Creating and Exploiting Learning Opportunities
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´Results are obtained by exploiting opportunities, not by solving problems'

Peter Drucker

Productive Skills

Setting Language Objectives

In order to help our learners develop, not just practice, every time we ask learners to produce language, setting clear language objectives can help to push them to use more complex language or to integrate language strategies and skills. These language objectives can be based on the content of the current unit, used to revise and reinforce previous material or to guide them to use anything that has been seen to be lacking in their production.

Ideas to encourage learners to meet the language objectives:

- Present, model and instruct them to use them.
- Set them as a 'Checklist' that they or their partner can use during the task.
- To provide a competitive element: have them on cards for them to turn over/ grab when used, pass on to partner when used etc.

Errors

Our learners' errors highlight what they need to be revised or taught and it is essential that we notice these and use them.

To aid this we can:

- Always have pen and paper to hand to record them.
- Set yourself an objective of spotting 5 errors during each productive task.
- Highlight them, use them, write them on the WB and play with them.
- Ensure learners record them in their books.
- Review them at the end of class.
- Review and recycle them in later classes.

Upgrading

Even if a learners' output is correct, we should also assess whether it can or should be upgraded.

It is important to:

- Assess a learner's output and think it is in line with their level, could they use more complex grammar or lexis to say the same thing but at a higher level.
- Provide them upgraded examples or guide them to upgrade it themselves.
- Encourage them by giving a score and asking if they want to try again for a better score
- Get the class to vote and discuss possible improvements on open class production during the feedback stage.

Receptive skills

It's what we do after the skills activity that can help our learners develop in these skills and any text can be used to highlight a wealth of interesting items that will help our learners.

A reading text can be used to highlight

- Aspect of genre
- Grammar and lexis
- Cohesion
- Semantics

A listening text can be used to highlight

- Grammar and lexis
- Speaking strategies
- Cohesion
- Aspects of phonology

Some activities:

- Guided analysis of the text
- Discrete item gap fills
- Substitution gap fills
- Reconstruction activities
- Steal some vocabulary, highlight collocations and lexical chains to then be used in a productive activity.