

CULTIVATING CHARACTER BUILDING IN WRITING CLASSES THROUGH YOU TUBE VIDEOS. IS IT POSSIBLE?

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Abstract

With today's technology advancement, it is a requirement for teachers to be familiar with Information Technology (IT) world. One of the ITs which can be maximized in ELT classroom is YouTube. However, not many ELT teachers have adequate knowledge on how to use YouTube to teach English, especially writing. YouTube is a free and rich learning tool that can be used to teach writing and at the same time, if it is planned and used properly, raise the students' positive characters. Since many of the EFL students feel that writing is a demanding and difficult subject, writing teachers need to connect the topic of the composition with life outside the classroom. Thus, YouTube serves as an excellent tool to relate the topic in writing classes and life outside school. This paper is intended to address various ways teachers can use the video website YouTube.com (or other online streaming video websites) to teach English, especially in writing, and which part of character building which can be triggered from the use of particular kind of YouTube videos.

Key Words: YouTube, writing, character building

INTRODUCTION

Having the ability to write in foreign language, especially in English, is very important in this modern era. Many jobs required writing skill and also many of our daily activities as well, such as writing email, letters requires good writing skill. Despite of its importance, writing becomes a demanding activity. It is demanding for both the teacher and the students. If the students of writing classes are asked about their feeling of writing in English, many of them will say 'difficult', 'not easy', or 'I do not know what to write'. Based on one of the author's experience of teaching writing classes, students often confessed that 'what to write' becomes their problems to express their ideas on paper or to fulfill writing assignments.

In the students' experience of learning writing English, some teachers often ask them to write something under free topics. However, giving free topics did not help them much with the accomplishment of the writing task. Topics alone could not solve their 'what to write problem'. They needed something that could help them prepare their

background knowledge and to generate the ideas before writing. Because of that, writing teachers should help the students with sufficient background knowledge before assigning them to write something.

One way to help students ready to write is by exposing them to materials which are not only challenging, but also emotionally and personally attached to the students' life, such by using YouTube videos. Some YouTube videos can be considered as authentic materials since the uploaded videos are not meant for teaching tools. When chosen carefully, YouTube videos can be a powerful learning tool. It is powerful in a sense that, it does not only provide background knowledge which is essential for the 'preparation' stage, but also it can trigger the students' awareness on the characters development as a person. This paper is intended to find out how YouTube videos can be used for teaching writing and at the same time show how the videos can grow the students characters as reflected in their writing.

THEORITICAL REVIEW

In this part, some theoretical review will be discussed, namely character building, You Tube as Learning tools, and how character building, You Tube videos and writing classes are related.

Characters Building

Characters education has found its place in Indonesian education system, basically, since character building becomes one of the aims of national education as stated in Law Number 1 Year 2003 on the National Education System (Suyanto, 2009; Kemdiknas, 2010). It is then elaborated in the Indonesian Law no 17 Year 2007 about Long Term Plan of National Education (RPJPN) 2005 - 2025. The characters required for the students are strong, competitive, good moral, tolerable, patriotic, dynamic, culture-minded, IT-oriented based on Pancasila and faith to God. The Curriculum Center of Indonesia then developed the four minimal characters into seventeen characters expected to be acquired by the students during their formal learning in schools. The characters required are religious, honest, intelligent, strong, caring, responsible, learning initiative, discipline, perseverant, appreciative to diversity, contributive, optimistic, open, risk taking, committed, and sharing (Malino, 2012).

These seventeen characters above basically are in line with the six universal characters or six ethical values proposed by Michael Josephson, the president of Josephson Institute (Education World, 2011). The universal values under six broad categories are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Other resources sometimes also include three additional topics namely courage, diligence, and integrity. One big difference between Indonesian character building and the universal values is that our values of characters building are religiously and culturally biased. However, despite of the difference, both set of values (Indonesian characters and universal characters) shared commonalities, *first*, they are directed toward the creation of 'ethical' individual, and *second*, they are

directed toward the creation of good citizenship that can live in harmony with other people. Thus, the focus of character building is basically to improve the quality of individuals, within individuals and between individuals.

Having students who are morally good, caring, responsible, open to any diversity are likely to achieve better success in life than those who are only good academically. Character building is not just 'moral education'. It does have something to do with students academic performance. Daniel Goleman (in Suyanto, 2009), the writer of *Emotional Intelligence*, writes that someone's success in society is very much influenced by his/her emotional intelligence, not solely on the intelligence. The characters of this emotional intelligence that can help individual to succeed are confident, cooperative, emphatic, and communicative. Education goal, thus, should be directed toward both creating intelligent individuals and strong character individuals.

Indonesian education system, basically have combined these 'intelligence plus character' goal. This has been stated clearly in Law Number 1 Year 2003 on the National Education System. As what has been discussed above, in Indonesian context, there are seventeen characters expected to be acquired by the students. As cited from Malino (2012), those characters are 1) honest (religiously, fair, *ikhlas*, positive thinking), intelligent (creative, self-control, humble, economical), 3) strong (independent, confident, responsible, discipline, hard working, perseverant), 4) caring (compassionate, tolerant, polite, peaceful lover, cooperative, nation loving), 5) honest, 6) responsibility, 7) learning initiative, 8) self-discipline, 9) perseverant, 10) appreciative to diversity, 11) contributive, 12) optimistic, 13) honest, 14) open, 15) risk taking, 16) committed, and 17) sharing. Since Pancasila is the ideology of Indonesia, and hundreds of culture are living in the country, it becomes understandable why those characters building in Indonesian

Education system are religiously and culturally biased.

Based on the manual of character education released by Kemdiknas (2010), the cultivation of character building can be done in two ways, namely intervention and habituation. Intervention means that the character education should be done integratively during the teaching and learning process by employing Contextual Teaching and Learning approach (CTL). CTL principals are considered appropriate to facilitate the internalization of those moral values. In the habituation strategy, the students characters are shaped by repeated activities and routines school schedules. Purnomo (2012) believes that high discipline school atmosphere will influence the students lives at school and outside school. The habituation strategy covers the implementation of nation characters values to school culture, school/class rules and regulations, models that students can imitate, and creating conducive school atmosphere. One example of habituation is through routines classroom activities, such as checking attendance (discipline), praying before starting the lesson (religious), doing assignments individually (honesty), etc. Thus, through the process of habituation and intervention, the expected characters will be internalized and personalized.

If we take a look at the seventeen characters within Indonesian education system, all of them shows the expected quality that individuals should acquire, that is to improve the self-quality and to have better relationship with other individuals and society. However, living in the 21st century when the world faces problems of environmental destruction, the characters required which show awareness and protection to the environment are equally important.

You Tube as Learning Tools

Before discussing further how You Tube can be used as one of the instructional media, it is important to know what You Tube is. You Tube is a website where people can find all sorts of videos which they have made of themselves, others, of

TV shows, etc. and have put on the web for everyone to see.

Developing Online Teaching Skill [DOTS] (2011) lists some reasons why ELT teachers should use You Tube in their classroom. The first reason is because teachers can use it in face-to-face and online teaching and learning environments. *Second*, it is a relatively simple way of bringing authentic audiovisual material into the classroom. The next reason is because the authenticity of the material and communicative situations presented on YouTube videos allow to work on both language and culture. Next, You Tube appeals to the students since this site usually is part of their world. Also, You Tube gives teachers more possibilities to teach different types of learners (audio, visual, learning by doing). Moreover, it allows students and teachers to bring material to the class as a shared responsibility. Finally, You Tube facilitates a task-based approach to learning which allows student to learn the language while creating documents and audiovisual material that they can put on the site.

Many ELT practitioners believes that You Tube has many advantages to be used in ELT classroom. Martidou (2013) is in the opinion that You Tube is a “powerful, exciting educational tool”. She further states that You Tube is free, rich in content, which requires minimum IT skills from the part of the teacher and requires only basic IT school facilities. Similarly, Bulent (2011) agrees that YouTube Channels provide invaluable sources to teach and learn English. They’re also great resources for self-improvement of teachers. If students and teachers have access to the Internet, YouTube can be a valuable tool through which multiple foreign language skills can be taught. Watkins and Wilkins (2011) further states that using YouTube both inside and outside the classroom can enhance conversation, listening, and pronunciation skills. They also believes that YouTube videos can also be utilized as realia to stimulate cultural lessons, enhance exposure to World Englishes, and promote authentic vocabulary development.

Recent Research on Using You Tube for Learning

Not many research has been conducted to find out how You Tube videos gives effect on learning. Most of the literature talk about the conceptual mode on how You Tube can be utilized to facilitate learning. However, few can be found in the literature on how You Tube can be used in the classroom.

One research conducted by Roodt and Villiers (2011) investigate how You Tube can be used for group work in their Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. In their study, the researchers ask the students to work in group creating a video on how business can use Web 2.0 technologies by using You Tube. The students were given questionnaires to fill. The result of the survey revealed that integrating You Tube into undergraduate education is useful for improving the Information System (IS) knowledge and competence.

You Tube Videos, Characters Building, and Writing Class

Helping students to acquire the basic human values such as honesty, kindness, generosity, courage, freedom, equality, and respect is not easy. Telling them to do good things is different from helping them to see how good deeds can be done and why it is necessary to be done. This being the case, teachers do not need to have a lengthy explanation why doing good things in life is important. Showing them examples of people doing good things to mankind, having strong spirit of surviving despite of the lack of self resource ability, showing compassion to other people and helping them to have better life might be able to raise the students' awareness of the importance possessing good characters. However, it is also important to note, that character building is not only directed to people to people relationship but also people to environment relationship.

You Tube videos can provide abundant sources of character education if they are chosen carefully for the teaching learning process. Students need not only see and watch the video, but they should write

something about it. Only by writing, they can put their opinions, ideas, and argument on a piece of paper and have a critical thinking about it. There are some You Tube videos that can be used for raising the the students' characters as well as for teaching writing such as cartoon videos for Narrative, the Effect of Drugs, Global Warming, the Oil Spill, Illegal logging videos for Argumentative and Expository essay, and many more videos that can be selected from You Tube site.

The following section will discuss about step by step instruction on how ELT writing teacher can make use of the You Tube Videos for raising students' characters as well as teaching writing.

Caring, Love and Respect (Example and Detail paragraph development)

In the Examples and Details paragraph organization, I downloaded You Tube videos entitled "Parents' Love". It is a letter written by Mom and Dad intended for their son/daughter. The letter tells about how the parents love their children, how they remind them about the childhood memories, and wish them to treat the parents well when they get old. The duration of the video is about 4:11, but it did bring tears to some students as they watched the video since they could feel the emotion of the letter. After that we discussed about the video through questions and answer session. The discussion was about why and what the parents ask to their children. The next activity was giving the students the model text, which is in relation to the video. In the model text, the teacher guide the students to analyze the structure of the text. The model text can be downloaded from the internet or teacher-made. If it is downloaded from the internet, it is suggested to modify the text here and there to adjust the teaching goals if the original text does not fit the intended objective.

Since it is important for the students to be familiar with the structure of the text, the teacher can lead the class discussion to find out the thesis statement, the controlling ideas, the conclusion, and the transitional expression used in the model text by using

certain type of diagram. When the teacher feels they are ready to write, the teacher can ask them to outline their ideas by using a diagram. In the outline, the teacher can ask the students to list at least three reasons why they should love their parents, and give specific examples and details for each idea before developing them into a paragraph or an essay.

Strong, Hard –working and Perseverant (Chronological Order)

In the narrative, I gave them simple short story entitled “Pete the Cat” (3:54) written by Eric Litwin in the form of video. The video is about Pete who steps on different kinds of objects in different color. Because of this, the color of his shoes also changes differently each time he steps on particular objects. The video is the model text. After watching the video, the classroom discussion follows. In the discussion, the class tried to find out the sequence of the events; what happen first, next, after that and finally, what is also important, the moral value behind the story. It was stated in the video, though, the moral value of the story in which no matter what happen in life, despite of the problems one gets, one should keep on going and enjoy the life. Students can discuss why moral value is stated that way, and why it is important to keep on going in life regardless the problems they have.

For practice, different video was shown to the students, the title is “Powerful Inspirational True Story...Don’t Give Up” (3:15). Since few written narration is also available in this video, students could benefit from watching each events as well as reading the narration to have better understanding of the story. The next activity was guided writing activity by using narrative story structure. Students were introduced with the introduction, the transitional expression that shows events from the video, some useful vocabulary, and closing. This activity was done in group. When outlining was ready, they started to write the story based what was shown on the video.

Love and Respect to Nature (Chronological Order)

The following is the steps for teaching narrative. First, to prepare the students’ background knowledge, the teacher can play a short movie (not more than 7 minutes), or the excerpt, which can be downloaded from you tube in the internet. The movie should be within the topic of environmenta issues, such as *Shaun the Sheep Save the Tree, Benard’s Flower, the Giving Tree, The little blue fish, the Story of Fizzy and Sparkling, Gazon: the African Carrots*, and many more. The questions and answer session then follow. The teacher can ask the students’ opinion about the setting, the characters, the conflicts, and the moral value. After that, a model text is presented. In my opinion, it is better to have the same story between the one shown on the movie, and the one written as the model text. I suggest the teacher create his/her own story based on the movie. This is beneficial in certain ways, *first*, the language used in the model text can be simplified, adjusted to the students’ level; and *second*, the teacher can practice his/her language and creativity in creating the story. After the model text is presented, the teacher can lead the students to investigate the characteristic of the text. The teacher works with the students to identify the characteristics of the new genre and may create charts for classroom display that show these characteristics. Next, the teacher and the students can work together to construct texts through group writing with the help of picture series or short movie without subtitle. Some vocabulary related to the text can be discussed before the drafting proceed. Finally, when the students do their solo effort, they can choose their own theme, but within the environmental topic. Students conference with each other and with the teacher. Other aspects of process writing (e.g., revising, editing, and publishing) are employed.

Self-Discipline and Self-Control (Cause and Effect Paragraph Development)

It is not easy to make a paragraph by using cause and effect relationship. Giving topics for the students to write is

simple, but asking them to develop the topic into a composition by using cause and effect relationship is a different matter. I have experienced this in my writing class, and the result was short simple sentences with under-developed ideas. So, I tried different things in the following meeting by using You Tube videos. I downloaded three different videos from You Tube. One was about “Alcohol and Its Effect on Your Body”(2:52), the second was “Psychiatric Drugs” (1:57), and the third was “The Effect of Facebook on Teenagers” (3:46). These videos were chosen since I believe that they were rich in values, especially in being able to have self-control on the bad influence of technology and the drug abuse. The class can have self-reflection and open discussion about what should and should not be done.

The activities in the classroom is described as follows. After each of these videos were presented, the class discussion followed. The next activity was model text analysis. In the model text, the students lead by the teacher identified the characteristics of argumentative essay, the thesis statement, the controlling ideas, the transitional expressions, and the conclusion. Then the students were give a diagram for outlining. During outlining, they should generate ideas to develop one of the three topics offered (Alcohol, Drugs, and Facebook). It was interesting to find out that, while the video shown the negative effect of facebook, most students writing were on the positive effect of facebook. The interesting part was that they can ‘counter attack’ the ideas in the video which said that facebook has many negative effects on teenagers. This is very understandable since many of them are the facebook users.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English is not only teaching the language. When it is seen carefully, ELT teacher can teach beyond the language. He/she can teach the students to be better citizens who posses strong and good characters. To build the expected characters within individuals, students need to have good models that they can learn

from and reflect upon, or having the experience of doing certain action that can trigger their inner drive. You Tube is a powerful and free instructional tool in teaching EFL writing since it can provide rich learning experiences for students only if it is designed properly. If ELT writing teacher can teach the language as well as cultivate the learners’ virtues through the careful selection of You Tube site, I believe that we should start to do it right away. I think teaching the language, have fun with the media, and help the students to be morally better citizen is either quite a challenge or something nice to do that every ELT teacher should look forward to.

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