

PLAYING T4 ON THE TASK-BASED CLASSROOM: A YOUNG LEARNERS CLASSROOM DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

Games in the young learners' classroom are taking an important role to engage the students in the teaching and learning process as they serve visual and aural channels and activate language production as well as physical movement. Young learners' classrooms, however, are commonly found in non-government institutions or courses. The independency from government rules about objectives, approaches, teaching method, curriculum, etc. initiates the English courses to choose any method for their students. In the children class 5 of ELITE course which consist of 9-10 years old students, T4 (throwing at the target) is implemented. Therefore, the study is aimed on carrying out the implementation of T4 games in the task-based classroom. This study uses qualitative approach by describing the classroom situation and the application of game in the teaching. The data collected through observation in the classroom by using observation sheet as the main instrument. The researchers also conduct interview as secondary data. This study reveals the strength of T4 game and how it is applied in the young learners' classroom.

Keywords: games, task-based approach, English for young learners

1. INTRODUCTION

English as foreign language in Indonesia makes classroom may be the students' only exposure to the language. Classroom should provide the appropriate quantity and quality for students to explore their skill. In Indonesia itself, the teaching of English in elementary school has been through up and down situation where once it was included as one of the local contents material. However, the importance of English is never been neglected and makes the parents put their trust on English course.

The position of English when it was included in local content or not, does not puzzle the English course since they have full independency to decide their language focus, material, and method. Those things are also distinguishing one course to another. Since the classroom is the only exposure, designing classroom

for young learners should underline two important aspects; language experience and the fun.

Task-based learning is presented as an approach seeking to provide learners with a natural context for language use. As learners work to complete a task, they have abundant opportunity to interact. Such interaction is thought to facilitate language acquisition as learners have to work to understand each other and to express their own meaning (Larsen-Freeman 2000:114). Task-based learning has big opportunity to be implemented in teaching learning process in Indonesia. The activities in TBL demand students to be more active and communicative. TBL is not a new method. Rather, it simply puts task at the centre of one's methodological focus. It views the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to the curricular goals they serve (Brown, 1994). This approach was applied to general language teaching in David Wilkins' Notional Syllabuses in 1976 which influenced the description of the Council of Europe's Threshold Level (Dawson, 2001).

In some books, the word "task" has been used as a label for various activities including grammar exercises, practice activities and role plays. These are not tasks in the sense the word is used in task-based learning (TBL). In TBL, tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome in which the emphasis is on exchanging meanings not producing specific language forms. Examples include compiling a list of reasons, features, or things that need doing under particular circumstances; comparing two pictures and/or texts to find the differences; and solving a problem or designing a brochure, oral presentations, sharing and comparing experiences, doing a puzzle, and more importantly, playing a game.

Games to teach English learners can help to make language learning a positive and exciting experience, which will be important and motivating to the students. Games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting so they can create a positive atmosphere in the teaching and learning context. Therefore, the implementation of T4 game is found interesting to be discussed.

T4 (throw to the target) is a very simple game with two variations. The first version is the students are given a set of ice cream sticks and asked to throw them to a specific area in a given period of time while the second version uses a ball which is thrown to the whiteboard containing written alphabet. The game involves physical activities as well as concentration since the students should focus on aiming the target. The two variations carry similar purposes which are for taking turns in the task-based approach.

2. METHODS

In order to carry out the implementation of T4 games in ELITE course which use a task-based method, a descriptive qualitative approach is considered most appropriate. Creswell (2007:37) states that qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lenses, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems. This study is considered sufficient as it concerns the deep description of integrating the game with the task-based approach.

Ten students of Children Class 5 in ELITE Course are involved. The class is English proficiency level-based. Therefore, the ten students are not in the same age. The data collected through observation in the classroom by using observation sheets as the instrument. These qualitative data provided sufficient detail for thick description (Piller and Skilling: 2005). The data from observation is analyzed by following the steps proposed by Sukardi (2006), they are: reducing data, displaying the data and drawing conclusions of the data.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

Observation is held on Friday, March 24th, 2017. The following are the stages used by the teacher.

Table 1. *Teaching and Learning Stages*

Time Allotment	Stage	Activity
30'	Warmer	Playing T4 version 1
20'	Elicitation	Introducing vocabulary used in the lesson
10'	Presentation	Presenting the language focus

15'	Production	Practice the language focus orally one by one, followed by playing T4 version 2 to decide the turn
15'	Skill Practice	Answering the workbook

On the first 30 minutes, the lesson is started by grouping the students into two consist of five members. Each group is handed 20 ice cream sticks so each person has four sticks. The teacher set the position for the group and put tables as the aim. The tables are located near the set up position of the students. The teacher counts 1,2,3 to indicate the time where the students can start throwing the sticks. They should throw all the sticks within 30 seconds and the team who has more sticks on the target table wins. The game is repeated until 10 times. The lose team should answer the question from teacher which is taken from the exercise from the previous lesson.

On the elicitation stage, the teacher introduces the vocabulary for the lesson. The material is Family Member, and the vocabularies are father, mother, sister, brother, uncle, and aunt. The teacher makes sure that the students remember all the vocabulary before moving to the stage which is presentation.

In the presentation, the teacher explains the language focus by relating the vocabulary on the elicitation with the expression. Since they are using specific book which has the character named Lenny, then they talk about Lenny's family. The teacher uses the same question over and over to familiarize the instruction. The teacher asks the students to look at their book showing Lenny's family. She then says the name on the picture and students answer based on the expression taught earlier. The example is on the following dialogue.

T: Who's Ben?
S: He is Lenny's father.
T: Who's Meera?
S: She is Lenny's mother

After making sure that the students are able to answer the question, the lesson moves to the next stage: Production. In the production, the students are given 5 minutes to draw their own family member. After they finish, the teacher sets the second version of T4 game. The teacher writes alphabet on the white board and students are asked one by one to throw the ball on the alphabet the

teacher want. When the student throws on the correct target, he can show his family tree picture to the student he want and asks him. The game is repeated until the time allocated for the stage is finished.

After playing two games which involves mental and physical activities, the students are asked to sit in quiet to do the task. The last 15 minutes is spent in peace since all of the students are busy doing the assignment and teacher walks around the class to check students' progress in doing the task. When they finish, they hand the workbooks to the teacher and she checks them directly. Teacher circles the mistakes students make and asks them to correct it right away. The score is given in form of teacher's signature to show completeness instead of number.

3.2 Discussion

From the very beginning, the students are set into situation where they should answer the question from the teacher. In the game set by the teacher, both are focusing on the turn taking to answer the questions followed. The questions related to the previous lesson are used as the punishment for those who lose in the game. Since the question is incorporated with the game, the students are not aware that they reviewing the material. This fact is in line with Huang (1996) who stated that learning through game could encourage the operation of certain psychological and intellectual factors which could facilitate communication self-esteem, motivation and spontaneity, reinforcing learning, improving intonation and building confidence.

The task given during the teaching and learning process are varied. In the warmer stage, the teacher presents the question in oral form while on the skill practice stage, the task is given in written form. In the warmer stage, when the students fail to throw, the teacher asks directly the past form of certain verbs. Since the students are assigned in group, the member of the group can help each other to answer teacher's question. As stated by Thanh Huyen and Thu Nga (2011), vocabulary game bring real word context into the classroom, and enhance students use English in a flexible, communicative way. This statement is reflected on the teaching and learning process as the interaction happens not only between

students to teacher, but also among the pupils. The role of the game sets the class into a very interactive situation. The students can speak freely and naturally.

Language game is also an example of free techniques in language teaching suggested by Brown (2001). The free techniques are those which are student-centered, communicative, open-ended, unpredicted responses, negotiated objectives, or cooperative curriculum which is in line with the implementation of games in the young learners' classroom. All activities in the classroom are covered with varied game so the students can really enjoy the class.

The teacher uses the games in most of the stages since she believes that students can easily feel bored in English lesson. Reeves (2015) proposed seven ways to increase young learners' attention span: include physical activities, have "attention break", adjust time frames, remove visual distraction, play memory game, rate and change the task, and break task into pieces. The inclusion of physical activities is reflected from two games used in the classroom. The students are assigned to throw the object to the specific target which requires physical involvement. The time for throwing the ice cream stick is set by the teacher which shows the implementation of having "attention break". This stage is important to create awareness of the students and can help train a student's brain to understand what attention looks like, and how often they are tempted to disengage. The teacher also varied the activities where the students play and do the task on warmer, brainstorm their ideas on elicitation stage, listen to teacher's explanation on the presentation stage, play games as well as do the task again on production, and then sit as well as do the task on the skill practice stage. The interval of doing the task in each stage shows the implementation of adjusting the time frames and breaking task into pieces.

The classroom observed is a good example on how the teacher understands the psychological characteristics of young learners. However, in implementing the task-based approach, there are several points which are different from Willis TBL framework (1996: 52). In Willis framework, TBL practice covers Pre-Task which is an introduction to topic and task; Task Cycle which includes task, planning and report; and Language focus which covers analysis and practice. For introducing

the topic, the teacher doesn't give any task to do or discuss and rather uses sole explanation. The task cycle proposed by Willis framework is set in 20 minutes, while in the observed class is 15-30 minutes. And the last, language focus is presented on the third stage while Willis suggests it on the last stage which covers the analysis and practice.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of T4 games in young learners' classroom provides a fun and joyful learning. The teacher can provide the English exposure by actively demand the students to get involved in the teaching and learning process. By using task-based approach, the teacher has successfully shown task-based approach classroom which is interactive and covers all English skills.

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