

Using Pictures As A Motivating Factor In English Speaking Class

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Abstract

In the era of economic growth and globalization, the importance of English cannot be denied since it serves as is the most spoken globally language. As a result, global integration forces speakers to use English effectively in all aspects of social life. Of all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), speaking is considered as the most important of all because the target of every language is for communication, which is particularly expressed by the spoken channel. In this paper, we present the theories related to motivation and highlight the importance of using pictures as a motivation in language learning in general and in teaching and learning speaking skill in particular. Besides, it gives out suggested methodologies and activities using visual aids to motivate students speak up in speaking class. Some pedagogical implications of the study are discussed for learning and teaching speaking to second or foreign language learners.

Key words: pictures, motivating factor, speaking skill

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I. Introduction

To meet the requirement of globalization, it is necessary for each individual to use English fluently due to the fact that English has now been considered and used as an international language. That is the reason why English has been taught widely in Vietnam, from schools, colleges to private centres. Furthermore, English has become a compulsory subject in school at general education. Additionally, most universities and other educational institutions in Vietnam require students to pass the English test in order to be eligible for graduation. However, nowadays, speaking is also considered as the most difficult and challenging skill to be mastered (Brown, 2001), especially students of the colleges and universities since Vietnam has a long tradition of teaching vocabulary and grammar in high schools. As a result, students attach little importance to four basic skills, especially speaking skill.

Motivation has been widely considered as one of the important factors that affect the success of foreign language learning. Visual aids serving as a motivation teach speaking skill for the students is one pedagogical issue that attracts great attention of not only educators but also many learners and people concerned. With the problems in speaking class, the use of visual aids in general and pictures in particular in order to develop the students' speaking skill is developed.

II. Literature review of related theories

In this part, the authors cite some remarkable concepts for comparison and general views of motivation and the matter of using pictures as a motivating factor in speaking class.

2.1 Definition of motivation

Motivation is considered as an integral part in the achievement of any goal. It is an important factor that has a positive influence in any educational learning process. However, it is not easy to define motivation and different researchers approach motivation in different ways. According to Gardner (1982), motivation is perceived to be composed of three elements: effort, desire and affect. Effort refers to the time spent studying the language and the drive of the learner. Desire indicates how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language, and affect means the learner's emotional reactions related to language study. In addition, Parsons, R. D., Hinson, S. and Sardo-Brown, D. (2001) define motivation as an important component or factor in the learning process. Learning and motivation have the same importance in order to achieve learning goals. Learning makes us gain new knowledge and skills and motivation pushes us or encourage us to go through the

learning process. From all the concepts above, it can be seen that motivation links effort and desire and occurs as a result of combination of internal and external influences.

2.2 Factors that affect motivation in foreign language learning

Motivation has an important role in success or failure in learning a second language. Those students with motivation are likely to acquire more than students who are less motivated. In a particular learning situation, students who are less motivated are likely to lose their attention, leading to low learning outcome. According to Harmer (1991), four factors that can affect the learners' motivation in learning foreign language, especially learning speaking process, are the following:

- **Physical condition** which means the atmosphere in class.
- **Method of teaching** which refers to the way that students are taught must affect their motivation.
- **The teachers** as the most powerful variable of motivation and demotivation, can become a major part in demotivating the learners.
- **Success** refers to the appropriate level of challenge designed by the teachers. As Harmer pointed out, to give high challenge activities may have a negative effect on motivation. Students can also equally be demotivated by too low level of challenge.

III. Using pictures as a motivating factor in speaking class

3.1 Definition of picture

According to Cobuild (1987), picture is defined as "a visual representation or image painted, drawn, photographed, or otherwise rendered on a flat surface." It is obvious that the most outstanding feature of a picture is its visibility to learners. For this reason, teachers can employ pictures for a lot of teaching purposes. Pictures can be categorized according to the size and design. Each type has its own characteristics which teachers should consider carefully when using them as a teaching tool.

- **Wall pictures:** A wall picture refers to "a large illustration of a scene or events", said Bowen (1982).
- **Sequence pictures:** According to Bowen, this type of pictures presents a single subject that will "reveal one story or theme, like a strip of cartoon, in a connected set of illustration".
- **Flash cards:** Picture flash cards are pictures drawn on cards which are "held up" rapidly by the teacher (Bowen, 1982).

3.2 Pictures as a motivation for students in speaking class

There are a certain number of benefits utilizing pictures in teaching a foreign language. Firstly, pictures can develop learners' interest in learning foreign language. Secondly, Byrne (1980) states that pictures can stimulate students' discussion and interpretation of the topic. Thirdly, students' imaginativeness can be inspired thanks to pictures and other visual aids. Furthermore, Wright (1989) inserted that pictures can motivate students to take part in speaking activities.

IV. Methods to use pictures in speaking class

The teacher is the person who decides how to use pictures and when to use them. This task is mainly based on the teacher's ability their flexibility as well as purposes). In this study, we emphasize the main kind of picture, which is for communicative practice.

In communicative practice, the students make use of the pictures given by teachers. However, both students and teachers give the value of meaning to what they are saying. Therefore, teachers do not know exactly what the students want to say.

4.1. Matching

In this kind of activity, students are challenged to find a relationship between two pieces of information. This practice can be in the form of *imaginative matching* or *find the difference*.

Imaginative matching: Two pictures are chosen randomly and the students are asked to find a connection between them.

E.g.: Table and bed

Student A: They are both made of wood.

Student B: There is a table and a bed in the room.



Find the difference: Students must find out the differences between two pictures and find the way to describe and speak it out.

E.g.: Can you find the 7 differences between these beach party scenes?



4.2. Describing

This activity is widely used to challenge students to describe something by pointing, drawing, commenting, etc. Examples using describing activity:

Describe a picture: Each student is given a picture by the teacher. He or she prepares a description of the picture and present his or her ideas in front of the class.

Describe and draw: Students can work in pairs. One student has a picture or a plan, but keeps it secret with the partner. Then, he or she tries to describe so that their partner can make an accurate drawing of it.

Saying anything you know: The class is shown a picture of scene or series of individual pictures. The students say anything they can about it. This is an opportunity for them to call out any word that they know and practicing describing, interpreting and associating things in pictures.

4.3. Grouping

In these activities, students must find a connection between more than two pieces of information.

Grouping pictures: Students are given a number of pictures and asked to arrange them in groups to form a story or sequence of events.

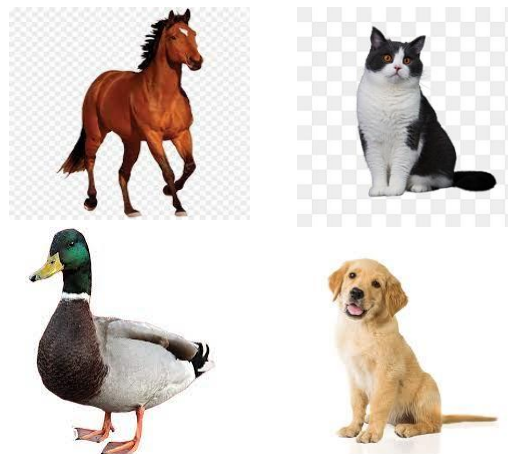
Odd one out: A number of pictures are shown and the students are asked to say which one does not belong with the others and state the reason why.

E.g.:

Student: The duck is odd one out.

Teacher: Why?

Student: Because duck has 2 legs while others have 4 legs.



4.4. Memorizing

Challenging people's memories and ability to memorize is the basis for a number of well-known games. The ability to remember is a key factor in successful language learning. The activities in this section contribute not only to the remembering of words but, more significantly, to general techniques for improving memory.

Remembering a scene

The student looks at the wall picture carefully and then stands with his or her back to it. He or she then tries to describe the picture from their memory. The class can see the picture and are allowed to ask questions. The activity can also be done by asking the students if they can remember what is behind them in the classroom or what it is possible to see from the front door of the school.

Remembering a sequence

The teacher tells a story illustrated by a number of picture cards which are shown to the class and then propped up, for example, on the board self. The teacher then turns the pictures to face the board. On the back of each picture card there is a number. Students, working in pairs, try to remember the story, making written notes related to each number. Then the class reconstructs the story orally, discussing and then agreeing on a final version. The teacher then turns the pictures to face the class and rereads the original story so that it can be compared with the class's version.

Newspapers or magazines are good resources for teachers to take pictures. In addition, teachers can find suitable pictures in the Internet which are suitable for their purpose of teaching. With pictures taken from the Internet, teachers can work on their computers to have some changes with them like resizing, changing colors and inserting texts with them.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, with all the suggestions in this article, we hope to propose some useful activities using pictures and some available sources for speaking class. It cannot be denied that the use of pictures can be effective in promoting students' interest and motivation in speaking activities. This article has discussed both the general knowledge of motivation and pictures and give a number of pedagogical implications for using pictures in teaching speaking skill. We hope that these activities using pictures will create an exciting learning environment where students will be motivated to engage in speaking activities. We believe that our study will be a helpful resource to English teachers who are struggling in finding solutions to students' lack of participation and interest in their speaking lessons. Therefore, the teaching and learning process becomes more interactive and communicative.

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