

TEACHING METHODS APPLIED WITH INTERACTIVE BOARDS IN ELT LESSONS

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The aim of the contribution is to present a review of teaching methods suitable for teaching EFL, particularly in the lessons where an interactive board is being used. The aim of the study is to lay a theoretical background for a part of dissertation research. The contribution concentrates mainly on the methods which support the learners' activity and autonomy. It gives categorization of the methods and concentrates on those which can be used when English is taught with the help of an interactive board. Emphasis is put on those methods which promote learners' activity and independence.

Keywords: teaching method, interactive board, teacher, learner, activity

The first interactive board appeared in 1999. In a short period of time it has become a very popular tool in all spheres where people needed to present with visual support. Interactive boards started to be used not only in a business sphere but quickly made its way to schools and educational institutions.

Czech schools have also been significantly influenced by the introduction of modern technological teaching aids. According to Neumajer (2008) in 2007 there were 2213 interactive boards in Czech schools, while secondary schools owned about twice as much interactive boards, than elementary schools. Thanks to information policy in education Czech schools gained money and started to equip their classrooms with interactive boards. But Neumajer (2008) points out that many teachers do not fully exploit the potential of interactive boards and most of these boards are incorrectly used. They often serve as a projection screen, pupils very often passively watch and teachers do not benefit from the interactivity of the tool. According to Neumajer, the number of teachers who are able to use the board correctly is relatively low.

Potential danger of technical aids is the fact that new technologies make it feasible for teachers to present far more information to pupils than through classical teaching aids. Technology when used incorrectly, might lead to traditional frontal teaching (Neumajer, 2008).

On one side interactive boards can significantly help in teaching, they can make it more demonstrative and interesting but, on the other side, there is a serious danger that the pupils will be placed in the role of passive observers. Despite this commonly discussed fact many publishers invest vast sums of money in converting textbooks into electronic versions for interactive boards and in developing software for the boards and suppose that using these will move teaching languages on a higher level.

Research area

With a growing number of interactive boards in Czech schools scholars started to realize the necessity of finding out if the modern aid can considerably influence the quality of teaching and learning and change the study results. The first research projects were carried out abroad. Probably one of the first researches of a large scale was undertaken in London between 2003 and 2005. Its result was a detailed report introducing both positive and negative impact of using interactive boards. One of the most critical comments concerned the fact that pupils are passive while an interactive board is being used.

The drawback which is also mentioned by Neumajer (2008), is not according to my opinion caused by the interactive board itself but by the way it is used, by teaching methods which the teacher applies and also by the way they organize the class work.

The following article will therefore deal with teaching methods which can be used with interactive boards and will concentrate mainly on those which encourage pupils' activity and lead the pupils towards independence.

We will shortly analyze the term of teaching method; we will give the summary of teaching methods and choose those which are applicable in teaching English. We will discuss if and how it is possible to use them in combination with an interactive board.

Teaching methods

There are many definitions of teaching methods; scholars have still been searching for optimal way to express principles and main aspects of the teaching method. It is necessary to point out here that Czech categorizations and definitions differ from the conception of English speaking methodologists who, when speaking about a method mean the whole set of teaching techniques and strategies, while Czech scholar usually mean one concrete way of doing things (e.g. narration, dialogue, work with pictures etc.). For our purposes the classical definition of the Czech scholar Otokar Chlup can be used. There are two main concepts in the definition – method and aim. Maňák and Švec add one more and thus create a triangle whose base is formed by needs of the society, on one point of the base there is a method and on the other content. On the top of the triangle there are aims and the whole process of reaching the aims is influenced by the climate and communication (Maňák & Švec, 2003:23).

As in the case of teaching methods, there is the whole range of classifications of teaching methods. The survey of approach to categorization according to individual criteria is given e.g. by Mojžíšek (1985). While describing teaching methods applicable when teaching English with an interactive board Maňák's and Švec's (2003) classification will be used. They divide methods into three groups: classical teaching methods, activating teaching methods and complex teaching methods. We will deal with the methods from the first and the second group in details. Concerning all the methods it is possible to say that whenever we use them together with any audiovisual aids, texts, recordings or even paper flashcards, we can successfully use an interactive board instead.

Classical teaching methods

Verbal methods

The distinctive phenomenon of this time is communication without which today's life and daily routine are beyond imagination. Communication nowadays has completely different character and rules of exchanging information in comparison with the communication twenty years ago. Most children and young people communicate through their mobile phones, social networks or chats where emphasis is put on briefness and content, not so much on form; thus the culture of spoken word gradually declines.

Verbal methods include narration, explanation, lecture, work with a text and a dialogue. In a language teaching teachers mostly use narration, work with text and a dialogue.

1. *Narration*. Teacher's narration in English lessons provides not only live material for practicing listening comprehension but it can also enliven lessons, change the class dynamics, etc. On the other hand it might be demanding especially for young learners with a short attention span to concentrate on longer narration – and in this case there's a good reason to use an interactive board. The teacher can accompany their narration with pictures, key words from a story, symbols etc. It is not only the teacher who can work with an interactive board during the narration. The pupils can e.g. move the order of the pictures or key words according to the story; they can be actively involved in finishing the story with the help of sentences prepared by the teacher on the board etc. In this case and in examples given further the teacher addresses pupils with different learning styles.

2. *Work with texts*. Work with texts belongs among the oldest teaching methods but in the times it started to be applied hardly anybody could imagine the sophisticated form it will acquire with the development of communication technologies. Texts in language teaching are still considered to be the key material and are mostly used in teaching and practicing reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or as a starting point for training independent oral or written performance. After reaching a higher language level the texts can be used for e.g. interpretation of the main idea, as a springboard to discussion, independent reproduction etc. Advantage of presentation the text on the interactive board is a possibility of easy adjusting the size and type of the font, changing the order of sentences, highlighting the main ideas, key words or grammar items. There are also many ways to enrich the written text with a spoken word, picture, symbol, video sequence etc. Also connection to internet provides possibilities to access additional texts and materials which can be used for didactic purposes.

3. *Dialogue*. From all possible varieties of this method which are used in teaching we will have a closer look at a controlled dialogue. In language teaching a method of so called catechetic dialogue is still being used though it is considered outdated in other subjects. This method is often criticized for being mechanical, the pupil answers without having to think much about the content of their answer, there is no space for independent thinking and expressing their own view. The method has been rehabilitated in language teaching. In cases when we teach pupils so called functional language, i.e. how to apologize, how to ask for permission, how to express agreement or disagreement etc., we are presenting certain model answers which are fixed by frequent repetition and drill. In initial stages the dialogues are highly controlled, later, when the pupils master the presented structures, they choose from a given range of possibilities and it is upon their decision what kind of reaction they choose. After reaching a higher level the dialogues are

more spontaneous and are not restricted to rehearsed answers. The teacher can use also other varieties of dialogues, such as Heuristic dialogue.

How can interactive board help while using the method of dialogue? Dialogues can be stimulated by pictures or video – this would concern the content. If we think about the language form, then there is the whole range of possibilities such as multiple choice, choice of suitable vocabulary or grammar structures or some more advanced functions – e.g. visual modelling of the correct pronunciation or intonation.

Demonstrational-illustrative methods

Among these methods Maňák and Švec (2003) rank demonstration and observation, training and work with pictures. While the first two methods are usually used in the sphere of scientific and technical subjects, work with pictures has its undeniable function in language teaching though pictures here are used for different purposes than in subjects mentioned above.

Mojžíšek (1985) criticizes using picture material saying that among the vast number of visual aids the impact of picture material is getting weak. Petty (1996) on the other hand proves that with the help of visual aids which comprise didactic picture it is possible to keep the pupils' attention from other visual impulses and it is possible to present non-visual information visually and make it more memorable.

The varieties of a didactic picture presented by Maňák and Švec (2003:85) are scheme, illustration and mind maps. While we rarely use schemes in language teaching, illustrations and mind maps are very common.

Another critical point concerning didactic picture given by Mojžíšek (1985:66) are the difficulties with storing, high prices and fast out dating. All these disadvantages are eliminated by interactive boards where it is easily possible to create a vast virtual database of pictures or mind maps of all possible sizes, colours or even shapes. Picture material is mostly used to stimulate written or oral performance, to convey information about culture of foreign countries etc., mind maps play important role while building up vocabulary systems or teaching the structure of written or oral discourse.

Activating teaching methods

Methods leading to active and independent work are called activating methods (Silbermann, 1997:14).

Activating methods are according to Maňák and Švec (2003) used especially in alternative schools. They claim that according to various comparative studies carried out in the U.S.A. and also according to findings of Czech school inspection traditional schools equip their pupils with better knowledge but alternative schools, thanks to using activating methods develop their pupils' creativity and independence and equip them better with systematic procedures for achieving various tasks. It is therefore obvious that it is necessary to find the way to combine traditional procedures with alternative ones, use activating methods creatively.

Before giving the summary of activating methods which are applicable in English lessons with an interactive board, let's explain what is understood by the term activity and how it is interpreted by some scholars who deal with it in their research and work. It is often mentioned in connection with other terms – independence and creativity. Maňák (1998) characterizes an active pupil as one who tries especially hard, goes with their work far beyond the

average and intensively works on reaching common goals. He also explains that activity has two basic sources; primary source is biological activity which can be uncontrolled and not always serve the goals of the teaching process. Conscious activity, on the other hand, is the matter of will and leads towards fulfilling the educational goals. The ideal situation is when both these sources are in accordance (Maňák, 1998:29) The author further mentions four stages of pupil's activity. The first stage is forced activity during which, as is clear from the term, the teacher has to force pupils to do the work. The most common type at school is so called induced activity during which the pupils work under the teacher's direction (in this case motivation and attractiveness of the work play an important role). If a pupil is interested and does the work without being forced and relatively independently we speak about independent activity. Finally the fourth stage is engaged activity (Maňák, 1998:29).

During active teaching the fundamental role is played by motivation. In this connection Maňák presents in several points his experience with motivating pupils. They are satisfying pupils' psychological needs, respecting pupils' specific features (background, conditions, interests etc.), evaluation and feedback, explaining the purpose of activities, stimulating atmosphere, teacher's enthusiasm and last but not least it is the point connected with our topic – motivation is strongly connected by interesting methods, techniques and means (Maňák, 1998).

In the following subchapter we will present concrete examples of activating methods which might be applied in language teaching with an interactive board. Maňák and Švec (2003) divide them into discussion methods, heuristic methods, solving-problem methods, situational methods and finally stage methods and didactic games. The last three will not be discussed here since it is not advisable to use IWB with them – it would probably disturb the process.

Discussion methods

Discussion exists in many varieties and those which can be applied in language teaching can be used only on a certain language level (they are e.g. small group discussion or debate). We can hardly expect that a pupil will be able to discuss without being equipped with adequate language. But language itself is not enough for smooth discussion. It is necessary to choose the right topic and support it with information – “material” essential for the discussion. And here an interactive board can help to bring about the problem – discussion can be based on initial text, set of controversial opinions, picture material, video recording etc. Similarly as in the case of dialogue method, it is necessary to equip students with certain language constructions which will be used during discussion and also to teach them some discussion ethic. We can again demonstrate it on the interactive board, use the internet connection and show examples of discussions or work on language typical for discussion. The teacher during this method teaches students main principles of a successful dialogue and discussion.

Heuristic methods, problem-solving

Independent and engaged learning activity is induced by techniques “which should promote discovering, searching, exploring...” (Maňák & Švec, 2003:113). This group comprises e.g. method of asking questions about problems, learning through independent searching which, in initial stages

when pupils are only being prepared for independent learning, is usually replaced by a method of controlled discovery. This category also includes a problem-solving method (Maňák, Švec, 2003:114). In language teaching these methods are used mainly for teaching grammar when it is desirable for students to discover rules and regulations independently and they are lead by their teacher indirectly. Also modern textbooks very often present grammar inductively which in fact corresponds with the needs of active learning. With the problem-solving method language becomes a tool, not a primary aim. When using these methods, interactive board can again help when audiovisual support is needed. Especially when we use the method of controlled discovery, all possible pre-prepared instructional steps or procedures can be displayed; during problem solving the tasks can be tackled directly on the board etc.

Conclusion

In English language teaching with interactive board a teacher has the whole range of teaching methods at their disposal ranking from classical to modern which can be successfully and effectively used provided they are used correctly. Classical methods described in the article are verbal methods – narration, work with texts and dialogue and demonstrative methods out of which work with pictures is appropriate for use with an interactive board. These are followed by a description of activating methods, concretely discussion methods, heuristic methods and problem-solving.

It is necessary to point out that during any activities when we use not only interactive board but any other didactic aid we have to constantly bear in mind that it is a learner who is a centre of our attention, a pupil who is lead towards a concrete goal. On this way teaching methods and aids can help us. It should never happen that the primary impulse which would determine our work will be didactic technology, textbook or other aids in our disposal.

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