Achieving Good Grade and Good Heart:
A Strategy of Developing Soft Skills in English Language Teaching
English Language Teaching

Irwandi[*]

Bukittinggi State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN Bukittinggi), Indonesia
irwandinashir@yahoo.co.id

Abstract

Soft skills have a significant role in the development of the students' overall personality, thereby potentially enhance their career prospect. In the context of foreign language teaching, soft skills can be exposed integrally through the process of teaching and learning English. This is based on the paradigm that English language teaching   ideally does not merely focus on how to achieve a good grade in the language skills, but also guide them to internalize the virtues for their soft skills development (good heart). This paper focuses on : (1) the nature of soft skills in, (2) the   relation between soft skills and English language teaching, and (3) some strategies of developing students' soft skills in English language teaching in terms of course design, lesson plan, instructional material, classroom activities, and the assessment of the students' achievement. It is expected that this paper contributes significantly to the effort of English teachers to develop soft skills in the process of teaching and learning English.

Keywords: soft skills, core values, contextual teaching and learning (CTL)

1. Introduction

Education ideally must have a priority over developing soft skills without neglecting the significant role of hard skills or academic skills. Soft skills are self-developed, interactice, communicative, human and transferable skills. They include positive thinking, good interpersonal skills, communication skills, time management, self-confidence, problem solving, including analyzing a problem, setting goal, and thinking through both the long-term and short-term consequences of an action. Moreover, literature suggests that hard skills contribute to only 15 % of one's skills success while remaining 85 % is supported by soft skills. Ultimately, soft skills are believed would make the youth achieve a great chance to be succesfull in a competitive environment, and increase their employability potential.

One of the assumptions used in developing soft skills is that putting academics mastery as a media to develop soft skills. For this reason, English language teaching (ELT) does not merely focus on the language mastery, but also the efforts of constructing good character or soft skills to the students. This fact is also affirmed by the the perspective that the essence of language teaching, as the essence of all teachings, lies in values or moral. In fact, ELT involves the ways of cross-cultural communication, manners, etiquette, and self-confidence with its complexity. These aspects crucially relate to soft skills dimension. Moreover, in teaching the language skills, these values are transmitted to the students through syllabus, lesson plan, instructional material, and classroom activity.

2. Discussion

The concept of soft skills takes root from the concept of emotional intelligence. The terminolgy of soft skills are used to distinguish them from the term of hard skills. Hard skills refer to cognitive capacities (IQ) while soft skills belong to Emotional Intelligence. Hard skills are used for seeking a job while soft skills is useful to maintain it. In this concept, soft skills are imparted to fine one's attitudes, values, motivation, beliefs, desires, willingness to share and embrace new ideas, goal orientation, flexibility, and various skills of communication, interaction, and manners so that he/she is able to adapt with different situations diligently and responsibily. Soft skills are divided into two main parts, which are one part involves developing attitudes and attributes, and the other part encompass communication skills to express attitudes, ideas,and thoughts well in oral, written, and non-verbal areas. Thus, soft skills are life skill for oneself, and community so that a existence of person can be accepted by others.

Soft skills building is aimed at fostering the development of ethical and responsible individuals by teaching them about the good values that people should apply. The students are taught values of caring about other people, honesty, responsibility, and other important traits to

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[*] Corresponding author. Tel.: N/A; fax: N/A.
   E-mail address: irwandinashir@yahoo.co.id.

make them as upstanding citizen. As moral education, developing soft skills describes character education encompassing the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality. The cognitive dimension plays significantly to lead students to achieve moral awareness. Specifically, moral awareness is the students' ability to use their intelligence to consider when a situation requires moral judgment, and then think carefully about what the right action is Soft skills is also formed through internalizing the good, and applying the good things. Ultimately, the students are helped understanding the core values, commit to them, and apply them in their own lives.

Developing soft skills or good character in ELT needs to formulate core values. Values which are acted by a person in his/her behavior become a real character. Thus, there is no a person's behavior which is free from a value. In relation to core values, [8] proposes ten core values as underpinnings of character. These values are relevant to the effort of developing soft skills. The values are presented in the table below:

The first value is wisdom. This value leads people to decide a thing logically, that is, what thing is good for themselves and others. The second is justice, which relates to how respect the rights of other people. The next value is fortitude. It is ability to overcome the problem with the right thing. Having fortitude could avoid teenagers to do suicide, for instance, when they do not know how else to deal with their overwhelming emotions. The fourth value is self-control that is the ability to manage emotion proportionally and not give into overbearing feelings or temptations. The fifth virtue is love in term of the willingness to sacrifice for the good of others. The sixth value is having a positive attitude. Those who have a positive attitude will get the chance of success and be valuable to others. Hard work becomes the seventh value. Hard work is applied through taking initiative, being diligent, setting goals, and being resourceful. The eighth essential value is integrity. This value involves the unity between what is believed and what is done. Gratitude is the ninth virtue. It entails person's mentality to accept satisfactorily for what already have, and be happy with everything that he/she is blessed to have in his/her life. The final virtue is humility that is a person's ability to accept his/her imperfections and appreciate others' special quality. These ten essential virtues can be the reference values in developing soft skills in English language teaching.

Furthermore, as proposed by [6] that there are specific soft skills to be implemented and used in a process of teaching and learning. Referring to the research findings, at least there are some important soft skills which have been identified and applied in educational institutions, which are communication skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, team work, lifelong learning and information management skills, entrepreneurship skill, ethics and professional moral, and leadership skill. In communication skill, students are lead to be able to convey their thoughts with clarity and confidence both in written and oral forms. The, with critical thinking and problem solving skills, students are guided to be able to think in a critical, creative, innovative, and analytical manner which includes the competency to apply the knowledge. Team work skills encompass the ability to work and cooperate with people who are different in terms of cultural and social aspect. Students are also lead to be autonomous learners and have the skills to search for relevant information. Entrepreneurship skills lead students to self-employment. Ethics and professional moral leads students to be able to apply high moral standars in the relevant professional practice. Finally, leadership skill provides students on how lead people and lead in various activities. To keep these simple, it is clear that the different skills are categorized as personal qualities, interpersonal skills, and enrichment skills or knoledge.

The effort of developing soft skills also ties in with the field of psychology. Theories of cognitive and development are purposed to explain how children develop, and thus, how to teach them appropriately in the frame of students' development. Piaget proposed a theory about cognitive development which employs in the four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational [10]. Sensorimotor occurs since birth through ages 18-24 months. The last three stages connect to the discussion on moral development. In the preoperational stage (ages 2-7), the main emphasis is the mastery of motor development skills. The preoperational stage is a bridge between the sensorimotor stage and concrete operational stage. When they are in 7-12 years, they move into the concrete stage which is indicated by their ability to think about a situation logically and concretely. They can also see things based on others' perspective instead of only seeing things from their own point of view. Then, children achieve the formal operation stage when they are 12 years and older. Through this stage, they can think things abstractly.

Table 1
Ten core values in soft skills

wisdom	positive attitude
justice	hard work
fortitude	integrity
self-control	gratitude
love	humility

Furthermore, Piaget's cognitive development theory is elaborated by Kohlberg becoming a theory of moral reasoning [10]. This theory is grouped into three different levels: preconventional morality, conventional morality, and post-conventional morality. Through the stage of preconventional morality, students will obey rules in order to avoid punishment. The stage of preconventional morality also deals with self-interest. Students adapt themselves to rules in order to get something they want. Then, the stage of conventional morality occurs when children enter middle school. Through this level, students obey rules because they want to be accepted in their community so that they want to achieve an image as a "good boy or girl". The last stage is achieved by students when they are in high school. Through this stage, they act upon what they think is the right thing to do, without considering opinion of others. Then, to move from a stage to another, everyone goes through the stages sequentially without skipping any stage. Students do not automatically move from one stage to the next as they mature. Moreover, students cannot understand moral reasoning more than one stage ahead of their own. For instance, a person in first stage can understand second stage reasoning but nothing beyond that. Therefore, teachers should present moral arguments that are only one stage ahead of a learner's present level of reasoning to stimulate movement to higher stages.

3. The Relation between Soft Skills and English Language Teaching

As in all teachings, ELT is inherent with soft skills development. This fact, at least, can be seen in term of the nature of language itself, and the theory of language learning. One of the most basic underlying tenets of communicative language teaching is that language is not merely a set of forms (words, grammatical structures, etc.), but is used for something: to convey information, maintain relationships, and act in and on the social world [4, 5]. Moreover, Hymes in [11] states that language can be seen as a part of a more general theory in relation to communication and culture.

In Hymes'view, a person who acquires a communicative competence is not only directed to know linguistic features, but also the ability for using language with respect to a context in which it is used. Thus, using a language contextually is clear character-laden activity. People should have morality awareness in using a language in terms of to whom they speak, where they speak, when they speak, and what the function of their speaking. He also described seven basic functions of language which are performed by children in learning their first language, which are:
1. the instrumental function: using language to get things,
2. the regulatory function: using language to control the behavior of others,
3. the interactional function: using language to create interaction with others,
4. the personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings,

5. the heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover,
6. The imaginative function: using language to create a world of imagination, and
7. The representational functions: using language to communicate information.

These functions of language clearly tie to dimension of character building in using language. Children are not merely guided to use a language accurately and fluently, but also respect to the norms of using the language in a community. Even, most parents are not interested in the ungrammaticality of the utterances of their children. They are more interested in the truth value, social appropriateness, or cleverness of what their children say [13].

Soft skills development is also reflected through the theory of language learning. This view is based on the following reasons: Firstly, learning a language ties to students' motivation. Motivation refers to the intensity of one's impetus to learn [2]. In fact, changing one's type motivation is begun from changing his/her core value. Moreover, the effort of changing students' motivation in learning a second language actually is indeed as a part of soft skills development. The second strand states that learning a language is influenced by students' attitude. A negative attitude towards the target language, its speakers, and the other members of the class may affect students' determination and persistence in learning the language. This attitude also can impair memory functioning and detract from focusing on the target language [13]. In learning English, for instance, students' antipathy towards English culture may decrease their enthusiasm in learning the language, and even, it emerges the hate to study English. For this reason, the teachers should guide the students on how to see cultural diversity in the world, and expose to them some ethical core values to the students, such tolerance, empathy, and respect.

The last, learning a language needs interaction which occurs among students, students to teacher, and vice versa. Such interaction should be employed in the frame of moral values, such as respect, obedience, tolerance, kindness, cooperation, and etc. When the language teachers apply these values, they will have a great care to the students in mastering the language skills. The students are taught in humanistic ways, so that the students' error is seen as a creative construction process. In fact, the evidences as explained above indicate that character building and language teaching are like two sides of coin. Ideally, the study of language should enable students to cultivate core values to be internalized and acted in their real life.

4. The Strategies of Developing Soft Skills in English Language Teaching

The classroom implications of character education in English language teaching (ELT) deserve the teachers' attention at least for four aspects: course design, lesson plan, instructional materials, the types of classroom

activities, and the assessment in students' achievement. Course design refers to the way of designing a syllabus to the need of character education. the lesson plan is an integrated set of activities which commonly encompass goal, objective, materials and equipment, procedures, evaluation, extra-calss work, and period of classroom time. Instructional materials refer to the kinds of material which are used in teaching the target language. The types of learning and teaching activities are attained through the instructional process and interaction of teachers, students, and materials in the classroom directly. The last aspect is assesment which is proposed to judge students'performance in the language skills as well as their soft skills development.

4.1 Developing Soft Skills in Course Design

In providing a syllabus for the need of soft skills development, the teacher must not change the existing syllabus, but adapt it appropriately. All materials in the syllabus can be cultivated to integrate them into the core values. In the perspective of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CLT), this strategy is in line with the principle of interdependence that drives to establish relationship to arrive at new insights. In another word, this makes possible for the teachers and students to create a connection to reveal meaning [7]. In this case, the core value can be understood as a kind of meaning which should be found by the students in learning the language skills.

To integrate the core values into the syllabus, the teachers must understand the curriculum, materials, and core values. Some strategies which can be employed by the teachers are as follows: Firstly, identifying standard of competency and basic competency. The curriculum contains standard of competency (goal) and basic competency (objective) for each subject which should be achieved by students. Teachers must find ethical value which is possible integrated to the standard of competency and basic competency. Secondly, analyzing indicator, subject matter, and topics. The standard of competency and basic competency are spelled out by the indicator a basis to formulate subject matter, and topic. Finally, selecting subject matter which can be integrated into the core values. This is the significant stage to integrate English subject and the ethical core values for soft skills development.

To analyze the potency of integration between subject matter and core values, some main principles should be considered which are: principle of correspondence, principle of philosophy, and principle of clarification. The principle of correspondence entails the direct connection between a subject matter and core value. In teaching reading, for instance, the teacher uses a text which contains a direct connection to certain ethical value. Then, principle of philosophy states the teacher can integrate the subject matters to the core value philosophically since not all subject matters have a direct connection to core value. Thus, in teaching speaking, for example, any kinds of learning objectives can be connected to certain core value,

such as empathy, respect, obedience, and etc. The final principle emphasizes that the teachers can clarify the content of subject matter which contains contradictory remark to the core values.

4.2 Developing Soft Skills in Lesson Plan

Developing soft skills in lesson plan can occur in the section of objectives, materials, and procedures. In the section of objectives, teachers write explicitly the kinds of soft skills that they want students to gain from the lesson based on the pre-determined instructional objectives. The explicit statements help teachers to make sure what kinds of soft skills that should be understood and internalized by their students. In term of materials, teacher must write the lesson which must be taught and the soft skils that woukd be developed. Relating to procedure, teachers write a set of activities and techniques which can facilitate them to deliver soft skills to students. For instance, beginning the class by praying to God, greeting students, cultivating and reflecting soft skills which are found in the lesson, and closing the class by motivating students to study hard.

4.3 Developing Soft Skills in Instructional Materials

The next stage is deciding the instructional materials which can accommodate students to internalize the core values with still concern with the main goal of teaching English. The teachers may select instructional material after identifying the chance in a curriculum which can be used to explore moral values [8]. The instructional materials can be in form of non authentic material (e.g. the textbook), and authentic materials such as magazine, newspaper, brochure, film, and etc. Since it is hard to meet the textbook which can meet for the need of character education, a textbook must be adapted for particular need. In adapting a course book, the teacher can identify what parts of the textbook which are still used, but need to change in some way to make them more suitable for character education. Moreover, some parts in the textbook which are not conducive for teaching character must be left out, and they are changed with supplementary material to respond the needs of particular objective. These are also used for adapting non authentic materials to meet the particular need.

4.4 Developing Soft Skills in Classroom Technique

Another crucial stage of strategy of character education relates to classroom technique. Some approaches in developing soft skills can be used in ELT, which are values clarification technique (VCT), moral reasoning technique and reflective technique. Values clarification technique is a classroom technique which leads students to discover values through behavior, feelings, ideas, and important choices they have made for their life [1]. By applying VCT, students are helped finding, analyzing, and choosing the values which they want to achieve. Thus, they can have self reliance in deciding and directing their life

without other person's intervention. This technique also enhances the ability of students to communicate their beliefs, values, and feelings to other person. Through VCT, the students are encouraged to empathize with other person who has different value from their own. Another strategy is moral reasoning approach. This approach emphasizes on students' cognitive development to think logically through analyzing problems which relate closely to the values and judge them based on the moral values [1]. This technique is employed through class discussion which focuses on certain dilemma of morality. In reading class, for instance, some moral problems which are found in the text are appropriate to be discussed in order to encourage students to decide reasonable ways to solve it. Reflective technique emphasizes on students' effort to find the moral values in the subject matter. When they learn speaking skill, for example, on how to say greeting in English, and use formal and informal language, the teachers may get students to find the core values in it. In short, these techniques do not eliminate the learning objectives of English and their relationship is just complimentary each other.

It is also important for the language teachers should manage students' behavior in learning the target language in the frame of soft skills development. In facing students' misbehave, the teachers should find its causes before deciding a good way to solve it. Then, some schools of thought on classroom management as proposed by [3] can be selected in terms of character building. Such schools of thought are behavior modification, interpersonal relationship, cognitive behaviorism, and humanistic approaches. The former stresses the roles of rewards and punishment in the control of behavior. The second approach is aimed to produce good, positive relationship the teacher and students, and among the students themselves. Thus, emphasis on negotiation and suggestion can create a healthy classroom atmosphere. Cognitive behaviorism seeks to promote students' desirable behavior through counseling and discussions between the students and the teacher about the ways of solving a problem and handling their behavior in certain setting. Last but not least, humanistic approach guides the students to discuss unacceptable behavior in a problem-solving approach rather than a punitive approach.

4.5 Developing Soft Skills in Assessment

Developing soft skills in the section of assessment can be done through portofolio assessment. Portofolio helps students become autonomous, and foster them to do a reflection and monitor their own learning [9]. This kind of assessment is valid, especially in writing task, since students have a chance to revise it before submitting their work. Some soft skills can be developed through portofolio assessment, such as project management, critical and structured thinking, problem solving skill, creativity, time management, integrity or honesty, work ethic, and others.

5. Conclusion

In fact, the essence of English language teaching (ELT) is not only about the language skills, but also touches the moral value. Thus, the teaching of English language has a great potency to support the effort of soft skills development. Then, to connect ELT into the soft skills development, syllabus, lesson plan, instructional materials, classroom activity, and assessment model must be modified in frame of the quintessence of soft skills development. However, these efforts will not eliminate the effort to make the students competent in the language skills productively and receptively. It is hoped that through integrating the essential virtues into ELT, the students do not merely achieve good grade in practicing the target language, but also good heart in their behavior.

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