

CREATING FAMILIAL SETTING TO IMPROVE ENGLISH CLASS AUTONOMY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a report of self-evaluation on teaching the students of Teacher Training and Education Faculty, University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto at Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) classes since 2012 until today. Research and Development design is used here to test the feasible method to improve the endeavors of the classes. Four different classes at even semesters are analyzed as the data: TEYL class A 2012/2013 (28 students), TEYL class B 2012/2013 (28 students), TEYL class 2013/2014 (36 students), and TEYL class 2014/2015 (52 students). The students of 2012/2013 were asked to find the characteristics of children's learning styles topic as individual task while students of 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 were asked to do in group. The groups of the last two classes were formed in familial setting in which the lecturer prepared cards with 4 different surnames. Those got the same surname became one group and they became a big family in which they pretend to be brothers and sisters of different ages. Each, then, became one responsible most to find out characteristics of his supposed age. The discovery shows that the classes of 2012/2013 tended to be inactive as they wished they have got information from their friends while what we call now the members of the families of 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 showed great responds. Almost all of the members of the family showed their enthusiasm, collaborative works, as well as understanding.

Keywords: *familial setting, autonomy*

Introduction

Preparing future teachers is really a crucial matter as they are the role models for the prominent generations. The challenge grows bigger when these teachers have to teach foreign language, something considered new material for their students. Even, when their students are young learners who have very special characteristics to understand. Surely, these teachers-to-be have to show their qualities, that can be indicated through enthusiasm and collaborative works as well as capabilities to understand others. Further, Brown argues that language teachers should foster the autonomy of their students in language learning in order to be an independent and successful language learner (2004).

This paper is a report of self-evaluation on teaching the students of Teacher Training and Education Faculty, University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto at Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) classes since 2012 until today. Research and Development design is used here to test the feasible method to improve the

endeavor of the classes. It is done to know what are the characteristics of an effective teaching and learning strategy aimed at acquiring certain learning outcomes; how can we improve the motivation of learners. (Plomp & Nieveen, 2010:11) One of the topics discussed in the course is the characteristics of children's learning styles while the final aim is to enable students applying suitable strategies to teach children English. Here, the students have to understand that each age range has its specific characteristics both physically and emotionally to understand so that teachers as well as parents have to apply suitable teaching method to make the learners comfortable in learning and ease them in understanding the new language discussed.

The prominent ranges of children that are considered as young learners according to the subject are those who study at elementary schools. However, the youngest possibly to teach are those sent to PAUD, that we can see around us just about eighteen-month-old. To contrast with, the future teacher should understand as well the learning styles of teenagers,

young adults and adults: Junior High School students until students of their own age. It means, the students who join TEYL class should know very well age characteristics of all learners in order to be able to apply good teaching in the future.

The conditions of four different classes at even semesters are observed as the data: TEYL class A 2012/2013 (28 students), TEYL class B 2012/2013 (28 students), TEYL class 2013/2014 (36 students), and TEYL class 2014/2015 (52 students). The participants in these class were 19-22 years old students, often are categorized as young adults, that Harmer identifies as "young adults are bound up, after all, with a pronounced search for identity and a need for self-esteem: young adults need to feel good about themselves and valued (2007: 83).

Method

The students of 2012/2013 were asked to find the topic about age characteristics as individual homework tasks. Thus, everybody has to master understanding of various age ranges. A week after, they were chosen randomly to present the characteristic of the ages.

Later, they were asked to make a group of 3-4 in which they could choose themselves the member to define the suitable teaching method. As the result was not satisfying enough, a new method called familial setting then applied the following years.

Familial setting is an adaptation of cooperative learning. While the term cooperative learning (CL) refers to students working in teams on an assignment or project under conditions in which certain criteria are satisfied, including that the team members be held individually accountable for the complete content of the assignment or project (Felder & Brent: 1).

Here, the team is called a big family in which the lecturer asked the students to make family group according to the card they get. For 2013/2014 students, on each card prepared was written either: Simpson, Samson, Johnson, or Jonson. The cards were spread around the class and each student took one. They have to mention the name they got as their surname. They who met ones with the same surnames then gather as if they had found their lost siblings. Later, the same family gather in a spot to express their happiness to find their brothers and sisters. The same action was also done by

2014/2015 students by the names of Jack, Jackson, Peter, and Parker.

The big family then pretends to be brothers and sisters of different ages. They are asked to discuss their own supposed ages. The ages should be between 1,5 years old to 20 years old. There might be some twins in the family. They are asked to imagine their father's and mother's name as well. They may also imagine that the parents are of different nationalities and professions. As a family, they have to know their siblings and understand everybody in the family well.

Each, then, find out their own characteristics of their supposed ages but they may suggest their siblings any characteristics their siblings have not mentioned before. The following weeks, everybody present their findings starting from the youngest age. The family then compare with the same age of different family groups to check if they miss some findings or even have contrast finding. This presentation activity is done in 5 weeks: the first week is the presentation of age characteristics from 1,5-3 years old children (early younger learners), the second week from 3-7 years old (younger learners), the third week from 7-12 years old (elementary school students), the fourth week from 12-15 years old (junior high ages), and the fifth for 15-20 (young adults).

After completing all the discussion of the ranges of age characteristics, everybody comes back to their family to discuss and resume their finding. The supposed to be eldest one lead the discussion. The results of the discussion are to present before the class the following week.

The meetings after all those discussions will conclude the material. They also learn some learning theories suggest by Bruner, Vygotsky, Gardner, and Piaget to relate with their findings.

While spending the time to have mid test, they are asked to observe the real age characteristics at schools as well as observing suitable teaching methodology. Meetings after mid test will be time for them to show their competencies to have teaching practice before the class.

Discussion

It was found out that not all of the participants of the classes of 2012/2013 did their homework well. Some only copied from their friends and did not even understand well the differences of characteristics between those different age levels. It could be seen when they

were asked to be volunteers to present their findings, only active students did perform well while other seemed so reluctant to do. So as, when they were asked to define appropriate teaching method for certain level, some failed to refer the age characteristics that had been discussed before.

The-lost-siblings activity helps 2013/2014 students as well as 2014/2015 students to know each member of their family from very beginning of their collaboration works. As the members of the courses are students from different levels (some are 6th semester students while others are 8th different students), they have not known every member of the class. By having this activity, they know each other in a very fun way. They may have funny discussion only to agree or disagree with the supposed names, jobs, and nationalities of their parents or even to pretend to be certain age of children. However, this role play promotes mutual understanding between them to show that they have nice family.

They even interact to each other in the family group as if they are really brothers and sisters, as the 'older ones' have to be responsible to his/her siblings and the younger ones have to act as the real children to his/her other siblings.

Though each focus on his/her on supposed age, but each listen well to others' information and can conclude every week the age characteristics of certain ages. Completely after five weeks they do understand that different age ranges have their own different characteristic.

The concluding remarks that the students bring back to their family group really help them to discuss as if they discuss what they have got from their school back to their family, between brothers and sisters. The discussion that is led by the supposed eldest one gives him/her the trust that he/she can be the good leader for his/her brothers and sisters.

Conclusion

The discovery shows that the models used at the two classes of 2012/2013 did not really meet success as they wished they got information from their friends. While the familial setting applied at TEYL classes of 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 students of English Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, University of

uhammadiyah Purwokerto really meets its need as students show their enthusiasm, can cooperate well with his/her siblings as well as understand the material given. Everybody tries to understand each part to get the finding, so as called autonomous learner. Brown (2007) defines an autonomous learner as a learner who "is aware of their own process of learning."

The fact can be seen when the family present their conclusion of findings. They really elaborate any single info given by each member of the family in a concise way so as to give complete understanding of the materials delivered.

Not only that, the teaching method proposed by 2013/2014 students really considered the material given before. They seem to be understand well the effect of age characteristic of children as well as relate it to the theories of learning to the method used in teaching English to young learners.

However, as 2014/2015 TEYL class is still in progress, the teaching method proposed still can not be reported. Hopefully, the students will practice teaching after observing the real condition of teaching English to young learners at real schools. Their performance in showing suitable methodology to teach young learners is planned to be done in May.

Suggestion

The developed method is still being used today. It might be another research someday as the numbers of the students increases but the numbers of family are still the same as the previous year.

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