ENGLISH ACTIVITY LESSON - A FUN AND INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO MOTIVATING STUDENTS IN JUNIOR FOUNDATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the knowledge

English Activity Lesson was first implemented in Confucian Private Secondary School in 2006 in conjunction with the education reform. This paradigm shift has transformed our classroom learning from teacher-centred education to student-centred education. Students are able to interact with one another and participate actively in a learner-centred environment which is more conducive for active learning. Students can be motivated and enlightened through various fun and interactive activities such as group presentations, games, dramas, role plays, etc.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Due to the lack of environment for students in Confucian Private Secondary School to use the English language, the majority of them are not interested in learning the language. They tend to forget what the teachers have taught if they are not involved in the process of learning. Communication skills may also suffer if the teachers do most of the talking while the students listen inattentively in the conventional class. In order to master the speaking skill, learners ought to possess the ability to communicate and collaborate with other students. Therefore, it is inevitable that we must incorporate active learning in English Activity Lesson for our students to participate actively in fun and interactive tasks.

1.3 Objective of the Study

- To incorporate fun and interactive games in learning
- To involve students to participate actively
- To motivate students to speak English

2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Constructivist Approach: Active Learning

Active learning is described as a classroom approach which demonstrates that the learners are active in the learning process by building knowledge and understand in response to learning opportunity provided by the teacher. With active learning, students become more engaged in their learning process and eventually they can learn effectively by doing instead of reading or hearing.

I hear and I forget. *I read and I remember.* *I do and I understand.*	Confucius (551-479 BC)
Tell me and I forget. *Teach me and I remember.* *Involve me and I learn.*	Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

Therefore, learning by doing is a major breakthrough in the process of learning.

2.2　Cone of Learning

Edgar Dale, *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching* (3rd Edition). Holt, Rinehart, and Winston (1969).
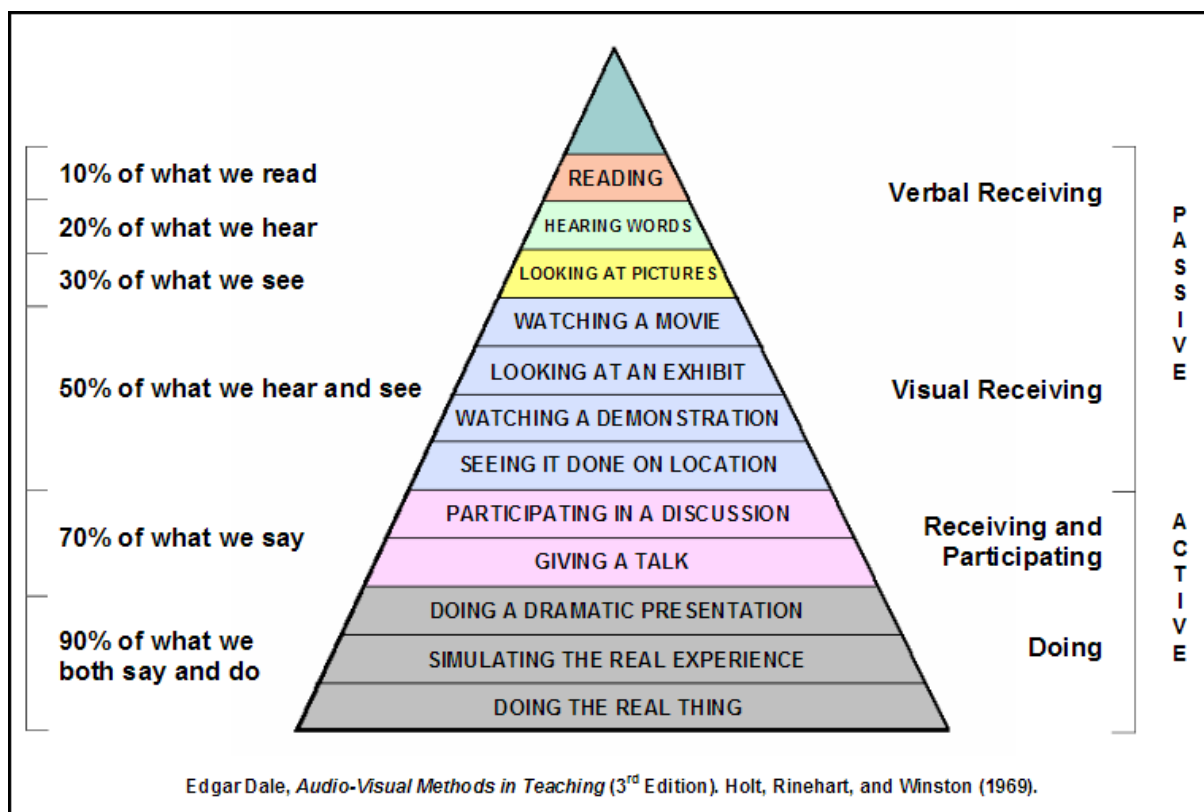
In 1946, Edgar Dale introduced the Cone of Learning in his book on Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching. Edgar Dale's research from the 1940s suggests that the best approach for active learning in the classroom is at the bottom of the cone. He says that learners retain more knowledge by what they "do" as opposed to what is "heard", "read" or "observed". Learners will be engaged in effective learning if they are involved in doing the real things or experiencing the simulated situations. On the contrary, the least effective approaches are at the top of the cone which consists of reading (10%) and listening in class (20%).

2.3 The Importance of Vocabulary in Speaking

Prior to teaching the structure of dialogues or practicing speaking, students are taught the relevant vocabulary that they will use in their speaking session. The importance of vocabulary is crucial as it is like bricks to building a house. Linguist David Wilkins once said, "Without grammar little can be conveyed, *without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed*." Indeed, people need to use words in order to express themselves in not only English but any language.

Most learners acknowledge the importance of vocabulary acquisition. Students usually consider speaking and writing activities exhausting because they keep on using the same expressions and words and very soon their conversation is abruptly interrupted due to missing words. The main reason for such communication problems is the lack of vocabulary.

Our students are confronted with the problem of forgetting the words immediately after the teacher has elicited their meaning or after they have looked them up in the dictionary, and this is also a cause of the lack of vocabulary.
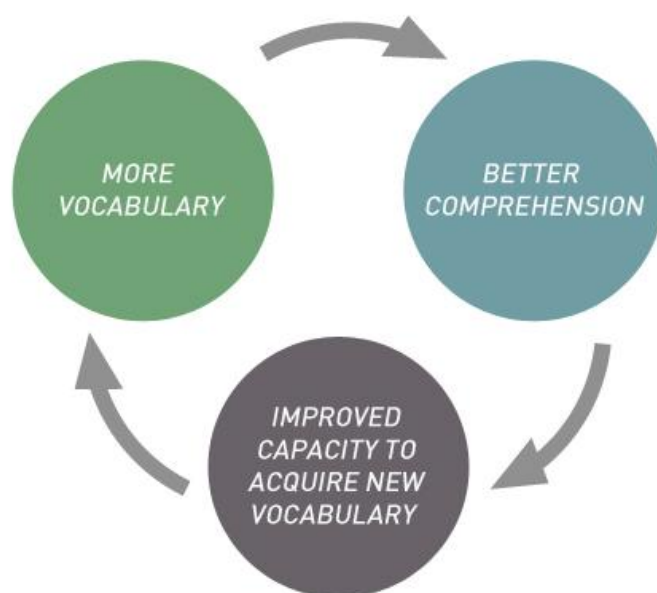
MORE
VOCABULARY

BETTER
COMPREHENSION

IMPROVED
CAPACITY TO
ACQUIRE NEW
VOCABULARY

Chart 1

As indicated in Chart 1, students require more vocabulary that will help them to speak English.

2.4　Participants And Procedures

Students in the Foundation level usually have limited vocabulary. Therefore it is essential to teach vocabulary in every speaking lesson. Furthermore, students who have learned new words, quickly forget due to insufficient recycling of the words. Quizlet.com is a useful tool that can be used to teach vocabulary to Junior Foundation students as it is an excellent platform for rote learning. One of the main features of Quizlet is the use of flashcards. The cards can be created with the flexibility of including translated words and images or even sound recording (payable version). Quizlet also includes a pair or games, matching and gravity games to help students recall the words. With the inclusion of sound, students hear and repeat each word and then teacher randomly picks a few students to repeat.
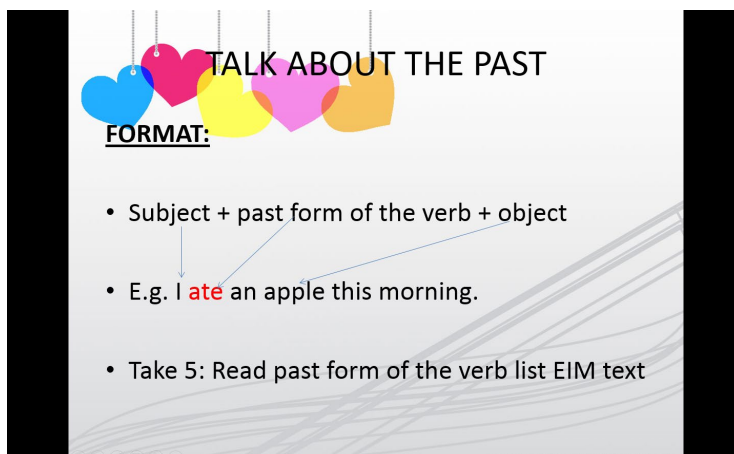
With reference made to their past simple verbs on Page 126 and using Quizlet, teachers teach and revise the vocabulary with flashcards and games.
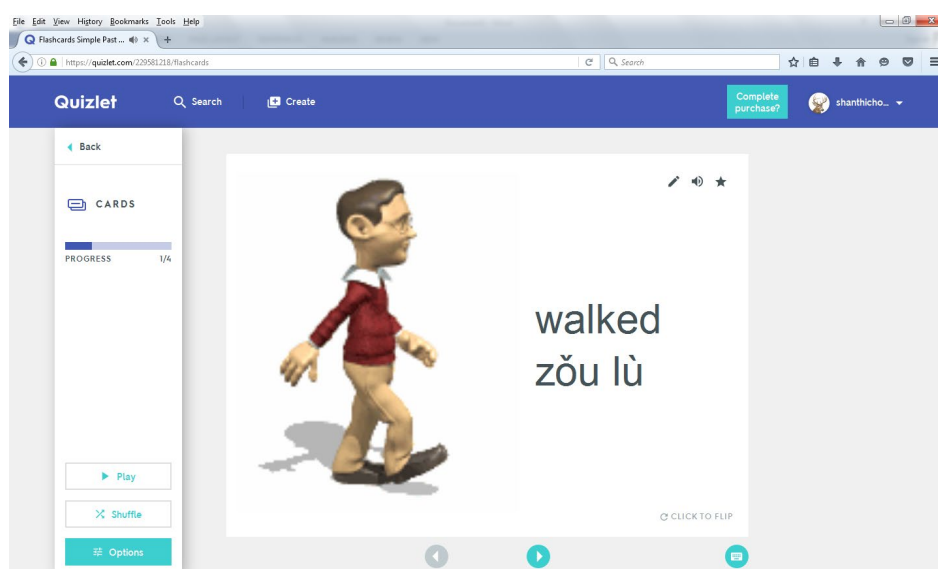
The second part of the lesson is to practise using the past simple form of the verbs in sentences through a game of musical chairs. Students sit in a circle and then they are given the instructions on how to play the game. A box with numbers is passed around the circle. Students pick a number when the music stops and this is also the number on the screen. Refer to the following illustrations:
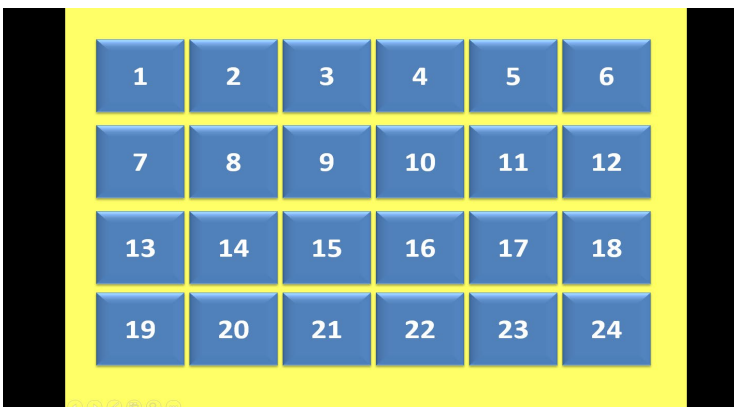
Teacher reminds the students the format of past simple questions and answers by writing on the board. Students copy down the format in their notebook.
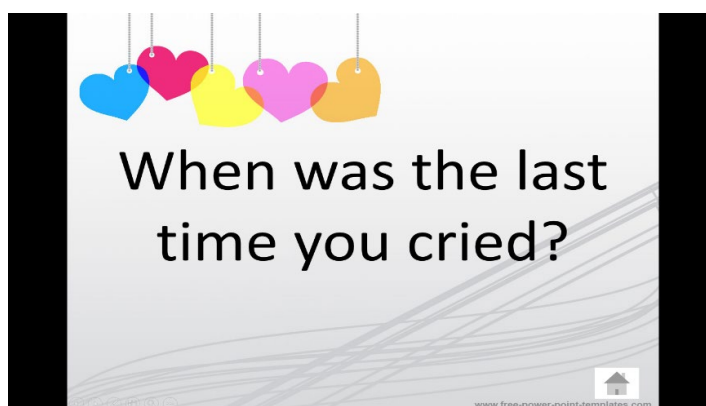

Using the website www.free-power-point-templates.com, this PowerPoint Slide is created. When the students draw a number, the teacher then clicks the number selected. Each number is connected to a question which is structured in the past simple tense, for example:

The student has to answer the question in past simple tense. In the first round, they are given a chance if they make mistakes. However, in the second round, they have to be "punished" by singing a song, standing on one leg for one round of the game or dancing, etc. Students continue with this game a few rounds, for about twenty minutes.

After this game, students sit back with their partner. Each student completes their 'me' section and then asks their partner using the format earlier. They then complete the questionnaire on Page 99 (refer to the following).
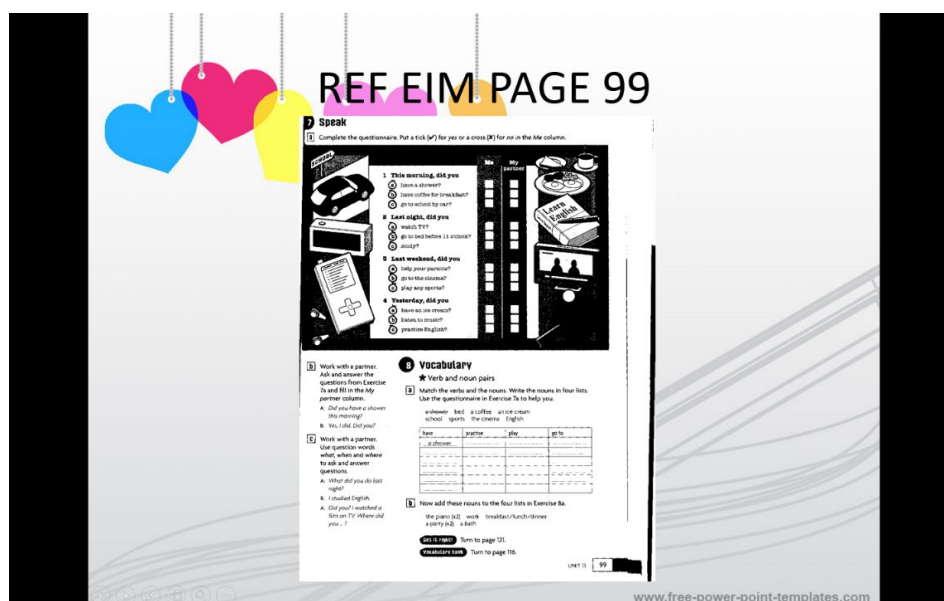
Then they write a dialogue (copied from the whiteboard) which is also taken from Page 99 of their text book.

Students complete the dialogues. The following week, teacher goes through it once again and allows the students some time to practise. Teacher walks around to ensure they pronounce the words correctly and assist wherever required. Thereafter, students present it to the class in pairs (without reading from the book).

3.   CONCLUSION

3.1   Summary

The implementation of English Activity Lesson in Junior Foundation helps to motivate students in learning the language, especially speaking. Indeed, the students are able to learn better in a fun and interactive approach due to active participation in class and involvement in the process of learning while the teacher only acts as a facilitator to try to help learners understand better when they ask for help. Student-centred education should focus on *how* students learn, not just on *what* they learn. John Holt states that the biggest enemy to learning is the talking teacher, so students ought to be encouraged to 'think hard', rather than passively receive information from the teacher.

3.2   Suggestion

The following website can be used to encourage learning in a fun way. On this website, there are many vocabulary games for students to learn vocabulary or revise what they have learnt, in a fun way. The following are two common vocabulary games.

www.manythings.org

1. Hangman

2. Word drop game