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USING INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGIES WHILE TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The first thing to realize about interactive teaching is that is not anything new or something extraordinary. If you are a teacher and provide learning process, assign and check homework, hold different types of discussions, then you already teach interactively. The use of interactive teaching can provide possibilities to students that are not usually available in traditional situations. Interactive teaching concentrates on the process of learning and not just presenting information.

Interactive teaching is based on the idea that students must be active and it takes into account that learners have experience and knowledge they bring to each situation. Instead of just adding more knowledge to that, teachers use the students' knowledge to assist more in the process of learning. Instead of just giving the information to the students, teachers encourage them to come up with the ideas on how they are linked to their own world, thus creating their own meaning of the material.

But interactive teaching does not mean just leaving students to make whatever sense they can from any learning experience (as we could call it "learning by doing"), but, to be of value, needs the interaction of sensitive teachers to interact and challenge student thinking exposing them to new ideas. By using interactive approach it is rather easy to see how much students know. It allows the teacher to realize how the students' individual thinking process is working with the information they are getting. The students gain by learning factual information within the range of a bigger picture which helps its better understanding and remembering. It is obvious that interactive learning is more motivating because of using groups and positive interactions between students and a teacher.

Interactive learning incorporates three primary interaction types. The first is "learner-content" where students interact with the facts, reading and information. In the second style, which could be called as "learner-instructor", the students interact primarily with the teacher. In the third structure, called "learner-learner", students collaborate with one another to construct knowledge. Experience shows that the most effective interactive learning occurs when all three types of interaction are used.

The phrases "focused teaching" and "the teacher as a cognitive coach" are often applied to describe this more positive role for the teacher. Interactive teaching evaluates student's prior ideas and is directed to empowering students to be independent learners. As for teachers, it offers an opportunity to learn along with the students and to use their interactive skills to listen carefully and challenge misconceptions where it could be possible. The teacher's own knowledge and experience will always be one of the most important factors. However, finding time to determine what students understand, either individually or as a group, and then challenging them to enrich their way of thinking, requires a class management style that gives teachers space to interact. Such a focused approach could be best seen in

teaching such different styles of reading as scanning and skimming. Introducing too many activities may be rather demanding for the teacher to find time, space and energy to interact properly. In such a situation the teacher becomes more an “activity manager” than an instructor.

The vision of a teacher using an interactive approach is to develop classrooms where students are helped to make sense and reflect on their experience, evaluate their work and set further learning goals. In such classrooms students are encouraged to articulate how they learn, they should be able to express what the problem is they are dealing with, what questions and prior ideas they have obtained, what plans and methods they are going to apply for solving arisen issues. They should also realize how they are going to evaluate and present their findings. The best assessment of students’ competence is to expose their skill by creating the plan and measuring its possibility of getting positive results.

When planning interactive learning situations, it is important to keep the environment and time constraints in mind. Too many tasks should not be planned at one time because it could lead to frustration for both the student and the teacher. The student will be more concerned about getting the tasks done than about learning, and the teacher will be too busy keeping the task going to participate in the process. Small groups are going to lead to some noise, so these activities should be reserved for times and places where others will not be disturbed.

As interactive learning becomes more user-based, the potential of extending it is nearly limitless. The learning matches the student rather than the student needing to accommodate the learning preferences of the instructor. Students tend to use the learning style that is most effective for them. For instance, technology-based interactive learning is self-placed, so students can move quickly through reviewing material and focusing on learning new information. Developers of technology-based learning environments are using research to create different and varied interactive learning methods. Technology allows for detailed models, simulations, social networks and on-line courses which are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The student does not have to be somewhere at a specific time, and geography is no longer a barrier.

Another thing which provides students and teachers with a chance for interactive learning is using keypads and white-boards. Integrating technology into the classroom gives the possibility to enhance the interactive learning experience, provide interactive and hypermedia technologies that support classroom interaction, increase overall classroom interaction and collaborative efforts, and provide an integrated learning environment as well. Through each of the objectives it is obvious that the overall theme is to get the student actively involved into the learning process.

But it should be noted that the use of technology must be evaluated based upon its functionality and educational merit. Usage must be integrated into the instructional objectives of the course. Otherwise, it could be reduced to the function of adding novelty to the class. If we are to maximize our gains with technology while minimizing labor, we need to approach educational design with a top-down systematic approach. If we can effectively address these problems, then the enhancement of electronic media becomes more apparent and useful.