

The Topic-Based Discussion Class

Another kind of fluency-based activity is the topic-based discussion. The teacher plans discussions on different topics and encourages all the learners to participate while taking turns. Even though the topics are interesting, the learners may or may not be inclined to participate, as it is a discussion for the sake of discussion. In addition, the discussion may not carry personal relevance for the learners and thus they have no incentive to talk.

It is thus important that the learner must have some involvement with the topic so that s/he may share his/her understanding of the topic with others.

Another disadvantage in the topic-based discussion is that if it was carried out with the full class, which might, at any given time be a group ranging from 30 to 50 learners, the linguistic gains would be minimal. In a whole class discussion, not many learners would get a chance to speak. Moreover the time available to each speaker would not be much. As in any normal class the brighter learners would monopolize the activity while the rest of the class would lose interest.

Task-Centred Fluency Practice

With increasing importance being given to Communicative Language Teaching, communicative tasks are being used to develop fluency. These activities are done in small groups by the learners, and may involve interaction, asking and answering questions, exchanging notes, agreeing or disagreeing or role-play. The tasks have a clear purpose and a tangible output, which depends on effective interaction between or amongst the learners. The learners of one group share the outcome of their activity, which might be in the shape of a report, a speech or a presentation, with the other groups in the class.

The learners have a concrete task to work with and clear guidelines given by the teacher in a situation, which is akin to problem solving. It also provides a basis for feed back.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Have you tried the three types of activities discussed in this section? In which activity did you have to provide the maximum support? Specify the support that the learners required from you?

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2. Which activity did you find most effective with your learners? Give reasons.

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