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Active Learning for Language Skills Development

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Introduction

21st century educational system is necessary to provide education according with society changes, especially, learning activities should be related to 3Rs x 7Cs skills, which 3Rs consists of (R)eading, W(R)iting, A(R)ithmetics. While 7Cs combine with Critical thinking & problem solving,) Creativity & innovation, Cross-cultural understanding, Collaboration, teamwork & leadership, Communications, information & media literacy, Computing & ICT literacy, and Career & learning skills.

From the authors' experience about pre -service teachers supervision (Thai and Teaching Chinese as foreign language majors), the authors had read their lesson plans. It was found that pre-service teachers in Thai major wrote teacher- centered lesson plans. They focused on explanation in order to encourage learners recognize the contents rather than practice critical thinking skills. Moreover, it was found that those pre-service teachers provided less learner roles in all activities, only teachers gave lectures to learners, ask and answer questions about contents. Some learners did not participate the class that made them bored to learn, some took a nap in the class. From interview, learners who studied with pre-service teachers that only gave content lecture, were selected as key informants. They said that the lesson was boring, learners did not pay attention to that lesson, and did not want to study Thai. It was correlated to the result from pre-service teacher supervision in teaching Chinese as foreign language major. The classroom observation revealed that pre-service teachers did not use strategies that were related to the teaching method. For instance, a pre-service teacher selected Demonstration Method but she/ he taught by reviewing the vocabulary first, then teaching grammatical structure 一边.....一边..... (which meant doing two actions in the same time), after that playing game divided learners into 3 groups and ask one person from each group to complete the jigsaw and write the correct sentence on the board and receive one point. The winner was the team that could write the sentence correctly first. From this

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example, we did not see teachers' demonstration or giving examples. This problem was shown that pre-service teachers still uncomprehend the teaching methods and strategies obviously and nowadays, they did not have variety of teaching strategies focusing on Active learning. However, if teachers provided various teaching strategies by letting learners doing by themselves, more critical thinking process and less recognition process, this lesson would attract learners, create learning atmosphere to improve learners' sustained learning.

What is Active learning?

Active learning is providing opportunities for students to meaningfully talk and listen, write, read, and reflect on the content, ideas, issues, and concerns of an academic subject. (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p. 6).

Active learning is also learning method that focuses on learning by doing more than learning by lecture. Instructors will be facilities more than be controller or teacher only, Active learning could help learners to practice their own learning process and high order thinking which are analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The competences of Active learning

There are three importance competences of active learning which are basic elements, leaning strategies, and teaching resources (Meyers & Jones, 1993)

For basic elements of active learning consists of four parts which are speaking and listening, writing, reading, and thinking reflection. By speaking and listening would help learners look for meaning of what they learnt. Writing would help learners generalize new information into their own words. Reading, examining their work, summarizing, taking note would help learners link what they have learnt to their previous knowledge or apply these knowledge to their real lives or giving pause time to encourage learners to think and tell the others later about what they learnt. It is a way to increase learners' knowledge absorption ability.

Learning Strategies could be used in various ways such as working in small groups, collaborative group works, case studies, simulation, group discussion, problem –solving, journal writing, role plays, and structure learning group. In the case of large class, it might be hard to set learners into groups, other strategies could be involved such as rally robin, rally table, round robin, round table, pair checks, pair work, think-pair-share, team-pair-solo or think-pair-square

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Teaching Resources should be required various resources which learners could study and learn by doing such as reading, giving homework, external experts, using instructional technology, instructional materials preparation, and educational TV.

The characteristics of Active learning

Active learning could set both in and out of classroom with all levels of students by groups and individuals which learners would be encouraged to doing activities by their own. The characteristics of active learning would be benefits for learners as follows;

1. It is learning activity to develop brain
2. It develops learners' language use and higher thinking skills.
3. It is a learning style that learners create knowledge by themselves.
4. It encourages learners doing by themselves rather than listening the lecture.
5. Teacher's role is facilitator rather than lecturer.
6. It provides learners could collaborate learning activities much more.
7. It provides learners' roles to create and acquire their own knowledge
8. It helps learners have more interaction and meaningful learning.
9. It encourages learners have more responsibility, discipline, and mange role in their group systematically
10. It integrates many sciences such as linguistics, mathematics, science, etc.
11. It decreases teacher role to give lecture, but increases learners' role to improve skills.

How Can Active Learning Be Incorporated In the Classroom?

The modification of traditional lectures (Penner 1984) is one way to incorporate active learning in the classroom. Research has demonstrated, for example, that if a faculty member allows students to consolidate their notes by pausing three times for two minutes each during a lecture, students will learn significantly more information (Ruhl, Hughes, and Schloss 1987). IWO other simple yet effective ways to involve students during a lecture are to insert brief demonstrations or short, ungraded writing exercises followed by class discussion. Certain alternatives to the lecture format further increase students' level of engagement: (1) the feedback lecture, which consists of two mini-lectures separated by a small group study session built around a study guide, and (2) the guided lecture, in which students listen to a 20- to 30-minute presentation without taking notes, followed by their writing for five minutes

when they remember and spending the remainder of the class period in small groups clarifying and elaborating the mater

Teacher's roles for Active learning

To achieve active learning in class, teacher could be the key role and need to know the way of teaching. Teacher's roles on active learning consist of these;

1. Teacher should provide learning activities that are related to learners' needs. Whether any activities lack of learners' need correlation, learners will not reach the achievement. Learners are learners who have right to select what they want to learn under appropriate extent that teacher sets. Hence, teacher has role to be only learning facilitator. Some contents do not need to learn in order from textbook, but teacher asks learners to choose which lesson that they want to learn first or later or last.

2. Teacher should establish learning atmosphere that encourage learners to collaborate as much as possible. Activities should provide learners to participate on learning planning, learning design, learning activities, including self – assessment. This learning atmosphere will help learners have more knowledge, more fun with learning because they are involved in the learning planning. Learners may not want to get score from a task, they may want more scores from another task. Therefore, group discussion and opinion exchange between teacher and learners should be encouraged in 21st century classroom.

3. Teacher should provide challenge activities to learners with various techniques and methods. Because learners who learn the same and old methods repeatedly, they have old learning behaviors. Some experts says that if teacher change their teaching style, learners will change their learning style as well. Therefore, professional teacher should use various new teaching techniques or innovation in the classroom.

4. Teacher should have open minded and listen to learners' opinions. Because whenever learners ask any questions, it means learners are creating their knowledge. But those questions should be responded effectively by teacher. Whether teachers give bad response to learners, it would block learners thinking skills. When learners ask or give ideas that are not the same with teacher's ideas, teacher should tell the reasons. Learning is not the contents that are taught or fixed by teacher.

5. Teacher should provide materials and tools for learning activities. Teacher who teach very well, also need the materials because they helps learners see the contents more clearly and transfer from difficulty to ease.

Veridian E-Journal, Silpakorn University
ISSN 1906 – 3431

Activities of Active learning

Active learning involves many techniques that could improve learning Thai language learning as following;

- **Active-Based Learning**

It is learning technique that focuses on learners know how to plan, work systematically, analyze data, and summarize data reasonably.

- **Problem-Based Learning**

It is learning technique that emphasizes learners to solve the problems. When learners have to deal with any problems, they could brainstorm reasonable solutions for making decision systematically through carefully consideration

- **Thinking Based Leaning**

It is learning technique that improves learners' thinking process, especially, higher order thinking skills (analyze, synthesize, and evaluate, creative thinking) Hence, teachers should encourage learners to think with higher order thinking that will help learners be able to think positively and creatively.

- **Task-Based Learning**

It is learning technique that focuses on tasks. Learners will doing by themselves and teachers will provide less lecture. Learners will be increased their self – direct learning through tasks or given works from teacher.

- **Project-Based Learning**

It is learning technique that practice learners to do a project systematically by planning, thinking, and doing, synthesizing, and summarizing report. They also practice work in group that cause learners have collaborative learning among group members. Learners can also express their opinion freely and have opportunity to learn by themselves.

- **Experiment Learning**

It is learning technique that focuses on experience. Learners will have experience from simulation learning through real experience or simulating situations.

- **Research-based Learning**

It is learning technique that is similar to project based learning but it is more systematic. It focuses on practicing learners to think systematically and scientifically by planning, making hypothesis, doing experiment, summarizing, and discussing about the results.

Assessment and evaluation learners' performance

Learners' assessment and evaluation is an important component of learning tasks that helps learners and teachers know the learning problems and suggestion to improve next classes. Assessment and evaluation learners' performances could be considered as following these;

1. Give opportunity for all learners to participate the evaluation such as instructors, learners, peers, and self-evaluation
2. Have learning reflection to encourage learners know their progress
3. Evaluate with various method such as observation, testing, interview, asking questions, etc.
4. Assess with authentic assessment
5. Evaluate to improve learners' learning ability than evaluate to judge learners' learning ability

Notices of Active learning implication

Example of Active learning in Thai language instruction about "Word formation"

1. Warm- up using brainstorming – set learners on groups of 4-5 then instructor give topic about "word formation" consists of compound words, complex words, redundant words, compounding words, after that, each group discuss to find generalization of given topic and every members share their opinions and record all ideas from members.

2. Exchange experience using writing Simultaneous round table which is similar to general round table writing but this type focuses on each member write in the same time, Instructor asks learner write and explain how to form those word groups and asks them the answers simultaneously.

3. **Produce knowledge** using Team - pair – solo technique that is group works, then pair works and individuals. Instructors sets problem for learners to find out the differences of word formation. Learners will work in groups first, then work in pairs and each learners will do task individually at the end.

4. **Present knowledge** using Time Discussion technique that instructor will make problem for learners to find out knowledge about Thai and foreign compound words. Learners will work in group to think and discuss about the given task

Veridian E-Journal, Silpakorn University
ISSN 1906 – 3431

5. **Production or Implication** using Team - pair - solo and Concept map technique that instructors will set another topic about word formation and the difference of work formation and let learners to make concept mapping to present to the class in pairs and each member summarize their own concept map from given topic and submit to instructor.

6. **Evaluation** using active learning which could study as following these;

a. learners' learning behaviors after learning in groups, pairs and individuals

b. achievement score comparison about word formation before and after learning in groups, pairs and individuals

c. achievement score comparison with standard (80%) about word formation before and after learning in groups, pairs and individuals

d. learners' learning satisfaction after learning in groups, pairs and individuals

Example of Active learning on Chinese language instruction by role play

In the daily language class, the typical learning process went through six steps:

Step one: Warm up the group. The instructor identified or introduced new topics, such as visiting a friend, seeing a doctor, or talking about Chinese music.

Step two: Study the subject matters. The instructor taught vocabulary, grammar, and led the students in practicing the conversations, with special emphasis on pronunciation and intonation. At the same time, cultural differences were explored. For example, in dealing with the topic of visiting a friend, the way the Chinese hosts showed their hospitality and the peculiar politeness of the visitors were experienced.

Step three: Design and rehearse. Students broke into small groups, about three students in each. Each group identified roles, designed the play and rehearsed for about 10 minutes. In order to have a good presentation, very often groups asked for more time to prepare. Their requests for extra time might appear to be extrinsically motivated (they want good grades), but much of the language was acquired at this stage, and the learning took on a veryactive feature. Therefore, if possible, more time was given for therehearsal.

Step four: Prepare the observers, while one groupwas going toact, others were to be observers. The instructor identified the tasksof the observers, such as looking out for strong and weak points inconversational design, use of language, cultural presentation, andsoon.

Step five: Enact. This was the most exciting phase in theprocess. Group by group, students acted out what they called skits orplays. They tried to speak and act like the Chinese. Great creativitywas initialized in making the plays and in acting manners. Whensomething

special was presented or a funny error occurred, therewas laughter in the classroom: The learning activity appeared to beenjoyable.

This step was not only exciting,it was a great motivation aswell for future practice. The warm hand claps of the observerswasa very encouraging reward, and the successful performancemanifested the capability of the students in using the Chineselanguage in the real situation.

Step six: Discuss and evaluate. Observers reported what theyfound, participants spoke on their feelings, and the instructormadehis comments and suggested areas for improvement. However,sincethe rehearsal and enacting steps were likely to takemore time, thediscussion and evaluation were usually brief.

Example of teaching Chinese grammatical structure 一边.....一边..... with Demonstration Method

1. Warm up

Teacher demonstrate by acting out as teacher are talking on the phone and ask learners “what am I doing?” Thai language is allowed with fixed structure (do this + do that in the same time) If learners could not say this structure in Thai (กริยาวลี+ไป กริยาวลี+ไป), teacher could change the action such as I both read and listen to music in the same time or I both eat snack and read the book.

2. Presentation

2.1. Teacher writes the sentence pattern on the board 一边+ V.， 一边+V. and compare with Thai pattern กริยาวลี+ไป กริยาวลี+ไป

2.2. Teacher presents the action vocabulary that learners already learnt and teacher could act out with flash card such as 吃饭 have meal，看电视 watch TV，听音乐 listen to music，看书 read books，做作业 do homework，打电话 television，写字 write books，走 walk，聊 talk

2.3. Teacher passes the card randomly to learners and ask them to act out slowly in front of the class such as Student “A” receive “吃饭 have meal and 看电视 watch TV” This students will be stand up and act out until classmate could tell the correct answers. (When learners say correct sentence, teacher have to write the sentence on the board)

2.4. Teacher takes turn for other learners to act out clues in the cards, and ask learners to answer from whole class, to groups, and to individuals.

Veridian E-Journal, Silpakorn University
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3. Practice and apply

3.1. Teacher shows a picture that has a person who do two action in the same time. After that, teacher asks Chinese question "她在做什么？) (what is he doing?)

3.2. After learners see the picture, they have to answer question in Chinese or write in the paper to check learners' comprehension

4. Wrap up

Teacher asks questions "When do we use this sentence" and ask learners to read all sentence on the board to check learners' comprehension at the end.

Advantages of demonstration methods

1. Learners will see the model, examples , procedures of learning that help them to understand meaningfully and deeply

2. Teacher and learners will save the time because of seeing the demonstration

Recommendations for Active learning implication

Active learning has a variety of activities, teachers could select appropriate activities to teaching contents for the most beneficial such as;

1. Each teaching method is appropriate for each content. By role play, the above example, could be suitable for communication, vocabulary recognition and sentence patterns but it might not be appropriate for grammatical learning which needed explanation.

2. If teaching grammartical structure could require for checking comprehension, instructor could post questions on website (application) "Kahoot.it" to motivate learners' thoughts for being curious better.

3. Language is skill practice, activities for improve language skills should integrate all many skills such as reading, listening, writing, etc.

4. Instructors should encourage learners to share and exchange ideas diversely, provide learners to have a chance to do oral presentation to the class.

Conclusion

Active learning for language skill development would be an important component for current educational instruction that would learners develop their all language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. It would be skills that teachers need to achieve learners' development. Besides, it could improve learners' critical thinking skills that could develop in parallel. Learners could learn by doing, while classroom atmosphere would be fun that encourage learners feel confident and enthusiastic to do their own tasks. However, it

could improve teachers because active learning would be created to integrate appropriately for learners. Activities that could improve language skills could be Activity-Based Learning, Experiential Learning, Problem-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, Thinking Based Learning, Service Learning, Inquiry-Based Learning, Discovery Learning, and Task-Based-Learning that any teachers could make and be authentic active learning.

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