

## **Teaching Writing to Build Students' Character by Using Google Docs**

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***Abstract,** the government of the Republic of Indonesia is now launching a form of education which is based on character known as "character education". In the context of character education in schools, it is expected that all the courses taught in all levels and in all kinds of education are directly to the building of good character. To relate with teaching English, writing is one of the subject that has promising potential to help the students to build their character. On the other hand, technology especially internet has been familiar with the students. Via internet we can exchange our idea online, even with people half a world away from us. Google docs is one of the alternative tool that can be used in teaching writing. Google docs is a free online program that allows users to create documents, spreadsheets and presentations online and share them with others for collaboration. By using Google docs the teacher can improve the students writing skill and also build their character.*

***Keywords :** character building, writing, google docs*

Nowadays, the statistics of the crimes in this country seems to increase. It can be seen from TV, newspaper, magazine, radio etc about drug abuse, prostitution, trafficking, abortion, sexual harrassment, sex intercourse before marriage, robbery, theft, corruption, etc. One of the reason why crimes happen in Indonesia is because of the incapibility of government to implement law inforcement. On the other hand, there is other view claiming that the crimes happen because the people or the actors committed the crimes have very low commitment, and even, do not want to make good character at all as the primary guidance of all their thoughts, attitude, and actions. Since, good character according to Lickona (1991 as cited in Vessels and Huitt, 2005) consists of knowing the good, desiring the good and doing the good.

Building students' character has been an intensive discussion among educators in Indonesia. The character education building has been included in the teaching and learning process starting from pre-school to the higher education since 2010. Introducing adequate teaching technique is one of the ways the teachers can do for the shake of the students'success in this global age. For instance, internet features do help teachers to make their class more interactive, and of course, it can bring more fun and more learning experience for the students.

In addition to the websites which offer English learning program that is accessible for the students, teachers of English can use the other features available. Especially for writing class, the use of Google Docs is valuable. Google Docs is one of the alternative tool that can be used in teaching writing. Google Docs is a free online program that allows users to create documents, spreadsheets and presentations online and share them with others for collaboration. (<http://docs.google.com>)

The basic of Google Docs is writing, so it is suitable for the students to write their ideas individually and collaboratively. They can also interact with their classmate and the teachers by using Google Docs. By using Google Docs the teacher can improve the students writing skill and also build their character.

## **THEORETICAL BASIS**

### **Character Education**

Character in accordance with Berkowitz, et, al (2005) is among others, defined as “the composite of those psychological characteristics that impact the child’s capacity and tendency to be an effective moral agent, i.e to be socially and personally responsible, ethical, and self managed. Character Education Partnership (CEP) defines character education as a national movement creating schools that foster ethical, responsible, and caring young people by modelling and teaching good character through emphasis on universal values that we all share.

If we closely pay attention to the definition above, there are some important points that attract us to discuss further. First, character education is a national movement. This implies that all components of our nation should get involved in this program. It is irresponsible then to put the burden and responsibility of educating students’ character only on teachers’ shoulder. Parents, educators, politicians, government officials, businessman, etc. should also be responsible for this program.

Second, character education is intended to foster ethical values. What is meant by ethical values ? according to Vessels and Huitt (2005) there are four ethical values to foster. They are : ethical sensitivity, ethical judgement, ethical motivation, and ethical action. Further, the four ethical values are elaborated as follow. Ethical sensitivity is defined as the perception of moral and social

situations, including the ability to consider possible actions and their repercussions in terms of the people involved. Ethical judgement is understood as the consideration of possible alternative actions and the rationale for selecting one or more as the best. Ethical motivation is explained as the selection of moreal values most relevant in the situation and the commitment to act on that selection. Whereas ethical action is elaborated as the ego strength combined with the psychological and social skills necessary to carry out the selected alternative.

Third, character education is intended to cater responsibility. Responsibility as defined by Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003) is something that is one's job or duty to deal with. The learner should be catered and nurtured to be responsible for anything he or she deserves to get appreciation from the other(s). However, if one fails to perform his or her duty rightfully and properly, a responsible person will not try to find fault and blame others. Instead, he or she is ready to be the one who should be blamed and criticized by the public.

Fouth, character education is intended to educate students to care other people. Having the character of caring other people is as important as caring oneself. The impact of this character is that if he or she finds other people having no food, for instance, he or she will feel drop out from school because they cannot afford the school free, he or she will feel upset about them and try to help them. If he or she finds an old man and woman afraid of crossing a busy and crowded traffic, he or she will be ready to offer assistance. In short, caring other people means, among others, 'to think that something is important and feel interested in it or upset about it' (Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary, 2003). This means that the learners may neglect, ignore or underestimate anyone or anything.

Fifth, character education necessitates modeling. This means that in order that the students are able to attain and internalize the values of good character within themselves a model of good character should be demonstrated. For example, if we want our children to be fair and honest, it is imperative then that a good model of fairness and honesty should be modeled by all components of nation. At home, they must be modeled by parents. At schools, they must be modeled by teachers. In political business, they must be modeled by politicians. In running government, they must be modeled by government officials, and in

interpersonal and social relationship, the model should be demonstrated and shown by the whole members of community at large. So as with the other good characters, the commitment of all components of the community to do the good should be the priority. Without the availability of a model it is doubted that the program character education will result in good result.

Finally, character education involves the teaching of good character. Though teaching good characters seems to be simpler than giving model of good character, teaching good character intentionally and elaborately is still needed. According to Narvaez and Lapsley (no year), there are two strategies relating to this : ‘minimalist’ strategy and ‘maximalist’ approach. A curriculum and reveal the inextricable linkage between the best practice instruction and moral character outcomes. Second, the ‘maximalist’ approach requires pre-service teachers to learn a tool kit of pedagogical strategies that target moral character directly as a curricular goal.

Why is character education necessary? Is there any evidence that character education fixes misbehaves or wrong deeds? The results of some research indicate positive effect of character education on students’ behavior. For instance, the research conducted in South Dakota from 1998-2000 by Walsh-Vetter, Moss and Wright (as cited in Bischalaney, 2009) found the decrease in crime and drug use. They also found that more exposure students have to the program the better they behaved. Sweeny (2008) reports that between 1993 and 2003, the declined from 42 percent to 33 percent. Other indication of the effectiveness of this program is also shown by other study revealed by Sweeny (2008:4), ‘the rate of in-school theft and the number of students who reported skipping school decreased from 1992 to 2003.

### **Definition of Writing**

According to Byrne (1984) writing is the production of a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways. Meanwhile Troyka (1987) states that writing is understood as a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose. Hammond (1988), on the other hand defines writing as a complex task which requires everything from getting your spelling right to making your voices distinctive enough to be heard.

The writer concludes that writing is the way of expressing and communicating ideas through a written language.

### **Writing as the Means of Building Students' Character**

There are two kinds of essay that can be used as a means of building students' character, they are expository and argumentative essay.

An exposition in accordance with Anderson and Anderson (2003:122), is a piece of text that presents one side of an issue." This text is intended to persuade the reader by presenting one side of an argument. In order that the reader or the listener is persuaded, the argument put forward should be convincing. Anderson and Anderson (2003) claim that a good argument or persuasion should clearly express a point of view or thesis. The thesis includes what the writer hopes to prove, the subject of the text, a statement of what the writer believes and the arguments. Another way of presenting a good argument or persuasion as suggested by Anderson and Anderson (2003) is by using evidence to prove the generalizations or support the reason.

Argumentative writing is defined by Anker (1998) as writing that takes a position on an issue and defends it with evidence to persuade someone else of the position argument in general. There are a number of ways to support an argument : using facts, quoting the opinions of experts, and giving example. The most powerful support among those are showing the facts. Facts according to Smalley, et al (2003) includes all that have been objectively proved and generally accepted, such as historical facts, scientific data, statistics etc.

### **Google Docs**

Google docs is one of the alternative tool that can be used in teaching writing. Google docs is a free online program that allows users to create documents, spreadsheets and presentations online and share them with others for collaboration. There are several function of Google Docs, (1) to work on files anywhere, anytime, (2) to get quick feedback from multiple people simultaneously and synchronously, (3) to make the full writing process visible including revisions, (4) to be quickly analyze and organize data, (5) to be easily share data sets, (6) to publish documents for invitation viewing and editing or full

public viewing and (7) to upload and download documents in various file formats. (<http://docs.google.com>)

### **TEACHING PROCEDURE**

- Pre teaching
  1. For introduction, the teacher gives the brainstorming about the crimes that often occur in Indonesia.
  2. The teacher asks the students to register on <http://docs.google.com> then the teacher divides the students into some groups (2-3 students for each)
- Whilst teaching
  1. The teacher gives the topics related to current issue (i.e sexual harrassment, drug abuse ect) to the group to be discussed then the group should write their opinion.
  2. Each group should invite the other group and also the teacher to give the comment of their writing.
  3. After the groups write their ideas collaboratively, the other groups and the teacher should give comment.
  4. The groups then revise their work.
- Post-Teaching
  1. The teacher gives feedback to the students. It covers about the mistakes which the students make while practicing it.

### **REFLECTION**

By using Google Docs in teaching writing, the teacher can build students' character. Firstly, the teacher can give the topics so that the students should be able to present their ideas clearly, therefore misunderstanding in the part of the reader can be avoided. Secondly, the students become cautious in making generalization, without enough data they cannot make any generalization. Thirdly, the students may not tell a lie. Finally, teaching writing by using Google Docs has asked the students to practice collaborative peer review and collaborative in writing.

According to Aryanti and Ekawati (2011:460) the application of collaborative writing will be a media for students to respect other people. It can be seen through the procedure of collaborative technique, the correction was done for

a few times until students are ready with their correction. During the process, they are required to correct their friends's writing fairly. Related to that statement, Alwasilah (2000) states advantages of using collaborative technique in composition classroom. They are :

- 1) Collaboration allows students to be cooperative and tolerant to the others' opinions and improves the skills in formulating and expressing ideas (Screnck, 1986);
- 2) It allows students to learn from each other, as confident students will model successful writing practices for struggling students (Lunsford, 1986);
- 3) It supports students to learn in a group, and create working atmosphere which they will face in the future (Allen, 1986);
- 4) It allows the students to be accustomed to correcting themselves and writing draft repeatedly, in which the students as writers become the readers (Brookes and Grundy, 1990) and
- 5) In shorts, writing collaboratively is a social process, in which the writers find out the mutual comprehension. In order to achieve the comprehension, each member plays his/her role in accordance with the number of social and interaction rules. These members set a mutual objective, have different performance skills, interact in one community, and take distance to the texts (Murray, 1992)

## **CONCLUSION**

From the discussion above, we may agree that teaching writing by using Google Docs can build students' character. There are two types of writing that are believed to be potential for building students character, they are expository and argumentative writing. Google Docs also asks the students to to practice collaborative peer review and collaborative in writing.

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