Awareness Centered Learning as One of the Language Learning Models to Build the Good Character of Learners-based Innovative Creator in the Future

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Abstract

Awareness Centered Learning (ACL) is a learning model developed to address the problems of students' lack of awareness during the (language) learning process. The core objective of this model is to develop the internal awareness, good national character, and strong integrity of the students through focusing on authentic ideas and creativity building. This objective becomes the basis of ACL methodology in which the process is framed to be students' self inflicted determination to contemplate, not only to think and to use. Contemplation on the objects of language learning material is the very ground of designing new authentic ideas and awareness which will shape more profound good character and integrity. ACL views language awareness in the context of learning English as a foreign language to be a mere means or instrument to master the knowledge in the western world, but not to be hegemonized or dominated mentally by Western centrism. Based on this point, the national character and identity to be shaped by ACL through learning English is to be equal to the westerns in producing authentic ideas. The purpose of this writing is to explore the history, concepts, indicators, methodology and philosophy including impact of ACL to TEFL and its contribution to the Indonesian character of education as well. This model had been disseminated in International TESOL Methods held by American English Institute of Oregon University during ten weeks since October 7 to December 13, 2013. ACL gained well reception from hundreds of participants around the world at that time.

Keywords: Awareness Centered Learning, Language Learning Models, and National Character

1. Introduction

Learning language during the last two decades, greater emphasis on learners and learning and language learning strategy (Oxford 2001; Ellis 2002; Kinoshita 2003; Roy, 2011; Tuan 2011; Jenpattarakul, 2012; Taki and Soleimani 2012). Language learning strategy can be defined as tricks, techniques, tactics, approaches, concious plans, or specific actions that an individual uses to influence his or her behavior in order to facilitate the language learning (Bauer and Shea, 2003, p.210; Brown 2001, p.208). It refers to the characteristics of the language learners that they can make their own good learning process.

However, some researchers are not satisfactory yet of the English learner`s performance nowadays. In other expressions, they do not know yet how to learn English successfully. One of the cases is effective learning own ways. Most students do not create and repair their own learning strategies. Shmais (2003) judges that most learners do not have insight into their own learning and their own difficulties nor into nature language learning task; they do not develop any definite and effective study habits. Those above points do not imply that students should be expected to create only own ways. Further, they should revise and improve their ways by learning from their mistakes, experiences, people, and teachers or lecturers experiences.

Another serious problem of Indonesian ways of learning and teaching is the profound lack in innovating and designing the new concepts, theories and methods based on multidisciplinary paradigm which meets the Indonesian socio-cultural aspects. Self innovation and creativity in learning are recommended by Unesco to apply in the world of education. It has

various methods and techniques that actually demand the students on developing multidisciplinary point of views, contemplations, and designing their own ways and concepts in studying particular subject. Nevertheless, mostly the Indonesian people are too intellectually western centered and consider every concept and theory from the west are the best without designing their own. The answer for this challenge is ACL basic philosophy so called transfiguration can be considered as one of the solutions in shaping students' intellectual creativity in learning.

2. Awareness Centered Learning Parameters

UNESCO formulates four principles of learning as follow: *learning to be, learning to know, learning to do,* and *learning to live together*. Indonesia responds these principles through developing 2013 Curriculum for elementary, junior and senior high education and Competence-based Curriculum (CBC) for the universities. Therefore, the minister of education's decision letter No 176/O/2001 section 24-c and No. 045/U/2002 on applied policies making concerned with the development of resources and facilities actually state that all human resources and facilities have to support the CBC.

In order to meet the standard of CBC, *Students-Centered Learning* (SCL) is expected to be the reliable teaching method. Now, how is it considered as one of the solutions in shaping students' intellectual creativity in learning? In this part, I suggest a model of "Awareness Centered Learning" (ACL) (see also Sawirman, 2012a; b). Those are some principles among TCL, SCL and ACL.

TCL	SCL	ACL
Focus on how the teacher teaches	Focus on how to make the students learn	Focus on how to make the students highly demands contemplate on particular concept, field, theory, knowledge
The students as the object of teaching	The students as the subject of learning	The students as the subject of innovator or creator
It has the patterns *"I explore, you listen"*	Support the students to achieve the expected competence	Support the students how to innovate and create
The students seat with minimum activities in listening to the teacher's explanations.	The students have maximum activities in the process of teaching.	The students are guided to have their own strategies in achieving their own target or competence
Content-based	Competence-based	Self-development strategies
The students are guided in rigid structure of teaching process	The students are thoroughly guided to develop themselves	The students can think critically and outside of the box
Memorizing the content is the most important	The way how the information is processed and used is the most important	Conceptual nets and trace investigations are necessary
Schooling concept	High ranking learning	Peer learning
The lecturers and teachers provide the lessons in conventional way.	Functional and vocational competence	Professional competence
Lecturers as the decision makers	The students as the decision makers	The students have expanded capabilities in developing themselves.
Teacher role as an instructor or mentor	Teacher role as a fasilitator, tutor or guide	Teacher role as an illustrator
Knowledge is taught through	Knowledge is gained through	Knowledge is gained through

conventional teaching	team skills	self innovation and creativity
The teacher transfers the knowledge to the students	The students explore the knowledge through the teacher's support and guidance.	The students create an exemplar or model through their own succesful strategies
Learning about thing	Learning how to do and to live together	Learning to be
Learning takes place in the classroom	Learning extends beyond the classroom	Learning extends beyond the existing concept, theory or method
Knowing	Knowing by doing/ behaving	Multi-disciplinary contemplations by project-based learning
Passing the test	Use something	Produce something
Achieving the grade	Continuous improvement	Active knowledge seekers
Pedagogic tasks	Real-life tasks	Contextualizing language learning
Traditional tests, such as multiple choice, short essays, etc	Alternative assessments	The students have their own good evaluation strategies

Table 1
The Differences among TCL, SCL and ACL
(Sources: Sawirman 2012a; b with some revisions)

Thus, how can ACL contribute to the development in the culture of studying English? This question can be answered at least through several major ACL parameters.

First, multi-disciplinary contemplations, point of views, inter-textual learning orientations, conceptual nets and traces investigations. This step suggests the students to use various methods and techniques that actually demand the students on developing multidisciplinary point of views, contemplations, and designing their own ways and concepts in studying particular subject. Self innovation and creativity in learning are the major objectives of ACL. It has also been recommended by Unesco to apply in the world of education. One of the basic problems of Indonesian students in learning English is the profound lack in innovating and designing the new concepts, theories and methods based on multidisciplinary paradigm which meets the Indonesian and international socio-cultural aspects. This step of learning highly demands the students to contemplate on particular concept, field, theory, knowledge, etc, by using multidisciplinary points of views from other concepts, theories, and subjects, inter-textual learning orientations, and conceptual net and trace investigations.

Second, improving the students' socio-cultural, political and ideological awareness for humanity. This parameter is related to improving the students' awareness for humanity like intensifying their social empathy and critical thoughts on various social problems, and developing their conceptual contemplations on particular field for the sake of humanity. This parameter is concerned with how the teachers cope with the conflicts and frictions on arguments battlefield, race, ideology, culture, religion, and behavior in the class room. ACL insists on conflicts and friction reduction by elevating the students' awareness on tolerances and socio-cultural, ideological, and political respects on diversities for humanities rather than intensifying the conflicts for the sake of competitions. It's related to improving the students' awareness for humanity like intensifying their social empathy and critical thoughts on various social problems, and developing their conceptual contemplations on particular field for the sake of humanity.

Third, contextualizing language. actually contextualizing language is essential to form meaning of language use. Since the meaning in language is profoundly related to reality, human behavior, social and cultural values, various forms of discursive and non discursive social

practices, and other non linguistic factors. Therefore,the use of language is exactly context dependent. This is one of the core points of contextualizing language. Contextualizing language as one of the aspects of learning and teaching English as a foreign language is actually related to cross-cultural differences or diversities which affect the use of language. We are aware of English as a second or foreign language also means different cultural meaning, values, and linguistic characteristics. Therefore, without understanding these differences, teaching and studying English as a foreign language can fail related to the failure of transferring appropriate cultural and linguistic sense. Actually there is another problem in learning English, mostly the learners are affected by their first language. This becomes an obstacle which should be further discussed in order to form equal understanding for both languages users, so the learners can think in English although their native language is not English. Transferring English values in appropriate manner and is oriented to shape respect and mutual understanding between different cultures (the learners' cultures and the English teachers' culture) will provide much more good effects in learning and teaching English. This is not only intended to improve learners' English mastery at appropriate use of English language, but also to forge mutual respect and tolerance in diverse world.

Fourth, peer learning. We have to change the way of teaching. I believe that peer learning is the best method of teaching since we just adapt to the best interest and excitement of the students without sacrificing the contents of the lessons or the subjects. If they love to chat through facebook, we as the teacher should provide the way for them to chat on subject materials and conduct a sort of discussion. So through peer learning we try to make them study in their own excitement, we provide the most interesting way for them to learn, and then we just act accordingly with their own development. This process will make them enjoying the learning process. Good discussion should be conducted through discussing cultural and linguistic differences, so the participants in diverse culture and language will understand the cultural equivalence, its linguistic properties, and different values of their language compared to English. This is actually one intriguing methods in discussion. Understanding the equivalence between non English first language and English as a second language will improve participants' English proficiency and respect for diversity.

Fifth, alternative assessments. Traditional testing does not develop the cognitive, affective, and psychomotoric aspects, therefore it is not relevant anymore in contemporary educational practices. Contradictorily, alternative asessment is designed to develop students' creativity and activity, peer group discussion and peer evaluation, real task and field project, and the students are encouraged to invent and develop new ideas or theory. Morever, I use self assessment in which the students are encouraged to evaluate their own weakness in subject material, and they should develope their own method of self learning to solve the weakness. During the process they should develop the most apropriate way of learning that will improve their English proficiency. I do not use formative asessment this far. The students of English as a foreign language should study the materials in much profound critical manner and develop their own ideas related to the materials. At this point, selecting answers and right/wrong answers seem to be traditional and less appropriate. We should go beyond the ordinary box of learning and teaching English as foreign language. We should also consider to encourage the students to explore and find new ideas related to subject materials. Developing the sense of English and forging the appropriate use of English are actually based on encouraging the students to acquire English, not just learning it. Therefore, some conventional and traditional techniques like selecting answers and right or wrong seem to be less appropriate to meet this objective. We should also consider the aspects of their psychology since it is a fact that some decisive learning obstacles lie in human or students' internal aspects.

Sixth, acquiring English. We need to develop a kind of English environment for the students in which they can develop their skill and behavior in acquiring English, not just learning English as a foreign language. I believe that designing the strategy of shaping particular English environment for the students and transferring the values in English culture of both British and American English are essential to forge the Students' natural process of English

proficiency. They have to adapt to following four main processess of English acquisition: Listening, Writing, Speaking, and Reading, but they also need to improve their understanding through intense exposure of English environment. I believe that the best goal of teaching English is forging the students' English proficiency through developing their cultural sense of appropriate English use at any level. This is included the process of transferring the values of English culture related to English language. The students should be encouraged and situated to use English all the time in any form of situation, contexts, spatial setting, emotion, problems, and any form of real life English use in real situation. The objective for this teaching goal is making the students acquiring the real English although their environment is not English. Thus, we design particular English speaking or English use community in which the members use English all the time particularly when they meet each other outside the class. They have to keep in touch each other in their real life, expressing their real feeling, emotion, problems, and solving the problems or designing any kinds of solution for friends problems through the use of English either in fluent manner or not. We also have to design the program of English exposure to the students in which they are situated to experience English in any single piece of time in their daily life like watching movies in English without the subtitles and try to grasp English as the way it is meant to be. I see the method of teaching English should be oriented toward total acquisition.

Seventh, project-based learning. it is quite demanding challenge to cope with unmotivated students. Actually this problem is concerned with psychology of teaching on class behavior. We cannot drive the students to like the lessons or to fall in love in particular subject of lesson just by encouraging them to participate in PBL and collaborative learning. In fact, most of the students are attracted to certain subjects or lesson if they find those lessons are useful for them. This is the core points of raising their interest on the lessons. Whatever our forms of teaching or learning plans, if the students think that those lessons are useless, they will be remaining unmotivated and uninterested. Now it's our duty to describe real life advantages and the use or the benefits of the lessons for them. Based on my experience, this simple tactics of teaching and learning really works, unless we fail to provide them the depiction of real advantages of the lessons. PBL also meets the four pillars described by Unesco as follow: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together. In essence, the ins and outs of PBL is well proven better than TCL, all any other methods like grammar translation method, direct method, natural method, silent way, and total physical response (TPR). The advantages of PBL lie in its strong orientation of finding discovery, providing new ideas, and escalating the level of creativity into extra ordinary way. Basically PBL can support student creativity in learning process as the subject, not as the object of teaching like that of in the traditional methods.

Eigth, creative and critical thinking. Critical and creative thinking is one of the basic behavior to build through learning. The process of learning development is deeply affected by the growth of students creative and critical thinking. Therefore, learning materials that we provide for the students should not limit their creativity to develop the materials, concepts, new ideas, solution for the class problems and their own learning problems. Creative and critical thinking is not only the means, but also ends as a part of learning awareness and behavior. Giving the questions for the students to trigger their creative and critical thinking is not enough, I believe that we have to encourage the students to develop new idea and design their own learning method. Then provoke the students to think about designing the questions, the answers, the problems, the way to solve the problems, the weakness and the strength of the materials.

<u>One of the Models of Awareness Centered Learning</u>
(Time meeting 2 X 50 Minutes)

Outside Class

Step I: One week before studying one of the topics related to Discourse Generic Structure, Antilanguage, and War of Discourse of Palm Oil Plantation and Potensials in West Sumatra and Indonesia, the students are asked to read various world prominent figures who experienced the speech delay in their childhood. The reading materials have been provided through personal website www.sawit-sawirman-e135.com.

> *"Find cases or articles in my website www.sawit-sawirman-e135.com. concerning with the palm oil conflicts and potensials. Please criticize their/his/her statement or analyze the strengths, the weaknesses, and/or the contribution to linguistics or other disciplines with other related sources at least three references from academic articles, e-books or e-journals"!*

Inside Class

Step II: The students are instructed to paint or draw the caricature on the palm oil conflicts and potensials.

> *Please design caricature or painting/ drawing/ portrayal or deviction of an event related to palm oil (time 10 minutes)!*

Step III: After 10 minutes the students are expected to write the intention or the meaning of their drawing and caricature through operational language.

> *What your caricature or painting means (time 10 minutes)!*

Step IV: The students are asked to read the materials that have been provided in 10 minutes through operational language.

> *Now, please read the short article below:*
>
> Multidimentional conflicts of palm oil plantations in West Sumatra has become a serious conflict potential which are not thoroughly solved as of today. This problem is very complex since it involves multilayered aspects like the role of language in conflicts, socio-political dimension, socio-cultural basis, socio-psychological and cognitive framework on conflicts, and the regulations of plantation from the government. The aspects of language and discourse play significant roles due to its functions as the medium of regulations on palm plantations, the lands or *tanah ulayat*, and threat management of regional conflicts. Thus, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Forensic Linguistic, and Postdiscourse Analysis of Sawirman-e135 (PAS-e) based analysis can be applied eclectically on the objects like national and regional palm regulations and acts in order to study the failure of those regulations in solving and preventing severe conflict and its potentials. The core analysis in this paper is focused on regulation assessments, war of discourse and evaluation based on multidisciplinary linguistic analysis at critical and forensic level. The national and regional regulations on palm plantations are actual core strategy in managing palm business and its conflict. Nevertheless, the conflict related to tanah ulayat as the land for building palm industrial activities in West Sumatra is remaining highly potential to happen, thus, it must be any problem in palm regulations. It seems that there are some strategic defects in these regulations which therefore fail to cope with conflicts and its potentials. The generic structure and political structure of discourse are the main analysis in studying the natures and the orientation of palm land conflicts. The aspects of political meaning, culture, and values are also studied. Moreover, this paper is also intended to provide the draft of possible solutions to solve and prevent the possible conflicts.

Step V: The students are asked to conclude based on the reading materials through operational language:

> *Explain fully and clearly how the writers put the main points of each sub-texts! (time 10 minutes)*

Step VI: The students are asked to criticize the articles by means of various related reading materials provided in previous weeks through the operational language:

> *Compare the article above with the other related articles have you read! If possible find the examples of characteritics and causes factors from your own local palm oil environment! 10 minutes for you.*

Step VII: The students are asked to discuss their own opinions in small groups formed in the beginning of the study through the sentences in texts.

> *Explain fully and clearly your own conclusion and discuss yours in your group in relation with the Discourse Generic Structure, Antilanguage, and War of Discourse of Palm Oil Plantation and Potensials in West Sumatra and Indonesia! (10 minutes)*

Step VIII: The students or the representative of the groups are asked to present the result of their discussion to short meeting (5-8 minutes for each group)

> *Now please present your own group's conclusion or suggestion to the topic assigned concerning with Discourse Generic Structure, Antilanguage, and War of Discourse of Palm Oil Plantation and Potensials in West Sumatra and Indonesia! (30 minutes)*

Step IX: The students are allowed to ask the group which perform presentation or the lecturers related to the topics discussed after presentation.

> *If there are, I'd like to invite your own questions, critical thinking, comments, or recommendation related to discourse generic structure, antilanguage, and war of discourse of palm oil plantation and potensials in West Sumatra or Indonesia!*

Inside and Outside Class

Step X: Before the class is dismissed, the lecturer as a illustrator and facilitator as well will ask the questions as the reinforcement to strengthen the students' understanding on discourse generic structure, antilanguage, and war of discourse and inform the students about the follow up of field task on the topics and inform the students about the next week materials on the personal website through another model of peer learning.

Those steps are constructed in various manners concerned with the topics that will be studied by the students. The students are placed in centered position as the subject of learning, not as the object of learning. Thus, the students are expected can be more active in discussion and problem solving in the class (peer learning) without marginalizing the roles of a lecturer in learning process. The students are also expected to have more courage in expressing their own ideas with clear intellectual visions and orientations through the use of internet as soft skill on technology.

3. Concluding Remarks

Based on ACL indicators, model or package of multicultural diversities-based curriculum is needed. This package is incisively developed to provide various multicultural diversities-based curriculum for cross cultural tolerance and understanding at schools. This curriculum is designed based on the significance of multicultural and cross tolerance in building robust inter(national) solidarity and diversities respect based behaviors which are very strategic for the unity of Indonesia, and strategic culture based defense mechanism. This package is intended to reveal various conceptual opportunities in designing and developing cross cultural tolerance-based curriculum. This curriculum is also aimed at distributing and spreading the essential

values of multiculturalism and cross-tolerance which potentially improve the national and international solidarity and respects.

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