

## COMPETENCY-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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**Abstract:** This article discusses practical ideas teachers, particularly senior high school teachers, could use in the classroom activities in line with the most recent teaching approach based on Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The discussion begins with CBC's background, characteristics, and practical formats for classroom activities. The paper offers teachers with handy experience of applying CBC for English teaching at senior high schools. It is anticipated that later on EFL teachers extend their own activities in their class to craft the English teaching at senior high schools to be more meaningful and fun.

**Key words:** Competency-based teaching and learning, practical classroom activities.

There has been a growing interest in Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) recently. To help teachers comprehend the curriculum better, many books, articles and papers about CBC have been written. For example a series of book are written to assist teachers in understanding CBC at English teaching and learning entitled *Materi Pelatihan Terintegrasi: Bahasa Inggris* (Materials of Integrated Training: English, Depdiknas:2004). There are also some papers written to socialize CBC to English teachers and lecturers (Mukminatien and Anugerahwati:2004). Some other papers are also written to facilitate High School teachers to acquire the general explanation of CBC and to identify types of texts discussed in the new curriculum (Furaidah &Widiati:2005). Furthermore, there are also some papers written to aid High School teachers to understand the nature of each type of texts and provide training in developing those types of texts

(Cahyono:2005) and to utilize various monologue texts (Suryati:2005) required in the new curriculum. There is an article which describes the teaching of Genre-Based Writing written by Guo Yan (English Teaching Forum, Volume 43, Number 3, 2005).

What is Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)? Basically, CBC has been introduced for some time and is part of the components of what is called Competency-Based Education. The curriculum aims to achieve for the highest level of mastery of science and technology for the students (Mulyasa, 2003:8).

To be able to transfer and use science and technology which mostly come from developed countries (some English speaking countries such as USA, Australia and England), students need to understand their languages for sure. Language, then, is essential in the development of students' so-

cial and emotional lives and intelligence. It is also believed to be the key of success in learning all lessons. Language is hoped to help the students to know themselves, their cultures and other people's cultures (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional. 2003). Corresponding to that ideals, curriculums for high school is made to prepare students in reaching competency in which they can mirror back their own and others' experiences, express their ideas and feeling, and understand differences in meanings.

In conclusion, CBC refers to a combination of knowledge, skills, values and attitude which is reflected in someone's way of thinking and acting. Indeed, it refers to knowledge, skills and abilities or capabilities that a person achieves, which becomes part of his or her being to the extent that he or she can satisfactorily perform particular cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behavior (Mulyasa, 2002:38-39). Based on the explanation, we can see that the goal of the curriculum is to enable students to relate what they have obtained at schools with the work world. Due to that reason, the curriculum also stipulates a good cooperation between the worlds of education and works. Furthermore, *Pusat Kurikulum Balitbang Depdiknas* (The Center of Curriculum Bureau, 2002:1-2) describes CBC's characteristics. It 1) puts an emphasis on the learners' achievement of the set competence at both individual and classical levels, 2) is oriented at learning outcomes and multidimensionality, 3) requires a variety of learning-teaching activities, 4) puts teachers as those among various educational resources, and 5) sets evaluation/assessment to be on the learning processes and outcomes. The original version is quoted below:

*Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi memiliki karakteristik sebagai berikut: 1) menekankan pada ketercapaian kompetensi siswa baik secara individual maupun klasikal, 2) berorientasi pada hasil belajar (learning*

*outcomes) dan keberagaman, 3) penyampaian dalam pembelajaran menggunakan pendekatan dan metode yang bervariasi, 4) sumber belajar bukan hanya guru, tetapi juga sumber belajar lainnya yang memenuhi unsur edukatif, dan 5) penilaian menekankan pada proses dan hasil belajar dalam upaya penguasaan atau pencapaian suatu kompetensi (Pusat Kurikulum Balitbang Depdiknas, 2002:1-2).*

Looking back at points number 3 and 4, we can conclude that both teachers and learners have to be creative and resourceful which, sometimes, can be daunting as stated by Basthomi (2005). As in English teaching, Basthomi reports that English teachers neither pay attention nor really try to comprehend the new curriculum. Besides, he also reports that due to their "moonlighting" tradition, English teachers will find no time to read and understand the new curriculum. Furthermore, if English teachers are asked to be adventurous and creative, it means that they need extra time and energy, which again, becomes not only burdensome but also troublesome for them. Despite its seemingly negative approach to viewing the condition of Indonesian English teachers above, he concludes that we have to do justice by also approaching the problem from the optimistic angle. In the light of the aforementioned ideas some practical ideas are gathered from some different sources that are possible to be done to make CBC implementable at the teaching and learning of English in senior high schools.

## **PRACTICAL FORMATS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

There have been many papers that present about the competence model, and components of CBC and their explanation. Let us pay attention to the competence standard of the materials. The Department of National Education (Departemen Pendi-

dikan Nasional ), 2004 states:

*Standar Kompetensi Bahan Kajian adalah berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggris lisan maupun tulis secara lancar dan akurat sesuai dengan konteks sosialnya. 1) Mendengarkan, memahami berbagai makna (interpersonal, idesional, tekstual) dalam berbagai teks lisan yang memiliki tujuan komunikatif, struktur teks, dan ciri kebahasaan tertentu, 2) Berbicara, mengungkapkan berbagai makna (interpersonal, idesional, tekstual) dalam berbagai teks lisan yang memiliki tujuan komunikatif, struktur teks, dan ciri kebahasaan tertentu, 3) Membaca, memahami berbagai makna (interpersonal, idesional, tekstual) dalam berbagai teks tulis yang memiliki tujuan komunikatif, struktur teks, dan ciri kebahasaan tertentu, and 4) Menulis, mengungkapkan berbagai makna (interpersonal, idesional, tekstual) dalam berbagai teks tulis yang memiliki tujuan komunikatif, struktur teks, dan ciri kebahasaan tertentu.*

The standard competence of the materials for the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is to enable the students to communicate in spoken and written English appropriately and accurately.

It is not an effortless thing to translate the ideas into practice. English teachers, however, must not feel disheartened about it. Practically there are two cycles in English learning method, as is stated in the CBC. Each cycle consists of four stages: Building Knowledge of the Field (BKoF), Modeling of Texts (MoT), Joint Construction of Texts (JCoT), and Independent Construction of Texts (ICoT). The proposed formats of teaching strategies and techniques will encompass the above cycles and stages. Since the strategies and techniques can be implemented in any grades in senior high schools, English teachers have the freedom to decide which techniques and strategies suit their students' needs and

abilities.

### **Stage 1: Building Knowledge of the Field**

As this stage aims to make students have enough background knowledge of the text/topic, to be able to talk or to write about it, it focuses mainly on the content or information of the text. Suryati (2005) mentions that at this stage, students are still a long way from producing a text themselves, and activities will involve speaking, listening, reading, information gathering and so on. Here are some ways to build the context which are taken from Suryati, 2005:1) build up a semantic web of student's current knowledge of the topic, teaching new vocabulary as appropriate, 2) use wallpapering to collect ideas based on students' current knowledge, 3) gather a list of questions from the children of things they would like to find out about, 4) read about the topic students used shared reading or big books, 5) use pictures to elicit or teach vocabulary, 6) develop a word wall/word bank about the topic, where technical vocabulary can be displayed, 7) use jigsaw listening or reading to extend the children's knowledge base, 8) use technological resources (the internet is a wonderful resource for many topics) to access additional information, 9) get the students to interview an expert in the field, 10) use picture and sentence matching game, 11) use barrier games, 12) watch a video and provide an information grid for pairs of students to complete as they watch, and 13) use the topic to practice or introduce grammar structure that are particularly meaningful to the topic. Here are some more practical classroom activities that the writer also uses in BKoF of the students: 1) use recorded materials and provide jumbled information for students to work on, 2) use teacher's voice in the reading of monologue texts, 3) use photographs such as family, holiday, wedding and pets photographs to build students' knowledge on the discussed

topic, 4) brainstorm ideas, and 5) use mind mapping to collect vocabulary.

### **Stage 2: Modeling of the Text**

This stage is meant to make students become familiar with the purpose, overall structure, and linguistic feature of the type of the text they are going to produce. The form and function of the particular text type that students are going to write become very essential here. Suryati (2005) notes teacher should choose a text that is similar to the one he/she will use in the next stage (Joint Construction) and to the one that the students will eventually produce themselves. She also says that model texts maybe commercially produced, teacher-produced or text produced previously by other students. Here are some steps that Suryati (2005) suggests: 1) play the tape or read the monologue text to the students, 2) ask their comprehension about the text, 3) draw students' attention to the organizational structure or the shape of the text and the function of each stage, 4) students (in pairs) do a text reconstruction of part of the text, 5) or mix up sentences from two texts of the same genre and students must sort out which sentence belong to which text, and then sequence them, 6) use the model text as a cloze exercise, and 7) once the students have clear idea of the characteristics of a certain genre, remind them of these characteristics and write up as a chart can be displayed on the wall. Here are some other practical ideas that can be carried out in the classrooms. First, ask students to read the model text on certain genre. Second, ask their comprehension about the text. Third, since they have previewed the organizational structure of the text, they can be asked to identify it in the reading passage. Fourth, students (in pairs) are given exercise on new reading passage which has been jumbled. They should reorder the parts of the text and then match them with its organ-

izational structure. As an alternative, they maybe given jumbled pictures and are asked to order them.

### **Stage 3: Joint Construction of the Text**

At this stage, the students work in groups to produce a text together. It is also possible that the teacher and students create a text together. Suryati (2005) notes that students are now ready to think about speaking/writing, although they will not yet be speaking/writing alone. She, further, remarks that teacher and students together discuss the overall structure of the text, suggest more appropriate vocabulary, consider alternative ways of wording an idea, and work on correcting grammar mistakes, spelling and punctuation. It is also said to be the time when there can be an explicit focus on grammar although it only occurs in functionally relevant ways. However, it should not be out of the contexts of actual language use and must be used at the point of need. The teachers' tasks here are to encourage the students to focus on all aspects of writing/speaking and to guide the students to write/speak. The following are activities which can be done in making use this stage. In groups, students are asked to: 1) create poster on related topic, 2) prepare somebody's profile to be put in a back cover of a book, novel, or biography, etc., 3) write a plot outline on recount, journal, review, short story, speech, etc., 4) prepare and present an interview between a reporter and a prominent figure, and 5) draw an illustration of a poem, story, scene, etc.

### **Stage 4: Independent Construction of the Text**

This is the final stage of the learning process. At this stage students produce their own texts which are similar to the texts they have learned on the previous stages. Suryati (2005) states that while the students are writing, the teacher must remind them about

the process of writing: doing a first draft, self-editing, discussing the draft with friends and later with the teacher, and finally producing a “published” text. These texts can be exhibited in the classroom, are made into a class book, or even (with their permission) are used as useful models and resources for other classes. Here are a few practical ideas teachers can use in their classrooms. Students are asked to work individually to: 1) publish a booklet of his/her favorite poems, short stories, etc., 2) design a poster to advertise a film he/she loves, 3) write an e-mail telling a friend about something related to the text type that has been learned on the previous stages, 3) watch TV news at home and make a spoken or written report, and 4) rewrite a poem of their own choice in narrative form, for example.

### **SOME PROBLEMS TEACHERS MIGHT FACE IN EMPLOYING THE IDEAS**

After discussing the practical format, now let us discuss the problems that might be faced by teachers in the implementation of CBC and how to deal with them. The problems that might surface include the following. First, there are too many students in the classroom; it is common that senior high schools in Indonesia have a big of number of students, running usually more than 35 in one classroom. Second, CBC demands teachers to be creative as well as good in every way. It becomes not only difficult but also impossible to be a good model, i.e., in writing, if the teachers are not creative as well as good at writing. Third, students are not motivated in joining the English class. It is a fact that students come to the classroom because English is a compulsory part of the curriculum. They don’t come to the classroom because they love the idea of learning English.

There might be more problems that exist in the real class. However, let us discuss

on the three issues above. Dealing with the first problem, Basthomi (2005) has a suggestion that the government should add the number of English teachers at schools. Head masters, especially, may also make a policy about the number of English students in English classes. For example, there should be 20-25 students in one classroom. Next, teachers must get more chances to join seminars, workshops, and other activities which will help them to enhance their creativity and their four language skills. It means that by joining a seminar, English teachers and lecturers can broaden their horizon about the latest techniques in English as Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning strategies. In addition, Singleton & Luckhurst (2005) state that good readers make good writers and that writing is something that people can catch through reading. From the statement, it can be conceived that teachers’ abilities are, indeed, possible to be improved. Finally, learning any lesson has to be fun. If it is not fun for the teachers, how can it be fun for the learners? If the students are not motivated, teachers must know why they are not motivated. One of the many reasons is that they don’t get any fun in their English class. By making the class, especially English class, fun, students will enjoy learning English. They do not only come to learn the lesson but also have good time in class. This can only be reached, in line with the previous discussion, when the teachers are creative, resourceful and “adventurous”. How can teachers be creative and resourceful and “adventurous”? They must read a lot, practice a lot and mustn’t be afraid of trying out new classroom techniques.

To conclude, not all educational practitioners comprehend every new curriculum until another curriculum comes. As reported by Basthomi (2005) there was a great number of teachers (74.2%) who were not aware enough of what was meant by 1975 and 1984 curriculums. In addition, some even

did not read the curriculum. He mentions, further, that we can safely assume that myriad of English teachers do not really try to read and understand the new curriculum. Referring to the above finding, it doesn't mean that we cannot implement the 2004 curriculum or CBC. In brief, there are some problems that have to be faced in the implementation of CBC. But, in the meantime, the educational practitioners, and people in the educational field, have to use the time effectively by doing something about it.

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