

The Reviewing of Benefits of Information Gap Activities in Teaching Second Language Situation

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Abstract

Since the existing of communicative language teaching (CLT), a great deal of research has explored the role of communicative activities in language learning. Such research has studied different ways of improving students' language skills. Activities are one way to practice the target language inside the classroom. Although there are many activities that encourage practicing the target language, the present paper tends to review information gap activities based on communicative language teaching approach. The aim is to investigate this approach through the review of literature and to determine the trend of the research done on information gap activities and their benefits in teaching the second language.

Key words; *information gap activities, CLT, Language learning.*

1- Introduction

The Cambridge dictionary defined gap as an empty room or opening in the center of something or between two items. In this study, what the researcher means by the gap is that one student has some information, but the other student doesn't have it, which means they have a gap and they need to interact to fill the gap. Rahimi (2016) identifies the method of information gap as it is a teaching method in which two or more learners work together in which each student responds to an issue or question. Another definition of information gap is by Harmer (1991) who described it as a gap between the two (individuals) in the data they possess, and the discussion helps to close that gap so that both speakers end up getting the same information. Information gap is an action between two or more students who have information, and to get that information and complete the task, they have to negotiate the meaning.

This causes learners to use various methods such as issues, explanations and descriptions. There are two kinds of information that can fill the gap in the information gap operations; the first form that one of the learners provides to the learner implies that one learner has a piece of information and the other learner has another piece of data from the same data and they have to interact and talk to finish the missing data from each other. The second type of supply data is provided by one-way suppliers like interviews. Based on the interaction theory of Long (1981) in studying that two methods are the best way to learn. According to Irona and Ratmanida (2018), there is a need for teachers and teachers or teachers and teachers to construct true communication; one of these ways is to use information gap.

However, the notion of information gap is a significant element of communication in the CLT classroom. To communicate in order to obtain information, this refers to human nature. Authentic communication within the classroom can take place when learners participate in information gap exchange operations (Basturkmen, 1994). Students must use their expertise from communication strategies, grammar and vocabulary to finish the operations (Ozsevik, 2010).

2- Literature

When students use the target language, authentic and meaningful communication should be regarded. Students must exercise communication using the target language referring to Vygotsy's hypothesis that social interaction is the foundation of human cognitive in order to develop speaking skills and their communication skills. Activities are one way within the classroom to exercise the target language. According to Ur (1991), the learning method of any skill should go through three primary phases: verbalization, automation, and autonomy. Although there are many activities that can encourage the practice of the target language within the classroom, the current research tends to use information gap-based practices oriented on the concept of Vygotsy and supports Ur's (1991) point of perspective on the teaching process to examine their efficacy in creating speech skills. According to Nunan (2005), the main focus of information gap is on listening and talking. The subsequent section discusses the meaning of information gap in details:

2.1 Major Characteristic of Information Gap Activities

There are a number of information gap activity features. A gap is the primary feature of information gap operations. Harmer (1991) defines the information gap as break in the information they process between the two people, and the discussion helps to close the gap so that both speakers now have the same information. Learning therefore requires thinking and gap to create this requirement (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). It implies that the existence of the gaps stimulates the demand for thinking. The divide generates both the complete need for communication and the need for cooperation. Another feature of information gap activity is genuine activity. Authentic communication can take place in the classroom when learners participate in information gap exchange operations (Basturkmen: 1994). Richards (2006) argues that genuine materials should be available for communicative operations.

The use of genuine materials believes it desirable to provide opportunities for learners to create strategies to understand the language as it is genuinely used (Larsen-freeman: 2000). In addition, the process of giving and receiving information, thoughts and ideas is an exchange of information. The information gap method includes data exchange between two or more individuals (Lee: 2003). The respondents decide what the exchange should be about important information or messages. In the information gap operations, the need for data exchange makes the respondents interact in order to exchange their information. Nunan (2005) argues that the objective of classroom operations is to communicate that leads to an exchange of information, ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings and accomplishments. Activities with information gaps should be performed through couple or group work.

According to Kayi (2006), in information gap operations, each student is asked to work in pairs. He also said that if the other student does not provide the information the other needs, the task cannot be finished. Activities with information gaps must be interesting. Ur (1996) pointed out that information gap is a particularly interesting sort of assignment based, for instance, on the need to comprehend or communicate information when it comes to figuring out what is in the image of the partners. The information gap activities are attractive as it attracts the participants to find the information they don't have. They will be encouraged to bridge the gap if the learners are drawn to the activity. Hess (2001) pointed out that the gap in information generates an atmosphere of motivation. In addition, information gap activities represent the actual interaction as Harmer (1991) pointed out that information gap activities should be helpful in the classroom input and output stage.

Ellis (1993) claims that the data gap provides room for students to practice how to obtain data and practice talking for actual life sharing. Richards and Platt (1992) argue that there must be an information divide between them or between them and their teacher in order to encourage true interaction between learners. Nunan (2005) pointed out that the objective of the classroom operations is to have some knowledge of the targeted language of everyday life, speech must cover the community such as college, home and recreation. In addition, one feature of information gap operations is that students can obtain peer feedback from each other (Hess: 2001). As Jonson and Morrow (1981) point out, there are three elements to the real communicative operations: information gap, selection and feedback. There are two primary features of an information gap operation, according to Brown and Lee (2001). First, the main focus is on the information, not the language form Second, to attain the goal, there is a need for communicative communication. McDonough and Show (2012) pointed out that Information gap activity is characterized as follow:

- a. In each activity the student is given a task.
- b. The information they need for the task is split into two parts (Student A and student B), no student has enough information to be able to do it alone.

- c. The students have to ask each other for the information they need and come to a decision together.
- d. The activities are not exercises, but contexts in which the students can use language to find out about things they genuinely need to know and to share ideas.

2.2 Advantages of Information Gap Activities

The use of information gap operations to improve the speaking skills of learners has many benefits. According to Arung (2012), using information gap operations is the route to promoting speaking capacity. Rees, (2002) and Kayi, (2006) also talked about learners having a room and great possibilities to practice English in and out of the classroom using information gap operations. It can also facilitate language acquisition and create a true atmosphere of interaction (Doughty and Pica, 1986).). Many grammatical structures and many vocabulary can build up information gap operations (Raptou, 2002). Authentic materials are used according to Basturkmen (1994) information gap operations. When using information gap operations, students will be pleased and inspired to talk, which will boost their trust because they are free to respond (Raptou, 2002; Rosmaliwarnis, 2007).

Students must complete the task through meaning negotiation (Neu and Reeser, 1997).

1. Activities involving information gaps motivate learners to speak. Collaborative and individual efforts are a method of studying foreign languages. Students speak freely together to gather information from other learners that produces a non-formal scenario that leads to more relaxed learners being involved. If there is a gap in data, the discussion between learners will be interesting and meaningful.

2. Activities with information gaps are appropriate for all levels by making some changes from the basic level to advance levels. Teachers as a monitor and students as participant activities are planned for beginners and middle levels, while the activities guided by the instructor and supervised by the learner are for intermediate and advanced levels.

3. It is verified that the advantages of information gap operations are helpful in the classroom input and output stage.

In addition, Hess (2001) presents the benefits of information gap operations. The overview of these benefits is addressed as follows in the following paragraph. Using information gap operations allows students to obtain peer feedback from one another. It also generates an atmosphere of motivation in the school that makes learners ask each other for assistance to finish the assignment. Brainstorming will make the learning method more efficient in order to obtain more information. Information gap operations will create a learning style by encouraging learners ' independence. According to Richards and Rogers (2014), however, the primary objective of teaching talking for linguistic learning is fluency, which has to use activities that require students to be in actual interaction such as information gap and other assignments.

Lawtie (2004) refers to the fact that whenever second language students can engage in a discussion that implies linguistic learning achievement. Ellis (1993) claims that communicative activities are full of communicative components such as role play, group activities and knowledge gaps that allow learners to practice how to obtain information and how to practice talking for true life sharing. Richards (2006) also pointed out that the information gap utilizes an authentic material in teaching and learning procedures that will be the same as outside the classroom. For many reasons, therefore, information gap is the best technique for second language learners; it can provide learners with a good opportunity to use the sentences they learn, it also allows learners to talk, exchange information, and interact over time, and the tasks will make the lesson more interesting and motivate the learner to speak more than their teacher (Harris, 1990). However, Nunan (1999) advises language teachers to adapt interaction operations in order to attain the objective of this research. Brown (2007) endorsed that, if in a true scenario, speaking abilities can be enhanced by exercise. Arung (2012) also claimed that, information gap operations are methods to encourage the capacity to speak.

2.3 Disadvantage of Information-Gap Activities

Because information gap operations have benefits, there are also disadvantages. According to Weir (1990), the use of data gap inside the classroom has some disadvantages. When colleagues work in pairs or groups and one of the respondents will regulate the process of conversation while others will reduce their speaking time. In addition, the variations in the level of skills between the learners may influence the process of communication.

2.4 Types of Information-Gap Activities

There are many kinds of operations of communication. Richards and Rogers (2014) and Richards (2006) argued that communicative approach operations are unlimited. These activities assist learners attain the curriculum's communicative objectives, as well as involve students in the process of communication such as interaction, sharing of information and meaning that is negotiated (Richards and Rogers, 2014). Pair work and group work regarded as the primary objects for communication language teaching in the framework of school operations. Johnson and Morrow (1981) outline that there are three elements to operations that are genuinely communicative: data gap, selection and feedback. Zimmer (2015) launched some information gap activity characteristics that are "anywhere some data is lacking and learners have to ask questions to other learners who have the response to gather.

Corbett (2003) emphasized that information gap should provide authentic and genuine communication while communication is the fundamental objective of communicative learning. Nunan (1989) intended a communicative classroom assignment in which he discussed the activity objective. First, communicating that can lead to an exchange of information, thoughts, opinions, attitudes, feelings and accomplishments. Second, understand the targeted language and speech of everyday life. This will include society like home, school, and recreation. There are two kinds of information gap operations: one-way direction of communication and two-way direction of communication. When a learner has information, one-way communication occurs, while other learners do not have that information. If one learner has a picture and explains this picture to another learner who has to paint the same picture, an example of a one-way communication path. A two-way direction of interaction is that all learners have distinct information; they have to negotiate to fix the activity issue. For instance, each student in a couple or group has distinct data on how to get to a specific location, they need to speak to exchange the information that causes the learners to get to a specific location (Ellis, 1999). Information gap is an approach to communication language teaching technique that motivates learners in the real scenario to practice the target language. Previous studies in the development of speaking skills have explored the impact of the information gap assignment. For example, Ismaili and Bajami (2016) found the information gap activity to be a useful way for second language learners in the classroom to interact and practice language. They explored in their research whether or not the information gap activities impact the speaking skills of Turkish learners. Using questionnaire and oral examination in an experimental design that demonstrated extremely enhanced speaking skills for learners. Similarly, in her research in Indonesia, Weathering (2016) used pre-test and post-test, observation and document experimental design. The research found that the activities of information gap could enhance the skill of talking learners.

In addition, Ghofur and Fuqaha (2015), who also performed their studies in Indonesia, reported that information gap exercise with twelve grade learners had been efficient in improving speaking skills. A study by Panjehkoubi et al. (2015) examined the efficacy of information gap operations among Iranian pre-intermediate EFL female English learners in the development of speaking skills. They intended it as a pre-and post-test experimental study. The outcome disclosed a statistically significant difference in both groups' speaking capacity and the findings showed that the control class was outperformed by the experimental class receiving information gap tasks. Afrizal (2015) performed a similar survey in Indonesia to explore whether the information gap activity will enhance the speaking skills of learners among the learners of the English department. He discovered that the information gap was affective in enhancing the speaking skills of learners by using observation and questionnaire.

Ibrahim (2014) performed a second grade SMA N 1 experimental study to explore whether the direct method or information gap is more affective in talking abilities. The outcome disclosed that learners taught using information gap operations had a stronger ability to speak than learners taught using direct method. In their research in Iran, Soleimani et al. (2014) examined whether pre-task implementation through information gap in EFL English schools impacts the speaking skills of learners. It was an experimental study and the outcome showed that the distinction between the experimental group and the control group was important. The posttest experimental team was better than the control group.

3- 3. Discussion and conclusion

It can be noted from the above literature that information gap operations enhanced the capacity of all research participants to speak. The participant was from distinct levels indicating the advantage of the

information gap technique for all levels and ages. As a consequence, the use of information gap operations can be stated to favorably enhance the speaking skills of the learners. The growth of the speaking skills of the learners is due to the use in the learning and teaching process of information gap operations. Information gap activity gave students a broad opportunity to practice speaking skills through peer or group communication. In order to fill the gap, information gap activities involve learners to speak the target language, increasing the trust and motivation of the learners. The learners were more involved in the speech class that represents the teaching and learning process development. They were also able to understand the teacher's target language. The students' vocabulary has increased. Therefore, it was intended to be possible to use information gap operations to create the speaking skills of the learners.

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