

# CREATING ACTIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY LEARNING SKILLS

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## Abstract

High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) are absolutely needed in the teaching learning process nowadays. Through various active learning activities, students are hoped to learn much to talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn as a part of themselves. Students' center based learning is a must to enable them actively in learning activities. Teachers must be creative in designing lesson plan, developing materials, utilizing printed and technology media, selecting right learning strategies and assessing students properly. By implementing active learning, students not only enjoy the class but also show their competence in language skills.

The key words: active learning, creative, high order thinking skills.

## Introduction

Critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (4C) are united parts in education lately. Education has to change its system to develop the essential things resulting from education. Not only the education equipment but also human resources have to run in balancing ways. Technology has spread very rapidly and the education has to chase it. The global world has influenced people to think beyond. One of the keys in education is 'creativity' and why must be creative? Creativity allows teachers and students to express themselves. Creativity promotes thinking outside the box and problem solving. Creativity is about thinking through information in new ways, making new connections and coming up with innovative solutions to problems. Teachers need to find new, alternative ways of looking at things that would be different from the expected. Whereas critical thinking is about analysing information and critiquing claims. It is the cognitive process of using reasoning skills to question and analyze the accuracy of ideas, statements, and new information. Communication is understanding things well enough to share them clearly with other people. Collaborative is about a teamwork (learning community) and communication can be built through collaborative activities.

The term 21st century has become an integral part of educational thinking and planning for the future. In order to prepare students to play their role in the 21st century society we are a part of a few things need to be considered when deciding how education will look in our schools and classrooms. Instruction should be student-centered. The teacher would act as a facilitator for the students. Education should be collaborative. It means students must learn how to collaborate with others. They have to be encouraged to work together to discover information, piece it together, and construct meaning. Learning should have context. While students are encouraged to learn in different ways, the teacher still provides guidance as to the skills that need to be acquired. Lessons have little purpose if they do not have any impact in a student's life outside of the school. Schools should be integrated

with society. Schools will often work at accomplishing this by creativity events for the school community by encouraging students to join committee or take part in school projects.

The idea of integrating high order thinking skills (HOTS) in language classrooms has been widely discussed by language teachers. The government sees this because students have been found to be passive and teachers have been found to lack creativity in innovating their lessons. The 21st century education is about giving students the skills they need to succeed in its new world and helping them grow the confidence to practice those skills. The role of teacher is to be forward-thinking, curious, and flexible. Teachers must be learners, learning new ways of teaching, and learning alongside their students. Invite students to contribute to strategy meetings and decision making. Create adaptable learning environment suited to different sorts of collaboration and groupwork. Encourage students to have ownership of community service programs. Find ways to connect students to people their age in other parts of the world and review the use of technology in the classroom, how can it be made more effective.

### **Active Learning**

Active Learning is getting students to work and think in the classroom. Active learning is simply that—having students engage in some activities that force them to think about and comment on the information presented. Students won't simply be listening, but will be developing skills in handling concepts in our disciplines. They will analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information in discussion with other students, through asking questions, or through writing. In short, students will be engaged in activities that force them to reflect upon ideas and upon how they are using those ideas. All students are learning and extending their language while using it. They become successful communicators because they have a real need to communicate so language learners need to interact on meaningful tasks with one another on the target language. Giving much more opportunities to students in communicative activities will be a great chance for them to use a language both in task-based language and real world tasks.

Arranging the class to promote effective learning or active learning depends on the kinds of interaction you provide for during the lesson. This will include opportunities for interactions between you and the class as well as interactions among the students themselves. According to Richard and Farrell (2011: 108-111) there are four possible ways of arranging a class, namely whole-class teaching, individual work, pair work, and group work. Which way you choose will depend on the materials that you make or develop. Through active learning, the teachers will implement 'learning by doing', use various learning models or strategies, vary classroom management, have students decorate the wall with portfolio, use various learning resources and media, apply student-centered, and create inspiring, interactive, interesting, motivating, and challenging learning process.

### **Materials Development**

Teachers are not the only learning sources. They must be able to develop learning materials that are suitable with their students' interest and competence. By creating their own learning

materials, the teachers will have many benefits because they are able to create learning materials based on the students' need and characteristics. Materials development for language learning and teaching is absolutely needed by the teachers to color the process of the class. By having good materials, the students will be motivated during class as it can avoid the students' boredom. The teachers must know their students' characteristics so that they can adapt or adopt the learning materials that are suitable with the students' need.

The teachers may not rely on their teaching on 'the only one book'. *Alam takambang jadi guru* that means everything in our surroundings can be learning resources. Nowadays, technology has spread widely in education sector. Teachers may use technology into the classroom such as computers, e-mails, chats, blogs, videoconferencing, power point, and internet. They will be very

helpful ways to manage the class in order to create a good atmosphere. By combining learning materials from printed to technology, education sector has advantages that include the motivational and experiential benefits (Burns and Richards: 2012: 274) such as youtube, advertisement, films, podcast, and other multimedia. The followings are some ideas for developing materials and learning activities:

- A reading space (display board)  
If there is a wall space in the classroom, you can use this as an area where students can go and read what they have finished their work. This is important because students do not remember instantly what teachers have taught them. Teachers must know that learning occurs when students meet new ideas, words, and phrases several times and in different contexts.
- English label cards  
Set your students the task of bringing to class an example of English they have found on a product, such as on a cereal box or a clothing label, or instructions that come with an electronic gadget. The English can be anything from two words to a whole sentence. Once you have some examples collected by the students, you can ask them to write down or stick the example on a card, and on another card to write down where they found it.
- English in films  
As part of a project on cinema, ask students to list their favorite films. Ask them which of these films were originally in English. Do a survey to find the class's most popular film and then organize to watch a short extract from the film in class in English. You can stop the film halfway through to ask the students who know the film what is going to happen, and if they know any words in English that they will hear.
- Simple puppets  
English teachers or students may use their fingers by drawing a face or a bag with a face drawn on it can be stuck on to a ruler or stick. Finger puppets can be a simple but nice way to get the students interested in the dialogs they have learned. The students can work in pairs on the dialogs with their puppets, and then ask them to perform in front of the class or in small groups. A puppet can be also used to give simple instruction to act out such as wash your face, brush your teeth, get dressed and put your coat on. (Cameron and McKay: 2010).

- **Reading authentic materials**  
When you pass through an airport or a book store, you could buy several magazines in English on topics that interest your students. These could be celebrities, photography, or decorating. They can motivate students to do activities using real learning sources. The English teachers can use children's books, brochures, leaflets, advertisements, and internets as a source of free materials.
- **Role play**  
Use role play in a free or more open way in the classroom such as one-sided dialog or guided situation (role play cards) in which the students create and practice dialog based on the instruction they have to do. It can avoid students' boredom rather than practicing a dialog by memorizing.
- **Information gap**  
Communication is a two-way process: what A says helps to shape B's reply, which in turn influences A's answer and so on (Matthews, 1991). Information gap describes the aim of such activities as to get students to use the language they are learning to interact in realistic and meaningful ways. Student A and student B have different information where they have to find missing information to complete it.
- **Storytelling**  
Students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. It also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have. Students also can tell riddles or jokes. For instance, at the very beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few students to tell short fables or their own imagination as an opening. In this way, not only will the teacher address students' speaking ability, but also get the attention of the class.
- **Interviews**  
Students can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people. It is a good idea that the teacher provides a rubric to students so that they know what type of questions they can ask or what path to follow, but students should prepare their own interview questions. Conducting interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them becoming socialized. After interviews, each student can present his or her study to the class. For example interviewing of a television survey by guiding students with a certain format.
- **Story completion**  
This is a very enjoyable, whole-class, free-speaking activity for which students sit in a circle. For this activity, a teacher starts to tell a story, but after a few sentences he or she stops narrating. Then, each student starts to narrate from the point where the previous one stopped. Each student is supposed to add from two to four sentences. Students can add new characters, events, descriptions and so on.
- **Reporting**  
Before coming to class, students are asked to read a newspaper or magazine and, in class, they report to their friends what they find as the most interesting news. Students

can also talk about whether they have experienced anything worth telling their friends in their daily lives before class.

- **Picture describing**

Another way to make use of pictures in a speaking activity is to give students just one picture and having them describe what it is in the picture. For this activity students can form groups and each group is given a different picture. Students discuss the picture with their groups, then a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class. This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

- **Find the difference**

For this activity students can work in pairs and each couple is given two different pictures, for example, picture of boys playing football and another picture of girls playing tennis. Students in pairs discuss the similarities and/or differences in the pictures.

### **Simple stages of teaching English**

1. **Presentation stage**

- a. Build up the situational context by using pictures, a dialog, a video, chatting, a story, etc.
- b. Elicit the new language from the students or tell it to them.
- c. Focus the students' attention on the marker sentence (the first example of the new language).
- d. Check the students' understanding of the concepts behind the new language.

2. **Practice stage**

Give the students time for drills and exercises for classroom practice. (little teacher's control)

3. **Production or Communication stage**

Give the students time for practicing the new language in a freer and wider situation or context. The activities can be role plays, discourse chains, discussions, games, communication-gap activities, etc. (the teacher does not interfere the class but gives feedback in the end of the class).

### **Classroom practices**

1. **Missing information**

**Student A and Student B have different information.**

*"A daily newspaper is publishing each day a short description of some of the singers taking part in the Eurovision Song Contest. Here is today's list of singers. Unfortunately, some of the information about them is missing. Ask Student A/B to find out the missing information and fill it in."*

You can ask questions like these:

*How old is ...?*

*Is ... married/single?*

*Where does ... live?*

*How long has ... been a pop singer?*

*Which country is ... singing for? What are ...'s interests? etc*

Name	Person's Name	Photo	Person's Name	Photo
Age				
Gender				
Height				
Weight				
Eye color				
Hair color				
Build				
Occupation				
Address				
Phone number				
Signature				

In the end activity, the teacher can ask the students to describe the people in the picture based on the information they have got.

## 2. Grocery shopping (video/youtube)



The teacher presents a video of shopping. While watching video, the students write some shopping expressions used in the video. Then the teacher plays the video once more and explains the expressions (the students imitate to practice correct pronunciation and intonation). They are for examples:

\_Hello, can I help you?‘

\_Yes, please. I would like a loaf of white bread, a dozen eggs, and milk.‘

\_Anything else?‘

\_How much is it?‘. etc.

Finally, the students do a role play as a customer and a shop assistant to practice language of grocery shopping.

## 3. Holiday survey

*“Your class at school are doing a survey on how people spend their summer holidays. You are going to interview people in the street about their holiday plans and write down their answers on the Holiday Survey sheet. Student A is a passer-by.”*

Before starting, study the Holiday Survey sheet and work out questions to ask. For example:

*Where are you going for holiday this year?*

*When are you going?*

*How long are you planning to stay there?*

*What are you going to do there? Etc.*

## Conclusion

Based on learning experiences or classroom practices, it can be concluded that the students enjoyed very much during the class. They were motivated to get actively involved in the classroom. They collaborated and communicated each other. They used language by using prompts from the teacher. They were active in the learning process by doing some activities or tasks planned by the teacher.

HOTS has positive long term learning impact on students rather than the conventional

rote learning. In applying HOTS, teachers need to create a good learning atmosphere by considering several components of teaching such as materials, strategies, and media.

Creativity is the heart of the motivational classroom. It empowers students and teachers to express ideas and opinions in unique ways. Creative teaching leads to active learning. Active learning helps students to motivate them in learning both inside and outside classroom. The role of teachers is extremely important to create an ideal learning through good, interesting, inspiring, fun, and motivated strategies or techniques and learning materials with various learning experiences.

The teachers' duty is to do creativity inside or outside the classroom. They have to think 'out of the box' by establishing a classroom environment in which the development of creativity is fostered from the start. Through the integration of creative thinking in English lessons, students develop relevant cognitive skills, such as observing, questioning, comparing, contrasting, imagining and hypothesizing that they need in all areas of the curriculum.

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