more, student-talk is elicited through guide questions, comprehension questions, and directives to retell, describe, and summarize the events, characters, or places in the listening or reading text. In the postlistening or postreading stage, the text is exploited in more interesting and challenging activities such as debates, discussions, and role plays which center around student-talk.

Student-talk is further maximized by having activities that involve pair work and group work, as these will engage all the students in speaking. Also, both individual and group writing exercises involve some speaking centered on schema-building and brainstorming. Further interaction occurs in group writing and peer editing, since students exchange ideas and make corrections or improvements in a collective composition. In short, speaking is the skill that seems to be most easily integrated into the teaching of each of the other basic skills.

Lesson stages

Speaking can also be a part of every stage of the lesson including—including presentation, practice, and performance. Although the *presentation* stage is dominated by the teacher, students can also contribute personal ideas and talk about what they already know about the new language or topic. Also, at this stage, learners should be encouraged to use their imagination and make guesses or predictions about stories or dialogues.

Adrian Doff (1988) discusses the value of this type of elicitation by making the following points. First, it helps to focus the students' attention and make them think. Second, it helps students make the connection between what they already know and what they are about to learn. Third, it helps the teacher assess what the students already know, thereby making it easier to adapt the presentation to an appropriate level. I would add that the inclusion of eliciting in the presentation stage adds variety to an otherwise teacher-dominated activity and enhances student motivation.

In the *practice* stage of the lesson, students have the opportunity to reproduce and practice the new words or structures.

The use of pictures in this stage greatly reduces the monotony of mechanical drills. By using pictures, the teacher is able to elicit predictable responses in a more interesting way and with less teacher-talk.

Jeremy Harmer (1983) refers to the stages of practice as personalization and localization. The former allows students to convey meaningful information while talking about themselves; the latter allows them to use the places they live as a reference point. So, instead of talking about the characters in the textbook, they can talk about themselves, their friends, and their own families. Likewise, the places in the textbook can be replaced by the names of local places. By personalizing and localizing the information or situations in the textbook, students can adapt and expand written texts or dialogues in useful, meaningful, interesting, and beneficial speaking practice.

The *performance* or production stage of the lesson should provide the students with the opportunity to use the language previously presented and practiced during the lesson in a communicative context. Students should be encouraged to express their ideas, opinions, and feelings in discussions and debates. The important element of fun can be injected into this stage with games and simulated role play. Genuine questions that encourage student-talk are used in information gap tasks.

Conclusion

Developing students' communicative oral skills is one of our most important goals in language teaching. Now more than ever before, oral skills are essential for interactive survival in a global setting. To accomplish this goal of developing students' communicative oral skills, we need to encourage interactive discourse and self-expression. Classroom activities that increase student-talk and promote interaction among students for communicative purposes will help us reach this goal. Such activities can be implemented at all stages of the lesson and in conjunction with the teaching of the other basic skills. Communicative language teaching offers us an unlimited realm of options and ideas for encouraging and enhancing student-talk.

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Grammar Notebooks as Learning Tools

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In a typical English grammar classroom anywhere in the world, students commonly have three things in front of them on the first day of class: a pencil, a textbook, and a notebook. Much literature has been written about textbook materials but very little about that other standard piece of equipment, the notebook.

More than just papers with some words written on them, notebooks can be powerful tools in assisting students during their learning process. First, notebooks are useful in organizing what a teachers says and writes on the board, so that later the students can understand the information. Second, notebooks are used to record rec-

ognizable feedback of previously learned material from class assignments. Third, notebooks are used to write additional practice done outside of class. Fourth, notebooks can provide valuable documentation for teachers of the students' progress in order to give grades and as a measure of the effectiveness of the teachers' instructions. More often than not, when our students study for tests, they consult their notebooks as well as their texts.

Notebooks can also serve as communication tools between students and teachers. Teachers can use the notebooks to write notes to the students concerning their progress. Or the teacher may have a special page in the notebook for "Questions to the Teacher."

All of these factors make the notebook a very useful tool for students studying at home.

Grammar notebook criteria

As with any graded aspect of a student's work, teachers should inform students what they expect from them in their notebooks. Students' notebooks should be graded according to the following criteria at least:

1. Organization Is the notebook well organized? Can the teacher readily identify homework, notes, and class assignments?

2. Neatness Is the student's writing legible? Are all the pages attached or are pages falling out?

3. Completeness Are all homework assignments in the notebook? Are notes that were written on the board present in the notebook?

I typically have students turn in their notebooks each time there is a test. In this way, I can see the progress they have made in keeping their notebooks and can compare this to their performances on the tests. This gives accountability to the notes, class assignments, and homework.

So that students do not mix notes and assignments from other classes, I insist that students keep a special notebook just for grammar. This makes the task of identifying homework, notes, and class assignments much easier for the teacher. Also, by having a special notebook for grammar, students cannot be distracted by their notes and assignments from other classes while they are studying their English grammar notebooks at home.

Teachers should insist that all homework be written in complete sentences in the grammar notebook. This is so that students can practice writing complete sentences using the grammar concept that is being taught instead of just filling in the blanks.

Checking homework

The day the homework assignment is due, teachers should check the notebooks at the beginning of class. This provides students with prompt feedback on their homework and, at the same time, makes for a quick review of the previous day's lesson.

Rather than checking each students' answers in their grammar notebooks, I ask each student to show me his/her homework. If the homework done corresponds to the assignment given and it is complete, I write the number on the page of the assignment that corresponds to the number of that assignment. For example, if the assignment I am checking is the sixth homework assignment given since the course started, I write the number 6 on the page. In this way I can quickly confirm the student's assignment, and I can readily identify it later when I grade the grammar notebook.

I then select students to go to the board to write their answers to the homework assignment. After I correct the homework on the board, I direct students to check their homework in the grammar notebook against that on the board. I do this because it teaches the students that how they apply what they have learned is valuable. In other words, it validates any of their outside work related to the class.

The grammar notebook as a diagnostic tool

In addition to being a learning tool for students, the grammar notebook can also assist teachers in assessing each student's progress. First, it can show the teacher the degree to which the student participates and pays attention in class. Teachers can readily see if a student has copied the notes that the teacher has written on the board and has done homework and class assignments. For example, sketches and doodles may indicate a student's lack of interest and off-task time.

Second, teachers can see exactly which grammatical concepts give students the most trouble and which mistakes are most commonly made. Teachers can then present those concepts more carefully the next time they are taught, or teachers can choose to reteach them to the students.

Finally, student completion or lack of completion of homework and class work can indicate the students' understanding of the concept as well as their participation in class. Class assignments which are only partially completed may indicate frustration or lack of interest in class, just as incomplete homework can indicate the same feelings for the subject outside of class.

Conclusion

The principal purpose for using notebooks is to assist students in their understanding of those concepts being taught, to organize the concepts together so that they relate to one another, and to encourage students to study at home. The end result is an improvement in students' grades and an increase in students' progress. This makes students more successful in English classrooms. 🌏

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