



Communication

Interpersonal Interpretive Presentational

Communicating in the foreign language is the stated goal of most people who are studying another language. It is also the most elusive of the goals because of the lack of practice time spent in the classroom developing speaking skills. Of the three communicative modes as defined by the National Foreign Language Standards, students spend most of their time in the classroom in the presentational mode, whereas, outside of the classroom, people are in the interpersonal mode when engaged in conversation, i.e., the language that they use is spontaneous, ad lib, off the cuff. It is not prepared and planned. Consequently, the teacher needs to plan activities that will allow students to speak creatively as often as possible during class time and the teacher needs to give up teaching time in favor of practice time. Just as one learns to drive by driving, one learns to speak by speaking.

Self-Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

What kind of speaking activities do you prepare for your students?

Do you plan activities whereby students initiate the speaking, or are they simply responding to your questions?

How much of classroom time is spent in teacher talk?

Do you favor the lecture approach?

Do you practice Cooperative Learning Techniques in your class?

Do you feel that you are not in control when students are engaged in group work?

Do you feel uncomfortable if you are not “the sage on the stage”?

What proportion of class time are you the “guide on the side?”

Do you think that a noisy classroom is necessarily a bad classroom?

Do you feel that a quiet classroom is always a good classroom?

Do you tend towards achievement-based or proficiency-based activities?

Do you favor accuracy over fluency?

TIP

Plan a week of classroom activities that concentrate on developing the interpersonal communicative mode, i.e., activities where students initiate the speaking.