TOEFL Speaking Task 4 Sample Question and Answer

Text of lecture

An example of how you might go about this is, well, I'll describe a lesson I observed a few weeks ago. The teacher was teaching children about nature… about plants – specifically about how to identify different trees. The first thing she did was to play a game where students had to name as many trees as they could – without writing anything down, just speaking out loud. Then after that little activity, she described the different ways you can identify trees – from the shape of their leaves, their buds, their bark and so on. But you can imagine that the kids who don't have very good imaginations… they couldn't really visualize what she was talking about… their minds were starting to wander, they were shuffling in their seats and getting distracted. But that was okay, because next she showed some photos for them to look at on the electronic whiteboard, then passed around some picture books. Students then copied some of the pictures into their exercise books. After that, students got the chance to go out into the school grounds and physically identify some of the trees that were there. So it was quite an effective lesson – very memorable, and the pupils looked very engaged. A week later I asked one of them to describe to me the leaf of an oak tree, and she did so perfectly.

Text of sample answer

Sample answer:

The idea behind the VAK theory is that everyone has a preferred way of learning. Visual people learn best through looking at things, auditory learners learn best when they hear something, and kinesthetic learners learn best by doing. The theory suggests that teachers need to include a range of activities in their lessons so that all pupils, whether they are visual, auditory or kinesthetic, get the chance to learn. The professor's example shows a teacher doing just this. The game, where the students name trees, and the teacher's opening talk, is designed to suit auditory learners, because at this point, they're only using their ears. The photos, and the part where the students copy pictures of leaves is visual, although you could say that copying pictures is kinesthetic too. The part where they go outside and look at leaves is kinesthetic. The fact that the student could remember the shape of the oak leaf suggests that applying the VAK theory is a useful way of helping students to learn. However, we can't assume it was the VAK theory that helped her remember. Perhaps the variety of activities kept her motivated, or maybe she was just a particularly bright student with a good memory