

ENGLISH FOR 21ST CENTURY INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century hosts various radical changes in the ways we live our life, especially in the ways we communicate our ideas, feelings, concerns, and other kinds of self-expressions. Today, our communication is no longer simple. The advancement of science and technology, especially ICT renders it multimodal and multi-semiotic. Our texts contain various semiotic resources, not only language, but also various kinds of image such as photos, emoticons, tables, scientific symbols, etc.; layout, music, and cyber hyperlinks; and in some cases it even includes videos and various kinds of taped materials which combines multimodality, including aural, visual, and kinetic modes.

This paper is intended to present 21st century world and the new demands of communication in our today's life, and the nature and roles of English in this century communication. To be specific, this paper is aimed at answering questions on how English is to be best learned and taught, how English is to be best utilized, and how the English curriculum is to be best oriented. While most of the content is theoretical and predictive, empirical examples will be used to illustrate the concepts, relations and procedures involved in this paper. Some conclusions and suggestions will conclude this paper.

Key words: 21st century world, multimodality, multi-semiotic resources, blended learning

INTRODUCTION

Rapid advancement in science and technology has brought with it radical changes in the way we live our life, especially in our ways of communication (See, for example, Trilling, and Fadel, 2009; Poh, 2010; and Nadkarni, 2010). The frequency, interval, and intensity of our communication, both oral and written, are multiplied. The invention of smartphones enable us to communicate more frequently,

more complicated, and more effective. In the past, we communicate through our office and home telephones. The frequency was not as frequently as that through smartphones. Quite often, when we were out, we would only get the message when we reached our offices or homes. Today, as we bring with us our mobile phones, we can check the messages wherever and whenever they reach us. In the meantime, in terms of the content, the message is far more complicated than it was before. In addition, in terms of the text forms, it involves multimodal and multi-semiotic resources of meaning making (See Kress et al., 2001; Jewitt et al., 2001; Hampel, 2006; and Salmon, 2011; Suherdi, in press). These all represent the complexity of the 21st world and texts. English as one of the systems of representation grows more and more complicated in its manifestation in our communication. It is now mandated to represent our ever-changing and growing world of the 21st century through multimodal and multi-semiotic texts (See also Suherdi, 2015).

Multimodal and multi-semiotic nature of today's English is by no means surprising. As the world is growing more demanding in terms of the skills individuals need to acquire for successful life (Trilling, and Fadel, 2009; Poh, 2010; see also Suherdi, 2012a, b, and <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>), English is forced to take its existing forms, utilizing various modes of communication and different kinds of semiotic resources (Cf. Suherdi, in press). To help readers understand this phenomena, see Figure 1a.

The image is a screenshot of a CNN news website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the CNN logo and various menu items like 'News', 'Regions', 'Video', 'TV', 'Features', 'Opinions', and 'More...'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with regional categories: 'U.S.', 'China', 'Asia', 'Middle East', 'Africa', 'Europe', and 'Americas'. The main headline is 'Oregon shooting: Medical examiner rules gunman killed self, sheriff says'. Below the headline, it says 'By Sara Sidner, Kyung Lah, Faith Karimi and Ryan Young, CNN' and 'Updated 0903 GMT (1003 HKT) October 4, 2015 | Video Source: CNN'. There are social media sharing icons for RSS, Facebook, Twitter, and a general share icon. The main content area features a large video player showing Sheriff John Hanlin speaking at a press conference. The video has a red banner at the bottom that reads 'OREGON SCHOOL SHOOTING NEW POLICE BRIEFING ON CAMPUS KILLINGS Sheriff John Hanlin Douglas County, Oregon'. To the right of the video is a sidebar with several related article thumbnails and titles, including 'Umpqua Community College shooting', 'Who were the victims?', 'Shooting hero blocked door, took bullets', 'Victim tells dad: Gunman singled out Christians', 'Sheriff who "will never" say shooter's name is no fan of gun control', 'Frantic students hid behind backpacks, chairs', and 'Photos: Oregon campus shooting aftermath'. Below the video player is a row of five 'New Playing' video thumbnails with titles: 'Sheriff: Umpqua gunman had 14 guns, committed suicide', 'Oregon shooter's father: Gun laws have to change', 'Sheriff responds to controversy over Facebook post', 'Aunt of Oregon shooting hero speaks out', and 'Army veteran shooter: "He better be"'. At the bottom right, there is a 'More from CNN' section.

Figure 1a Multimodal and Multi-semiotic News Texts

As indicated in Figure 1, the English text utilizes more than one modes of communication (aural, visual, and kinetic), and multi-semiotic resources (language, photos, layout, hyperlinks) to express the meaning the author(s) want(s) to convey. From the text, we can understand the main ideas, the characters involved, the victims, the hero, etc. Analysis of this kind of texts may reveal the roles and interrelationship existing among all the text elements: title, the main picture, pictures and texts on the lists (on the right and at the bottom), even the logo of CNN, the caption title, and the time and the reporters. To get further information, readers may click or double click the captions on both lists. This sophisticated text can tell readers more information than mono-modal and mono-semiotic texts. Furthermore, by the virtue of internet and its applications, the news will be regularly updated time to time. To get you fuller picture of the (macro) text, see Figure 1b, the continuation of the text presented in Figure 1a.

The image shows a screenshot of a CNN news article page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the CNN logo and links for News, Regions, Video, TV, Features, Opinions, and More... The 'Regions' section is expanded to show U.S., China, Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe, and Americas. Below the navigation bar, there is a video player with a 'Now Playing' indicator and a list of video thumbnails with their durations. The main article text is titled 'Roseburg, Oregon (CNN)' and discusses a shooting incident. To the right of the main text, there is a 'More from CNN' section with several news thumbnails and their titles. The thumbnails include Donald Trump, a woman's final words, a Snapchat photo, Afghanistan deaths, back-to-school worms, and Russia's air attacks.

News Regions Video TV Features Opinions More... International Edition Search CNN

U.S. China Asia Middle East Africa Europe Americas

Now Playing
Sheriff: Umpqua gunman had 14 guns, committed suicide 05:35
Oregon shooter's father: Gun laws have to change 02:07
Sheriff responds to controversy over Facebook post 04:25
Aunt of Oregon shooting hero speaks out 02:20
Army veteran shooter: 'I'm getting by f

More from CNN

Donald Trump holds commanding lead in new Pew poll
Hear executed woman's final words

Snapchat photo a clue in shooting death
Afghanistan: 19 die in air attacks on hospital; U.S. investigating

Back-to-school worms to watch out for
Russia launches new wave of

Story highlights

NEW: Father, who lives in California, says he was unaware shooter had any firearms

Investigators found 6 guns at school, 8 at shooter's home

Sheriff says gunman was enrolled in the class where the shootings took place

Roseburg, Oregon (CNN)—Chris Harper-Mercer, the shooter behind the deadly rampage at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, apparently committed suicide after exchanging gunfire with officers, Douglas County Sheriff John Hanlin said Saturday.

A timeline released by investigators shows that the first 911 call about the Thursday's shooting came at 10:38 a.m.

Six minutes later, Hanlin said, two Roseburg police officers and a state trooper arrived on the scene. At 10:46 a.m., the officers exchanged gunfire with Harper-Mercer. Two minutes later, there was a report of "suspect down," according to the timeline.

Hanlin said the state medical examiner determined the gunman's death was a suicide. State police are investigating the shootout.

Figure 1b Multimodal and Multi-semiotic News Texts

The language text presented in Figure 1b is an integral part of the whole macro text in this web page (<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/03/us/oregon-umpqua-community-college-shooting/>), and of course this is not the only part. Below this part, it has other integral parts, each of which contribute to the meaning of the whole macro text in the page.

The illustrations thus far presented is intended to give a global picture of how English should be viewed in the 21st century world. This leads us to some critical questions to answer: (1) How is then English to be best learned and taught? (2) How is English to be best utilized? And (2) How is the English curriculum to be best oriented? All these questions will be answered in the following sections.

ENGLISH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

How Is It Best to Be Learned and Taught?

The nature of English as discussed in the introduction inevitably requires significant changes in the way English is to be learned and, consequently, taught. From the illustration, it might be clear that traditional approaches to learning and teaching English are no longer appropriate (See Suherdi, 2015a, b, c). Discrete dealings with such language elements as vocabulary, syntax, and orthography or phonology in learning and teaching English will not only take a far longer time to master productive English communication skills, but also far more difficult for students to get the real sense of having a good command of English, both spoken and written.

The alternatives to be developed requires exposures to texts in real communicative contexts in which they are used to accomplish communicative purposes. This tasks are carried out through certain stages of communication, each of which build the most effective ways of doing communication. What is being developed by genre-based teaching (sometimes referred to as GBA) proponents may serve as an example. GBA is by no means the only approach available. However, for the purpose of this paper's use in today's Indonesian context (Cf. PP No. 19/2015 and PP No. 32/2013; Suherdi, 2013), it will be discussed in sufficient details in the rest of our discussion item here.

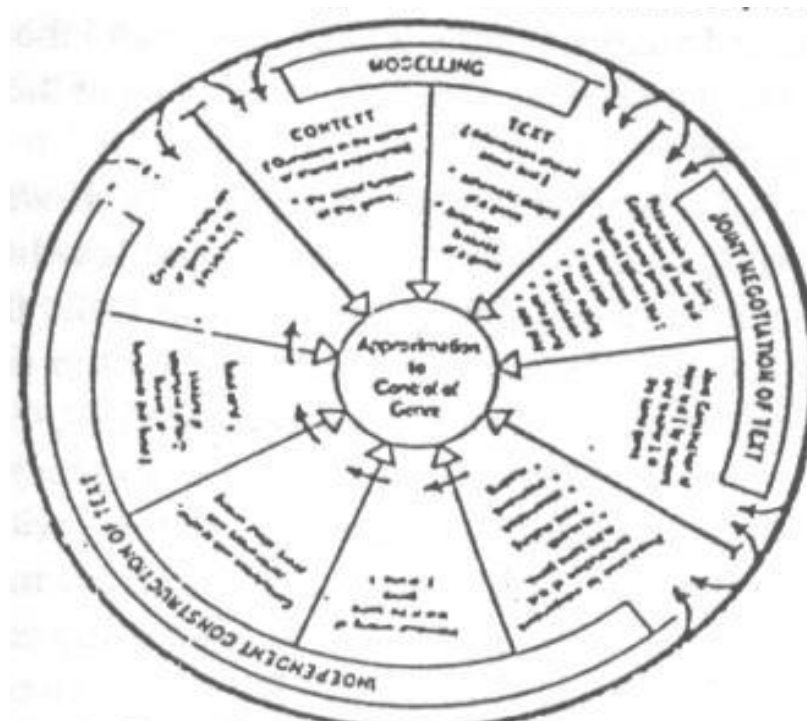


Figure 4: Teaching actual Writing: A Genre-based

GBA serves the expectation in the way it is established on the basis that language is not a set of rules but rather a repertoire of meaning-making resources language users may choose in accomplishing their communicative purposes (Halliday, 1985) in line with the social functions integral to the culture in which the communication is being performed (Martin 2015). This approach provides students with ample opportunities to be immersed in the texts, to be exposed to explicit teaching of functional grammar, and to a variety of well-staged scaffolding in producing the texts in the ways it is used and developed in real life communication. In initial stage of development GBA is developed as an instrument to lead disadvantaged students to master prestigious texts as an alternative way to get access to the 'mainstream' society (Martin 1985). Today, GBA is widely adopted beyond its initial intention. To get a comprehensive picture of GBA read Christie (1994), Martin (1992, 2015), Martin and Rothery (1980), Dudley-Evans (2002), Gibbons (2002), Hyland (2003), Emilia (2005, 2010). This paper is not intended to present an extensive discussion of GBA, and to illustrate the teaching cycle commonly carried out in a GBA class, see Figure 2.

As indicated in Figure 2, the teaching cycles represent all the necessary activities to develop a strong commitment to the mastery of a genre through systematic stages of development. In initial stages, students are exposed to natural texts found in real contexts of situation. Through systematic observation of the models of texts, students are expected to note important features of the texts in the genre learned. In addition, students are also led to develop the knowledge of the topic conveyed by the texts. Questioning will be natural parts of this activity. While observing, with or without teacher's elicitation, students will automatically be aroused to pose even limitless number of questions such as those related to words meanings and usage, pronunciation, linguistic constituent construction, the main ideas, the relationship among the texts elements, etc. In the meantime, in joint construction stage, they will have good opportunities to experiment their understanding and skills in revealing the text meaning or in constructing texts

How Is It to Be Best Utilized?

In relation to the second question, i. e. how English is to be best utilized, two considerations need to be taken into account. First, as ICT technology goes beyond the traditional boundaries of 'educated' communities to laymen, English, to some extent, has also been parts of broader English users' communities. This was not the case or at least very rare in the past. Second, in terms of its forms, English is to be used in its fullest multimodal and multi-semiotic potentials.

In conjunction with the first consideration, one of the widespread phenomena in our society is that English has even been common among laymen. Such terms as download, upload, loading, forward, reply, copy, paste, Bluetooth, tweeter, Facebook, email, etc. are just few examples. Advertisers use these terms to navigate customers to open uploaded files through a series of clicking some relevant buttons. To some extent, this shows how English is used to communicate with even non-English learners to accomplish real communicative purposes.

In the meantime, the second consideration entails imperative use of multimodal and multi-semiotic resources to get optimum results of the communication processes (See Suherdi, 2012; Goh, 1997; Kuhn, 2000; Bendixen and Hartley, 2003; Young and Fry, 2008). There are some rules that have

to be followed in order to make it a great success. The combination of semiotic resources should be done in line with multimodal and multi-semiotic 'grammar'. In the ideational meta-function, for example, it should be considered whether the author will choose realistic, conventional, or hybrid (the combination between both types of ideational representation). In interpersonal meta-function, it should be determined whether, s/he will use the image whether to offer information or to demand viewer's attention; to develop personal, interpersonal, or impersonal relationship with the viewers; or whether s/he will put them in low, equal, or high position, etc. Last, in textual meta-function, consideration should be taken whether s/he will choose to put them in a segregation, separation, integration, overlapping, or rhyming groupings; in a given/new or real/ideal construction, etc (Cf. Suherdi, in press).

How Is English Curriculum to Be Oriented?

As for the last question, i. e. how the English curriculum is to be best oriented. English is now expected to help learners develop their learning not merely as a means to good mastery of learning materials and experiences, but rather develop themselves as competitive, respected, and caring international citizens (Meek, 2010; and Plata, 2010). This, of course, leads English curriculum at schools to a more needs-based and quality-assured activities rather than merely as a set of relevant document; a more skills- and competence-oriented practices, rather than a series of lectures), and, consequently, English teachers need to be educated in this perspective (Senior, 2010; Poh, 2010; and Suherdi, 2012). In this relation, four main considerations are imperative for successful English education. First, English should be taught as a foreign language in an effort of developing proficient users as independent, respectable, and caring Indonesians contributive to international endeavors on peace, justice and welfare. Second, English should be taught as a tool for optimum meaning-making in accomplishing students' learning, work, and life. Last, English should be taught in a real life context or at least real-life-like situations. Last, ICT should be integral part of students' learning.

The first consideration entails the significance of character and sense of national identity development. We are not creating English competent users at the expense of our noble character and national identity. Our students should grow as Indonesians with competitive communication skills. Through English they can represent Indonesian noble values, culture and identity. In the meantime, the second implies that English should be a means to better life, not merely as 'a set of rules' to be memorized, performed in front of our classrooms. Hence, the texts taught should go beyond finely tuned (Krashen, 1982) short passages followed by convergent exercises. It should motivate students to explore and master authentic texts used in various contexts in our daily communication, including daily professional routines.

The third suggests that both learning and assessment processes should be carried out in real contexts or at least real-life-like situations. Hence, misled practices such as teaching dialog for the purpose of resulting in dialog scripts to read in front of the classrooms, reading aloud without specific reference to such real practice of loud reading as news reading, storytelling, etc., is not any more tolerable. Likewise, assessing students speaking ability through multiple choice of appropriate expressions, writing assessment through cloze procedures, etc., may only play a very peripheral role in today's teaching.

The last consideration leads to the significance of optimizing ICT for the sake of creating excellence in all aspects of students' life involving communication in all settings (local, regional, or international). The development of LMSs and open sources such as MOODLE, MOOCS, SPOT, etc. provides teachers and educators with a wide range of creative opportunities to develop both 21st century skills, including multimodal and multi-semiotic communication which is the heart of 21st century success (Cf. Freeman, 2010; Graddol, 2010).

The 21st Century English in Indonesian Contexts

The last part of this paper will be devoted to seeing how English should be taught in 21st century Indonesian contexts. Discussions on this topic is very critical as far as Indonesia is concerned. Instead of getting benefits, most of our fellow people are getting 'drowned' in information flood, dragging them into humiliation and disgrace. Many criminal cases are reported to be caused by abuses of ICT (Cf. Suherdi, 2012). Inappropriate control imposed on 'forbidden' contents may be one of the most significant causes of these abuses. Many teachers even refuse to utilize cellphones in their teachings simply because it is hard to protect students from such abuses. Hence, making the best use of ICT in Indonesian contexts needs a careful, well-thought, and high motivation in both the teachers' and students' parts (See also Suherdi, 2013). Otherwise, the students will be jeopardized rather than facilitated and advantaged.

Preliminary research findings (Suherdi, 2015) show that most of Indonesian students are equipped with more than one cellphones and they are eager to use them for the purpose of entertainment and social networking. However, when their teachers want them to use the gadgets for academic purpose they are reluctant and even refuse to participate. Hence, as far as Indonesia is concerned, there is a tension between the possibility of putting the potentials into achievement, and the possibility of putting the students into jeopardy or at least into a waste of time.

To guarantee the best English teaching and use of ICT in today's Indonesia, some principles need to be taken into consideration: (1) good character should be developed as a pre-requisite for English program, (2) students' cultural contexts should be the basis of the teaching-learning processes, (3) optimum English mastery should be the main target, (4) ICT should be integral part of the teaching-learning processes, (5) successful communication should be the ultimate goal of the teaching programs, and (6) real use should be the focus of assessment.

Based on those principles, English teaching will be entertaining on the one hand and aimed at high standard of achievement on the other hand. Students will be encouraged to contextualize their English communication in their real and valued experience. They have all the reasons to finish their learning tasks and experiences cheerfully as they feel the approachability of the teachers. Through the synergy of passion and discipline, they will climb up the stages of success in mastering English and utilizing ICT in its upmost levels of productive use. Eventually, they will grow as a real and respectable Indonesians that are ready to develop international peace, justice and prosperity in equitable collaborations with other nations.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This paper has presented the nature of English in the 21st century, how it is to be best learned and taught and utilized, and how the English curriculum is to be best oriented. The development of ICT leads English to get its multimodal and multi-semiotic nature, and hence need to be learned and taught as well as utilized in more complicated, ICT-based, and oriented to developed better learning, work and life. Therefore, it is suggested that English should be learned and taught integrated with ICT in real life contexts.

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