

The Application of Cooperative Learning Concept in Teaching Literature Through Budi Darma's Novel *Orang-Orang Bloomington*

Ong Mia Farao Karsono

Chinese Literature Department of Petra Christian University, Surabaya (INDONESIA)

ongmia@peter.petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This article aims to prove that the cooperative learning concept, which has been adopted in teaching foreign languages, is also applicable for teaching literature. From the analysis of the result, it is proven that students can answer the problem statement given by the teacher. With small group discussions and an expert group as the triangulation, the students are highly motivated to explore, and, as the result, can produce more optimal analytical problem solving formulation.

Keywords: Cooperative learning, Small group discussions, Students, Teaching, Literature

1. INTRODUCTION

This article aims to introduce the application of the cooperative learning concept, which is used in learning a second language, can be beneficially applied to learning literature. In addition, this article is also introducing one outstanding Indonesian writer, Budi Darma. So far, very limited works of Budi Darma are discussed in international journals. His novel *Orang-Orang Bloomington* (The people of Bloomington) contains plenty moral teachings that deserve thorough discussions.

Budi Darma got an inspiration to write his novel *Orang-Orang Bloomington* while he stayed in a story building on Fess Street in Bloomington, USA. The story is about three widows who are neighbors. The narrator deliberately rents an attic room in Mrs. MacMillan's house to observe the lives of the neighbors, Mrs. Nolan and Mrs. Casper, the long widows. Mrs. MacMillan herself is also a widow. Mrs. Nolan becomes a widow after she has been divorced due to her rough temperament. Mrs. Casper's husband dies in a car accident, and now she is suffering from an illness.

These three widows are very indifferent to others. They have their own gardens. Fess street is always deserted, and most of the residences are senior, living alone, and friendless. They do not like to make friends and do not like to be friends to others. Near Fess street, there is a small shop "Marsh" that sells raw food and canned food. The store owner is another unfriendly character. The narrator passes his days with boredom due to the unfriendly neighborhood, especially when he invites a small chat with one of them.

One day, there is a man of sixty years old renting a room in Mrs. Casper's house. Everyday, he opens the window of his room, bends his body over the window, and shows his gun by aiming it to the ground. Every now and then, there is the sound of a gun blast, but it is not too sure if the sound comes from Mrs. Casper's house.

The narrator is eager to know more about the old man. One day, he sees the old man playing with his gun on Dunn Meadow Street, pretending that he is a soldier arresting some people who are played by local kids. Information from a taxi driver reveals that he is a former World War II bomber pilot, whose wife has passed away recently because of colon cancer. Due to playing his gun to the crowds, the local newspaper's reader column mentions his disturbing behavior, but nobody knows whether the gun is real.

One day, after returning from the hospital, the narrator encounters Mrs. Casper running and screaming for help, and behind her is the old man chasing with a gun and shouting, "Look, I will shoot you! Beware, I will shoot you!" He helps Mrs. Casper by running into him, but the old man is too strong, so he falls down after bouncing to the old man's body. When he is about to get up, he hears the sound of a bursting firearm, and the bodies of Mrs. Casper and the old man fall on the street. Mrs. Nolan stands nearby with a smoking gun.

From the police, it is concluded that the old man carries a real unloaded gun. During the investigation, Mrs. MacMillan testifies that she often hears the explosive sound of a gun at night. According to Mrs. MacMillan and Mrs. Nolan, the old man must have the real bullets. Mrs. Casper gets fainted because of fear, not being shot. Meanwhile, Mrs. Nolan shoots the old man because she sees him chasing Mrs. Casper with a gun, threatening to kill her. The end of the story does not mention whether Mrs. Nolan was arrested or charged for murdering.

This story gives a good base for applying the cooperative learning approach in studying literature. The underlying theory of the cooperative learning concept is the theory of constructivism. The constructivism approach in learning process is an approach that requires students to find and process complex information, and to seek solutions to the problem. Students are given the opportunity to gain hands on experience in applying their ideas, so they have the opportunity to discover and implement their ideas (Rusman, 2012: 202).

The core of the cooperative learning concept consists of three components: the task structure, the reward structure, and the goal structure. They are depicted in the chart below.

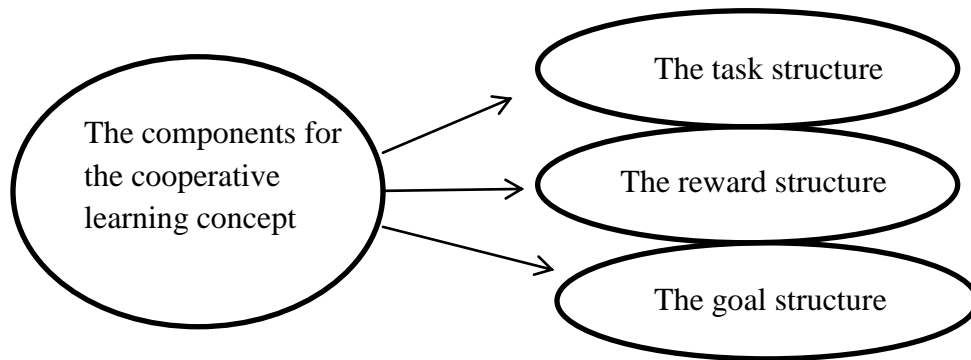


Chart 1: The components for the cooperative learning concept

The task structure contains a group of tasks given by the teacher. These tasks are related to the innovations of the teacher about the reachable goals. The tasks are distributed to students who previously have been divided into small groups of 5 students. This division process in the cooperative learning concept is called jigsaw. The small group should be heterogeneous. Elliot Aronson with his graduate students invents this jigsaw strategy in the early 1970s to bridge the interaction between students in the classroom (Aronson, 2000-2013). The task structure related

to this article is to find the moral lessons reflected through the novel *Orang-Orang Bloomington* by Budi Darma. The tasks given to the students cover these questions: (1) how are the character traits of the main characters? (2) how is the relatedness of the character traits with such traits that exist in Indonesian society? (3) what are the moral lessons reflected in the novel?

The reward structure can be varied, maybe an object or compliment. Teachers should give awards to students regarding to their efforts. Teachers should not embarrass the student in front of other students. Teachers should be innovative to create strategies that build interest among their students to complete the assignments. The goal of learning literature is to equip students with morality and life values; therefore, this cooperative learning concept is designed to create positive interactions, to develop self confidence, and to improve academic capability through group activities. Each student has the same opportunity for success. Learning process is very student-centered in the form of group discussion, doing the task together, and helping each other to solve problems.

The goal structure of the cooperative learning concept is to build students' motivation, self-confidence, strategic thinking, and interpersonal relationship through effective interactive learning process. This learning model enables all students to master the learning material at the similar level. Teachers can propose some problem statements, then students interpret the statements and discuss with other fellow students to find the solutions. According to Campbell and Rutherford (2010), when the students perform the task in their groups, the individual effort is also awarded besides the grouping effort (168).

2. THE CONCEPT OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

According to Olsen and Kagan (in Richard and Rodger, 2001: 193), cooperative learning is a learning approach that utilizes the fullest cooperation activities covering how to work in pairs and small groups of students in the class. Cooperative learning offers students working together in groups (Savage, and Armstrong, 1987: 217; Nurulhayati, 2002: 25; Larsen, 2000: 164). Cooperative learning is defined as a group learning activity in which the learning process depends on the exchange of information between students arranged socially in groups. Students are responsible for receiving the lesson, and they are motivated to improve other fellow students. Sujana (2005) said that the cooperation among students during the learning process is very important because students are not only obtaining learning outcomes but also cultivating attitudes of mutual cooperation, tolerance, democracy, and mutual respects. As confirmed by Abdulhak (2001: 19-20), in the cooperative learning method, student sharing process can generate a common understanding among the students themselves.

3. THE APPLICATION OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

A. Dividing working groups

The cooperative interaction process is called the jigsaw activity, in which the class of 20 students is divided into four small groups and one expert group. The expert group consists of four students who are more superior in their literature competence. All students in the small groups read the novel together at the same time. Then the expert group will split the members and each member will merge to the four small groups as the benchmark of the discussions. After solving the first problem statement, all four group members split into new four groups to solve the next two problem statements. In solving the last two problems, information from the previous

group discussions is needed, so the process of sharing and taking is happening in the new group discussions.

B. Distributing the learning material

Budi Darma's *Orang-Orang Bloomington* is a short novel or a novella, so all students read the whole novel together. Since time is the constraint, the literature aspect analyzed from the novel is the characterization of four main characters. The first problem statement is assigned into five small groups. Four groups investigate the four main characters and one group acts as the expert group. Group 1 seeks the characterization of Mrs. MacMillan, Group 2 Mrs. Nolan, Group 3 Mrs. Casper, and Group 4 the old man. Group 5, acting as the expert group, analyzes all characters. Then, each group member forms four new groups to discuss the second and third problem statements with the new group.

Each group member has to find a statement in the novel that supports the trait of each main character. After gaining the knowledge about the main characters, each student brings the knowledge to the new group formation for further discussions. All students in the new groups are involved in the discussions to answer the next two problem statements. This kind of an interactive assignment enhances cooperation and rapport among students, creating the learning environment in accordance to the cooperative learning concept through giving, sharing, and taking information.

After each group answers all problem statements, the leader of each group explains the findings to all groups by presenting them in front of the class. All findings are synthesized, summarized, and submitted to the teacher for grading.

4. TRAITS OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS

A. The character trait of Mrs. MacMillan

Students from group (1) conclude that Mrs. MacMillan is an indifferent person. She is not pleased dealing with others. Student (1) finds the statement in the novel:

Do not take care of other people's business and do not have a desire to know about other people. This is the message by Mrs. MacMillan after closing a story about her neighbors. This is the only way, she says, to live peacefully. She also advises me, to maintain a good relationship, I can speak to her only when it is necessary and by phone. Therefore, I have to install a phone (Darma, 1980: 4).

Student (2) finds the following statement to support the character trait analysis of Mrs. MacMillan:

I am sure Mrs. MacMillan and Mrs. Casper know what Mrs. Nolan does, but I wonder why they do not report her to the police. Apparently, this is the way to let each other live so they can maintain good relationships (Darma, 1980: 6).

Student (3) discovers a text in the paragraph that reveals the character of Mrs. MacMillan:

Before the telephone company installs a phone in my room, she forbids me to use the house phone, because three blocks from Fess Street there is a public phone to use. She also says that the house key for me to use is for the back door, while her key is for the main door. With different doors, we do not disturb each other (Darma, 1980: 4).

Student (4) finds a supporting evidence from the conversation with Mrs. MacMillan concerning the old man who lives in Mrs. Casper's house.

So I called Mrs. MacMillan. She thanks me for reminding her, but she tries to end the conversation with this remark: 'If it is true there is a new resident living in Mrs. Casper's attic, it is her business. You stay here, so it is my own business. If the old man really owns a gun, he must have the permit from the police. If he does not have the permit, one day he will be arrested (Darma, 1980, 8).

These findings are discussed in triangulation with student (17) from the expert group.

B. The character trait of Mrs. Nolan

Students from group (2) discover that Mrs. Nolan is somehow similar to Mrs. MacMillan, but she is more aggressive attitude toward animals. They find statements from the novel to support their arguments.

Student (5) finds out that Mrs. Nolan is very indifferent. It is reflected through this passage:

Several times, I encounter Mrs. Nolan and Mrs. Casper on the street. Since they are not eager to converse with me after I approach them, I become reluctant to talk to them (Darma, 1980: 5).

Student (6) finds supportive statements about Mrs. Nolan's trait when the narrator offers some helps in the following paragraph:

Finally, during a rainy night, I called Mrs. Nolan to offer some helps to clean up her garden. In fact, she is surprised and angry. She asks whether her garden is dirty and disgusting. When I say 'no', she questions me whether I have some hidden agendas behind my offers. After I say that she probably needs my helps, she questions me whether she looks ill or sluggish, therefore I offer services to help her (Darma, 1980: 8).

Student (7) sees another character trait of Mrs. Nolan through the way she treats animals around her garden. She is aggressive toward others.

Whenever she is in her garden and sees the glimpse of an animal, she does not hesitate to throw the animal with stones that are apparently already prepared. Without deliberately aiming the target, the stones always hit the animal. She kills some bats that are hanging on low branches of trees. Also various birds that are stranded in her garden are killed by throwing stones. Once I hear a dog screaming in pain and limping after entering Mrs. Nolan's garden (Darma, 1980: 6)

Student (8) also finds the cruel trait of Mrs. Nolan after the murder scene. It becomes clear that Mrs. Nolan is the murderer from this passage:

After that woman speaks, I realize that she is Mrs. Nolan. 'I am the one who kills this evil man,' says Mrs. Nolan with no guilty tone. 'You know he is going to kill Mrs. Casper, young man, so I come to rescue this poor lady. You should know it, young man, that this man has threatened to kill me several times already (Darma, 1980: 25).

This finding is discussed with student (18) from the expert group in the triangulation.

C. The character trait of Mrs. Casper

Students in group (3) discover that Mrs. Casper is very indifferent. Her character trait is reflected in the conversation with the narrator that is spotted by student (9) and (10). The narrator is eager to know about the old man who rents a room in Mrs. Casper's house.

Well, well, well, young man, why should i get involved with those matters? He has rented my loft. I will not forbid him to do whatever he likes as long as he does not destroy my property or create turmoil (Darma, 1980: 13).

Students (11) and (12) discover a similar trait of Mrs. Casper from the next conversation between the narrator and her.

Well, it is legitimate, and you just create stories, young man. What will you do if he has it, and what will you do if he does not have it? Good night, young man. I hope you stop questioning him, unless it is necessary.' The conversation stops (Darma, 1980: 13).

The above finding is discussed in the triangulation with student (19) from the expert group.

D. The character trait of the old man

Students (13), (14), (15), and (16) from group (4) analyzes the character development of the old man. It is rather difficult to find the real character trait of this old man because the narrator never starts a conversation with this old man. What the students get is some fractions of the old man's story from different sources, such as the taxi driver. From one fraction of the life story, all students assume that the old man is childish and proud.

When I wash my hands, I hear the old man saying 'bam! bam! bam!' as if a little boy aiming his enemy with his toy gun. I wait and in the toilet he still says 'bam! bam! bam!'. Some people look at him with a great interest for a moment, but then, they do not care (Darma, 1980: 20).

This finding is discussed in the triangulation with student (20) who is the member of the expert group.

5. THE RELATEDNESS BETWEEN THE TRAITS OF THE MAI CHARACTERS AND THE INDONESIAN CULTURE

Every student with the prior knowledge of the character traits forms a new group discussion to share the information they have learned. They answer the next two problem statements with the new groups. They have to relate the traits of the main characters to their culture.

While exploring the traits of the main characters, the students encounter many traits that are not usual in their culture. Being indifferent among the main characters is such a good example that raises the cultural discussions. Most of the students are exposed to the culture in which social ties and concerns are very rigid. The students begin to compare and contrast the cultural differences between the West and the East. In the small group discussions, every student gets the benefit to express their ideas without any hesitation. Since the purpose of studying this novel is not to judge other cultures, but to gain a better insight of other cultures, the students learn their best by understanding, comparing, and contrasting their culture with others through group discussions.

6. MORAL LESSONS IN THE NOVEL

The next problem statement to discuss is the moral lessons that are expressed in the novel. After gaining better insights from comparing and contrasting different cultures, students seek the moral values in the novel. All students find that the murder of the old man gives a moral lesson. All students learn that being indifferent is unacceptable in their social culture. If, since the very beginning, the three widows had ever engaged in a conversation with the old man, they might know that the gun was unloaded, and the old man might not get killed. The students construct the moral lessons of the novel through an intense debate in their small group, then they come up with the statement. The lessons contained in the novel are to direct the reader to value human virtues such as care and generous. While discussing the novel, all students are unconsciously engaged in the constant sharing and taking information. This situation is in accordance to the purpose of the learning structure of the cooperative approach.

7. CONCLUSION

The use of group discussions, working groups, and working together in pairs is the backbones of the cooperative learning method. By giving three problem statements that are needed to answer in small groups, the students can interact among their peers freely. Then they can bring the results through the process of the triangulation with the expert group to gain a more systematic and optimal problem solving. As the result, this cooperative learning concept is very suitable and effective for teaching literature.

REFERENCES

1. Abdulhak, I. (2001). *Komunikasi Pembelajaran: Pendekatan Konvergensi dalam Peningkatan Kualitas dan Efektivitas Pembelajaran*. Bandung: UPI.
2. Aronson, Elliot. (2000-2013). *The Jigsaw Classroom: A Cooperative Learning*. www.jigsaw.org/history.htm

3. Campbell, Russell N. & Rutherford, William E. (2010). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
4. Darma, Budi. (1980). *Orang-orang Bloomington*. Jakarta: Sinar harapan.Larsen,
5. Larsen, Diane-Freeman. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
6. Nurulhayati, Siti. (2002). *Pembelajaran Kooperatif yang Menggairahkan*. Wahana Informasi dan Komunikasi Pendidikan TK dan SD. Edisi 3.
7. Richards, Jack C. & Theodore S, Rodgers, (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. UK. Cambridge University.
8. Rusman. (2012). *Model-model Pembelajaran: Mengembangkan Profesionalisme Guru*. Edisi kedua. Jakarta: Rajawali Pers.
9. Savage V. Tom & Amstrong DG. (1987). *Effective Teaching in Sosial Studies*. Third Edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
10. Sudjana, Nana. (2005). *Dasar-dasar Proses Balajar Mengajar*. Bandung: Sinar Baru Algensindo.