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reframing java:
PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



Editors:

Dr. A. Rachmad Djati W., M.Sc.

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JAVA INSTITUTE – SOEGIJAPRANATA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
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2010

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THE 1ST JAVA INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM
Reframing Java: Past, Present and Future

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Preface

For years we are used to doing mono-disciplinary study of our own perspectives. This kind of study might give significant contribution to the respective field and the society in general. Many people have become specialists in certain scientific as well as practical fields. In the 'specialist trend' situation, there is a need to communicate with each other to put our study and practice in larger context. The Java Institute International Colloquium (JIIC) is one of efforts to discuss Java from several points of view. This book is a compilation of various topics highlighting the theme "Reframing Java: Past, Present, and Future". The contributors are (mostly) researchers from both domestic and foreign universities and institutions. They have conducted studies on several aspects of lives in Java, or reviewed particular aspects of Java living in global context. They are experts in public health, economics, culture, education, and environment studies.

We would like to share our gratitude to all contributors for their willingness to share ideas in the meeting and this book. We are also grateful to the Rector of Soegijapranata Catholic University, Prof. Dr. Y. Budi Widianarko, for his support and encouragement, to the committee. We thank to all committee members and fellows to make this compilation prepared.

Chairperson,
A. Rachmad Djati Winarno

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THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS IN MULTI-CULTURAL CONTEXTS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching in a multi-cultural society such as a Yogyakarta region, central Java region, and others is hard work as educators of any subject including English one should take into account culture that exists and works in the region concerned where students grow up and live. Such a consideration of students' culture is believed to be one of the determinant factors to gain the success of teaching and learning process in any level of education including secondary school and tertiary levels. This is based on the belief that the success of teaching and learning is determined by two factors that include internal and external factors. The internal factors embody learner health, personality, learning style, motivation, and others. External factors consist of teaching strategies, teaching methods, media, learner social and physical environments, society belief, and the like.

Of the existing factors, social ones are believed to confer a general impact on students' learning. This suggests that educators should be aware of social factors that learners have. Added to this, educators should be aware that learners come from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, students' own characteristics should be comprehensively understood to gain the success of teaching and learning. The minimum understanding of students' characteristics

is believed to raise some problems in multi-cultural contexts. When the existing problems are not well managed, this leads to the failure of teaching and learning process.

With regard to the above issues, this paper deals with a discussion of teaching and learning in multicultural contexts. The discussion mainly reviews the possible problems that exist in teaching and learning process in some subjects and some solutions that educators may apply to cope with the problems. To end up the discussion, some final remarks are made.

THE NATURE OF MULTI-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

The term *multi-cultural context* consists of three morphemes, namely *multi*, *culture* and *context*. Linguistically, the term *multi* refers to more than two. The meaning of culture is an integrated pattern of human behavior which embodies thought, language, action, and artifacts (Webster, 1080). According to Lebaron (2003), culture shapes one's perceptions, attributions, judgments, and ideas. Culture is not only concerned with languages, dress, food, and customs. Culture deals with race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, ability and disability, politics, religion, and gender. Culture is changeable and it relates to the symbolic dimension of life.

Further, Oakland (1992) proposes three levels of sub-culture which are shared by a group of particular society members. Level 1 consists of shared biological and physical aspects such as height and weight, skin color, inherited propensity for illness and physical problems. Level 2 deals with shared values, goals, beliefs, and attitudes. The aspects of Level 2 are determined by traditions within one's ancestral cultures which are possibly transmitted through genetic and family patterns in relation with one's existing environment and personal beliefs. Level 3 is concerned with foods, dress, language and methods applied for being disciplining, educating, communicating, working, dating, getting marriage, and playing. Similarly, Robinson in Tomalin and Stempleski (1993:7) propose three interconnected aspects of culture. They are products, ideas, and behaviours. The products consist of some elements such as music, artifacts, literature, and the like. Ideas embody beliefs, values, and institutions. Behaviours comprise some elements which include customs, habits, and others.

According to Moran in Zacharias (2005: 129), culture is constructed by five elements which include persons, communities, perspectives, practices, and products. With regard to this, culture is defined as 'the evolving way of life of a group of persons, comprising a shared set of practices associated with a shared set of products, based upon a shared set of perspectives on the world and set within specific social contexts.'

The term *multi-culture*, according to Sue, et al. (1998) is characterized by ten issues as performed below.

- (1) Cultural pluralisms are highly valued.
- (2) Inclusion, cooperation, and movement towards mutually shared goals are emphasized.
- (3) Social justice and equity are promoted.
- (4) The development of attitude, knowledge, and skills in a pluralistic community is triggered.
- (5) The use of multiple perspectives is highly recommended.
- (6) The equal treatment on different race, ethnicity, social class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, age, geographic origin, and the like is promoted.
- (7) Contributions and achievement of different cultures are highly valued.
- (8) Change within individual, organizations, and society may occur.
- (9) Tension and conflicts frequently exist.
- (10) Equity in treatment which leads to equal access and opportunity should be minimized.

The term *context* refers to environment in which a group of people live. The environment embodies social and physical situations which influences someone to have a particular pattern of life. The physical environment deals with a place or areas such as cities, urban areas, town, village, suburb, mountainous areas, remote areas, and the like. Having such physical environments determines different ways of life, behaviors, personalities, beliefs, values, and others under the discussion of culture. Social environments such

as age, religion, social-economy status, and others also influence someone or a group of people to behave different ways.

In reference to the above discussion, the concept of culture can embody beliefs, attitudes, values, habits, customs, and the like owned by students in any level of educational contexts. This suggests that students' behaviors, habits, perceptions and others can be part of culture. In addition, students' characteristics which include age, gender, intelligence, motivation, interests, perceptions, learning styles, learning strategies, social-economy background, geographical background, language, religion, and others can be part of culture. Those aspects should be comprehensively understood by educators to succeed the process of teaching and learning. The understanding of students' characteristics as part of culture is very important for educators of any subject to minimize problems faced in the process of teaching and learning.

Of students' characteristics above, educators are encouraged to be familiar with a multiple intelligence theory stating that each student has nine types of intelligence. They include (1) verbal-linguistic intelligence, (2) mathematical-logical intelligence, (3) musical intelligence, (4) visual-spatial intelligence, (5) bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, (6) interpersonal intelligence, (7) intrapersonal intelligence, (8) naturalist intelligence, and (9) existential intelligence (Gardner, 1999).

Linguistic intelligence deals with sensitivity to use spoken and written language, the ability to learn any language, and the capacity to activate language in any context. Logical-mathematical intelligence comprises the faculty to analyze problems logically, do with mathematical operations, and explore issues scientifically. Also, it embodies the ability to perceive patterns, reason deductively and think logically. This intelligence is most often concerned with scientific and mathematical thinking. Musical intelligence entails skills in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It deals with the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence refers to the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the ability to activate mental abilities to manage bodily actions. Spatial intelligence entails the potential to be familiar with and utilize the patterns of wide space and more restricted

areas. Interpersonal intelligence refers to the capacity to comprehend the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It drives students to work effectively with others. Intrapersonal intelligence is concerned with the ability to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations. Naturalist intelligence is concerned with the ability to be familiar with and identify plants, animals, and other objects in nature. Existential intelligence deals with sensitivity and ability to deal with the essence of life. These nine intelligences place in different areas of human beings' brain and either operate individually or together. This understanding facilitates educators to provide students with personalized and diversified learning experiences leading to success of the teaching and learning process.

Another issue of students' individual differences is learning style. It is defined as 'the biologically and developmentally imposed set of characteristics that make the same teaching method wonderful for some and terrible for others' (Dunn and Griggs, 1988). Style deals with patterns that give direction to learning behavior (Cornett, 1983). Learning style is broken up into three, namely (1) visual, (2) auditory, and (3) kinesthetic (Sprenger, 2003). Visual learning style deals with the use of seen or observed things, including pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, displays, handouts, films, flip-chart, etc. Auditory learning style is concerned with the transfer of information through listening: to the spoken word, of self or others, of sounds and noises. Kinesthetic learning involves physical practices such as touching, feeling, holding, doing, and practical hands-on experiences.

In lieu with individual differences of students as reviewed above, educators have to work hard when they are engaged in the process of teaching and learning. They are challenged to face many problems that exist in multi-cultural contexts as presented below.

PROBLEMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN MULTI-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

It is obvious that students who come from different social and geographical backgrounds have different patterns of behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. This implies that every student has different culture. For this reason,

they can be called multi-culturalisms. As they have different cultural backgrounds, educators have to apply multicultural approach otherwise many problems arise in the process of English teaching and learning that can hamper in achieving the targeted objectives as performed in offered subjects. The problems are encountered not only by students but also by educators. The following presents some problems that commonly exist in the process of teaching and learning.

Mis-interpretation of responses performed by a particular group of students due to their culture often raises a problem in the process of teaching and learning. For example, Javanese culture tends to be indirect. When educators want to confirm whether the students understand the materials that they have learned or not, the response of students shows that many of them just keep silent or respond to the question by saying "Yes". The meaning of "Yes" has two interpretations. The first meaning is that students really know the materials presented. The second meaning is that students do not know the material as the answer "yes" is used to make it polite or to maintain the interaction. This, of course, confuses the educators when they do not comprehensively understand students' characteristics. In addition, students tend not to ask for questions although they do not know the materials. They enjoy becoming good hearers. Interruption is taboo for particular groups of students. It is very hard for educators to voluntarily ask students to do tasks. Also, students who have been accustomed to having traditional, teacher-fronted instruction, and have been successful in such a situation may resist or have difficulty adjusting to multicultural approach which gives an emphasis on constructivism model rather than transmission one.

In a teaching and learning process, educators are demanded to design syllabus. In designing it, educators rarely involve students. For the sake of practical reasons, educators tend to fully refer to the content standard and competence standard made by the ministry of national education. A syllabus negotiation which gives an emphasis on students' involvement and some other parties such as students' parents, stakeholders, and the like has not been widely promoted. Consequently, some problems occur in the process of teaching and learning, for example, students' unwillingness to learn, students' minimum involvements, and others.

Many educators tend not to provide different materials that accommodate the uniqueness of students. Educators commonly apply top-down mode of material selection disregarding the diversity of students' needs and cultural backgrounds. The materials given do not vary in nature as they equalize students' learning capability. In addition, the materials offered somehow are not contextual and do not meet students' real life. The materials as manifested in tasks to some extent consist of bias gender which raises a conflict between female and male students. In addition, the provided tasks do not accommodate students' different religion backgrounds and other issues of multicultural aspects. This, of course, makes students get bored leading to the failure of the process of teaching and learning.

Teaching techniques applied by educators somehow do not accommodate different learning styles of students which lead to the failure in achieving the goals of teaching and learning. Educators tend to use monotonous teaching techniques that are only beneficial for particular groups of students. Students' meaningful involvement in the process of teaching and learning seems to be neglected as educators tend to promote testing practices or "LKS" discussion practices. A little attention is given to promote being autonomous learners.

The use of media directly or indirectly affect to the success of a teaching and learning process. However, the misconception of designing and misleading media which do not accommodate student differences in terms of their cultural backgrounds may raise some problems. For example, the use of a power point performing a depiction of a sexy and beautiful girl as the example of a sales promotion girl may attract male students but not female students who perceive it as a taboo thing. This suggests that educators should be cautious in designing media used in the process of teaching and learning.

So far the standardized test has been overwhelmingly used to assess all students who come from different backgrounds. Most items designed in a standardized test are in the form of cognitive test items which give a high priority on competence. Such test items are designed for all students or "one-size fits-all assessments (Hilliard, 2004). Cultural issues tend to be neglected or minimized as a factor to design regular assessments or to interpret the

assessment data. In other words, a little attention is given to construct a particular test that accommodates different cultural backgrounds which students have. This leads to raising frustrations and stress on the part of students.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO COPE WITH TEACHING AND LEARNING PROBLEMS

With regard to the above problems, the following presents some possible solutions that can be applied by educators to cope with them.

Educators are demanded to comprehensively take into account individual differences or individual characteristics of students including students' multiple intelligences. This can be achieved through having interpersonal relations and conducting need survey and need analysis with the employment of questionnaires or interviews before educators design syllabus. The questionnaires and interviews cover students' interest, motivation, perception, learning style, learning strategy, social and physical background, and the like.

Educators are encouraged to select and design various materials which accommodate diversified students' interest and needs. In addition, the materials should be contextual in nature in the sense that students find them in their environment and people tend to use them. This can be conducted by asking students' preferences dealing with the topics that they want to learn regarding the topic areas as required by the national content and competence standard. Educators can ask students to list topic areas and select the topic areas. After that, they make use of them in teaching and learning process.

Teaching in multi-cultural contexts, educators should select appropriate approach which meets the subjects and students' individual differences. Multi-cultural approach can be one of the alternative approaches to be applied. The essence of multicultural approach is to promote equal education opportunities for all students by changing the total school environment in such a way that it reflects diverse groups in society and in the schools and classrooms (Banks, 1995, 1996; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Grant and Sleeter (1989) define equal opportunity as a systematic and comprehensive attempt for each student to access equal opportunity to learn, to succeed, and to be

what he or she would like, regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, social-economy class, and disability. They add that there is no best student in multicultural approach.

Educators are encouraged to apply cooperative learning in the process of teaching and learning used to minimize a teacher-center mode. In addition, some various techniques are encouraged to be applied to establish students' autonomous learning. Media should be well selected and designed for the sake of accommodating students' individual differences without discrediting minority or a particular group. Educators may ask students to choose and prepare learning media used in the process of teaching and learning which meet the topics discussed.

The assessment should be well designed regarding students' individual differences. Educators should not rely on a standardized assessment which gives an emphasis on a cognitive test. A portfolio assessment can be applied as it deals with documenting the process of students' learning achievement rather than the learning product.

FINAL REMARKS

In reference to the above discussion, some conclusions are made. Teaching in multi-cultural contexts, Javanese society in particular requires comprehensive awareness of students' individual differences as students come to the class with different backgrounds in terms of psychological aspects, personalities, cognitive styles, hemisphere specialization, learning strategies, socio-cultural environments, learning strategies, and others. Having such understanding facilitates educators and students to be successfully engaged in the teaching and learning process. Added to this, it also assists educators to cope with existing problems due to students' individual differences.

Educators should be more concerned about the issue of diversity. They have to make every effort to provide an education that guarantees every student in the classroom equal access to the resources provided. In particular, we are in need of more critical analysis of educational theories as they relate to issues of diversity. In other words, instructional theories and approaches in teaching in Javanese society contexts need to be more responsive to students'

needs and interests in the mainstream classroom. Toward this end, a diverse repertoire of teaching strategies appropriate for different students and contexts needs to be established.

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