

STRATEGIES OF INTEGRATING CHARACTER EDUCATION INTO TASK DESIGN

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Abstract

In response to national concerns towards diverse complicated cases leading to moral degradation in Indonesia, the Ministry of National Education has determined to integrate character education into Indonesian classroom instruction. This policy has inevitably demanded teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners to be more creative and innovative in preparing a more challenging, interesting, and inspiring course design. Now, English teachers have to integrate not only such crucial elements as higher-order thinking skills and learning strategies but also character education into their English instruction.

This article aims at previewing strategies to integrate character education into learning tasks. Having been inherent in learning materials, tasks must be well-designed to reach one of the goals of tasks, i.e. to internalize good characters to students. The strategies for integration that will be outlined in this paper depart from the design of the components of a task that consist of: 1) goal, 2) input, 3) procedure, 4) learner role, 5) teacher role, and 6) setting. By systematically integrating character education into learning tasks design, teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners have consciously put their commitment to invest good and noble characters in the lives of their students.

Keywords: character education integration, task, and task design

I. INTRODUCTION

Along with the more complex national challenges as a result of the globalization era, the portray of national education has been experiencing crucial changes. One of the dynamic changes is the issue to integrate the ultimate values of character education into classroom instruction at Indonesian schools and universities. In the past when the previous Suharto era ruled the country, this issue seemed unpopular since the national character education had been frequently promoted by the national educational guideline for implementing the values of *Pancasila* or what is so called P4 (*Pedoman Pendidikan dan Pengamalan Pancasila*). The integration of this guideline into diverse national educational programs in Indonesia seemed to be the national reference for educational institutions to conduct educational practices for developing and strengthening the noble social and cultural values of our nation.

Nowadays, when this guideline has been deleted as the whole country has tried to efface the memory of the old dictatorship, the national reference for valuing noble values has as if disappeared. Soon after the reform era has taken over the national political life, this country seems not ready to prepare its citizens to welcome the global challenges so as to suffer from many complicated problems. Moral and character degradation is the main trigger for many complex disputes and corruption cases. This situation has, therefore, forced the Ministry of National Education to require Indonesian schools and universities to integrate the conceptual and

operational grand design of character education implementation into classroom instruction. There are 4 (four) ways offered by the grand design for integrating character education:

- a) Systematically integrating character education into the subject matters and teaching-learning activities in and out of classroom
- b) Integrating character education into various school and campus extra-curricular activities
- c) Integrating character education into diverse school and university/college programs for guiding and educating students
- d) Integrating character education into school and university/college management

Of the four ways recommended, this paper highlights the first way, i.e. the integration of character education into the subject matters and teaching-learning activities. The main starting point for the integration is to design learning tasks, which are embedded in learning materials, in such a way so as to facilitate the implementation of character education in the teaching-learning process. The design focuses on the process of adapting the components of learning task so that it puts the promoted values of character education into practice.

II. STRATEGIES OF INTEGRATING CHARACTER EDUCATION INTO TASK DESIGN

Task is defined into several definitions by some ELT proponents. Richards (2001) states that a task is “an activity which learners carry out using their available language resources and leading to a real outcome”. A task is also determined as the reflection of the language use in the real world which conveys several language activities and various cognitive processes (Ellis, 2003 in Nunan, 2004). In this view, a task is perceived as a work plan that pragmatically intends to achieve certain outcomes. Therefore, the primary attention is on meaning rather than form. In line with Ellis’s point of view, Nunan (2004) also defines a task as “a communicative event having a non-linguistic outcome”. Within this perspective, a task is regarded as a piece of classroom work that allows learners to comprehend, manipulate, produce, or interact in the target language”. Of the definitions offered above, it can be, therefore, inferred that a task is viewed as an activity, a work plan, and a piece of classroom work which puts its primary concern on meaning rather form to reach a certain learning outcome. To function effectively as an activity, a work plan, and a piece of classroom work, a task is structured by 6 (six) components (Nunan, 2004): (a) goal, (b) input, (c) procedure, (d) teacher role, (e) learner role, and (f) settings. These six components are defined as follows:

- a) Goal is the general intention which connects the task to the curriculum.
- b) Input refers to “the spoken, written and visual data that learners work with in the course of completing a task”.
- c) Procedures “specify what learners will actually do with the input which form the point of departure for the learning task”.
- d) Roles refer to “the part that learners and teachers are expected to play in carrying out the learning tasks as well as the social and interpersonal relationships between the participants”.

- e) Settings refer to “the classroom arrangements specified or implied in the task, and it also requires considerations of whether the task is to be carried out wholly or partly outside the classroom”.

Having elaborated the components of task as outlined before, a task, which is part of learning materials, has therefore significant potential to undergo some materials adaptation to achieve such a certain educational purpose or objective as internalizing the values of character education. The strategies for adapting the learning task are done through well-thought manipulation towards the components of task to integrate character education, which are going to be presented step by step as follows.

Learning Goal

A learning goal which intends to facilitate the implementation of character education can be re-formulated by adding a number of the selected values of character to be promoted, such as the values of being honest, self confident, hard-working, polite, etc. The reformulation of the learning goal must be well-reflected through the design of the learning task instruction, which at the same time regulates the procedure of the task. Here are the examples of sets of instructions of learning tasks which intend to build certain values of character.

Sample 1:



Task 1

In pairs, have a dialogue to introduce yourself to each other. Then, answer the following questions with your partner. (Secara berpasangan, berdialoglah untuk saling memperkenalkan diri. Kemudian jawablah pertanyaan-pertanyaan berikut dengan pasangan kalian).

Questions

1. How do you start your dialogue? Do you start by greeting your partner?
.....
2. What do you say to introduce yourself?
.....
3. What do you say to ask your partner’s name?
.....

Sample 2

SHARING YOUR OPINIONS

What is your idea of a good student? Work in pairs and discuss these questions with your partner.

1. Are you afraid of making mistakes when you speak English?
 - o Yes
 - o Sometimes
 - o No
 - o Not very often

2. Do you participate in scientific competitions?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - Not very often
3. Do you cheat on the school exam?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - Not very often
4. Do you ask questions in your classes?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - Not very often

Add two more critical questions of your own.

The two samples above show that the sets of instructions designed have projected the integration of such character values as cooperative and critical. These two values are accommodated explicitly by the instruction hints of ‘work in pairs’, ‘discuss’, add two more critical questions’ and facilitated through the selected activity of a peer discussion.

Input Text

The other components of task must be adjusted as well. The input texts being presented to learners, consequently, do not only support the intended basic competency that must be achieved, but are also suitable with the promoted values of character education. Teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners must therefore be able to select, evaluate, and adapt the input texts so that they are in line with the values of character that are planned to develop. The following is the example of the input text adaptation for a particular learning task to develop the speaking micro-skills of asking for and giving opinions at the junior high school level. As having been exemplified below that the design of the learning task is made for the Building Knowledge of Field stage. The incorporation of character education is done by means of techniques for materials adaptation which are so called zero and plus category. This input text is adapted from a unit of a global course book entitled *Impact Topics: 30 Exciting Topics to Talk About in English* written by Richard R. Day dan Junko Yamanaka. In overall, the adapted input text covers the character values of being discipline, active, creative, logical and critical, risk-taking, and obedient. These values are explicitly depicted through the instructions, the illustrations, and the content of the input text. While, the implied values that are facilitated by the selected learning activity of a discussion are being able to think critically, respecting different views, being polite, honest, and self confident.

ARE YOU GOOD STUDENTS? ⇒ *Modification on the title of the input text*

⇒ *Modification on the text illustrations*



SHARING YOUR OPINIONS ⇒ *Modification on the heading and instructions*

What is your idea of a good student? Work in pairs and discuss these questions with your partner.

1. Are you afraid of making mistakes when you speak English?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - Not very often
2. Do you participate in scientific competitions?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - Not very often
3. Do you cheat on the school exam?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - Not very often
4. Do you ask questions in your classes?
 - Yes
 - Sometimes
 - No
 - Not very often

Plus category
(extending the complexity of
the input text)

Add two more questions of your own.

Procedures

The next component of learning task is procedures which specify types of learning activities. This component should reflect the implementation of the character education values through learner-centered learning activities so that the ultimate learning goal to realize autonomous learners can be achieved. Such learning activities that bear the values of character

education as discussion, observation, debate, presentation, mini projects are, therefore, worth-selecting.

Setting, Teacher and Student Roles

The last three components, which are setting, teacher roles, and student roles, must be able to be integrated into task design in such ways that the task setting assigned to learners will shape the personalities and characters of learners. In designing learning tasks, teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners are required to consider several points, such as whether learners will be provided with a short or long period of time to accomplish the task, why assigning learners to work in pairs comes first before asking them to work in groups, why teachers should add or reduce the level of their scaffolding, why learners are assigned to present their ideas, etc. Those points to ponder demonstrate to what extent the task setting, teacher and student roles will ease learners to build the qualities of their characters and personalities.

III. CONCLUSION

Taking professional pride in designing learning tasks is one of the responsibilities of professional teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners. This leads to a consequence that the challenges of educational players are getting more complex and demanding. School teachers, lecturers, and educational practitioners are now demanded to integrate such crucial values as learning strategies, higher order of thinking skills, and character education into their course design. Therefore, taking a careful design in preparing learning tasks as outlined previously is very crucially done for building and shaping the excellence of Indonesian future generations.

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