

Integrating 21st Century Skill into EYL Class: A New Ideal Course Design and Planning for EYL Class

Erik Yuda Pratama

English Education Study Program
Ibn Khaldun University of Bogor

Abstract

The economical, political, business and social challenges faced by the world today demand the 21st century skill-integrated as the main aspect that must be mastered by every child nowadays. This paper explores some important aspects related to integrating the 21st century skill into EYL class. Included in the discussion of this essay are the framework of 21st century skill, the 21st century curriculum, and designing appropriate syllabus for 21st century education suitable for EYL classroom, such as project-based syllabus and theme-based syllabus. This paper also describes several ICT media tool that can be used to promote our children 21st century skill, such as cartoon story maker (computer software) and kidblog (online blogging).

Keywords: 21st Century skill, EYL, Course design and planning.

INTRODUCTION

The economical, political, business and social challenges faced by the world today demand the 21st century skill-integrated as the main aspect that must be mastered by every child nowadays (Partnership for 21st Century Skill, 2008). According to UN (cited in Seamolec Online Course Module 2, 2006), the challenge of the education in the 21st century is developing knowledge-based society who owns:

1. ICT-media and literacy skill
2. Critical thinking skill
3. Creative thinking skill
4. Effective communication skill
5. Collaborative skill

Consequently, the educators have to organize the powerful vision of the 21st framework in teaching and learning activity in order to guarantee every child's success as the citizen and worker in the 21st century era (Partnership for 21st Century Skill, 2008).

In the 21st century skills' framework of education, English is classified as one of the core subjects

(Seamolec Online Course Module 2, 2006) which is functioned as a gate to the world of knowledge and a tool to acquire the information from the multiple sources included website, e-book, e-journal, etc. For that reason, English is a primary requirement to be taught not only for adult learners but also for young learners. As stated by Slattery and Willis (2001), cited in Hakim (2011), English is being provided into initial classroom, such as Kindergarten and Elementary school, so that the teachers are needed to teach it into young learners.

Leaning on that statement, Wilson (2003) and Alianello (2004) categorized young learners as students from ages three to eight years. In contrast, Pinter (2006) argues that young learner is a group of learners from five to fifteen years old. However, Pinter (2006) bears a principle that the age of categorization is not a crucial aspect in teaching language to young learners. The main important aspect in teaching to young learners should be started from the consideration that every child is unique and there is a cultural difference among them (Pinter, 2006).

Moreover, Harmer (2007) cited in Alwasilah (2012) mentions several characteristics of young learners as follows: 1). They respond to the meaning if they do not understand; 2). They often learn indirectly rather than directly, 3). Their understanding comes not just from what they see and hear, and crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with; 4). They find abstract concept such as grammar rules difficult to grasp; 5). They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and curiosity about the world around them; 6). They have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher; 7). They are keen to talk about themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom; 8). They have a limited attention span unless activities are extremely engaging, they can get easily bored.

Based on those classifications, various interactive teaching activities should be designed to maintain the children motivation to learn English and to guide them to obtain the 21st century skills. One of the main elements in making successfully teaching and learning for young learners in the 21st century era is integrating ICT media into practical classroom activities. Hence, teachers should be able to use ICT media for numerous activities throughout the curriculum bearing the teaching and learning of the subject in order to meet the ideal situation in the 21st century education (Becta, 2010). To this relation, curriculum and syllabus for teaching to young learners should include model for appropriate learning activities that achieve the 21st century skills outcomes in order to help them to create a chance in succeeding college, life, and career (Partnership for 21st Century Skill, 2008).

In conjunction with the statement, school's curriculum and syllabus instructional planning should facilitate the students to learn in an innovative environment promoted by the use of

advance technology (Partnership for 21st Century Skill, 2008).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The 21st Century Curriculum for EYL Class

Curriculum can be defined as educational design which explores about the educational purpose of the programs and other main components of curriculum involved content, methodology, and evaluation (Richards, Platt and Platt 1993, Allen cited in Nunan, 2006, see also White, 1993). In the 21st century education framework, the core concept of curriculum blends thinking and innovation skills, ICT literacy, and life career skills in context of core academic subjects and across interdisciplinary themes (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005). It also comprises methods of 21st century instruction that integrate innovative and research-proven teaching strategies, modern learning technologies, and real world resources and contexts.

Therefore, the concepts of 21st curriculum must be employed in every syllabus of the school subject. In English language teaching, 21st syllabus not only contains a content of teaching instruction, method, and learning objectives for teaching language (Krhanke, 1987, Lee, 1980, Dubin & Olshtain, 1997) but also includes the elements of the 21st century skills (Becta, 2010). This framework should also be implemented in any syllabus courses of English teaching including English to young learners.

To this relation, it is worth voting to what Bourke (2006) concludes, which particularly dealing with the syllabus for teaching to young learners. In his explanation, the best type of syllabus for teaching English to young learners is one which can make the children to master the target language within the acquisition-poor environment of the classroom. Moreover, Bourke (2006)

explains that language teaching should relate children with their world. Therefore, the teachers and educators should make sure that the syllabus for teaching young learners should contain:

- Topics of interest to children
- Stories of all kind
- Games and fun activities
- Doing and making activities
- Songs, chants, and rhymes
- Pairworks and groupworks tasks
- Big Books
- Materials from the web
- Children's literature
- Any activity that brings acquisition into the classroom.

Therefore, some appropriate model of syllabus can possibly be developed for teaching English to young learner in this 21st century era are Theme-Based Syllabus and Project-Based Syllabus.

Topical-Based Syllabus

The concept of teaching using topical-based is simple. It is the teaching of a topic or information of the language in the language being taught by the teacher with little or no direct attempt to teach the language independently from the context being taught (Krahnke, 1987). The acquisition theory that accounts for learning without explicit instruction is a learning theory related to the topical-based instruction (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrel, 1983).

Most of modern schools today implement this model of syllabus in language teaching, especially in teaching young learner, with the purpose of facilitating the students to comprehend the element of language (Pinter, 2006). Topical-based seems to be most successful to teach young children (California State Board of Education, 1984).

In line with that statement, Pinter (2006) also explains topical-based may indeed benefit for teaching to young learners for several reasons; 1). Topic-

based syllabus is beneficial and meaningful because all new learning experiences are deeply rooted in the same theme and children; 2). Children can see the link between various learning tasks and areas of learning.

Based on those benefits, this topical-based model is definitely relevance with the situation and the condition in this 21st century era. On the other words, this model is relevant with the 21st century education framework which insists the teacher to relate the students with their own world.

Project-Based Syllabus

PBL means that students investigate rich and challenging issues and topics, often in the context of real world problems. Students generate ideas and provide explanations. PBL uses activities that the learners have to do for non instructional purposes outside of the classroom as a chance for language learning (Krahnke, 1987).

Further, Krahnke (1987) bears that the intent of PBL learning is to use learners' real-life needs and activities as learning experiences offering motivation through immediacy and relevancy.

In the 21st century education, PBL models may also include other aspects of 21st century instruction such as the use of interdisciplinary content, and cooperative learning groups. PBL increases students' active engagement with content, as well as their capacity for self-directed learning, collaboration, and social interaction.

Blended Syllabus (From Topic to Project)

Hudelson (1991) mentions four basics principle of learning and language learning that are surrounded in a topic-based/project-based syllabus:

1. Young learners are in the 'concrete operations' stage of cognitive development. This means that they learn through

hands-on experiences. It follows that in language classes children 'need to be active rather than passive; they need to be engaged in activities of which language is a part; they need to be working on meaningful tasks and use language to accomplish those tasks'.

2. In a group situation some members know more than others. Those who know less can learn from those who know more. Hence, children need to interact with and learn from each other. Teachers too need to interact with the children in order to challenge them to go beyond their present level of expression. This kind of contextual support is known as 'scaffolding' (Ellis 1997, p. 48).
3. Acquisition is a discovery process. Learners have to figure out how the language works. 'In terms of the classroom context, an implication is that learners need opportunities to use and to experiment with the new language.' Learners must be free to make errors so they can re-structure their emerging language system.
4. Acquisition occurs through social interaction. Meaning is constructed jointly as learners work together and exchange messages. They need to talk to each other in order to negotiate meaning.

Meanwhile, the design of topical syllabus is practically straightforward which is not aimed to give children all available information, yet rather to use the topic as a framework of instructional scaffolding in order to guide the children to explore certain aspect of a particular

topic and the language related to it (Bourke, 2006). The topics discussed in the lesson are then formulated into the task that children engage in. This blended syllabus is very suitable in giving variety of the lesson to the 21st century children. However, the aim of the 21st century learning is to make children to be active learners (Partnership for 21st Century Skill, 2008). Therefore, they can be able to produce, find, synthesize, and manipulate the information from the multiple sources.

ICT-Media Tool that can be Used to Promote Our Children 21st Century Skills

In the 21st century education framework, schools should facilitate the students to learn in an innovative environment promoted by the use of advance technology (Partnership for 21st Century Skill, 2008). ICT media can be also used to promote our children 21st century skills.

According Seamolec Online Course Module 2 (2006), ICT resources available can be classified into: 1). Instructional software skill; drill and practice, tutorial, simulation, instructional games, problem-solving courseware; 2). Productivity tool; word processing, spreadsheet, database, desktop publishing, data collecting tools, concept mapping tools, music editors and synthesizers, and modeling tools. One of the examples media for this learning model is Cartoon Story Maker; 3). Multimedia and hypermedia; 4). Internet which provides several online activities such as blogging, social media for teaching and learning activities i.e. Edmodo, Twitter, Facebook, Blackboard, etc.

Further, Seamolec Online Course Modul 1 (2006) explains that successful implementation ICT media-based model learning will be indeed useful in increasing the quality of teaching and

learning process and in developing the 21st skills of the students.

COMMENT

The economical, political, business and social challenges faced by the world today demand the 21st century skill-integrated as the main aspect that must be mastered by every child nowadays. One of the important aspects that may lead to the changes in education today is the emergence of ICT media as a tool to contribute a good education and to help every child to acquire the 21st century skills. The emergence of ICT media also contributes to the shifting and changes in school's curriculum and syllabus instructional planning which should be designed in accordance with the 21st century education framework. In teaching and learning activities, the school and educator should facilitate the children to learn in an innovative environment promoted by the use of advance technology.

Technology-pedagogy integration becomes the main important issue in the 21st century education. Unfortunately, one of the main problems in teaching and learning process in our country is that most teachers cannot be able to integrate ICT into learning process. In fact, ICT takes a crucial part in building and developing the 21st century skills of the children.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st century skills' framework of education, English is classified as one of the core subjects which is functioned as a gate to the world of knowledge and a tool to acquire the information from the multiple sources included website, e-book, e-journal, etc. For that reason, English is a primary requirement to be taught not only for adult learners but also for young learners. English is being provided into initial classroom, such as Kindergarten and

Elementary school, so that the teachers are needed to teach it into young learners

Topical-based syllabus and project-based syllabus are the appropriate model of syllabus suggested by experts in teaching English to 21st century children. In teaching and learning activities, those models of syllabus can be blended together as a way to acquire the 21st century skills. Further, the blended syllabus for young learners must also be supported with the technological pedagogy. Successful implementation ICT media-based model learning will be indeed useful in increasing the quality of teaching and learning process and in developing the 21st skills of the students.

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