Activities Enrich the Process of Acquiring a New Language

Chandrika Mathur

I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand.
- Chinese proverb

A child who has really learned something can use it, and does use it. It is connected with reality in his mind; therefore he can make other connections between it and reality when the chance comes. A piece of unreal learning has no hooks on it; it can't be attached to anything. It is of no use to the learner.

- John Holt, 'How Children Fail' pg 169

An activity is a classroom process in which the teacher gets the children to 'do something' which:

a) Engages them in a practical situation that is an opportunity for introducing rich and relevant language inputs, which the children can practice in a 'live' context.
b) Gives children a chance to apply the content of a lesson (a poem, new vocabulary introduced, a communicative situation etc), to create or express something of their own.

Activities can be done individually, but are best done in groups.

- Activities provide the occasion for bringing in a rich multi-sensorial input (taste, smell, sight, sound)
- Doing activities in a language class provides the occasion for the child to make connections between what he has learnt and the reality of a given task.
- Through activities children learn to listen carefully to instructions, imitate, repeat and even express encouragement and appreciation to each other.
- Activities provide the occasion for working together and communicating with each other towards a common purpose
- First experience principle – if your first experience of something (for example, a game, a cooking activity) is in a different language, chances are that you will remember the vocabulary connected with that experience in that language
- An activity allows you to widen, or deepen the scope of the language elements introduced in a lesson
- If a range of activities is done in the class, it allows children with different talents and abilities to feel a sense of success and achievement.

 BY-NC-ND

Examples of meaningful activities in a language classroom:

Description of Activity	Purpose(s) that it would serve