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ELICITATION- AN EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUE OF TEACHING EFL

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***Annotation.** This article describes most common and effective ways of eliciting in teaching English and some tips on how a teacher should conduct this method.*

***Keywords:** teaching English, methods, elicitation, tips to the teachers.*

***Аннотация.** В данной статье описываются наиболее распространённые и эффективные методы элиситации при обучении английскому языку и советы для преподавателей по использованию данного метода.*

***Ключевые слова:** преподавание английского языка, методы, элиситация, советы преподавателям.*

Eliciting (elicitation) is term which describes a range of techniques which enable the teacher to get learners to provide information rather than giving it to them.

Commonly, eliciting is used to ask learners to come up with vocabulary and language forms and rules, and to brainstorm a topic at the start of a skills lesson. The definition of the term in the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, “Techniques or procedures which a teacher uses to get learners to actively produce speech or writing”, suggests that there may be wider applications. Eliciting is based on several premises:

- Collectively, students have a great deal of knowledge, both of the language and of the real world. This knowledge needs to be activated and used constructively;
- The teaching of new knowledge is often based on what the learners already know;
- Questioning assists in self-discovery, which makes information more memorable.

Eliciting helps to develop a learner-centred classroom and a stimulating environment, while making learning memorable by linking new and old information.

Eliciting is not limited to language and global knowledge. The teacher can elicit ideas, feelings, meaning, situations, associations and memories. For the teacher, eliciting is a powerful diagnostic tool, providing key information about what the learners know or don't know, and therefore a starting point for lesson planning. Eliciting also encourages teachers to be flexible and to move on rather than dwell on information which is already known.

Language and ideas cannot be elicited without some input from the teacher, and eliciting is certainly not an excuse for not presenting language in a clear context. Students also need prompts, associations and reminders in order to jog their memories.

Often, the teacher provides stimulus using visuals or the board. When working on the simple present for daily routines, for example, a picture or drawing of a house and a clock combined with mime can be used to elicit both the names of household items and common verbs.

The teacher may also model new structures or lexis before it is introduced as the target language.

A situational dialogue, example sentences or a listening/reading text may provide the context from which the target language is elicited. In this case, the teacher is asking the learners to notice how a particular function is expressed, and eliciting is combined with concept questions.

Eliciting ideas and background information also requires input. This may come from a teacher's anecdote or story, a text, pictures, or a video, and involves the sharing of knowledge between teacher and learners. Information is often elicited onto a mind-map on the board, but it is important that all the students have a record of collective knowledge, and may find one of the many kinds of graphic organiser useful. Reading lessons often begin with a photo or headline from the text which serves a dual purpose in providing a stimulus for eliciting and a prompt for predicting content. KWL charts are ideal records of what students already Know, what they Want to know, and what they have Learnt by the end of the lesson, and point to the conclusion that eliciting can take place at any stage of a lesson and often indicates what should happen next.

While eliciting clearly contributes to student involvement, it does not always produce the desired or expected results. Questions such as 'Who can tell me something about....?' may be greeted with stony silence. Students are wrongly labelled as lacking knowledge or being too shy when there are often cultural reasons for their reticence.

In many cultures, students are not encouraged to volunteer information or ask questions while in others the teacher is seen as the sole provider of knowledge. The problem is reinforced by the fact that many units in course materials begin with open

elicitation questions which create the possibility of making grammatical or pronunciation errors and therefore losing face in front of classmates.

In cultures where the group is more important than the individual it is unacceptable to stand out either as a success or as a failure. Even with constant encouragement, it is difficult to break down entrenched attitudes and beliefs, and certain strategies may be required:

- Nominate students rather than waiting for volunteers. The student is then not responsible for being made to stand out from the group.
- Give learners time to prepare an answer. Spontaneity may be ideal, but students will be more confident if they are given a moment to think about or even to write down an answer.
- Ensure that there is no right or wrong answer involved. General questions such as 'What's your favourite colour?' or 'What kind of music do you listen to?' are more likely to produce answers than those requiring specific knowledge.
- Encourage rather than correct. When eliciting language, comments such as 'nearly right' and 'try again' are more constructive than 'no, does anyone else know the right answer?' Try not to correct when learners are volunteering background information about a topic - confidence-building, not accuracy is important here.

Tips for eliciting

- Eliciting is a basic technique and should be used regularly, not only at the beginning of a lesson but whenever it is necessary and appropriate.
- Don't try to 'pull teeth'. Prolonged silence or incorrect answers suggest that input is required from the teacher.
- Don't ask students to repeat incorrect answers, but ask a variety of students to repeat a good answer.
- Acknowledge or give feedback to each answer with gestures or short comments.
- Provide sufficient context or information. Eliciting differs from Socratic questioning in that it is designed to find out what the learners know rather than to lead them to a conclusion which only the teacher knows.
- Learners can elicit from each other, particularly during brainstorming activities. This helps to build confidence and group cohesion as well as shifting the focus away from the teacher.
- At lower levels, more guided questioning is needed. Open-ended questions should be avoided as the learners are unlikely to have the language to answer them to their own satisfaction.

The success of eliciting depends largely on the attitudes of teachers and learners to their respective roles. Ideally it promotes the notion of an exchange of information, helps to break down traditional teacher-centredness, and begins to establish a variety of interaction patterns in the classroom. It is also fundamental to the inductive approach to teaching language and to learning through tasks and self-discovery, and a simple and effective way of getting learners to produce language.

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