

Enriching Vocabulary Through Speaking and Listening

by Barby Punzone and Maryanne Kildare

Teaching new vocabulary words in the ESL classroom can be a challenge for many teachers. It's easy to assume that students will learn and remember a new word once it's been taught, but the truth is every student learns and retains in a different way. The activities presented in this article aid in Gardner's theory of how "students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways (Cherry, 2013)." We also agree with Vygotsky (1978) who viewed interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. The following activities will provide ESL teachers with new and innovative ways to teach vocabulary while enhancing the students' listening and speaking skills.

- **Using YouTube** This website offers many music videos that you can use with your ESL class. For our unit on money we show a segment from Schoolhouse Rock titled "Where the Money Goes." Students are given vocabulary words to look up that pertain to the segment and then comprehension questions to answer that relate to the vocabulary words after they viewed it. The students enjoy watching a show that was once a part of the American culture and can understand its content because of their prior knowledge. Another way YouTube can be used as a listening resource is for its music videos. In the same unit, we use such videos as "Can't Buy Me Love" from the Beatles and "Money Money Money" by Abba. The students are given the lyrics with blanks. They need to listen to the song and fill in the blanks with the appropriate words.
- **Dialogues** This speaking activity encourages students to use all of their English skills to complete it. Each student is given a partner and together they are asked to write an 8-line dialogue on one topic. An example of this activity is having the students write a dialogue as though they were at the bank. One student is the teller and one student is the customer. Using the vocabulary words that would be introduced prior to this activity, they would create a dialogue. After they complete the dialogue, they would practice and perform it.
- **Discussion Questions** This speaking and listening activity requires the instructor to supply the discussion questions to the class. The students should be placed into groups of three to four students. Each group is handed an index card with a question on it for them to discuss; the question can incorporate a vocabulary word. Each student needs to answer the question while the other members of the group are listening. As each group answers the question they receive another index card to discuss. When all of the index cards have been discussed, the instructor can ask the class what they have learned from each other. This activity can be used as either an introductory or a concluding activity.
- **Presentations** Presentations are short speeches relating to a topic. Students have an opportunity to practice their speaking skills while using their newly-learned information and vocabulary words; in addition, it's a great way for students to practice their note-taking skills. The audience is given a chart so they can record the information that they hear from the speaker. When the students can successfully explain themselves in English, they build not only build confidence in themselves within the classroom, but also outside as well.

As ESL teachers, we need to have students understand, apply, create, and assess what they learned, so they can be successful learners in the classroom. By offering a variety of strategies of teaching vocabulary while building listening and speaking skills, students are able to not only develop these skills and interact with their peers comfortably and effectively, but we, the

teachers, are also able to reach successfully the different types of learners we see in our classrooms and watch their language development and skills flourish.

References

Cherry, K. (2013). Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

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