

Hrvatsko udruženje profesora engleskog jezika
Croatian Association of Teachers of English



inspire
& be inspired

HUPEzine

No. 4 • May 2015



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear HUPEzine readers,

You are reading the fourth issue of HUPEzine. I hope it finds you well and happy, as we are all running towards the end of another school year. This issue will present some new and exciting ways to use technology in classrooms, and not only in teaching English, but Math too. Lidija Kralj has written something about it. Also, our Slovenian colleague Janja Čolić has shared her ideas in teaching the gifted and talented in ELT classroom and Sanja Božinović from Velika Gorica has sent us an interesting article about Teaching Minecraft Kids. So, a lot of technology in this HUPEzine issue is in front of you.

After the Annual HUPE Conference, we are all full of energy and eager to show as much as we can. So is the HUPE Board, so make sure to read more about it in our next issue of HUPE Newsletter at the beginning of June. The reports will be given to you by HUPE partners from all over Europe. Don't miss it!

HUPEzine is intended to be important for both, personal and professional development of English teachers in Croatia and abroad. So, if you have any ELT articles which you would like to publish, let us know. We are here for you! The address for you is hupe.newsletter@gmail.com
Stay well, teach well. As always.

Yours,
Lidija

Impressum

Issue No. 4 May 2015
ISSN 1332-1005

HUPEzine Editor:

Lidija Branilović, prof.
Mobile: 091/362 46 74
e-mail: hupe.newsletter@gmail.com

Design and layout:

Đuro Jelečević, Studio HS internet d.o.o.

HUPE address:

HUPE c/o
The British Council
Palmotićeva 60
10000 Zagreb

Web. www.hupe.hr
hupe@britishcouncil.hr

HUPE account number:

2500009-1 101033220

Contributions:

The best way to support your association and the HUPEzine is to write to us and send us your contributions. All contributions should be submitted on a CD or by e-mail. Please note the document name clearly on the CD. The deadline for the next issue is: 1 November 2015.

Write and send your contributions to the HUPEzine editor. Please, be sure to write your name, surname and affiliation / institution and address at the beginning or end of the text.

Teaching Minecraft Kids

Sanja Božinović
OŠ Nikole Hribara Velika Gorica
sanja.bozinovic@skole.hr



Introduction

Minecraft is a video game that a lot of young learners like to play in their free time. They have fun creating and breaking blocks in three-dimensional worlds of the game. While doing it, they communicate with other players and with the environment of the game. Before and after playing the game, they read books about the game, manuals, “walkthrough” sites, forums for players, and they watch and create YouTube videos about the game. The language they use in all these activities is English and that was the inspiration for teachers all around the world, gamers and those interested in the gamification of language learning, to start using the game or the elements of the game in the English language classroom. This article will present some examples of the use of the game in the EFL classroom, and discuss some advantages and some problems that I have noticed when I used the game and the students' experience of playing it for creating EFL lessons for two groups of 12 and 14 year old students.



(Picture 1: What is Minecraft?)

Who are Minecraft kids?

Creative young students who like video games, more boys than girls in the group, could not believe their luck when I, as their English teacher, mentioned that I had bought the game for myself, started playing, felt helpless and wanted them to teach me. A group of students hard to reach through traditional teaching methods, more boys than girls again joined the group, too. All students who joined me for the extra lesson a week to discuss the game play and learn English, were motivated by the possibility to flip the roles, to teach the teacher, plus the possibility to show their expertise in the field.



(picture 2: students in the classroom)

Who are Minecraft teachers?

There are two kinds of teachers who use the game in the classroom: gamers and “noobs” in the game. Gamers create worlds in the game, take care of servers and mods, and take their students into the game with different learning tasks. “Noobs” are novice players or are not very good at the game, but understand enough of the game to be able to use it to create language lessons. Both types share their thoughts and their examples of good practice and it is very easy for an interested teacher to learn from and with colleagues in a number of excellent websites about the use of the game in EFL, as well as in free MOOCs and communities of practice. I learned my first ideas about how to use the game as a teacher in TESOL EVO Minecraft MOOC in January and then I joined Minecraft in Education Google community and The MinecraftExperience Wiki administered by Bron Stuckey.

What do parents say?

Sometimes, parents help teachers if they like playing the game with their children. It is an excellent idea for various reasons: they spend time with their children building things together, they teach children about computers when helping teachers and students with servers and mods, and they fight cyberbullying by helping the students to choose kid-friendly video creators to follow on YouTube or visiting worlds in the game together.

What and how can we teach?

We can teach all school subjects and we can do it in English. A lot of teachers use the game to teach History and Geography. When children enter Minecraft world of ancient Rome with the task to build a home, they have a lot of learning to do before they can do it accurately, not to mention reading, writing, listening and speaking skills they develop trying to accomplish the task (H. Lanphier and A. Yount). When they encounter a disaster situation in the game, they can learn from the experience of how disasters occur and are managed and use it in their writing classes (J. Kuhn). Building blocks in the game are excellent for teaching Maths, developing problem solving skills and critical thinking.

All four language skills are practiced. Minecraft kids watch a lot of YouTube videos of experts at play and learn the language by listening to native speakers. They communicate with other players in multiplayer mode. They read texts at Minecraft wikis, forums and “walkthrough “sites. They are motivated to read books about the game even when the language level of the books is above the students' language level (D. Dodgson, 2014). They type in chat and write in English to contribute to game sites and discussions online. Even those students who are not very good at English grammar learn a lot of new vocabulary to describe objects, actions, materials and tools, moving and directions, and a lot of verbs to describe building. They learn English through authentic, challenging and highly motivating tasks and love talking and writing about it.

My Minecraft Experience

Being a “noob“in the game was not a disadvantage for me as a teacher. I could not join my students and create lessons in the virtual worlds of the game, but I could create discussions followed by writing activities in which my students were teaching me about the game. We started with “What is Minecraft for me?“ discussion, during which I also recorded some group conversations and shared them on the class blog, Minecraft Fun at School (<http://minecraftfunatschool.blogspot.com/>). Students contributed to our Minecraft dictionary on the blog. We even put together a nice little video with the screenshots and definitions of words important in the game.

Oral and written presentations accompanied by screenshots of places students built in the game were a very good language practice, too. To motivate the students to read again and more carefully the story we were learning during our regular class, I asked the students to craft the lesson from the book for homework. Two groups of students built the scene with a lot of details mentioned in the lesson and sent me screenshots. Crafting dictations were a fun activity, too: one student prepared a description of a simple scene in writing, read it to the partner who had to build the scene as he/she understood the dictation.

My students are very enthusiastic and we plan some more Minecraft lessons: recording their own “How to...“videos, creating Minecraft illustrations for some sets of our Quizlet word cards...

(animoto video:

http://animoto.com/play/Gc8xaVsD4rl3S07snN1ajg?utm_source=amazonaws.com&utm_medium=player&utm_campaign=player)

Why use the game?

It is a paid game. The fact that most students have it on their smartphones can help but the availability of the game on school computers can be a problem. Also, lessons which include playing the game, even if for a short period of time, can be demanding in the school lab. The teacher has to plan time very carefully and be firm about the timing building can be time-consuming. The usual problems of planning the lessons with technology apply here, too: the availability of the computer lab, the internet connection and the characteristics of the computers in the classroom. The challenges are serious but the advantages of using the game are numerous. Highly motivated students, some of them are those not easily persuaded to take part in class activities, have a lot of fun learning the language when they can talk or write about their favourite game, sometimes even play the game for a short period of time in the classroom. The tasks are authentic and creative. For me, all these are reasons to continue learning about game and how to use it to teach English, and to keep creating lessons for my students with the help of the game.

Literature:

Minecraft Wiki: http://minecraft.gamepedia.com/Minecraft_Wiki?cookieSetup=true

MinecraftExperienceWiki: <http://www.minecraftexperience.net/>

Minecraft and MinecraftEdu Resources: <http://www.minecraftercamp.com/resources.html>

Dijkers S. (2015): Teachercraft: How Teachers Learn to Use Minecraft in their Classrooms (free to download)

Minecraft Handbooks (Essential, Redstone, Combat) by Scholastic

Stevens V, Smolčec M., Smolčec F., (2014) Using Minecraft for Learning English:

<http://www.tesl-ej.org/wordpress/issues/volume18/ej70/ej70int/>

Yammer in education, part 1

Lidija Kralj, OŠ Veliki Bukovec, Croatia
lidija.kralj@skole.hr

Social networks are an important part of our lives and the lives of our students. For the last few years we've come to know that they cannot disappear or be banned from schools. So I thought of embracing them and convert them into a powerful tool for learning and teaching.

The screenshot shows a Yammer group interface. At the top is a blue header with the CARNet logo and navigation links for Home, Inbox, and a search bar. Below the header, the user profile for Lidija Kralj is visible on the left. The main content area displays the group 'OSVB-8b-2015', which is a Private Group with 14 members. The group description is 'Učitelji 8.b razreda OŠ Veliki Bukovec'. Below the group name are tabs for Conversations, Info, Files, and Notes. A post by Lidija Kralj is shown, titled 'OfficeMix dodatak za PowerPoint 2013 možete preuzeti na ovoj stranici: [URL]'. To the right of the post is a 'Pinned' section with a folder icon and the text 'Add files, notes, or links that'. The bottom of the page shows a 'Networks' section.

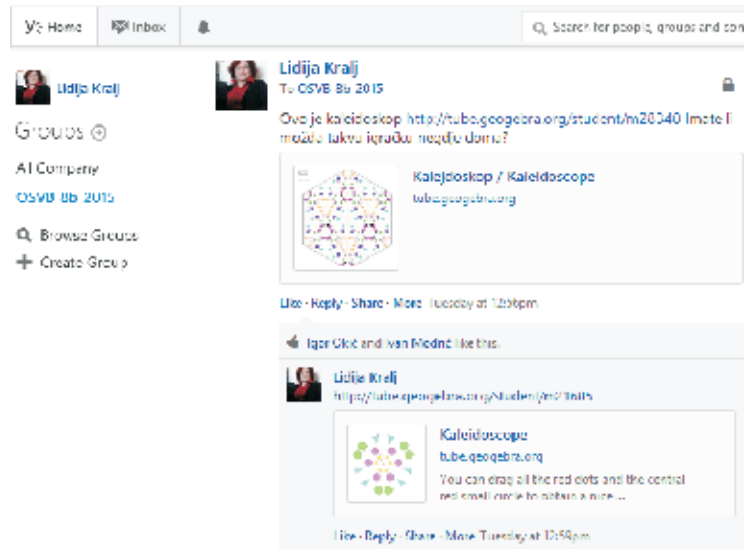
Safety first

Social networks are risky because lots of students share too much personal data and without thinking post naughty messages or even spread hate speech. We have three important topics we have to integrate to the use of social networks in education: protecting students' data, warning students about 'oversharing' and prevent cyberbullying.

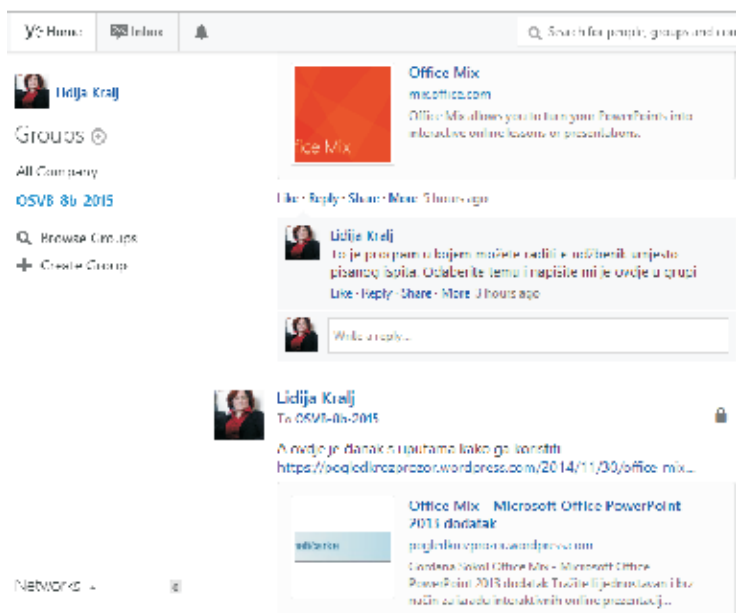
All of the above were the reasons I've decided to give Yammer a chance as safe learning environment. In Croatia, we have a great opportunity since Office 365, including Yammer, is available to both teachers and students in primary and secondary schools. We all have digital identity defined on the national level with domain @skole.hr, so every person is easily recognizable by their AAI identity (authentication and authorisation infrastructure). Therefore, Yammer is opened only to people with @skole.hr identity which makes it safe place for students, even if they are minors.

Baby steps

Yammer is novelty for me, too, so I decided to start small - with a class of twenty-four eighth graders (age 14). I'm their Math teacher, as well as their class teacher. First step for them was to sign up on Yammer and activate account via e-mail. It went smoothly and when students opened Yammer for the first time their comments were 'Oh, it is similar to Facebook, we have a wall, we can like something and share as well'. Next question was: 'Can I have it on my mobile device?' They were happy that this option was available, too and by their online presence today I see that some of them are using mobile apps.



It can be a bit chaotic once you enter the room which is opened to around half a million teachers and students. So, the next step was to organize students in a private group for our class only. Firstly, I invited some students to the group, but soon the others found a way to get into the group and send requests to join it.



Keep them busy

Having group just for 'hanging' and chatting was not enough for me or to reach educational goals I wanted. I started with the topics connected to our current Math curriculum - *transformations in geometry*. I shared a few resources about kaleidoscope in GeoGebra and asked them to Google search for the toy at home. Kaleidoscope is pretty rare today and creating digital interactive version is interesting to students, also they could connect with their parents and grandparents talking about the old toy.

Next post was sharing resources about Office Mix, how to install it and where they could find more information in Croatian. During the next few months they will use Office Mix to create e-

books about Math. We will use Yammer to talk about process of creation, hopefully solve some problems and later on share results.

So far, Yammer proved to be easy to use, efficient to share resources and connect to other people. We'll see what the future brings us but I hope we've just made the first step of this exciting learning trip.

THE GIFTED IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING THE GIFTED (part 1)

Janja Čolić, IATEFL Slovenia

The gifted children are children, who have special abilities that are well above those of the average children. Therefore, I believe, it is in every lesson that we have to deal with them, not only at extra lessons before or after school, at preparations for competitions, or at special Saturday classes organized for them. Most gifted and talented children are busy as a bee in their free time and occupied with the activities in the afternoons, according to their field of interest (or of their parents). At school, I believe, working with gifted and talented children has to be done on every day basis, at every lesson, every day, throughout the whole year, that is at regular lessons not after school.

There are three models that have proved to be the most suitable on different fields of working with gifted and talented children and all of them can be used with the gifted at regular English lessons. Intelligent children do need our help, our stimulation as well as our acknowledgement ... if we want them to develop their potential to their maximum. If not, those children are lost in the average. They get lost in OUR classroom.

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFTED

Too many times gifted and talented children are bored during the regular lessons. NOT because teachers wouldn't prepare their lessons at their best, NOT because we wouldn't work hard enough, but because gifted children have different abilities, needs and interests. And those ARE different than abilities, needs and interests of the average children.

According to the literature, the gifted and talented children are different from other children in three basic characteristics:

1. The ability to learn quickly. (Keating, 1976; in VanTassel-Baska, 1988, pp. 53-54).
2. The ability to find, solve or react to problems quickly. (Sternberg, 1985; in VanTassel-Baska, 1988, pp. 53-54).
3. The ability to understand and connect abstract ideas. (Gallagher, 1985 in VanTassel-Baska, 1988, pp. 53-54).

But they are different in other personal characteristics as well: logical thinking, expressive imagination, precise observation, good memory, know a lot about everything, being well-read, wide vocabulary, good marks, skillfulness, high expectations, the need to be perfect, various but strong interests, independence, autonomy, well-organized, good leaders, influence on others and more (Koncept, 1999).

And because of all that, they have different needs, different requirements, which have to be suited, have to be met. That is why lessons for the gifted and talented have to be a challenge to those children.

2. PRACTICAL MODELS FOR WORKING WITH THE GIFTED

According to Joyce VanTassel Baska (1988) three models that have proved to be the most suitable on different levels and on different fields of working with gifted and talented pupils are the following:

- A: Content adaptation model**
- B: Procedure/product model**
- C: Epistemological model**

The models can be used as a framework for internal differentiation. All of them proceed from a cognition that planning and developing of working with gifted learners mean several accommodations of curriculum to their abilities, needs and interests. Learning characteristics of gifted children should be a starting-point for our choice of content, products, activities and instructional approaches. We should try to occupy the gifted children to their optimum using different methods, as well as giving them more specific exercises or additional activities.

A. Content adaptation model

This model places stress on developing children's abilities and their learning in the field of their interest. Content IS important. The most important thing here is that children learn in their own pace that is as quickly as possible. An orientation like that enables individualization, differentiation and personification of our lessons. Each child is engaged with a different problem, a different book or a different chapter and therefore making progress individually. The teacher is a mentor: helps, suggests, directs.

B. Procedure / product model

The basic difference between the content adaptation model and the procedure / product model is that here it is not important to acquire knowledge as quickly as possible but to gain knowledge in depth; to study the chosen themes in depth. The gifted children develop their abilities for research and they work on their own. Their goal is to understand the chosen topic and at the end a research paper, a report, an essay, a poster, an oral presentation, a "powerpoint" presentation, a picture, prepared food, an experiment, a collection of questions / exercises, an interview, an article, a play, a construction, equipment etc. is a result of their learning. Products can be concrete or abstract, simple or complicated; all are different. Chances are enormous: limited only by children's imagination, sources, time and teachers' patience. If possible, the product should be presented to the audience: to other children in the classroom or at school, to teachers, to parents ...

C. Epistemological model

The essential element of the epistemological model is in discussion in depth. The teacher raises questions for discussion and stimulates the gifted to contribute with their ideas and critical thinking. The discussion can be done orally or written.

At teaching the gifted it is important for the teacher to know and use different teaching methods. Knowing the three models helps the teacher to abandon some traditional teaching methods in order to satisfy gifted children's needs and interests. It is NOT important to test out everything we have ever heard of if we want to be successful at teaching the gifted. More important is to know when to use what. More important is to adapt and to combine models that fit our philosophy of teaching. More important is to PLAN. Planning regular lessons MUST include additional (extra) work for the gifted.

To sum up, irrespective of the teaching methods, lessons have to be flexible to the point, where the gifted children can follow their individual interests, gain knowledge in their own pace, t.i. as quickly as possible, make products, work independently and learn content in depth.

mag. Janja ČOLIĆ

LITERATURE:

1. Čolić, Janja (2004). Načrtovanje in razvijanje učnega načrta za nadarjene učence po konceptu Joyce VanTassel Baska. Magistrska naloga. Ljubljana.
2. Koncept (1999). Odkrivanje in delo z nadarjenimi učenci v devetletni osnovni šoli. Strokovni svet Republike Slovenije za splošno izobraževanje. Ljubljana.
3. VanTassel-Baska, J., Feldhusen, J., Seeley, K., Wheatley, G., Silverman, L. in Foster, W. (1988). Comprehensive Curriculum for Gifted Learners. Massachusetts: Ally and Bacon, Inc.

Fortcoming events

TETA International Conference

'Creating a real-world connection'

June 12-13, 2015

Faculty of Philosophy, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

www.teta-upej.ba

IATEFL BESIG & IATEFL Hungary joint event

'Business English for Special Purposes: What do our learners really need?'

June 20, 2015

Rubin Wellness and Conference Hotel, Budapest, Hungary

www.iatefl.org

The 10th International and the 14th National ATECR Conference

September 4-6, 2015

Studentske nam. 1532, Uherske Hradiste, Czech Republic

www.atecr.weebly.com

IATEFL HUNGARY LEARNATHON!

'Looking forward, looking back'

October 7-9, 2015

ELTE University, Budapest, Hungary

www.iatefl.hu