



Features of Methods for Engaging Students in Interactive Activities to Build Communication Skills in French

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Abstract

This article focuses on the use of interactive methods in French lessons. The article provides a detailed analysis of some methods of involving students in interactive activities. The materials of this article will be useful for teachers of French in their practical work.

Keywords: *Interactive Methods; Small Group Work; Didactic Strategies*

Introduction

Exchange and interaction takes place between teacher and students as well as between students. In modern foreign language teaching practice, a number of learner-centred methodologies are successfully used. They ensure that learners are able to perform tasks as well as possible in the process of acquiring and using a foreign language. Interactive learning techniques (learning through interaction) are based on the use of various didactic strategies, real communication methods and the organization of interaction between learners in a group (in pairs, in small groups) in order to jointly solve communication problems.

Discussion

In this paper we will look in detail at cooperative learning techniques and applications. Cooperative learning has a long history in education. The idea of group learning dates back to the 1920s, but the development of cooperative learning techniques in small groups did not begin until the 1970s. The basic idea of cooperative learning is to learn together, not just to do something together.

Nowadays, there are several varieties of group learning methods.

1. *Group learning for students.* This method of teaching students in teams constitutes of 3 basic principles:
 - Rewarding: assessment is common to the whole group that has done the work. Groups are differentiated but not competitive.

- Individual responsibility of each student, the success or failure of the whole group depends on the success of each group member. Students in the group observe each other and help each other. The teacher can assess any of the students in the group.
 - Chances of success: equal for all students, which means that each student brings points to his/her team, which he/she earns by improving previous results.
2. *“Jigsaw”*. This option was developed by Professor Eliot Aronson in 1978. Students are grouped into groups of 6 to work on learning material broken down into fragments (logical blocks and meaning blocks).

A whole group can work on the same subject. But in addition, each member of the group is given a topic to work on and becomes an expert on it. There are meetings of experts from different groups, and each expert reports back to his or her group on the work done. Everyone is obliged to listen carefully to the others and to take notes. In the final stage, the teacher asks questions of any member of the group. Alternatively, an individual control exercise with a grade may be chosen.

The results are added up: the group with the highest number of points receives a reward.

3. *We learn together*. This collaborative approach to learning was developed by the University of Mounessot in 1987.

The class is divided into heterogeneous (by level) groups of 3 to 5 students. Each group is given an assignment that corresponds to a broader topic that the whole class is working on. When the different groups work together, all of the proposed material is absorbed. The basic principles: rewarding the whole group, individual approach, equal opportunities, are also effective in this case. Within each group, each person's role in completing the task is determined independently. Thus, the group has a double task: an “academic task” to achieve cognitive and creative goals, and a “social or socio–psychological task”, the realisation of a relational culture in the process of completing the task.

The role of the teacher is to evaluate the student's performance.

4. *The heuristic map method (memory map)*. This method, developed by T. Buzan, is a very simple technique for recording thoughts, ideas and conversations. The recording is done quickly, working by association, in an obviously “chaotic” order on a sheet of paper. The subject, the topic, must necessarily be in the centre of the sheet of paper and in all circumstances in the centre of the gaze.

In this way, we examine the picture or orient ourselves towards the discovery of the unknown, starting from the centre and widening the gaze in all directions. This structuring has its advantages: suppose, for example, that a word, an idea, a thought, a theme emerges. Then comes a stream of ideas that deserve to be written down on our sheet of paper. And there is no limit to the number of ideas. We are usually in the bottom right corner. Adding something becomes difficult. We make a mark or write a note. The space on the sheet shrinks and the flow of ideas becomes clogged. In fact, memorising a large number of ideas is beyond a person's normal psychological strength. This is why the teacher's speech to students, for example, when introducing a topic to activate their latent knowledge, as well as repeating elements already encountered in a summarising sentence, remains in most cases a simple conversation. After a very short time, much of the information will be forgotten and a considerable knowledge potential will probably remain unused.

The advantages of using thought visualisation techniques, in our view, are the following:

- a clear and concise definition of the main idea;
- links between many concepts, many elements are easier to identify and become apparent;
- associative thinking is developed–repetition is faster and more effective;
- the map can be filled in or written later;
- maps are easily retained in memory.

A mind map can be used individually or in a group. If students take responsibility for presenting a topic with a mind map, they will be happy to use this method in the future. The mind map reflects their individual capabilities, it creates space for them to manifest, to express their creativity. Developing a mind map involves the following steps:

1. A topic is written in the centre of a sheet of paper (blackboard);
2. Students can say anything that comes to mind about the topic. The teacher writes these ideas, these associations on one side of the board. Students' autonomy here is obvious, there is no censorship, no grading, no idea that one idea is better than another.
3. After everyone has spoken fully on the topic, key words can be identified in consultation with each other.
4. From the central theme, the main branches emerge, on which other keywords are strung.
5. On the branches of these keywords are classified all the other ideas outlined above. It is possible that other new ideas emerge from the students at the same time. These will also be listed. If the set of ideas does not fit well with the selected keywords, other keywords should be identified for these ideas.
6. The main and secondary branches can be numbered, different colours, some words can be replaced by symbols, small pictures, etc.

Let's look at the possibilities of working with a mind map. There are many examples in foreign academic literature of how its many facets can be used, for example when working on a text. In lessons and in other subjects, one has not only to read a text, understand its meaning and express its essence, but also to retell it.

In this case we can use the following approach based on the mind map:

1. Students study the text;
2. The text is read a second time, paragraph by paragraph. Students underline the most important terms or key words;
3. The first mental map consists of selected concepts, where the topic is in the centre and selected words are grouped around it.
4. The text is reread for the last time and the map is updated with details in the form of keyword branches. The students write down on a sheet of paper the words they have chosen from the chosen topic. The sheets of paper are then collected and a map is made, which is displayed in the classroom.

Option: the students move to the music. Each student has a sheet of paper and a pencil in his or her hand. Each time the music stops, each student writes on his or her own sheet of paper all the ideas that come to mind at that moment in relation to the topic. Then all the students together make a map.

Introducing the topic: a sheet of paper is placed on each group's desk with the same topic, the same concept written in the middle of the sheet. The students have 90 seconds to write down everything that comes to mind during this time on the topic, then the ideas are sorted and a mental map is made.

This can be done as a whole group, using different cards to select the necessary language material for discussion of the topic, debates, dialogues, interviews, writing and evaluation exercises, etc.

5. *The cluster method (semantic web).* Another method of writing by association is the “cluster” method developed by Gabriel Ricoeur. This method stimulates speech and imagination, brings variety to routine work and individualises learning. The right hemisphere of the brain develops as a student, and only during socialisation does the left hemisphere (the hemisphere of attention and awareness) take over from the right and control all spontaneous thinking.

This method contrasts free association with systematisation, image with concept, originality with conventionality, and originality with the routine of adult life.

The technique of making postcards is quite simple:

1. The word (theme, advice) is written in the upper third of the sheet and circled;
2. Words and associations that come to mind are written around the circled word.

These are also circled and connected to the central word.

3. Each new word forms a new cell which triggers further associations. In this way a chain of associations is built up;
4. Interdependent concepts are connected by lines.

In this way, a sketch of the “cellular” representation of the concepts is born, which leads to the word “cluster”. Any words in any element of discourse can function as a “cluster”. It should be noted that not everything on the map has to be used. The student passes his eyes over the map and may choose only a part of it, or even a word, that will best suit his interests, his emotions at the moment, that will evoke some emotion, thought or feeling. A cluster map does not offer the same careful structuring as a mind map. You can write in typed or handwritten letters, you can write whole sentences; you can circle words, underline them, connect them with arrows, dotted lines, etc.

The main thing is spontaneity, free from censorship. Thus, a “cluster” on the theme “Fantasy world” could look like the following:

The environment is made of:		
living beings	mineral matter	human achievements
animals	air	buildings
plants	water	plantations
	rocks	waste

In this cluster, this representation uses text-filled “bubbles” connected by lines – the connections between concepts in the bubbles are not explicit. A synthesis presented in global form and making explicit the connections between different elements is better remembered than when it is presented in the form of text written linearly, such as an outline. Pictures, diagrams and colours can help to make sense of it.

Conclusion

Thus, collaborative learning is a form of organisation of the learning process which involves the creation, under the guidance of the teacher, of problem situations and a great deal of independent activity by students to solve them. There is also a form of learning, which is characterized by a reasonable (in the pedagogical sense of the word) combination of independent study of problem situations and productive cognitive activity of students.

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