

# **AQUISITION ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) TEACHING**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims at discussing the use of four possible ways to conduct acquisition activities in English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom teaching and focuses on some of the appealing uses of vivid linking, story retelling, self directed statement and role playing in intensive reading, and on how language teachers could exploit them in their classes. These ways of teachers to use the acquisition activities could be considered by the language teachers in teaching intensive reading. This article implies that language acquisition and language learning are interrelated and mutually supplementary to develop competence in EFL, and this paper attempts to present acquisition activities by providing an overview of some of the interesting uses of vivid linking, story retelling, self directed statement and role playing, and suggesting ways of exploiting them in intensive reading classroom.

***Keywords:** acquisition, intensive reading, vivid linking, story retelling, self directed statement and role playing*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language is used for many purposes such as communication, interaction, thinking, solving problems, indicating facts, expressing facts, expressing feeling, and others. People use a language every day, face to face as means of communication, while written language allows every individual to record all essential materials so that they can be passed on the generations. Language also allows us to coordinate with other, it is possible to gain information, find out answers, and carry out everyday activities such as making funs, writing memos, reading newspaper, learning history, enjoying novels, greeting friends, telling stories, and reading interactions.

Language acquisition is a process by which language develops in the life of human beings. Krashen (1983) says, "Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning."

This study is intended to reveal some of the potential ways to conduct acquisition activities in classroom teaching especially in intensive reading. They are vivid linking, story retelling, self directed statement, and role playing.

## **VIVID LINKING**

In intensive reading class, the teachers try to put the new words and expressions from the text into real life contexts whenever possible. For example, take the phrase "lay down one's arms," the teacher told the students to think of action film and asked them to describe how a general stops the war. The students described it without difficulties. They said, "The general told the soldiers to lay down their arms." When they uttered this sentence, the picture of the actors vividly appeared in their minds. From the example can

be seen that when teaching or learning English as foreign language, the explanation of a linguistic concept is often necessary but not always sufficient. Situational language teaching, or language in real communication, helps much in learning a foreign language.

On many occasions, the teacher told the students the meanings of new phrases first and then provided them with situations in which new terms are used. For instance, with the phrase "beyond one's means," the teacher said to them, "Suppose you find a very beautiful dress in a shop and you like it. But you cannot buy it, because...". The students responded at once, "it is beyond my means." So the intension is to take the language learners beyond verb forms and vocabulary lists to more lasting insights into language and language use.

## **STORY RETELLING**

Teachers as well as students are well aware that in a language learning situation, all classroom activities are contrived for language learning. It is the teacher's responsibility to plan realistic activities, or acquisition activities, that are relevant to the students' everyday life and communication needs. So in the class, besides explaining the text and doing exercises, the teachers often provide the students with some interesting stories to read. Instead of giving all students the same stories, they are also given in the different ones.

After reading, the students are supposed to tell their stories to a partner in their own words or use the words they remember from their readings. In any case, they are not allowed to read the story to each other. When it is done each student is asked to retell the story heard from his or her partner to the whole class. The intent is to make the students focus on the meaning they want to get across, not focus on the linguistic forms that are being used. In telling or retelling the story, the students are allowed to use gestures and facial expressions. They are informed that each pair of students will share the marks for the story's retelling. The marks are mainly based on the meaning of the story, not on the language. In this kind of the activity, the students do not feel like they are just doing exercises. They are eager to tell their partner the plot of the story, so they let the language take care of itself. The principle here is, as Krashen (1983) puts it, "Normal conversation tends to be quite rapid, and the speakers' attention is usually on what is being said, not how it is being said."

## **SELF-DIRECTED STATEMENT**

The self-directed statement activity places the responsibility for communication chiefly on the learners themselves. Students complete and total view of their cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and psychological capabilities and abilities as a student (Jason, 2001). The teacher's role is to prepare proper topics. For instance, when teachers were teaching the text about "love". The students must be interested in this kind of topic and gave a good response to be discussed. The teachers allowed them in 10 minutes to write out their understanding of kinds of loves according to their experiences. In their preparation, they concentrated on collecting evidence from events that happened in their daily lives. When they reported on their individual understanding of the terms to the class, the most important things was to get the meaning across as effectively as they could. They were not to be overly concerned with using exactly the correct words or using them accurately.

With this kind of activity, students do not feel that they merely do the exercises. Instead, they are communicating with others. It is what Krashen (1983) said "Activities in

the classroom focus at all times on topics which are interesting and relevant to the students and encourage them to express their ideas, opinions, desires, emotions and feelings.”

## **ROLE-PLAYING**

Role-play is another acquisition activity for learning a foreign language. In intensive reading class, the teacher could ask the students to read a text or short stories. For example, the students read the story about *Puss in boots*, the teacher suggested that they put on performance about the action of Puss to save their country. The students gave an excellent performance. They did not only make their conversations based on the meaning of the story but also created some interesting plots. In addition, the phrases or expressions from their text that fit their particular situation were too few, so they beyond the text to create suitable sentences. In other words, they were not just repeating what they learned from the text, they were actually doing creative work that required inventiveness, resourcefulness and a good bit of knowledge.

When the students were working on the text about direction, the teacher asked one of the students to play the role of a Medan's teacher and another student is a foreigner from America. When the foreigner asked the way, the Medan citizen had to give information based on reality. If the Medan's teacher's answer was not correct, other students from Medan would correct the teacher. Of course, they corrected the teacher mistakes in information, not in language.

When teaching the reading Gesture, instead of explaining the linguistic concepts, the teacher asked the students first to make different gestures according to the descriptions from the text and then to explain these gestures in English. After those exercises, certain expressions such as “palm downwards”, the fingers flexed”, protrude one's lips” became the students' own language. The students do not only know about those phrases, but they can also express themselves by using those phrases. In doing such exercises, mistakes are unavoidable. However, the teacher only corrected the mistakes when the meaning is unclear. As all of us know, the purpose of learning a language is to communicate. And communication consists of not only passively accepting sounds, graphics and letters, but also producing what one wants to express. Role play stimulates the learners' attempts to use the language they are learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

Language teachers are well aware that there is a gap between linguistic competence and communicative competence. Some students know much about language they are learning and are good in syntax, pronunciation, and vocabulary. But while putting on their own, they often simply cannot use patterns and vocabulary spontaneously and fluently. There is often stumbling and hesitation, sometimes long and very complete silence. During the last term's classroom teaching, the teacher said to the students, “Happy weekend!”, a few responded in kind by saying “thank you”, or “you too”. Most of the students only smiled and left the classroom without saying a word. Quite often, in spontaneous situations like this, there are no responses. It's not that the students do not know the correct responses; it is that they are not confident to respond it. Of course this kind of phenomenon is not confined only to speaking but also writing, and listening. So in order to improve a learner's progress in developing communicative competence, teachers should devise a variety of activities in which the students can use the foreign language as a means of communication. The students have benefited from all the acquisition activities. Although it is not easy to create adequate means to obtain real communication in language

teaching, the teacher should use the techniques to narrow the gap between linguistic and communicative competence.

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