

DEVELOPING STUDENTS' MACRO LANGUAGE SKILLS INTEGRATEDLY BY INTERCONNECTING THE TARGET CULTURE AND LOCAL WISDOM IN TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL

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ABSTRACT

The goal of teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia (TEFLIN), or in a wider context—teaching English as a global language (TEGL) or teaching English as an international language (TEIL), is that the students are able to “authentically” communicate with others using the target language in real life situations: attending lectures or seminars, having a chat via Internet, discussing TV programmes, bargaining items in markets, etc. When the communication takes place, the four macro language skills are integratedly employed to convey and receive messages as the contents of communications. This vividly seems that language in use must have contents because language itself merely consists of symbols, grammatical rules in the forms of patterns, and skills. In TEFLIN or TEGL/TEIL, therefore, the teachers/lecturers of English should cater the students with meaningful contents appropriate for them to develop their four macro language skills in meaningful learning atmosphere. The contents encompass the target culture and students' local wisdom related to their real-life situations. The target culture is employed as meaningful input texts for receptive skills: listening and reading. The input texts are then employed to explore and elaborate on local wisdom related to the target culture for productive skills: writing and speaking. The steps proposed are as follows: 1) warming the students up with relevant situation to the topic, 2) presenting input texts about the target culture to discuss (listening or reading), 3) analysing the ways of expressing ideas used in the target language –English, 4) analysing and discussing the language elements, and 5) employing the learned ways of expressing ideas in productive skills (writing and speaking) about local wisdom related to students' real life situations in the target language.

Keywords: macro language skills, language elements, target culture, local wisdom, students' real-life situations, TEFLIN and TEGL/TEIL

INTRODUCTION

English is more widely used in all branches of sciences than any other international languages. Besides, it is broadly used in all aspects of lives for international purposes. Its use has got meteoric increases. It is not exclusively owned by English speaking countries anymore inasmuch as it is used in a wide range of international communication. Therefore, English becomes a compulsory subject in formal education in many countries embracing Indonesia. The goal of teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia (TEFLIN), or in a wider context—teaching English as a global language (TEGL) or also usually called teaching English as an international language (TEIL), is that the students are able to “authentically” communicate with others using the target language, English.

To meet the pre-determined objectives of TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL, being able to communicate with others employing the target language—English, the English teachers should facilitate the students to develop and master the four macro language skills. In real communication, these four macro language skills are simultaneously employed. Therefore, the English teachers should make their students accustomed to integratedly employing these four macro language skills during the teaching-learning processes. This fact is in line with the nature language; its macro language skills are integral and cannot be separated into discrete skills. In teaching English, therefore, developing students' four macro language skills integratedly is highly recommended.

However, English as a language cannot be learned without contents for it has only symbols, pattern, grammatical rules, and skills. The contents of teaching-learning English can be any aspects of lives, and cultures are one of them that best suits for the students in a particular reason. To render clear understanding on how to develop students' language skills integrated, the following sections deal in more details with teaching integrated language skills, interconnection between teaching language and culture, and the steps in interconnecting target culture and local wisdom in TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL to develop students' language skills that are broken down into 1) warming up, 2) presenting input texts, 3) analysing ways of expressing ideas, 4) analysing and discussing language elements, and 5) expressing ideas for productive skills.

DISCUSSION

A. TEACHING INTEGRATED LANGUAGE SKILLS

As touched upon in the previous section, the goal of TEFLIN, or in a wider context – TEGL/TEIL, is that the students are able to “authentically” communicate with others using the target language in real life situations: attending lectures, having a chat via Internet, discussing TV programme, shopping, outing with guests, etc. They are expected to master the four macro language skills so that they are able to fluently and accurately communicate with others. When they communicate with one another in a social life, of course they simultaneously employ more than one language skill. At least two language skills are employed. When they attend a lecture, for instance, they employ four macro language skills: listening to the lecturer's explanation, reading words/phrases/sentences on slides, taking notes (writing), and asking questions/commenting on lecturer's explanations/giving opinions/arguing (speaking).

Regarding normal communication in social lives encompassing four macro language skills, English teachers need to take into consideration that they cater the students with interconnected learning materials in the spoken cycle (listening-speaking) and in the written cycle (reading-writing). If possible, they are suggested that they teach English integratedly as most English language teaching (ELT) experts scrutinize, theorize, and practice in recent years, instead of using the segregated-skill approach –teaching discrete skills that is typically separate from content. (<http://www.academia.edu>). In integrated learning, the students will practice and use English to naturally interact with one another by making use of the learning materials (in pedagogical contexts). Therefore, they will gradually “gain a true picture of the richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication.” They will also realize that English is a real means of communication when they interact with one another or with foreigners, especially in global contexts (<http://www.educ.ualberta.ca>) or at least the students get used to employ the skills integratedly.

When integrated teaching is implemented, each of the four macro language skills supports with one another. The materials and activities in one skill can be such input texts for other skills, especially for productive ones. They work in tandem during learning processes. Content-based instruction, task-based instruction, and the project-based approach are those that can be employed in TEFL/TEGL/TEIL when the four language skills are simultaneously learned and practiced in classrooms (<http://www.educ.ualberta.ca>). Content-based instruction emphasizes learning contents through language, English. In TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL, however, the focus of learning is English itself. The content functions as a message to understand and gives inputs of language elements, language features, and language expressions to learn, practice, master, and implement in real communications. Task-based instruction accentuates completing tasks requiring communicative language use. The final objective is that the students are able to intelligibly communicate with others using the target language, English. (<http://www.educ.ualberta.ca>). The last one, project-based approach insists that the students be able to complete a project in the forms of new tangible texts. To complete the project, the

students pass through stages involving the four macro language skills as integration. The integration of the skills does not mean that the four macro language skills are always simultaneously employed. They work in tandem. Therefore, the English should be able to cater the students with extensive second-language inputs for their learning and create opportunities for using the language as well (Ellis, 2008 in Li, 2012: 12).

In implementing integrated language instruction engaging the students in meaningful contexts of communication, the English teachers can use various techniques and models depending on their creativity, learning materials the design, and students' characteristics and socioeconomic cultural backgrounds (Richards and Rodgers 2001 in Hinkel, <http://www.elihinkel.org> and <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu>) so that the students are able to develop their two or more language skills in use within real contexts and in a communicative framework (Baturay and Akar, <http://dergiler.ankara.edu>). To make the learning process run smoothly, the English teachers can start their instruction with students' real-life contexts and end also with students' real-life aspects (Suwarsih Madya, 2004). The themes of the English teaching-learning materials can be related to students' origin (Mee, 1996: 194). This is supported by Celce-Muria & Olshtain (2000: 194) who state that the thematic contents should expose students to situations, texts, or discourse types that are relevant to the interest and experiences of the learners. This idea is also in accordance with three pedagogic parameters proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2006: 171-176): particularity, practicality, and possibility. This implies that the English teachers should be able to adopt, adapt, or even create their own learning materials suitable for their students. Furthermore, Crawford in Richards and Renandya (2002: 67) states that language is functional and must be contextualized in the students' real-life situations to be meaningful for the students. Besides, the students will easily follow, comprehend, practice, and implement the lessons.

B. INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN TEACHING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Taking into account that TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL needs contents since English as a language merely consists of symbols, grammatical rules, patterns, and skills; it cannot be learned without contents –vacuum. English is not a discrete subject. Its skills are also integral in nature, language use. The contents of TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL can be across subjects to communicate, especially current issues on the basis of the students' real-life situations and other related subjects (Jacobs and Farrell in Richards, 2006: 22). Therefore, cultures can be one of the best alternative contents. Language and culture are “one coin having two sides.” Culture cannot be expressed and communicated without language, and the inner forms of languages influence its speakers' thoughts (Boas in Strazny, 2005: 146). Language is one on the cultural products and is used to communicate the culture itself. Language and culture are two things which cannot be separated and they support each other. They are “two in one.” It is in line with Brown (2007: 210) stating that culture is really an integral part of the interaction between language and thought. Therefore, making use of culture as the content of TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL is beneficial as a curriculum without showing recognition to the cultural values society “appears to be laid on a path incompatible with the sociology of learning that is aimed at sustaining the socioeconomic cultural development of any society” (Okeke, 2009). The English teachers, therefore, should have the options of assigning supplementary materials based on their own specific needs in their own specific teaching situations (Ansary and Babaii, 2002), i.e., materials related to students' real lives. During the teaching-learning process, English is suitable for creating the negotiation of cultural ideas (Mee, 1996: 201-202). However, for receptive skills, it is better that the English teachers select learning materials containing target cultures that can also be used as input texts for developing students' productive skills.

Language is a part of culture, it is a kind of cultural products, and therefore, it plays an important role in it and without it, culture will not exist. Simultaneously it reflects culture, and is

affected and formed by culture. Language and culture are interwoven and inseparable (Jiang, 200: 328). Sapir (1921) states that “language does not exist apart from culture.” “Between language and culture there is always an interactive influence: the two cannot exist without each other” (Jiang, 2000: 332). As language and culture are “one thing having two sides like a coin of money,” the task of English teacher is to make it real in their learning materials and teachings. They should design language learning materials and class activities connected to cultures, both target cultures and local cultures, as a part of their whole teachings. It is important that their teaching is sensitive and relevant to “the diversity and richness of the English used today in an increasingly globalized and complex world” (MacKay, 2012: 346). Therefore, TEFLIN in a wider context becomes TEGL/TEIL and the materials should interconnect between language and culture. Culture becomes vital in language learning and teaching inasmuch as offers the development of communicative competence as well as other skills in the instruction of any language (Genc and Bada, 2005: 81).

Interconnecting between teaching language and culture will give benefits for the students as they, in fact, find it easy to recognise others’ cultures, especially equipped with current technologies to browse information. Even people living in a remote area can easily see others’ cultures as Kumaravadivelu (2012: 11) states that now people can know others and their cultural way of life – “the good, the bad, and the ugly.” Furthermore, interconnecting teaching language and culture will be beneficial as it will 1) “develop greater understanding of cultural patterns; 2) respect individuals of all cultures in the class; and 3) develop positive and productive interaction among students and among experiences of diverse cultural groups” (Fantini, 1995: 42). This is a must inasmuch as students’ learning occurs in social contexts by interacting with one another. Learning in classrooms is a kind of social contexts in miniature where students from any backgrounds come, meet, and interact with one another (Jacobs and Farrell in Richards, 2006: 22)

Interconnecting between teaching language and culture in TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL caters the students with linguistic competence and performance, intercultural competence, and intercultural sensitivity. Linguistic competence refers to one’s knowledge of language elements- grammatical rules for instance; whereas linguistic performance refers to linguistic competence in actuality, speaking and writing. It is observable and or measurable (Brown, 1987: 24-25; 2000: 30, and 2007: 35) and Chomsky in Clark & Clark (1977: 6). Intercultural competence deals with knowledge in interpreting and producing new tangible texts in particular sociocultural contexts encompassing cultural awareness: differences and similarities among cultures (<http://rua.ua.es>). Cultural sensitivities refer to one’s ability to understand and realise that other cultures exist and everyone should respect with one another’s cultures. Related to interconnection between teaching language and cultures, Liddicoat (2011: 840-841) proposes principles of teaching and learning that involve a) active construction; b) making connections; c) interaction; d) reflection; and e) responsibility.

C. INTERCONNECTING TARGET CULTURE AND LOCAL WISDOM IN TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL TO DEVELOP STUDENTS’ LANGUAGE SKILLS

As touched upon in the previous sections, English as other languages merely consists of symbols, grammatical rules, patterns, and skills. It cannot be learned without contents as a message since it is a real means of communication. Cultures as contents of TEFL/TEGL/TEIL have benefits because learning a language is also learning its culture of its native speakers, at least the way how to express something (receptive). In a real communication, English is also used to convey a message; therefore, what one has is transferred via English (productive). As there is no perfect textbook integrating language and culture, the tasks of English teachers are to set culture learning as components of their language classes. The activities should reflect real language use (Neff and Rucynski Jr., 2013: 13).

In real communication, at least two skills are involved; probably in other situations the four macro language skills are simultaneously employed. This fact emphasises that these language skills are integral. In TEFLIN/TEGL/TEIL, integrated teaching is much more meaningful since it resembles an actual use of English as a real means of communication rather than discrete teaching by segregating language skills. The followings are steps as one alternative way how to develop students' four macro language skills integrately by interconnecting the target culture and local wisdom that comprise 1) warming up, 2) presenting input texts, 3) analysing ways of expressing ideas, 4) analysing and discussing language elements, and 5) expressing ideas for productive skills. In this model, the teaching-learning process starts and ends with students' real life (Suwarsih Madya, 2004).

1. Warming Up

To make the teaching-learning process run smoothly, an English teacher should start his/her teaching with his/her students' real life. It can be in the forms of a question-answer session to draw the students' attention, interest, and motivation. The teacher should use probing questions leading to the topic to be discussed. As it is related to culture, the teacher should also guide his/her students to their culture. They are guided to explore their own culture. It is in accordance with Worrell (2009) stating that understanding the target language and also the target culture, in this case English, the students are strongly influenced by knowledge and experiences of their own language and socioeconomic cultural linguistic backgrounds—source culture.

When their small discussion is on their culture, the teacher relates their culture to the one exists in the target language. The teacher is suggested to use question-answer models to guide his/her students to the target culture. If the students seem enthusiastic in following the small discussion, the teacher tells his/her students what they are going to talk about on that day, and then the teacher presents the input texts.

2. Presenting Input Texts

In this step, the teacher presents his/her selected meaningful input texts. The texts should contain target cultures related to daily lives of a particular context. It is important to relate the learning materials to cultural contexts as learning a language is closely related to recognise and understand people's meaning, sharing the same cultural knowledge. Contexts are very important because when the speakers (learners) really only understand other speakers share, not only words and grammar but also appropriate words and grammatical choices are for a particular situation (Butt et al., 2001: 14)

Cultures are very complex, therefore, what is meant by cultures in this context is that existing in the texts. This does not mean cultures in general, merely what is in the texts. The teacher should be sensitive to the cultural contents of the texts s/he presents. The teacher should be able to explore the texts so that the students understand the contents of the texts. The texts should be based on social contexts as "learning to use a language necessarily involves learning how to make meaning in that language in social contexts" (Butt et al., 2001: 257)

In this session, the students are asked to listen to the audio, if the input texts are in the forms of recording; to read, if the input texts are in the forms of reading passages, or to listen to and read, if the input texts are in the forms of video-taped. The students are guided and trained to develop their receptive skills (listening and reading) and simultaneously productive skills (speaking and writing) when they are asked to give comments, opinions, or suggestions and take a note when they find something important.

The focus of the discussion in this step is the contents of the input texts –cultures. Guided by the teacher, the students learn what exists in the texts. The students are trained to understand the contents of the input texts mainly employing the micro receptive skills although productive skills are also used. How to find main ideas, details, specific information, inference, etc. are trained in this step.

Therefore, the students unconsciously also learn the target cultures that exist in the texts. The teacher is also suggested to give more explanations about the contents of the texts, if possible, because this depends on the teacher's sensitivity toward the cultures in the texts.

English contents in the input texts refer to material contents and language elements. In these input texts students learn the contents, i.e., cultures and English itself as linguistic elements, linguistic features, and language functions to communicate with others. Therefore, the students also learn transactional, interpersonal, and aesthetic functions –depending on the contents of the input texts and their language elements they have. Those three macro functions are interwoven when the four macro language skills are simultaneously used in communication for daily life activities (Halliday in Nunan, 2004: 19).

3. Analysing Ways of Expressing Ideas

While/after the input texts are presented and discussed, the students are also guided to analyse ways of expressing ideas in the input texts. These are related to how to express something (ideas) in the target language, for spoken and or written expressions. The students, in this step, are to notice patterns and expressions which are used to convey messages or ideas. The ways of expressing ideas in the input texts are used as a model to express students' ideas as they are made and used by English the native speakers.

The *expressions* in the input texts are highlighted. The students are to pay attention how to express ideas in the target language. After that, the students are to practice expressing their own ideas using the target language. The teacher supervises the students in completing the tasks. The tasks can be spoken or written depending upon expressions gained from the texts and also depending upon the learning atmosphere during class activities.

4. Analysing and Discussing Language Elements

The input texts function as the source of learning language elements. In this step, the students are guided to the elements of English which the texts contain. This step can also be called language focus because the students focus on English itself: grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc. Certain sentences or expressions in the texts having particular patterns or grammatical rules or other elements are highlighted. They are taken out from the texts to be discussed and analysed.

Guided by the teacher, the students are to conclude the language data they analyse. After that, they are trained to practice expressing their own ideas using the language elements they have learned. The practice can be spoken and or written expressions depending upon what they learn. The teacher should make sure that the students practice correctly, based on the rules they have learned.

5. Expressing Ideas for Productive Skills

Realising that English as a real means of international communication, it is worth exploring and elaborating students' local wisdom to be communicated with international parties using English as an alternative way of promotions. It can be conducted after the students get input texts and learn how to express ideas in the target language, English. In this step, the students practice writing skills and speaking skills integrately as exploring and elaborating students' local cultures/wisdom are appropriate for productive skills.

The students are assigned to make a composition consisting of their local wisdom. In this case, the students are to employ the language elements they have learned to express their ideas. Having finished writing their composition, they are asked to present what they have written using power points equipped with an LCD. During the presentation, they learn about local wisdom each student

presents and simultaneously the practice their speaking and listening skills. In this step, the students also learn cross-cultural understanding from each of the students in the class.

Having finished discussing the contents, the class is asked and guided to pay attention to the composition on the slides focusing on linguistic features. All of the students are asked to check everything related to language elements. In this step, the students learn and practice writing skills: language elements and the organisation of the ideas. Every student learns, and the one having the composition should revise if there are mistakes in his composition.

From the activities above, the students learn a lot about local wisdom. Besides, they also deeply learn about language elements and how to organise ideas in the target language. They also learn and practice speaking and listening during the presentation and discussion. They also make use that English is a means of communication as they practice. Moreover, the students also promote their own local wisdom/culture in a small scale as a practice that can be developed into a wider context. The can also upload their compositions and activities via social media: blogs, your tube, instagram, facebook, etc.

CONCLUSSION

With regards to the above discussion, some conclusions can be made. Learning a language must be with contents. Learning language is also learning its culture. Therefore, learning English having cultures as the contents gives benefits to the students. They learn cultures and language elements in the input texts, and they practice language elements and organisations to express their ideas containing their own local culture/wisdom using the target language, English. They practice that language is a real means of communication.

In real communication, language skills cannot be employed separately as they are integral in nature. Therefore, developing students' language skills should also be conducted in an integrated way. It does not mean that the four macro language skills must always be used simultaneously. At least, two language skills are simultaneously used. Language skills should not be segregated in teaching language.

In developing students' four language skills integratedly, the English teacher should select such materials that can suitably be used for the students and relevant to the language elements that will be highlighted. Besides, the English teacher should be creative in creating class activities and guiding the students in completing the tasks so that the each of the students has an opportunity to develop his/her skills. The English teacher should also be sensitive to the cultures and language elements in the texts so that s/he can explore them to facilitate his/her students' learning.

Through the steps offered, the students are actively involved in promoting local cultures/wisdoms to international parties. The can make use of social media for the promotion. Furthermore, they can show their self-identity or even national identity inasmuch as languages and cultures represent one's or nation's identity.

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