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THE USE OF PICTURES IN TEACHING LANGUAGE

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Using visual aids in general and pictures in particular to teach speaking skill for the students is one pedagogical issue which attracts the attention of not only educator but also many learners and people concerned. Thus it is worth investigating the roles of pictures in speaking lesson as it might affect their motivation and the way they learn.

Learning is a complex process and visual aids, especially pictures, are a great help in stimulating the learning of a foreign language. The student must use his ears as well as his eyes but it is the eye that is the primary channel of learning. Good visual materials will help maintain the pace of the lesson and student's motivation. As we learn most through visual stimulus, the more interesting and varied these stimuli are, be quicker and more effective our learning will be. B. M. Bowen says about visual aids in language teaching: they vary the pace of the lesson:

– encourage the learners to lift their eyes from their books, which makes it easier and more natural for one to speak to another;

- allow the teacher talking less by diminishing the importance of the verbal stimuli provided by the teacher's voice, and allow the students to talk more;

- enrich the classroom by bringing in topics from the outside world which are made real and immediate by the pictures;

- spotlight issues, providing a new dimension of dramatic realism and clarifying facts;

- a student with a creative imagination will often find he learns a new language easily and enjoyably through the use of pictures while he finds it difficult to learn just from a textbook and dictionary;

- make a communicative approach to language learning easier and more natural;

- help to teach listening, speaking, reading, and writing and allow the teacher to integrate these skills constructively;

- inspire imaginativeness in both the teacher and students;

- provide variety at all levels of proficiency [2].

Wright A. & Hallem S. also consider that pictures have a major role to play in the development of students skills. There are two reasons in particular for listening and reading:

- The meanings we derive from words are affected by the context they are in: pictures can represent or contribute much to the creation of contexts in the classroom;

- It is often helpful if the students can respond to a text non – verbally: pictures provide an opportunity for non-verbal response [10].

J.M. Dobson goes on confirming that pictures for use in conversation sessions may come from books, magazines, newspapers, or they may be use the ones drawn by teacher or students [3]. Whatever they are, they can serve as excellent conversation starters. Students can make different discussions about pictures, and it helps to practice to use the prepositions what they already know and students feel need to learn more of them. It can also be some short description about the picture where students can test themselves about prepositions they have been learning. V. F. Allen says that pictures which show human situations often interest students at the elementary level [1]. Students enjoy imagining where they are, what happened before the picture moment, what might happen next. Pictures with different situations are very valuable in the language classes, especially at elementary level.

Traditionally, pictures have been used for description or for illustrating a recorded dialogue. Recently, however, there has been more emphasis on the communicative use of language, and pictures can be very useful in this respect. They provide references to which the learner can make a personal

response, such as expressing likes or dislikes. They also provide each learner with the opportunity to try to use the language he or she has learned. Here are some examples of how pictures can be used to practice speaking and writing.

– *Sport the Difference*. Learners examine two or three pictures that are the same except for several details. They describe the differences. The differences can be designed in such a way that the sentences used to describe them can be of the same construction.

– *Memory*. Fifteen pictures of men and women, each with an identifying feature, are placed face down. One learner picks up a picture. Another learner tries to remember what the card was. If she / he is right, she / he is given it, otherwise it is replaced.

– *Written Composition*. Learners are shown a picture and are asked to start writing a story based on it. After five minutes they are asked to read to their neighbor what they have written, or one learner is asked to read his version to the whole group. Then the teacher shows another picture, which may not have any obvious relationship to the previous one, and the learners are asked to continue their story without any break, using information from the second picture. The teacher continues in this way with three or four picture. The teacher can also show a sequence with one picture missing. The learners write (or tell) the story and are expected to guess the content of the missing picture.

– *A Single Picture for Interpretation*. The learners are shown a picture, and they describe what they see in very simple terms. For example: What do you do see in the picture? How many people are there? What's this? etc. Very quickly, individual interpretations of what is represented become apparent, and these lead to genuine exchanges of views. Then the learners can talk about their personal experiences.

– *Acted-Out Conversations*. Presenting a picture of two people, the teacher asks the learners to imagine a conversation between them. They should write the conversation down and then act or read it out loud.

– *A Sequence of pictures*. The learners may discuss the sequence in pairs, evolving their story and writing it down. The stories may then be read aloud to the class and the differences discussed.

All the above mentioned ways of using pictures not only make foreign-language lessons more attractive and interesting but they also stimulate conversation and discussion. They provide learners with a variety of completely open-ended speaking and writing exercises, thus transforming an ordinary lesson into an enjoyable activity for both learner and teacher.

In conclusion, with all the suggestions in this paper, we hope to provide teachers of English some useful activities using pictures and some available sources which they can use as references when preparing for speaking lessons. We do believe that these activities using pictures will create an exciting learning environment where students will be motivated to engage in speaking activities in English class. However, needless to say, in all cases the most important factor is the teacher. The fact that all the useful activities above will become really useful or not depends a lot on the teacher's ability and flexibility in using them. Teachers' skills can be shown by how they choose the suitable activity, why they choose them and when they use them. Before selecting any activity for speaking lesson, teachers should ask themselves: why we choose that activity, when we can use it and whether or not our students will get involved in our activity.

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