Using Sponge Puppet Strategies to Instill Characters through Storytelling to Elementary School Students in Bekasi

Endry Boeriswati

State University of Jakarta, Indonesia
Corresponding author : eboeriswati@yahoo.com

Abstract

Language learning can be used to instill character valueto students. Aspects of the language that is easy to use as a means of character values is storytelling. The result of prior research reveals that the factors that become obstacles for students in storytelling is anxiety and speaking skills of students. This study aims to find strategies that can reduce anxiety in instilling character values through storytelling instruction in Indonesian as a second language. The research method used in this research was action research conducted at the third year of the elementary school in Bekasi area on students whose first language is Sundanese. The result of the study reveals that with the Sponge Puppet strategy in which students learned cooperatively and the teaching was assisted with some teaching aids can reduce anxiety and foster moral values, as well as fluency in speaking. In addition, this study found the stage in storytelling with an emphasis in learning character value.

Keywords: Moral values, storytelling, sponge Puppet

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is actively promoting character education to build a civilized nation, the noble values that have long upheld and entrenched in everyday attitudes and behavior. Recently, Indonesian nation has been experiencing the decline of noble character values, such as honesty, politeness, unity, and religious. This occurs because these have been eroded by foreign cultures that tend hedonistic, materialistic, and individualistic, so that the values of these characters are no longer considered important if contrary to the objectives to be obtained. Based on this, the Indonesian government has adopted a policy that character education must be given at school starting from early year education to higher education through integrating them in all subject matters.

Character education is essentially the process to bring the values of the various world values (symbolic, empirical, ethical, aesthetic, ethical, and semiotic, and synoptic) to the learners. The implementation of values and character education in elementary schools does not optimally develop and care about the values of life such as love, respect, peace, cooperation, obedience, democracy in practice in primary education. It is true that certain values such as discipline, cooperation, and responsibility are implemented in elementary schools, but in practice they tend to be behavioristic and cognitive so that students' self-awareness to realize these values in everyday life at school is also not optimal.

This article is based on a study that tested the learning model that integrates characters in Indonesian learning. An integrative approach to character education is a point of view that to build characters we need to develop a character education system that enables all the elements of characters (know, understand, and perform) or elements such as moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action can be practiced in lifeand learning the value and character in primary schools through various school programs.

DESIGN

This study experimented the model of learning that integrates character education in Indonesian language learning, under the topic of storytelling or fairy tales. Certainly looking at the characteristics of character education, fairy tales and child's moral development were built in the model of learning.

In the Indonesian language teaching at first grade of elementary school there is the subject of fairy tales that expects students to be able to portray, imitate speech or characters of a favorite folklore or a fairy tale by the appropriate expression. The language competence that must be mastered by the students is the ability to tell which is measured through the ability to use the appropriate vocabulary and sentences.

On the basis of the above arguments, the instructional model developed in the subject of the storytelling from the aspect of the content is filled with the materials about the values of character (moral), so that students not only master the language skills to understand the content alone but also understand the content of the discourse containing

characters. Character education cannot be given on the cognitive domain but emphasizes the affective domain. Character education done through the internalization of values through the story is the framework to deliver and internalize the values of the various world value, such as symbolic, empirical, aesthetic, ethical, synnoetic, and synoptic embodied in various subjects in order to develop behavior (builds character) of the learners.

In the process of internalizing the values on learners, Lickhona (1991) refer to it as the elements of character that includes moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Characters can be described from the dimensions of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and interactive. Intrapersonal dimension focuses on abilities or human effort to understand himself. The essence of intrapersonal dimension is the ability to be reflective and retrospective to direct the human being the God's creature that covers in them-selves self-awareness, self-observation, self-esteem, and self-adaptation. Interpersonal dimension is generally built upon the core ability to recognize differences, while in particular, is the ability to recognize the difference in mood, temperament, motivation, and the will.

The problem is how to implement the model to students of the first grade in the elementary school (aged 6-7 years) so that character values that are abstract can be understood and internalized in daily life. Character education in elementary school tends not to develop and care about the values of life. It is true that certain values such as discipline, cooperation, and responsibility are implemented in elementary school, but in practice they tend to be behavioristic and cognitive so that students' self-awareness to realize that these values into practice everyday life at school is also not optimal.

Thus the instructional model developed in the study is the one that incorporates character education in the subject of fairy tales in the 1st grade of elementary school through constructivism approach. Constructivist-oriented learning is considered more appropriate, because constructivism learning allows learners more active, creative, and gain meaning from their learning experiences. Constructivist learning in integrated learning models are characterized by: a holistic, authentic, active-creative-fun, meaningful, and contextual help the process of internalization of values through a cyclic process: understanding, action, and reflection.

Storytelling is one of these capabilities and when it is used in a thoughtful, reflective and formalized ways, significant learning is possible (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998; McDrury and Alterio, 2002; McEwan and Egan, 1995; Pendlebury, 1995 and Witherell and Nodding, 1991). When educators support students to share and process their practice experiences in these ways, storytelling can: (a) encourage co-operative activity; (b) eencompass holistic perspectives; (d) value emotional realities; (e) link theory to practice; (f) stimulate students' critical thinking skills; (g) capture complexities of situations; (h) reveal multiple perspectives; (i) make sense of experience; (j) Encourage self-review; (k) construct new knowledge.

To learn through storytelling is to take seriously the human need to the make meaning from experience, to communicate that meaning to others, and, in the process, learn about ourselves and the worlds we reside. Meaningful storytelling processes and activities incorporate opportunities for reflective dialogue, foster collaborative endeavor, nurture the spirit of inquiry and Contribute to the construction of new knowledge. In addition, cultural, contextual and emotional realities can be acknowledged, valued and integrated into storytelling processes. Students who learn through processing reflectively telling their stories and develop skills that enable them to link wiki and objective perspectives, capture the complexity of experience and bring about thoughtful change to self and practice. Stories can be told in a wide variety of ways, which can be broadly categorized as oral, written and visual, and are so all-pervasive in our everyday lives that we are not always aware of their role as a tool of communication in all societies (Healing Through Remembering, 2006).

The content of the story can be explored through the help of learning media. The media used in this study is Sponge Puppet. The reason for using the Puppet Sponge is it is assumed that children will present real life in the form of fantasy through role playing. Sponge puppet is a real-life engineering which is controlled by the child. With sponge puppet students can express their experiences and knowledge. Thus the expected character values may appear and can be observed by the teacher.

At this learning model students will tell the class about a real life that illustrates the value of love, respect, peace, cooperation, obedience, democracy in the real practice in communities that are played through the sponge puppet. Fluency in storytelling describes the acquisition of knowledge and internalizes the values of the characters. This study used an experimental method through a pretest and posttest control group design which was conducted in the first year of elementary school no 1 in Bekasi on the subject of fairytale. The experimental class taught the fairytale through storytelling through the help of sponge puppet media to internalize moral values. The controlled class taught storytelling without the help of the media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study reveals that students learning the storytelling by using the sponge puppet can internalize the value of character much faster than the students learning storytelling without using sponge puppet. Through the sponge puppet games done in groups, the students will play the role as real people in everyday life completed with a character played. The internalization of character education lies in this activity. It is based on the theory that students' acquisition of knowledge begins from the social environment, and then the individual as an internalization events (Taylor, 1993). In addition, this model is also based on the opinion that the student's intellectual development can be understood only in the context of the culture and experiences of students (van der Veer and Valsiner in Slavin, 2000). Intellectual development relies on a system of signs and each individual is always developing (Ratner in Slavin, 2000). From the control and the experimental groups observation journal, I couldcompare the two kinds of observation journal. That in the experimental group theprocess of teaching learning activity was enough. Although some of the students made noisy, it can be solved. Then, in the experimental group, some of the studentsdidn't pay the attention at first but then after the student shows her sponge puppet, it was effective to make them focus and pay attention to the lesson. Then theuse puppet in teaching speaking was good and appropriate. It was used to motivatethem to be active to speak up. It was used to encourage them to be confidence tospeak up in the class and it was also colorful and fun, it could enrich theirimagination. Then, the students not only kept silent and heard the teacher'sexplanation, but they also made interaction with the teacher when the teacher invitedthem to practice with the teacher. In addition, their speaking skill improved after thetreatments. Before the treatments were done they used to do many mistake in their speech, especially in their pronunciation, but now their speech was better.For the control group, the teaching learning process was not good as theexperimental group, but it was enough. Then, some of them did not pay attention tothe teacher and some of them made noisy and did not do the homework, but they gotbetter in the next meeting. They did not as active as the experimental group; just afew of them asked the questions. Then the interaction between the teacher and thestudents was not really good as the experimental group. Some of them did not answerthe teacher's question. Then about the ability in speaking, the students' ability wasalso improved enough after the treatments.From the two comparisons above, it can be concluded that sponge puppet iseffective in teaching speaking to improve the seven graders of junior high school inperforming adjacency pairs. The students were interest in it. They became moreactive to speak up and to ask questions in the classroom. They also loved to learn andto practice speaking using sponge puppet and efective for intenalizes moral velue.

With a sponge puppet game, students can play how to present the character values such as behaviors devoted to God and follows his teachings; become leaders of themselves, their families, and their communities on the basis of a credible honest, trustworthy, discipline, hard work, resilient, and responsible, humane in the sense of the character as a man who has the qualities of love of neighbor, a high awareness of the suffering of others, to be good to our fellow human beings, and human dignity, complying with the regulations in the life of the nation (good citizen), as well as having human characteristics (empathic, sympathetic, considerate, caring, helping, respect, etc.).

In addition, through the sponge puppet games students can do simulating on how they live in the society coming from different race, ethnicity, religion, class, social status and economic. In addition, Indonesia lives and does communication with other nations. Therefore, the efforts to develop the character of mutual respect and tolerance are very important. When compared to learning storytelling without using the sponge puppet media, the teachers have difficulty in teaching concepts and value that having character values concretely. For example, if students should understand the concept of tolerance, the teachers can only give an explanation of tolerance in the abstract sense. The learning process by using the sponge puppet, the teacher can assign students to play the characters in the story, each of which has a character so that students follow the storyline set by the teacher. Here the teacher acts as a facilitator who directs the flow of the story and emphasizes the values of character in students' activities.

Constructivism based approach in learning requires the real context so that students can experience the real events. Real experience will stay easily in the memory and will be easily assimilated with existing knowledge. With real experience played by students through the sponge puppet, there is the process of constructing character values.

The benefits of the use of puppets in the classroom are many and varied. Theuse of puppets provides an opportunity for student expression through the social aspects of communication. Students who are working in a group to prepare and present a puppet play are learning to work cooperatively with others, where there is give and take and sharing of ideas. The use of puppets can motivate student interest in the reading selection or topic. According to Peyton (2002), "Students typically resistant to lecturing and representing diverse learning styles andpersonalities are freed to process and articulate concepts and explore the who-what-when-where- and why of the curriculum physically, interactively, and experientially." For many students the group work the use of a puppet can

provide help with public speaking, especially for the shy or apprehensive student. The use of puppets is beneficial to the student who prefers to learn kinesthetically. Puppet activities keep students actively engaged with hands-on activities.

The strength of this model in teaching language skills is the students are better at choosing the appropriate vocabulary related to the character values, and students are able to speak fluently. In addition, students will be better at understanding the culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that a storytelling lesson about a fairy tale with a sponge puppet media is very effective in making students active and creative, and enabling students to develop personal skills such as growing self-awareness, social skills (ability to communicate, collaborate, and work), academic skills (such as the ability to build and use a theory) about the values of character. The contextual learning with constructivism approach offers an alternative approach to developing the potential of soft skills such as the values of openness, honesty, responsibility, and self-control.

Sponge puppet is one of the alternative media in teaching speaking. There are lots of media beside puppet that can be used. However, hand puppet helps he teacher to deliver the material and it also helps the students to be active in sharing their idea by speaking. So, the students become more active in the teaching-learning processes especially in the competence of speaking.

The students should try to practice speaking using hand puppet. The teacher should let the students try to practice using hand puppet in performing the dialogue with the teacher itself or with their friends. The teacher should give reinforcement and praise while performing the dialogue so, it will make them become more confident and decrease their shame.

REFERENCES

Bishop, R and Glynn, T (1999) *Culture Counts: Changing Power Relations in Education.* Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

Clandinin, D and Connelly, F (1998) . Stories to Live by: Narrative Understandings of School Reform. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 28(2): 149-164.

Damon, W. (1988).*Moral Child: Nurturing Children's Natural Moral Growth.* New York: Free Press.

Kieran McEvoy (2006). *Healing Through Remembering : Making Peace with The Past: Options for Truth Recovery Regarding the Conflict in and about Northern Ireland :* Belfast.

Lickona, T. (1991).Educating *for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*.New York: Bantam.

McDrury, J and Alterio, M. G (2002) *Learning Through Storytelling: Using Reflection and Experience in Higher Education Contexts .*

McEwan, H and Egan, K (1995) *Narrative in Teaching, Learning and Research .* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

Pendelbury, S. (1995) . *Reason and Story in Wise Practice',* in H. Mewan & K. Egan (eds.) Narrative in Teaching, Learning and Research. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Peyton. 2002. *The Use of Puppet* in www.puppetools.com [accessed january, 25 2013]

Slavin, R. (1996). Research on Cooperative Learning and Achievement: What We Know, What We Need To Know. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 21. 43-69.

Van der Veer, R. & Valsiner, J. (1991). *Understanding Vygotsky: A Quest for Synthesis.* London: Blackwell.

Vessels, G. (1998).*Character and Community Development: A School Planning and Teacher Training Handbook.* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Witherell, C and Nodding, M (eds) (1991) *Stories Lives Tell: Narrative and Dialogue in Education.* New York: Teachers College Press