

LISTENING CLASS AND MORAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Since some students including in my class become more self-oriented and less aware on group, there is a need to integrate online teaching material which contains moral values in society into English language course. We believe that English language teaching, in some extents, could facilitate this necessity. A good choice of material, for example, is not only beneficial to promote students' language skill, but also could inspire students to become a better individual. This paper aims to propose online teaching materials as alternative for teaching moral education. To limit its scope, the material is used only for teaching listening in the EFL classroom. The benefit is two folds. First, it is expected to directly improve students' listening skill. Second, the material could be used indirectly to implant moral values to the students where the emphasis could be placed on the Indonesian values of group and society. The paper concludes by echoing a call for further research specialised in a classroom action research.

Keywords: moral values, listening comprehension

Introduction

A growing body of report reveals that students today experience a certain degree of moral degradation, in particular having received negative effects of globalization. In Indonesia, it is quite common to find several students involved in some aggressive behaviors such as student brawls, drug abuse, and cyberbullying. In my classes, indeed, such cases are not found this far. Yet, we observe that some students seem to have less respect to peers and teachers, become less responsible on their assignments, more selfish, and less collaborative. One of the example, some students tend to work alone even when they have been put in a group. Some others, in addition, seem reluctant to work with other students that they are not very close with. They will only work with their cliques and are seemingly not happy if the teacher finds a new group for them.

Since Indonesia is well-known by its unique moral values and diverse social cultures, it is important to re-emphasize moral education into school subjects, including in English language. This sort of subject is expected to nurture students to become better not only as an individual but also a member of society. The education, thus, should concern with something which promotes Indonesian values for example about respect, honesty, helping each other, groups and society. Sari (2013) even reminds us that today's debate is no longer about the importance of teaching moral values but directed on how to integrate it into classroom

teaching. We believe that English language, in some extents, can bridge this necessity by providing appropriate materials to encourage students' moral, social and cultural awareness while at the same time increasing their English language skill.

The present paper aims to propose online teaching materials as alternative for teaching moral education. To limit its scope, the material is used only for teaching listening in the EFL classroom. The benefit of this online materials is two folds. First, it is expected to directly improve students' listening skill. Second, in the indirect fashion, the material could be used to implant moral and cultural values to the students where the emphasis could be placed on the Indonesian values of group and society.

We shall begin this paper by defining what moral education really means. After that, we highlight several characteristics of language learners in Indonesia and briefly discuss how these characteristics influence us in choosing materials in the classroom. As the focus of this paper is online material, we also present multiple benefits that it offers for our EFL class. Since we use www.englishspotlight.com as our online teaching material, we therefore justify our reasons for choosing the website and how it can fit to Indonesian learners, especially learners in this context. Following this, we discuss ways to integrate moral values into EFL teaching through online teaching material. Although there has been ample research reporting the use of online material for EFL class, little information can be found regarding its use on moral education. We, then, elaborate how this material can be beneficial not only for students' language skill but also for their morality. Finally, we conclude the paper by summarizing the key points and offering recommendation for researchers in the future.

Theory

Understanding Moral Education

Moral education is frequently used to define school activities which encourage students to play their roles properly both as individual and as a community member (Mergler and Spooner-Lane, 2012). Researchers (e.g. Mergle & Spooner-Lane, 2012; Saidek, Islami, and Abdoludin, 2016) point out that the term has been used interchangeably, ranging from values education, character education, personal education, civic education, and religious education. Apart from their differences, they all have something in common in which they guide individuals to distinguish 'good and bad' in generally accepted values of a society. For the sake of consistency, this research uses moral education throughout the paper to avoid ambiguity among the readers.

While researchers still have various names for moral education, they seem to somewhat agree when referring to what can be classified as good moral/character. Lickona (1991, cited in Akin et al., 1995) mentions that good moral means when someone knows the good, desires the good, and does the good. Akin et al (1995) add by introducing six pillars of characters, i.e. trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, justice and fairness, caring, and citizenship. If they could be translated in details, they would involve honesty, not cheating, responsibility,

unselfishness, community service, etc. Similarly, Indonesian government acknowledges these values in the form of Pancasila.

In 2010, the Minister of National Education called for the need of embedding moral education in school (so-called character education). The hope of Indonesian students to grow and live with the spirit of Pancasila and Religious values became the basis triggering the emergence of this plan. Pancasila, as the national ideology, should be put forward covering the values of Goddess, humanity, unity, citizenship, and social justice as the basis. The ultimate goal is to create people who are not only intellectually strong, but also strong in character and morality.

The characteristics of English Language Learners in Indonesia

Despite triggered by multiple factors, we believe that students' characteristics play a part in determining the success of English language teaching. According to Marcellino (2008) Indonesian students are often described passive, silent, and obedient. Adi (2011) also puts that Indonesian students are not brave enough to interrupt their teachers as they are expected to answer positively and be obedient to what the teachers are saying. In addition, students today are contaminated by the negative effect of technology. The use of online chatting and social media, for example, decreases the amount of time they spent to chat with 'real' peers. Everyone seems busy with their gadgets. They look enjoy playing games or their gadget rather than talking to teachers or classmates. Gradually, this phenomenon can be negative for the students' moral growth since it may lead them to become more selfish and less caring about their surroundings.

In our personal beliefs, students should be encouraged to interact and use the language that they learn. It can be achieved by creating a communicative-based classroom activity in which it could stimulate the students to use the language in a real practice. Teachers can apply cooperative and/or collaborative learning approach encouraging the students to work together to solve problems. However, if the students are passive or only talking in their cliques, it is difficult for the teachers to gain maximum benefits of such activities. Therefore, there is a need to apply strategies or material which can stimulate students to work together in the classroom.

Online Materials in Listening Comprehension

Of many attempts to make ELT classroom alive, the selection of teaching materials can be taken into consideration. In listening class, Cahyono and Widiati (2009) believe that a good listening material is a key factor to determine the success of listening instructions. However, they continue that the source of material for students is limited. Therefore, we propose the use of www.spotlightenglish.com as an alternative material in teaching listening comprehension. It constitutes a free-access website which provides students with a wide range of topics such as science, education, culture, religion, and so forth. The audio file could be downloaded or listened directly from the website. One of the popular features of the website is 'listen & read', a 15-minute audio which is delivered to imitate radio broadcasters' style.

Using www.spotlightenglish.com can be beneficial in several ways. First of all, the recording is brought in a natural way (radio-like). Furthermore, it is

supplemented with a musical background allowing its listeners to feel relax and calm during the listening session. Undeniably, listening can be quite stressful for some students, especially if they fail to recognize certain words which prevent them from understanding the content. Researchers (Elkhafaifi 2005; Bekleyen 2009) assert that students who suffer general language anxiety are potentially to experience a certain degree of anxiety in listening. They agree that this two type of anxieties correlate negatively with the students' achievement. Therefore, the presence of a relaxing music in the listening is expected to lower their nervousness, making them to feel more comfortable in the classroom. Ultimately, it is hoped to increase focus of the students so they can optimize the benefits, for example in form of a better comprehension or higher test results.

Second, the speed of the material is rather slow. Although Hayati (2010) claims that a natural speed delivery would be slightly better to improve listening comprehension, earlier studies (e.g. Blau 1990; Nation & Newton 2009) suggest that low speed delivery can be more helpful for students at the basic level English proficiency. Considering the status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia, the use of low speed audio might help students understand the message better. The slower recording could assist the learners to take time in processing input messages in the brain. Moreover, the audio is accompanied by a script. Thus, students can listen carefully how broadcasters deliver particular words as they are reading the script. They can compare their own pronunciation and check whether they have used a correct pronunciation or not. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the decision to pick slow recording should carefully consider the level of the students. If the students in the class are in advance levels, there is no slowing needed.

The next benefit that teachers may gain from using the website is regarding its accessibility where the content is free of cost. Everyone can listen to the audio directly from the website or download it to be listened at home without paying any dollars. Students can access the website at any time and listen to the audio file to train their listening skill. As the result, teachers not only can use it in the classroom but also can have students to work collaboratively at home without the presence of the teacher. The students may be assigned a collaborative project from which they can use the language. On top of that, this free access allow students to be more independent leading them to become autonomous language learners.

Finally, materials in the website contain positive social values which are good for students' moral development. As mentioned earlier, the website has various topics in which a teacher can easily download for classroom materials. In this research, materials related to culture, religion, society seem to be more appropriate considering our main purpose for moral development. Students can be selected interesting materials where they can consciously or unconsciously learn from it. The rest of this paper will focus on this issue, particularly practical examples to use this website.

Theory Application

In this section, we are going to discuss step-by-step how an online material can be used to promote both students' listening proficiency and moral values. We

offer practical classroom activities as well as reasons underlying the activities. To start with, teachers can select moral-related materials. Akin et al. (1995) recommend that teachers could provide students materials which provoke their sense of community service. After that, teachers can stand up in front of the classroom and invite students to mention what they know about the topic before listening (brainstorming activities). Unlike intermediate/advance learners who can translate word by word from what they hear, beginner learners greatly rely on their prior knowledge (schemata) to help them guess the content (Nation and Newton 2009). Hence, students could be asked to explore as many as possible words or phrases to get them familiar with topic. Teachers can draw a main circle with the topic placed within the circle. Then the teachers draw other smaller circles containing related vocabularies or words mentioned by the students.

The next step is activities that students do whilst listening. As they are listening to the audio, they can be provided with a listening's script so they can read how exactly a word is pronounced. This is helpful because it gives the students enough time to process the language word-by-word in the brain. It allows them to discover the meaning of the words and identify its linguistic aspects, such as grammar. Nation and Newton (2009) correctly claim that if students want to be successful in listening, they must pay more attention on the linguistic aspects rather than solely on their schemata. In addition, by providing the script, it is hoped that the students can follow the plot of the listening and grasp its general moral values better.

Having given a chance to listen, students are requested to do some comprehension tests. The students can be handed out with various types of activities. In our context, we frequently employ oral close test, filling in the gaps, and other questions requiring short answers from the students. Another type question which requires longer and debatable answers can be also implemented by requesting students to have a discussion with their peers. Harmer (1998) highlights that this sort of question is just as crucial as other short answer questions. The possible reason is because it demands the students to infer what they hear. It enables us to verify that the students' understanding is not at a superficial level.

It has been mentioned at the beginning that the purpose of this research is to enhance students' moral development through education. In addition to moral-related materials, generating discussion activities at the end of listening can properly support this goal. It is in this session where students can learn some examples of good moral values. Before the discussion begins, teachers can remind the students to behave well and introduce the values of respect, honesty, responsibility, group, and society. Most importantly, teachers can demonstrate these values, for example by modelling useful phrases to interrupt other discussion members. The discussion also reflects a pretty good example of working collaboratively. In the group, the students can exchange ideas. They not only interpret certain moral values from their own perspective but also can hear other students' voices.

In order to effectively embed moral values in this activity, teachers should be able to play their roles. Experts (Akin et al 1995; Mergler and Spooner-lane

2012) underline that the best way to teach moral education, one of them, is through modelling. Mergler and Spooner-lane (2012, p. 72) argues that “the behaviors a teacher models to students in the classroom send powerful messages about what is and is not acceptable ways of behaving. During the discussion, teachers can show the element of respect by listening enthusiastically to their students. Teachers can also endorse the use of cooperative learning to promote the elements of caring on group and society, for example by encouraging the students to help each other.

Finally, when the discussion has ended, teachers may have the students conduct an extra project. This is in line with Akin et al’s (1995) suggestion, where students should be encouraged with extracurricular, projects, or community services. They may observe their social environment to see a link between what they learn from the discussion and the practice. In this final activity, teachers can insert other elements of good characters mentioned previously. The teachers, for instance, can have students apply the principles of honesty in their work. They should give honest data and avoid negative data manipulation. Further, the students should uphold the element of responsibility. Each students must be responsible with their individual and group task. In a group, they should also ensure that they can accomplish the project/observation on time.

Conclusion

Living in the mid of globalization era means that students can easily access either positive or negative information from their gadget. To protect students from its negative effect, teachers play a vital role to help them develop their good characters at school. The aim is to create individuals who not only shines in their academic achievement, but also have good manners in society. The use of appropriate materials is considered important in this paper. We propose an online material which offers multiple benefits both for students and teachers. Not only expose students with reasonable speed, such a listening also contains some moral values which can be transferred as the result of the listening. Most importantly, the teachers can embed and emphasis moral education following the listening, i.e. during discussion section. However, the paper is still limited in a number of ways. One of the example, it does not present data which stems from an empirical perspective. All judgment and claim made in this paper are still based on a theoretical basis. Therefore, there is a need to conduct further research which, for instance, empirically examines the effectiveness of www.spotlightenglish.com to develop both listening proficiency and morality. Secondly, the research could be also directed to assess students’ thought during the learning activities, especially concerning with the explicit ways of teaching moral education. We recommend further research to focus on classroom action research since it is capable of checking students’ progress on certain classroom activities while at the same time its qualitative data can be used to investigate students’ perspectives about the integration of moral education during listening activities.

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