Non-typical letter activities and their effectiveness in foreign language lessons – EFL secondary school students’ perceptions

1. Introduction

A letter, being one of the written forms recommended for student practice in a foreign language lesson as well as a frequent evaluation task, in school tests and final exams (see among others Gąsiorkiewicz-Kozłowska, Kowalska 2012; Kębłowska 2017; Krajewska 2012; Sosnowska, Wieruszewska 2012; Stefańska 2017) is, as scholars (e.g. Komorowska 2004: 154; Iwata, Suzuki 2017) emphasize, often neglected and marginalized in EFL teaching practices. The reason for this may be a lack of appreciation of written forms (including letters) by students, to whom they seem to be too monotonous, tedious and demanding to be focused on in classroom conditions (Arju 2017: 119; Cimcoz 1999; Majchrzak 2018: viii). The limited attention paid in a lesson to these forms often leads to unsatisfactory results on the part of learners, who in consequence become too discouraged and less motivated to learn the language and to further develop their knowledge and skills. Therefore, to make written forms attractive for young people and to familiarize them with different aspects of the functioning of the foreign language (including lexical and grammatical aspects), teachers are recommended in their work to design and use various stimulating activities. One such activity, which in the opinion of the authors of this article contributes to the effectiveness of foreign language learning and teaching and which serves among others the purpose of arousing students’ interest in a lesson and the development of different competences (including linguistic competence), is a ‘non-typical form of a letter’, which will be presented and discussed after some theoretical considerations on the issues in question. The non-typical character of letter activities suggested here relates to games and fun, and students’ initial state of being unaware of the final product of the actions undertaken by them in these activities. This notion will be discussed in more detail in the empirical part of this paper.
2. The form of a letter and letter activities in a language class

A letter, which in the *Cambridge English Dictionary* (2018) is defined among others as “a written message from one person to another, usually put in an envelope and sent by post”, is an example of epistolary discourse. It is a medium by means of which people can exchange information between one another on public and private matters and relate to different elements of the surrounding reality. A letter provides an insight into human communication in specific periods and in certain socio-cultural situations, and therefore needs to be viewed as a valuable object of not only linguistic but also historical, social and cultural investigation, in other words, of interdisciplinary research (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2014: 17-18). Due to its multifunctional and varied character, numerous messages between the addresser and the addressee can be transmitted, and different feelings and emotions which accompany the writer at the moment of producing the letter can be reflected upon. Letters are a result of “genuine interaction of correspondents in which their identities are linguistically and discursively” formed and which allow one to observe “how authorial selves and participant relationships change from one letter to another and how such changes affect the linguistic style adopted by the writer” (Del Lungo Camiciotti 2014: 20-21).

Contrary to teachers’ and students’ unwillingness to apply this form of classroom work, scholars suggest that letter writing is a very advantageous activity which helps to “(1) reinforce and integrate the development of all the language skills and (2) prepare learners for the production of written” compositions at more advanced levels (Malkoc 2012: 1). This activity usually involves the use of the vocabulary and structures from the students’ own learnt material and the logical organization of thoughts, which guarantees the proper transmission of intended messages (Malkoc 2012: 1-2).

In literature (e.g. Gąsiorkiewicz-Kozłowska, Kowalska 2012: 195), letters are divided into two main types, such as:

- an informal/personal letter, which is addressed to a specific person who is well known to the writer (e.g. a friend or a family member); this letter is produced with the aim of sustaining contact with the given person and is characterized among others by informal language, contractions, short sentences, idiomatic expressions, anecdotes and narrative elements;
- a formal/impersonal letter, which is written with a specific goal in mind in situations where the addresser or addressee or both represent some company or other institution; this type of letter is characterized by formal language, complex sentences, passive voice structures, and non-contracted forms.

In educational practices one can identify numerous activities that help students to familiarize with these two types of letters and to master the skills of writing and conveying ideas in a proper way. At this point it is worth enumerating some of them, such as (Gąsiorkiewicz-Kozłowska, Kowalska 2012: 191):

- filling in the gaps with appropriate vocabulary items;
- providing correct grammatical forms;
- paraphrasing;
- writing from dictation;
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- matching;
- categorising;
- sequencing;
- deleting;
- completing;
- correcting mistakes (including spelling and punctuation mistakes);
- writing one’s own compositions.

It is worth noting here that in school conditions it is particularly the language teachers who are responsible for practising and revising with students the two types of a letter, and it is they who should remember that not all available methods, techniques and materials are suitable for teaching their students in a lesson. Therefore, when organizing a class, an educator is advised to make a selection and to choose the most appropriate activities, those that would match students’ level of knowledge and skills, their age, needs and interests (Komorowska 2004: 116; Schmitt 2008: 332; Ur 2012: 65).

It is necessary to note here that of the two types of letters listed above, the informal/personal letter holds a more prominent position in the context of foreign language learning and teaching, as this type of writing is commonly presented in teaching materials and is often recommended for practice in foreign language classes at different educational levels (also at the primary school level, as emphasized in the curricula by e.g. Kębłowska 2017 and Stefańska 2017). Therefore, the authors of this article have decided to focus on such a type of writing in their empirical studies and to draw conclusions about EFL students’ non-typical work with it. In this account, however, the presentation of findings obtained through the conducted studies needs to be preceded by the theoretical information on the notion which is crucial for the overall discussion of the subject in question, that is effective foreign language education.

3. Effective foreign language learning and teaching

Considering the notion of effectiveness in the context of foreign language learning and teaching, one should note the “California Principle” (Elsner 2010: 39) which seems to be an interesting guideline on how teaching and learning in a classroom should be performed. The principle stresses communication, active learning, language awareness, intercultural understanding, fun, orientation, repetition, networking, integration and authenticity. The most common feature of a language is communication. Therefore, in classroom conditions there must be enough opportunities to practice receptive and productive communication skills based on the use of appropriate vocabulary and grammar structures. The use of the language should be combined with natural actions and should motivate students to learn actively, autonomously and self-responsibly. In order to develop intercultural understanding, the classroom initiatives undertaken by the teacher should make students aware of the specificity of the foreign language and its cultural background. Besides, classroom tasks should also provide a suitable
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amount of fun, should be oriented to the needs, interests and age of learners, integrate
different social forms and strategies, address various senses and multiple intelligences
and be linked with other subjects (Puchta, Rinvolucri 2005: 15), in the spirit of the
CLIL approach (Content and Language Integrated Learning). What is more, authentic
texts, materials and topics which are tightly related to students’ lives should contribute
to effective language learning and teaching (Skrzypczyńska 2002, 2003, 2006). Next
to authenticity – which is an aspect evident, for example, in the letter designed for the
undertaken research project and described in a subsequent part of this paper – a variety
of methods and techniques (including games and competitions) well serve the purpose
of effective education (Ur 2011: 281).

In close connection to the “California Principle” are the considerations of Tomlin-
son (2016: 53-59) who enumerates important characteristics of a healthy classroom
environment. He particularly emphasizes the role of a teacher who:
● appreciates a learner as an individual;
● remembers to teach all students;
● stimulates young people to present their own ideas;
● provides conditions for joyful learning;
● helps young people to make their own sense of ideas;
● shares his/her teaching with students;
● promotes students’ independence;
● develops learners’ different skills.

The set of ideas and guidelines presented above has a great deal to do with modern
approaches to foreign language learning and teaching in which the notion of effec-
tiveness seems to be one of the fundamental premises. These approaches, which are
highlighted in scholarly literature and in the regulations and directives of Ministers
of Education, suggest in particular the development of (Krawiec 2015: 450-454):
● language knowledge and skills – which is evident, for instance, in the acqui-
sition of vocabulary items and grammatical rules, and in the reception and
production of written and spoken texts in different situations (it applies to the
development of listening, reading, speaking and writing skills).
● autonomy – which is reflected through independent actions undertaken by
teachers and students in a lesson. It involves among others planning of one’s
own work, taking responsibility for the undertaken actions, self-controlling
and self-evaluating.
● motivation – which is linked with the arousal of learners’ interest in the given
subject. It is done in a class by introducing attractive, stimulating, often funny
and unusual methods, techniques, materials and topics and by relating them to
students’ needs and experiences.
● creativity – which is based on the concept of originality. It requires application
of different skills and levels of thinking, such as the quality of making use
of specific knowledge, following one’s own intuitions, taking risk, making
choices and solving problems in innovative ways.
● school community integration – which can be achieved in school conditions
through pair work or group work. Such forms of work “equip an individual
with a special property to integrate with others and to solve problems in cooperation with them” (Krawiec 2015: 452).

- inter-culturalism – which necessitates learning about oneself and others, and what follows, identifying similarities and differences between different cultural groups. It has to do with the enhancement “of skills, attitudes and knowledge that help people to effectively communicate and cooperate with representatives of foreign milieus” (Krawiec 2015: 453).

- cross-curricularly – which relates to the integration of content from different domains and which allows learners to perceive and interpret the surrounding reality in a more holistic way.

It is necessary to emphasize here that the implementation of all these mechanisms in foreign language classes can result in effective learning and teaching and can prepare young people for successful dealing with problems and tasks of the modern world (Krawiec 2015: 450).

In a final remark to this section it is worth noting that despite some guidelines and recommendations given by scholars and authorities on the subject in question, there are no universal paradigms for effective language learning and teaching. The kind and the way of education depend among others on the WHO, the WHERE and the WHY (Harmer 2007: 104), and we as teachers should bear these in mind.

4. ‘A letter to/from …’ and its role for EFL secondary school students – empirical part

By taking into account the theoretical information presented above (in particular the approaches that stress the development of students’ motivation, integration, language knowledge and skills and cross-curricular thinking), it is essential now to verify if non-typical work with a letter can contribute to effective language learning and teaching. In order to identify the role which a letter can play in the context of language education, a two-phase research project was initiated and carried out on 8th June 2018 in the Complex of Secondary Schools No. 1 in Krotoszyn (Poland).

In the first phase of the research, a teacher (one of the contributors to this paper) conducted among students in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years of this school’s programme (altogether 56 students) a series of guest lessons (5 lessons) with the use of a letter, which was of the following form (author: M.K.):

A LETTER FROM HOLIDAYS
Hi ________________________ (1 – name of a person from your group),
I’m writing because I want to tell you that I’m now in ________________________
(2 – geographical place) where I am spending holidays together with my
______________________________ (3 – plural noun). We’re staying in a/an
______________________________ (4 – adjective) hotel near the music club called
______________________________ (5 – plural noun).
The food here is ________________________ (6 – negative adjective) but the
people are really ________________________ (7 – positive adjective). Among
them is ________________________ (8 – name of a famous person), with whom I ________________________ (9 – verb in Past Simple) all last night.

Every morning, before breakfast, I run around a ________________________ (10 – colour adjective) lake in the middle of a large forest. I think it’s probably ________________________ (11 – geographical place).

I’m having ________________________ (12 – adjective) holidays here, aren’t I? That’s all I wanted to ________________________ (13 – verb). I’d like to ________________________ (14 – verb) you and your family.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

__________________________ (15 – adverb) yours,

__________________________ (16 – your name)

The students’ task in the first phase of the research was to follow the teacher’s instructions and to write down on their sheets of paper the vocabulary items which came to their minds with regard to 16 categories read out by the teacher from the ‘letter’ matrix presented above. The matrix at that time was not available to students, which means that they were not aware of the purpose of this activity and of its final product. Thus, the items which students generated were a result of a free and spontaneous flow of associations to the listed categories (except category no. 16). In the next stage, printed-out letter matrices were given to students who were supposed to complete them with the items which they had written down on their pieces of paper. Subsequently, participants were requested to read on their own the letters with the words provided by them and to make sense of the texts which were created on this basis. The teacher observed that it was quite an engaging task as students not only carefully analyzed and interpreted their own texts, paying attention to all the sentences which were created with the help of the vocabulary they had forwarded, but they also got involved in making comparisons between their letters and the ones of their colleagues – which, in fact, brought a lot of fun to the class. After individual analysis of texts by learners, some completed letters were presented to the whole group. The letters were read out either by the teacher or by student volunteers. It needs to be noted here that in each group where such a lesson was conducted there were numerous such volunteers.

At the end of the lesson based on the non-typical form of letter work, student participants were requested to fill in a questionnaire, which constituted the second phase of the research. The questionnaire distributed by the teacher consisted of 6 questions altogether (5 closed-ended and 1 open-ended). They all helped the contributors to this paper to gather necessary information about the suggested form of work and its role in EFL learning and teaching. The results coming from the analysis of the data obtained through this questionnaire were possible be presented in both quantitative and qualitative ways.

At this point it is worth presenting the results with regard to each of the questions included in the distributed questionnaire form (the questions were addressed to students in the Polish language so that they could better understand and more easily respond to them; in this article, however, the questions are translated into English).
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Rate on the scale from 1 (the lowest value) to 5 (the highest value) the attractiveness of the lesson based on the suggested form of work. Circle your answer.

Table 1: Attractiveness of the lesson with non-typical letter activities (overall number of students: 56)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>1,78</td>
<td>14,28</td>
<td>39,28</td>
<td>44,64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information presented in Table 1 suggests that the lesson with non-typical letter activities is viewed by the majority of students as attractive. Students in their responses mainly highlighted values 4 and 5, which means that they appreciated the form of work that was offered to them in the class.

Do you think that through such letter activities the teacher can motivate students to learn English?

Table 2: Letter activities as a teacher’s tool for motivating students (overall number of students: 56).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>definitely not</th>
<th>rather not</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
<th>rather yes</th>
<th>definitely yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>10,71</td>
<td>16,07</td>
<td>50,00</td>
<td>23,21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Table 2 one can infer that the introduced letter activities are for many respondents a useful tool for enhancing students’ motivation to study English. As many as 28 out of 56 subjects stated that it is a rather good way of encouraging young people to learn a language.

Does this form of work allow in your opinion for practicing and revising vocabulary in a lesson?

Table 3: Letter activities and their role in vocabulary practice and revision (overall number of students: 56).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>definitely not</th>
<th>rather not</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
<th>rather yes</th>
<th>definitely yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>3,57</td>
<td>7,14</td>
<td>55,35</td>
<td>33,92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, a majority of students views the suggested letter activities as crucial for vocabulary practice and revision. By circling on the scale mainly the answers ‘rather yes’ and ‘definitely yes’, the respondents highlighted the role which such materials play in vocabulary learning and teaching.
Do you think that the suggested form of work broadens students’ knowledge about English parts of speech?

Table 4: Letter activities and the development of students’ grammar knowledge (overall number of students: 56).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>definitely not</th>
<th>rather not</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
<th>rather yes</th>
<th>definitely yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>0,00</td>
<td>1,78</td>
<td>3,57</td>
<td>57,14</td>
<td>37,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The layout of responses to the question about the contribution of letter activities to the familiarization of students with English parts of speech is similar to those presented in the previous questions. By circling again mainly the responses ‘rather yes’ and ‘definitely yes’, the subjects emphasized an important role which this form of work plays in the development of young people’s knowledge about grammar concepts.

Do the letter activities help to relate to the content of different school subjects, and in consequence to promote cross-curricular language learning and teaching?

Table 5: Letter activities and their role in CLIL (overall number of students: 56).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>definitely not</th>
<th>rather not</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
<th>rather yes</th>
<th>definitely yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>5,35</td>
<td>5,35</td>
<td>23,21</td>
<td>48,21</td>
<td>17,85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having analysed students’ responses to the question about the role which the devised letter activities play in cross-curricular learning and teaching, one can state that a majority of young people is willing or quite willing to point to such a role. In the lexical items, which they came up with as a result of their free associations with given categories, they recognized the cross-curricular content which, as the teacher also observed, related to numerous domains.

Say in your own words what you think about the suggested form of work.

(only the most elaborate student opinions are presented below, they are translated by the authors of this article from the Polish language into English)

S 1: It’s definitely an unconventional way of conducting lessons. To my mind, there should be more activities of this sort at school.

S 3: I really liked this form of work because thanks to it me and my classmates revised vocabulary and at the same time had a great deal of fun.

S 5: It was an interesting lesson during which we got acquainted with the form of a letter. We enjoyed it very much.

S 6: This lesson was different from the other ones we have at school. For me it was much more attractive.
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S 11: We had great fun in the classroom because we had a chance to laugh at what we had written in the blank spaces of the letter prepared by the teacher.

S 13: This is a useful tool for integrating students and for playing with language in a lesson.

S 18: It is a very attractive form of work. If lessons were conducted this way, students would be more willing to learn.

S 19: This form of work contributes to the overall development of students.

S 20: It arouses creativity and encourages learners to think quickly, leading in consequence to surprising effects. I think it brings fun to language learning and teaching.

S 22: The lesson based on the letter work was very interesting and it helped to activate more students than usual.

S 23: This form of work facilitates learning because of the student-friendly atmosphere it creates.

S 24: It's a very inventive and nice form of work.

S 27: In my opinion such lessons are not boring and they encourage students to learn a language.

S 28: Students in such a lesson are more focused on the content and pay more attention to what is being said in a class.

S 30: From my point of view, a lesson based on the work with the letter broadens our knowledge, is interesting, and through elements of play and fun helps us to revise vocabulary.

S 32: It was a fun lesson which allowed us to practice vocabulary. I would like to take part in such a lesson again. It was the best English lesson ever.

S 34: It is an attractive form of work which helped us to revise the vocabulary and the spelling of English words.

S 36: In my opinion this work makes learning fun, improves concentration skills and motivates students to think.

S 37: This form of work creates a pleasant atmosphere in a class and is really funny. I would love to take part in such a lesson again.

S 38: Such activities should be used in teaching other subjects as well because they develop students' knowledge and their motivation to learn.

S 49: It is a nice alternative to traditional language lessons, and in my opinion it should be organized once a month. This form of work makes a lesson attractive and encourages students to active participation in a class.

S 50: It is a nice form but it could be improved by using, for example, multimedia.

S 51: I find this form of work very useful to teaching those students who have problems with language learning.

S 52: A very nice form of work, more activities of this sort are warmly welcomed by students.

S 54: If language lessons were organized and conducted this way, it would be funnier and more pleasant at school. We, students, would definitely learn more through such activities.

Of course the list of student responses to this question was very long, and apart from the statements presented above, it also included less elaborate, but still positive, opinions such as the ones expressed through individual words (for example: OK, super, cool, perfect, fine or nice). One could, however, find some negative opinions as well but they, as the material below shows, were in a considerable minority:
S 46: I did not like it much.
S 48: I was bored with these activities.

Bearing all these results in mind, one can now proceed to the formulation of conclusions, which are going to be presented in the final part to this paper.

5. Conclusions

On the basis of what has been presented here one can state that the set of non-typical letter activities described above and implemented in real school conditions by the authors of this article is a very useful educational tool. Such a tool meets the expectations of EFL secondary school students with regard to vocabulary practice and revision, the enhancement of their motivation, the promotion of cross-curricular in school conditions, and the improvement of the atmosphere and relationships in a class. This sort of work, in spite of various types of learners whom one can find in the present-day class, different learning strategies which they use and numerous needs and interests which they have, well serves the students themselves (as shown by research results) and the process of FL learning and teaching which, thanks to such activities, becomes more attractive and effective. Due to the ‘fun’ character, which is an aspect particularly emphasized by Teresa Siek-Piskozub in her series of authored and co-authored publications on foreign language education (e.g. Siek-Piskozub 1995; Siek-Piskozub 1997; Siek-Piskozub 2001; Siek-Piskozub 2002; Siek-Piskozub, Wach 2006), such a form of work also helps to activate young people in a lesson, to eliminate inhibitions among them and to integrate them all in a group.

One should, however, bear in mind that this small-scale research project could be expanded in the future to investigate other materials (see, for instance, materials in Appendices 1 and 2) and aspects (e.g. the notions of creativity, autonomy, interculturalism) that would definitely provide a more thorough insight into the matter of ‘written forms’ and their role in the educational context.

Bibliography


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APPENDIX 1

A LETTER TO SANTA CLAUS

Dear Santa Claus,

My name is _______________ (YOUR NAME). How have you been this year? I know you must be very busy during this holiday season. Please say _______________ (SALUTATION) to your elves and Mrs. Claus. I hope your reindeer are ready to _______________ (VERB) around the world. Please tell them there will be fresh _______________ (FOOD) waiting for them and of course there will be _______________ (BEVERAGE) for you at my house. However, this year please try to be quiet when you deliver my presents because it is very important that I get a full _______________ (NUMBER/UNIT OF TIME) of sleep. I have been very _______________ (ADJECTIVE) this year and did not cause any permanent damage to my _______________ (TYPE OF FAMILY MEMBER)... yet. I only want _______________ (NUMBER) things for Christmas so this should be an easy year for you. My first wish is for a _______________ (ANIMAL) that will protect me from Christmas burglars and take me to school because let’s face it, gas is too expensive. I also love _______________ (PLURAL NOUN). These are the best inventions in the world and I want _______________ (NUMBER) of them. I would also like _______________ (FAMOUS MOVIE STAR) to show up at my door on Christmas morning and serenade me with _______________ (SONG). Finally, I think that you should bring _______________ (PLURAL NOUN) to the world. I understand these things are hard to come by, but I have faith in you and your _______________ (PLURAL NOUN). If all of these things are too hard to get please make things easier on you and simply send _______________ (PLURAL NOUN). The only thing I don’t want for Christmas is a _______________ (NOUN). I am putting my _______________ (NOUN) in you Santa. Thanks for helping make this the best holiday ever.

Hugs and _______________ (PLURAL NOUN),
_______________ (YOUR NAME)

APPENDIX 2

COPERNICUS

Four hundred years ago people knew little about our _________ (ADJECTIVE) universe. They thought that the Earth was the center of the entire _________ (NOUN) and that the sun and all of the _________ (PLURAL NOUN) revolved around it. But then a/an _________ (NATIONALITY) named Copernicus discovered the truth: the earth revolves around the _________ (SOMETHING ROUND) _________ (A NUMBER) times a year. Copernicus, whose last name was _________ (LAST NAME), was born in Warsaw, and he used one of the first _________ (ADJECTIVE) telescopes, which was invented by _________ (PERSON IN ROOM). This primitive telescope was little more than two pieces of _________ (FOOD) stuck on each end of a/an _________ (NOUN). In 1600, an Italian _________ (OCCUPATION) named Galileo expanded Copernicus’ _________ (ADJECTIVE) theories, but during the Inquisition in Italy he was _________ (ADVERB) arrested. After _________ (VERB ENDING IN –ING) for six months in jail, Galileo was forced to _________ (VERB).

Adapted from: www.cs.kent.edu/.../Activity%206%20--%20Mad%20Lib.doc (retrieved on 20th June 2018).

Słowa kluczowe
list, nietypowe zajęcia z wykorzystaniem listu, efektywność, nowoczesne podejścia do nauczania języków obcych, spostrzeżenia młodzieży szkoły średniej uczącej się języka angielskiego jako obcego

Abstract

Non-typical letter activities and their effectiveness in foreign language lessons – EFL secondary school students’ perceptions

The main aim of this article is to verify the effectiveness of non-typical lesson activities, involving the completion of a letter, in classroom conditions; and in implementing modern approaches to foreign language learning and teaching. Apart from presenting theoretical information on the notion of a letter and the concept of effectiveness in language education, the following account also provides insight into letter-based practical activities and identifies some consequences of their application in EFL classes. It delineates the opinions of secondary school students who, in an anonymous questionnaire, expressed their views on the letter activities offered to them in their lessons. Their opinions provide evidence in support of the content and concepts distinguished and discussed in the theoretical part of this paper.

Keywords
letter, non-typical letter activities, effectiveness, modern approaches to foreign language learning and teaching, EFL secondary school students’ perceptions