stimulate entrepreneurship spirit and to promote entrepreneurial mindset of the students.

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1. Introduction

In our changing world, which is getting harder and more and more demanding for the future generations, young people are required to have a lot of skills. Among those, two skills seem vital for a successful career. One of them is having a good command of English, which is the world language and the language of the third generation universities and the other is having an entrepreneurial mindset. This paper aims to discuss the possibility of designing a curriculum for an English class with a special emphasis on creating an entrepreneurial mindset.

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It is a generally accepted fact that English is the language of the global world and there are numerous benefits of learning it at an early age. Among these are better and more advanced reading skills, greater confidence, giving brains a boost, greater opportunities in college or careers and a bigger view of the world (Dinçay, 2011).

On the other hand, entrepreneurship is getting more and more important. In past decade, policy makers and economists labeled entrepreneurship as one of the key factors to increase economic growth and innovation. In the wake of this development, entrepreneurship education programs have been proliferating all over the world as these are considered a way of fostering successful entrepreneurship activity (Rosendahl, Randolph & Sloof, 2012).

Because education is an effective key to shaping young people's attitudes, skills and culture, it is vital that entrepreneurship education is addressed from an early age. Entrepreneurship education is essential not only to shape the mindsets of young people but also to provide the skills and knowledge that are central to developing an entrepreneurial culture (Rosendahl, Randolph & Sloof, 2012).

There are some international organizations which attach great importance to this issue. One of them is the European Commission, which has emphasized the need to embed it in all sectors of education through the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan and the Rethinking Education Communication. Both documents call on Member States to provide all young people with a practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education, highlighting the importance of learning by doing within education and training (Entrepreneurship Education, 2013).

To realize the early education for the entrepreneurship, Oslo Agenda for Entrepreneurship Education in Europe was accepted. The aim of this agenda is to step up progress in promoting entrepreneurial mindsets in society systematically and with effective actions (EC, 2006).

Another organization to support early entrepreneurial education is UNESCO, which states that fostering entrepreneurship attitudes and skills in secondary schools raises awareness of career opportunities, as well as of ways young people can contribute to the development and prosperity of their communities. It helps reduce youth vulnerability, social marginalization and poverty" (UNESCO, 2014).

As is seen, the skills related to having a good command of English and having an entrepreneurial mindset are the most basic skills to be taught in schools and the earlier they are taught, the better it is for the students. So the authorities in non-English speaking countries do their best to equip the children with English as early as possible; likewise, authorities in most countries try to teach entrepreneurship skills at an early age.

So why not design the curriculum of EFL classes in such a way that the students can both learn English and gain an entrepreneurial mindset?

2. Suggested Methods To Integrate Two Skills

A course designed in this way should combine the goals of both teaching English and giving an entrepreneurial viewpoint. To achieve this, entrepreneurship can be embedded in the entire curriculum. In the courses specially designed bearing entrepreneurship in mind, there must be some activities that are selected carefully to give the learners the ability to "think outside the box", which is an essential entrepreneurial competency. The activities should also help the students adapt to new situations easily, to think independently and to learn through mistakes. The focus should be on self-confidence, perseverance, risk-taking, decision-making, negotiation skills and tolerance of uncertainty (Entrepreneurship Education, 2013).

EFL lessons during which various activities are used are suitable to achieve this goal because short dialogues or role-playing activities along with problem solving activities, reading passages and writing tasks are excellent opportunities to internalize a certain idea. Introducing the subjects and vocabulary which may inspire entrepreneurship is a must to attain the goal. This is both teaching English and addressing the subconscious mind.

While doing this, it is important to get the subconscious mind on board to help us out. According to the article *Reprogramming The Subconscious Mind, 2006*, several techniques should be utilized to reprogram our subconscious mind in order to effectively create the change we want to make, which is making them think like entrepreneurs.

One of the techniques suggested here is "repetition" of the same thought. As stated in the article *Reprogramming The Subconscious Mind, 2006*, repetitive thoughts can be quite powerful. The repeated experiences help the children form the foundation for the patterns of behavior they exhibit as adults. To make the same logic work in a language

class, similar ideas or words can repeatedly be given in most of the passages or dialogues studied in the class, which is the idea of entrepreneurship in this study.

The next technique is to use “context-rich problems”. Context-rich problems are short realistic scenarios giving the students a plausible motivation for solving a problem (Bangs, 2012).

To apply this technique in a language classroom, it is important to choose simple entrepreneurship inspiring subjects that are interesting for the students and confine them to the vocabulary the command of which the students have. If the subject is interesting enough, even the most composed students want to say something about it. For example, "Imagine that you are marketing cell phones, what would you do to persuade people to buy a certain brand?" or “Imagine you have the skill to add another feature to your cell phone, what feature would you like to add?” So they both try to speak in English and give some thought to a subject which may help them to think like an entrepreneur.

Another method to use in the language class may be to make use of reading passages which may give the idea of entrepreneurship or innovation. Studying a passage which contains some messages about entrepreneurship may be inspiring for the students.

Some of the students are more inclined to think and behave like an entrepreneur and some others are more reluctant about this. The students with an entrepreneurial inclination may benefit more from the classes designed with entrepreneurship in mind while the others may gain a certain point of view on entrepreneurship.

Besides these, the teacher can modify some classroom activities which s/he can find on the websites such as “Consortium for Entrepreneurial Education”. They are specially designed to be used in classes and already used by some teachers. These programs are in the native language of the students and aimed at giving students the opportunity to learn how businesses can be started. Students develop a plan, learn basic business vocabulary, discuss and practise marketing, customer service, record keeping, networking, problem solving and ethical business practices in these programs (Warren Miller Foundation, 2009).

A similar practice can be carried out in EFL classes. The teachers can either make up their own activities to use in the class or they can adapt one of the many given on the internet after simplifying the language according to the level of the students. Selecting the vocabulary suitable to the level of the students is important because when it comes to talking and expressing themselves, the learners can have difficulty because of their limited vocabulary while native speakers can talk without such a hardship. So the teacher should assess the level of the exercises precisely.

These activities can be as simple as only asking, "What kind of business would you like to start if you won the lottery?" or "What is the best/worst business you have ever seen?" or they can be as complicated as "Make an interview with a successful business person and learn his/her key to success." Sometimes it may be only a "role playing activity between an ice cream vendor and his customers" or "a conversation between a pizza delivery man and the customer".

The teacher should take care to choose subjects which are both interesting and serving the purpose. Then s/he should give the vocabulary the students need to talk or write about the subject and prepare some prompts to stir up ideas. After learning the vocabulary and reflecting on the subject for a while, the students can be ready to discuss or write about the subjects chosen.

3. The Study Conducted In The Class

A study was conducted to see the impact of English education reflecting entrepreneurship motives in an EFL class. In the first phase of the study, the students were given a short survey to measure their entrepreneurial attitude. In the survey, some questions, such as "If you had 100 thousand Turkish Liras, what would you do with it?", "Would you prefer to work for somebody else or for yourself?", "Would you like to be your own boss?" and "What are the advantages of being your own boss or working for somebody else?" were asked and the number of students who gave answers signaling that they have entrepreneurial propensity was justified.

In the second phase of the research, ideas promotive of entrepreneurship were used in the exercises. Because this research was carried out in a main course (grammar) class, some of the grammar exercises used in the class were chosen in such a way to mention the achievements of the successful entrepreneurs. This can be done whatever the

level of the students is. That is, it may vary from very simple subjects such as "Simple Present Tense" or "There is..., There are ..." structures to complex ones such as "Relative Clauses" or rewriting with "such ... that, so... that," structures. Here are some examples of the exercises used in the lessons.

1. Combine the following sentences using relative pronouns.

- Hamdi Ulukaya was born in Tokat. / He went to the USA when he was 22.
- Hamdi Ulukaya was a shepherd in his village. / He bought an old farm in the USA.
- He began producing his yogurt in his factory. / Americans like his yogurt a lot.

2. Rewrite the following sentences using the words given in parenthesis.

- Hamdi Ulukaya became very famous. His success story was studied at Harvard University. (so...that)
- The taste of his yogurt was very nice. It soon became popular. (such ... that)
- He called his yogurt *Chobani*. (passive voice)
- He bought a 84-year-old factory. His attorney advised him not to buy it. (although...)
- His brand, Chobani, is more popular than other brands. (as...as)
- He called his sampling truck *Chomobile*.” (passive)

Other celebrities included in this study are Hüseyin Özer, Bill Gates, Acun Ilıcalı, Vahap KÜçük, Rosalia Mera. The entrepreneurs with impressive success stories were chosen for the study. The students were already familiar with some of them. They were familiar with the brands some others created but didn't know who were behind those brands, so they were curious to hear their stories.

In the last phase, a survey similar to the one given at the beginning of the semester was given. After the evaluation of the survey, the number of students with an entrepreneurial tendency was compared with the number found at the end of the first survey. It was seen that there was an increase in the number of students who gave positive answers to the questions intended to determine entrepreneurship tendency.

The students were so curious about the subjects introduced that they wanted to learn more about them and asked a lot of questions. They even found further information about the successful entrepreneurs, the life and achievements of whom were used in the exercises and shared it with their classmates. So the research not only helped them to practise grammar but also gave them a chance for speaking practice.

This study, in which 44 students were involved, lasted for two and half months and the students were given regular and systematic exercises during this period. The number of the students with entrepreneurial propensity was 11 after the first survey and it increased to 23 after the study was completed.

4. Conclusion

In the study, it was seen that the success stories of the entrepreneurs are interesting for the students and it is possible to create an entrepreneurial mindset through the themes used in various activities in English lessons.

No matter what the level and the complexity of the activity are, the focus will be on both teaching English and creating an entrepreneurial mindset. It is extremely important for our children not only to have the qualifications to survive in today's highly competitive world but also to think and behave like an entrepreneur. Only by having the necessary qualifications and using them to create new ventures can the future of the nations get the welfare they deserve. There are some institutions which constantly research this subject and give advice to start entrepreneurship education as early as possible and to use as many means as possible.

Because entrepreneurship is seen as one of the life buoys to save the world's economy in the future, it is vital to provide our children with skills to think and behave like entrepreneurs. EFL classes with a rich mixture of activities present us golden opportunities to achieve this aim. It mustn't be hard to redesign some of the activities in an English class in such a way to create an entrepreneurial mindset and to contribute to the welfare of not only a person but also a country, or maybe the whole world.

This study was conducted only in main course lessons. It is expected that if other lessons are also involved in the study and more exercises with the same aim are given, better results with respect to creating entrepreneurial mindsets will be achieved.

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