



SOME USEFUL ACTIVITIES IN TEACHING SPEAKING IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT THE BEGINNER LEVEL

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Annotation: The problems of modernization of the modern education system, insufficient development of theoretical and practical issues of teaching foreign languages have determined the need to identify ways to overcome difficulties in teaching non-linguistic students to speak a foreign (English) language in a group with different basic levels of training. The task facing the foreign language teacher of the university is to select and use the methods of teaching speaking, which make it possible to adapt and improve the basic knowledge of a foreign language among students for successful communication. The analysis of scientific and pedagogical works of scientists allowed to form the basic principles of teaching students to speak a foreign language.

Keywords: speaking, productive skill, activity, learners, communication.

Speaking is a productive type of speech activity, with the help of which (together with listening) oral verbal communication is carried out, and its content is the expression of thoughts orally. Special preparatory and speech exercises have been developed for teaching speaking. A quick way of gaining early fluency in a language is to memorise useful phrases. There are several advantages in doing this. First, simple communication can occur at an early stage. For example, learners should be able to say who they are, where they come from, and what they do from the very first language lessons. They should also be able to greet people with phrases like good morning, and good day and to thank them. Second, memorizing phrases and sentences allows learners to make accurate use of the language without having to know the grammar. Third, as we have seen, knowing sentences like Please say that again, Please speak more slowly, What does X mean? allows learners to take control of a conversation and use it for language learning purposes. Fourth, the words and patterns that make up such phrases can make the learning of later phrases and perhaps the learning of later patterns easier. Even at this very early stage of language learning, it is worth showing learners the value of making small cards with the second



language word or phrase on one side and the first language translation on the other. These cards are used for recalling the meanings of the words and phrases, and later recalling the words and phrases.

Interview activities provide small-scale question and answer interaction. The activities using grids and surveys described above can easily become like small interviews. The person being interviewed needs a source of knowledge, for example personal experience, a report from a newspaper, part of a science, mathematics or economics textbook, a picture or a brief written description. The interviewer needs some guidance on what information to look for and what kinds of questions to ask. If, for example, several learners or pairs of learners have a different car advertisement each, then they can be interviewed several times by different learners who are using a standard set of questions or the same grid to fill in. Quizzes are often simply listening activities with an element of competition. The teacher prepares general knowledge questions, incomplete statements, or true/false statements that the learners will hear and try to answer. There may be two competing teams with an audience who also write their own answers to the questions. It is not difficult to design quiz questions around a few grammatical constructions.

Bingo is a very adaptable activity that provides learners with lots of listening and vocabulary practice. The game begins with the teacher reading out descriptions of body parts in random order and the learners covering the matching words. The first learner to cover a row in any direction calls out “body”. He or she then reads back the covered word.

Twenty questions is a well-known activity. The teacher or a learner thinks of an object and writes its name on a piece of paper. The learners ask yes/no questions, for example, “Is it in the room?”, “Is it big?” They must guess what it is before they have asked 20 questions. The person who guesses correctly thinks of the next object and the other learners ask questions. Questions that are not grammatically correct should not be answered. In another game, a learner can pretend to have a certain job or to be a famous person. The others ask them questions to try to guess their job or who they are. In this game pronominal questions can be used. Instead of thinking of an object the teacher can show an unfamiliar object to the class and by asking yes/no questions, the learners find out what it is.

The find the differences activity. In this activity a pair of learners have a similar picture each, but they have to find the differences by describing and not showing their pictures to each other. In this activity the support comes from the common features of the two pictures. Support may also involve some kind of support during



the task such as notes, pictures with annotations, or objects. Breikreuz (1972) suggests a sequence of speaking activities starting with a set of pictures. The learners are shown several pictures that tell a story. Usually there are about four pictures. First, the learners must describe the pictures and tell the story in their own words. Then they retell the story as a dialogue. After this they can act it. Questions can be used to help the learners. The pictures can be taken from books of picture stories or joke books, or they can be made of stick drawings drawn by the teacher. In this procedure the teacher may simply rely on group cooperation to produce the wanted vocabulary and constructions. If monitoring the activity shows that this does not happen, then it may be necessary for the teacher to write words and phrases on the pictures for the learners to use. This gives the first activity something of a focus on form, and so the follow-up activities of turning it into a dialogue and then acting it may serve to bring back the meaning focus. Fowles (1970) suggests using humorous cartoons in a similar way. This has the learning goals of cultural understanding and language development. All these kinds of support allow learners to draw on explicit knowledge of the language in their spoken production.

Tongue twisters. In this activity students must see who can say these tongue twister sentences that are hard to say very fast, for example: *“These things here not these things here, but those things there. She sells sea shells by the seashore. Red lorry, yellow lorry. Copper-bottomed coffee pot. I saw a kitten eating chicken in the kitchen. She sees cheese. Black background, brown background. How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?”*

Two truths and a Lie. Learners work in groups and write down three ‘facts’ about themselves – two things that are true, one thing that is a lie. As teacher first give students an example of two personal facts and one obvious lie, *“I am a teacher. I am not married. I am Chinese.”* They must then present their two facts and a lie and the other students may ask questions to determine what is the lie or simply guess.

Fortunately, Unfortunately. One student starts a story with just one sentence. The next student has to continue the story, starting their sentence with ‘fortunately’. The next student continues the story with a new sentence starting with ‘unfortunately’. Then, back to ‘fortunately’ and so on. For example: One day, Bob woke up. Fortunately, it was a Sunday and he could stay in bed. Unfortunately, there was a storm outside and water was pouring in through his window. Fortunately, all he had to do was get up and close the window. Unfortunately, when he got up, he saw that there was a tiger next to the window! Fortunately...



The Expert. In 'The Expert' the nominated student have to choose a topic and talk about it for 30 seconds as if he or she is an expert. If they can, they win and go to the next round. For example, talk about the ocean for 30 seconds; talk about Australian animals, or Olympic sports, famous singers, and so on.

I am an Alien. Students have to imagine that the teacher is an alien and they need to instruct the alien how to complete an everyday task. They have to teach the alien the necessary vocabulary for the task and how to perform it. Ideas for such tasks are: Going to the supermarket to buy bread; making a sandwich; washing their clothes; brushing their teeth; taking a bus to the city.

Overall, taking into consideration all the activities above, it is up to the teacher what communicative activity to choose for his/her learners according to their interests and the topic they are going to teach.

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