

EMPOWERING TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS' CHARACTERS THROUGH CULTURAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Character is a significant element to build. The appropriate place to develop it is through educational institution since most of the students' time is spent in school besides in their own home with family members. In Indonesian context, character building seems to be a focus on primary and secondary level. However, tertiary level students also need it. One of the ways to insert good characters to the college students in order to set their cultural awareness or avoid culture shock is by giving cultural issues in their courses. By comparing and contrasting between what they and others have, it is expected high respect and responsibility will be hold persistently in both daily and academic life. In EFL, cross-cultural understanding has become the pivotal part to teach. Communication breakdown happens due to limited knowledge about various communication or culture used by English speaking countries. Therefore, this article presents the theoretical framework, the strengths, and alternative implementation of cultural education in fostering students' good values in response to the big diversity, especially in the use of non-verbal communication.

Keywords: character building, cultural education, communication, non-verbal communication

INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia has realized that character building is highly needed for students regarding the current moral degradation which has appeared to most of our youth. The moral degradation symptoms are indicated by the increase of drugs abuse problems, free sex, crime, violent action, and various immoral behaviors (Lubis, 2009:v). On the other side, many of our youth have failed to show the proper behavior as expected by the parents. Politeness, friendliness, solidarity, humble, helpfulness, and various more which have been our nation's identity for centuries are not completely comprehended by the youth (Ki Supriyoko, 2003 : 3). In this paper, the writer tries to discuss relationship between characters, cultural issue, and ELT by proposing an idea in inserting cultural aspects on teaching English to empower the students' characters in responding culture, particularly respect on what others have and responsibility for maintaining what they have.

Good moral values makes the youth have strong foundation for their life, not easy to be influenced by other people. It is undeniable that the existence of other cultures takes a part in this moral degradation. The youth do not realize that not everything new can be adopted. Sometimes it brings goodness, sometimes harm. As Indonesian citizens, people have got many moral values taught in family members. If they are lucky they will strengthen it in their school. For those who do not have opportunity, their life is controlled by environment in which parents cannot guarantee its safety.

To be wise, it is fine to understand other countries' cultures, but being selective is strongly recommended, otherwise, cross cultural misunderstanding will appear, and it probably causes some misbehavior or culture shock. If we talk about culture, actually, it is so broad. To make it more specific, culture in conveying communication is highlighted in this paper. Just a simple illustration, in Indonesia, if the people nod their head, it

means agreement on something. However, it will be something different if Indian people do it. This also happens in EFL context which will be discussed in this article. If the people are not given knowledge about this diversity, so many miscommunications will occur. Therefore, as English language learners, it is crucial to understand different communication from different English speaking countries. There must be distinction and similarities. To cope with the differences, high respect and self control are needed.

Character Building

To create outstanding human resource, it does not merely depend on excellent academic things. Personality also takes part in it. Another term of this trait is character. Character building now is developing in Indonesia. Inserting certain value on lesson is the project to improve students' characters. Based on a study in Harvard university, united State of America, a person's success does not depend only on knowledge and technical skill (hard skills), but more in the skill of self-management and others (soft skills). The study reveals that success is 20 percent hard skill and 80 percent soft skill. Many successful people in the world achieved their success mostly by their soft skill abilities rather than their hard skills. This fact explains that character education is very significant for students.

According to Kurniawan (2015), there are four factors that become the reason why the students should be equipped with character education. Those are religion, Pancasila, culture, and National education purpose. Then, he mentioned that from that factors, it can be elaborated to be 18 characters which can be given to the three center of education (family, school, and society), namely religious, honest, tolerant,

disciplined, hardworking, creative, independent, democratic, curious, nation spirit, nationalist, respect achievement, friendly/communicative, peaceful, love reading, sociable, environment caring, and responsibility.

Generally, the campaign of character education is highly socialized in primary and secondary level of school (Almerico, 2014). He also proposed that good character can be developed through children's literature. Regan and Page (2008) further studied that not only normal children have a right to get character education, but also children and adolescent with emotional and behavioral disability (EBD). Chau-Shun and Ro-Yu (2007) studied about character education in high school area, especially for gifted students to enrich behavior: hard work, responsibility and mission, love and caring, optimism and humor, and multiple intelligence. In this case, the target of the study has already been equipped with the good attitude from the word "gifted". Therefore, there should be supporting study to elaborate media and teaching techniques to accommodate character education for all learners. From these findings, it can be concluded that in tertiary level the topic of character development get little attention. Character education should be lifelong learning starting from family education to university level to promote the development of "character traits." Thus, this article tries to put character development in college as an interesting topic to discuss.

Cultural Issue

In learning a foreign language, learners are expected to be able to convey and respond to messages by using the target language appropriately. However, it does not mean that the learners merely focus on learning the language receptively (through listening

and reading) and productively (through speaking and writing), but they are supposed to understand the cultural competence as an influential part in creating communication as well as language skills and language components (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation). Cultural competence resulting from a common language, communication style, customs, beliefs, attitudes, and values (Levine & Mara, 1993) should be given to the learners since it can benefit them in many ways. The competence can help them experience less cross-cultural miscommunication, assess behavior more accurately, and provide more effective services and interventions (King, Sims, & Osher, n.d.).

In character building, it is called a good personality when the learners are able to respect and be responsible to maintain their own culture. If we discuss the culture, it is undeniable that communication plays a pivotal role in society. Generally, communication has two types: verbal and non verbal. This chapter aims to introduce some American gestures that are used as nonverbal communication. Since this part is very crucial when we communicate with American people, the teachers should be selective in choosing the materials so that the learners can identify whether the gestures are polite or not. Besides, they can get more insights in differentiating between American gestures and other countries', especially English Speaking nations. In line with this, it is important to encourage learners to speculate on the significance of gestures where people unconsciously put between each other and to show in what ways these nonverbal cues are similar to, or at variance with, those of their culture (Thanasoulas, 2001). The teachers should also be a good model to show

how to use the gestures in the real context. By understanding this topic, it is expected that the learners can comprehend the meaning of the American gestures, its similarities and differences to their home culture so that they can apply or respond to this silent language appropriately. It is hoped that the learners can apply this knowledge to minimize culture shock when they go to the United States of America or meet American people in Indonesia.

American Gestures

Gestures are movements of the body or parts of the body, especially the hands, that carry meaning. It is usually used when people do not need to talk to communicate their feeling/emotions and attitudes. By looking at those gestures, people who understand will do or respond it quickly, otherwise miscommunication will appear due to misunderstanding between the message sender and receiver.

Every culture has its own unique set of gestures, including American culture. Thus, what is considered usual or polite behavior in America may be seen unusual or impolite in another. For example, beckoning people to come with the palm up that is considered common gesture in America is considered rude in the Philippines, Korea, and parts of Latin America. To be able to recognize the American gestures, pay attention to the following gestures and its meaning.

American Gestures



Picture 1. O.K



Picture 2. Good Luck



Picture 3. I don't know



Picture 4. I can't hear you



Picture 5. Embarrassment, Frustration



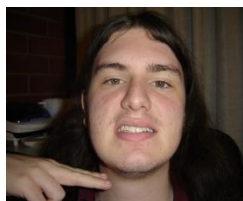
Picture 6. Well done



Picture 7. Peace Picture



8. Congratulations



Picture 9. Stop! That's enough



Picture 10. I love U

awareness, lecturers are suggested to give appealing and challenging activities in CCU class. For tertiary level students, besides poster presentations, role play can be an alternative way to apply since they can use their creativity and practice critical thinking to respond the gestures. In addition, to stimulate them in the beginning of the class, the use of pictures and reading texts are possible to do.

In this paper, the relationship among culture, character education, and English teaching is closely related. To be a person with good moral, character education is supposed to be given to the students by inserting it through the lesson, implicitly or explicitly. This paper tries to promote gestures as part of communication which consist of cultural competence in pedagogy and role play as a recommended teaching technique in classroom activity. Role play in this case is free technique so that the students have freedom to act out of specified roles and functions. It is suggested to apply since student-centered is conducted and communicative strategy can be achieved (Brown, 2007). It can be illustrated as follows.

Classroom Instruction

In English Department, the course which can specifically accommodate students in learning culture stated in curriculum is CCU, Cross Cultural Understanding. In line with this, Anugerahwati (2011) stated that can develop the students' noble characters based on their teaching experience. She further mentioned her students' opinion about her CCU class that the class let them learn and understand their own culture by studying other cultures. In this class, they can explore their knowledge about what is accepted and unaccepted habit of native speakers. To enhance their sense of cultural



Here are the procedures in teaching American Gestures to promote character building, particularly "respectful and responsible" in the seventh semester

Pre-Teaching

- Explaining the learning objectives.
 - Brainstorming the students by giving pictures and videos on ppt slides about communication in the world.
 - Asking the students' ideas about gestures and its example.
 - Distributing the reading text about American gestures.
 - Dividing the students in groups of 4.
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Whilst-Teaching

- Giving the students a few minutes to read the text for comprehension and answer comprehension questions in group (see the appendix).
 - Discussing the content of the text.
 - Discussing the students' answers in reading comprehension questions.
 - Explaining American gestures and showing how to use them.
 - **Asking the students to work in group for the next exercise: comparing American gestures with Indonesian one by identifying the similarities and differences of both cultures through filling in the blank columns of Indonesian gesture. If the gestures are the same, ask the students to write "same". But, if the gestures are not the same, ask them to write the Indonesian gestures for the meanings shown in picture on the worksheet.**
 - Asking the students to do "wall gallery" by sticking the paper of their group work on the wall or white board, then give comments to their classmates' work and vice versa.
 - Discussing the students' answers.
 - Assessing the students' work.
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Post-Teaching

- Giving feedback to the students' work and asking the students to give comments about the class activities.
 - **Asking the students to take lottery for a role play that will be performed in the next meeting.**
 - Reviewing the materials.
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The activities that can encourage their respect and responsibility to the culture is put on the main and post activities. In the main activity, the lecturer Asking the students to work in group for the exercise. This task gives them opportunity to compare American gestures with Indonesian one by identifying the similarities and differences of both cultures through filling in the blank columns of Indonesian gesture. If the gestures are the same, ask the students to write "same". But, if the gestures are not the same, ask them to write the Indonesian gestures for the meanings shown in picture on the worksheet. Next, in the post activity, the lecturer gives role pay activity as homework so that they can have optimal preparation and better performance since they have more time to practice and select the best solution in solving the cultural problem.

CONCLUSION

Providing cultural competence in classroom setting and then asking them to relate it to their home culture is one of effective ways in learning a foreign language since they will understand more about culture as an important aspect existing in the country where they learn the language. This can be used as a moment to establish their character, respectful and responsible. Being respectful means accepting other people's (polite) gesture, while being responsible means maintaining own gestures or even introducing it to other non native Indonesian people.

In addition to reading a text, a suitable activity that can be done in the class is analyzing the similarities and differences on both cultures. In this case, the cultural competence that is given to the learners is American gestures. By introducing the American gestures and

relating them to Indonesian cultures, it is expected that the learners have awareness to the different gestures that are used as non-verbal communication in the world. Furthermore, it is hoped that the learners can create good communication in their society especially those who live around American people.

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