

EXTREMISM PREVENTION AT ENGLISH CLASSES WITH STUDENTS

Olesya Babenko, Olga Kuzmina, Liya Yusupova

Kazan (the Volga region) Federal University (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

Abstract

Current modern challenges connected with terrorism open new angles of prevention work with students at universities: teachers have to take care not only about anti-drug-addiction and anti-alcoholism work but also dwell on possible solutions of radical ideas that might possibly invade the minds.

One may suppose that it is obviously too late to influence students - young adults - and even claim it might be absolutely unnecessary. Let us totally disagree with that: it can be easily proved at classes when students demonstrate their willingness to develop and promote the topics of the importance of enhancing sport, art, music, creativity and a strong life-position within young people. The things mentioned can be happily opposed to radicalism that mostly grows from the abundance of free time.

The problem we are facing nowadays should be discussed at all levels, with all age groups, with people of different backgrounds, nationalities, religions, political views, etc. You cannot stand aside and be indifferent because it touches upon the planet future, the future of our children. And students can become the leading movement against anti-human, anti-civilization radicalism. Being young and active, they can set up flash-mobs attracting attention to this contemporary challenge of humanity, they can enhance ideas of dynamic life-style free from drugs, alcohol-addiction, extremism.

By all means, it is quite difficult to organize a flash-mob at the English lesson, however teaching a foreign language can offer numerous ways of the troubleshooting: debating (involving team-work), projects (oriented at enlightening ideas of true traditional religions - unlike the false-one imposed by extremists), student round tables (providing discussions on breakdowns extremism can bring and possible ways of its overcoming), educative excursions to places of terrorist attacks and museums (telling about people killed in wars provoked by someone's radicalism - like World War I and World War II), interviews with famous people holding to a vivid position of human values support, surveys based on students' personal investigations about world dramatic changes due to extremism, article writing (which helps to shape your personal sound attitude to violence produced by extremists) and so on. The English language can help here as a wide-spread international language uniting students.

Young people are talented enough to invent slogans and use them in social nets - as long as Internet has also become the ground of anti-extremistic battles. These slogans are initially discussed in class and among a number of variants the most eye-catching is chosen, f.e. "Choosing violence, you are choosing hell".

Finally, having all the above mentioned in mind, we can come to the conclusion that students should be widely attracted to looking for anti-extremist solutions. Moreover, we strongly believe that they can use modern technologies better, so they can do everything faster - especially if they know a foreign language.

Keywords: Extremism prevention, English class extremism prevention, student movement.

1 INTRODUCTION

Youngsters are known to be open for everything new and – even if sometimes it is not showing – want to find answers to acute issues and challenges our modern reality is putting forward.

Their curious minds may search these answers themselves, their experimental nature is thirsty for new decisions and the so called “upgraded” perception of reality. On and off this constant search gives no guarantee of everlasting sense of knowledge-satisfaction unless close friends, parents, Internet society and the teacher offer some thought-provoking ideas concerning troubleshooting plans in relation to various problems.

Extremism seems to be – and is! – a very sharp-edged, urgent current issue which educated young generation is really worried about. They initiate special projects and flash-mobs (as the most state-of-the-art ways of attention attracting), they edit their student posters defending common humanity values, dwelling on the extremism roots, explaining its devastating anti-human evil nature. Most of them demonstrate willingness of reflecting on current world events, on their and their children's future, on the matter of existence of the whole mankind.

2 DWELLING ON EXTREMISM AT ENGLISH CLASSES

It may seem odd – even improbable at times – that foreign language teaching can “equip” young adults with anti-extremist views and open the road of life full of normal interaction, communication and values. There is nothing improbable, colleagues! It is quite a time-consuming and long process but

Statistically, every five minutes every 5th – sometimes 10th - young person is forced into extremist groups via Internet, phone or new acquaintances telling fairy-tales about possible paradise existence and an ideal world construction on condition of joining terrorism-oriented groups positioned as “cleaning revolutionary”.

So what can foreign language teachers do? Save the planet from this evil? Ban old-time architecture ruining and innocent people killing?

Think globally, act locally, they say!

One person – a teacher – can do a lot to make his students have a serious look at the problem of extremism. He can focus his students' attention on the facts showing it is not ONE of the world existing urgent problems. It really stands out. It can stand for the end of any civilization without any exaggeration. It does not leave a chance to any age, any social status, any country, any background, any humanity value. Foreign language classes teach communication, so this can become one of the acutest topics of the conversation ever.

3 EXPERIMENT

The authors of the article (foreign language university teachers) have made a local two-stage mini-research with 100 language –oriented students involved.

The first interview aimed at asking the question as follows: “What are the reasons of the terrorism increase in the modern world in your opinion?” The students (aged 19-22) were offered to choose one of the following answers:

- 1 World political situation;
- 2 Modern-time social phenomenon - deviation;
- 3 Illiteracy;
- 4 Lack of other ways of getting de-stressed

The second interview was focused on the question “Which terrorism prevention form do you find the most effective?” and the students had to choose one option from the given four possible reasons:

- 1 Debating at round tables;
- 2 Inviting special guests involved in prevention work;
- 3 Flash-mobs (dedicated to the theme);
- 4 Special projects and posters made by students themselves.

3.1 Details of the Students' Question Perception

It became clear from the way of the experiment that some students were ready to choose two options from the whole list. They underlined the fact that terrorism appearance reasons may be interweaved: extremism may come not only from disadvantaged backgrounds which may give an unfavourable ground for extremist moods (not in all cases, and in all these families, of course!), it can also develop in absolutely well-off families and environments when a person takes this as a role in an inappropriate-for-society game – unlike the first situation when illiteracy provokes the search of better life-conditions.

Some youngsters highlighted the importance of talking about extremism and terrorism since early school years – the years still full of parental care. The more children know about it – the better.

Moreover, according to our language-oriented students, the more a young person is engaged into some kind of positive-natured activity like music, art or dancing school, a motivating hobby, some kind of sport, etc., the less extremist-prone he or she becomes. Why? The answer lies on the surface, in their opinion: busy people creating beauty cannot bring harm to this wonderful world full of interesting events, beautiful people of different races and nationalities, various religions and beliefs. If very young people have lacked the proper perception of beauty since green years, it may be quite difficult to talk them into being tolerant, respectful, good-natured, artistic and open-hearted.

English classes – as the students mentioned – are able to create human-friendly environment which can breed the feeling of harmony and beauty, which can teach – even those youngsters who were deprived of good up-bringing conditions in their childhood for different reasons. Yes, English teachers do not create painting masterpieces (may be some of them do) – they create the beauty of a language being learnt, the verbal beauty of speech, the beauty of human souls.

People creating something beautiful themselves are hardly capable of ruining the beauty of archaic architectural monuments created by someone. Do you agree, colleagues?

3.2 Experiment Results and Conclusion

We have a strong opinion about the results of our experiment: the data we got enables us to see that there is no indifference of youngsters in relation to extremism problems. The results of the first question “What are the reasons of the terrorism increase in the modern world in your opinion?” are vividly depicted in Fig 1:

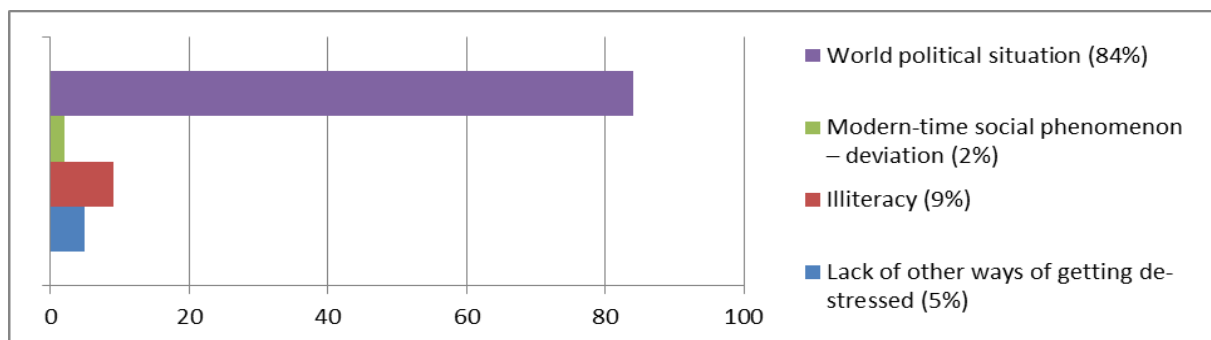


Fig 1. The reasons of the terrorism increase in the modern world according to 100 language-oriented students aged 18-22.

Therefore, Fig 1 demonstrates the world political situation with its 84 % to be the most wide-spread reason capable of provoking violent extremist moods within modern society. Illiteracy gathers 9 %, lack of other ways of getting de-stressed – 5 % and finally, 2 % of students believe that extremism is something like modern-time social phenomenon – deviation.

Fig 2 shows the interview results of the most effective among young people terrorism prevention forms:

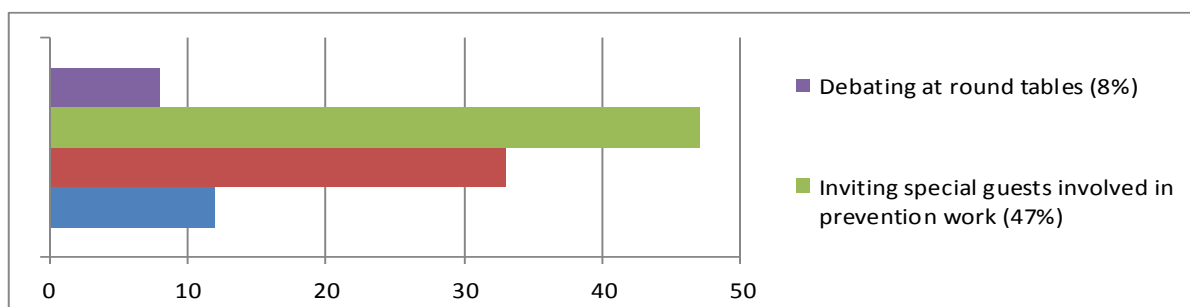


Fig 2. The most effective forms of extremism prevention in the modern world according to 100 language-oriented students aged 18-22.

As we can see from Fig 2, the most effective form is inviting guests involved in prevention work – about 47 % of answers. The second largest group is organizing flash-mobs attracting attention to the problem of extremism – 33 %. The third in popularity is special projects – 12 %. The least popular is debating at round tables – 8 %.

In view of that we, teachers of foreign languages, should always bear in mind that we have powerful instruments of teaching in our hands which are able not only to arm our students with a certain vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation level of a foreign language, but also with ideas of basic human values, positive thinking and productive world attitude.

4 OVERSTEPPING EXTREMIST IDEAS TOWARDS CREATIVITY

Unquestionably, one more essential aspect of English classes is out-of-class activities stimulating students' creativity and initiative. The teacher can always set up brainstorming tasks on the theme of extremism prevention, address his / her students as assistants.

Out-of-class activities may include anti-extremism flash-mob organizing, which may develop into a certain young generation movement in the city. Students may write and type brochures containing information about extremism and its roots. They may set up "get-always-busy" English-speaking hobby-classes where they can learn something new, acquire new skills, feel themselves needed; they can make out-of-class videos showing other possible ways of being happy and young, uncovering the consequences of extremist behavior (which typically results in going to prison or electric chair in some countries). And if all of this is done in English, it enables a wider community to get acquainted with this work.

"One bead makes a necklace" – as the saying goes.

5 CONCLUSION

Summing it all up, extremism is now considered to be the most evil-bringing hazard of modern humanity. While teaching students, we should draw their attention not only to commonly accepted topics and rules, but also to the things of life-importance, to the ways of sharing the knowledge on extremism and its roots with others.

Foreign language teachers should be capable of giving proper life-directions, claiming commonly accepted peace-keeping life-values, offering alternatives of happy extremism-free living.

By all means, it is not a matter of one day, or one week, or even a year! As long as you work with young adults, you should be careful enough and enable them to think about troubleshooting plans themselves. Judging by our experience, they usually grab this opportunity with pleasure – they feel they are trusted and respected, which is crucial for interaction-building classes.

Foreign languages open perspectives of world-wide communication and idea-interchange: anti-extremism student communities can set up cosmopolitan clubs of experience inter-change via Internet.

All in all, discussing acute topics and finding solutions for urgent problems with your students can make you good friends and partners.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aminov D.I., Oganyan R.E. Youth extremism. – M.: TRIADA LTD, 2005.
- [2] Zubok U.A., Chuprov V.I., Youth extremism. The gist and peculiarities of appearance. // SOTZIS. – 2008. - № 6.
- [3] The concept of anti-extremism movement in the Russian Federation // Russian paper 3 № 198 (5022). 20.10.2009.
- [4] Tzeluyeva N.V. Psychological aspects of studying the problems of youth extremism // SOTZIS. 2007. № 3.