

Transcript for DRGC Training video #9

Hello.

In this video we are going to discuss how to develop soft skills within the language curriculum using the DRGC framework.

Let's start by defining what soft skills actually are:

Soft skills refer to interpersonal, communication, and emotional intelligence competencies that are valuable in various contexts, including the workplace, education, and personal relationships.

Soft skills include qualities such as effective communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, empathy, cultural competence, and resilience.

English teachers can play a vital role in developing these skills in their students by creating engaging learning experiences, fostering collaborative learning environments, and providing opportunities for authentic communication and interaction, in English.

When using the DRGC Syllabus Builder for your students, you will be able to see which soft skills are being developed in the learning outcomes of the lesson.

Now, let's have a look at some practical strategies we can use to implement soft skills within the language curriculum using the DRGC framework.

In order to raise cultural awareness and facilitate intercultural exchange

The first thing we as teachers need to do is to model respect and inclusivity by using inclusive language and promoting acceptance and appreciation of cultural differences.

Another way is integrating diverse texts and materials: you can incorporate authentic cultural materials that represent diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences.

Teachers can do an activity where students identify who's not represented by themselves, groups such as elderly people, people with disabilities, etc. and then seek out authentic materials including the unrepresented groups.

Teachers can also do an activity to raise awareness of different media perspectives. for example, you can choose a current topic in the news to discuss with your learners. Give your students a newspaper article or video that deals with the topic. ask them to examine the same story in different media sources. you can give them a questionnaire they can use to organize their ideas. an example of the questionnaire can be found in our DRGC handbook. you can find the link below.

To facilitate intercultural exchange organize pen pal programs, virtual exchanges, or collaborative projects. These interactions help students learn from peers in different cultural contexts. It's excellent to use programmes like Erasmus plus and E twinning projects. You can also organize cultural celebrations where students have the opportunity to showcase their cultural heritage through music, dance, food, and art.

Another important soft skill is **critical thinking**. It is the ability to analyse, evaluate, and interpret information in a systematic and logical manner to form a balanced judgment. Use the activities like 'The 4 I's', 'The 4 Cs', and 'The 3 Whys' to help students develop these skills and to look at an idea from different perspectives. More details on these activities can also be found in our handbook linked below.

Problem solving is another soft skill students can develop while also developing their language skills.

you can do this through a creative writing activity such as this one. to implement this activity, start by presenting students with a picture prompt to set the scene, such as a boat at sea. Then, give them a problem to solve, for example, needing to get home quickly from the boat. Each student writes their solution at the top of their page. They then pass their solution to a partner, who adds another problem the character faces. This exchange continues back and forth, with each partner adding new problems and solutions. By the end of the activity, students will have collaboratively created the outline for a story.

Next, let's talk about collective problem-solving using the **IDEAL** framework. This method helps students tackle complex problems together through five key steps. First, **Identify** the problem. Students need to clearly define the challenge, understand its nature, scope, and potential impact. Second, **Define** the problem more precisely. This involves breaking it down into parts, gathering information, analysing data, and understanding the underlying causes. Third, **Explore** potential solutions. Students brainstorm and research various approaches, considering different perspectives. Fourth, **Act** on the chosen solution. Students develop a plan of action, allocate resources, set goals, and implement the solution. Finally, **Look back and evaluate**. Students assess the effectiveness of the solution, identify lessons learned, and consider improvements for future problem-solving efforts. Using the IDEAL framework, students can collaboratively solve complex problems, enhancing their critical thinking and teamwork skills."

Communication skills

Creating a communicative classroom is key to the successful implementation of the DGRC framework. The development of communication skills is not only an outcome of learning, but a key part of the learning process, as we promote social interaction and prepare students for future success.

Let's explore **backchanneling**, a technique that uses verbal and non-verbal cues to show engagement and understanding during conversations. These cues include phrases like '*uh huh*' to signal 'please continue,' '*I see*' to indicate understanding, '*yeah*' to agree, '*oh dear*' to sympathize, and '*so?*' to ask for more information. To help students master backchanneling, provide them with the necessary functional language and practice the intonation to ensure they convey the right message.

Use a **communicative strategies questionnaire** to raise awareness of cross-cultural communication. This helps students reflect on their listening habits, like using body language, maintaining eye contact, and using backchanneling cues.

Teach students **fixed expressions** for agreeing and disagreeing politely, such as 'I agree with this point because...' or 'I'm afraid I don't agree because...'. These expressions are practical and easily applicable in real-life situations.

Encourage learners to extend their **speaking turns** by using linking words like 'and', 'so', 'but', and 'because'. Create cards with these words and have students draw them to continue their responses during discussions

By incorporating these techniques, you can enhance your students' communication skills, making them more effective and confident speakers.

Empathy is another crucial soft skill that nurtures understanding, compassion, and effective communication. It strengthens relationships, resolves conflicts, and enhances teamwork, making it essential for becoming a Responsible Global Citizen.

Encourage students to see situations from others' perspectives using texts and videos. Teach expressions like, 'If I were in their shoes, I would feel...' to help them articulate empathy.

Use photos of people in different situations. Isolate the faces and ask students to predict the emotions. Reveal the whole picture to see if their opinions change, helping to break down stereotypes.

Teach polite disagreement to respect different opinions. Use phrases like 'I understand' or 'I see things differently' to foster respectful communication.

Integrate drama and role play in your lessons. These activities explore issues, make learning memorable, encourage cooperation, and foster empathy. They also provide opportunities for students to rehearse language in meaningful contexts.

By incorporating these strategies, you can effectively develop empathy in your students, preparing them for collaborative and compassionate interactions in the future.

Social-emotional learning is another important soft skill which is often neglected.

Learners with emotional self-regulation and well-being skills can recognize and manage their emotions, contributing to a healthy lifestyle. One effective strategy is the 'If, then' plan, which helps students handle negative emotions. For example, 'If I feel angry, then I can take three deep breaths, count to ten, and think of my happy place.

Another useful tool is the gratitude diary. Encourage students to reflect on positive experiences and what they are grateful for. Allocate class time for diary entries, provide prompts, and foster a supportive environment for sharing.

By incorporating these strategies, you can help students develop emotional self-regulation and well-being skills, essential for their overall health and success.

To prepare students for the job market, it's crucial they can articulate their skills and experiences with examples. One effective strategy to work on their **employability skills** is to incorporate end-of-class routines where students work in pairs to identify and discuss the skills they practiced that day. Additionally, they can design posters or complete charts to visually represent their skills, serving as a tool for self-reflection and future reference. By consistently reflecting on and documenting their skills, students become better prepared to communicate their abilities effectively in professional settings.