



COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING READING SKILLS AT ENGLISH LESSON

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Abstract. The present article «Communicative approach to teaching reading skills at English lesson» reveals the main idea of the teaching method “Jigsaw”, which is aimed at the developing students’ reading skills and better understanding of target texts of English lessons. Moreover, the article depicts the ways of using “jigsaw” method of different methodologists and represents the author’s own way of using this method. Furthermore, the novelty of the article is that the author suggests a little bit different approach of using jigsaw reading activity within one texts or using different ones at the same time.

Key words: teaching approach, “jigsaw” method, developing jigsaw reading skills, cooperative-learning process, reading activity, target language.

There are various approaches in language teaching such as task-based learning approach, lexical approach, grammar-translation approach, communicative approach etcetera. Different approaches pursue different aims. I would like to concentrate on the communicative approach to teaching languages, particularly to concentrate on jigsaw reading activity as a part of the communicative approach.

The word “jigsaw” first used by Dr. Eliot Aronson, a psychologist at Texas University in Austin, in 1971. His research concerned psychological problems appeared during the process of study in the classroom. The problem was that learners struggled to win teacher’s attention, respect, confidence, and trust. As the result, bright students suppressed low-level students, so passive students lost their interest in studies and stopped participating in the learning process. The discipline during the lesson was also violated. Furthermore, to solve the arisen problem Aronson tried to divide the whole class into 5-6 jigsaw groups of learners and give each group independent tasks. After some period he asked each student from every group to form other groups. For example, let us call a student from group one student 1, from group 2 - student 2 respectively. So,

he got new jigsaw groups consisting of student 1, student2, student3, student4, student 5. Each student in new groups had the task to share his/her ideas concerning the material he was to study in his/her previous group. At the end of this activity the teacher is advised to retrieve students' knowledge in the form of a quiz. The aim of the quiz is to make students realize the fact they have involved in the serious learning process but not into entertainment. While working in jigsaw classroom it is noticed that passive students stopped being shy and try doing their best to get good results. On the other hand, active and bright students who dominated previously conducted the role of instructors and started to help weak students to understand the material in order to achieve better results in the group. As the result all the students became quite active during the lesson. They started developing the skills to teach and to listen to each other. Moreover, the classroom turned into very cooperative and friendly. So, teacher-based learning approach turned into a cooperative - learning process. Each student in a small jigsaw group became an indivisible unit of the whole learning process. Each student in small jigsaw groups became an indivisible unit of the whole learning process. In addition, competitiveness as a previously well-developed skill became useless and dysfunctional. From that experience it was retrieved that students' self-esteem increased greatly. Hence, we can observe that jigsaw classroom is quite useful in the classroom with students of different English level. So, students with higher level interact peacefully and positively with low-level students. In addition, it is easier for a teacher to unite students with different levels. Aronson suggested using jigsaw classroom not every time, but almost in all subjects and, what is more, it is widely and successfully used in English lessons. And, one of the jigsaw classroom activities is reading. Though, reading is basically a passive way of getting information and students easily get bored by fulfilling reading tasks using jigsaw reading activity brings boring tasks into lively, communicative learning procedure. As the result, jigsaw reading activity becomes quite actual and oblivious to use during the language lesson. Furthermore, while accomplishing jigsaw reading task students enjoy other's companions by sharing their ideas and atmosphere of friendship and positive mood are created. Another advantage of using jigsaw reading task is the possibility to cover large reading material during a short period of time. In this case, students are given various texts and time to read and to discuss. While doing a jigsaw - reading activity, students learn not only to understand the text, but also to speak, to listen and to summarize the target material. What refers to the role of a teacher in the classroom is that the teacher becomes as a facilitator, a monitor of the learning process. And, the lesson from the teacher-based becomes student-based. The teacher moves from one

jigsaw group to another and gives some instructions needed to get the group work properly.

In order to get good results from the jigsaw reading activity, it is necessary that the teacher prepares beforehand. One step of preparation is to make jigsaw cards. For instance, when I prepare for my lesson I take any text, for example “a world full of Englishes” by David Crystal retrieved from Global Intermediate student’s book, unit 1 Language and culture, or “Endless energy?” from Global Intermediate student’s book, unit 3 Hot and Cold, and divide it text into the parts according to the number of groups I would like to have in my lesson. For example, I divide the text “Endless energy?” into 3 parts, if I want to have 3 groups of students for jigsaw reading activity. There should be one more group “expert group”. This group is formed out of high level students. Their task is to monitor and summarize the texts which were retold by other groups. And, the process of this activity is described below. Each group of students gets their own part of the text, reads it and discusses. Then, the teacher compiles new jigsaw groups out of the old ones. For example, new jigsaw group consists of student1, student2, student3, student4. Moreover, in the new jigsaw group each student retells his/her own part of the whole text. At the end of this activity, one student from “expert group” joins every jigsaw group and tries to get the whole idea of the text and to summarize it by his/her own words. At the end, I conduct the quiz in order to make students feel the reality of the lesson not as the part of their leisure time but a serious process. As for me, I give not written, but an oral quiz to retrieve information they get out of this activity. While doing jigsaw reading task a teacher role is a guide who helps students to orientate in the learning process. For example, the instructor may use the expressions as “You had better ask another student about the meaning of this word.”, or “May be another group can help you to find the answer to your question?”, “Try to speak more slowly, some students have difficulty with understanding you”, and so on. If during the discussion or reading any problem arises, the teacher only guides students in the right direction. But students by themselves should develop their own solution to their problem. This method helps learners to develop their critical thinking and speaking skills.

For conducting jigsaw-reading activity there is also some advice suggested by Berg and Robert Slavin, famous scholars and teachers of English language. Particularly, it is to study not only one text during the lesson but also to cover a large amount of material (for instance, several texts) at a time with the stipulation that it is concerned one topic. Moreover, during jigsaw reading activity some problems may appear. So, there is one precaution teachers should be aware of is that first when you start using jigsaw reading activity, it is suggested to begin with one easy text and only then gradually to get down

to more complex ones. Both students and teachers should get used to fulfilling this task and have some practice beforehand. The reason is that it is not so easy to conduct the whole activity perfectly well from the first time as there is a chance to get lost in the instructions.

Another difficulty can happen regarding quicker-to perform students. This kind of students may become impatient with those who perceive information comparatively more slowly to them. The solution is to embody smarter students with the task to teach lower ones to summarize the text, to translate it or to search new vocabulary. Furthermore, high level students may check the accuracy of perceiving information from other groups. It can be a good chance for bright students to show their leadership skills. On the other side of this point, weaker students get the help of their group mates “ex-competitors” and passive learners simultaneously develop their reading, speaking, and critical thinking skills as well.

Another dilemma which may arise is dealing with very active students who sometimes can be annoying. That type of students always tries to compete with others to show own results and command of knowledge. There exists some advice how to deal with this situation. Namely, a teacher may try to change the group leader several times during one activity. Moreover, group leaders may summarize the discussed part of the text among one jigsaw group.

All in all, trying to predict all the problems described above and to prepare for the lesson properly gives teachers an opportunity to create positive, friendly atmosphere during the lesson. Plus to this, using jigsaw reading activity helps students to make their own attitude toward the target text and to develop critical thinking skill. To conclude, by working in mini jigsaw groups, students get good and friendly relationship with each other which has a quite positive effect on the process of perceiving studied material and in the whole the learning process itself.

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