A Multi-Level Collaborative and Cooperative Writing Class in Inducing Character Building (A Model of An Integration Between Teaching Writing and Character Education)

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ABSTRACT

Character education should not plainly implicate socially-authorize pattern for such character as honesty and perseverance, but also and perhaps more importantly it should provide the ways in which the students believe of their own conception selves, and their essential qualities that will back the actualization of those selves. This conceit may require a more personalized or less formulaic appropriate to inscribe instruction, but the compensation of such transformations of instructive goals and methods might well be the revitalization of democratic society in Indonesia. Taking that into account, a multi-level collaborative and cooperative writing class, in a more specific context and scope, classroom practices, provides one of breakthroughs toward this direction. This model of writing class is either implicitly or explicitly integrated with character education. The paper is a report of a research and development. Theories and concepts supporting the study will initiate the paper. The next part of the paper will explore the so called "a multi-level collaborative and cooperative writing class" itself as the product of the study and its implementation. The paper will not only address some problems that were experienced during the implementation but also will furnish some suggestions to resolve those efficacious problems in the conclusion part of the article.

Keywords: cooperative learning and collaborative writing, multilevel, character building, integration

INTRODUCTION

Social illness is at present tormenting Indonesian society. They are depicted in communal clashes among religious groups, a bias legal system, prolonged corrupt behaviors among politicians and educated elites, unethical behavior by lawmakers, street fights among youths and other social injustices. They are just some of the dismal views for our young generation. Moreover, there are existing prejudices that some universities are the upbringing grounds of fraudulent intellectuals.

In response to those prevailing social disorders, the discourse on character education arises and has in fact gained a bigger priority in the national educational landscape nowadays. Therefore, the conceptualization of the notion of character has to be translated into noticeable pedagogy such as a clear conceptualization of the curriculum, proper methods of teaching and teachers' competence. What is more important, after all, is the conduct of our national figures displayed before society. In this sense, education surpasses the narrow border of schools.

Character is comprised of complex systems of habits that support or hamper the development of a person's distinctive

potential for excellence. Such a conception would require character educators to focus on not simply to socially-sanctioned norms for behavior such as honesty and perseverance, but also and perhaps more importantly to the ways in which their students formulate of their own ideal selves, and the personal qualities that will support the actualization of those selves. This formulation may require a more personalized or less formulaic approach to character education, but the rewards of such transformations of educational goals and methods might well be the revitalization of democratic society in Indonesia. Taking that into an account, a multi-level collaborative and cooperative writing class, in a more specific context and scope classroom practices, provides one of breakthroughs toward this direction.

The multi-level collaborative and cooperative writing class activities which are codified in the form of Syllabus are the efforts of educators to cater all aspect of humanity and personality, which are physical, cognitive, affective (emotion), behavioral, and spiritual. It is line with messages stipulated on the Undang-Undang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional No. 2, verse no. 4, 1989 in that the main purpose of education is to build decent individuals with high ability to think, feel, and behave in a very decent manner, in other word, to make human out of a human. need to be able to develop both cognitive and affective (emotion) aspects of their students.

METHOD

This study is intended to develop a syllabus as a guideline for the instructional activities. So, the development of syllabus as a document of instructional activities in writing class is the main objective of this study. Therefore, the stages adopted from Yalden's are (1) need survey, (2) description of purpose, (3) selection or development of syllabus type, (4) production of a proto syllabus, (5) production of a pedagogical syllabus, and (7) evaluation stage (6) development and implementation of classroom procedure is not adopted due to the focus of the research is to develop a syllabus, while stage (6) requires to develop material and teacher training to implement the classroom procedure.

The evaluation in this study is verification of the developed syllabus to know the suitability. It is conducted by assigning educational experts to review the syllabus and to give their comments and feedbacks (expert's validation). These attempts try to look at the expert's viewpoint on whether the syllabus type, the list and description of Sociolinguistics contents to be covered in the program, and the syllabus content; the objectives, the materials, the strategies, the evaluation, and the time framework have already met the students' needs. This will gather comments and feedbacks as the basis for the revision. If it still matches, the syllabus will be revised again. This is a series of cycle to produce the final syllabus.

Main Steps		Steps in Research and Development
Prelim-inary Research	Research and Information Collecting	Need survey
Research and Develop-ment	Planning	Selection or development of syllabus type
	Develop preliminary form of product	- Production of a proto syllabus - Production of a pedagogical syllabus
	Field testing and product revision	Evaluation stage
	Final Product Revision	Final product of Syllabus

Table 1.1 Steps of Research and Development

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Syllabus of Writing

A syllabus is an expression of opinion

on the nature of language and learning; it acts as a guide for both teacher and learner by providing some goals to be attained. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:80) define syllabus as the simplest level in which a syllabus can be described as a statement of what is to be learnt or reflects of language and linguistic performance. This is a rather conventional interpretation of syllabus focusing on the outcomes rather than processes. However, a syllabus can also be seen as a summary of the content to which learners will be exposed (Yalden,1987: 87). It is seen as an approximation of what will be taught and that it cannot accurately predict what will be learnt. In shorts, a language teaching syllabus involves the integration of subject matter (what to talk about) and linguistic matter (how to talk about it); that is, the actual matter that makes up teaching.

Choices of syllabi can range from the more or less purely linguistic to the purely semantic or information. The more oriented linguistic syllabus contains the grammatical and lexical forms of the language in the content of its instruction. Meanwhile the purely semantic or informational syllabus encompass some skills or information and only incidentally cover the form of the language. To design a syllabus is to decide what to teach and in what order. For this reason, the theory of language explicitly or implicitly underlying the language teaching method will play a major role in determining what syllabus is adopted. Theory of learning also plays an important part in determining the kind of syllabus used.

The currents syllabus as the product of study can best be labelled to be a mixed syllabus (Brown, 1995:12). It adopts two types of syllabi: notional/functional and task-based syllabi. The starting point for a notional/ functional syllabus is the communicative purpose and conceptual meaning of language i.e. notions and functions, as opposed to grammatical items and situational elements which remain but are relegated to a subsidiary role. In addition, task-based syllabus assumes that speaking a language is a skill best perfected through practice and interaction, and uses tasks and activities to encourage learners to use the language communicatively in order to achieve a purpose. Tasks must be relevant to the real-world language needs of the student. That is, the underlying learning theory of task based and communicative language teaching seems to suggest that activities in which language is employed to complete meaningful tasks, enhances learning.

As a mixed syllabus, the materials organization of the syllabus is related to functional organizational and on occasion serves as a general set of categories within which functions form subcategories. It is organized around abstract notions of sociolinguistics concepts and theories which are ordered and sequenced according to chronology, frequency, or the utility of the notions involved. Furthermore, the syllabus also organizes and sequences different tasks and assignments that the students are required to perform in and out of the classroom. The tasks and assignment are selected based on the perceived usefulness and interrelatedness not to mention the concordance with the learning approach adopted

Generally, this mixed syllabus includes the following structured information as proposed by Nunan (2003:71). It is structured into several parts: course details, course introduction, course objectives, course content, literature, class schedule, course evaluation and class attendance and policies. The first part of the syllabus structure is course details. It covers what course title is, what course book is used, instructors complete name and email address and blog address. Course introduction as the second part of the syllabus explains a general overview what sociolinguistics offers and provides as a course study. The following part of the syllabus is course objectives. It

shows the targeted objectives which are graded depending on level of cognitive domain. The class schedule as fourth part of the syllabus is the most importantly featured since it shows how the syllabus is loaded with various notions and approaches of learning and teaching. The next part of syllabus is course evaluation which shows the elements and the percentages of grading system. The last part of the syllabus is class attendance and class policies which expose the rules and policies the students have to commit with.

process writing and text types/genre-based writing skills is featured prominently in this syllabus. In the other words, this syllabus adopts a blend between the process approach and genre approach to the process genre approach. The main idea behind this approach developed by Badger and White (2000, pp. 157-8) is that

Writing involves knowledge about language... knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose for the writing... and skills in using language. ... Writing development happens by drawing out the learners' potential... and by providing input to which the learners respond....

Essentially, the process approach, as its name suggests, focuses on the process one goes through when writing including generating ideas, deciding which ideas are relevant to the message and then using the language available to communicate that message in a process that evolves as it develops. In the classroom this translates into group brainstorming exercises, general discussions, and group planning activities to decide on the content of the piece of writing. Peer correction and group evaluation are also encouraged.

As shown on Figure 1, the process of writing is demonstrated in the complex and recursive nature of writing and the interaction between the different operations which may occur simultaneously (White and Arndt,1991:4; Hedge, 2005:50). Our cognitive process or

thinking is not linear. However, writing is linear and a writer must know how to organize his/her thoughts and message in an appropriate manner. Many writers often do not know what they want to write beforehand and many ideas are only revealed once the writer has started. They then move backwards to revise and change words or structures before they move forwards and they continue doing this until they are satisfied with the end result. Thus, writing is a process through which meaning is created (Zamel,1982:195).

Figure 1 Proses Writing adopted from White and Arndt (1991:7)

Regarding the genre approach, Badger and White (2000: 155) argue that genre theory is an extension of the product approaches. The similarities position that both approaches see writing as predominantly linguistic. Furthermore, Badger & White (2000:155) argue that genre theory differs from product approaches, since it admits that the writing varies with the social context in which it is produced. Genre analysts believe there are several elements of a genre which will determine the language chosen in writing. These are primarily the purpose of the writing but also the subject matter, the relationships between the writer and the audience, and the pattern of organization. Eventually, the role of the teacher is to provide language model and to facilitate the learner's understanding of the purpose and context of the writing (Badger & White, 2000:155).

In this syllabus all tasks carried out in classrooms are related to each other and based on real world tasks and should encourage interdisciplinary thinking. Students are engaged in learning for life.

There are connections between content and processes to the learners' background and needs, as this would relate school learning to real life (Schwartz, 2000 and Parks, 1994 & Jones and Haynes, 1999 cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002). It will create a more meaningful learning. Through these tasks and activities, there would be more collaborative teacher-student relationships and shared beliefs about thinking.

When involving holistic approach in the syllabus, students are engaged with a whole task and not elements of a task (Fennimore and Tinzman, 1990 cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002). Materials and content are structured to allow holistic learning of meaningful and complex tasks. There is much more flexibility, creativity and critical thinking in the classrooms.

The objectives of the syllabus are ranked based on Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom & Kratwohl, 1965). The taxonomy starts from the lower level cognitive/thinking domain to higher ones. beside cognitive domain the syllabus also includes the affective domain as well as the psycho-motoric domain. The syllabus prepares the students to be able to: to demonstrate an understanding of writing as a multi-step process involving invention, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading; to implement strategies which enhance the effectiveness of your writing; to respond to various demands of audience (organization, focus, voice); to approach new writing tasks confidently; to realize the power of writing to foster discovery and learning; to present finished essays in standard written English style across several genres; to use writing for inquiry, argumentation, research, and communication; to apply research skills to the development of a thesis, and integrate primary and secondary sources with their own ideas; to learn appropriate formatting conventions and standard English usage; to understand and exploit the differences in the rhetorical strategies available in both print and electronic composing processes and texts.

In the case of classroom and learning strategies in this syllabus, flexible learning, creative and critical evaluation are encouraged in the classroom. There is a flexibility to allow more time for students to process their thoughts and voice their opinions. There is creativity in using various authentic and real-world teaching materials, such as the use of computers and new technology (Schwartz, 2000 and Schwartz and Parks, 1994 cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002). There is flexibility to allow students to be involved in the decision-making process of how they learn. This would enable them to eventually take control of their learning.

Thinking and learning strategies and cognitive and metacognitive strategies are explicitly taught and modeled. Cooperative (David et.al, 1991) and collaborative learning take place through group work and group project. Learning is linked to thinking. Thinking is transforming. Yet the transforming is the result not of surface learning but that of long-term deep learning. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991) stress that: "the use of collaborative learning groups approximates more closely the activity of real-world employment and problem solving... allows students to tackle more complicated and often more interesting problems without feeling overwhelmed."

When students are faced with the task of producing a solution to a problem, working in groups would enable them to produce richer and better-quality solutions than would individual work. Student cooperation and collaboration are also carried out through virtual classroom which would eventually lead to improvements in the area of academic achievement as the students learn to interact, share information and divide workload. Bruffee (1989) stresses that:

Cooperative and collaborative work provides the transitional support communities

that students can rely on a they go through the risky process of taking on authority themselves as writers and critical readers. It provides measure of security as students substitute confidence in their own authority for dependence on the teacher's authority.

Cockburn and Ross (1978) added that group work can train students to develop critical thinking skills,

Students learn in small groups through co-operative academic work and it is perhaps precisely the interactive element of small group work that brings about what can be called the higher order types of learning. By this we mean, for example, the development of judgement or interpretative skills. Cockburn and Ross (1978:22)

The result of adopting collaborative and cooperative learning in the syllabus reveals that learners can become collaborative constructors of their own knowledge and become independent and critical writers who are in control and are accountable for their own learning.

Each one of us embraces persistently to our own concepts of learning. Some of us see learning as a modelling process of habit formation, others see learning as a mentally engaged event while yet others see learning as a construction of realization because the learners are owners of their own learning. Whichever concept we talk and work with the end product that we all gain towards is ensuring that the learner leaves the educational experience a thinking independent individual. But in all the truth, it is very comforting for a learner to be in a teacher driven class simply because the pressure of responsibility is the hands of the teacher and the pleasure of passive participation rest the learners. That's why the syllabus applies the so called "problem-based learning (PBL)".

In the PBL situation the entire dynamic of learning shifts from the hands of the teacher to the shoulders of the learner.

Ownership which entails responsibility shift to the leaners. The question that would arise in one's mind then would be the "what if" question. What if the learner does not cover particular portion of the learning material? PBL by its very nature reiterative. Revisiting the same topic is an in-built characteristic of this learning approach. Also, the fact that the facilitator ends a learning problem with a summary lesson ensures that the baseline portions or the minimum requirements of the learning portion are met.

In addition, the syllabus requires the students to write reflective journal. the reflective journals allow teachers to assist learners to develop deep thinker skills. Journal in education are not new. They have been used for a long time now and they come in different packaging. Diaries, learning logs, learning journal, progress files, think book, think place are all terms that have been used to describe the exercise if writing individual thoughts as part of a learning engagement.

The reason why it is important that journaling be part of the learning process especially in a PBL classroom is because much of the actual learning is self-directed. Individuals have to discover new knowledge and then synthesize and evaluate the new knowledge to make group sharing meaningful. Wolf, 1989, Fulwire, 1986). Reflective journals allow learners to engage in self-discovery. It allows them to open up and move on a learning continuum from being passive to active learners. It also allows them to develop multiple thinking skills. The benefit is convincing.

While the benefits of any task in an educational endeavor cannot be denied yet the task of journaling seems to have an edge especially when we realize that journaling actually satisfies the three ways of learning. First, the learner learns by doing (enactive), by using imagery (iconic) and by alluding to representational or symbolic means. Second, the act of engaged writing ensures that all

of these three aspects of learning are met. Journaling is thus a powerful tool to help move learners from learning by memorizing (surface learning) to learning by owning (deep learning) (McCrindle & Christensens, 1995)

Regarding assessment, the syllabus encourages a thinking-learning environment which involves more application rather that regurgitation of facts. Therefore, assessment should be less exam oriented and be based more on on-going, real-world, collaborative assessment, such as project work. Students should also be provided with the opportunity to evaluate their learning through metacognitive strategies which would teach them how to control and manage their learning (Schwartz, 2000).

Reinventing or restructuring the syllabus to one that encourages thinking and develops a holistic approach to learning, is and will be one that involves massive changes and a rethinking of what teaching and learning should be. Implementing a thinking-oriented curriculum would mean redesigning critical aspects of teaching, learning and schooling. These critical aspects that need to be addressed simultaneously and seriously, contain elements that interrelate and support thinking and learning. This process can only begin with a change in the beliefs and attitudes towards education, teaching and learning.

The core part of the syllabus is featured mainly on class schedule because it posits various approaches of teaching and learning. As shown on Table 1, there are several kinds of topics/activities and learning experience such as preliminary orientation, general overview of sociolinguistics, one to one simultaneous presentation, wrap up review, second orientation of sociolinguistics mini research, field work and one to one consultation, and finally report presentation and submission.

Multi-level Cooperative and Collaborative Writing and Its Valuable Character Values

Multi-level cooperative and collaborative writing activities are implemented through some stages. Stage one is initiated by grouping the students into groups consisting of five students. In stage two each group is provided guiding instructions, tasks and assignment regarding writing activities that students have to carry out in groups. Stage two is the beginning process of cooperative and collaborative writing on how to create a certain assigned type of text by following process and genre writing approaches. In stage three, having completed the activities, each group should be able to produce written assigned type of text which has later on to be proofread by another determined compatriot group. In stage four, the group functioning as proofreading group presents the results in class for the purpose of checking and rechecking as well as clarifying the discrepancies in the students writing works. The stages from stage two to four repeat twice; meaning, each group has to produce a least two assigned types of text. Stage five is the final stage in which each student in each group has to write their own writing works which has again to be proofread by their colleagues in groups or in other groups. So, the process of cooperative and collaborative ranges from inter-members of the group and group to group to inter-individual student.

This multilevel cooperative and collaborative writing class activities posits some following benefits. First, the process of writing collaboratively forces the writer to put "tacit" decisions about his/her writing process into words. This, according to Elbow, "forces students to become more conscious and articulate about rhetorical decision making" (p.373). Second, collaboration allows students to learn from each other, as confident students will model successful writing practices for struggling students (Webb: 607). Third, co-authorship allows students to work on complex projects, which may otherwise be too large in scope for an individual author to tackle over the

course of the semester (Howard: 10). Fourth, the process of working in a group fosters relationship among a community of writers. Elbow describes this as taking away the "loneliness" of the writing act (p.372). Fifth, collaboration focuses on the generation of many possible points of view/solutions to a problem, which ultimately leads to more complex conclusions (Howard: 10). Sixth, collaborative writing gives students practice at a kind of writing that will benefit them in their chosen careers, as much professional/business writing is co-authored (Stewart: 63). Seventh, the students show care of another person or situation and appreciation to other groups or persons writing works. Eighth, students have integrity in which they have to adhere to a set of principles or a code of values, especially honesty such as avoiding plagiarism. Ninth, the students have the capacity to endure and to wait for their goals to be achieved and the ability to keep working toward a goal, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of difficulty, opposition, or discouragement. Tenth, students have the ability to work with others to reach a common goal.

Problem and Anticipation

The first problem that might be encountered during implementation of the syllabus is frequently because groups (depending on size) can become difficult to manage. The time allocation to group organization, meeting times and meeting places can weaken time used on meaningful work. In addition to this, difficult group members can disturb the dynamic of a group. In anticipating this, lecturer need class time spent discussing the difficulties frequently experienced in group work and this can produce valuable strategies for managing the work load and dealing with difficult members. Second problem is collaborative writing and group papers are difficult to assess/grade. Lecturer in anticipating this problem can set up scoring rubric that can be negotiated with

students.

CONCLUSION

This multilevel cooperative and collaborative writing class syllabus is an expression of opinion on the nature of language and learning which acts as a guide for both teacher and learner by providing some characters building goals to be attained. The syllabus is classified into a mixed syllabus which mixes the orientation of language skill and characters building focus. The activities in syllabus have assisted students to write collaboratively and allow students to learn from each other. eventually the process of working in a group fosters relationship among a community of writers.

The activities of multilevel cooperative and collaborative writing have resulted in the students care of another person or situation and appreciation to other groups or persons writing works. Finally, students have been encouraged to have integrity and honesty such as avoiding plagiarism. Last but not least, the character of endurance undertaking difficulty, opposition, or discouragement and the ability to work with others to reach a common goal are the ultimate result of the activities.

Despite the success in implementing the syllabus, some problems might emerge such as difficult group members to manage, time allocated to group organization, meeting times and meeting places. Those problems can ruin meaningful work and the dynamic of a group. Regarding the workload in grading students writing lecturer is supposed to set up scoring rubric that can be negotiated with students.

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