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ORACY

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We are going to take a look at strategies to achieve effective oracy in the ESL classroom. We need to constantly assess the ways we get our students talking to ensure that they fulfil their full potential and also, that they build the confidence needed to express themselves effectively in their second language. Anyone who has learnt a foreign language knows that it can be daunting at first, then later issues with anxiety, stress or pressure can impede progress. What we need to do is implement numerous strategies into the dynamic of the class to make sure that all students feel comfortable to speak. We all know that the main focus of language learning is usually (or should be) based on speaking and listening skills, therefore this is a fundamental concept in the ESL classroom.

Guidelines

When we use oracy in class there are various ways of doing so, teachers should take advantage of paired and group activities, the space available to them for role-play (etc). Students need to speak in various situations to develop the necessary confidence, but there need to be limits. Students should understand how activities work and also collaborate to ensure that everyone can participate. These guidelines need to be constantly reinforced throughout the year to ensure that effective oracy is achieved.

- Always respect each other's ideas.
- Motivate others to be involved in activities.
- Be prepared to change your point of view.
- Come to an agreement or disagreement.
- Build on each other's ideas and develop conversations.
- Encourage people to give their view by asking a question.
- Show that you are listening to others.



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Teachers need to consider the practicality of the strategies they use in class. They need to consider the focus of activities to make sure that they complete or at least contribute to completing the learning objectives, that they are timed well and well paced to avoid boredom and also that they are measurable (the students have a clear idea of what they are doing and the teacher is able to evaluate the participation of each student) see [Time Saving Speaking](#) or [Quick warm up activities for ESL](#) for examples of activities.

Student and teacher roles

Each student should understand their individual role during activities, as should the teacher. The teacher cannot always be the centre of the learning experience (as tends to be the case) and needs to understand when to intervene or correct and when to let things continue. Students can have specifically assigned or changing roles but they also need to have the flexibility to choose their own contribution. These should be specified within an individual activity's guidelines. It is important to prepare activities well and structure talk so that participants can see the relevance of it, see how the activity progresses, and also to be able to see their own progress

Developing conversation

It is important to prepare the activity well so that students can see how the activity advances. It needs to develop; I am not referring to its difficulty, but more to keeping the interest of the learner. Students should see steady progress within talk so that they can keep their focus and thus, enjoy the activity. This will help the students to constantly advance and use new vocabulary or grammar structures, it will lead them to developing their language database in a way that avoids memorization or drilling information into their heads; I am referring to the acquisition of language through use. With this tendency to try to develop each and every activity, students will learn



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from each other like never before and also they will lose the fear of making mistakes as it is all part of the process.

Negotiating an outcome

Students should be encouraged to try to look towards finding an outcome during speaking tasks. They need to practice key speaking skills, such as: suggesting, agreeing or disagreeing, finding a solution, specifying or giving opinions. These skills are essential for organising speech and keeping a clear focus on the activity at hand.

Building confidence and motivating

This should really be the principal focus of an educator with relation to talk, however, all participants in classroom activities should be focussed on creating a positive working environment. It is not easily achieved (or even impossible) through only the effort of the teacher. That is why it is important to assign roles to individuals in the class to monitor work and to ensure that everyone is focussed on the activity to the best of their ability.

A great way to help with self-confidence is through analysis of activities, keeping in mind several points, such as:

- **Achievable:** is the activity adequate for everyone in the class and can they do it
- **Relevant:** do the participants understand why they are doing each task and how it is aiding their progress.
- **Reflexive:** as the teacher, you should be looking for constant improvement and this is an ongoing process that should be reviewed constantly to ensure that no one gets left behind.



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To motivate students the teacher needs to focus on various aspects of the class, such as:

- **Fun:** Is the activity engaging and does it capture the interest of the students?
- **Varied:** Do the participants feel that they are getting something new out of it?
- **Organized:** is the activity well prepared and organised to make sure that the students make the most of class time?
- **Resources:** use varied resources such as texts, audios, images and videos to capture interest and later base activities around.

So, to sum up, it is for us the teachers to work on creating a positive and inclusive working environment to make sure that we develop and maintain an effective classroom, in which students feel empowered to take responsibility for their own learning and motivated to want to progress. Collaboration is the key and it needs to be constantly maintained to ensure that all learners feel involved and valued. If our students feel valued, they will value the lessons and therefore, value the effort put in by us teaching professionals.