

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This paper summarizes a range of theoretical reviews about language teaching approaches and strategies. The approaches and strategies are claimed to be effective and helpful in learning second language. A combination of an active learning approach and a project-based approach to teaching seems to be the best way to achieve a good pedagogy for teaching language as Widdowson (2004) states that the learners have different ways of learning the language and they learn it through interaction with teachers and peers as well the environment. Moreover, the availability of technology cannot be ignored as matter highly contributes to students' interest and capacity in learning language. Therefore, this essay is intended to discuss how an active learning approach and the project-based approach fit very well in teaching language. The writer also will present information on how three main elements-teachers, students, and classroom context contribute to good learning process and how technology can contribute well in teaching language.

Key words: *active learning approach, integrated approach, a project- based approach, language learning dynamic elements, technology used in language learning.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning language is not only learning grammar and vocabulary but also the meaning. The goal of language learning is to communicate with other people and can be understood by the speakers of the target language. According to Illich (as cited in Harmer, 2007) actually learning is how people use the language through activities which need interactions with others' participation in a meaningful setting. In other words, teachers should involve the students to solve the communication problems in the target language with students' experiences and thoughts so that the communication becomes meaningful. For example instead of teaching present continuous tense explicitly, teachers can expose the students to the real examples and guide them how to use it in real life setting.

In addition, every student has a unique style in learning a new language. When learning a new language, the students may find some difficulties to acquire the language through the materials and activities given by the teacher. So, a revised approach for teaching language, based on the best pedagogical advice available, is required in order to make the learning activities more

interesting and effective. According to Widdowson (2004), the learners have different ways of learning the language and they learn it through interaction with teachers and peers.

Moreover, teachers should be very flexible with the method applied in the classroom when they are teaching literacy to the students because according to Luke and Freebody (1999) that one methodology is not always appropriate with the learning literacy but try to find right method for reading with the classroom activities so the teacher and students get involved in the textual practices. For example, for students who work after school as a waiter/waitress in the restaurant, porter, souvenir seller and tourist guide, giving related vocabularies with the students' environment and situation and choosing the reading topics related to their life, can result the students to be more enthusiastic in learning English because they know how to greet tourists, how to offer food in the restaurant and how to persuade people to buy the souvenirs. According to Mitchell and Myles (2001) second language learners are concerned with the relationship between the social context and the opportunity to use the language as in the interactions. Furthermore, the students can explore interesting content in learning the language. The language learners need to come and feel the real situation for their development. Therefore, a combination of an active learning approach and a project-based approach to teaching are two alternatives to achieve a good pedagogy for teaching language presented in this paper.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Active Learning Method in Teaching Language

Carlson and Winquist (2011) say that active learning activities are effective to the degree that they encourage students to think about concepts. This method can encourage the students to think more about the task given to them. They are not just listening to the teacher. The learners do activities, as well as they have to participate. This approach do not suggest that teachers can have their students "do anything" and expect positive results. However, students are asked to "do something". Teachers should know that it is impossible to have the students do anything about the language or for the improvement of their language acquisition but the teachers should know that through active learning method the students can do something for the language ability improvement. It means that this approach facilitate not only students with high level of proficiency but also students with middle or low level of achievement to be able to contribute more in the learning activities. Certainly, what students do and how they think about what they

did determines whether a given active learning approach will be successful. , Weltman and Whiteside in Carlson and Winqvist (2011) reported an interaction between teaching method and student GPA. When the hybrid and “fully active” approaches were used, students with high, medium and low GPAs performed equally. In both conditions the performance of the high GPA students was significantly *less* than their performance under the lecture method. It means that the active learning method suit to apply to gather the participation of the middle and low level ones.

In active learning, the students learn the language through interactions either with the teachers or peers. They find their own way of getting information to complete their task. The students can work in group too. The students work and find together new knowledge in the classroom activities. The students may share their ideas in class or group discussion greatly since they have got knowledge with they understand much. However, when the students work together in group, it will minimize the anxiety of making mistakes to produce the language. It is not a new case in our country that most of the students are very shy to speak in front of the class individually but they tend to speak more in groups. They are more active in group works because they are not shy with their peers and this condition makes them feel relax in learning. According to Krashen (as cited in Harmer, 2007) when the students are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings in relax ways, they will produce the language naturally and spontaneously. In addition, active learning may increase students’ motivation, improve their critical thinking, understand the topics better and share new information among them. Throuh active learning method, the students find their own solution to the task given with their own way.

Prince (2014) Define Active as any instructional method that engages students in the learning process. In short, active learning requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing. This method makes the students to learn building their understanding about the task. The role of the teachers in this way of learning is as facilitator and controller. It is true that active learning is often contrasted to the traditional lecture where students passively receive information from the instructor where the teachers are the ones who give the knowledge, the ones as the only who have the knowledge

Active learning gives space for to be more motivated and interested because they cooperate to find new information. When the students are motivated and interested in the material they are learning, they will make better correlation between topics and learning activities and use the language as real life context. In short, when students are in the real life setting and motivated, they will achieve more in learning.

2.2 Project-based learning method

A good method in teaching English is not only teaching grammar and vocabulary but also teaching the context of the language. However, according to Gibbons (2002, p.10) that teachers have to understand and provide the students with experiences, skills, knowledge, concepts and context in order to assist the students in learning.

According to Ellis (2001) that teachers should understand how the L2 learners acquire the language so the teachers know better what to do in the classroom. Finally, by considering the ways of students learn the language, the teachers should find the best way and topic for the students in learning second language.

Project-based learning has a positive effect on the development of thinking skills in specific groups of students. Students with low verbal ability and students with little previous content knowledge learned more in PBL-taught classes than in traditionally-taught classes (Mergendoller, Maxwell & Bellisimo, 2006). Researchers have found high levels of student engagement in PBL classrooms because it places students in a real-world, problem-solving context (Blumenfeld, et al., in Prince, 2014

Levine and Mosier (2014) state that PBL requires students to apply the knowledge and skills they learn are the focus of the curriculum rather than being added as a supplement at the end of traditional instruction. the students can develop their own questions to drive learning, study concepts and information that answer those questions, and apply that knowledge to products they develop PBL method give chance to the students to take an active role in understanding concepts and content.

It is not easy to implement PBL in our language class. Ertmer and Simons (2006) noted three distinct areas of implementation difficulty for teachers: 1) creating a culture of collaboration and teamwork in the classroom, 2) adjusting from a directive to a facilitative role, and 3) scaffolding student learning. So, it is the teacher who has great role to facilitate the students.

Marx, Blumenfeld, Krajcik, and Soloway in Levine and Mosier (2014) also reported barriers to implementation including that project planning is time-consuming, classrooms sometimes feel disorderly, and authentic assessments are difficult to design. Additionally, teachers want to control the flow of information, and find it difficult to balance the need for student independence with providing students support. In this method, teachers cannot be separated from technology because technology will be needed much to succeed the project.

2.3 How active learning and project-based learning as integrated approach in teaching language

Clear explanation has been previously provided in the above sub topic. Teachers can design the language class activities to be more student centre using active learning and project based learning approach. These methods allow the learners to get more information in the way fit to their way of learning. In addition, these methods give chance for students to be active in participating in the classroom. Through active learning and project based learning, students are able to experience four skills in learning language, writing, speaking, reading, and listening. In other words, these two methods are the real example of the integrated approach itself.

Using integrated approach to teaching English in the classroom is very useful for ESL students. In the integrated approach the students will learn form of the language consciously through type of contexts, such as context of culture and context of situation (Gibbons, 2002). Gibbons (2002) adds that the students are more likely to learn daily conversations through context rather than learn English academically in the schools. Learning conversation (speaking skill) through context will cause the students to also practice their reading, when they have printed material. They students need to practice their listening when they have report task from the teacher.

Therefore, teachers should see some benefits of using the integrated approach to teaching reading, writing, listening and speaking in one package. The benefits are students can communicate successfully either in writing or speaking and the students can develop their reading and listening skills at the same time. According to Harmer (2007) one of the reasons students can communicate successfully either in writing or speaking because the students understand the genre that they are familiar with their context. In the other word, the learners need to come to the real situation. In this case, teachers should not only focus on one skill because using the integrated approach to teaching English will develop students' language skills as Gibbons states that students should learn through language and learn about language.

For example, a teacher of English Business Correspondence Assigns the students to do survey to company and get some documents used by the company such as “purchasing order form, invoice, complain letter, etc. This activity is assign to be group project. At final, the group should present their finding in front of the classroom. They need to tell the class what are the difference and similarity the found from the document and the theory they had had before.

In the sample of project-based activity above, the teacher is not only assign the students to find the differences and similarities but in the process, the students do discussion, prepare the presentation, as well as they are ready to explain some questions related to the presentation. The students practice their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in this activity.

2.4 The use of technologies in learning language

The condition of teaching English changes rapidly. There are a lot of students who are now very familiar with the computer and internet now. Google can be used to search information. According to Harmer (2007) computer and internet give a lot of opportunities for students and teachers to discover material rather than use pencils, pens and papers.

In its relation to project-based approach, technology has great support for the success of this method. Eskrootchi and Oskrochi (2010) conducted a quasi-experimental study of PBL instruction in a technology-rich environment to determine their combined impact on students.

In addition, teachers can use various technologies to encourage and motivate the students in learning a new language. As well as the learners can get lot of information using technology to complete their task or project. Moreover, according to Cummins (2000) it is important for teachers to use new literacies and new technologies in order to increase students' interest and capacity in learning language. Unfortunately, some teachers still have little knowledge about computer and internet. How a good pedagogy can be implemented by using computer and internet while the teachers cannot operate the devices? In some areas in Indonesia, students also not familiar enough with computers and internet. These condition may be the obstacles to apply the project-based learning activities with technology. Because according to Warschauer (2002) we have hardware, software but we lack of human ware and it is important to teach teachers how to use technology.

2.5 Teaching and Learning elements to achieve a dynamic pedagogy

Teaching is not only teaching. There are some elements need to be considered in teaching. Those are teachers, students and the classroom contexts. In addition, the three elements should be dynamic in order to achieve a good pedagogy. If these elements are ignored to one another, the students will be frustrated and uninterested in learning new knowledge.

Good teachers should act as a leader, model and facilitator in order to build good relationships with the students. However, Harmer (2007, p.108) argues that teacher's role are not only

facilitators but also numbers of different roles such as, controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant and resource so the teachers can foster the students in learning. Moreover, when students can engage and take part in the classroom activities, they will feel they are part of the lesson given by the teachers. On the other hand, if they do not participate actively in the tasks they will feel that they are separated in the classroom (Toohey, 2000). According to Lier (2001) that symmetrical interactions between students and teachers which in the classrooms provide opportunities to engage context and group talk will make students motivated and focused. I think the dynamic teachers can observe the ways of students' learning and create classroom interactions more varied in order to control students in the classrooms. The classrooms can be large or very large but the key is the teachers can control what the students are doing.

In order to make the classroom activities more dynamic, there are three elements should be considered in teaching such as teachers, students and classroom contexts. Those elements have great connections to one another and cannot be separated. Otherwise the classroom activities can be very boring and the students are not motivated and interested in learning.

3. CONCLUSION

an active learning approach and a project-based approach to teaching are a kind of integrated method in learning language. These two methods allow the learners or language to practice all skill of the language-writing, reading, speaking, and listening. In order to get good result of the activities or project given to the student, the availability of technology cannot be ignored as matter highly contributes to students' interest and capacity in learning language. In addition, three main elements-teachers, students, and classroom context contribute to good learning process.

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