

Acquisition of English as a Second Language by Experiential Learning

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Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience, and is more specifically defined as "learning through reflection on doing". This paper is going to explore a survey's feedback on experiential learning in the second language acquisition. It is done to examine the impact of practical learning on students of Bangladesh regarding learning English as a second or foreign language. Experiential learning helps lock the learning in human brain because it suits human behavior. From our very childhood, we have imitated most of our acts of adults by whom we are surrounded. If we apply the same trick regarding second language acquisition, that would be easier for all learners.

In Bangladesh and in most of the Asian countries, it is seen that students learn English officially or unofficially as the second language honoring it as the international language which is the lingua franca around the globe. But they try to learn its grammar and technicality first which makes their way of learning complex and monotonous. But if they learn it just in the same way they had learned their mother language, it becomes easy and friendly for them. To implement this way, instructors have to create that kind of environment for the students. They have to examine the entire learning wheel very carefully so that it doesn't go in vain. Not only in classroom of second language learning, but also in every assignments, exams or presentation, instructors can create that scope of experiential learning. Avoiding the traditional bookish format of language learning, students should have an English

speaking environment where they will learn by mistaking and practicing. By this students will be free of the phobia of learning English. This is what I found after surveying the students' feedbacks that how effectively students get helped via experiential learning and how long lasting it is.

But in this way, teachers have to design the tasks or exams in such a way so that they get the most benefit out of it and become more enthusiastic to learn the next phase because, "interest growing" is very important for any field of learning. If the learners don't have interest in learning, they will find it as a burden. But it's really important for the learners that they find pleasure and motivation in the learning format. One example is explained in the paper that shows how the students positively reacted after their assignment of experiential learning.

Several researches are done on experiential learning in second language acquisition, but they don't focus the spot light on the proper ways or methods of implementing them which is highly important on the perspective of a second language acquisition. In those researches, the ways of applying of experiential learning is discussed in very low percentage but this paper will show by an experiment that how it can be effectively applied and can cover most of the skills regarding second language learning.

Problem statement and objective of the study:

This paper has surveyed some feedback of experiential learning done among some English language learners in Bangladesh. This research is done to get a proper idea how empirical tasks influence English language learners in the perspective of our country since English is considered as the most used and important language after Bangla though it is not officially recognized as second language here. The experiment on students was done to examine their reaction or post-approach and to find more ways of making complex learning procedures easy for the second language learners since

intelligence is not to make the easy task complex but to make the complex task easy for the students. It is highly applicable on second language learners.

English is like an alien language and to majority of Bangladeshi students, it is a phobia or nightmare. They don't find it interesting but a burden because they started learning it in the conventional way of memorizing grammar from the very beginning of their academic life. But maximum students find it unadventurous to memorize the grammar only to pass the examination. Ultimately they vomit it on examination paper and then like to forget it as a nightmare. As a consequence, there is no long lasting feedback of such "book based" learning and even they do not get any practical session or experience of using those grammars in practical or real-life conversation. In experiential learning process, they have the scope to practice the grammatical rules in reality and by such frequent sessions they get used to with the new language.

The main objective of this research is to help this majority of English language learners who do not get proper English speaking or learning environment like the very few students in Bangladesh. This minimum number of students are privileged and fortunately blessed with proper environment or may be got admitted to English medium or English version schools in their childhood. Some of the students try hard to get over with the phobia of learning English. But this percentage is very poor since maximum students give up in the midway and do not stick to the learning process. They give up since they find the learning process conservative. This paper will present an example how to make the process effectively interesting and how to engage the learners enthusiastically. This is also to show how to engage almost all the four skills in a single task.

Research questions:

Experiential learning method is important in the undergraduate level regarding second language learning and it should be introduced mandatorily. This research paper will try to

answer why is it necessary and will describe how to introduce it to the undergraduate students with an example of a field work.

1. Why there is a significant relation between experiential learning and four basic language skills development of undergraduate students?
2. Does experiential learning specially boost up English communicative skill?
3. Does experiential learning last longer than the other ways of learning?
4. Should experiential learning be added in academic syllabus of second language acquisition?
5. Will students push and engage themselves more spontaneously in second language learning being interested by experiential learning?

Method:

1. Task's feedback analysis (Students' feedback and experience analysis after accomplishing the experiential task)
2. Textual analysis

While conducting my work, I have pursued following methods and procedures:

For my quantitative research, I have surveyed mainly some tasks' feedback from students and analyzed them. Fifty tertiary level students of first semester of EFL course were under this survey umbrella who were divided into groups. The paper has studied students' reaction after the experiential task whether they are inspired for more learning by such experiential task or not.

As secondary resources, I have analyzed several other research papers, articles and essays written on experiential learning. Besides, I have also analyzed different library sources, critical texts related to my research.

Literature review:

Some researches and articles are done regarding second language acquisition by experiential learning which had contributed to my understanding of the topic but none of them had included this type of tasks' feedback that is an implemented example of experiential learning covering all the four skills development altogether. Knowing the effective empirical procedures is very significant in implementing experiential learning effectively. Though this research is done on Bangladeshi students but it can be applicable to all second language learners. Some related literature are reviewed below to show the connections that are found in other works and the gaps that are covered by this research and also to present new insights that I have drawn from the literatures.

In a Canadian journal, **Knutson** wrote that practical learning as a philosophy is based on the ideals of active and reflective learning, building on prior learning experiences and requiring the personal participation of the learner. In the field of second-language acquisition (SLA), the empirical approach inspires learners to develop the target language skills through the experience of working together on a specific task, rather than only observing discrete elements of the target language. The reflection phase requires learners to involve actively with their own past gained experiences and focuses them on the future. "Experiential methodology holds many potential benefits for SLA in terms of motivation, investment, and cultural understanding." (Knutson, 2003) This article has shown the importance of experiential learning where present research has stated problems with their solutions.

Negin Sharifi and Dr. Mohammad Shariati say that in real classroom education students are not given enough accountability and liberty. Pragmatic approach is based on partnership between instructors and students, which needs to be advanced according to democratic ideologies. "Students are granted freedom in decision-making, but at the same time, they are required to take responsibility

for their actions. So by applying experiential learning in the class they can take so.” (Sharifi & Shariati, 2017) They had examined the benefits of empirical learning. But how the benefits can be ensured that is discussed in present study.

Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development is a book by **David A. Kolb**. Picking the scholarly origins of experiential learning from the works of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, this comprehensive and methodical book brands the process of pragmatic learning. The author suggests a model of the basic structures of the learning process based on research in psychology, philosophy, and physiology, and centers its typology of individual learning styles and conforming structures of knowledge in diverse academic disciplines and careers on this structural model. He also relates experiential learning to higher education and lifetime learning, particularly with regard to adult education. The existing study will show how to get the best out of experiential learning by showing an example. (Kolb, 1984) Kolb’s model of experiential learning:

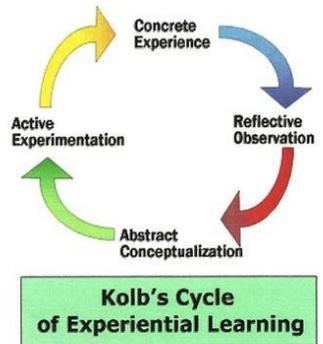


image by Karin Kirk

Anita Teresa Boggu and Dr.J. Sundarsingh point out that there are numerous experiential learning concepts till date, however, Kolb’s (Fry & Kolb, 1979) experiential learning model has been tried out in quite a lot of studies. This model provides a general development of the learner, by taking the pupil through the four phases of the learning procedure. The first stage begins with the solid

experience of the learner where they are made aware of the existing strategies from their earlier experiences, then revising them, abstracting what they have reviewed and trying to investigate ways how to put into exercise what they have learned. “Experiential learning Model works well with skills based modules where the focus is on developing language learning strategies. This method can be adopted with content based modules as well if the institution supports integration of experiential learning tasks as a part of the regular curriculum.” (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2016) They supported the present study that experiential learning can be incorporated in regular curriculum but the present study will show the ways of incorporating them.

Fatemeh Mollaei and **Hamidreza Rahnama** describes in their research that empirical learning has been applied to a variety of learning circumstances, from business team building seminars, to orienteering, to math and science classes. The method is easily adaptable to a wide variety of educational settings, especially to classrooms where project-based and task-based learning form the principal of the curriculum. All classroom actions form a part of student experience. An activity can be done in a cluster or separately and fruitfully mined for affecting value through interrogative methods and student reflection. The division of the learning procedure into experiential stages helps order the learning activities toward the attainment of the anticipated learning consequences. They offer in their article a historical background of how experiential education has emerged, and how it has been adopted to the field of language education. It focuses on identifying the concept of experiential learning, an experiential learning cycle, its principles and criteria, weaknesses and strengths. (Mollaei & Rahnama, 2012) Existing study will give the idea how to manage effective ways of experiential learning which will help to learn all the phases of language learning.

Duong ThiHuongLan, Phan Minh Huyen, Le Thi Thu Huong conducted a survey on their Vietnamese students regarding improving English speaking skill. In the survey, they found that

the difficulties of students in Thai Nguyen University could be divided into four main groups: **a.** Students felt uncomfortable to speak English because they were anxious of making errors in grammar or vocabulary while speaking. It is often seen at the fundamental level students who are afraid of being criticized by instructors and other students. **b.** When allocated to work in pairs (or groups), pupils habitually use their native language. **c.** Students often feel that there is not enough material on the topics discussed. **d.** Students feel lack of language and oral resources to solve given tasks. In that case, the educator should create a friendly environment of assistance so that students will not have to fear to confess their faults and will accept the criticism. (ThiHuongLan, Huyen, & Huong, 2017) This survey has covered the speaking skill development where present survey will include all the four skills development.

Isabel Moreno- López, Aida Ramos- Sellman, Citlali Miranda- Aldaco, Maria Teresa Gomis Quinto used qualitative and quantitative instruments to measure students' linguistic improvements and their views and approaches toward intercultural consciousness while learning Spanish as a second language. Students' survey responses showed that they believed that moving beyond conventional instructional models by adding classes with experimental learning heightened their second language acquirement and powered their inquisitiveness about cultural connections and variances. Qualitative findings also ensured that students' engagement was developed in the experiential models. (Moreno- López, Ramos- Sellman, Miranda- Aldaco, & Quinto, 2017) Current quantitative research will show the impact of such experiment on Bangladeshi English language learners and analyze their benefited four skills areas.

Rod Ellis reports in an article on a study of the education styles of two adult students of L2 German. Using records collected in a variety of ways it aims to search to what extent and in what ways the pupils' learning style differs, whether one apprentice's learning style outcomes in more active

learning than the other's and the influence of the instructional style on the subjects' learning outcomes. A key difference is made between traditional and empirical learning style. The consequences indicate that the two novices differed in their intellectual orientation to the learning task, that one learner might have abandoned her own chosen learning style in order to cope with the type of instruction provided and that the learning conclusions reflected what the apprentices set out to learn. (Ellis, 1989) Current article is not only about the importance of experiential learning but also shows ways of getting the best fruit out of this

Masilamani C and **Dr. Sundarsingh** bring out a theoretical study of Kolb's learning cycle in the setting of English as Second language learning and teaching. The key purpose of the empirical foreign language learning is to generate a true, genuine linking of the apprentices with the learning content, contact with the world outside, and with each other by using an alien language. To have a better understanding and gaining of language skills, one's experience is the most crucial part of the procedure of learning. It scrutinizes the theory of experiential learning and its structures for making the English language classrooms a better learning environment for adult learners. This article accents that the technique of learning needs deliberate effort to create new knowledge in the face of uncertainty and failure; and opens the way to novel, wide and profound skylines of experience. (C & Sundarsingh, 2019) The present study will add more techniques to maintain and elevate this experiential study procedure.

Anthony William explains the strength and weaknesses of experiential learning. Realistic learning approach requires significant re-structuring of training and an excessive deal of comprehensive planning if the program is to be fully covered. It usually means widespread re-training of faculty, and careful placement and groundwork of students. Just giving pupils tasks to do in real world conditions without supervision and maintenance is likely to be unproductive. How one assesses

pragmatic learning projects depends partially on one's epistemological situation. Constructivists intensely support practical learning models, whereas those with a robust objectivist place are usually highly skeptical of the efficacy of this method. Nevertheless, problem-based learning in particular has proved to be very widespread in many institutions teaching science or medicine, and project-based learning is used across many subject domains and heights of education. There is proof that experimental learning, when appropriately designed, is highly winning for students and leads to long-term memory. Proponents also claim that it leads to deeper understanding, and grows abilities for a digital age such as problem-solving, critical thinking, upgraded communications skills, and knowledge organization. In particular, it enables apprentices to cope up better with extremely complex circumstances that cross disciplinary limitations, and subject fields where the borders of understanding are challenging to manage. (William, 2020) This paper has shown the importance of keen management of experiential learning procedures but the present paper will describe how to manage it with example.

Overview of the experimental task:

As an experiment fifty tertiary level students of first semester of EFL course were assigned to write a report in English on “Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh” as a field work. That report had to be written based on real interview dealt by students themselves. It was not a group task. Each student individually had to be in the role of interviewer. During this survey, Rohingya community of Myanmar was feeling unsafe in their country due to some political issues. To be safe, more than one million Rohingya became refugee in Bangladesh. To help this community, numerous national and international organizations came forward to help them with various daily commodities and other supports almost every day. Rohingyas were staying in Cox's Bazar which is widely famous for its longest unbroken sand beach in the world. Many English speaking foreign tourists often come to

explore the beach beauty. But during this crisis, every day many English speaking foreigners came to visit this community.

Taking opportunity of the numerous presences of all these English speakers for many months at one place, I instructed my students to interview foreigners (English speakers) who came to visit Rohingya Community during the crisis in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh since by this students will be close to the English speakers with an official approach. Students got a formal chance of engaging themselves in conversation with them. Students had to set some questions to ask foreigner's opinion regarding Rohingya crisis. Though they set questions earlier but they had to manage the conversation with their common sense on the spot. They also had to submit the video of the interview. But they had to take permission of the interviewees before starting videoing. They had to approach in very formal way in the beginning before starting any conversation. University ID card had to be worn that time. They were supposed to ask permission very politely to start conversation with any foreigner so that no one gets annoyed with their approach.

At first, they got a bit nervous and shy but after some of the interviews, they started enjoying it since they usually don't get frequent opportunity to communicate with foreigners with such professional approach. They were required to video the interviews so that the introvert or shy students cannot anyhow submit the report skipping the real interview process. Watching the videos, the instructor can also give feedback to the students on what they should do and should not do in that situation.

Here, all four skills were covered by this single task:

1. **Speaking-** The students who were used to be very nervous even to interact in classroom, they became more interested in English communication even outside. The Students wanted to have such kind of interactive and experiential sessions repeatedly. Maximum students broke their initial

ice of speaking in English with foreigners or with any one at public place. It started growing confidence inside them that if with their hundreds of mistakes and limitations they could continue speaking with a native speaker, they can achieve fluency if they practice more. Putting a seed of confidence in a student is one of the most required and greatest tasks by any teacher which can grow as a huge tree of positivity later among the students.

2. **Writing-** The report writing was assigned to examine and develop student's writing capability which they had to prepare based on the conversations they had with foreigners. They had to keep the grammatical rules in mind but this time they did not just do it for exam passing but also found it challenging and adventurous.
3. **Reading-** They were supposed to read and organize coherently all the information of the interview which demands good analysis and reading skill. To enrich their report writing, they also read other resources related to this issue.
4. **Listening-** It is not needed to explain that to maintain harmony among all these other skills, they had to at first receive the information or speech of their interviewees which tested their listening skill too. They had to keep careful concentration on the interviewee's replies nor they would have missed any important point that is stated by the foreigner and then would not have enough scope to exchange dialogues based on their reply. They were not sent only to ask a set of questions and record it but also to speak to them based on their responses which require good listening power.

It is important to mention that they did multiple interviews for a week. When they compared the first interview's video with the last one, students could differ their own improving qualities and realized the development by themselves hands on. Putting effort to all these skills area, they prepared the report and submitted as written assignment. Best five videos of interview were selected and shown in classroom projector so that rest of the students could understand their drawbacks or problems and

could reshape their performance next time. I found these sorts of methods highly effective since it engages the learners and makes the lesson learners' centered, not only teachers' centered which the students often find monotonous. Later these sort of task analysis were done in East Delta University too several times and the results were positively same.

Findings and Discussions:

- 1. Four skills development were processed in a single task.** Students had to conduct several interviews. So, they could themselves identify their problems while communicating with them. They tried to make their communication better and enriched watching every last video done by them. They could realize their shortcomings whether it is vocabulary or grammar, analyzing or writing, nervousness or just initial ice, lack of proper guidance or their laziness, listening or pronunciation, organizing inability or approach, accent or fear of mistaking etc.
- 2. Nervous students started to interact in class.** Some students are not actually introvert but afraid of making mistakes and being judged by teacher or fellow students. This was a good opportunity for them to learn through mistakes and practice in the field which broke their initial ice or inertia. They felt boosted with confidence afterwards which got reflected on their next classroom activities. They used to feel shy but later felt enthusiastic not only to perform but also to do best.
- 3. It was an unusual opportunity to communicate with native speakers with a professional approach.** The learners got the challenge to communicate with English speaking foreigners. If it was to interview only Bangladeshi people, it would not have been that much impactful. Because, speaking English with Bangladeshi people could be easier for them but now they had to be very careful from beginning to the end of the interview. They had to be comprehensive, formal, polite and ready to face a challenge to bring out the best interview keeping the four skills in mind. Since

our students do not have the chance every day to communicate with English speaking foreigners, it became more adventurous for them where they could judge their communication level. Moreover, they had to make the foreigner comfortable and secure while talking with them. It was something beyond a mere interviewing assignment.

- 4. Watching the videos, the instructor can give feedback on “do’s and don’ts”.** Students worked hard to shape a best documentary on interviews. They had to redo the interviews with different foreigners to generate a best interview documentary. They could identify by watching their videos that where they have to put more effort before final submission of the video. On the other hand, instructor can show them, individually or in class, point by point that what were the weak and strong sides of them.
- 5. Vocabulary and research capability were examined.** Often it happens that students have so many information and dialogues going on in their mind but they cannot express due to vocabulary shortage or for being unable to put correct diction. When they can clearly identify their problem of word picking, they can focus on that in the next interview or in any next segment of the course in future. Learners had to focus on their sentence structures for correct report making. They were supposed to analyze all their recorded videos to write a report maintaining coherence which demands analytical capability.
- 6. Common sense applying and guessing power got heightened.** Though they made some questions before the interview which they were supposed to ask the interviewees, but still in some situations, pre-made questions do not help where they have to handle according to the demand of situation. They had to carry on the conversation with their common sense. Sometimes they had to apply guessing sense to understand the probable meaning of any unknown vocabulary.

Sometimes they had to link the meaning and guess the summary of any answer in spite of missing any sentence while listening.

7. It was found as a highly effective example of experiential learning since it is **“learners’ centered, not teachers’ centered”** where students have the most space to give their best. It engaged students not only physically but also psychologically and from all other perspectives where learners should give their concentration.
8. This sort of **experiential learning process breaks the monotony** of the students. Students often get tired of the conventional process. But when the lessons come in different shades of experiences, it becomes long lasting. But when it is more challenging and adventurous where they had to encounter multicultural people, it sits in their mind as a lifetime memory.
9. **Pronunciation of the learners is improved** while dealing all the interviews. Because human behavior is very imitating. So, when they listen to the native English speakers talking with them in a standard pronunciation and accent, they also try to imitate them or at least to maintain a good quality. When instructors suggest them to watch English movies or news, they might listen but cannot implement properly. So, it was a vital scope to have the best impact on pronunciation or accent.
10. Students were so involved and facilitated in this task that later they **wanted to have such interactive sessions regularly** so that they could apply all the experiences that they had acquired from this foreigner interview segment and also to make their monotonous lessons interesting afterwards.
11. **Avoiding translating from mother language to target language** in mind during speaking is required. This problem is faced by most students that they at first think in their mother tongue what they want to say and then they translate that in English in mind. Finally, they express it

verbally which is really time consuming and embarrassing in front of people specially while in a conversation or delivering public speech. The students faced the same problem and were suggested to practice thinking in second language all the time so that it helps them while performing something finally. It helps to train the brain to find required vocabulary faster and to set the sentence correctly.

12. This sort of experiential segment provided students with a chance to improve the **University Graduate Attributes** in them which means the qualities, skills and knowledge that the pupils should progress during their study time with their university to equip themselves for life in a complex and rapidly shifting world. This is the graduate attributes model of East Delta University which is showing the outcomes of experiential learning below.

SL	University Graduate Attributes	Experiential Learning Outcome(s)
1	Domain knowledge	Enhanced
2	Research Understanding	Upgraded
3	Leadership Development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable Leadership 2. Digital Leadership 3. Moral and Ethical Leadership 4. Innovative Leadership 	Improved
4	Soft-skill Development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Effective Communication Skills 2. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving 3. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) 	Advanced

5	Global Citizenship	Developed
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Limitations and Recommendations:

There are some limitations in this task analysis survey-based paper. It cannot be generalized since it is done in some specific small areas of Bangladesh on few numbers of students. If it was done in broader ways and space, the result might vary. After that, various other experiential learning experiments were conducted on several other groups of students where the same positive feedbacks were received. There is a little possibility that after completion of the specific course, students will no more be self-motivated to engage themselves in experiential learning. But once a student is inspired by experiential learning, there is huge probability that s/he will find her way out to solve any issue. This type of learning should be included in all related courses. Instructions for students have to be clear regarding experiential learning so that they don't get confused. Instructors have to control the entire learning wheel very carefully. Some recommended ways of experiential learning can be:

1. Students give their thoughts on topic assigned by teacher
2. Students listen to classmates thoughts and respond
3. Oral diary
4. Group presentations on a topic
5. Picture description
6. Story telling/completing
7. Chained story telling
8. Role play
9. Debates
10. Dramatic monologues

11. Tour guide
12. Games
13. News Presentation
14. Sales Executive role
15. Video reviewing
16. Conversation etc.

These types of learning process accelerate learning and provide a better learning environment. It bridges the gap between theory and exercise. These also produce noticeable mindset changes and increases engagement levels. Empirical learning delivers incomparable return on investment. It provides authentic assessment outcomes and enables personalized learning.

Conclusion

It is attempted to be shown by the task's feedback analysis that experiential learning can be effectively working in teaching English as a second language. For inspecting the issue, the case study approach were employed. Students appreciated when learning is fun but it is not enough. They are aware of the requirements of the school, job, future fulfillment and they got motivated when the way of study fulfills with their personal aims. For all the drawbacks that I pointed out, there are things that cannot be planned and influenced. Even if an activity is well held and equipped and even if great efforts are taken to present at a suitable moment, it may still not come out as expected. Though there are some limitations in this survey or there might be some drawbacks of such kind of experiential learning, but this type of practical learning sources should be introduced more and established in academic curriculum to make second language acquisition enjoyably comprehensive. Because it's very rightly said by **Confucius**, "Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand."

Learning from experience is a vital philosophical and theoretical notion in the field of adult learning. In spite of its long convention and practical fertility, however, the idea is not grounded in a methodical philosophy or model of how we learn from involvement and what it is that is learned. The theoretical meaning of the idea of experience-based learning remains indefinable and many practitioners are not clear on what exact tactics to use to smooth this form of learning or when to use them. As a result, for participants in adult teaching programs, experience-based learning is often more a promise than a truth. A clearly essential factor to this theory-building is an effort to realize how learning from experience happens and what it is that is learned in the procedure. Empirical learning in second language acquisition, as far as its chief idea is concerned, is not completely new. But it suggests a renewed gaze at the way teaching and learning get systematized in our classrooms. It proposes that the pupil must occupy the focused points of classroom activity and not the educator. Practical learning is participative, collaborative, and applied. It permits interaction with the environment, and contact to procedures that are greatly variable and tentative. It involves the whole-person; learning takes place on the affecting and behavioral dimensions as well as on the intellectual dimension. The involvement needs to be organized to some degree; related learning objects need to be identified and the conduct of the practice needs to be supervised. Students need to assess the experience in light of theory and in light of their own outlooks. Pragmatic learning theory sketches the method in which novices gain awareness and understanding through involvements. Though some may debate which stages are existing in practical learning, there is no dispute about the worth of experience in learning. Through experience, learners are able to construct firsthand sense of understanding of the actions going on around them. Tutors have initiated to harness the power of experience in study abroad courses, field trainings, role plays, and numerous computer-based involvements. In this perspective, it can be expected that it will be established soon as one of the fixed

formats regarding second language education. The future could bring even more applications of this model since it is as thrilling for the learner as much as it is for the facilitator. **Aristotle** said in his book, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”

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