

TEACHING ASIAN VALUES THROUGH STORY TELLING ACTIVITY IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) CLASS¹

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Abstract

Values are the standards by which one may judge the difference between good and bad, and the right and wrong things to do. Values can vary quite a bit depending upon one's generation, class, education, and origin. For example, Asian societies tend to be very hierarchical, in contrast to American culture, where in some cases it is not unusual to consider teacher and student, or even parent and child as equals. Further, values are able to be taught by giving story telling since in each story there are always some moral values. Story telling is the conveying of events in words, and images, often by improvisation or embellishment. Characters in nearly every children story become models in their real life. The purpose of this paper is to share the way to teach Asian values through story telling in English as Second Foreign classes. There were 22 students participated in the learning activities. In beginning of the activities, the participants were introduced with an Asian traditional story from China. In the middle of the learning activities, the participants practiced how to deliver the stories in front of the EFL classes therefore they were able to listen, remember, write and re tell the story. At the end of the learning activity, the participants summarized the story and filled in a questionnaire. In conclusion, all of the participants understand the Asian values from the story. Some of them stated that they wanted to implement the values learnt on their real life.

Keywords: Asian Values, Story Telling, EFL Class

Introduction

The introduction of Asian Values

Values are the standards by which one may judge the difference between good and bad, and the right and wrong things to do. Values can vary quite a bit depending upon one's generation, class, education, and origin. (Hu, 1985)

There are many differences in Eastern and Western ideas, philosophies, and religions, and also geographical location. One of the differences is collectivism concept. The concept of collectivism in Asian society is stronger than in Western society. Western society tends to be more individualism. Besides, Asian societies tend to be very hierarchical, in contrast to American culture, where in some cases it is not unusual to consider teacher and student, or even parent and child as equals.

The concept of Asian values appears based on the idea that Asian countries have a unique set of institutions and political ideologies that reflect the region's cultures and histories. Asian values were stated in the Bangkok Declaration of 1993, which reemphasized the principles of sovereignty, self-determination, and noninterference over civil and political rights.

There are some Asian values, which are:

- 1) Preference for social harmony Concern with socio-economic well-being
- 2) Preference for the welfare and collective well-being of the community over individual rights
- 3) Loyalty and respect towards forms of authority including parents, teachers and government
- 4) Collectivism and communitarianism over individualism and liberalism

With the American sexual typing modes, this may also lead to the perception of Asians as being less masculine and more feminine since males are expected to be more aggressive and assertive than females, a particularly good example of crossed-values. Since the well-being of the larger group is most important in Asian culture, great importance is placed on maintaining harmony. Conflict is to be avoided. Society is viewed as an extended family whose relationships and obligations are to be preserved. Maintaining harmony also creates a bias against change and "rocking the boat", as opposed to American values, which encourage change. Asian societies tend to be very hierarchical, in contrast to American culture, where in some cases it is not unusual to consider teacher and student, or even parent and child as equals.

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Similar relationships are expected between man and wife, employee and employer, and ruler and ruled. Asians are often seen as a hardworking lot. Maintaining one's obligations, good face, and harmony are more important than personal comfort. Complaining is seen as a sign of weakness. Maintaining good face is a kind of measurement of how well one has maintained faith to traditional values, and one's social standing among others. It serves as a strong control mechanism which reinforces all other Asian values.

How effective is Story Telling to teach Values to children

Story telling is the conveying of events in words, and images, often by improvisation or embellishment. Characters in nearly every children story become models in their real life. Telling stories can develop self knowledge, creating understanding among ourselves, people, God and places in the world. Stories have the potential to build authentic communities of shared meaning and values.

Myths: refers mostly to meditation and reconciliation. Myths allow us to dream and believe in a future better than the present. E.g. Beauty and the Beast

Parable: They stop us from living in a dream world, call us to comfort the present, and deter us from trusting in any hope that does not face the hard reality of the present.

Story telling is effective to teach values to children because:

- 1) First, because stories can create emotional attachment to goodness, a desire to do the right thing
- 2) Second, because stories provide a wealth of good examples - the kind of examples that are often missing from a child's day to day environment.
- 3) Third, because stories help to make sense out of life.
- 4) Fourth, stories enables us to "rehearse" moral decisions
- 5) Fifth, stories strengthening our solidarity with the good.

Stories have great power in people's life. Many adults can still name their favorite bedtime story or recall the name of a great storyteller from their lives. Additionally, we share our personal stories with each other through letters, phone conversations, instant messaging and emails. For children, storytelling and dialogue are an essential component of their early lives. Not only does storytelling introduce children to the initial stages of communication and literacy, it also helps them to "share experiences and feelings in an engaging and entertaining way" (Huffaker, 2004, p. 63). These personal experiences and feelings are the cornerstone of many digital storytelling projects. Indeed, Combs

and Beach (1994) state, "The stories that are part of the fabric of our lives are personal narratives . . . the human brain is essentially a narrative device. It runs on stories" (p. 464). Storytelling may also provide students with the means to think through their past and present realities. In fact, research advocates that storytelling can serve as a method to aid students in making sense of the "complex and unordered world of experience" (Chung, 2007; Ohler, 2008; Sadik, 2008, p. 489). Finally, storytelling can connect past, present, and future generations to shape values and beliefs (Chung, 2007).

Digital story telling

Digital storytelling is the practice of combining still images with a narrated soundtrack including both voice and music (Bull & Kajder, 2004; Robin, 2008; Sadik, 2008). Additionally, digital storytelling expert Joe Lambert coined the Seven Elements of Effective Digital Stories. They are: a point of view, a dramatic question, emotional content, economy, pacing, the gift of your voice, and an accompanying soundtrack (Bull & Kajder, 2004). Each element may be conceived as follows:

- 1) Point of view: the main point or specific realization that a student tries to communicate within his or her story.
- 2) Dramatic question: the key question that will be answered by the end of the story and keeps the audience members' attention.
- 3) Emotional content: writing that will take hold of audience members' attention and engage them emotionally.
- 4) The gift of your voice: narration of the text, including emotion and inflections that give greater meaning to the story and aid in the audience's understanding.
- 5) Soundtrack: thoughtfully selected sounds and music will add further emotional response and embellishment.
- 6) Economy: many stories can be illustrated effectively with a small number of images or video and a fairly short text.
- 7) Pacing: the rhythm of a story and how slowly or quickly it moves

What are the story telling methodologies we use in the EFL classes?

There are some story telling methodologies we can use in EFL classes, which are: (Turner, 2010)

- 1) Teaching values through examples and models: Children like heroes and they want to be like their heroes. Characters in nearly every story children encounter serve as models for children. When used in school, the modeling approach involves getting children to look at figures in stories and history as the kind of people that they should aspire to be. Folk tales are rich in heroes and can provide a way of helping children to see qualities that are admirable while examining cultural values and beliefs.

- 2) Teaching values through stories with morals or lessons:
- 3) Fables and parables have been used to teach right and wrong for thousands of years. This approach is most effective when the listener or reader is provoked to think by the story and then through discussion and thought discovers the lesson embedded in the story. Nonfiction or fiction stories provide a way to look at different cultures, different times, and different beliefs.

Research Methodology

The research subjects were 22 students from grade VII Junior High School with beginner English level. This research is a qualitative research based on questionnaire and interview. The class participants were given a story telling lesson learning activity in English which related with values and then interviewed related to the values implementation. The duration of the lesson is about 30 minutes. The research was conducted in SMART Ekselensia Indonesia English class on March 3rd 2014.

In the beginning of the lesson the participants were shown a video of a story from China with the title Moon Princess. After that, the participants were divided into pairs and given some questions. By answering the questions, the participants could remember the story and also practice their English comprehension. While answering the questions, the teacher re told the story with his/her own style and gestures. Next, the participants were challenged to re tell the stories with their own style and gestures. Then, the participants were given some questions about the valued inside the stories. They should decide whether they agree with the statements. After that, the teacher and class participants summarized the story and discussed about values inside the story. Finally, the participants were given some daily cases in order to describe the value implementation on their daily life.

The material needed in this research is one of the Asian stories. It should contain some more values which can represent some Asian values. Besides, the questions about the story and the values inside the story are also needed. Below is the script of story, some questions about the story and the values inside the story.

The Script of The Story

“Moon Princess (A Story From China)”

Once upon a time, there was a young girl name Xiao Yue. She loved to draw so much. She drew pictures everywhere in her tiny room.

One night an old man appeared to her in a dream. He gave her a magical paint brush that made anything she drew real. She promised to only use the

paint brush to help the poor. When she woke up, the paint brush was lying next to her. From that day on she used the paintbrush whenever people needed help.

When the farmers had no rain she painted a river through the field and the river came to life. When fishermen had difficulty catching fish, she drew them nets to cast into the water. Whenever the people needed help. She painted creative solutions and word spread of the paint brush.

Soon the rich man heard of the paint brush and thought to steal it. He was an evil man who wanted the power of the paintbrush for himself. He sent guards to lock Xiao Yue in her room and they stole the magic paintbrush. He threw a big party to show off his magic paint brush, try as he did, no pictures magically become real. Very angry, the evil man sent his guards to fetch Xiao Yue. If you paint me a golden mountain, I will let you go free, said the evil man.

She remembered her promise to the old man and had an idea. She went to the wall and drew a big gold mountain in the distance. Seeing all the richest lying only a few miles away, everyone ran greedily toward the gold, led by the evil man himself. Xiao Yue was soon alone watching the crowd run toward the mountain of the gold she just painted.

Suddenly the old man appeared and asked, “Why did you help that evil man? I will have to take back the magic paint brush. Xiao Yue said, “wait, you will see I did not break my promise.” Then she drew around the mountain and everything become a scroll.

The old man turned to Xiao Yue and said, “You are the moon princess. That is why the magic only works for you. So Xiao Yue traveled to the world helping the poor and was known to everyone for her magic art.

The Questions About the Story

Answer the questions below!

1. What is the name of the young girl?
2. What did she love to do?
3. What did the old man give on her dream?
4. What will the girl use the paint brush?
5. What did the girl do with the farmers who had no rain?
6. What did the girl do with the fishermen who had difficulty catching fish?
7. Why did the rich evil man wanted to steal the paint brush?
8. What happened when the evil man tried to use the paint brush?
9. What did the girl do when the evil man forced her to paint golden mountain?
10. How did the girl make the evil man and other people run toward the mountain of gold?
11. Did the girl break her promise?
12. Why does the magic only work for the girl

Table 1. The questionnaire questions about the values**Put the checklist on the right column!**

No.	Statements	A	D
1.	Xiao Yue is loyal		
2.	Xiao Yue is kind because she likes to help the poor		
3.	Xiao Yue likes to share what she has/she can do with others		
4.	Xiao Yue respects the old man		
5.	Xiao Yue daily activities makes social harmony		
6.	It is good to be individual and do not care of others		
7.	We do not have to help poor people when we are rich		
8.	Helping other can make us tired and it is wasting time		
9.	We should be greedy		
10.	We do not have to respect older people		

Where:

A = Agree with the statements

D = Disagree with the statements

Result and Discussions

Story Analysis

From the story above the class participants can learn about Simple Past Tense through narrative story telling. From the learning activities given, the participants had a change to develop their English listening, reading, writing, and also speaking skills. Besides, there are some moral values which can be learnt by the class participant after they comprehend the story.

1) Preference for social harmony

The sentences below have shown the social harmony value. Xiao Yue, the character of the story, has tried to give impression that social harmony is something important in Asian values.

"When the farmers had no rain she painted a river through the field and the river came to life. When fishermen had difficulty catching fish, she drew them nets to cast into the water. Whenever the people needed help. She painted creative solutions and word spread of the paint brush."

By reading and understand the story, the class participants will be able to think deeper that river and nets are something important to balance social harmony of fishermen's social life. Helping others is also important to create social harmony in life. While the sentences in form of Past Tense is also another language part that could be discuss in an EFL class.

2) Concern with socio-economic well-being

"She promised to only use the paint brush to help the poor. When she woke up, the paint brush was lying next to her. From that day on she used the paintbrush whenever people needed help."

The sentences above are the reflection of socio economic concern in Asia values. Besides, loyalty to help the poor is also something important.

3) Preference for the welfare and collective well-being of the community over individual rights.

"Soon the rich man heard of the paint brush and thought to steal it. He was an evil man who wanted the power of the paintbrush for himself."

It was states that a man who wanted the power for himself was an evil man. Selfish and invidual rights are not the part of the part of Asian values.

4) Loyalty and respect towards forms of authority including parents, teachers and government

"Suddenly the old man appeared and asked, "Why did you help that evil man? I will have to take back the magic paint brush. Xiao Yue said, "wait, you will see I did not break my promise."

The statements above have shown that Xiao Yue respects the old man therefore she could not break her promise easily. Loyalty and respecting older people are the parts of Asian Values.

5) Collectivism and communitarianism over individualism and liberalism

"Seeing all the richest lying only a few miles away, everyone ran greedily toward the gold, led by the evil man himself. Xiao Yue was soon alone watching the crowd run toward the mountain of the gold she just painted."

Asian people tend to avoid individualism since collectivism is more important in their life. Based on the sentences above, the people who catch the gold for themselves considered as greedy people who does not appropriate with Asian Values.

Students' values understanding based on questionnaire and interview

1) The result of the questionnaire given is listed on this table below:

Table 2. The Questionnaire Results

No.	Statements	A	D
1.	Xiao Yue is loyal	21	1
2.	Xiao Yue is kind because she likes to help the poor	22	0
3.	Xiao Yue likes to share what she has/she can do with others	22	0
4.	Xiao Yue respects the old man	22	0
5.	Xiao Yue daily activities makes social harmony	22	0
6.	It is good to be individual and do not care of others	0	22
7.	We do not have to help poor people when we are rich	0	22
8.	Helping other can make us tired and it is wasting time	0	22
9.	We should be greedy	0	22
10.	We do not have to respect older people	0	22

Where:

A = Number of the students who Agree with the statementsD = Number of the students who Disagree with the statements

2) The result of the questionnaires were listed below: Based on the interview from with the class participants, there were some statements:

1. *The story is good because it teaches me about the things that I should do in daily life. This story reminds me to be a more loyal person, respect older people, not to be selfish and help others who are in needed condition.*
2. *I am able to know that it is nice to be good people and helping others is nice. I was stingy in the past but I liked to asked to others. I was sorry for that.*
3. *The story teaches me to be much better with sharing, helping poor people, keeping my promise. It makes us understand the meaning of social harmony because I was an individualistic person. It also teaches me to be more loyal.*
4. *Good, the story is good. I have an intention to help others indeed. I also, God willing will respect older people and be more loyal.*
5. *In my opinion, the film is good. There are a lot of lessons could be taken. The example, we must be loyal and share to others. I have an intention to be a better leader and share with my friends in dormitory.*
6. *The film is perfect. I have to be able to care to others. I must change myself, not to be selfish.*
7. *The film is cool. We must be a loyal person. We must help each other. I used to be a selfish person but I will not repeat that attitude anymore.*
8. *By this story, I will try to be much better. Inside this story, there are a lot of moral values that we can learn such as respect others and not to be selfish. We must not be individualistic people. With this story, I will be a better person.*

From the statements above, it could be analyzed that the students have understood Asian moral values. They did self reflection by comparing their real life with the values on the story.

Conclusion

Story telling can be used as a method to teach values in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. Besides practicing their English skills which are reading, listening, writing and speaking, the class participants have tried to comprehend the story. All of the participants understand the Asian values from the story. Some of them stated that they wanted to implement the values learnt on their real life.

Further, It is suggested to conduct quantitative research with more numbers of students and longer term of research to obtain the impact of the learning activities on the class participants' values implementation in their daily life.

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Keterangan Penulis

Lisa Rosaline, S. Pt, lahir di Bogor, 11 April 1981. Lulusan Fakultas Peternakan, Program Studi Ilmu Nutrisi Ternak, Institut Pertanian Bogor. Beberapa prestasi lain pernah diraihinya sebagai pemakalah seminar dan workshop internasional, dan salah satunya adalah pada event The 10th Asia TEFL International Conference on "Expanding Horizons of Language and Communication: ELT Issues, Challenges and Implications" (India, Oktober 5th 2012). Dalam penulisan karya ilmiah kali ini, penulis dibantu oleh Lizamudin (Mahasiwa Sekolah Guru Indonesia) untuk menerjemahkan tulisan ke dalam bahasa Inggris. Saat ini penulis adalah pengajar Bahasa Inggris di SMP SMART Ekselensia.