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Developing Soft Skills Through the Jigsaw Learning Model

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Abstract

Soft skills can be categorized into seven types. These are Communication, Organizational, Leadership, Logic, Effort, Group, and Ethics; they can be abbreviated into one acronym: COLLEGE. Jigsaw is one model of active learning. The Jigsaw is a cooperative learning technique in which students work in small groups. It can be used in a variety of ways for a variety of goals, but it is primarily used for the acquisition and presentation of new material, review, or informed debate. The Jigsaw learning model can be applied in language classes. This paper will describe how Jigsaw has been used to support all seven categories of soft skills in English language learning classes at university level. It will demonstrate how the Jigsaw learning model can develop language learners' soft skills.

Keywords: soft skills, jigsaw, soft skills development

Introduction

The Job Outlook 2008 Survey of 276 employers examined the qualities that employers look for in prospective employees (in Beard). Data was collected using a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5 with "1" indicating that the characteristic was "not important" and "5" indicating that the characteristic was "extremely important". The levels of importance for the characteristics studied as follows:

The data shows that of the twelve qualities which are very important for the employees required by the employers are mostly intangible skills or attributes. These attributes later are well known as "soft skills".

Skill	Value
Communication skills (verbal and written)	4.6
Strong work ethic	4.6
Teamwork skills (works well with others)	4.5
Initiative	4.4
Interpersonal skills (relates well with others)	4.4
Problem-solving skills	4.4
Analytical skills	4.3
Flexibility/ adaptability	4.2
Computer skills	4.1
Technical skills	4.1
Detail orientation	4.0
Organizational skills	4.0

Source: Job Outlook 2008 Survey www.naceweb.org

Table 1. Skills and Characteristics Sought by Employers

Arnon Rotem (2010) wrote that an architect needs to be familiar with a wide range of technologies, methodologies, understand the software lifecycle, has design experience, etc., which are categorized as "hard skills". The hard skills are important. However, it doesn't stop there if he/she wants to be a good architect. Someone needs to master "soft skills" such as leadership, communication skills, and human relation.

It is important to develop language learner's soft skills in order they are also ready to become preferred employees when they graduated from university. There are some ways to build their soft skills up. One of the ways is through learning process in the class room applying the Jigsaw learning model. It provides soft skills development to the students through its activities.

What Are Soft Skills?

The Malaysian Institute of Higher Learning interprets soft skills as incorporating aspects of generic skills which include non-academic skills such as leadership, teamwork, communication, and lifelong learning (Roselina, 2009). Plotkin (2010) stated that soft skills are being sensitive to the needs of others, wanting to be of service to others, being courteous, being appreciative, being a hard worker, being dependable, and being honest. Soft skills are the combined product of a person's aptitude and values.

Vast research and expert opinions have been sought in the effort to determine the specific soft skills to be implemented and used in higher institution of learning. Roselina (2009) identifies seven elements of soft skills. They are (1) communication skills, (2) critical thinking and problem solving skills, (3) team work, (4) lifelong learning and information management skills, (5) entrepreneurship skill, (6) ethics and professional moral, and (7) leadership skill.

Ichsan and Ariyanti (2005), adapting S. Obrein's *Winning Characteristic*, splits the soft skills into seven aspects. They are: (1) Communication skills, (2) Organizational

skills, (3) Leadership, (4) Logic, (5) Effort, (6) Group skills, and (7) Ethics which can be abbreviated into one acronym: COLLEGE.

The first is communication skills. Communication is a process whereby symbols generated by people are received and proposed to by other people (Catchart and Samovar, 1988: 252). There are some elements involved in communication, such as people, message, channels, noise, context, feedback, and effect (Gamble, 1984: 8-11).

Ichsan and Ariyanti (2005) divides communication skills into two; oral and written communication. Oral communication skill has some branches such as personal communication skills, presentation skills, and group discussion skill. Some important features of a good personal communicator is least ambiguity, courageous to ask for clarification, and responsive to others' gesture and intonation (Ichsan and Ariyanti, 2005).

Presentation skill has a big role both in academic and work environment. It becomes essential when someone offers an idea or reports a project progress. An excellent idea may not attract others if it is not presented in a good way. An outstanding presenter always does a sufficient preparation both content and tools of presentation, starts the session interestingly, highlights the important points, keeps eye contact with the audiences, and be aware of audience's gesture and intonation (Ichsan and Ariyanti, 2005).

Discussion will give some good experiences to the students. The students will learn that to be a good member of a discussion requires courageousness to express an idea. This will demonstrate his/her capability. It also trains him/her how to run a discussion be on the focus of the issue. A good member also always takes notes on what have been discussed (Ichsan and Ariyanti, 2005).

Written communication has the same purpose with oral communication. It is also to communicate an idea to others. The very essential thing in written communication is how to convey an idea briefly and clearly. This demands the students to enjoy writing activities (Ichsan and Ariyanti, 2005).

6) The second element of soft skills is organizational skill. Ichsan and Ariyanti in *Sukses dengan Soft Skills* (2005) divide it into three parts. They are time management, motivation, and physical performance. The very principal thing in time management is how to manage various activities and assignment with good result, on time, and minimal stress. One of the ways is scheduling the agendas based on their priorities, time allocation, and evaluation of the schedule.

Motivation involves psychological process that cause arousal, direction, and persistence of behavior (Goldstein, 2002:120). Someone's motivation may both increase and decrease. It will raise if he/she has an obvious goal. An effective goal is typically specific, measurable, realistic, and flexible. Specific means it is apparent what to achieve. Measurable implies that it has criteria and method to recognize the achievement. Realistic indicates that it is possible to attain. Flexible denotes flexibility in getting the target.

The third part of soft skills is leadership. Forsyth (1983) defines leadership as a reciprocal process in which an individual is permitted to influence and motivate others to facilitate the attainment of mutually satisfying group and individual works. Manning and Curtis (2003) stated that leadership is social influence. It is initiating and guiding, and the result is a change. The product is a new character or direction that otherwise would never be. Manning and Curtis also agree that by their ideas and deeds, leaders show the way and influence the behavior of others.

Ichsan and Ariyanti (2005) cite five characteristics of a good leader. They are: (1) *inclusive*. It means that he/she understand and appreciate differences of the members. (2) *supportive*. It means he/she always support the members to take an optimum roles in the group. (3) *commitment*, meanings that a leader should have a commitment to achieve mutual objective. (4) *ethic*. A leader should become a model for his constituent. (5) *process oriented*, meanings that the leader appreciate others' effort to support group's objectives.

The next element of soft skills is logic. Logic has two branches, they are problem solving skill and creativity. Related to the problem solving, Charney (2006) cited John Foster Dull that the measure of success is not whether someone have a tough problem to deal with but whether it is the same problem he/she had last year. He, then, shows the six steps in solving a problem. They are understanding the problem, defining the problem, considering the values, identifying the root cause, choosing a solution, and implementing the solution.

Creativity means the process of discovering solutions of a problem. It is not a must that the solution is something merely new and extraordinary. The solution may be something common but it has high effectiveness to break the troubles. Some qualities of a creative person are such as high curiosity, be fond of challenge, optimistic, open-minded, imaginative, and mentally tough (Ichsan and Ariyanti, 2005)

The fifth part of soft skills is effort. It has assertiveness and lifelong learning. Shmerling (1996) defines assertiveness as "expressing your feelings, needs, and ideas and standing up for your legitimate rights in ways that do not violate the rights of others." Manning and Curtis (2003) distinguishes assertiveness from cooperativeness. Assertiveness is the desire to satisfy one's own needs and concerns. Cooperativeness is the desire to satisfy another person's needs and concern. Cooperativeness is other's satisfaction oriented whereas assertiveness is own satisfaction oriented by keeping appreciation of other's rights.

In acquiring skills and knowledge, students should be able to do self-regulated learning independently. They should have the skills to search for relevant information from various sources and able to manage them efficiently. They should also be receptive to new ideas and able to develop an inquiry mind (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, in Roselina: 2009).

The sixth element of soft skills is group skills is group skills. The parts are team work

and interpersonal skill. Team work indicates one's ability to work together with various background people, both social and cultural, to achieve mutual objectives. To create a good atmosphere and relationship in the work environment, the members of community or group of people should have mutual understanding in belief, attitude, and behavior. Manning and Curtis in his book *The Art of Leadership* (2003) notes some features of an excellent group such as clear mission, informal atmosphere, lots of discussion, active listening, trust and openness, disagreement is OK, criticism is issue-oriented, never personal, consensus is the norm, effective leadership, clarity of assignment, shared values and norms behavior, and commitment.

Interpersonal skill refers to one's ability to associate with others or to build a good relation with others. Preserving a good relationship with others is not easy. It requires mutual trust, mutual respect, and it takes time. It will construct not only a good relationship with other but also conducive and beneficial work atmosphere. Some means to build interpersonal skill effectiveness are: (1) no judging, (2) stop complaining, (3) award appreciation, (4) to be sincere, (5) always smile, (6) make someone else feel as an important person, and (7) ask and do not instruct

The last element of soft skill is ethics. Ethics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the intent, means, and consequences of moral behavior (Manning and Curtis: 2003). Some qualities of being an ethics are (1) attempting to satisfy others, (2) dedicated to accomplish ideal objectives, (3) lifelong learning, and (4) always endeavor to be the best on every moment (Ichsan and Ariyanti, 2005)

Jigsaw Learning Model

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that has been used for about forty years. This technique was invented in 1971 by Professor Elliot Aronson and his graduate students from the University of Texas (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.). It provides students

with an opportunity to actively help each other in their learning. Each student is assigned to a 'home groups' and an 'expert group' consisting of members from different home groups. Students meet in their expert group to discuss specific ideas or solve problems. They then turn to their home group, where all members share their expert knowledge (<http://www.lkdsb.net/program/elementary/intermediate/di/files>).

The procedure of The Jigsaw method are as follow: First, students are divided up into groups. The number in each group depends on the number of subtopics. It is namely "home group" or "original group". Second, each member of the group is assigned a section or portion of the material. Next, each student meets with the members of the other groups who have the same assigned section forming an expert group. Now they are in "expert group". Third, the expert group learns the material together and decides on how to teach the material to the original groups. Then, students return to their original groups, whose members are each now an expert in one of the different areas of the topics being studied, and teach their area of expertise to the other group members. In the end, a quiz is given. At that time no team members may help each other.

The Jigsaw learning model can be used to cover a large amount of material quickly, to introduce students to different perspectives on a topic, to introduce topics and create interest, and as a research strategy. In language classes, there are many subjects such as Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Introduction to English Literature History, English Business Letter, etc. can apply the Jigsaw learning model.

Soft Skills Development Through Jigsaw

The following paragraphs are explanation how the activities in the Jigsaw model learning can develop students' soft skills.

1. Communication Skills

Oral communication skills which can be developed in the Jigsaw learning model are personal communication skills, presentation skills, and group discussion skill. Students may learn to have a good personal communication skill during the activities proceed. Starting from the first step up to the end of the activities the students as the member of both home group and expert group should communicate one another. When rising some questions and state some ideas, they have to produce clear and least ambiguous sentences. They also may learn how to express ideas with certain intonation and gestures. Intonation for asking is different from intonation for stating. The gesture of appreciating is different from the gesture of complaining. These activities require the students to have courageousness.

Students have a large chance to practice their presentation and group discussion skill when they are both in the home and expert group. Lecturer assigns the students as members of the group to discuss (a) certain sub-topic(s). In the expert group they discuss the same topic and when they are back to their home groups they present the topic they have discussed in the expert group. In these two steps in the procedure of the Jigsaw the student may grasp and experience to be not only speakers but also listeners in the discussion. They can also measure how interesting they are when presenting their ideas in front of their audiences. Students can also evaluate themselves and their friends by answering such these questions: did I/he/she have enough preparation? , did I/he/she successfully attract the audience? did I/he/she keep eye contact with the audience?, did I/he/she take a note of the important points? Did I/he/she pay attention to the audiences' gesture? Did I/he/she actively take a part during the discussion, etc. If the answers are mostly "yes" meanings that they have good skills in presentation and discussion, and vice versa.

In the end of session, lecturer may assign the students to write a report of what they have gotten from the discussion. This will train the

students how to write a report with certain form and way. The lecturer may give feedback of the students' reports and t they may estimate how well their writing skills are.

2. Organizational skills

As we know that the Jigsaw has some steps in its procedure. Each step has its own time allocation. One of challenging parts in the Jigsaw is that the students have to manage the time proportionally. For example, when the students are in the expert group, the lecturer assign them to discuss or to understand a certain sub-topic with definite time allocation. Each group should manage themselves in order they can finish the assignment on time to understand or to discuss the sub-topic. Also, when they are in the home group in which each member should share what have been discussed in the expert group. In these activities they have to learn how to manage the time with the intention that everyone has a chance to share ideas and all members may understand what are being discussed. The students also learn how to manage the time based on the priorities and the time availability.

Motivation also has a big role in the all steps of the Jigsaw. The lecturer and students are demanded to be cooperative in assuring that the students are motivated. They have the same responsibility to the success of the whole process. The students, guided by lecturer, have to determine their specific goal in order they have high motivation during the program. They ought to really be acquainted with the criteria of the goal and sure that the goal is achievable.

3. Leadership

All groups, both in home and expert ones, should organize themselves in order they can carry on the discussion properly. Here the leader, and automatically leadership, is needed. The students will learn and experience to be a leader. They will find a way how to initiate and to guide their members. The way they guide the group will affect others' behavior and group's result. Also, they will

face various characteristics of colleagues and they will learn the art of leadership and how to be a good leader.

4. Logic

During the long steps of Jigsaw, students may find some problems. The problems may be either internal or external problems. They can be problem in communication, problem in building a good teamwork, or problem and questions given by the lecturer. A simple problem may alter to be a sophisticated problem. As well, a sophisticated problem may be solved easily by a great problem solver. In this way, the students may develop their skills in how to be an excellent problem solver. An smart student mostly tries to solve the difficulties starting from understanding and defining the problem, then considering the values, identifying the root cause, choosing a solution, and finally implementing it. A problem solver needs creativity. To rise creativity, the students should be open-minded, optimistic, imaginative, and having high curiosity.

5. Effort

A class has more than twenty students, let's say. They have various backgrounds and characteristics. Some are introvert, the others are extrovert. Some are 'easy going', the others are 'too careful' students. These may cause a problem in communication. Those who have assertiveness, psychologically, will face no dilemma. Those who haven't been able to be assertive possibly find some difficulties in building communication. This type of students will never free from such this problem if they never change their styles to be an assertive persons.

Jigsaw will give the students much more opportunities to interact intensely with various backgrounds of personalities. It means that they will have more chance to learn to be assertive. It is not easy to do, but they will feel more convenient after practicing it. The lecturer should encourage the students to be assertive.

Including effort is lifelong learning. It is related to the independency in learning. Although Jigsaw is a cooperative learning, it requires students to be independent. To have a good discussion, where all members are active and not dominated by certain limited member, every of them should participate in sharing ideas, responding questions, etc. It demands the students to be independent in searching information, managing it efficiently, and sharing it to the others.

6. Group Skills

Some activities in the Jigsaw demand the students to work in team; starting activities of grouping, discussion in the home and expert group. They will meet and work with different characteristics and qualities people at least in those two groups. They work together in the teams to achieve mutual objectives. To achieve the objectives they have to form a solid team work. They will learn how to create a good atmosphere and relationship in their groups, how to be good listeners, how to form trust and openness among them, etc.

Interpersonal skills of the students in the groups may become the vital factor to build a solid team work. For example, when they are discussing a topic and one of them sharing ideas, the quality of their interpersonal skills will determine how they give responses. Will they appreciate, judge, or complain the speaker? It depends on their interpersonal skill. Intensive interaction and team work will push them for developing their interpersonal skill.

7. Ethics

Ethics here means qualities of being ethics such as attempting to satisfy others, dedicated to accomplish ideal objectives, lifelong learning, and always endeavor to be the best on every occasion. These excellent qualities should be embedded in every student if they want to have a successful Jigsaw. If most students attempt to be the best in the activities by being active, independent, cooperative, and try to communicate in a good way, the Jigsaw activities will award many advantages to the students. They will take and

give each other. If they are not active in the expert group discussion, they will make their friends in the home group unsatisfied. The students will learn try to satisfy others because they know that they will get the same deeds like what he did to their friends.

Conclusion

Based on the elaboration above, it can be concluded that: *first*, soft skills are very important to develop for higher education students including language learners. Soft skills are intangible but they mostly influence students' accomplishment. *Second*, Many subjects in the language classes possibly utilize the Jigsaw learning model. *Third*, Jigsaw learning model activities may develop students' soft skills such as communication skills, organizational skills, logic, leadership, effort, and ethic.

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