## Simulation in Language Learning Acquisition

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### Abstract

Simulation is undoubtedly a valuable tool for applied scientific language learning in a constructive teaching learning process. It has and is enhancing creativity, innovation and applied thinking. Besides it helps in the development and cultivation of creative language within a relatively conducive learning environment. Thus, it helps in building motivation and enthusiasm, compulsory for the quality language-learning to take place.

This paper shall throw light on different approaches relating to the use of simulation techniques and designs behind the process and finally procedure of operation followed by the resulting conclusion.

*Key words: classroom simulations, methodology, approaches, motivation, language learning and communications*

### Simulation Theory in Language: An Approach

There are three theoretical approaches to a language (Rodgers & Richards, 1986): Functional, Structural and Interactional. Simulation is viewed under the Interactional approach. Here the language is an instrument for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the social transaction performances between individuals…In the light of this approach "language teaching content, may be specified and organized by patterns of exchange and interaction or may be left

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Altaf Jameel, Ph.D.
Simulation in Language Learning Acquisition                                    745

unspecified, to be shaped by the inclinations of learners as interactions." (Rodgers & Richards, 1986)

Simulations very openly promote effective interpersonal relations and social transactions between participants. "In order for a simulation to occur the participants must accept the duties and responsibilities of their roles and functions, and do the best they can in a situation in which they find themselves" (Jones, 1982, p. 113). Acting on their individual duties, participants have to utilize effective social skills while communicating to each other in a simulation activity.

On the other hand Christopher & Smith, 1990; have very aptly presented a model wherein language teaching content in simulations may be either specified or left unspecified by differentiating them as 'convergent' and 'divergent' models. They are convinced that once a convergent model is used, the simulation patterns of exchange are specified and once the divergent model is used, the simulation patterns of exchange are left unspecified.

## Simulation Theory in Language Learning

Simulation according to Scarcella & Crookall, (1990) facilitates second language acquisition. For the reason they put forth three language-learning theories.

1. Learners are exposed to multi-quantities of comprehensive input.
2. Learners are actively involved and
3. Their desires, attitudes and feelings are strongly influenced.

For the comprehensible input, once implied in simulation, students have been found getting engaged in positive communication thus playing their active roles. Learners get the chance to go for new experimentations in an adoptable atmosphere, thereby helping them to develop long term motivation to acquire an additional language. Further it encourages needful communication, active involvement and positive attitude. The simulated (real life) problems help students develop their problem solving skills and critical thinking. By active engagement, indirect participation with results, are observed, thus attracting interaction among participants. It helps to make them forget they are learning a foreign language.

## Objectives

Primarily simulation designing is to decide upon the game criteria. Cummings & Genzel, (1990) have explained the concept as a general example: "I want my students to become more comfortable when visiting restaurants or to be more at ease in business situations, such as negotiating a contract." specific objectives, particularly "I want my students to know how to give their orders in fast restaurants", speaks of it very clearly and simply thus highlighting general objectives.

## Designing syllabus replica for simulation

The syllabus replica could be a combination of 'procedural and 'process'. Initially in simulations, the student's personal activities are essential to learning but the task has to be chosen under the guidelines of a trainer. Skehan's (1998), defining procedural syllabus, an early ice breaking game e.g. the famous people game described by Ladousse, 1987, can introduce the learners to simple simulation activities. Here a student as a volunteer plays the role of a famous person.  Others ask questions to the volunteer in order to guess his or her identity. The activity based on ice breaker would involve more complexity; nevertheless play the game in accordance with the procedural replica.

After that, however, a simulation taking place on several periods might follow the process replica hence involving learners to control the nature of the ongoing interactions (Skehan, 1998). It is pursued by a design competition (Ladousse, 1987). Thus learners prepare a simulation which is very similar to them. They finally decide on the event to be simulated, select a significant issue within an incident to be investigated besides identifying the roles of participants, etc.

## Teaching-Learning Activities

The simulation used in case of convergent replica counteracts with Skehan's, (1998) four task-based criteria instructions:

1. Meaning is primary,
2. There is a goal which needs to be worked at,
3. The activity is outcome-evaluated,
4. There is a real-world relationship,

The activities in class therefore don't hub solely on language itself, but on the goals and activities that may be defined by the trainer in case of procedural syllabus or the learner's process syllabus.

In further elaboration of the concept, examples of a leaner-trainer activity have been put forth by Shadow (1987). Here the functions shall stimulate students to use their imagination and test them to think and speak as well.

Among most intricate simulations, the activities of the trainer may be more comprehensive and learner's activities may be more defined. The trainer might, for example, explain a handout or have the student read a case study explaining the situation and role play cards might be distributed. Such simulations can be applied to teaching language in many areas for instance business and industry (Brammer and Sawyer-Laucanno, (1990), technical English (Hutchinson and Sawyer-Laucanno (1990) and international relations Crookall, (1990).

## Role of Learner/ Student

Ever since role of learners have been specially defined as very prominent in simulation replica, either through verbal instructions or role cards. Nevertheless Kaplan, (1997) argues

against role plays that focus solely on prescriptive themes targeting specific fields of vocabulary, as they don't give birth to spontaneous, real-life flow of communication.

Furthermore another quality replica in the simulation method is pinpointed by Scarcella and Oxford's (1992) approach called 'tapestry approach'. Students, here have to be active and possess considerable control over their own learning. The learners help to select themes and tasks and provide their trainer's, the details of learning process. In simulation, this can be done through' the design competitions' or 'divergent simulations'

Learners have fresh assignments in simulation that he might not be used to. Burns & Gentry (1998), spot lighted undergraduate learners scientifically and suggested some haven't been exposed experiences requiring them to be proactive and to make decisions in unfamiliar contexts. They strongly suggested that instructors understand the knowledge which the learners brought during simulation process and give close attention to the introduction of experiential exercises so that the learner is not discouraged. This suggestion seems much relevant for second language learners, who may be a from a culture in which rules pertaining to teacher-oriented classrooms are dictated, who may possess knowledge gaps thereby making simulation difficult and challenging.

**Role of Trainer/Teacher**

The trainer or a teacher defines the overall structure of the simulation, but generally doesn't actively participate once the structure is set. Jones, 1992; explains the concept as "……the teacher becomes the controller, and controls the event in the same way as a traffic controller, helping the flow of traffic and avoiding bottlenecks, but not telling individuals which way to go." Further this is consistent with Scarcella & Oxford's (1992) principles instead of a traditional, teacher-oriented classrooms structure, the teacher keeps a comparatively low profile and the learners are liberal to communicate each other spontaneously. Thus helps in diminishing learner's anxiety and learning.

The teacher/ trainer, is supposed to enhance surplus responsibilities in simulation methodology especially ought to keep learners motivated by stimulating their curiosity and keeping the material relevant thereby creating a tension to learn (Burns &Gentry, 1998).

**Simulation Procedure: Real classroom methods, practices and activities**

The simulation activity to be put forth shall be based on Ladousse's, (1987) format applied to 'the island game', as described by Crookall & Oxford (1990). In the light of Ladousse's view there are 11(eleven) factors. These factors are: level, time, aim, language, organization, preparation, warm-up, procedure, follow-up, remarks and variations. Various playing simulation exercises are then explained in terms of the mentioned factors..

Normally **level** shows the minimum and occasionally maximum level at which the activity can be carried out. **Time** depends on whether learners need to read reports, articles etc. A broader

objective of each activity is an indication of **Aim** such as developing confidence or becoming very sensitive to concepts expressed in a **language**. The medium of instruction is indicated by the language to be utilized. Such as structures, functions, different skills, work with register, or intonation patterns. **Organization** describes whether the activity absorbs pair work or group work and in the latter case how many learners ought to be in each group. **Preparation** indicates whatever thing needs to be done before the class activity. **Warm-up** comprises ideas to focus the learner's attention thus create interest within them. **Procedure** involves a gradual guide in an activity. For example Richards (1985), advocates a six step procedure: preliminary activity, a model dialogue, learning to perform the role play with the help of role cards, listening to the recorded voices of the native speakers performing the role play activity, follow-up and finally repeating the sequence. However most of the simulation procedures don't follow these guidelines. **Follow-up** indicates the activities that are performed after the activity may be as homework. **Remarks** may be the general interest or warnings about special difficulties expected to arise. **Variations** can be utilized with different types of experimental classes at different levels.

In order to the implicate whole procedure to be carried out in the class, lets apply Ladousse's 11(eleven) factors to Crookall & Oxford's (1990) ' island game ' this game is equally expanded ice-breaking and collective decision-making activity which can help develop multi skills in a target language. The simulation activity is one in which the group has been standard on an island. Lava is sure to get erupted in 30-55 minutes therefore a run away plan has to be formulated very hastily. All the lifeboats are ready to take everyone to the safety to a nearby station. Nevertheless an agreement has to be made as who shall go where and with whom etc. here is the procedural chart:

Level:        Upper Advanced
Time:         12/2 hours allotted for the game, one hour for the follow-up.
Aim:          Ice-breaking activity, developing skills at decision making and co-ordination
Language:     language skills are openly used to express personal things, expressing agreement and disagreement, persuade, defend a point of view, elicit cooperation, analyze data and make judgments. Different skills are enhanced such as listening, speaking, initiating, understanding directions, reading and writing.
Organization: whole class including micro groups of 5-8 learners.
Preparation and warm-up:
              Learners aren't allowed to talk but are provided information on lifeboat numbers and capacities, neighboring places, etc. every participant has to furnish a personal profile with update information on age, sex, background, nationality, employment, practical skills etc.
Procedure:    the decision is made by group purposely to come to the conclusion. Meanwhile the teacher ensures that each of them stands up and carries on. Changes can be made with reference to the boats or demarcation of end lines. Once a group looks to have come to a decision with no trouble, the moment the lava explodes is accordingly noted on the board.

Follow-up:    order is created among the micro groups and five top factors are discussed as well that led to their decision making, islands chosen and escape boats, etc.
Variation:    every group finally develops a society on its new place with complete political structure. A set of guidelines, is drawn or constituted for the community.

**Conclusion**

Once the simulation technique is employed, it becomes obligatory to integrate it with other language learning activities. A real language learning methodology demands systematic preparations and due care besides accept compatibility in relation to the learner's requirements and appropriate level. As long as the mentioned guidelines are implied and accordingly followed, it would certainly give birth to rewarding results and experience for both, the trainer as well as the trainee.

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