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AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Sri Agriyanti Mestari

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AN ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Sri Agriyanti Mestari
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

Abstract

This study is aimed to analyze a language learning activity in regard to how it addresses diverse language proficiency and various cultural and learner factors. This activity not only develop students speaking skill, another language skill also integrated in this activity for instance listening and writing. Moreover there is non language outcomes included in this activity such as confidence, motivation, cultural understanding and clarification of goal. The result of this research is expected to be a guide for lecturers in applying different kinds of activities.

Key Words: Diverse language proficiency, cultural and learner factors.

INTRODUCTION

This essay aims at analyzing a language learning activity in regard to how it addresses diverse language proficiency and various cultural and learner factors. The activity is Called Love and Marriage stories developed by Alex Case. This activity aims to develop students speaking skill, especially in giving suggestion or advice on particular topic. Another language skill also integrated in this activity for instance listening and writing. Also there is non language outcomes included in this activity such as confidence, motivation, cultural understanding and clarification of goal (Richards 2001). Love and Marriage stories activity involved vocabulary development and lots of discussion on topic that everyone likes talking about. The activities start with imaginary stories and can move onto personalization for classes that know each other or would like to know each other well. The class brainstorms some language to talk about love and marriage, and then they make stories out of this vocabulary and compare them. They practice the language of advice with some imaginary problem, and then move onto a slightly risqué game asking personal questions on the topic. This activity takes 30 – 75 minutes.

There are some steps in this activity. Firstly is introduction, the teacher draw a big heart on the board and ask student to guess about the topic, the teacher then write Love and Marriage in the heart. The next step is

Brain storming, the teacher brainstorm vocabulary onto mind map on the board and organize these vocabularies into verb, noun, and adjectives. In this step teacher start with basic vocabulary and try to elicit some complex vocabulary especially the words and expression in the pack of cards. Thirdly are love stories, the teacher asking the students which of the things on the board usually happen first for example, love at first sight or blind date and which is the end (e.g. divorce, etc). Brain storming and discussion stimulates the students to have negotiation in meaning and interpretation, so that they are force to perform analytical and collaborative interaction during the activity (Lantolf 2000). After that teacher gives worksheet with chosen vocabulary to the student and ask them to arrange a story based on these vocabularies. Students make a story in pairs, teacher monitor and act as facilitator which who facilitates students learning and encourage students to participate in class. Teacher then ask one groups to tell the class about their story and other groups are listen and tell the class how theirs is different. The next step is advice match. The teacher pick one piece of vocabulary (for example, affair) and tell the class "I have a problem, (my husband having an affair). What should I do? The teacher asks the student to give a suggestions but it will only accept advice containing one piece of vocabulary from the board or worksheet. Ask class if it is good advice. If so, the student can get a point. The students

who answered a question have chance to using another piece of vocabulary. Again, take advice from class. The students then do the same activities in pair. The final step is 'ask and answer'. In this step teacher use coin and pack card as a tool of learning. Head and tails in coin means ask and tell. Students take a word from card pack and ask the class to make a nice or interesting question. The students toss the coin, if it is heads the student can choose another student to ask the question but if it is tails the students should answer it themselves. The student can make any question from the vocabulary they have to be careful because they may have to answer the questions by themselves.

DISCUSSION

Diverse Language Proficiency

Students are not alike, that is why Classroom activities selection should be based on indication of student grade level, language proficiency, needs and interest of the students, degree of heterogeneity in the classroom and student purposes for learning (Turnbull at all, 2002). Language proficiency is usually measured in term of four skill, speaking, reading, listening and writing. Learners usually have different proficiency in four skills. Many language learning activity require a certain proficiency level for successful completion. Love and Marriage activity is designed for pre-intermediate to intermediate level. The teacher needs to re-arrange the topic if this kind of activity will be used for either lower or higher level proficiency. In this activity the teacher should create an activity to cater diverse language proficiency in the classroom, the teacher ask the students to work in pairs or in groups. By doing discussion, all class members are involved in interaction. In order to be able to perform the appropriate use of language based on academic culture in a communicative way, the classroom is conducted in learner-centered, while the teacher offers appropriate activities, stimulates language for communicative purpose, observe learner improvement, and motivated learners independence (Silva and Burns 1999). For that reason,

Cultural Factors

We know that culture and learning are connected in important ways. Early life experiences and the values of a person culture affect the processes of learning. We also know that an individual learner's culture, family background and socioeconomic level affect someone learning. That is why in this activity using intercultural approach which sees language and culture are inseparable. When the teacher teaching culture she will also involves teaching cultural aspects (Bianco, 2004). However, Moran (2001) argued that it is good to separate language and culture at lower level proficiency to achieve a best result. Love and Marriage activity require cultural knowledge. When this activity applied to students in Indonesia for example, it is needed the role of the teacher to explain cultural aspect related to the context of teaching. The Indonesian students may be confused about some words in card packs for instance, one night stand, French kiss or to have a bun in the oven since this kind of phrase are rarely or never used in their communities. Furthermore, discussion of love and marriage may raise issues of religion, politics and morality, so that the teacher needs to think about the way to explain some words or phrase because in some school or region talking about sex or anything related to very personal issues are taboo. This activity which is emphasized on the real communicative value bring into the classroom (Flowerdew and Miller 2005)

Various Learner Educators b learners are different in different ways, classroom confir Learners bring approach, talents learning situation. activity try to cat styles. The teacher learners with visual a card and using representation to reflective students respond to question though a response giving opportunity to and to discuss with answer the questions who respond quickly thought, the teacher activity which is directed from the students. For learners who learn stage of learning are explain step by step the and move to the other aim of one step activity. This kind of activity applied to any age, how to change the topic related to the age and the teaching method based on student Another factor motivation is factor in second language Motivation divided in two integrative and instrumental learning motivation is the learner's positive attitude the target language group involve into the target community. Instrumental underlies the goal to gain economic rewards through

Various Learner factors

Educators believe that all the learners are different. The students learn in different ways, the experience in the classroom confirm this every day. Learners bring their own individual approach, talents and interest to the learning situation. Love and marriage activity try to cater different learning styles. The teacher provides a 'visual learners with visual information by giving a card and using symbol or visual representation to the learner. For reflective students who are slow to respond to question and need to think through a response carefully the teacher giving opportunity to think about the topic and to discuss with their pairs before answer the questions. Impulsive learner who respond quickly and blurt out their thought, the teacher provide first step of activity which is directly need response from the students. For the step by step learners who learn best when each stage of learning are clear, the teacher explain step by step the learning process and move to the other stage when the aim of one step activity has achieved.

This kind of activity also can be applied to any age, however it is needed to change the topic related to the age and the teaching method should vary according to the age of students. Spolsky in Cook (1996) describes three conditions for second language learning related to age. A grammar translation methods seems to be better for the older students, child is learn easier in informal approach and natural situation and adults need the creations of language situation in the classroom. As a consequence, teacher should be able to manage class and to use appropriate method based on students need.

Another factor is student's motivation. Motivation is an important factor in second language learning. Motivation divided in two basic types: integrative and instrumental. Integrative learning motivation is characterized by the learner's positive attitude towards the target language group and desire to involve into the target language community. Instrumental motivation underlies the goal to gain some social or economic rewards through second

language achievement. It is referring to the more functional reason to the language learning (Cook 1996). Every student has their own motivation in learning second language. Nevertheless, students will find difficulties in learning language if they have neither instrumental nor integrative motivation. Love and Marriage activity need teachers to apply this activity skillfully, so that it can generate students to involve effectively in this activity.

Moreover, student's personality characters such as self-esteem, empathy, dominance, talkativeness, inhibition and responsiveness also affect the teaching and learning process. These personality characters seem to be a problem for adult learner. "Adults are often feeling embarrassed by their lack of mastery of the language and.... After experience of frustration in trying what exactly they mean" (Lightbown and Spada 1993). By using this activity the teacher can reduce the negative feelings of the learner by explaining the step by step activity clearly and giving opportunity to the students to share their idea in more relax situation. This activity try to reduce the classroom situation that makes students feel being judged by giving another chance to the students for self correction or eliminating or minimizing the competition and makes students feel that they are expected to collaborate toward the same goal, also reduced isolated feeling by create the same opportunity to the students to participate in classroom (Turula 2002).

Love and marriage activity may be affected the students both positive and negative through engagement in the activity. The students who willing to take a risk and have positive attitudes such as sociable and outgoing will eager to involved in whole activity. On the other hand, the students who has a problem with their anxiety and loss of their self confidence will negatively engage in this activity, the may be reluctant to speak especially when they realize or assume that other students are more fluent. In order to help students the anxiety learners cope with the situation, the teacher need to consider how classroom

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- support to the students.
 advisor who provides feedback and
 learning process and as mentor or
 empowering students to involve in
 manages the classroom and
 should be act as facilitator who
 teaching and learning process. They
 Again, the teacher's role is crucial in
 will be different if they work individually.
 in the form of collaborative thinking that
 facilitated to have interaction with peers
 able to apply them in the real
 and function but also their process to be
 knowledge of language forms, meanings
 learner curiosity to understand the
 atmosphere that supports not only the
 should be set up in a sufficient
 personality. Moreover, classroom
 age, motivation, learning style, and
 background and various factors such as
 proficiency of the learner, cultural
 consider. They are: diverse language
 some important factors need to be
 get started with the activity, there are
 interest. When the teacher decides to
 based on the students need and
 learning, the activity should be arranged
 process. To get the positive outcomes of
 be applied in teaching and learning
 To summarize, many activities can
- CONCLUSION**
- dynamic can contribute to students'
 anxiety.

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