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SIMULATION-BASED EDUCATION AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO DEVELOP SPEAKING SKILLS

Modelling the situations which are maximally close to real life situations encourages students to conduct more relaxing communications developing speaking skills. It is not a secret that encouraging communication in any foreign language, particularly in English, during the lessons is not an easy task for most teachers to perform. When you create interesting learning situations your students feel at ease and it encourages the development of communicative skills. At present simulation-based education is about using simulation software and tools to make the teaching and learning processes more interesting, involving, practice-oriented and student-centered. Nowadays both computer hardware and software are so advanced that they make it easy to employ innovative methodologies that include use of simulation-based education tools to improve the learning experience. In addition, due to the process which is known as globalization of e-learning practices, these educational experiences are becoming available to more and more students from different parts of the world. Besides, it promotes the development of international and inter-university cooperation in education.

What is a simulation? It is a problem-driven activity that occurs in a clearly described realistic setting. Simulation as experiential learning has been recognized as a means to challenge student's misapprehension as it encourages higher-order learning, which boosts critical thinking abilities and self-oriented learning. Those who are involved in this type of learning have a better understanding of their subject matter than students in a traditional lecture-only class. In the future such students tend to be perceived as more competent practitioners than students in classes without these methods. So, simulations are one form of experiential learning used in educational and community settings engaging an audience in active learning where participants learn from each other, not just from the teacher. Simulations are simplified patterns of human interactions or social processes where the players participate in roles. Most simulations demand that the students are supplied with background information and materials to work both before and during simulations. While participating in simulations students behave as themselves, apply their own background and first-language experience to the situation which is being simulated.

There are undoubtedly plenty of reasons why teachers should use simulations in teaching foreign language students. Firstly, students use the foreign language, particularly English, creatively and communicatively. Secondly, students are more motivated as communication while participating in simulation is purposeful. Thirdly, language fluency of students is developed. More attention is paid to the situation and the language is subordinate to the activity. Fourthly, all four language and communicative skills are developed. Students learn the pragmatic skills of using language appropriately. They also develop the nonverbal components of the language. Fifthly, students feel proud, self-confident and they believe in their abilities and in themselves. Lastly, learning is more effective as students are actively engaged in communication which can easily occur in real life situations.

To make a simulation effective, the one must be carefully planned and prepared in advance. A typical simulation usually includes three elements which are necessary to achieve the best results and to make it effective: preparation, active student participation and debriefing. During the preparation students are thoroughly explained what they are expected to do and what they need for it. They are given tasks, roles, background (information input) and language input: useful lexis,

structures, discussion strategies, research skills, etc. Effective learning comes through simulations when students are actively engaged and totally involved. Every effort should be made and applied to make it difficult or even impossible for students to become passive and indifferent during the simulation. During debriefing the participants discuss the tactics which has been employed, cultural aspects that have been mentioned, assess performance which has been shown, analyze the language which has been used, errors which have been made and express their impressions about the activity.

So, there are a lot of benefits provided by simulation-based education. Their easy integration on both online and offline courses makes it popular and widely used in the world.

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