

DISCUSSION AS THE WAY OF IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS

The article is devoted to the problems of preparation and conducting of the discussion. The ways directed towards maximum group involvement into the speaking activity are being examined.

Discussion as a learning activity that encourages students to voice their opinions and ask questions of their classmates and teachers, can be a highly effective learning tool. One of the most difficult skills is the ability to guide students through class discussion. Most teachers recognize early in their careers that the ability to understand and manipulate concepts does not necessarily transmit into the ability to teach those same concepts to someone else. Teaching requires an individual to refine his or her knowledge and to approach material from the viewpoint of others.

Discussion, as a learning activity, either it is focused or open, provides a forum in which students can vocalize their concerns about issues raised in reading material, VIDEO, lectures, and other academic situations. Most importantly, discussion encourages students to find their own ways to explain principles and to listen critically to the views of others. Through discussion, which can be used across curriculum, students learn to assess their own communicative skills as well as those of their peers. In addition, they learn to offer positive criticism and appropriate feedback to their class-

mates. Discussion encourages students to view the classroom as an open environment in which everyone has an equal opportunity to speak rather than a place where they passively listen to a teacher.

One has to remember about individual peculiarities of those involved in this learning activity. For some students there is nothing better than the sound of their voice. They are not interested in what other people have to say unless they are asked to express their point of view. Other students take an active part in the conversation, as well as sit back and let others do the talking. Others are definitely the quiet, shy type or they may feel sceptical about their ability to speak the language, but that does not mean they have not got anything to say. The teacher's task is to involve all of the students into discussion. It would be reasonable for the teacher to begin with a relatively easy assignment and then progress after students have had a chance to develop mutual understanding among themselves. The teacher should provide oral and written instructions for the task and explain to the students how he will evaluate their participation.

Another technique that teachers can use is small

group discussion. An excellent tool to build student involvement in a class is to have them discuss a topic or question with a partner or a few other students. More introverted students often will discuss comfortably. The teacher can then ask small groups to report their ideas to the class. The groups should be monitored carefully to make sure they are spending time on their tasks. The teacher walks around the room and asks each group questions about their progress periodically.

Another technique is planning the discussion together. To insure that everyone will participate in discussion teachers can require students to bring to class articles from newspapers or magazines, a series of questions or short responses to the material on which the discussion will focus. Students who are nervous about responding spontaneously during a discussion will be more likely to talk when they can refer to their written comments.

Assigning activities to prepare students for discussion can make teachers feel more comfortable about calling on a wide variety of students than waiting for volunteers.

Another technique is holding one-to-one exchanges with students in class. The teacher should avoid letting more than two or three students speak in a row without his or her commenting. This heightens the teacher's visibility as a model for how the discussion should proceed.

E.g. "When Oksana said this, I saw you shaking your head in disagreement, Helen. Can you tell us why you disagree with Oksana's assessment of the situation?"

The teacher may also suggest the students to respond formally to comments classmates make during discussion. For this purpose students are placed in pairs and then write 1 or 2 page response to their partners' comments during discussion.

During the next class meeting, they may share their response as a way to reiterate the previous discussion. If a comment is somewhat off the track it would be reasonable for the teacher to respond selectively to that aspect of it which most fulfills the goals of the discussion. For example, you might say, "This part of your comment really addresses today's topic." One should not forget that open — ended question may lead the discussion in other areas. If your students became interested in a particular digression, try to respond to that interest in the next class meeting. Write such topics on the board under the heading "For future discussion" to show you are serious about dealing with them.

The teacher periodically summarizes both his/her own points and the themes of the discussion— especially at the end of the meeting. He or she may also keep tracks of students' ideas by writing their claims briefly on the board. This will help the teacher to connect and summarize them as well as return to overlooked points. It would be logical to ask your students at regular intervals to reiterate the points people have made so far.

Taking notes on student discussion is very important. During the next class meeting, remind students of what issues you raised.

E.g. Yesterday we seemed to have reached a consensus about this, but we were unable to agree on that.

Quoting directly from students will tell them that you value their comments. The more psychologically involved and methodologically prepared the teacher is the more confident and sincerer students are while discussing.

So, acquisition activity in discussion is one of the main aims in the framework of Communicative Language Teaching.

1. *Jonson K., Morrow K. (editors). Communication in the classroom: Applications and Methods for Communicative Approach.— Longman, 1992.*
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4. *Malamah-Tomas A. Classroom Interaction.— Oxford University Press, 1992.*

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ДИСКУСІЯ ЯК ШЛЯХ ДО ПОКРАЩЕННЯ НАВИЧОК

Статтю присвячено проблемам підготовки та ведення дискусії. Розглядаються шляхи, спрямовані на максимальне залучення аудиторії до мовленнєвої діяльності.