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# TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE CLASS MANAGEMENT

There are three terms which are crucial for the work of every teacher – teaching approach, method and technique. Since over recent decades there has been continuous confusion in comprehending these terms and various authors have defined them in different (and sometimes rather contradictory) ways, we need to explain how they are understood and used in this manual.

A teaching approach is the broadest term. It integrates the theory of how languages are best taught and learned (e.g. behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism, etc.), philosophy of education (educational idealism, scholasticism, pragmatism, existentialism, etc.), and teaching principles the teacher tends to follow.

The key principles of traditional education consider education as struggling for the perfect and absolute. Discipline is viewed as adaptation to social rules and learning is gained through receiving and grasping. The learning is mainly for the future use. There is usually a gap between school and real life.

The key principles of modern, progressive education imply accepting the child´s individuality and view discipline as cooperating and supporting. The learning is gained through creation or discovery. The learning is mainly now and here through current experience. There is usually a connection between school and real life outside the school.

A modern teacher is expected to be able to use a wide variety of teaching techniques to facilitate the learning needs of all students. He/she should:

- be well informed about the basic principles and methodological procedures of as many teaching techniques as possible;

- be well informed about students, their learning styles and preferences to be able to select the most appropriate techniques that would attract and support students;

- be able to adapt the generally recommended procedure of a particular teaching technique to the current situation in the classroom;

- have a battery of teaching materials for various teaching techniques.

Ideally, the teaching technique itself should:

- enable students to discover or gain new knowledge;

- facilitate learning processes;

- be natural and as close to real life outside the school as possible;

- be appropriate to the students age and proficiency level;

- be attractive enough to motivate students to learn further;

- help students develop their logical thinking;

- be economical (students should be able to reach educational objectives in as short time as possible with as little effort as possible);

- be flexible (adaptable for various groups of students and teaching objectives);

- promote individualized learning.

Using discovery techniques is inspired by some modern approaches to foreign language teaching and learning (e.g. task-based learning theory) which advocate students' active participation in language teaching and respecting their learning autonomy. The technique is close to student-centred approaches and those which enforce analytical and critical thinking of students.

Discovering techniques are based on inductive learning because students need to discover new knowledge. This is opposite to the traditional approach where knowledge is usually passed on to the students. Along with the fact that discovery techniques make learning more memorable, they also help students become more independent and better prepared for practical life.

Deductive and inductive approaches are used in a discovery technique.

Deductive technique is realized when the teacher introduces a general rule. The students learn the rule (e.g. by heart). The students practice the rule on a set of exercises (drills).

In inductive approach and the teacher presents a number of examples. The students compare the examples and try to find a rule. The students formulate a general rule.

In addition to many advantages, discovery techniques also have some risks:

- They are rather time-consuming and some teachers are not patient enough to wait for their students to come to the result.

- Comparing the time necessary for the techniques and immediate results gained in the classroom some teachers might conclude that the techniques are not effective enough and not worth to be used in the classroom.

- They might be frustrating for students with less developed analytical thinking.

One more technique used in teaching is a discussion.

A discussion (together with role plays and simulation techniques) is one of dialogic techniques based on the existence of information/opinion gap between communicating partners (see *Information gap activities*). Discussion on a particular topic is very frequently used as a motivation technique before reading or listening activities. To discuss is not only to ask and answer questions. In reality, it is something else and more.

Three basic types of classroom discussions may be recognized:

a) small-group discussions,

b) large-group discussions,

c) debate.

Small-group discussions are conducted in the way when the class is divided into several smaller groups where students discuss freely and after some time they present their outcomes to the whole class.

A large-group discussion requires a very well prepared chairman. He/she should be prepared to discuss any issue related to the discussion topic. The chairman may be a teacher or one of the students.

The chairman´s tasks include

- starting the discussion: with a provocative question, a common experience, using visuals, recently read ideas, a controversy, eliciting information from the students' "real life", etc.;

- facilitating the discussion by asking questions: e.g. by asking general questions; keeping eye contact with the whole class not only students who talk; by controlling „excessive talkers"; by asking for examples and illustrations; by allowing for pauses and silences to think; by encouraging and recognizing students' contributions, etc.;

- dealing with disagreements and conflicts: the chairman may help clarify what seems to be the disagreement by listing the pros and cons visually, conflicts must not be ignored;

- reflecting on the discussion and providing a summary: at the end, the chairman should provide a summary and conclusions of the discussion; What did the students learn?

**Recommended procedure**

1. The students are initially presented with a provocative question or a problem.

2. They are asked to present their own opinions, views and beliefs on the matter.

3. The chairman takes notes on a board as an outcome of the discussion.

4. The chairman concludes the discussion by stating a summary.

The form of a debate is very close to that of a discussion. Students create two groups with conflicting views and their task is to come to an agreement/conclusion.

**Recommended procedure**

1. Introduce the topic. It must be controversial.

2. Ask students to form two teams: "pros" and "cons".

3. Give the students sufficient time for preparation of their arguments.

4. Ask both teams to appoint "a speaker".

5. Set a one-minute limit for presentations of both teams.

6. Allow teams to ask questions and answer them (5-minute limit). If the debate turns too loud, only speakers are allowed to speak.

7. After five minutes of discussion, stop the debate. Summarize both teams´ points.

Ask students to make notes.

The teaching technique the teacher decides to use should not require more effort than necessary. Otherwise, it would lead to the loss of students´ motivation. On the other side, the teaching technique must be in accordance with teacher´s individuality and his/her skills. The techniques can be easily and flexibly changed and used in hundreds of different ways according to the momentary objectives of the teacher and his/her students´ needs.

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