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ISSN 2598-991X (ONLINE)

# IJEMD



**INDONESIAN  
JOURNAL OF  
EDUCATION  
METHODS  
DEVELOPMENT**

**UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SIDOARJO**

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## **Fastering Humanistic Language Teaching**

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### **Abstract**

***Language teaching systems (especially in Indonesia) are generally still dominative. Teachers still dominate teaching process, both regarding the communication pattern, material presentation, and evaluation system used. In fact, education experts, such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire, emphasize the importance of developing a humanistic teaching climate. In this teaching climate, teachers place students as human beings who prepare their future critically and creatively. Teachers' domination means killing students' criticality and creativity. Humanization of language teaching can be represented in various aspects of teaching, including in the process of preparing teaching materials, processes, and evaluation.***

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Published date: 2019-05-20 00:00:00

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## Introduction

Taufik Ismail in his lecture on the Postgraduate Program of the State University of Malang, March 1999, concluded, "Our nation is now myopic reading, paralyzed writing." The fact shows that students' language skills and even students in Indonesia are still low. In general, their reading speed is still very low. To just read a book with 100 pages, they take days. Even if measured the level of understanding is still far below from the average. In addition, they also still have difficulties in expressing their feelings, thoughts, or findings in the paper. Apparently, their writing ability is also no better than other language skills. What is the language ability of students and university students in Malaysia? Attendees certainly can answer that question based on data from the study results.

We who are engaged in language teaching should ask why it happened. In fact, language teaching has been given since elementary education to college. In fact, language teaching in schools has a time considerable allocation when compared to other subjects. In addition, changes in the curriculum we have done and various teacher upgrades have been projected. In Indonesia, several curricula have been applied. What is the change in the language education curriculum in Malaysia?

The 1975 curriculum is often used as a scapegoat to accuse the failure cause of language teaching in Indonesia. The curriculum is considered too stressed on language knowledge, not language skills. As a result, students understand the grammar, but lack language skills. The presence of the 1984

Curriculum with its functional approach is expected to change the situation. However, the use of curriculum to be refined into the 1994 curriculum also did not change the situation. Pre-university students and university students still find it difficult to express their thoughts or ideas in Indonesian, especially in written language. Now, the improved 2013 Curriculum is coming into effect. Will the teaching outcomes of the application of this curriculum show the same symptoms as some of the curricula that having been applied in this country?

We, who are involved in education, certainly cannot leave our hands on the facts above. Bukhori (2002) states that the conditions that occur above cannot be separated from the implementation of education in schools. Basically, schools are formal institutions directly involved with improving human quality. Schools have "shares" in the process of improving human resource quality. Therefore, it is a natural that schools also take responsibility for the low quality of Indonesian human resources.

Related to this, a number of experts began to link the low quality of language education with the teaching climate that had been carried out. teaching is more commanded by the central government. Regions seem to be merely implementing central government's will. In fact, we live in a country that is very large and diverse, both in terms of ethnicity, language, and cultures. Degeng (2001) came to one conclusion: a centralistic, monolithic, and uniformity mindset colored teaching packaging. This is a systemic barrier to teaching revolution. Therefore, he expressly stated to say goodbye to uniformity, but welcome diversity.

Even though it is still hypothetical, analysis should be considered by following up on ideas that might contribute to thinking. One of the paradigms worthy of being said is a humanistic teaching system. For this reason, this paper tries to present humanistic teaching ideas in the context of language teaching. For more detail, this paper is described about (a) humanistic teaching nature, (b) humanistic teaching implications in selecting teaching material context, process, and assessment.

## Humanistic Teaching Rights

In essence, humanistic teaching is a teaching system that treats students based on their rights and obligations as students who are providing themselves to face their future critically and creatively. Humanistic teaching wherever possibly avoids the process of teacher domination that tends to build uniformity and deny diversity. Therefore, humanist teaching puts forward critical, creative, and dialogical thoughts. This is represented in the various implementation of education and teaching, both in preparing teaching material process, teaching process, and assessment implementation.

John Dewey in his book *Democracy and Education* (1916) laid the foundations of humanistic education. The core of his thinking is that classes should mirror a wider society and serve as a laboratory for teaching real life. Therefore, in the teaching process, teachers should develop a social teaching environment characterized by democratic procedures and scientific processes. Teacher's responsibility is to motivate students to learn cooperatively and think about the importance of social problems. In addition to efforts to understand problems in their small groups, students learn the principles of democracy through daily interactions among others.

In Freire's (2000) terminology, this humanistic education is termed liberating education which is usually contrasted with education that is shackled or dominative. In shackling education there is a dichotomy between teachers who do manipulative actions and manipulated students; whereas in education that frees no liberating subject and freed objects because there is no dichotomy between subject and object. Shackling education is prescriptive, while liberating education is dialogical. Shackling education is transferring knowledge, while free education is an effort to acquire knowledge and transformation process tested in real life.

Freire (2000) calls education that is shackled as a bank education. Characteristics of education style include: (a) the teacher

teaches, students learn, (b) the teacher knows everything, students know nothing, (c) the teacher thinks, students think, (d) the teacher speaks, students listen, (e) the teacher arranges, students organize, (f) the teacher chooses and forces his choices, students obey, (g) the teacher acts, students imagine how to act in the same as the teacher's actions, (h) the teacher chooses what is taught, students adjust, (i) the teacher disrupts the authority of science with his professional authority, and contrasts with students' freedom, and (j) the teacher is the subject of teaching process, the students are the object.

Otherwise, free education offers humanistic teaching. This education system places students as individuals who have diverse desires and characteristics. For this reason, in this education system, teaching process carried out in the classroom gives students the freedom to actually recognize and capture critical and creative life. In humanistic education system, teaching is not reduced to an effort to equate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Classroom teaching is seen as a process of empowering students through science. Therefore, it is natural that in the process there will be different opinions or views.

According to Freire (2000) teaching is actually a process to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes. For that reason, in teaching process the subject must use a scientifically approach to communicate with the world so that it can explain the reality correctly. So actually, knowing this is not the same as remembering. In this context, it is justified that there is a synthesis of teacher and student knowledge through dialogue. The teacher's role is to explain the problem of existential situation that has been codified to help students to have a more critical and creative view of the reality. Philosophically, teacher's responsibility places himself more as a friend of students' dialogue than just moving information that must be remembered by students.

## Implications In Humanistic Language Teaching

### Implications in Selecting Teaching Materials

So far, language teaching in Indonesian schools tends to be very dominant. How is language teaching in Malaysia? In the context of selecting teaching materials, for example, it is rarely or perhaps never based on the results of an analysis of student needs. Materials presented in the classroom are the result of experts' assumption, curriculum designers, and teachers on the needs of students. In fact, in modern language teaching, teaching material is usually adjusted to student's need (see Nunan, 1999). In fact, it is not just teaching material that must be based on student's needs, but also the tasks they must do, the teaching strategies that will be used, and the evaluation system that will be applied. Thus, in humanistic teaching, determination of things is not unilateral, but is adjusted to student's needs and desires.

Because it is not based on students' needs, Indonesian language teaching material in schools is often boring. The same material is given to the same students at different levels of school. Is this not boring?

Besides being boring, the above impacts are not the same as the constructivist perspective. In a constructivist perspective, teaching will be effective if selected teaching material related to the knowledge students already have. The connection will generate students' schemata of teaching material they will get. Therefore, language teaching material should be harmonized with student's needs and environment.

Teaching materials based on student's needs have at least three benefits. First, teaching material based on students' needs will make teaching more meaningful. What we teach in class is what students really need, not something redundant because students don't need it. Why don't they need it? Maybe because they have mastered the material, or maybe it doesn't feel useful to them. Meaningful teaching material as far as possible avoids wastefulness, waste of time and energy.

Second, material that is based on needs can generate students' motivation in following the teaching process. In teaching psychological study, it was revealed that students would feel happy teaching something they really needed. Thus, fulfilling their needs is an alternative way to generate their motivation get into teaching process. In this context, various complaints that are often raised against the low motivation of students to learn Indonesian so far may be minimized by promoting Indonesian language teaching based on students' needs.

Third, teaching based on student's needs has benefits which in terms of education are called as an accompaniment impact. Getting used to teaching that is based on students' needs will indirectly give an example to them in human life. They are given an example of an attitude to respect other people's will, not to force their will when facing many people's will. This kind of escort effect is often forgotten in teaching process in this country. Therefore, it is only natural that teaching product produces humans who tend to be authoritarian who find it difficult to respect other's opinions and rights, it is difficult to respect diversity, to regard the group as the right and the most superior.

Regarding this need analysis, the experts are quite diverse in determining student's needs. Retcherich and Chancerel (in Nunan, 1999) divide the need for two types, namely *objective* and *subjective needs*. Objective needs are the needs that can be diagnosed by the teacher based on analyzing students' personal data, their language skills, and patterns of language use. Nunan (1999) prefers to sort out student's needs for two types, namely *content requirements* and *process needs*. Content requirements include selecting and sorting things such as topics, grammar, functions, thoughts, and vocabulary - which are traditionally a field of syllabus design - while the process needs refer to selecting and sorting of teaching and experience tasks - traditionally seen as a methodology field.

In addition, Nunan (ibid) distinguishes initial need analysis and ongoing need analysis. Initial need analysis is carried out before teaching begins. But unfortunately, in the context of Indonesian language teaching, this is not teacher's responsibility



because it has been determined by the curriculum designer. Ongoing need analysis refers to analysis that is relatively often informal and implemented by the teacher as soon as teaching has begun.

Analysis of student needs can be done by using a questionnaire that contains the points of students' attitudes, previous teaching experiences, their initial abilities, and what abilities they want to achieve. The results of this analysis can be combined with the facts of language use in the community so that the teaching material really becomes a material by Ellis (1994) as a *language use*, not just *language usage*.

Teaching based on need analysis may not all be applied in our curriculum system. As we know, our curriculum system is highly structured. It means that every teaching material is top-down, not based on students' real needs. However, in author's opinion, it can still be dealt with. For example, before the initial teaching of semester begins, the teachers make a questionnaire or other instrument that is useful for knowing the desire and initial provision of knowledge or students' language skills. The instrument results are combined with the basic competencies required in curriculum. At the very least, this method can bridge material required in the curriculum with the material that students really need. The percentage of teaching materials based on students' needs should be directly proportional to their education level.

## Implications in the Teaching Process

As explained before, humanistic teaching places teachers as dialogue partners with students. teaching is not transfer, but generative. Related to this, Slavin (2000) states that one of the most important principles of educational psychology is that teachers cannot merely provide knowledge to students. Students must build knowledge in their own minds. Teachers can assist this process with ways of teaching that make information very meaningful and highly relevant to students, and provide opportunities for students to find or apply ideas themselves and by inviting students to realize and consciously use their own strategies for teaching. Metaphorically it can be said that teachers can provide a ladder to help students achieve a higher level of understanding. In the implementation, it must be endeavored so that the students themselves climb the ladder.

The description above suggests that language teaching in class should not be dominated. Teachers guide students to achieve the teaching objectives they want. This kind of teaching system is often called student-centered teaching (student-centered instruction). In a student-centered classroom, teacher's role is to help students find facts, concepts, or principles for themselves, rather than giving lectures or controlling all classroom activities. In this context, the teacher must strive for students to actively learn, both through interaction with the teacher, teaching materials, environment, classmates, and others.

Apparently, cooperative teaching is the right choice to build humanistic Indonesian teaching. Humanistic educator, Dewey (1964), firmly stated that teacher's primary responsibility is motivating students to work cooperatively. Besides solving problems in their small groups, students learn the principles of democracy through day-to-day interactions each other. This can be created because in cooperative teaching there is positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, and skills to establish interpersonal relationships or social skills deliberately taught.

There are several cooperative teaching methods that can be applied in language teaching, including STAD method (*Student Teams Achievement Division*); jigsaw method, GI (*group investigation*) method, and structural method (which includes *thing-pair-share* method and *numbered head together* method). The use of each method must be adjusted to the characteristics of basic competencies to be achieved, teaching materials, student characteristics, and teaching facilities.

Cooperative teaching is the same as constructivist teaching paradigm. Many modern constructivist ideas are based on Vygotsky's theory, which has been used to support teaching methods that emphasize cooperative teaching. The key principles derived from his theory have played an important role. Its emphasis is teaching social reality. He stated that students learn through interaction with adults and more capable peers. In cooperative teaching, students are faced with the process of thinking their peers; this method not only makes teaching outcomes open to all students, but also makes other students' thinking processes open to all students (check Slavin, 2000).

According to Ibrahim et al. (2000), basic elements of cooperative teaching are as follows: (a) students in their group must assume that they are "living together as a group.", (B) students are responsible for everything in their group, as their own, (c) students must see that all members in the group have the same purpose, (d) students must share the same duties and responsibilities among members of group, (e) students will be as subject to the assessment or given prizes / awards that will also be charged for all group members, (f) students share leadership and need skills to learn together during the teaching process, and (g) students will be asked to account individually for the material handled in co-operative group.

If we pay attention on it, cooperative teaching has a number of advantages. These advantages are of course when associated with other methods. According to Ibrahim et al. (ibid) at least cooperative teaching has three advantages, namely advantage related to academic teaching outcomes, acceptance of individual differences, and development of social skills. Regarding teaching outcomes, cooperative teaching improves student performance in academic tasks. Some experts argue that this model is really good to help students understand difficult concepts. Model developers have shown that cooperative reward structure model has increased students' assessment of academic teaching and changes in norms related to teaching outcomes.

The second advantage of cooperative teaching is broad acceptance of people from different family, culture, social class, abilities, and disability. Goldon and Allport (in Ibrahim et al., 2000) put forward the premise that only physical contact

between people in different background or ethnic groups is not enough to reduce suspicion and differences in ideas. Cooperative teaching provides opportunities for students with different backgrounds and conditions to work interdependently each other on shared tasks, and through the use of cooperative reward structures, teaching to respect each other. Thus, cooperative teaching is an effective means of educating students' humanistic behavior. If this premise is held, it seems that macro language teaching can be used to prevent bloodshed due to ethnic conflict and interests.

In addition, cooperative teaching excels at developing social skills through cooperation and collaboration. It is very important to have in a society that socially needs people and works together. But unfortunately, this slackness is not much developed in language teaching. In fact, if this advantage can be achieved, perhaps a small conflict between students and other forms of disputes can be avoided.

## Implications in the Assessment Process

In teaching process, including language teaching, assessment is not a rare term. At least, at the end of a teaching program assessment is usually done. There are various types of assessments. Each type has a certain function. If it is related to the implementation of teaching process, assessment can be used to see the achievement of teaching outcomes or the effective implementation of teaching process.

In the process of language teaching, assessment can be divided into two, assessments that lead to products and assessments that lead to the process (check Nunan, 1999). Assessment that leads to the product tends to see the achievement of teaching outcomes in the final result, which is usually done through a test instrument; while the assessment that leads to the process of seeing the achievement of teaching outcomes is not solely from the end result, but also from the process of achievement.

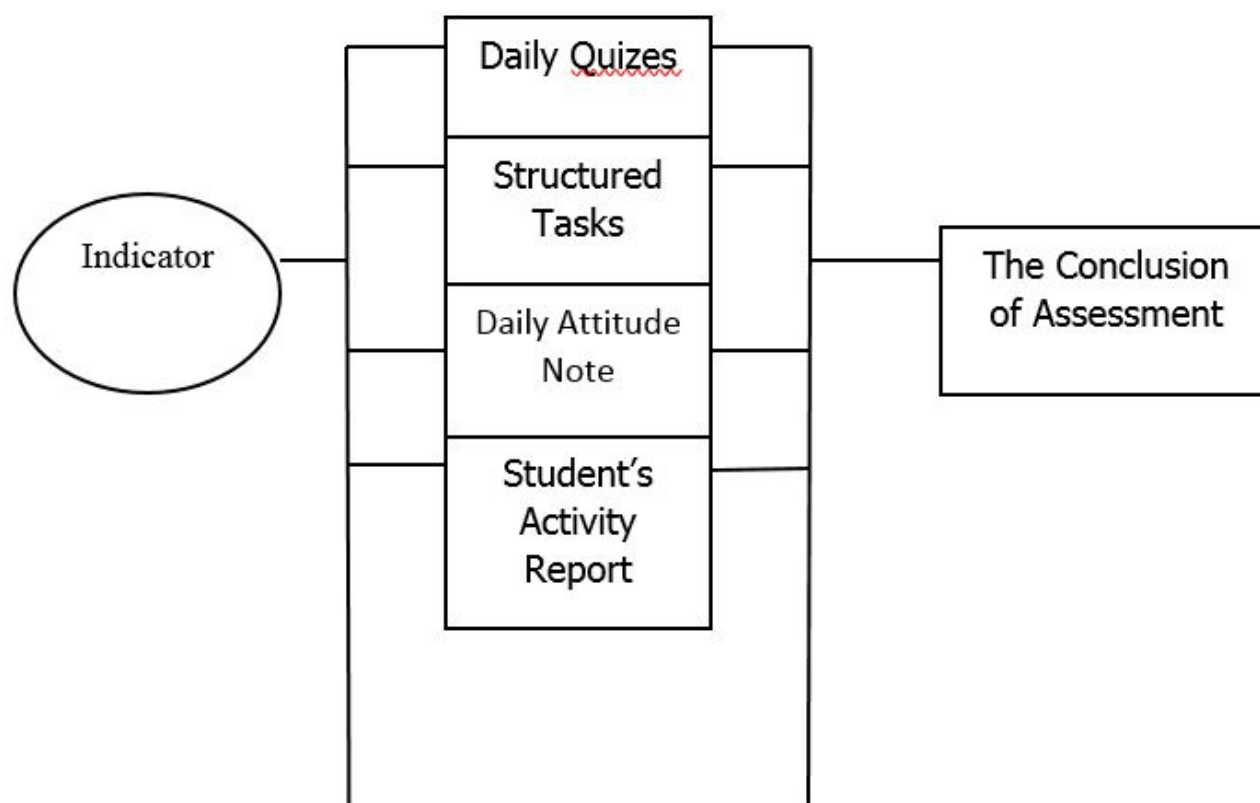
In general, assessments in the process of teaching Indonesian in our schooling tend to lead to product appraisal, and it is least towards the assessment of process. Ironically, the final result determines the "fate" of our students. Students' fate determined by the results of national examinations is a concrete example in a product-oriented assessment system. The assessment developed with this system is clearly dominant, lacks respect for teaching process. "Fate" children tend to be sentenced from the final performance, regardless of how they work.

Assessments that emphasize products tend to be authoritarian and have weaknesses. Why? In essence, assessment is not only done for a moment, but periodic and continuity. In addition, assessment not only estimates a partial achievement, but must assess something in a comprehensive way that includes the process and result of growth and development of insight into knowledge, attitudes, and language skills achieved by students. Therefore, to determine a person does not reach the target that is demanded not only from instantaneous results, for example taken from the final exam score. It could happen that someone in the process has good performance, but because his health is not good, at the time of the exam he will get a bad grade. It doesn't seem right to sentence students not to take classes because of failing the final exam, even though in their daily achievements they are very good.

In the latest teaching system, the assessment of student's teaching outcomes is not only determined by the final results, but also by the process (check Nunan, 1999). This assessment system is usually called *authentic assessment*. In this assessment system, assessment is carried out during and after teaching process takes place; assessment can be used by teachers for formative and summative; what is measured is skill and performance, not remembering facts; continuity characters; integrated; and can be used as feedback (see Nurhadi et al., 2004: 53).

Hill et al. (1998) in his book *Classroom Based Assessment* actually emphasizes the assessment of processes. They emphasize portfolio assessment. Therefore, teaching achievement results are recorded from various instruments, such as teacher records, anecdotes, journals, information from parents, in addition to the final product of student's performance.

Portfolio assessment is based on indicators of teaching achievement from a number of notes or documents. Budimansyah (2002) states that portfolio assessments can be based on notes or documents: (a) the results of daily tests and general replications noted in students' report, (b) structured tasks are usually collected by the teacher and stored in a special program for student duties, (c) student's daily behavior record is usually stored in a special book called anecdotal notes, and (d) reports of student activities outside of school that support teaching activities, usually collected by teachers and subsequently documented. If it is actualized, the indicator is shown in [Figure 1](#) below.



**Figure 1.** *Indicators of Achieving teaching Outcomes*

From Figure 1 above, it appears that the conclusions of assessment are based on a number of achievement indicators of teaching outcomes. Assessment results are only one indicator that will be used to construct the overall conclusion system. Thus, language assessors who only rely on the results of replications are categorized as a dominant language teaching system.

If it is used appropriately, portfolio evaluation has a number of advantages. Barton and Collins (1997: 9) describe the following advantages.

- a. Portfolios provide opportunities for teachers or students to communicate teaching outcomes after or during the teaching process in the classroom.
- b. Portfolios allow teachers to see students' work based on the context. Portfolios display the structure for each part and proof of contents. This structure allows the teacher to see how each part of the student's teaching is aligned into the big picture of teaching plan that teachers have prepared.
- c. Portfolios will stimulate a change in each student's teaching rights. Students will learn how to make decisions about the quality and usefulness of their respective work, and they can lead to a strong meaning from personal completion.
- d. Portfolios will help teachers create a forum for students to communicate their ideas in a supportive environment. These interactions will help students in showing themselves.
- e. Portfolios will be able to help you be a better teacher. Portfolio process will encourage teachers to constantly pay attention to what your students really want to accomplish. It is a challenge for teachers to try new ways to design these achievements.

## Conclusion

Educational thinkers like Dewey have long reminded us that schools should be as a miniature of a wider society. If we think about it, this warning has very broad implications. Whatever they do at school will have an influence on the quality of a society.

But unfortunately, this warning we often ignore in teaching process. We who are engaged in the world of education, including language teaching, often design and conduct dominative teaching so as not to give the widest opportunity to

students to be themselves who want to look at the future critically and creatively. Therefore, if the quality of human resources in this country wants to increase, the teaching paradigm must be changed: from dominative education to humanistic education.

Educational awareness level can be represented in many ways, especially in preparing teaching materials, teaching methods, and evaluation systems used. In the context of preparing teaching materials, humanistic language teaching is based on the analysis of student needs, not merely based on the assumptions of curriculum designers. In teaching process, linguistic teachers deserve to use cooperative teaching methods. Through this method, teachers not only can improve students' language performance, but also equip them not to be allergic to differences so they are accustomed to respecting others. Meanwhile, related to the evaluation system, linguistic teachers should not only rely on product evaluation systems, but also process evaluation.

## Acknowledgments

This author thanks to Faculty of Teacher and Educational Science and Lambung Mangkurat University for support and collaboration in investigation process.

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