Introducing classroom rules using the jigsaw technique

by Siti Tamah

INTRODUCING CLASSROOM RULES USING THE JIGSAW TECHNIQUE: A MODEL

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INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon for teachers to spend the very first session of the class they are assigned to teach by having something 'light' as the first session is eminently known as an 'introductory session'. The class is not yet serious in discussing the instructional materials. Some classes are started by course outline sharing. Some are started with an ice breaking activity. Some others are commenced with classroom rule sharing.

Concerning classroom rules sharing, students are told about the classroom rules to maintain; they are sometimes reminded about the rules that have generally been implemented. The students primarily listen most of the time while the teacher is informing what is expected from them. The point highlighted here is that the classroom rules are traditionally depicted.

Constructivism theory has been adopted formally since the Indonesian government applied Competency-Based Curriculum nationwide in the 2004/2005 academic year. The new curriculum being implemented, the Indonesian teachers are inevitably to transform their traditional class into a more engaging class. The teachers are, in other words, faced with constructivist thinking of how to involve their students in relevant tasks so that the students are really engaged in the classroom.

Engaging students in a Competency-based Curriculum class can be realized by employing cooperative learning techniques. One technique of cooperative learning which is often adopted is Jigsaw. This Jigsaw technique introduced by Aronson provides students chance to experience collaborative learning environment which emphasizes interaction among group members.

This paper then emphasizes on the implementation of the Jigsaw technique. It is implemented when it is the introduction of classroom rules. In fact in this paper the writer is sharing what she usually carries out in the very first session of a class where she establishes

classroom rules that she considers an indispensable issue to take care. Prior to this main issue, four theories underlying it will be presented.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Classroom Rules

Orlich et al. (1985) indicates the report of George H. Gallop (1984) that a major problem of any educational setting is discipline. Discipline or behavioral problems often dominate the class. Not being handled well, this discipline or behavioral problems can become "a leading contributor to teachers' stress and attrition." (Yahaya et al., 2009:660). Teachers are therefore challenged with the task of minimizing discipline problems. 13

In order that discipline is maintained in the classroom situations, teachers should ensure that they establish certain classroom rules which are defined as "the general behavior standards or expectations that are to be followed" (Mtsweni, 2008:114). They comprise a code of conduct to create a positive learning environment and more importantly to regulate individual behavior to avoid disruptive behavior or at least to reduce the behavior problems within the classroom with the long term objective of creating an atmosphere beneficial to all.

The establishment of interpersonal relationship commences on the very first day of the class meeting. With regard to discipline concern, the very first day can be utilized first and foremost as there should be a way to avoid disruptive behavior. Harmer (1994) points out that the teacher's role in the first few classes especially with a new group of students will be to establish a code of conduct. This code of conduct or 'rule of the game' can be revealed on the very first day. Gibson (2011) and Lucas (2005) put it, "One component of a discipline plan is to establish effective classroom rules at the beginning of the year. Students need to know rules, routines and procedures at the beginning

of your class, before you start to tackle any content."

Similarly, Finocchiaro (1974) suggests that teachers establish routines of classroom procedure from the very first day as a way out to minimize discipline problems. Having a similar idea, Orlich et al. (1985:340) write, "Proponents of the effective classroom management maintain that the very first day of school is critical in the establishment of standards."

Meanwhile, McQueen (1992) also puts forward the importance of rule establishment. He more particularly puts it, "Classroom rules are needed in order to accomplish the business of teaching and learning and the nurturing of students' self-worth" (McQueen, 1992:52). The first class meeting is consequently the appropriate time to deal with standard or routines establishment.

In line with what is argued by Lucas (2005) and the other experts whose ideas are previously cited, a common practice carried out in the very first meeting of every semester or every academic year is classroom rule establishment besides course outline sharing. Teachers often tell the students what is expected from them. They frequently just tell or inform them about the classroom rules by a sort of 'announcement'. Some classroom rules teachers conventionally announce to them are: "If you miss a session, you should try to get updated by asking your friends"; "If you are sick and you can't submit your home assignment on time, you should … ." A typical suggestion "Then say 'Let's exemplify the good qualities of a good student …'" strongly indicates that the classroom rule is "said".

As my paper title suggests, another mode will be employed. It is via the Jigsaw technique or making use of the Jigsaw technique. The classroom rules can be revealed by the teacher's actively involving the students in the process, rather than by the teacher's plainly informing them. Before we really touch the main issue, we

are still to finish the other underlying theories. What follows is then the discussion on the second underlying theory.

Constructivism

Richards (2001) defines competencies as a description of the essential skills, knowledge and activities needed for effective performance of certain tasks and activities. Meanwhile Kaplan (2002) points out that constructivism is not a teaching theory, but that it is a theory of knowledge and learning. Based on those two defined words – 'competence' and 'constructivism' – the writer can argue that the prominent underlying theory to deal with concerning Competency-Based Curriculum is constructivism. The following discussion is then centered on constructivism.

Constructivism, pointed out by Kaplan (2002), proposes that learning environment should support multiple interpretations of reality, knowledge construction as well as context-rich and experience-based activities. Considering the core of constructivism, Kaplan (2002) provides ten basic guiding principles of constructivist thinking. They are as follows:

1. Learners need time to learn since learning is not instantaneous.
2. Learners are engaged in doing something as learning is an active process of which meaning is constructed out.
3. Learners learn to learn as they learn.
4. Learners need activities which engage the mind as well as the hands.
5. Learners learn by using language.
6. Learners learn by interaction with others – their fellow students, teacher and families.
7. Learners need contextual environment.
8. Learners learn by developing from their existing knowledge.
9. Learners are engaged with the world extracting meaning from their experiences.
10. Learners need motivation to accelerate their learning.

The guiding principles depicted above are in line with what Zahorik (1995) argues. The following quotation is what he puts forward concerning constructivism:

> *Knowledge is constructed by humans. Knowledge is not a set of facts, concepts, or laws waiting to be discovered. It is not something that exists independent of knower. Humans create or construct knowledge as they attempt to bring meaning to their experience. Everything that we know, we have made.*
>
> Zahorik (1995) in Nurhadi (2004:44-45)

Unlike behaviorists, constructivists believe that learning process is initiated by the students themselves. Learners construct new knowledge based on the knowledge already possessed by them. Nobody else can 'plant' this knowledge to the students; they are to do it themselves (Sumarsono, 2004).

What can be inferred from the principles of constructivist thinking previously presented is that it is high time that teachers abandoned their spoon-feeding technique. The traditional classroom stage should be altered. One typical way to reveal this shift is the teacher's adopting 'students teaching other students' technique. This then leads us to the next underlying theory.

Cooperative Learning

Referring to Slavin (1990), Jacobs, Lee and Ball (1996) in Tamah (2007) point out that cooperative learning requires students to work together to learn and to be responsible for their fellow students' learning as well as their own. Similarly, Nurhadi (2004) defines cooperative learning as a learning approach focusing on the use of small groups of students who work together so that learning condition is maximized to attain learning objectives. Meanwhile, Felder (2005:2) viewing cooperative learning from the perspective of teaching puts forward a similar definition of cooperative learning as follows:

> Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with

students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

Felder (2005) argues that certain conditions must be met to result in productive cooperation instead of competitive one. The conditions are: (1) positive interdependence, (2) individual and group accountability, (3) face-to-face interaction, (4) interpersonal and small-group skills, and (5) group processing. One way to enforce positive interdependence (the sense of 'sink or swim together') is assigning roles to group members. A student can be assigned 'captain', the others can be 'secretary', 'time keeper', and 'speaker' respectively. Individual and group accountability is ensured when there is 'no hitchhiking' of individual students. Face-to-face interaction occurs when each member makes an effort to promote each other's success. Interpersonal and small-group skills indicate the existence of leadership, decision-making, trust, communication and conflict resolution. Group processing takes place when each member reflects on how well the group functions and identify what to continue or change.

Some classroom activities or techniques or cooperative structures extensively suggested and employed are presented below: (interested readers can refer to Felder, 2005; Jacobs, Lee and Ball, 1996; Kagan in Orr, 1999; and Nurhadi, 2004 for more detailed information)

1. Think-Pair-Share. The 'think' component indicates that the students are required to individually think about a question posed by the teacher. The 'pair' indicates the requirement to pair up to discuss the question to get the answer and eventually the 'share' indicates that they share it with other pairs, and/or with other groups.

2. Numbered-Heads. Small groups of students are formed and each student is given a number. The teacher asks a question and the students think of the answer making sure each member gets it. The teacher calls out a number (e.g. 2) and each student numbered 2 is asked to answer or to respond to the teacher's question.

3. Inside-Outside Circle. Students form circles and stand in pairs. The inside circle faces out, meanwhile the outside circle faces in. They carry out the task required. They then find new partners by rotating the circle and carry out the same task.

4. Jigsaw. Small groups of students (home teams) are formed and each group is assigned a part of the material to learn and then to teach to the other members in the group. More discussion on Jigsaw is presented in the next section for it is significant to have a separate discussion on this particular cooperative structure as the last primary theory underlying this paper.

THE STUDY

The Jigsaw Technique

Initially introduced by Aronson et al. (1978), this Jigsaw technique is meant to provide students with the chance to learn an instructional material from their peers. The instructional material is divided into sections and one section is for each student to take care of. The students who are responsible for the same section get together and form a new group of which the goal is for the students to master the section of the material and to enable them to teach the other members in their original learning group later.

Teachers who employ Jigsaw believe that their students are capable of learning by themselves. They believe that each student owns the capability to be the contributor of knowledge in class. Not only teachers can provide knowledge in class. Students themselves can be the contributors. Aronson (2005) puts it: "This "cooperation by design" facilitates interaction among all students in the class, leading them to

value each other as contributors to their common task."

Talking about the benefits of the Jigsaw technique, Aronson (2005) claims that it is an efficient way of learning. It is even more beneficial as the process in the Jigsaw technique encourages listening, engagement, and empathy. Here is what Aronson (2005) points out:

> What is the benefit of the jigsaw classroom? First and foremost, it is a remarkably efficient way to learn the material. But even more important, the jigsaw process encourages listening, engagement, and empathy by giving each member of the group an essential part to play in the academic activity. Group members must work together as a team to accomplish a common goal; each person depends on all the others. No student can succeed completely unless everyone works well together as a team.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Using Jigsaw to Introduce Classroom Rules

This section is presented to reveal the main issue this paper is highlighting. It is a model of making use of the Jigsaw technique to introduce classroom rules.

The students are to form groups of 4-5 students. They form their home teams; they can be encouraged to name their home teams. I commonly ask them to think of a list of good character traits. This results in the group names like LOYAL group, HONEST group and SINCERE group. The group then decides who the captain of the home team is.

A set of classroom rules will be revealed in the home team. As an illustration, the classroom rules prepared can state: 1) LET'S NOT BE LATE FOR CLASS, 2) IF YOU MISS A CLASS, MAKE UP FOR IT, 3) READ THE MATERIALS BEFORE JOINING THE CLASS, 4) LET'S TRY AND LISTEN TO EACH OTHER, and 5) LET'S HELP EACH OTHER. They are written on pieces of paper. Each piece therefore contains one classroom rule.

The captain gets it but he/she is not allowed to read them. He/she then distributes it face-down among the members. This means that each member gets only one piece of paper where a sentence of classroom rule is written. The sentence which is numbered is only for the respective student to read. The sentence is to be revealed to the other home team members. It is not to be simply read for others. The students have to use other ways. They will discuss it later when they get together with other students from other home team members.

The students then form expert teams. The students having Sentence 1 – the first classroom rule – get together to form an expert team. Similarly, those having Sentences 2, 3, and 4 – the second, third and fourth classroom rules respectively – form their expert teams. They leave their home team members to be the member of the expert team. When they leave the home team, they can be encouraged to say in a fun way, "Hang on. Don't cry. I'll be back soon."

Each expert team member gets a piece of paper which looks like the following:

> (*Write the sentence you get in the blank space below*)
>
> It's one of the classroom rules. How will you help the other home team members get the sentence? Reading it for them is not allowed. Use other ways like giving synonyms, opposites or other clues. Discuss it in this expert team. It is your responsibility to assist your friends. Yet, ask your friends' help when you're not sure or hopeless. The goal of the expert team discussion: Each knows how to help the other home team members get the sentence later.

As we can see from what is stated in the note, the students are actually given a chance to have a fun section later: a sort of guessing game. They are preparing a guessing game to be carried out in the home team later. For a language class this can be used as a warming-up activity to

review certain language items. The note "Use other ways like giving synonyms, opposites or other clues." shall illustrate the review of vocabulary.

Before they begin to perform the task in the expert team, they can be encouraged to greet the 'new' friends – saying a simple HI to one another or a bit longer one HI, GLAD TO WORK WITH YOU. Each of them then reads. Each also writes as instructed – completing the blank space. The expert team is then asked to decide the captain of the expert team. Requested to come in front of the classroom, the expert team captain then gets a note which says:

NOTE FOR THE CAPTAIN OF THE EXPERT TEAM

Congratulations for being the captain. Here's your job description.

1) **Pre-expert team work:** decide the role of the other members. You need a secretary who will help you when you get stuck, a timer to help you keep the time, a speaker to report the result of the expert team work. If you have a member who does not get a role, you can offer what role he/she would like to take.

2) **Individual silent preparation (2 min.):** ask each member to prepare silently how to reveal each word in the sentence without telling it directly. Ask the timer to help keep the time.

3) **Sharing/discussion (10 min.):** every one should get equal chance to ask and give information; remind the team members to help one another.

4) **Conclusion (3 min.):** the speaker reports the important points – what to do and how to help the home team members later when each gets back home.

While the captains are making sure they understand their job, the other expert team members are asked to individually reread the note distributed to them previously. This indicates that there are two 'parties' temporarily

formed. One is the captain party. They work together to understand the instruction – to ensure each understands what to do as a captain. The other is the non-captain party. They reread the note and ensure that they understand the point written in the note.

When the captains are ready, each goes back to his/her respective expert team. Guided by the note, the captain leads the expert team discussion. Firstly, in the pre-expert team work, the captain decides the role of the other expert team members. One member becomes the secretary who will help him/her when he/she gets stuck. One member becomes the timer who helps keep the time. The other member is the speaker who is assigned to report the result of the expert team work. Secondly, when it is individual silent preparation, each member silently prepares how to reveal each word in the sentence without telling it directly. Meanwhile, the timer keeps the time. Thirdly, during the sharing or discussion every member gets equal chance to ask and give information. The team works cooperatively – assisting one another to get the way to reveal the sentence without reading it. Eventually, the speaker reports the important points – what to do and how to help the home team members later when each gets back home.

Having spent about 15 minutes, the expert team is then dismissed. The students are encouraged to thank one another as it is time for them to 'go back home'. They return to their respective home teams.

In their home team the students share the classroom rules. The task in the home team is started by choosing the captain. The captain leads the sharing of each member who tries to reveal the sentence. Each home team member participates in this fun activity. They use the way they have learnt or got in the expert team so that eventually the set of classroom rules is revealed for each member. It is in this particular section that they perform the fun activity – the guessing game. The students know the classroom rules

not from listening passively to the teacher but they get them from actively engaging themselves in a Jigsaw activity.

Eventually the teacher can spend some time to carry out the whole-class teacher directed section. The teacher can ensure the establishment of the classroom rules by saying for instance "OK class, so what's the first rule of our class? Rule 1. What is it? I hope a student can read it aloud for all of us.", and "What's the second?". The teacher can also ensure that the students get the meaning of 'make up for it' (in Rule number 2).

CONCLUSION

This paper has revealed a model of introducing classroom rules using the Jigsaw technique. Prior to the model, the paper has presented four underlying theories: Classroom Rule, Constructivism, Cooperative Learning and JIGSAW. What is implied from the discussion is that the Jigsaw technique being employed, the traditional classroom stage which is teacher-centered is challenged. The implementation of the Jigsaw technique indirectly assists the students to alter their insight about learning. It is expected that they will in the long run be aware of their capability as learners. Moreover, the implementation of the Jigsaw technique to introduce classroom rules is expected to engage students more enthusiastically on the first study day – the day which should be very informative but is filled with a 'fun' activity to establish classroom rules expected.

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