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THE USE OF MINGLES IN THE COMMUNICATIVE WAY OF TEACHING

Summary. *The significance of mingles and information about the numerous tasks of arranging mingles in the English classes was investigated.*

Key words: *mingle, communicative approach, communicative interaction, questionnaire, opinion poll.*

As we know, there are several methods of teaching English, especially for improving communicative skills. Communicative approach to teaching is well known to majority of us. Although this approach emerged in Europe in 1970s, it has found its way to classrooms in Uzbekistan quite recently.

In a nutshell, the CLT is one of the latest approaches to language teaching which focuses on interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. To put it simply, it means teaching learners to communicate by letting them communicate.

Conversational partners in the English as a foreign language classroom has long been an effective way to involve students actively in communicative interactions and increase their talking time. But based on my observations and experience, few foreign language teachers actually use this classroom management strategy on a regular basis. There are reasons why teachers are reluctant to use *mingle*- the activity that involve switching from one interlocutor to another – into their lessons, including fear of distractions, lack of time, and uncertainty about when and how to apply them.

What is a mingle? A mingle is an activity where a student approaches a classmate, talks for a while, and then moves on to speak to another classmate. According to Robertson and Acklam mingles “allow constant repetition of a particular question or collection of the opinions of many students.” This gives students the opportunity to repeat the same utterance several times, which gradually raises confidence in their use of English.

How do we procedure these activities?

A mingle active should not appear out of blue in an isolated fashion, however. Students should be prepared for the activity in terms of both language and content.

The mingle activity can be implemented by (1) walking around and talking freely with other students or (2) rotating pairs, where students form inside and outside circles and face each other; each student from the outside circle, after speaking with the person facing him or her, moves one step clockwise to speak with a new classmate from the inside circle.

In general, the key idea of this classroom management strategy is “diversity of students-diversity of materials and tasks”. It promotes meaningful student interaction and creates a powerful learning environment offering varied opportunities for effective learning and communicating.

Practical suggestions for teachers that describe mingle activities include

- “a tea party strategy”;
- ”questionnaires”;
- ”opinion polls”;
- ”surveys”;
- ”find your match”;
- ”find out who”.

Depending on the lesson, mingle tasks in the classroom can focus on the following functions:

- 1) *Language* – form-focused mingles;
- 2) *Communicative* – form-focused mingles in communicative disguise;
- 3) *Meaning* – meaning-focused mingles.

Examples of these tasks are illustrated in the following sections.

Form-focused mingles are aimed at sub-skill reinforcement through active recycle of vocabulary and grammar. Following are two examples of such tasks.

The materials used in this mingle activity depend on the grammar or vocabulary the teacher wants the students

to recycle. To begin, each student receives and completes a writing task, such as the following types:

- Use the correct form of the verb in brackets: “Shakespeare (be) born in San Francisco.”
- Insert the correct form of the missing words: “I ____ born ____ 1993.”
- Change the sentence by inserting the word in brackets: “Have you been there before?”

Form-focused mingles in communicative disguise help students practice grammar and vocabulary in simple situations with a focus on communicative functions, such as asking for advice, making suppositions, or asking directions, inviting everybody to do something together, or planning a weekend.

In order to achieve communicative goal with this task, students repeatedly address different classmates while using prescribed language items. As a result, the monotony of repetition is enlivened by the diversity of partners, who each time contribute something new to the content depending on their personal experience, opinion, or attitude towards the subject matter.

“Poll your classmates”

In this task students find out how well they know each other. Each student receives a different classmate’s name and polls all the other students about this individual, taking brief notes to remember who says what about that person. Then each student checks the answers with the person he or she has been asking about to see if the findings are true. The question can be written on the board. For example:

“Does _____ enjoy going to school?”

Why do you think so?”

“What is ____’s favourite subject?”

Why do you think so?”

Possible activities: As a class, the students discuss who knows each other very well, supporting their conclusions with the facts from the answers they received. Then they write their own answers to the same questions.

We can give them the following tasks:

- “True or false”
- “What is the main idea of the passage?”
- “We can interfere from the passage...”
- “Continue the story...”
- “Find specific information”

Possible activities: 1. Teachers can gather students in a circle and give them the first sentence of the story. Turn by turn students will add their own sentences appropriate to the context. 2. Each student gets a card with the names of three pastimes; after analyzing the three activities, they list the advantages and disadvantages of each pastime.

Example activities are:

- Bodybuilding, knitting, listening to jazz.
- Cross-country skiing, travelling, collecting stamps.
- Keeping a dog, writing poems, hanging out with friends.
- Dancing, reading detective stories, cooking.
- Watching soap operas, gardening, drawing.
- Hitching, listening to folk music, designing clothes.

Tips to the teachers:

1. It makes sense to offer some activities that are not very popular among teens to promote a variety of responses and give students practice in talking about things they like as well as things they may not like.

2. Students poll their classmates about their attitude toward the three activities to find out what they think about each of the pastimes and why; then while mingling,

Students choose one of the pastimes that a classmate dislikes and persuades him or her to take it up.

3. Students report to the class on which activities appeared to be the most and the least popular and why.

4. The class creates a list of the most and least popular activities.

5. In groups, students decide on the advantages of the least popular pastimes and the disadvantages of the most popular activities.

6. Finally, students write an essay about an activity that they have never done but would like to try in the future.

To sum up our ideas we can say that the use of mingles in the only class management strategy that allows every student to do a lot of talking in the classroom, increasing the quality of communicative competence in English. In addition, mingle activities in the classroom have the potential to considerably improve the students’ relationships in class as well as outside the classroom. That is why we should be ready to incorporate mingles into our teaching without regret.

References

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