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A Self-determination Theory-based Lesson Plan

David Ockert

This paper explains the theoretical foundation of self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) as it relates to foreign language learning, and second, to provide SDT-based lesson plans / tasks that can be used in a communicative language teaching (CLT) setting or task-based language teaching (TBLT) situation. The theoretical basis for the task presented herein can be found in research results published previously in *The School House* (Ockert, 2013). First, it must be noted that “(r)ecent studies on SDT-based motives have shown that games are primarily motivating to the extent that players experience *autonomy*, *competence* and *relatedness* while playing” (Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006, p. 2). The authors investigated the impact of game play on participant psychological well-being based on these three basic psychological needs, which games are presumed to satisfy. Second, the “results show that SDT’s theorized needs for *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* independently predict enjoyment and future game play” (p. 1). While some educator may argue against the use of the term ‘game’ for an in-class exercise, the terms ‘activity’ or ‘task’, as in TBLT, will be used in this paper.

In this paper, variations on lesson planning are explained. These SDT-based lesson plans are actually tasks – as in task-based language teaching (TBLT) - that can be used in a principled communicative language teaching class (CLT; For a recent article, see Dörnyei, 2009). Research has shown that activities are inherently motivating to the extent that the participants experience *autonomy*, *competence* and *relatedness* (see Deci & Flaste, 1996).

First, *autonomy* means giving the students choices or options in how they both create and participate in the activity. For example, allowing students to have input or make their own questions for a Q & A activity provides *autonomy*. (See Figure 2, below.)

On the other hand, *competence* requires that participants have the potential to master the material, from the vocabulary (lexical level), the phrases necessary to complete the activity (syntactical level), and the purpose of the activity in its entirety holistically. For vocabulary, this is made easier since the students choose what is in their own room.

If they lack the required word, they can consult a dictionary, a friend, the Japanese teacher of English (JTE), or the assistant language teacher (ALT). With a large class, I often walk around to check on student progress and will help put katakana labels into English, or at least Romanize them to the extent possible. The necessary speech to carry on the activity can be taught via demonstration between the JTE and ALT. The purpose of the activity as a whole can be explained via pre-teaching; this is what we are going *to do* today, and this is *why* we are doing it.

Now the third component, *relatedness*, requires that the students have a friendly, almost personal relationship with their classmates, the JTE, and the ALT (Yes - The ALTs active role is crucial in EFL learning contexts!). So, to provide the necessary proximity for a feeling of *relatedness* to occur, the rules of the activity must include one such as: You must describe three features of your *Dream Room* to the ALT and receive his or her signature. Please see below for specific advice on how to conduct the activity. Finally, this is a great way to lower students' affective filter (Krashen, 1982). The activity is presented below in the same format as a My Share activity commonly found in *The Language Teacher*.

Activity: BINGO! BINGO!! BINGO!!!

The well-known game of bingo can be played in several different ways since it was originally intended as a communicative language teaching (CLT) activity. In fact, bingo may be the perfect task-based language teaching (TBLT) activity ever created due to its amazing versatility and adaptability to student ability levels. For teachers working with junior high school students (JHSs), there are several very creative ways to make bingo an integral part of a principled CLT course (Dörnyei, 2009).

For example, when using bingo activities with first year JHSs, it is good to use simple statements followed with a tag question. For example, in a nine-grid bingo activity, statements on the first line such as 'I like pizza.' This is followed by the tag question 'How about you?' on the second line of the grid. The third line of the grid would have the 'Yes, I do.' agreement statement and the 'No, I do not. (or don't)' non agreement statement. After each of the latter two statements, brackets can be used with nothing between them as a space to get the signature of a communication partner (For an example, see Figure 1, below). The activity would proceed as follows: First, the students practice all nine statements with the teacher and clarify the meaning of each.

When working with junior high school students, bingo works great in the following ways. First, if you use a five by five bingo grid, the students can enter twenty-five of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Then, the teacher can call out the letters randomly and the students can cross them out until they get four in a row, or 'reach'. Sec-

ond, when they get 'reach' (one space away from a "bingo") they must stand up and say "Reach!" When they get "bingo" they must wave their arms back and forth and shout "Bingo! Bingo! Bingo! Bingo!"

Quick guide

Keywords: Young learners, TBLT, CLT, group work

Learner English level: From beginner to advanced

Learner maturity: Elementary school to adult

Preparation time: One hour or less

Activity time: 20 – 30 minutes

Materials: Bingo sheet handout

Preparation

Step 1: For first year students, use statements with a tag question. For example, in a nine-grid game, a statement on the first line such as 'I like pizza.' followed by the tag question 'How about you?' on the second line. The third line would have the 'Yes, I do.' and the 'No, I don't' statements. Brackets can be used to make a space to get the signatures partners (see Figure 1).

Step 2: The teacher prepares nine statements on a sheet of A4 size paper. Make enough copies for the students plus the teacher.

Procedure

Step1: The activity can proceed as follows. First, the students practice all nine statements with the teacher and clarify the meanings.

Step 2: Second, the rules are explained. First, stand up and find a partner. Second, do a variation of *janken*, such as "Yes, we can!" The winner asks one question first. If their partner answers 'Yes, I do.' the partner signs the questioners bingo sheet in the bracket. Then it is the other partners turn to ask a question.

<p>I like pizza. How about you? Yes, I do. () No, I don't. ()</p>

Figure 1. An example of a simple grid

Step 3: Have the students continue the activity until they get as many signatures as possible in the time allotted. The more communication, the better!

Step 4: Next, it is time to play bingo! How do you play? Well, if the students have signatures in three boxes in a row, many will think they have a bingo, but that would be too easy. So, it is necessary to 'Japanize' it. Therefore, the way to 'win' must be random.

Step 5: Therefore, one way is to simply choose student numbers randomly and if the students have the signature of the student who has been chosen, they circle the grid. A simple way to choose students randomly is to call the student 'names' according to their attendance list number. As more numbers are called, the students continue to circle grids.

Step 6: When a student gets two grids in a row, they say "Reach!" and stand up. When they get three circles in a row, they do the Bingo Dance – wave their hands in the air above their heads and say "Bingo! Bingo! Bingo! Bingo! Bingo!" Then they may sit down.

Step 7: Continue as long as you feel necessary to finish the game.

Variations and Conclusion

For advanced students, allowing the students to actually make their own questions is a great way to allow them autonomy, which students inherently find motivating (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Dickinson, 1995). An example of a grid designed to review a specific grammar point can be seen in Figure 2. Allow students ten minutes or so to make their own questions. Then continue the activity as outlined above. Or try reverse 'bingo!' by having the students stand up first. When they get 'bingo!' they may sit down. The last student standing is the winner. Enjoy!

Variations: 1) The next partner must be of the opposite gender to prevent boys from clustering in one corner, and girls in another. 2) As an incentive to communicate with a native speaker, the students must ask the teacher one question (no *janken* would be necessary).

It is hoped that the three basic premises of *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* – the three strands of self-determination, are readily evident in the simple game of 'bingo!' Since the students are provided the

<p>Do you have a _____ made in _____?</p> <p>Yes, I do. () No, I don't. ()</p>
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Figure 2. An example of an advanced bingo grid

opportunity to demonstrate *competence* by completing the activity, and *relatedness* by interacting with the classmates and teachers, these two facets of SDT are readily apparent. Adding the third strand of SDT, *autonomy*, requires a little more effort on behalf of the teacher(s) in order to allow the students the opportunity to essentially create their own 'bingo!' card. However, once you give this activity a try, you will understand how much the students actually enjoy using English to finish the task.

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