TEACHING ACTIVITY2/ Eddie Landsberg

Reversed Classroom Approach (The Silent Teacher)

This method requires letting students take over the whiteboard, and having them work in pairs and groups without front and center leadership of the teacher. Some students tend to be very passive when they’re sitting at their desks, but when they’re up at the board, they like to use the markers and explain things to each other, so if there are clear tasks, they start to help each other and work as teams.

For this approach to work best, students are broken into groups with a leader (more advanced student) for each group. (In the picture below, one student who is very good at speaking is helping the class, and the student in the middle has virtually no oral communication skills but is good at writing, and they are both helping each other!)

In this method, the students will be facing each other and the blackboard, so the teacher stands behind them monitoring, and steps in as needed, but intentionally avoids touching the markers or standing at the front of the room in order to keep students from becoming passive. Each student has a marker and they are given an objective related assignment which begins by filling in information, then doing some kind of modeled presentation.

For example, the board might have a chart. In one column each of the students names and in each column some kind of words that elicit questions such as “place of birth?” “Hobbies?” “Family?” etc. The students might be paired up, and dictate to each other the information to fill in the gaps. When everything is filled up, the teacher models an intro of a student with grammatical points and corrections as appropriate, possible to one leader student, then has the leader team up students and get them practicing. The teacher might “up the ante” by suggesting that the students perform intro relays by timing how long it takes each member of their group to introduce a student who is randomly pointed to by another student. When students get stuck, the teacher tries to find a student to step in and become a teacher, but if necessary, the teacher calls a huddle and works on the structure or language point with the group. In this case, the student on the left is a student notorious for sleeping in class and zoning out, but here he is participating with the group.

It is also useful for getting passive students (including cell phone addicts) to participate, because it is difficult to zone out when standing up at the board and moving around. It is also good for dealing with more advanced students who get bored and resent being in a class they view as too easy (for whatever reason.) For example, by temporarily becoming the teacher, they get to practice their English at a more advanced level, and while students are practicing the teacher is freed up to give students who need it the most individualized atten.

The success of the method is judge by three criteria: 1) Are all students participating? 2) Are all students producing target language? 3) What is the ratio of STT to TTT. Ideally speaking TTT (teacher talking time) is minimal, although activities might begin and end with a group huddle led by the teacher.

A group of people looking at a whiteboard

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