

Developing Students' Language Awareness through Discovery Learning in English Language Teaching

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4 Developing Students' Language Awareness through Discovery Learning in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Language acquisition has strong relation with language awareness which is very important in order to be a good language user, because it is a person's compassion to and sentient awareness of language and its function in human life. It deals with overt knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use. Language awareness includes the knowledge about language, a conscious understanding of how languages work, of how people learn them and use them. In English language teaching the use of language in classroom interaction is not only for communication, it is also used to deliver norm through language, meanwhile in Indonesia, most of student is multilingual where they have already acquired languages, including their mother tongue and their national language, the students' awareness in learning foreign language such English is a crucial issue to be considered. One of technique that can be used to develop students' language awareness is through discovery learning. It is an inquiry-based theory which engages students to be active actors in their own process of learning, including in language learning. Discovery learning in English language teaching allows the students to work on language by having a role in their own learning and developing their activity through the language. So, this paper aims to give an overview how to apply discovery learning in English language teaching to develop student language awareness.

Key words: Language awareness, discovery learning, English language teaching.

1. Introduction

The term of language awareness is introduced in the beginning of 1980s by linguist Erick Hawkins. It is defined as a person's compassion to and cognizant awareness of the concept of language and its function in human life (Donmall in Ellis, 2012:2). Language awareness deals with being aware of different languages and the variety of ways in which they are spoken. Language awareness also includes being aware of the pattern in language because insight into pattern underlies the successful learning of foreign language. It is also related to the understanding about the relationship between language and culture, the awareness of the way language usage varies in different social contexts, the awareness of language as a nuanced and complex system of verbal and non-verbal communication, the understanding of how language is acquired, and the awareness of one's own language learning.

The awareness of learners in a foreign language learning is crucial to be developed since students' languages competence guides to a greater and more confident to use target languages. Developing an attentiveness of how languages work produce a better interest in acquired languages previously and in learning recent acquired languages. Developing language awareness f also makes people more inquisitive about languages and more amenable to acquiring them. Positive language diversity awareness in the world also produce more positive attitude towards diversity of culture.

In West Sumatera, English is learned as a foreign language where the students has already acquire two languages, Minangkabau language and Indonesian language as a national language.

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Thus, the awareness of how these languages work, the acquired language and foreign language that will be learned, is important issues to be concerned. There are three major facets in which Hawkins in Ellis (2012:4) see foreign language learning contributing to language awareness; it provides positive feedback on the mother tongue and cultural stereotypes; it encourages the learner to pay close attention to words and their meanings; and it builds confidence in the function of language which promotes by Halliday in Hawkins (199:136) which includes the use of language to learn about the world and to learn about reality.

Students seldom dwell on their language except if they are obliged to do so overtly or by way of learning activities. Developing students' language awareness in English as foreign language teaching classroom can be done through discovery learning. Discovery learning is an inquiry-based theory which facilitates students to be active actors in their own learning process (Chambers, Thiekotter and Chambers, 2013: 109). It enables the students to have a role in their own learning and developing their creativity as they work on problems. It is expected that the students has learning autonomy where the center of learning is focused on students as well as they work with language on their own role. Consequently, this paper try to propose the discovery learning method to enhance students' language awareness in English as foreign language teaching classroom.

2. Discussion

a. The Nature of Language Awareness

Language awareness refers to learners' progress of a boosted consciousness of the forms and functions of language. It helps students reveal on language in use (Callies, Keller & Lucas in Yang, 2013: 325). Furthermore, Soons (2008:7) asserts that students' language awareness relates to their thinking state and correlate with the study of the thinking process in learning contexts, i.e. how knowledge is developed and how ideas are established. Students in foreign language learning should be motivated to ask questions about language, how the language functions and what role it plays in human lives; in other words, to have an overt method to distinct facts of language.

In line to the function of language awareness, it is important to understand the thinking aspect of language awareness. First is obviously learning approach. By means of the language awareness relate to the overt about language knowledge, overt instruction seems more effective than implicit one because it helps the learners to identify kinds of language features and vigorously involved in processing the input. Soons (2008:11) explains that direct learning means that the learner is able to describe his/her thinking process and discuss about a particular characteristic of knowledge, with help from a less or more formal metalanguage. Thus, explicit learning and instruction become crucial in the classroom, because they stimulate language awareness and build language acquisition.

Second cognitive aspect of language awareness is consciousness. Schmidt in Soons (2008:12) describe four common meanings of the word consciousness and these are: (1) Consciousness as purpose. In teaching, need to be distinguish between incidental learning and intentional (on purpose). For instance, the acquisition of a native language is always incidental because there is no choice to learn our mother tongue. (2) Consciousness as attention. This includes such concept as noticing and focusing. Schmidt explain that noticing is important and adequate situation for changing input into intake. (3) Consciousness as attentiveness. In this sense, consciousness refers to possessing comprehension of, either perceptually or metacognitively. In language learning it means understanding rules, but it could also refer to noticing, which it becomes harder to differentiate consciousness as attention (and hence noticing) from consciousness as awareness.

b. Discovery Learning in English Language Teaching

Discovery learning refers to merely as a learning condition in which the important content of what is to be studied is not given, but must be self-sufficiently discovered by the learner, create the learner an vigorous participant in his learning. According to Tenenbaum, Alfieri, Brooks and Aldrich (2010:2) discovery learning occurs whenever the learner is not provided

with the target information or conceptual understanding and must find it independently and with only the provided materials. Discovery learning model requires the student to participate in making decisions about what, when and how, something need to be learned and even plays a great role in making such decisions. Instead of being told the content by the teacher, it is expected that the student will have to explore examples and from these examples discover the principles or concepts, which are to be learned. Discovery learning refers to a method that engage students to arrive at a conclusion based on their own activities and observations. It undertakes that learners plays an active role and make their own knowledge based. Sometimes discovery learning describes as learning by doing because it occurs in situations where learners draw on their own experiences and knowledge to solve problems.

Ministry of Education and Culture (2013:13) states that the benefits of discovery learning model selection include; a) helping learners improve and enhance the skills and cognitive processes, b) the knowledge gained is personal and powerful because it strengthen understanding, retention, and transfer, c) making a fun learning, d) allow learners develop quickly and in accordance with their own pace, e) Causing learners direct their learning activities use both the mind and motivation, f) assist learners in reinforcing their self concept, g) Assist students dispel doubts because it leads to the final truth experienced, h) encouraging students to think intuitively, initiatives in formulating hypotheses, i) developing talent, motivation, and curiosity and j) studying from various types of learning resources.

Bruder in Weible (2011:9) explores six based problems in discovery learning where it intend to an approach to learning that let the child not only to learn the material that is presented in a school setting, but also to learn it in such a way that he can use the information in problem solving. These six problems in discovery learning namely attitude, compatibility, activation, practice, the –self-loop problem and capacity for handling information flow.

1) Attitude

The attitude problem deals with how the teacher arranges learning that the children recognizes when they has information they can go beyond it. It leads them to aware that there is connection between the facts they have learned with other data and situations. The students must have the attitude toward their capability to use their thinking ability effectively to find solution. Principally, this is an attitudinal problem which deals with something that will counteract lifelessness in that learners will know the content that they have learned as an occasion for going beyond it.

2) Compatibility

The compatibility problem is related to the way teacher gets the children to advance new content that they are learning in such a fashion that they fit it into their own system of subdivisions, categories, associations, and frames of reference, in order that they can produce it their own and thus enable to use the information in a style well-suited with what they already understood.

3) Activation

Third involves getting the child activated so that he can experience his own capacity to solve problems and have enough success so that he can feel rewarded for the exercise of thinking.

4) Practice

Next problem is giving the children practice in the skills related to the use of information and problem solving. It is the part where the teacher provide a chance for the students to practice to use the skill and to know the application of these competences, because it produce that however often the educator may set out general ideas, unless the student has a chance to use them he is not going to be very applicable in their application.

5) The “self-loop” problem

The children, when teaching in school settings, the students will often do activities which he is not able to describe to themselves. Psychologists always observe in new studies,

1 kids who are able to do everything.

6) Capacity for handling information flow

The sixth problem contains the nature of teacher and students capacity for managing information flow controllably so that it can be utilized in problem solving. Furthermore,

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Burner in Weible (2011:10) sums up the ideas of discovery learning as exhibit in a fragmentary fashion with restricted situation, (b) construed beyond their intended range, (c) oversimplified into a specialists' usage, and (d) were modified and subdued lately by their instigator for a recent interpretation. However, as there are many theories, the educational specialist's appliance of the original opinion which has considerable influence both in the classroom and the learning process.

c. Teaching News Item through Discovery Learning to Enhance Students' Language Awareness

In English as foreign language teaching classroom, discovery learning can be applied into learning the genre of the text. One of genres of the text that learned by the secondary school students in Indonesia is news Item. News item text can be taught through this method. The learner will try to find out what is the news item text through their own way in Discovery learning. It can be done through three step, namely pre-teaching, whilst teaching and post teaching.

1) *Pre-Teaching*

The teacher can begin discovery learning by presenting students with a scenario that has a problem that they can solve or giving a stimulus for the learners. Stimulus is given during the observation activity where the students observe the facts or phenomena in a way of seeing, hearing, reading, or listening. Facts are provided starting from the simple to the facts or phenomena that caused controversy.

In this case, the teacher provides several hot issues that happen in their environment. Unlike the traditional method where the teacher has already provide the students with the text of news item, through discovery learning the students are stimulate to find the news on their own. The project can be based on the hot issues that happen in Indonesia or in their school environment only. A teacher need to begin the process of discovery learning with related questions that correlate a learners' situation and practice. This will bring learners' to active engagement in a learning phases. Thus learners intrigued to find out more about the fact or phenomenon by reading from various sources or question.

Additionally, in learning activities teacher can begin by asking the question, suggestion for some resources, and other learning activities that lead to the preparation of problem solving. Stimulation at this stage serves to provide the conditions of learning interactions that can develop and assist students in exploring materials. In this case questioning is the best way to provide stimulation because asking questions can expose learners to the internal conditions that encourage exploration. Thus, teacher must master the techniques of giving a stimulus to students so as to enable the goal to explore the learners can be achieved.

2) *Whilst-Teaching*

After classifying the instructional moment and stimulus stage, then the teacher leads the learners by showing examples, non-examples and instructional materials. The teacher give an opportunity to students to identify as many as possible agendas of issues relevant to the lesson material, then one of them is selected and formulated in the form of hypotheses (temporary answer to the question of the problem), in this case the students has to formulate the answer for what news item text is. Meanwhile, according to selected problems that subsequently must be formulated in the form of a question, or hypothesis, the statement as a temporary answer to questions, give students the time to recognize and investigate the problem they face, is a beneficial technique in developing learners so that they used to find a problem.

Discovery learning is non-deductive thinking in which the learner is directed by a set of learning procedures. The question and answer stages with examples and learning resources will be keep going until the students find out interconnection and general principles in the content. The learner will frame a suitable hypothesis and examine it during the inquiry phase. This stage is the main element of discovery learning. The process of discovery is not basiccally receiving a teachers' idea. It is an vigorous process of knowledge formation in the subject matter. Bruner in Chambers, Thiekotter and Chambers (2013:120) mention that discovery is the process of

transforming or rearranging evidence in such a way to find out the evidence. Consequently, through this stages, the learner will seek to realize what is the news item, what is the social purpose of the news item, what is the generic structure of a news item and what is language features of a news item text.

3) *Post-Teaching*

During the exploration, teacher provides a chance for students to collect relevant information to prove the fact of the hypothesis. In this case information that collected related to what is news item. In this stage, the information is used to reply the question or prove the reality of the hypothesis, thus students are devoted the chance to collect a variety of relevant information, reading literature and sources, observing the things, interviews informants, do their own experimental and so on. In this active learning the students will uncover something which is regarding to the problems they faced, thereby unconsciously connecting learners problems with prevailing knowledge.

The last stage of discovery learning is to employ the lesson learned to students' practical contexts. Learning is beneficial when it is transmitted to another situation contextually. The teacher should engage students to overcome a problem by using methods and values that the learner study during all session of discovery learning.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, language awareness plays an important role on learners' language acquisition, especially for multilingual students such as in West Sumatera. Language awareness deals with explicit knowledge about language. How students work with acquired language and new language such as English as foreign language is an important issue to be concerned. Regarding to awareness of language there are cognitive aspects of language awareness, namely explicit learning and consciousness which both really important to be considered in developing student's awareness of the use of language. Developing students' language awareness can be done through discovery learning. It is a learning situation in which the principal content of what is to be learned is not given but must be independently discovered by the student. The students have a role in their own learning and developing their creativity as they work on problems but still under teacher's control. There six based problems in discovery learning which are attitude, compatibility, activation, practice, the -self-loop| problem and capacity for handling information flow, though this six base problem it is aimed that the children or learner not only to learn the material that is presented in a school setting, but to learn it in such a way that he can use the information in problem solving. In English language teaching, discovery learning can be applied in teaching genre of text such as news item. The teacher guide the students to find out what is news item is by the students' way. The teacher provides an opportunity for the students which enable them to work on problem. The discovery learning in teaching news item text can be done through three basic steps in teaching; pre teaching, whilst teaching and post teaching.

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