

THE NOBILITY OF TEACHING: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN INDONE

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ABSTRAK

Kualitas penguasaan bahasa Inggris tergantung pada berbagai faktor, yang secara sederhana dikelompokkan menjadi tiga faktor utama, yakni faktor (1) guru, (2) siswa dan (3) lingkungan pembelajaran. Dari ketiga faktor ini, faktor guru masih diyakini sebagai faktor kunci. Berdasarkan keyakinan ini, rendahnya penguasaan bahasa Inggris terutama bersumber dari rendahnya kualitas kinerja guru bahasa Inggris. Sementara kinerja tersebut, ditentukan oleh rendahnya kualitas guru sebagai individu. Banyak guru bahasa Inggris yang tidak memiliki penguasaan keterampilan berbahasa Inggris, keilmuan linguistik, dan pedagogik belajar serta pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Penguasaan keilmuan seperti ini tidak juga menjadi penjamin utama keberhasilan menerjemahkan keilmuan tersebut dalam wujud kinerja mengajar yang sesungguhnya; masih diperlukan sensitifitas, kreatifitas dan kekritisan berfikir terhadap masalah faktual pengajaran bahasa Inggris. Atribut psikologis ini dan penguasaan keilmuan di sisi lain hanya mungkin ditumbuhkan oleh nilai (*theme*). Nilai (*theme*) inilah yang menggerakkan seluruh keinginan dan perilaku untuk mencapai dan mempraktekkan kedua aspek tersebut. Pandangan dan keyakinan bahwa mengajar adalah pekerjaan *mulia* (*noble*) merupakan salah satu bagian dari nilai (*theme*). Oleh karena itu, membangun dan menumbuhkan *the nobility of teaching* pada diri guru akan menjadi salah satu jalan keluar mengatasi masalah rendahnya kualitas berbahasa Inggris siswa.

Kata Kunci: nobility, kinerja guru, pengajaran bahasa Inggris, pengembangan

INTRODUCTION

The quality of teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Indonesia is much less satisfying. One of the empirical evidences that proved the disappointing condition is the low average achievement of the Senior High School in English national examination. In addition, despite long years (six years or more) spent on studying English, most of the Senior High School graduates can not communicate in the foreign language sufficiently.

Teaching English, as the teaching of any other subjects, considers *teacher* as the sufficiently strong determinant of the success of the teaching. This is in line with Hattie's claim (2003) saying that 30% of the variance of students' achievement lie in the *teacher* factor, while 50% of the variance is from *the student* factors and the rest is contributed by home, school, principals and peer effects. Concentrating on enhancing these sources of variance is believed to make truly different in students' learning achievement.

A teacher quality, in accordance with Hattie's (2003) statement, must be improved for bettering the quality of students' English mastery. Such improvement, as a matter of fact, has often been conducted. There have been a lot of training, short courses, workshops, etc. devoted to the teacher quality improvement. It deals with

various aspects, such as teacher teaching competence, English proficiency, linguistic knowledge, knowledge of language learning psychology, etc. Those attempts seem to have not resulted maximally and therefore further efforts need to be conducted.

The nobility of teaching currently becomes the object of hot discussion among the educators and others with great interest in education. It seems to be the fact that nobility is a potential solution to increase the teacher quality. This concept is attributed to the *teacher* rather than to other factors of teaching. The problem in connection to this topic is how to engineer this concept for the purpose of teacher quality improvement which in turns will improve the students' achievement in learning English. To achieve this purpose, it is badly needed to (1) elaborate the concept of the *nobility*, and (2) investigate the attitude of the society towards the concept and how the society reacts it, (3) analyze the current government policy from the perspective of the concept of *nobility*, and (4) propose real concrete action plan of manipulating the concept. These four main parts will constitute this paper.

THE CONCEPT OF “NOBILITY”

Historically, *nobility* is a social and often legal notion, which is distinct from socio-economic status which is mainly based on income and possessions. Being wealthy or influential does not automatically make one a noble, nor are all nobles wealthy and influential. There are some poor nobles and they have existed since the term was known. The term originally referred to those who were “known” or “notable” and was applied to the highest social class in pre-modern societies. It rapidly came to be seen as heredity caste, sometimes associated with a right to bear a hereditary title. Countries without feudal tradition do not have a nobility as such. Various republics, including the United States, Mexico, and Italy have expressly abolished the granting of titles of nobility. This concept mostly referred to one's social status which is heredity. Holders of this title are commonly a small privileged class consisting of those felt to be best qualified to rule (Merriam, 2009).

Etymologically the word *nobility* comes from a stem, *noble*, and a suffix, *-ity*. The stem, semantically means *having, showing high characters, high quality, superior in characters and having a command of excellence*. Nobility is defined in two kinds of definition. In the first kind of definition, it is defined as the state of being of high rank or noble birth; patrician dignity, antiquity of family; distinction by rank, station or title, whether inherited or conferred or as the collective body of nobles or titled persons in a state; the aristocratic and patrician class. In the second type of definition, *nobility* is defined as the state of being noble; superiority of mind or of character, commanding excellence or the quality of being exalted in character or ideals or conduct. The concept of *nobility* discussed in this paper is adopted both from the second type of definition and that proposed by Achterberg (2009).

Even though the meaning of *nobility*, as described above has been decreasingly known in which *nobility* was mostly associated to the inherited social status, the *very basic meaning* of the *nobility*, remains existing and even spreads in more various aspects of life. In teaching, for example, the term is understood in its basic meaning only. This is clearly stated in Achterberg (2009). According to Achterberg (2009), teaching is a calling to a noble purpose. A great teacher does not only teach but also provide a life long passion for learning and the pursuit of knowledge. This implicitly conveys that he or she teaches two kinds of knowledge, namely: (1) the knowledge that we know and that which we do not know yet. The first kind of knowledge requires the teaching of vocabulary, skills, facts, relationships related to a discipline or a subject.

While the second requires the teaching of what we do not know and its focus is on teaching the students *how to learn, discover, inquire, create and come to know*. This suggests that teaching provides both knowledge and wisdom and the latter can not only be taught but should also be shared. The two aspects are very important for the future of one's society and country. On the other hand, the term *nobility* does not suggest anything of financial rewards. The purpose of being a teacher is not making millions of dollars. So the basic meaning of *nobility* that the *teaching* carries with itself - as interpreted in the Achterberg's (2009) statement- is that: (1) teaching has a noble purpose, namely to provide knowledge and wisdom with the students or to teach them the knowledge and the way how to learn and therefore to foster the value of sustainable knowledge improvement in the students' mind; and (2) teaching is a calling for the teacher to achieve the purpose. As a *calling*, the nobility should be understood as an excellent psychological trait which lies deep in the teacher's personality which governs and motivate him or her to perform noble teaching. Nobility, as a matter of fact, is a psychological construct underlying and deriving the noble performance to take place.

NOBILITY IN THE FIELD OF TEACHING

In the context of *teaching*, the meaning of *nobility* as adopted here is often equalized with the concept of *excellent teachers*. For the better understanding of the concept *nobility*, in this field, the concept of *excellent teacher* is considered necessary to discuss.

Many researches have been done to explore the characteristics of an excellent teacher and to investigate factors deriving him or her to be excellent. This purpose is started to be achieved by raising two main questions: (1) how do we decide a teacher to be an excellent or not and (2) why do they want to be excellent teachers? The results of such researches vary but they still shared few common findings.

Vallane (2000) said that there is no suggestion that the daily skills of teaching, classroom management and subject knowledge are not important. These technical competences are foundational, but more than technical competences is required for excellence. A culture theme (value) which not only values these technical skills but also values fostering the skills, supporting them, and stimulating their growth. The latter theme, according to Vallane's research findings, consists of four self psychological attributes, they are:

- (1) having sufficient skills of organization and a work ethic to meet reasonable deadlines and expectations,
- (2) a solid commitment to the whole persons so that the needs of the students are directly addressed, especially those less academically gifted,
- (3) that the teacher loves each student with an affection that is real and not possessive,
- (4) a teacher makes a personal commitment to the benefit of their students.

The last factor or factor number four is considered as the most significant contributor to the excellent of teaching because in the midst of many competing demands it calls forth life and energy that moves teaching into the realm of where role and person unite to complement the integrity of the teacher. If the four factors are analyzed deeply and comprehensively, it can be summarized into two main factors, namely (1) knowledge or skills and (2) personal psychological attributes and the second factor consists of two psychological attributes, namely (a) commitment and (b) love.

This psychological theme is believed by Vallane (2009) to derive noble teaching behavior intended to achieve noble purpose of teaching. Other researchers were also

successful in identifying excellent classroom teaching performances. Hattie (2003) identified five major dimensions of excellent teachers, they are: they can

- (1) identify essential representations of their subject(s),
- (2) guide learning through classroom interactions,
- (3) monitor learning and provide feedback,
- (4) attend to affective attributes, and
- (5) influence student outcome.

The five major dimensions are breakdown into sixteen more observable behaviors as listed below:

- A. An excellent teacher can identify essential representations of their subject(s):
 1. Excellent teachers have deeper representation about teaching and learning:
 - (a) can spontaneously relate what is happening to these deeper sets of principles
 - (b) can quickly recognize sequences of events occurring in the classroom which in some way affect the learning and teaching of a topic.
 - (c) Can detect and concentrate more on the information that has instructional significance'
 - (d) Can make better predictions based on their representations about the classroom
 - (e) Can be much more responsive to the students.
 2. Excellent teachers adopt a problem-solving stance to their work
 3. Excellent teachers can anticipate, plan, and improve as required by the situation
 4. Excellent teachers are better decision-makers and can identify what decisions are important and which are less.
- B. Excellent teachers guide learning through classroom interaction
 5. Excellent teachers are proficient at creating an optimal classroom climate for learning.
 6. Excellent teachers have a multidimensionally complex perception of classroom situations
- C. Monitoring learning and provide feedback
 8. Excellent teachers are more adept at monitoring student problems and assessing their level of understanding and progress, and provide much more relevant, useful feedback.
 9. Excellent teachers are more adept at developing and testing hypotheses about learning difficulties or instructional strategies.
 10. Excellent teachers are more automatic
- D. Attending to affective attributes
 11. Excellent teachers have high respect for students
 12. Excellent teachers are passionate about teaching and learning
- E. Influencing students outcome
 13. Excellent teachers engage students in learning and develop in their students' self regulation, involvement in mastery learning, enhanced self-efficacy, and self-esteem as learners.
 14. Excellent teachers provide appropriate challenging tasks and goals for students
 15. Excellent teachers have positive influences on students' achievement
 16. Excellent teachers enhance surface and deep learning.

Among the sixteen more observable behaviors, according to Hattie's (2003) research findings, *influencing student outcome's* (see E) component, namely: setting

challenging task is the most significantly effective on the students' learning achievement.

The research findings, presented above, suggests that all the sixteen observable behaviors are performed by excellent teachers, and since they are considered excellent, all of these behaviors are also true to be taken as effective behaviors on promoting the growth of technical skills in the students learning. These behaviors are only possible to be performed by the teachers who have the value or theme as proposed by Achterberg (2009). This means that it is this value that makes it possible for the teaching to be excellent and therefore this value needs special attention in the attempt of developing excellent teachers through teacher education.

THE NOBILITY OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Before coming down to the development of noble teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), the term nobility needs to be reanalyzed from the more specific perspective of teaching English as a foreign language.

Nobility, as elaborated in the previous parts of this paper, is a psychological attributes which is considered as value or theme which derives the teachers to perceive and value the teaching as a noble work and force them to perform excellent or noble teaching. This concept is similar to the concept of nobility, as it is perceived by the writer, in the teaching of EFL and is it is true to consider *nobility* in this context as a value which derives noble teaching of EFL. The only difference is the noble purpose of teaching English as foreign language.

English as foreign language is different from English as a second language (ESL). In a country which treats English as a second language, the people use the language as the second formal language of communication. The language may be used as a means of official communication in some domains, such as in government offices, even in some occasions by some community; this language is used as communication besides official communications. Singapore and also Philippine are good examples of countries using the language as a second language. In a country in which English is used, the situation is very much different. In that context, English is only heard in classroom, mostly when the language is being taught. Even in this context the amount of using language is undeterminable. Most of classroom teaching uses the language frequently mixed with the national language of the students and the composition of the mixture greatly varies from one classroom to the other classroom. A few classrooms are held more in English than in the national language of the students and many, if not most, use the English language less than the national language of the students. A good example of this situation is Indonesia.

The two conditions, automatically cause two different amount of language exposure. In the context of English as a foreign language the English exposure is less than those in the context of English as a second language. Theoretically, the amount of exposure and the frequency of the exposure to be heard is perceived by many language education experts as strongly significant contributor to the success of language mastery. Krashen (1987) claimed that language acquisition will take place if there are a lot of language samples (exposure) exposed to the students in natural setting of communication. This is the basic requirement for the acquisition to take place. Other basic requirement, as proposed by Swain, is the opportunity to use the language as a means of real world communication. Through his output hypothesis, Swain claimed that sufficient amount of input is not very much facilitative if the language learners find

no opportunity to use the language to express themselves in the real communicative context. The opportunity to use the language is very useful in learning the language because it provides the learners with valuable feedbacks which function as a means of making them aware of both the correctness and the wrongness of language use they make and it also provides them the opportunity to improve their language acquisition.

The two hypotheses suggest that the teaching of English in Indonesia is more challenging than that in the country in which the English language is a second language. The English teachers in Indonesia come across with much more difficulties in teaching the language to their students.

The objective of teaching English to Indonesian students is to promote higher acceleration of science and technology. To enable the students or the scholars to achieve this objective, the teaching of English in Indonesian context is focused on the students' reading mastery improvement. Teaching English with the focus on the improvement of reading comprehension skills has its own difficulties which is very distinct from the teaching of Speaking, Listening, or Writing because teaching reading comprehension is not merely a matter of language mastery, but it also deals with the improvement of students horizon or enlargement of contents and with the improvement of students critical thinking ability. However, the quality improvement of students reading comprehension ability must be seriously conducted through the intensive teaching of English, unless the prosperity of this country in terms of the advantageous obtained from the accelerated mastery of Science and Technology will never happen. And it is in this context, the noble purpose of teaching English is obviously perceived, while the difficulties the teaching has require the noble value to perform sustainable quality teaching of English.

Teaching *Reading Comprehension* deals with turning the students to be a critical thinkers who reconstruct the meaning conveyed through written signal of the written texts; not just learning the language, such as the learning of vocabularies and syntactical meaning through the reading activities. Reading comprehension is a cognitive process in which the reconstruction happens. With such theoretical explanation, the job of English teachers even becomes more difficult. Even having the students to be interested in reading never satisfactorily successful, let alone turning them to critical thinkers through reading comprehension activities.

Teaching English is not limited to the teaching of language itself; it includes the teaching of the culture of the native speakers of the language. So teaching English is also teaching the culture of English people. One of the impact of mastering a language, including English, is bettering communicative behavior which is very useful to maintain and improve international relationship. This is another different noble purpose of teaching English in Indonesian context.

Realizing the noble purpose of teaching English as well as the challenging provided by this teaching, Indonesian government through Indonesian educational department have attempted many efforts for the improvement of teaching English to Indonesian students. The most current attempt is teacher certification program. This program is based on two main assumptions, they are: (1) education, included the English education, can be improved if the quality of teacher profession is improved and (2) the improvement can be conducted only if the teachers can be made sufficiently prosperous; having sufficient salary to support their family. Professional quality includes quality pedagogical knowledge, subject matter, academic development which covers the ability to do research and to write scientific writing. This professional quality is improved through portfolio and PLPG (Professional Teacher Training and Education) and to improve the teacher prosperity, the teacher who passes either

portfolio or PLPG will receive salary twice as much as he used to receive. This program has been being done for three years, since 2007 but the improvement of English education seems to fail; no English education improvement has been seen or felt by either the students or the society. So far, this program is considered being successful in improving the teachers' salary which, in fact, does not automatically improve the quality of teaching including the quality of teaching English. This fact suggests that the assumptions underlying this program are wrong and on the other hand this suggests that the psychological attribute known as the nobility of teaching in this discussion is regarded as becoming stronger contributor of learning achievement.

Noble teachers, included English teachers, as presented in the previous parts, have foundational skills of real classroom teaching, classroom management and subject matter knowledge - and these have been successfully achieved, at least by the results of the achievement test administered in the certification program - but these are not sufficient to make the teachers' nobility of teaching. A few of psychological attributes should be met by the teacher who has had the foundational skills or technical competences in order to be a noble teacher and this psychological attribute is known to be nobility, which is elaborated in the field of teaching as proposed by Vallane (2000), they are: love students with an affection and personal commitment to the benefit of their students.

Teacher certification program is not unimportant since this program has successfully achieved the foundational skills or technical competences, but other foundational efforts should be conducted in order to foster the deriving value of noble behavior of teaching English as a foreign language.

EDUCATING NOBLE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In educating one to be a teacher of English as a foreign language, there are some factors to deal with seriously, they are: (1) setting the purpose of the education, (2) deciding the teaching materials or curriculum, (3) designing educational activities enabling the student teachers to achieve the predetermined purpose and (4) administering evaluation to ensure the achievement of the purpose.

The purpose of the education proposed here is to enable the student teachers to be a noble teachers of English as a foreign language. The concept of the *noble teacher* has been thoroughly elaborated in the previous part of this paper and here, again, the elaboration is presented in very short form. The noble teacher of English as a foreign language consists of two core concept, namely (1) to foster noble commitment and love in the student teachers' hearths for their teaching and students and also for sustaining their country through the empowerment of young generations educated by them as noble teachers. and (2) mastery of foundational knowledge and skills.

To achieve the purpose the first step to do is to determine the curriculum (the instructional materials). The curriculum should contain foundational knowledge of a teacher, they are (a) English Language, both good command of language skills and deep knowledge of linguistics as well as its philosophy (b) pedagogical knowledge which covers both its deep and philosophical aspects as well as its practical matters and (c) academic development ability and skills. All of these curricular materials are

fostered into the student teachers' minds through effective and strategic educational activities which consists of three main educational activities, namely (1) classroom theoretical teaching and discussion, (2) real classroom teaching practice preceded by micro teaching, and (3) reflection on the results of the teaching practice as well as student-student and student-lecturer discussions of each student's reflection.

The proportion between theoretical lecture and teaching practice is fifty to fifty percents (fifty percent for theoretical lecture and fifty for the practice). In addition, the operation between these activities is arranged interactively or interchangeably not consecutively and the reflective activities is inserted in the two types of activity.

In comparison to the current practice of EFL teacher education, the education proposed in this article is different in some aspects. They are different in terms of time allocation. The time allocated to both theoretical lecture and teaching practice is more in the proposed one than that allocated in the current practice. Reflective activities as well as the interchangeability between theoretical lecture and teaching practice are not practiced in the current education of EFL teachers but it is in the proposed one. The educational practices as proposed in this article are believed to enable a student teacher to be knowledgeable in English, teaching and academic development, as well as enable him or her to put all these knowledge into effective practice, namely into effective teaching of English as a foreign language.

The EFL teacher education proposed above must be designed from a specific philosophical stance. Mostly, the EFL teacher education is based on cognitive assumption in which learning is perceived as an internal psychological process isolated in the mind of the learner and largely free from the social and physical contexts within which it occurs. This has been the common practice in the EFL teacher education since the half past century (Jhonson, 2009). The education model has suffered from vocal critics, which mostly complain that the nature of learning on which the EFL education is based is oversimplified, depersonalized, and decontextualized and finally it is proved to be ineffective and producing unsatisfactory EFL teachers.

Learning, included the learning of teaching, according to the sociocultural perspectives, is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from the external, socially mediated activity to internal mediation control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and activity. Thus, cognitive development is not simply a matter of enculturation or even appropriation of existing sociocultural resources and practices, but the reconstruction and transformation of those resources and practices in ways that are responsive both to individual and local needs. How an individual learns something, what is learned, and how it is used will depend on the sum of the individual's prior experiences, the sociocultural contexts in which the learning takes place, and what the individual wants, needs, and/or is expected to do with the knowledge ((Jhonson, 2009). This means that *learning* is making relationship between human mental functioning, and cultural, institutional, and historical situation in which this functioning occurs. Therefore it is claimed that human cognition is formed through engagement in social activities, that is social relationship and culturally constructed materials, signs, symbols that mediate those relationships that create uniquely human forms of higher-thinking. So, cognitive development is an interactive process, mediated by culture, context, language, and social interaction.

The proposed EFL teacher education should be based on this philosophical assumption. This assumption is exactly like *value* in the human behavior. How human beings behave is directed and governed by the value believed by them. In the same

way, the philosophical assumption will direct, determine and govern all the behaviors of all the participants of the activity, namely the EFL teacher education.

The sociocultural perspectives suggest that the EFL teacher learning is not simply resulted from direct effect of educational activities designed for and experienced by the student teachers, but is also resulted from the whole experiences related to the education in wider scope and aspects, such as experiences obtained from other social institution and cultural practices. So to take this perspective as its underlying assumptions means that the other social institutions should also be designed as the learning resources which is in line with the purpose the EFL teachers education. It is only in this way that a noble EFL teachers can be produced.

CONCLUSIONS

The nobility of teaching EFL is the representation of a noble EFL teachers' love, commitment and calling to the EFL teaching in the form of real classroom teaching behaviors that the students could enjoy and by which the improvement of the students' human resource quality can be easily achieved. Developing EFL teachers of this type cannot be merely based on the success of making the EFL students master the foundational knowledge and skills (English proficiency, linguistic knowledge and pedagogical knowledge as well as teaching practice skills) but should also be based on the success of fostering love and commitment to the profession as well as making them realize that the EFL teaching is a calling for them and believe that through the nobility of EFL teaching they pose themselves as determinant contributors of the successful succession from the old generation to the young generation. Comprehensive, well theoretically framed and suitably philosophically based design of both EFL teacher education and other social institution in the society can ensure the achievement of these objectives. Other activities or attempts for the quality improvement of the EFL teachers, which may be unrelated to or away from the scheme proposed here are doubtfully seen to be successful. An example of this attempt currently conducted is teacher certification and it has shown some significant indication of failure. In line with the philosophical concept of learning and knowledge proposed from the perspective of socioculture, the development of noble EFL teachers must no be the responsibility of educational department only but also of the other governmental departments in charge of other social institution development.



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Sekilas tentang penulis : Prof. Dr. Berlin Sibarani, M.Pd. adalah dosen pada jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris FBS dan sekarang menjabat sebagai Pembantu Rektor 4 Unimed.

