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TEACHING TOOLS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN STUDENTS OF TECHNICAL SPECIALTIES

University students study foreign language through the framework of their native language, it results in interference that has obviously a negative impact on learning. Mixed ability groups and limited contact hours forces the ESP teacher to optimize mastering foreign language, use scaffolding in language instruction for strengthening core skills together with boosting communication competence.

The use of integrative teaching tools help foster reading and teaching and at the same time train and develop such competences as work and interaction in a team, critical thinking, ability to lead a civilized discussion and reasonably express opinion, think and act on their own. All these competences can be formed in real verbal

activity while discussing topical controversial issues, open-ended questions that awakes genuine interest of learners.

A lead-in activity like brainstorming while filling Frayer model for main concept force students clarify and discuss the topic. It gives a good start for generating interest and further classroom activity. The open-ended questions are also may plunge learners into the theme. What is important is a careful thorough selection of the issues that would give food for thought and stimulate students to expressing their vision of the problem. We discuss such topics with technical students “Perspectives and threats of Artificial Intelligence”, “Social media, their role in our life, advantages and disadvantages”, “The overpopulation and future of humankind”, etc. Students start with filling the Frayer model in groups (Fig. 1):

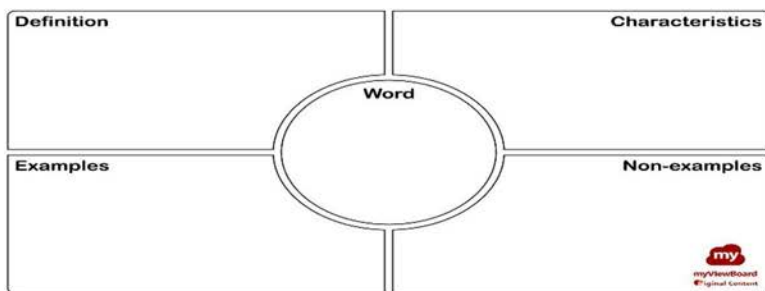


Figure 1 – The Frayer model

The teacher should give the students time to work on their own.

Only in case they encounter difficulties in formulating and describing the concept, teacher puts leading questions to help them. For the groups with low language level teacher proposes to consider several definitions of artificial intelligence, choose the best one and substantiate their choice, e.g.

“Artificial intelligence (AI) is the science of making machines do those things that would be considered intelligent if they were done by people” – Marvin Minsky, MIT professor;

“AI is intelligence demonstrated by machines, unlike the natural intelligence displayed by humans and animals, which involves consciousness and emotionality”– Wikipedia

or create their own and explain why they defined AI this way.

The topic may be also introduced with the question such as Will robots control human beings in the future? While filling out the Frayer model seems to be more productive in terms of a more complete description of the concept, as well as the participation and contribution of all students in filling out the template.

After such pre-reading activity the teacher may propose students to read articles so as to find answers to the questions posed. Limiting the time to read (not more than 15 minutes) and search for the necessary information will create a setup for scanning and skimming reading. And a follow-up discussion in the form of a Socratic seminar contributes to the development of several competencies. A Socratic Seminar is a student-led discussion. One student is nominated as the lead speaker, half of the group as speakers, and the rest as observers, whose role is to follow the discussion and evaluate the speakers using predefined criteria for scoring. It is teacher who chooses students for the role of lead speakers. He also offers support with teaching materials in questions. Socratic seminar works best when students are in a circle and teacher is outside. It is important especially at the beginning of the course to prepare thought provoking questions that will keep discussion going. Teacher writes the questions on the board, e.g.:

How is artificial intelligence helping us today?

How intelligent are you?

What movies have you seen about artificial intelligence?

What will artificial intelligence be like in 100 years from now?

What are the dangers of artificial intelligence?

Will artificial intelligence ever be more intelligent than humans?

Students learn how to discuss with each other in a thoughtful and respectful way. It is teachers task to find about 10-15 different articles of appropriate length and level of complexity, so that students can prepare for a discussion, speak with evidence. Everybody is contributing to this shared dialogue, each should be able to see the opposing side points instead of arguing them, and each should feel in a safe space. A lead speaker is responsible for the discussion moderation and time-management. Each speaker is given a floor and must adhere to the regulations that are binding on all. At the end of the seminar students write feedbacks, commenting on how well he/she have argued and defended their position, how politely they have disagreed with opponent's opinion, whether they have asked proper questions for meaningful conversation, and what they would like to improve. As a home assignment the students are proposed to write an essay (not exceeding a page and a half) answering the question, e.g. "What are the dangers of artificial intelligence, how can we protect ourselves?" or using a prompt, e.g. "Companies have to race to AI or they will be made incompatible. Essentially, if your competitor is racing to build AI, they will crush you" – Ilon Musk; "Those who rule data skills rule the entire world..." – Masayoshi Son.

Socratic seminar is followed by a "silent discussion". It is a learning technique which fosters students thinking, collaborating, and reflecting about open-ended ambiguous questions – but through writing rather than speaking. At the next lesson students read each other's essays silently and write a critical review with two or three sentences, giving their opinion whether the analysis was insightful and evidential

and how essay can be improved. It is necessary to explain to students that they respond to the essays, give evidence or explanation of their viewpoint. The review is written on the same sheet or file as the essay. When the students see the responses from their group mates they reflect how they would change their essay or on the contrary why leave it unchanged and substantiate their disagreement with comments. The closing stage of this discussion is voting for the best three essays except their own essays.

Conclusion: Summing up we may assert that integrated learning of main language skills enable students to learn faster, overcome the language barrier even for timid students, foster communicative, metacognitive skills. Socratic seminar and silent discussion are good teaching techniques for developing higher order skills. At the same time it is necessary to mention that preparation, organization and conducting such classes require much more time, efforts and skillfulness on teacher's side. Despite the obvious advantages and perspectives of such a communicative learning model as integrated skills learning, it should be taken into account that tests has not coincided with the shifts and developments in teaching, so this communication learning type is not optimal in preparation for the tests, where each skill is traditionally assessed discretely, especially in multiple choice tests. Nevertheless, for the EASP integrated language teaching and learning as well as other integrated instruction techniques proved to be productive and need to be further developed and refine