

may not be familiar with. The most common exercise in this case is matching words with their definitions before watching the episode containing them. Vocabulary exercises that follow comprehension tasks can involve finding words or expressions in the preceding exercise, using their definitions/explanations or synonyms. Alternatively, students read the definitions of the words that are used in the extract, and then they try to hear and note them down while watching/listening to it. The teacher can ask the students to guess what words may have the given meanings before showing the episode. Another kind of vocabulary exercise is first matching the words to their definitions, then using them to fill in the gaps in the extract before watching it, and finally watching the extract and checking.

After completing the comprehension or vocabulary task students can compare their answers in pairs or small groups.

The post-viewing, or follow-up, activities involve discussion, in which students share their impressions of and views on what they have heard and seen and compare the different aspects of London's infrastructure and traffic control with those in Kyiv, Kharkiv or other Ukrainian cities. Follow-up activities can also involve writing. For instance, in Section III we offer this writing task as a follow-up activity: *Write an article about the traffic surveillance system in London to appear in a British newspaper using what you have found out from the documentary. Try to impress your reader highlighting the advantages of this system.*

To sum up, elaborately designed video courses can develop students' linguistic and cultural competence and should be intensively used in foreign language teaching.

References

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TEACHING ENGLISH AS A LIFE SKILL

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As modern foreign language teachers, we hear more and more that a modern course concept needs to simultaneously target our modern learners' language needs and provide a range of professional, academic, social and personal skills that learners will need in order to succeed in the 21st century. It could be an opportunity to enhance the value of English teaching. As people gradually realized the inadequacy of traditional teaching approaches, such as audiolingualism and grammar-translation, in preparing students for engagement in social interaction, cries for a teaching approach that addresses students' ability to produce the right thing at the right time echoed in the countries, where English is taught as a foreign language, and these cries precipitated communicative language teaching.

Teachers in communicative classrooms will find themselves talking less and listening more – becoming active facilitators of their students’ learning. The teacher sets up the exercise, but because the students’ performance is the goal, the teacher must step back and observe, sometimes acting as referee or monitor. A classroom during a communicative activity is far from quiet, however. The students do most of the speaking, and frequently the scene of a classroom during a communicative exercise is active, with students leaving their seats to complete a task. Because of the increased responsibility to participate, students may find they gain confidence in using the target language in general. Students are more responsible managers of their own learning.

With classrooms operating more like grade factories, it's hard to make the case for school-driven empathy. Faced with an endless cycle of memorize, drill, spit back and test, teachers have become the wardens of a new educational reality that pits the head against the heart. Even if educators manage to skate past the dizzying array of standards and value-added evaluations, they must still contend with this fundamental divide: academic rigor, with its unflinching emphasis on measurable success, seems strangely at odds with emotional intelligence, a mix of moods and feelings. Which leaves many to wonder – can empathy feel its way back into the classroom?

For an unlikely accomplice, look no farther than tomorrow’s lesson plan. That’s because evidence-based models of instruction can become empathy builders, tools for the mind and spirit. Designed around cooperative learning, your lesson plan can actively foster class-wide feelings of cohesiveness, collaboration and interdependence – without sacrificing instructional time or learning goals.

Cooperative Learning: An Empathy Lever. In cooperative learning, students work together, think together and plan together using a variety of group structures designed along an instructional path. This dynamic learning model breaks with the dusty forms of frontal teaching that often create classrooms of “lonesome togetherness” – students who may sit together but live worlds apart. Cooperative learning creates what is called a kind of “cognitive empathy”, a mind-to-mind sense of how another person’s thinking works. The better we understand others, the better we know them – pointing toward (among other virtues) greater trust, appreciation and generosity.

But wholesale adoption of cooperative learning does not automatically yield the kind of results that educators want and students need. Dispatching students into “groups” with the hopes they'll become more empathetic carries the same potential for success as trying to hit a dartboard while blindfolded – maybe a few lucky strikes, but not much more. To harness the power of cooperative learning as a tool for building empathy, teachers need a specific strategy, a best practice that works – in real classrooms with real students. Fortunately, one exists. It’s called jigsaw.

The Jigsaw Classroom: Goals and Execution. Created in 1971 by psychologist Elliot Aronson to defuse his volatile fifth grade classroom, the jigsaw method has a long track record of successfully reducing classroom conflict and increasing positive educational outcomes. As an empathy builder, it also opens doors of opportunity.

In jigsaw classrooms, lesson content is divided into self-contained chunks and assigned piece by piece to different groups of learners. Each group – strategically arranged to reflect differences in learning style, prior knowledge or socio-economic makeup – simultaneously studies a different but complementary piece of the lesson. When this “mastery” round is complete, every student should possess unique knowledge of one slice of the lesson. Groups are then reshuffled to form new units that draw a member from each of the mastery teams. Working in these newly minted teams of “experts”, each student shares a brand new piece of content with team members who only now learn that particular lesson segment. When every group has finished sharing information, checking for understanding and re-teaching complicated points, the jigsaw activity is over.

To be sure, jigsaw classrooms look and feel almost nothing like their traditional counterparts – and neither do the students who occupy them. The fluid movement, flexible groupings and redistribution of responsibility force kids to be more actively engaged in what and how they learn. Unlike the slow drip of frontal instruction, jigsaw learning flows freely between group members. Familiar roles change, too. Teachers re-outfit themselves as sideline reporters, monitoring, questioning and analyzing the action, while the quickest and slowest students suddenly discover themselves in supporting and leading roles they never quite imagined.

Educational Empathy: Learning by Doing. The most powerful feature of jigsaw learning – the very reason behind its conception – is practiced empathy. Creating points of contact between students who would otherwise not interact delivers a humbling but elevating awareness of the “other”. Seeing classmates as bona fide sources of knowledge builds emotional capital and lowers the artificial gates of detachment. Students learn quickly to adhere to jigsaw’s inviolable rule: “Tune in or miss out”. In this social construct, the hard currency is active listening, or the art of thinking about what the other person is saying. And because each student has a purpose (a teaching role) and something valuable (new and necessary information), every learner is regarded as an asset, not a liability. To the unsuspecting student, all this may seem like a lesson plan. But to the empathetic educator, it’s a life skill.

All told, jigsaw learning is a counterweight to the high-stakes testing culture that too often tears kids apart instead of stitching them together. It recognizes that behind every educational label stands an alternate version of the child waiting to be exposed. Jigsaw is rooted in research, embedded in instruction, and aligned with the wider world. There’s no simple way to catch a quality as elusive as empathy, and with oversized federal mandates, precious little time. But a “total education”, the kind we want to give every student, ought to value not just what children know, but how they feel.

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