

## COVERING LEARNERS' DIVERSITY IN A LEARNING PROCESS

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**Abstract:** This writing is a reflection and evaluation of a teaching practice by tracing back what went ineffective and what helped the students learn. This reflection is made by investigating the core of the problem and rationalizing it for the perfection of the next teaching practice. A practice which valued reward to boost students' learning motivation seemed to fail for this group of elementary-competence students. More, the evaluation is made by reviewing critically the teacher's teaching strategies. The teacher's intention in designing her strategies was to lead the learners to self-question the targeted materials, expose to retention for development of automaticity and effortless learning. However, the idea to encourage learners to develop their learning strategies which optimize their cognitive, develop synthesizing, and foster affective perspective strategies did not affect the learners' attitude in receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing information. The teacher's ignorance to learners' patterns of capabilities which influence learners' patterns of learning strategies becomes the main reflective lesson that the teacher learned to develop class instructions and activities. More, the significance of teachers' knowledge about an educational objective framework which makes the learning process manageable and the learning objective reachable is proposed at the end of the discussion.

**Keywords:** *learners' pattern of capability, educational objective framework, bloom taxonomy*

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### INTRODUCTION

Teachers should always see themselves as active learners who keep learning through reflecting their teaching practice in order to escape themselves from the condition where teaching is merely a routine. If teachers perform teaching as a routine task, they will be trapped into traditional ways of teaching (Larrivee, 2009). Even though the system in the education setting has set reward for students' participation in each class activity which contributes to their passing score, however, most students did not take the chance optimally. Theoretically, reward is effective to increase students' motivation in learning (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016), but this idea seemed ineffective for this class. The teacher ended up inserting unplanned lecturing session since she considered students were not motivated and engaged with the activities (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016). Hence, through this reflection, her teaching practice's strength and weakness will be evaluated, and the core of the problem will deeply be investigated to rationalize it for the perfection of the teaching practice.

This reflection is done through an episode of a class of 24 students in a TOEIC preparation class for elementary level. The class started with students discussed a popular song which the teacher had prepared beforehand. Even though the teacher has paid effort in conditioning, exposing, and providing the students with scaffolding learning, but it turned out students did not engage optimally in the learning process. They were reluctant to try and they did not participate in the class activities as the teacher expected them to. Teacher assumed that students were not motivated (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016) because they had no interest in learning the subject or it might be the students' experience in the previous class had affected their learning interest negatively. Her assumption had influenced her teaching practice which not only frustrated the teacher herself, but also it was potential to de-motivate students as well. For this reason, this reflection is important to help teachers from being burnt-out in their teaching practice.

## LEARNERS CHARACTERISTIC AND TEACHING PRACTICE

The learning process took place in the English language center of a private university. The center requires all new students take TOEIC placement test to group them based on their English competence level. They study English for six semesters to help them meet the university standard of 550 TOEIC score at the lowest to get their diploma certificate. At the end of every semester, the students are assessed with TOEIC like materials, where the test is a mini form of TOEIC test. The center rules that student should collect point from several posts of score. Firstly, they have to attend the class and participate in it which contributes for 40 percent, take class quiz which values for 10 percent, pass the mid-term test which rewards for 20 percent, and finally earn 30 percent from the final test to pass the class with flying color. The attending and participation point are advantageous for the teachers to be used as a reward instrument for shaping contributive and participative students' behavior (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016). Since expecting students' inner motivation seems to be an impossible work to do, then this instrument should be powerful to make students engage with the class activities (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016).

Knowing the situation, the teacher had set fun activities to generate students' inner motivation, to minimize the demand for their working memory since they were low level students, and to make them be more responsive (McInerney, 2014). The students found the introduction and the explanation were easy to follow. Most of them considered the introduction was interesting and they were eager to sing the song that the teacher used to introduce the topic. They tried to notice the meaning of underlined word in the printed lyric. They could identify the context of the sentences. The time signal clues were familiar for them. They could recognize the subjects and the verbs of the sentences. Since the lyrics were in simple sentences, they could accomplish the target. Malone and Lepper in their research (1987) claimed that fun activities help students comprehend targeted materials better (as cited in Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016). In the case, the teacher decided to use a song which was interesting for the students as the input. Through the lyric, students could observe how the simple present tense used.

More, the teacher's presentation had also helped learners draw conclusion about the language rules. The presentation was followed with more explanation in textbook. However, most students found it difficult to comprehend the textbook explanation. It might be caused by the complex explanation. So, to assist the students, the teacher used to refer back to the sentences which students shared at the introduction part and to be crosschecked and compared with the teacher's presentation. This was the teacher's strategy to possible students to self-regulate their learning which requires them to perform self-monitoring and evaluation for creating positive self-perception (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016).

The pair and group sharing have worked effectively for students to strengthen and recheck their understanding about the materials (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016). Several activities which were started from talking about a popular song, the language rules emerge in the song, working the exercises collaboratively, and sharing and responding opinions were expected facilitate social learners (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016). These various activities enhanced the learners to clarify their understanding about the materials. This activity also developed students' skill in negotiating and conveying their ideas which also contributed to build their confidence to solve problems and to learn from each other (Maloy & Verock-O'Loughlin, 2014). However, the whole class activities were followed only by half of the class. Some contributed in sharing their conclusion in the introduction stage and few students could draw more complex knowledge about the topic. Similar students who contributed in the introduction and presentation also took part in the production activities. They volunteered themselves to solve problems in the textbook, and creatively shared

their experience. The reward in the form of participation points boosted their motivation to engage more (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016).

## **CRITICAL REVIEW OF IMPLICATION OF LEARNERS' CHARACTERISTIC FOR DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING**

The teacher's teaching strategies had assisted the development of the students' learning strategies through asking student to self-questioning the form, doing repetition and drilling by singing and doing exercises. These activities had facilitated the retention for the development of automaticity (McInnerney, 2014). By setting such fun and engaging class activities, the teacher expected that she could cover of all her learners' strategies and preference in mastering the materials. She expected that the learners were able to see the importance of the learning and develop their own way of learning. The strategy was aimed in making the students respond which would impact the students' learning through unconscious and effortless process (McInnerney, 2014).

Realizing responsibilities to develop learners' strategies in learning (McInnerney, 2014); the teacher planned different strategies to cover the learning stages which were suggested by Bloom. Her strategies facilitated students to identify the form of targeted materials and understand the rules of the form. The strategies enable students to use the knowledge in daily communication. When students were able to perform it, students had successfully developed their skill as the result of learning (Krathwohl, 2002). Since, cognitive strategies are dealing with knowledge with its basic form is the learners' ability to recall information from their short or long-term memory, the teacher's strategy to choose popular song for her students was effective to give meaning to the information.

In the comprehending process, learners developed several strategies by analyzing teacher's presentation and checking textbook for further information and samples. They also evaluated the information while doing the guided practice. They developed creativity to use the information in broader context. In this stage, students had undergone synthesizing strategy by evaluating information to create something original (Krathwohl, 2002 and Stenberg, 2000). The production stage took place when students shared to the class their routine things to do in campus. This activity covered the needs of creating something genuine. At the same time, students had also improved their affective strategies to overcome anxiety which they might have during their class presentation. Shortly, based on cognitive and affective domain strategies, this teaching strategy had provided students ideal stages of learning for its exposure for learners' capability to apply the knowledge, and to use it in the daily life (Krathwohl, 2002).

Furthermore, affective perspective strategies focus on the learners' attitude in receiving responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing the information (Krathwohl, 2002). These affective strategies developed through the learners' efforts to stay focus and pay attention to the information, at the same time, participate and contribute in the learning. Further, those attitudes indicated that the learners appreciated the knowledge. The moments where learners added values and thoughts to the knowledge and applied it in more concrete situation, then the learners were able to construct abstract thinking from the knowledge (Krathwohl, 2002; and Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, Bjork, 2008). Through pair and group works, the teacher had provided students opportunities to develop their skill in giving feedback to their mates' work and at the same time developing attitude in receiving others suggestion and correction if possible. They were able to do it because they had the knowledge to enable them contribute in the collaborative learning.

Lastly, the teachers' teaching strategies have been able to develop students' learning strategies. It accommodated visual learners through the printed song lyrics and teacher's presentation, auditory reflective learner through playing the song and students' sharing, and assertive observers through guided book practice and teacher's presentation (Felder & Solomon, 2000; Pashler et al, 2008). However, the teacher still struggled with other aspect of learners' responses to measure the success of her teaching strategies. Her misinterpretation of the learners' response led the teacher to frustrating condition where she considered she failed to address students' motivation which was indicated by some students' lack of attention and engagement with the class activities (McInerney, 2014). In fact, teachers should realize that learners' patterns of capabilities influence their patterns of strategies to the teacher's class instructions and activities (Stenberg, 2000)

### **IDENTIFICATION KEY STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING LEARNING**

Crucial issues triggered the teacher to consider that her teaching strategies have not been able to involve all students in the class with the learning activities which she had planned beforehand. It was basically because of her insufficient knowledge about educational objective framework that she never practiced before and lack understanding about different learners' capabilities (Krathwohl, 2002 and Stenberg, 2000). Educational objective framework knowledge is crucial for teachers to facilitate their communication with students, and to set assessment tools which reflect the learning activities (Krathwohl, 2002). Meanwhile, understanding learners' capabilities is paramount to determine if particular teaching strategies can work best to make students concentrate, able to maintain it, during their natural information processing style which beneficial for storing the information in their long-term memory (Pashler, et al, 2008; Stenberg, 2000).

Firstly, the teacher should have stated the learning objective clearly at the beginning of her class. It relates to the subject matter content and description of what is going to be done. The students did not know what their teacher expected from them. It impacted their learning attitude negatively (Krathwohl, 2002). Driven by the institution's target, the teacher kept broad expectancy in her mind which was to make the students learn so they improved their English which would be assessed by TOEIC test. Meanwhile, success learning is initiated by realistic and specific goal for the students which are stated explicitly (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2016). Krathwohl (2002) suggested an educational objective framework to classify form of written statement of what to learn as the result teachers' instruction. Stating the class objective in written form makes the learning process manageable and the learning objective reachable. Hence, writing down lesson plan is an important stage a teacher should do to in the effort to perfect their teaching practice. Teachers should also state in the lesson plan not only the class objectives, but also the purpose of each class activity. This is to cover what skills the learners will develop by engaging in a particular activity (Krathwohl, 2002), because every instruction should have goals. Since, educational objectives concern with the learning outcome, then teachers should have it visually accessible as the guidance not only throughout the teaching practice but also in assessment designing for setting standardized achievement.

The teacher had fault confidence that her strategies, planned stimuli would make some changes in the students' behavior in reaching the target (Maloy et al, 2014), to pass the test. This implicit objective was not accessible, not relevant nor achievable for the students since they did not see then relevancy of their learning to the assessment which they should take. While the teacher systematically prepared the students for daily active communication, contrary the

students knew they would be assessed by written form of assertive aspect of language usage. Fundamentally, a learning goal is to encourage people to think for themselves and develop their skills as an independent ethical person (Jagger, 2013). Clearly, the teacher missed this opportunity due to her lack understanding of learning objectives which can be achieved through systematic designed curriculum (Krathwohl, 2002).

Secondly, the teacher should have been aware of different patterns of learners' capability (Stenberg, 2000) in responding instructions. In this case, the teacher simply valued the students' participation and response to the activities she designed based on her standard, the active responds from the students to compensate her enthusiasm in conducting the class. In fact, students have different capabilities and strategies in processing and responding information (Krathwohl, 2002 and Stenberg, 2000). Literally every learner should be treated uniquely based on their preference to digest information (Pashler et al, 2008). The various capabilities should be addressed by different pattern of instructions.

Stenberg' theory of pattern of intelligence claimed that each individual has strength and weakness in learning. Some students possess analytical pattern which make them good in analyzing as well as evaluating ideas and remembering information. However, they might be weak in presenting ideas. These kinds of learners might not be able to make oral response as what the teacher expected through some of her teaching strategies. They might come up as passive students who will do better in written guided practice and tests. These students will not participate in her freer activities which require practical capability to present and convince others about their ideas. Contrary, creative students are good in generating novel ideas but they are not capable to analyze and make the ideas into practice (Krathwohl, 2002 and Stenberg, 2000).

The teacher in this study case might end up into frustrating condition to know her active and responsive student do not perform in tests. These students can be the same students who contributed actively in the introduction, presentation and freer activities. Meantime, students who appeared to be passive and unmotivated might perform well in the tests. To avoid teachers from being frustrated, they should have learned this.

Importantly, for developing students' learning, teachers should design tailored assessment which was made based on the learning objectives and the patterns of students learning (Krathwohl, 2002 and Pashler, et al, 2008). An ideal educational assessment covers different memories, analytical, and practical achievement. Since the institution set the assessment for the whole parallel class, then the learning process might lose its authenticity and meaning by the generalized assessment tools (Krathwohl, 2002). This factor could be the reason why some students tend to be ignorant during the class. Shortly, by understanding more taxonomy of educational objectives and transmitting it into visible written language formats, teachers can enhance students' learning through clearly stated of the measurable standard of learning goals. This objective facilitates the communication of determining particular materials.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is teachers' desire to bring their students to success through an ideal learning environment they designed for students. Indeed, an ideal learning process develops learners' analytical, creative and practical abilities (Bennet, 2017). It is teachers' responsibility to make learning happen. To do so, teachers should be able to design class instruction, activities and assessment which develop learners' capabilities to be successful learners through the class interaction which require learners to balance the abilities the learners possess (Krathwohl, 2002). Pattern of capabilities can be developed through learning. Teachers' understanding about this

issue is paramount in their teaching practice. It helps teachers recognize their students' capabilities and it gives insights for teachers that students respond differently to instructions. Teachers need to be more sensitive in picking up classroom instruction procedures to facilitate their diverse students' learning strategies. Teachers should balance different learners' patterns and strategies in their classrooms' instruction, activities, and assessment to help learners develop their capabilities to be a consummate balancer.

Benjamin Bloom with his taxonomy proposed ways to save teachers from the moral dilemmas to develop students' cognitive aspect and at the same time their affective strategies. Developing affective domain is important to create sympathetic, social, passionate and self-efficacy individual. Instead of lecturing the students, the teacher can set dynamic and collaborative peer and group activities to the development of students understanding and affective skills (Pashler et al., 2008). The taxonomy also enables teachers to classify class activities with its specific purposes, and to provide clear and concise assessment goal. The whole written form of this lesson plan and assessment target provides visual representation of the learning process. At the end, it is beneficial in improving educational opportunity, to change the learners' attitude. This taxonomy improves teachers' teaching practice and institutions' curriculum. Particularly, since the institution in this study case does not accommodate the learners' different capabilities in its score policies and assessment tools, hence a revision might be a necessity. The revision will take a lot of work, human resources, and cost. However, it worth doing for making the institution a reliable place to produce qualified education output. Importantly, teachers can start it from their class instruction and activities which cover the needs of diversity in their classrooms.

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