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Effective strategies to motivate students to become active participants

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Abstract—**This paper is aimed to develop the learner-centered approach for the students to become active participants in the class. Most of Myanmar students feel embarrassed about their pronunciation and accent and fear of making mistakes. Today is technology age. So, the roles of engineer are vital for developing all round sectors of a nation. At the same time, the job market for engineer is more and more wide-spreading. Today, English is the language of instruction in universities in Myanmar. In addition, our university joined to ASEAN universities. It is important for the students to be able use to English as a language for their further studies. Engineer students also hope to learn English to be able to use in their daily lives. For these reasons, the teachers or universities should focus on their requirements for their job opportunities. This paper is hoped to give the satisfaction of the learners and helpful to be effective teaching and learning.**

Keywords——**active participants, instruction,further studies, language learning,effective teaching and learning**

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is aimed to develop the students-centered approach and to motivate the learners more active to participate in the classroom. Nowadays, English has become the dominant of international business, academic conferences, science and technology and tourism. Most of the teachers in Myanmar who is teaching English complain that most of Myanmar students are shy and hesitate to participate in conversation because they are concerned about making mistakes in front of the teachers. Some students can speak English in their peer group without breaking down the conversation but they are reluctant to speak with teachers. The teacher can sometimes deter students from freely expressing their idea. In the traditional teacher-centered system, it is very offensive for the learners to participate in the classroom. In such kind of class room, teachers are stressful because the teachers explain the lessons, ask and answer the questions, offer the examples, organize the content and do the preview and review. They work harder than the learners and learners seem to be passive and lack of interest. In contrast, learner-centered approach teacher teaches how to solve the problems analyse the argument and generate hypotheses – all those skills which are essential to mastering in their subjects. So, the teachers should act as a monitor, helper or supporter for their classroom activities. Teachers can set up the activities related to their daily life.

II. ADOPTING THE TEXT-DRIVEN APPROACH

The text driven-approach requires finding materials from books, magazines, newspapers, and other sources so that have a direct link to the students' lives and experience. Specific language and activities can then be designed from these materials. Teacher must help the learners to use the grammar patterns to express their own ideas or feeling. So they find that learning English is very fruitful to their future job opportunities. The advantage of this approach is that text can be selected based on the richness and diversity of the language and on their relevance to the English learners, who should find them both meaningful and motivating. If the level of knowledge is very different from each student, find out the materials which are suitable for the class is the most challenging to the teacher. If so, teacher needs the large amount of time in this approach. At the same time, learners should have specific goal to learn the materials they found out. So they can use the language and pattern and vocabulary in their specific fields. Learners can get a wide range of vocabulary and language patterns from different kinds of learning materials. Their interest can make them to become the active learners.

III. TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

For Marshall and Rowland (1998), critical thinking occurs when learners question their own beliefs or what they are told. It is also the vital feature for the improvement of teaching and learning. It is an essential ability because we are living in time of advanced of technology and the widespread expansion of information. Learning to think critically can produce enthusiastic language learners.

Interesting materials make the learners think differently. Teacher let them to think deeply and ask question to each other and to the teacher. And encourage them to feel free to discuss how they think about the topic. So they can better remember the words by thinking and discussing in their peer group. Thus, question in the language classroom should be referential or meaning based, and should not focus solely on form. In the language classroom, teacher should elicit meaningful student reactions to texts and also signal that it is permissible to disagree with the text and to ask questions as well.

Richards and Rogers (2001, 210) write that "language learning is believed to be motivating when students are focusing on something other than language, such as ideas, issues, and opinions". To achieve this, teacher must be able to set the situation for every learner to be able to participate in the classroom activities. These classroom activities will develop higher thinking skills and make the students active participants in the acquisition of knowledge.

Another technique to stimulate critical thinking is for the teacher to provide two texts that present totally different views on the same matter and invite students to discuss and debate the issue. When selecting the text, the teacher has to pay attention to the content to ensure that it corresponds with topic that students are genuinely interested in. Teacher gives the argumentative topic such as cultural differences. And then, have the students thought and brainstorm the differences and expressed their ideas in their group. Knowing that their ideas are never wrong under the argumentative topic, learners become more and more active to include in the conversation. So they can get different knowledge about the culture and are able to think deeply from other people point of view. In addition to this, it can enhance the learner's confidence to continue their topics.

The next technique to promote the critical thinking skill is to produce theirs' own idea. The teacher has to give the learners different grammar patterns for their specific lessons. The learners have to think and produce the ideas as much as they can within the allotted time. When the time is up, the teacher has to collect the ideas from each learner and then share them to the class. After that, group the learners, let them consider the consequences resulted from their

opinions and draw the inference from different points of view. Therefore, learners become the active thinkers by developing their language skills.

IV. MOTIVATING LEARNERS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Learners' interest, their choice and their requirements can make learners active participants. The teacher should be aware of what they want and how they want to learn and pay attention to each learner. Moreover, the teacher must act as facilitator, supporter, manager and helper to create the classroom as the relaxed environment

A. Developing learner autonomy

Learner autonomy is defined as the ability to take charge of one's own learning. Autonomous learners understand the purpose and process of learning and able to choose from available tools and resources to create a productive learning environment.

If the teacher is teaching and reading or translating all the time, learners become the listeners and they are passive in the class. It is helpful to consider promoting learner autonomy for the purpose of transforming dependent and passive learners. To promote learner autonomy, the teacher should encourage students to be more self-motivated and to continue learning outside the classroom so they can be personally responsible for acquire English. Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002, 255) indicate that "a motivated student would have a greater interest in what was to be learned and thus be more ready and able to take on responsibilities in the language learning process." They suggest that the teacher promote autonomous behavior by suggesting extracurricular activities, focusing first on those that students already engage in.

As we are teaching at the technological university, we should be aware that students do not want to learn English as in literature. They want to learn English as a medium of communication and an essential tool for their further studies. The teacher can change teaching style from lecturing to monitoring learners' activities in the classroom. The teacher should try to encourage and persuade learners to participate activities such as writing to friends and family, reading articles and magazines and books, listening to and speaking to their friends. So, the teachers should act as a monitor, helper or supporter for their classroom activities. Teachers can set up the activities related to their daily life.

In these activities they may feel free to share their knowledge in their groups. So they are seen to be in their natural world not like the class room.

The formal education, however, does not give much space and support to learner's autonomy; it is limited by large numbers of student and extensive knowledge that has to be covered within the curriculum regardless of the level in education system. The autonomous learning requires a lot time, so the time is the major constraint for teaching and learning process. On the one hand, it can develop thinking skills that enable students see the learning from different perceptive and to get involved in the learning process more actively. Consequently they are rewarded with full recognition and better results. The positive feeling about autonomous learning then anticipates a will to learn further and the prospects for life-long learning are possible.

To be effective for learning, teacher makes sure to take charge of every stage, which includes:

- Setting specific goal before starting the lecture
- Identifying and developing strategies to achieve such goals
- Identifying and selecting the relevant resources and support
- Quick scanning vocabulary and grammar for the lesson
- Creating friendly atmosphere for the learners to involve in the conversation

At the same time, the learners should prepare to be better learners:

- Accepting and opening to everyone's contributions
- Having strong willingness to participate in the activities
- Being respectful to one another
- Being keen on sharing their knowledge
- Having the positive attitude to others learners questions and comments

There are many factors that have negative effect on learner autonomy. First of all, according to Edge and Wharton (1998, 289) teaching material that are controlled by the teacher or institution "may limit the amount of investment and involvement that students have in the learning process." This may place the learner autonomy and teachers' creativities at risk. To overcome these problems, teacher needs to use a wide range of resources and encourage students to find and bring to class texts, stories, or any piece of information on topic that are of interest to them. Moreover, it takes a lot of time for preparing the contexts that are suitable for the learner's level of language. If the context is too difficult for the learners to follow, teaching and learning process is not effective. By choosing the materials themselves, learners are starting on the road to autonomous learning. The teacher plays an indispensable role by acting as a facilitator and modifying materials for the students when necessary. For example, after finding out that student want to master in writing in business letters in English, the teacher could ask them to find the sample the sample of business in the style that they prefer. The teacher then uses the sample to work out and provide students with alternate samples for comparison. In the end, it is students' choice that matters.

B. Drawing students attention

Assigning the class works in accordance with the students' level of knowledge and language is one of the constraints in the class. Students who feel like their expected class work is far too below their capabilities or far too above their capabilities likely are not the motivated students. Strive to be challenging by giving class assignments that are just a bit above the students' current ability. They need to stretch and attempt hard topics and assignment in class, but be careful the teacher picks just the right level of work. Use differentiated instructions or teaching strategies that are different for different students' need since not every student is at the same level. Teacher should be enthusiastic about the topic to be taught, and teacher may even motivate your students to make a career out of what they learned in your class.

When learners tell what they want to learn, the teacher must be able to guide them where to find the materials advise them to find materials that are suitable and interesting. The materials they found should be effective for their intention and can fulfill their necessaries. In fact, teacher should not spend too much time and energy preparing or conducting activities that students can

accomplish themselves. To save the time and be affective in the class, teacher must be able to identify the stronger students and weaker students. If so, teacher let the former group plays in leader role of the activities and the latter group can learn from their group. Sometimes, teacher lets the learner take the role of teacher and teacher can reduce the control on the class and burden. The teacher is responsible for supporting learners where they can search what they want to learn. Learners have to involve in searching the learning materials. It is worth considering that "if teacher can share responsibilities with learners, then not only learners benefit but also teacher will be less burdened. (Edge and Wharton 1998, 298) For example, in order to bring in a favorite songs, story and poem in which the grammar structure is used. By inviting students to seek materials from different resources, the teacher constructs an environment where students complete task by themselves. They can get the required knowledge and language from their own learning.

C. Incorporating a variety of English

English has become the world language and the essential tool for studying culture, business, education and communication. More and more people are learning English for their job requirement and most of the English users are non-native speakers. The choice of English materials has to follow the learners' interest for giving their requirements. So, they want to learn English come from different regions and societies. The varieties of English in different contexts have to keep the learners interest and fulfill their needs. We should recognize the importance of being effective speakers rather than sounding native-like. This has great implications for English language teaching, since so much international communication in important fields is conducted by nonnative speakers and English is the language of instruction all over the world. So it is essential to include these varieties in teaching materials. If this is not done, according to Matsuda (2003, 720), 'the limited exposure to English varieties in the classroom may lead to confusion or resistance when students are confronted with different types of English user or users outside the classroom. The exposure to different forms and functions of English is crucial for English as an International language learner, who may use the language with the speakers of an English variety other than American and British English. Most of Myanmar students are afraid of making grammar and spelling mistakes. They also feel embarrassed about their accent and pronunciation. They are reluctant to use the language and hesitant to speak English. The inclusion of more varieties can positively affect motivation, and students may speak English more confidently if they see people who speak English as they do not as perfectly as native speaker of English do.

D. Instructional methods in learner-centered class

Participatory learning can promote leaner responsibility in their own learning and make learners active by different instructional methods. In participatory learning, learners are always engaged in activities, working together and create new ideas. Learners who are actively engaged in their own learning through discussions, group works, debate and collaboration retain more information, develop higher-level thinking skills and perform well in the class. The facilitator has to prepare the instructions according to the specific lessons, manage the flow of activities for the sake of time,

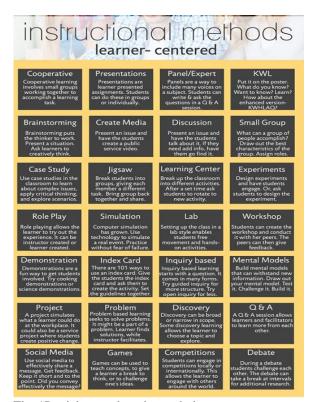and engage each learner who is passive to participate in the class.

Fig. 1 Participatory learning techniques

V. TEACHER AND LEARNERS IN THE LEARNER-CENTERED CLASS

Most of the teachers make too many of the decisions about learning for the students. Teachers decide what students should learn, how they learn it, the pace at which they learn, the conditions under which they learn, and then teacher determine whether students have learned. Students aren't in a position of decide what content should be included in the course or which textbook is best, but when teachers make all the decisions, the motivation to learn decreases and learners becomes dependent. Learner-centered teachers search out ethically responsible ways to share power with students. It can give the learners self-respect and self-esteem to learn the language. At the same time, teacher might create the situation and make policies something students can discuss equally.

Using English creatively can students develop their ability to actually use English to express theirs' own ideas. If students are corrected all the time, they will feel vulnerable when they speak and write. Correcting error calls for gentleness and tact. Sensitive or different students often feel they are being reprimanded or even mocked if told they are wrong. Even well-adjusted or confident students can upset by aggressive correction. Thus correction should be regarded as a positive act designed to help students improve their accuracy. Correction in friendly and helpful way is very effective technique. The atmosphere in the class should be relaxed and cooperative. In this way, students are more likely to enjoy their lessons, acquire more English, and make progress

Effective teaching strategies that result in motivating students are rewarding them for participating. Communicate expectations to the learners and think how they can succeed. If the students know the teacher believes they can master the materials which are being taught, they will start to

believe it, too. Positive feedback, especially when they do not expect it, will serve to let them and their work, which will motivate them to do better. Some of these ideas may help to develop a relaxed and cooperative atmosphere in the classroom:

- Try to make students feel that you value their ideas and contributions and encourage them to value each other's contributions too.
- Encourage each individual to contribute their opinions to the class, treat everyone as a responsible adult (especially if your students are teenagers), not as a kid.
- Praise them whenever they can do something and show you value their abilities.
- Try not to talk too much. The more the teacher speaks, the less time the students have to speak themselves.
- Address the class as you would address a group of colleagues, rather than learners.
- Make students regard teacher as their partner.
- Be friendship with the students.
- Open the conversation to discuss their different views.

Encourage students to regard teacher as a guide, monitor, supporter, adviser and facilitator whose role is to organize the class so that they can practice and use the language point they are studying, and to help them to learn. So, students may relief and dare to discuss with the teacher and ask for help openly if necessary.. The teacher makes careful decisions about the size and composition of the groups they created based on the complexity of the academic task. In the learner-centered class, learners are not passive but are actively engaged to their interest.

Before starting an activity in the class, it would be better to put yourself in your students' shoes and ask yourself these questions.

- What would it be like doing this activity or exercise? What would I enjoy it? What would I find difficult?
- What is the purpose of the activity? What the students can get from this activity?

When teaching, call the learners by name, keep the lesson content relevant to their lives as much as possible. Giving example in lesson close to their real lives will motivate the students to initiate more questions. Learners may regard language learning is very relaxing and they can ask and answer questions easily. They feel as if they are in the real lives.

- Every student gets the opportunities to communicate with each other in a whole-class situation, it tent to be the quickest or loudest students whose idea dominate.
- Students feel less inhibited, and they are more willing to experiment with their English. They don't "play it safe" by using the simplest vocabulary and structures as they might down when "performing in front of the whole class. Shy, quiet students often become quite talkactive when they are in small groups.
- Students are more likely to remember answer they have discovered or worked out by themselves than other students' answers or answer the teacher announces to the class.
- Students working in their peer groups are more active than they are working as a class.

The teacher's role during the classroom activities is to move around the class from pair to pair or group. When necessary, the teacher must try to be able to meet individually.

- Eavesdropping on each pair or group while doing so, discouraging students from using their native language, reminding them that they can make progress only by speaking English together in the class.
- Showing an interest.
- Offering suggestion and advices.

To discourage the students from talking in their native language during these activities, make sure they know and use the simple pattern and vocabulary for their communication

VI. CONCLUSIONS

There are many constraints for implementing the autonomous learning because of classroom size, the amount of time and range of resources. To be able to pay attention to each learner and every group or pair is very challenging for the teacher. Student-centered approach takes more time than traditional teaching style. On the other hand, one way communication method and lecturing are very boarding. In this method, students do not participate actively in the class. To improve the learner-centered class, institution should be able to provide the resources because the scope of the learning process is very wide-spreading. The teachers are also able to contribute their knowledge in accordance with their requirements. In addition to this, teachers need to work harder than in the teacher-centered approach.

Strategies for developing the learner autonomy are discussed in this paper. By applying these strategies, we, the teacher of English can improve the potential for students to be active participants, critical thinkers and active thinkers and independent learners. Students are hoped to become responsive people in their daily lives. In the learner-centered class, English will then not only afford them the opportunity to learn a language, but it will make them more human beings as well.

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