The Use of Interactive Games as a Teaching and Learning Strategy in an EFL Class in a Developing Country

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Abstract: Teaching strategies are very important during the educational process. In recognizing that, this study was aimed to discover whether using interactive games can motivate students in learning English and to obtain the students’ responses through the implementation of the game. There were 15 students used as participants who study in at the Bumi Sehat Youth Center in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia. The result of the study was examined whether utilizing interactive games, specifically, a game called “Find Someone Who …” would be effective in being able to motivate students in learning English. Further, the study explores the implications of students who gave positive responses through the implementation of interactive games as a teaching and learning strategy.

Keywords: Teaching strategies; Interactive games; EFL; English learning; Motivation.

1. Introduction

Creativity in teaching is a common problem faced by teachers. During the teaching and learning process, teachers sometimes have a challenge removing students’ boredom which often happens because of unsuitable strategies chosen by the teachers. In addition, placing the students as passive learners is also a factor that arouses students’ saturation. Additionally, another problem can also occur due to the lack of their target language use, English. As passive learners, students will not have the chance to develop their language in use and there is a limitation time during their communication practice.

This present study found that the teachers had a problem of situation in teaching learning process in the class. They wanted to get a good atmosphere in learning process but the real situation in the class is not comfortable for the students to study. It happened because there are some factors in the class which affect the situation in learning process. The first factor is the number of the students in the class. Mostly, the number of students in every school is more than 20 students in a class and it is not the effective number of students in a class, so this situation will be more crowded for the teacher in managing the class.

The second factor is about time of learning. In any activity, time plays a vital role. In the learning process morning time is the best time to learn for the students. In the morning, our brain and minds are fresh, hence learning becomes easy and effective. However, in the afternoon the students already got tired because they have studied for a long time in the morning until afternoon with different materials. They also felt sleepy, bored and wanted to go home sooner.

The third factor is about intellectual ability. Intellectual ability also affects of learning. Some people have easier time remembering information than others. Some students can easier understand abstract concepts, while others need concrete examples. Everyone has different intellectual strengths and weaknesses. Thus, the teachers have to know their students because they have to choose the appropriate strategy to help them understand the materials at the same time.

Based on these problems, it can be seen that teachers have the opportunity to engage the students’ roles as active learners and teachers should be able to choose an appropriate teaching strategy with this in
mind. Using games is one of the strategies that can be implemented.

Games are activities which are designed to alleviate stress. The main purpose of games is to make people feel joyful and relaxed. They are not only for eliminating fatigue but they can be a means to support education. Games are important for English language learners and teachers because they encourage students to use their language creatively and communicatively besides just providing enjoyment and relaxation [10]. This statement indicates that games are able to build a productive educational atmosphere and that they can be a solution to solve teachers’ problems in creating a fun and interactive activities in the classroom. This idea is also supported by the experts who has pointed out that games are an agreeable way of getting a class to utilize their initiatives in English [5].

In recognizing previous research, this study focused on the use of naming games as a teaching strategy. This game gives the students chance to speak and communicate with others. Beyond that, the game has been identified as one that supports an interactive process of language learning.

The role of English as a Foreign Language is really crucial in Indonesia. Instead of English as an international language, there are many reasons showing how important English is culturally and practically. The 21st century requires students mastering the language because if they are able to use the language as a receptive and productive skill, it will support them to achieve their goals and will lessen many of their obstacles. English is also a scientific language which is used academically. Many learning sources on the internet use English as the language; in addition, in technology systems, it is also used widely. One example can be found in computer program instructions which are most often written in English. By mastering English, students will be more confident to compete with others in this era because they can learn from many sources without the limitation of language.

On the other hand, teaching English as a foreign language faces has many challenges in Indonesia. A wide exposition of the mother tongue is one of the problems which can inhibit English education. Sometimes, the environment cannot support the students’ needs in leaning the target language because there is limited access to communication. Who will be talked with and when they can communicate in English are still the common problem faced by students in a developing country.

Regarding the issue above, actually the Indonesian Government, especially the Ministry of Education, is already aware of it and has been applying the newest curriculum made to overcome the problem of the 21st Century Education challenge. The curriculum is called The K13 Curriculum and tends to focus on the students’ process in developing their knowledge. In addition, it provides a big chance for students to learn English. The goal that must be achieved is to master the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The K13 Curriculum also requires teachers to be more creative in selecting teaching materials and strategies. Teachers are thus given the right to find a suitable way to teach students. One of the strategies is learning through games.

Games are activities carried out by cooperating or competing to achieve a goal. Games need members or participants to be played [1]. Both statements indicate that games can build students’ interaction because there are a group of individuals who are set in one condition and it also creates a competition among others. It can be assumed that learning through games is able to engage students’ language use and maximize their practice. In order to have the ability to speak English fluently, young learners need to have the ability to know the language features and to process information immediately [4]. During the games, students are able to share information and also have to ask each other questions; it shows that the language features are used automatically.

In EFL classrooms, games provide many advantages for promoting learning the target language. One of the advantages associated with games is that students’ anxiety towards language learning decreases as games are employed [3]. In language classes, learners assume that they have to be successful in the target language that they do not know. This success to them is also marked by their need to be “correct”. Because of this, learners often feel great anxiety because of being criticized and punished by their teacher when they make a mistake. At this point games can be of great help since they can reduce anxiety, increase
positive feelings and improve self-confidence by reducing or alleviating fear of punishment and criticism for learners when they are practicing the target language freely [2]. A research study entitled “Application of Games in College English Teaching in China” that shows that games help students in their study of vocabulary, speaking, and texts; furthermore, they can stimulate learning and motivation [9].

“Find Someone Who …” is the game chosen by the researcher. This game allows students to communicate with their friends directly. Through the “Find Someone Who…” game, the students’ motivation in learning language can be improved [7]. “Find Someone Who …” game can increase students’ linguistic complexity. During this game, students will not only asking and answering questions; however, they are also exposed to grammar and sentence structures [8]. There are some steps must be followed in implementing this game as a teaching strategy; they are as follows:

1. Preparation:
   - The teacher writes some statements on a worksheet.
   - The teacher prints out the worksheet based on the amount of students.

2. During the activity:
   - The teacher gives the students the worksheet.
   - The teacher asks the students to find their friends in class who match with the statements. For example, if the statement says “I always eat breakfast”, the students have to ask their friend by questioning “Do you always eat breakfast?”.
   - Teacher asks the student to take a notes while talking to each other.

3. After the activity:
   - The teacher points to one or more students to report what information they have learned from each other.

1.1 Problem Statement
Based on the results of previous studies, the broad objectives of this study were:

a. To describe the implementation of the “Find Someone Who …” game as one that can influence students’ motivations to learn English at the Bumi Sehat Youth Center.

b. To describe the students’ responses to the implementation of the “Find Someone Who …” game at The Bumi Sehat Youth Center.

2. Material & Methodology

2.1. Methodology
In conducting this study, the researcher chose one class which consisted of 15 students in age of 15 years old at the Bumi Sehat Youth Center, an English course, which focuses on educating students to be able to master English in spoken and written. The instruments used to collect the data were observation, interview and questionnaire. The researcher did the observations during the activity, the “Find Someone Who …” game. Observation is a natural process [6]. It is an effective way to how to record every day incidents that happen all the time. It can be used for researchers to make judgments. Basically, the researchers make a note about how the subjects responded the teaching and learning activity. Then, the researcher did interviews with 15 students to reveal their views about learning English with the “Find Someone Who …” game. Last, the researcher administered an open-ended questionnaire to provide supporting data as the follow up of the interview.

3. Results and Discussion
Based on the observation during the class activity, students looked active. They moved around the class and asked each other questions enthusiastically. Then, they took their notes in a hurry. Their actions indicated that they enjoyed the process and that interested with the activity created by the researcher; in this case the researcher was also their teacher. In addition, they used English frequently because they knew how to ask to get the information although sometimes they used their mother tongue (Bahasa Indonesia), but it was not significant. According to the interview and the questionnaire, the data showed that the students felt comfortable and they did not feel anxiety during the activity and the purpose of them taking notes in hurry (as was observed) was to finish first.

4. Conclusion
In conclusion, according to the results of the study, it was found that the implementation of the “Find Someone Who …” game can motivate students in learning English. This can
be seen from their interest and active participation during the learning process. In addition, based on the interview and questionnaire administered, all students gave positive responses through the implementation of the “Find Someone Who …“ game as a teaching and learning strategy. Their responses tended to state the lack of anxiety about inability to communicate. In addition, the reflection of their happiness can also be seen in their statement which said that the use of the game was able to make them knowing and correcting their mistakes especially in the last section, reporting section.

References