

USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE SKILLS

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ANNOTATION

This article is devoted to the graphic organizers used in improving language skills. Using communicative approach emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. Organizers raise creative providing flexibility in thinking and assist the students to get the whole information. The author classifies different types of graphic organizers. The analysis of the research are provided.

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Nowadays great attention is paid to teaching English through communicative activities and the students are elated to participate in any communicative activity when they possess the knowledge of current and past issues. Using communicative language teaching, or the communicative approach emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. Communicative activities include any activities that encourage and require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners. Moreover, these activities have real purposes: to find information, break down barriers, talk about self, and learn about the culture.

Thus, students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics and the teachers in communicative classrooms will find themselves talking less, listening more, becoming active facilitators of their students' learning. As a means of communicative method, graphic organizers are widely used in foreign language classes in order to improve students not only language skills, but also to create a relaxed, informal atmosphere combined with lateral thinking to solve problems.

In teaching English graphic organizers actually have the power and potential to enhance the learning ability of students in all age groups, and when used in effective ways, graphic organizers have a great amount of potential for fostering learning in a variety of different areas in education. The most prevalent educational areas that are positively affected by the effectiveness of graphic organizers are comprehension, reading and vocabulary knowledge. Through the use of graphic organizers, students are able to gain a better understanding of the underlying concepts that can be found within what is being read, allowing them to isolate text that is not important to their learning. This will allow the students to determine main ideas so that they can build entire stories from their reading. Through this process, the reading and writing skills for the student will be enhanced, and writing applications like essays will improve over time, and students are more likely to become strategic learners.

There are different types of graphic organizers and each type is beneficial, as well as help to develop language learners' analytical, critical, planning and creative thinking skills, as they are used to structure writing projects, summarize reading texts, organize and store vocabulary, and help in studying, planning research and brainstorming. Since most graphic organizers use short words or phrases, and sometimes drawings, they can be used with all levels and with young and less-able learners.

Although there are many variations and possible combinations of graphic organizers used in the classrooms, they can be classified either in terms of their design or their function and most of them fall into four basic categories:

1. Cyclical organizers are organizers showing the sequence of events in a process.
2. Conceptual organizers are organizers showing how a main concept is supported by facts, evidence and characteristics.
3. Sequential organizers are organizers showing events in chronological order.
4. Hierarchical organizers are organizers showing the between a concept and its subordinate levels of characteristics.

For the language classroom, the most common functions of graphic organizers are: describing, comparing and contrasting, classifying sequences, cause and effect, decision making. As there a wide variety of designs for depicting information structures, the following graphic organizers are used for the purpose of visually revealing to learners how the information is structured: Clock, Cluster/Word Web, Describing Wheel, E-Chart, Fact and Opinion, Five W's Chart, Flow Chart, Four-Column Chart, Goal-Reasons Web, Hierarchy Chart, Idea Wheel, KWL/KWHL Chart, Ladder, Observation Chart, Persuasion Map, Planning Chart, Progress Report, Sequence Chart, Spider Map, Step-by-Step Chart, Story Map, T-Chart, Time Line, Tree Chart, Venn Diagram, Mind Map, SWOT-Analyses, Circles on the Water, PRES-formula.

All above mentioned graphic organizers serve not only as a guide before and during student reading and listening, but also as study tools to improve language skills. They facilitate student responses for writing, speaking, and performing, as well as they provide the learner with a different way of seeing and thinking about information, and convey complex information in a simple-to-understand manner. The benefits of graphic organizers are evident not only for learners but also for teachers, because while using these organizers in teaching:

- a lot of information can be converted into a structured, easy-to-read, graphic display.
- a large amount of information can be displayed to provide the "big picture" of a topic.
- through graphic organizers teachers are able to connect the new information with students' prior knowledge and promote the active oral and written participation, regardless of learners' levels of linguistic proficiency.

Graphic organizers which are specifically designed for facilitating learning and instruction of the context are visual and spatial symbols which describe content, structure and the key conceptual relationships of the text using lines, arrows and circles. They, also named as visual maps, enable the use of skill areas of the brain entirely, help overcoming the information load and allow the information and resources to be collected in one place.

Besides, they increase creativity providing flexibility in thinking and help the individuals perceive the information entirely. Moreover, they clarify the thoughts by means of relationships and organization, help the individuals solve problem, make decisions and go into action and also they develop memory, speech and comprehension. Students who use graphic organizers can be more strategic learners. When the topic to be organized, is clear analytic skills besides reading and writing skills, communication skills, personal creative skills develop by means of graphic organizers.

They work in consciousness as tools that also contribute to critical thinking because they help the individuals focus on what is really important by taking their attention to the key word, key concept and relationship between them. The topic focuses on the use of graphic organizers on student's writing ability as well as their attitudes towards this essential language. Some of these studies recommend the teachers to provide learning experience in risk-free setting and provide continuous positive feedback to students for greater chances

to develop writing skills. Others propose that teachers should provide step-by-step instruction for struggling writing.

Others claim that building positive classroom experience for learning is of paramount importance for learning writing successfully. However, a wide spectrum of research has determined on recommended the use of graphic organizers to augment the teaching of various writing process. Graphic organizers serve as visual representation of ideas that help learners organize their thought and apply their thinking skills to the content in a more orderly manner and allow the students to focus more on the meaning rather than the format of complete sentence structure. Graphic organizers can be used to mitigate difficulties that less skilled writers face as these or can improve planning organization, word choice and compositional coherence.

Graphic organizers can be used to encourage students to plan brainstorm their topic before beginning to write. A graphic organizer is a visual representation of knowledge, a way of structuring information, and the arranging essential aspects of an idea or topic into a pattern using labels.

Although graphic organizers can be very successful when teaching students the writing process, teachers must learn to be cautions when choosing graphic organizers to incorporate into writer's workshop. When using organizers to teach writing skills, the students will carefully choose the type of graphic organizers to fit all students in the class. Depending on what writing skills is being taught, the proper graphic organizer must be chosen. It is important to remember that only a few graphic organizers are used to teach one writing skill so that students do not become confused or overwhelmed.

Graphic organizers come in many different forms, each one is designed to suit a particular type of information. For example:

Descriptive or semantic map: this is commonly used for mapping generic information, it particularly works well for mapping hierarchical relationships.

Cause and effect: this is widely used to assist the students identify the major causes of certain events and their affects on surrounding atmospheres.

Compare and contrast: this is basically used to assist students compare and contrast concepts according to the main features or quality.

Series of events chain: this is quite useful in helping students organize information or events according to the stages or steps of their occurrence. However, for organizing information that is circular with no specific beginning or ending.

Although there are many variations and possible combinations of graphic organizers used in language classroom, most of them fall into four basic categories, namely cyclical organizers, sequential organizers and hierarchical organizers.

Graphic organizers enable teachers to show and explain relationships between content and sub-content and how they in turn relate to other content areas. On the other hand, through the use of the organizers, students can make more abstract comparisons, evaluations, and conclusions. In short, graphic organizers allow students have an active role in their learning. In conclusion, it is necessary to say that graphic organizers are effective instruments to develop the students' writing ability. The use of such organizers has a significant positive impact on their attitudes towards this skill.

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