

I am all for edutainment!

Down with boring tasks! Enough of dull texts! And don't even try to convince me that cramming still rocks. It is so last season! What's in? Be ready to sport edutainment¹ wherever you go!

But if you have a proper look at it, edutainment (education plus entertainment) is a brand new term for what English teachers have been doing for quite a while. It is like the little black dress that will stay in forever. Motivation is the key to success when it comes to language studies. And how can you ensure 100% class attendance and the desire of your students to make language studies their priority? The great idea behind edutainment is that a teacher of English must create a suitable environment for the students and offer them a variety of tasks to make English classes upbeat and fun, encourage independent thinking and collaboration.

Motivation is the key to success – whatever you do. When I meet my students for the first time, I might ask them to make up a motto that would help them on their way. This task is surprisingly motivating. Sometimes I ask them to write an essay, and the topic is: 'What progress I want to make this semester'. It may also help the teacher understand what results a student really wants to achieve (learn Travel English or pass the First Certificate in English?) and manage the student's expectations. It might be easier for you to go from A to B if you know how long you have to walk to get there. Or, if the student is at A now and wants to get to C later, the teacher might guide him/her and suggest that they must first reach B. Besides, language learners should be able to assess their own knowledge and achievements, that's why I ask my students to fill in progress assessment sheets every month. In this way students learn to assess their own performance and

¹ Edutainment - entertainment (as by games, films, or shows) that is designed to be educational. (Merriam-Webster online dictionary).

set new goals for the next month. And even without noticing it, they revise the vocabulary and the structural patterns we have studied. Isn't it great?

It is an open secret that students benefit big time from teamwork and pair work. You are lucky if you have male and female students in one group. They might learn a lot more from each other. If the topic is 'a person's character' and my students need to learn a few adjectives on topic, I might suggest they present essays in class about an ideal husband or wife. They have great fun presenting such essays and learn new things from their fellow students.

However, it may be very challenging for some students to present their ideas facing the audience. Self-presentation skills are of vital importance and they will help most students later in life. That's something your students will remember for years! Reports made in class are great for this! Topics may vary – teaching your students vocabulary from every sphere of life, be it science, technology or entertainment. Sometimes I ask my students (and they are would-be teachers) to teach others things they are particularly good at. Maybe one of your students does all assignments in time – ask him/her to share their tips on time management with the others. Another student might be especially interested in history – telling his/her fellow students about a particular event in the history of Russia (on May 9th perhaps?) will be very interesting for the others. The teacher's delicate remarks after every presentation (or, for shy and reserved students, face-to-face discussions) might help them correct their mistakes. There will be quite many – but with time and practice your students will learn how to attract the audience's attention and how to make their ideas clear. They will just have this know-how. Extra credit: your students are going to be at an advantage on the job market!

Whenever possible, I try to make my students work on their own and find and process information without anybody's help. If we discuss cinema in class, they will write a film review at home. And if we study the use of articles with geographic names, I ask my students to make a list of places they would like to visit. It doesn't pay to learn nationality words by heart. Not now that you can learn

these words while watching ‘Eurovision’ song contest and discuss the results of your research project on nationality words in class.

Laughing with your students is ok if you offer them some jokes to share with the others. Retelling small texts is much more exciting this way.

This joke won the 2nd place at World’s funniest joke contest²: *‘Holmes and Watson went camping. After they went to bed in a tent, in the middle of the night Holmes wakes his friend up and asks: ‘Tell me, Watson, what does this starry sky tell you?’ — ‘Hmm, it tells me that the weather is going to be fine in the morning’ — ‘And to me it tells that someone has stolen our tent!’*

Even if my students have to retell longish texts I try to play a game with them. Creating the right atmosphere is essential. I might draw the stars and the crescent on the whiteboard, switch off the light and put a pile of papers (never books) in the centre of the table. That must look like a fire. Then I might say: ‘Well, the night is dark, we are sitting by the fire in a summer camp and now, Mary, it is your turn to tell us a story’. My students become very thrilled, they not only listen to each other’s stories with keen interest and attention but they also take part in the game. They will stretch their hands to warm them by the fire or make some encouraging remarks like: ‘Hey, Mary, you did promise to tell us this story!’

Why should tests be stressful and boring? Your students will definitely enjoy taking music and picture tests. The assignment might be: ‘please write below the photos what these places are’ if you want to check whether your students remember some famous sights of London.

² Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_jokes



The Houses of Parliament



Nelson's column



Hyde Park

Or maybe you are teaching your students to speak about human emotions?
Google images provide a variety of pictures to make every quiz fun.



Hurt



Disappointed



Miserable

Music tests are just as easy to make and so much more exciting. I might find the lyrics of a popular song online and offer my students ‘fill in the gaps’ assignment. This works for modal verbs and articles or might be good for teaching spelling.

Here are top five songs to listen to when studying modal verbs:

1. ‘All you **need** is love’, the Beatles
2. ‘You **can** leave your hat on’, Joe Cocker
3. ‘**Might** as well be strangers’, Keane
4. ‘**Must** get out’, Maroon 5
5. ‘I **can’t** help myself’, the Kelly family

And these are only a few ‘tricks’ to make English classes more efficient and more fun. In this way, you can shape the future rather than adapt to it. If you ask me, I am all for edutainment!

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2. Edutainment at work <https://sites.google.com/site/olgastrelnikovaformsu/>
3. Merriam-Webster online dictionary: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/edutainment>
4. Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_jokes
5. The photos/pictures taken from Google images <http://www.google.ru/imghp>, namely:

photo: The Houses of Parliament <http://davesworldtravel.com/tag/houses-of-parliament/>

photo: Hyde Park <http://scribbler.ru/community/blog/40/showRecord/7307>

photo: Nelson's Column <http://www.dialog-ticket.ru/93.php>

photo: Disappointed <http://khason.net/?s=disappointed>

photo: Hurt <http://twistedscottishbastard.blogspot.com/2011/04/skills-of-appeasement.html>

photo: Miserable <http://botinok.co.il/node/56482>