

Survey as a group interactive teaching technique

Sondajul – tehnică interactivă de predare în grup

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SUMMARY

Smooth running of the educational process and the results depend a great deal on the methods used. The methodology of teaching offers a great variety of teaching techniques that the teacher can make use of in the teaching/learning process. Such techniques as brainstorming, the cube, KWL, case study, Venn diagram, and many other are familiar to the teachers and they use them effectively in the classroom. The present article proposes a technique called 'survey', which has been successfully used by the author as a student-centered speaking activity in foreign language classes. It has certain advantages especially if used in large groups. It can be adapted for any other discipline in the case when the teacher wishes to offer the students space for cooperative activity and creativity.

Keywords: learning process, method of teaching, interactive teaching technique, survey.

REZUMAT

Bunul mers al procesului de învățământ și rezultatele obținute depind în mare măsură de metodele utilizate. Metodologia predării ne oferă o mare varietate de tehnici de predare pe care profesorul le poate utiliza în procesul de predare/învățare. Astfel de tehnici ca brainstorming-ul, cubul, știu/vreau să știu/am învățat, studiul de caz, diagrama Venn etc. sunt bine cunoscute profesorilor și le utilizează eficient în predare. Articolul de față propune o tehnică de predare numită „sondaj” care a fost utilizată cu succes de către autor la lecțiile de limbi străine în calitate de tehnică centrată pe elev, menită să dezvolte abilitățile de vorbire. Ea are anumite avantaje, mai ales dacă este utilizată în grupuri mari. Tehnica poate fi adaptată pentru orice altă disciplină în cazul în care profesorul dorește să le ofere studenților spațiu pentru activitate cooperativă și creativitate.

Cuvinte-cheie: proces de predare, metodă de predare, tehnică interactivă de predare, sondaj.

The choice of teaching methods and techniques, which the teacher makes use of, represents her/his learners' performance and is a key element of her/his teaching style. It has a significant impact on the teacher-student relationship as it develops the learners' personality, influences their ability to think critically, to solve problems, to be organized, etc. Currently, effective teaching is, or should be, student-centered, outcome-oriented, based on performance,

involve participatory learning that would take into account the learners' life, social and personal experience, engage them fully in the reception and valuation of information, so as to generate immediate satisfaction, a positive self-image, affective use of intelligence and creative potential, in other words, arise the learner's feeling of success.

We will start with the clarification of the terms 'approach', 'method' and 'technique', which are often confused especially in the

Romanian language, when all the three notions are most frequently used with the word '*metoda*'.

According to the Etymology Dictionary, the word 'method' comes either from Latin '*methodus*', which means a 'way of teaching or doing', or from Greek '*methodos*' consisting of *meta-* meaning 'after' and *hodos* 'a method, a way or manner', in time acquiring also the meaning of 'the pursuit of knowledge'.

The English literature on the methodology of teaching makes a clear distinction between the three terms [2, 5]. An approach is understood as a set of theoretical assumptions that does not involve procedures or does not provide any details how these assumptions should be implemented into the classroom setting. In other words, it represents a set of principles, beliefs, or ideas about the nature of learning; one's point of view toward teaching. A teaching method is a plan for presenting the material to be learned and should be based on a selected approach. In order for an approach to be translated into a method, an instructional system must be designed considering the objectives of the teaching/learning, how the content is to be selected and organized, the types of tasks to be performed, the roles of the students and the roles of the teachers. In other words, it is a series of related and progressive acts performed by the teacher and students to achieve the objectives of the lesson. The methodology of teaching foreign languages distinguishes several groups of methods, such as traditional (grammar translation, audio-lingual), communicative (the Communicative Approach, Silent Way, Total Physical Response), and innovative (Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning, Task Based Language Learning), etc.

A *technique* is a very specific, concrete stratagem designed to accomplish an immediate objective, a specific activity or task, a personal act and style of the teacher in car-

rying out the procedure of teaching. Thus, a technique is a common way of the teacher and students' action to achieve educational objectives. In other words, a technique is a way of proceeding, which seeks to place the student in a more or less directed learning situation. It is an organized group of operations and procedures. Thus, different methods can use the same techniques. For example, techniques like problem solving or brainstorming can be used regardless of the method.

Lately, much is spoken about *interactive teaching* techniques. They promote active learning, involve cooperation between students, who being organized in groups, work together to reach the objectives. The teacher has the role of organizer, facilitator and mediator of the learning [4]. Group interactive techniques represent modern ways of stimulating learning and personal development that foster interchange of ideas, experiences, and knowledge. Interactivity is learning through communication and collaboration to produce a confrontation of ideas, opinions and argument. It creates situations centered on students' learning readiness and willingness to cooperate through direct and active involvement.

Interactive techniques are numerous and are classified according to a number of criteria such as: centered on developing affective and action relationships (role play); focused on developing inter-communication (brainstorming, discussion, debate); focused on investigation (observation, experiment, project work, case study); focused on cooperation (think/pair/share, know/want to know/learn); interactive methods for producing ideas, coming up with solutions (the cube) [3].

Further, we suggest a group interactive technique prompted from the well-known opinion poll, which is an assessment of public opinion obtained by questioning a representative sample, we will call it *survey*.

In real life, a survey, as a data collection

tool, is used to gather information on a topic of interest to the person(s) who conduct it. Kendra Cherry considers that "surveys are one of the most commonly used research tools and can be utilized to collect data and describe naturally occurring phenomena that exist in the real-world"[1]. Surveys can have a variety of purposes and be conducted through a printed questionnaire, over the telephone, by mail, in person, on the web. The information is collected so that every participant is asked the same questions in the same way.

As teachers, we can make good use of the survey by adapting it to the classroom use. It could serve as a wonderful way of developing students' communication skills through their interaction. It could be used in any discipline if the teacher wants the students to interact and cooperatively create a result that does not require special preparation or materials.

Below, we suggest the procedure of using survey as an interactive teaching technique. The role of the teacher in this activity is that of organizer and prompter if necessary. Here are the steps to be followed:

Step 1. Announce the topic for the survey. Divide the class into groups of equal size. For example, if there are 25 students in the group, 5 subgroups can be formed with 5 students in each.

Step 2. Ask students to work out a questionnaire (interview sheet) together in the subgroup. There should be at least five questions. The questions may require a simple yes/no answer, a multiple choice or be open-ended. Each student should have a copy of the questionnaire with the written down questions. Though the topic is common, each subgroup will have to come up with a different questionnaire. It depends on what they want to focus their attention.

Step 3. Students walk around the class to interview two different learners from other groups. So, if there are 25 students in the group, 5 groups all in all, each student will

have to interview 10 different respondents and record their answers.

Step 4. Learners get back in the original subgroups and process the data, i.e. analyze the findings.

Step 5. One representative of each group makes an oral presentation in front of the classroom to announce the results of the findings and interpret them.

Here is an example of questions that can be included in a questionnaire on the topic "Elections".

1. Are you currently registered for voting? (yes/no)

2. Are you active in politics? (yes/no)

3. Have you voted in the presidential, parliamentary, local elections? (yes/no)

4. What is your view on voting (*very important, important, not important, makes no difference*)

5. Why do you vote? (*it is a right and responsibility, to get those I trust elected, sacred duty, just following others, at the request of cadres*)

6. Would you like to see a new face as your leader? (yes/no)

7. How did you decide which candidate(s) to vote for? (*knew the candidate myself; decided after briefing by candidate; sought others' opinions, then decided; followed leaders' directions; voted for those from my kinship group*).

Also, the teacher should teach the students some typical vocabulary to be used by the when they make the final presentation. These will include: *questionnaire, respondent, carried out on a sample of, data collection, data processing, findings, interpretation of the results*.

Such an activity has a number of advantages:

- It is entirely student centered and student generated. The role of the teacher is that of manager and prompter, if needed.

- everybody is involved;

- doesn't require any materials or visual aids;

- it is lively.

One disadvantage may be that it takes much time but there could be some adaptations. When students get familiar with the procedure of the activity, the teacher may ask them to work on the questions in class, while the interview and the processing of the data could be done outside the class. Learners can interview their friends, colleagues at work, neighbors, members of the family. The presentation of the data could also be done in graphic form and pinned on the wall. At later stages, students could carry out a survey individually and present the results in written form. The most important thing is that such a technique has also an affective learning, develops life necessary communication skills. It is effective because all learners are actively involved in the process. It arises students' curiosity by finding out things about on-going current issues. It gets students out of their seats and culminates in a final product, which everybody has helped to produce.

Teachers could also encourage students to use the survey technique when they write their bachelor or master thesis. Including the results of personally generated survey will give their paper an interesting perspective on the attitudes of people and demonstrate the

author's contribution to the researched topic.

The implementation of modern techniques requires certain qualities on behalf of the teacher such as receptivity to the new, adaptation of the teaching style, outreach, desire for self-improvement, modern and reflective thinking, creativity, intelligence and great flexibility in views. Sometimes, we consider that education as an activity in which continuity is more important than change. However, it becomes obvious that we live in an environment whose movement is not only fast but also unpredictable. Due to the technological progress and increased access to knowledge and resources, we can propose and implement changes that some time ago we could not even think of. We must therefore change the way we think about the present and the future of education. The knowledge-based society needs personalities characterized by a new dimension that includes critical thinking, creativity, communication and cooperation skills, networking and team work, positive attitude and adaptability, responsibility and involvement in which the teacher's role acquires new meanings and namely from provider of knowledge to that of co-participant.

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