POTENTIAL EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF INCORPORATING STRUCTURED CONTROVERSY IN EFL CONTEXT AND ITS POSSIBLE CHALLENGES

Restu Mufanti
English Department, UNMUH Ponorogo

Abstrak: *Tujuan dari artikel ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi beberapa potensi akademik dari penerapan model pembelajaran kontroversi terstruktur (structured controversy) serta tantangan yang mungkin dihadapi pendidik, khususnya dalam proses pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing di tingkat universitas. Structured controversy merupakan salah satu model pembelajaran kooperatif dengan mengeksplorasi penggunaan konflik intelektual untuk memfasilitasi peserta didik agar mereka dapat memperluas dan memperdalam pemahamannya terhadap masalah/ topik yang dipelajari. Diyakini bahwa pelibatan peserta didik dalam proses kontroversi terstruktur dapat meningkatkan kemampuannya dalam menggali dan menyampaikan permasalahan akademis, menyelesaikan permasalahan yang dihadapi secara kolaboratif, dan menarik kesimpulan berdasarkan sudut pandang yang berbeda. Peserta didik lebih mampu menyampaikan argumen yang kuat dalam menentukan dan menafsirkan masalah, mengembangkan dan mengevaluasi solusi, menyusun rencana berdasarkan solusi yang dipilih, dan mampu merefleksi hasil belajar. Dalam artikel ini, ada tiga manfaat yang diperoleh ketika teknik kontroversi terstruktur diimplementasikan di kelas: (a) memberikan kesempatan luas bagi peserta didik untuk belajar bersama dalam situasi yang menantang dan bermakna, (b) memberikan peluang pada mereka untuk berproses bersama dengan teman sejawat dan negosiasi makna dalam proses interaksi diskusi, dan (c) meningkatkan kemampuan berfikir kritis mereka. Karena implementasi teknik ini membawa manfaat banyak dalam pembelajaran dan didukung dengan banyak teori serta hasil penelitian, disarankan bagi pendidik untuk mengintegrasikan praktik pembelajaran tersebut di kelas.*

تهدف هذه المقالة إلى اكتشاف الطاقة الأكاديمية من تطبيق نمط التعليم "structured controversy" والتحديات التي سيواجهها المدرس، وخاصة في عملية تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المستوى الجامعي. structured controversy" هو نمط من أنماط التعليم التعاوني باستخدام الخلاف الفكري كوسيلة للطلاب لتوسيع وتعميق الفهم تجاه الموضوع المدروس. وأيقن الكثير أن إشراك الطلاب في عملية الخلاف المركّب يرقّي قدراتهم على الاكتساب والعرض للمسائل الأكاديمية ثم حلّ المشكلات التي تواجههم عن طريق التعاون ثم استنتاج النتائج على الأسس أو وجهات نظر مختلفة. بهذا كان الطلاب أقدر على عرض

البراهين القوية في تعيين وتفسير المسألة، وتنمية وتقويم الحلّ، ثم اختيار الخطة على أساس الحلّ المختار وقادرون كذلك على التأمل في نتائج الدراسة. وثمة ثلاث منافع في تطبيق نمط "structured controversy في التعليم، وهي (١)، إعطاء الفرصة الواسعة للطلاب للتعلم جماعة في جوّ متحدّ وذى معنى. (٢) إعطاء الامكانية لهم للعمل الجماعي مع غيرهم والتساوم في المعنى في عملية الاتصال النقاشي، (٣) ترقية طاقاتهم في التفكير النقدي. ولأن تطبيق هذا النمط من التعليم له منافعه، وفيه نظريّات ودراسات تؤيده، فيوصي للمدرسين تطبيق هذا النمط من التعليم في الفصول.

Keywords: Structured controversy, collaborative learning, negotiation of meaning, peer assistance, critical thinking

INTRODUCTION

The use of structured controversy for instructional purposes is less known and gets little attention from teachers. It is possibly noticed that controversy is a worthless or even destructive term for students in language learning. As Johnson & Johnson argue that controversy is as divisive, alienating students from each other, with the least capable feeling defeated and humiliated.[1] Additionally, some teachers avoid controversy fearing that among students may lead to serious rifts, even violence, and arouse the displeasure of administrators and community members.[2] For this reasons, teachers do not occupy and subdue controversy as a model to deliver instruction in the classroom.

In the classroom interaction, however, students may experience controversy whenever or whatever they learn in the classroom. For instance, students may encounter controversy situation when their ideas are challenged or argued by other's opinion. They are easily to get conflict with their peer mates because of silly controversy. Little controversy may lead larger conflict if they have poor knowledge and experience to overcome or are not able to manage controversy in appropriate ways. In future global workplace, however, acquiring the ability of critical thinking and problem solving is unavoidable to help students succeed in their career. Shortly, the ability to handle controversies in any field is paramount important for students to acquire. For those reasons, therefore, teachers in some subject areas and at various levels of education incorporate controversy as instructional delivery technique hoping that students can achieve their potential epistemic level.

---

[1] David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson, "Critical Thinking through Structured Controversy", *Educational Leadership,* 45 (8), (1988), 58.

[2] George Jacobs "Academic Controversy: a cooperative way to debate," *Intercultural Education,* Vol. 21, No. 3, (2010), 291.

The term of structured controversy, also recognized as "structure academic controversy", "academic controversy", or "cooperative controversy", is defined variously. Johnson and Johnson define that structuring academic controversy is a discussion that helps the students to broaden and deepen understanding related to an issue, problem or topic.[3] It is a type of academic conflict that exists when one student's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, or opinions are incompatible with those of another and the two seek to reach an agreement.[4] More operationally, the application of this technique involves a cooperative form of debate in which groups of four, divided into pairs, take turns representing two opposing views on an issue before attempting to reach a consensus on the issue.[5]

The benefits of applying structured controversy are adequately supported both theories and empirical studies. As Johnson, Johnson & Smith argue, structured controversy is the instructional use of intellectual conflict to promote higher achievement and increase the quality of problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, reasoning, interpersonal relationships, and psychological health and well-being.[6] Meanwhile, a classroom research conducted by Mufanti revealed that the use of structured academic controversy improved college students' achievement in speaking course.[7] In particular, the result of study showed that the mean score of students' speaking achievement could be improved from 67.33 (cycle 1) to 72.44 (cycle 2) in term of content; and 71.33 (cycle 1) to 74.67 (cycle 2) in term of delivery. Additionally, the application of structured academic controversy were better able to engage students to work collaboratively to solve academic problems, share ideas well and give argumentation forcefully and acceptably, reverse perspective, and make conclusion well.

Drawing upon the discussion above, it is obvious that the use of structured controversy provides fruitful benefits if it is structured and controlled well. It is asserted that the application of structured controversy can stimulate learning as well as foster learning achievement. In this paper, threefold benefits will be gained through the process of structured controversy: (a) giving students

---

[3] David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson, *Critical Thinking through Structured Controversy*, 59.

[4] *ibid*

[5] George Jacobs, *Academic Controversy: A Cooperative Way To Debate*, 291.

[6] D.W. Johnson, R. Johnson, & K.A. Smith, *Academic Controversy: Enriching Collage Instruction through Intellectual Conflict*, (Washington, D.C: The George Washington University, 1996), 3.

[7] Restu Mufanti, *Optimalisasi Pembelajaran Kooperatif Melalui Structured Academic Controversy Model Untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Proses Dan Hasil Belajar Mata Kuliah Speaking IV Di Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Banyuwangi,* laporan penelitian Dosen Muda, (Banyuwangi: UNTAG Banyuwangi, 2010), 52.

opportunities to work collaboratively in free risk situation, (b) providing negotiation of meaning and peer assistance, and (c) shaping college students' critical thinking. Hence, this paper is aimed at highlighting those possible educational benefits of implementing structured controversy in EFL learning. In what follows, the present paper also discusses the challenges of implementing structured controversy in EFL learning at university level. These issues are presented as follows.

A COOPERATIVE WAY TO DEBATE

Structured controversy is most often contrasted with debate or individualistic learning. As Susilo explains, the differentiation lies in the target of learning, in which it is not mainly focused on the winner or looser group likes in debate. In this model, however, the students are assigned to discuss an issue in a peer team, research and prepare a position, present and advocate their position, refute opposing positions and rebut attacks on their own position, reverse perspectives, and create a synthesis that everyone can agree to.[8]

Figure 1 provides detail information about the facts of structured controversy, debate, concurrent seeking and individualistic learning.

Figure 1. Facts of structured controversy, debate, and concurrent seeking[9]

Structured controversy	Debate	Concurrence seeking	Individualistic
Deriving conclusions by categorizing and organizing information and experiences	Deriving conclusions by categorizing and organizing information and experiences	Deriving conclusions by categorizing and organizing information and experiences	Deriving conclusions by categorizing and organizing information and experiences
Being challenged by opposing views	Being challenged by opposing views	Quick compromise to one view	Presence of only one view

[8] Andi Susilo, "Academic Controversy Model as an Alternative Strategy for Teaching Speaking at University Level," *Cendekia*, vol. 11 no. 2 (Juli-Desember 2013), 291.

[9] David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson, *Critical Thinking through Structured Controversy*, 61

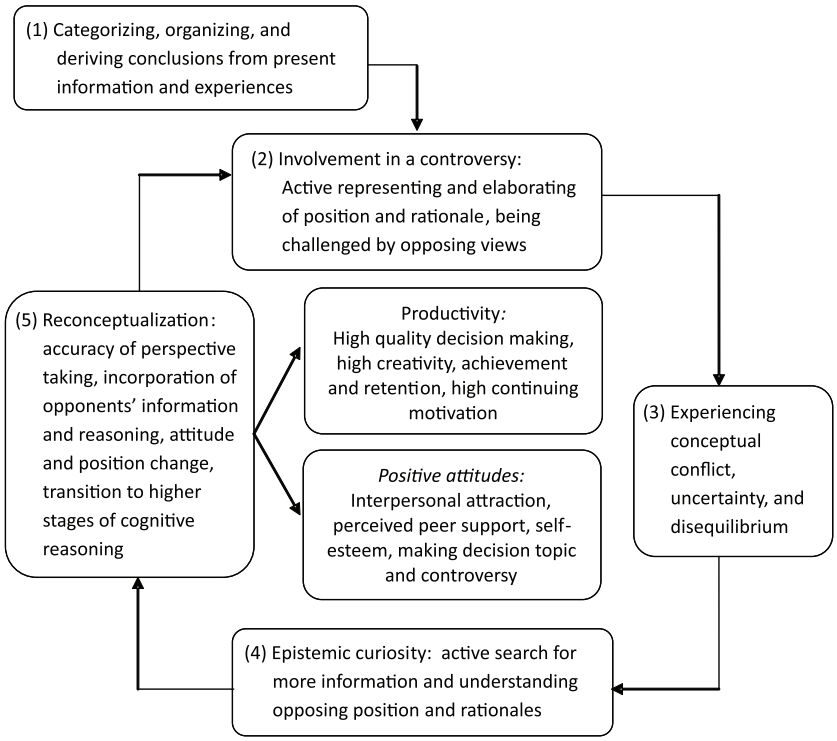
Structured controversy	Debate	Concurrence seeking	Individualistic
Uncertainty about the correctness of own view, cognitive conflict	Uncertainty about the correctness of own view, cognitive conflict	High certainty	High certainty
High epistemic curiosity	Moderate epistemic curiosity	Absence of epistemic curiosity	No epistemic curiosity
Active representation and elaboration of position and rationale	Active representation and elaboration of position and rationale	Active restatement of original position	No oral statement of position
High reconcep-tualization	Moderate reconcep-tualization	No reconcep-tualization	No reconcep-tualization
High productivity	Moderate productivity	Low productivity	Low productivity
High positive cathexis	Moderate positive cathexis	Low positive cathexis	Low positive cathexis

Additionally, structured controversy is also regarded as cooperative learning technique as some principles take place in cooperative context and they are as effort that results in more productive outcomes than competitive or individualistic efforts. The application of structured controversy results in more positive outcomes as this technique promotes positive interdependence, face to face promotive interaction, individual and group accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing. As Slavin claims that cooperative learning, involving structured controversy, shares the idea that students work together to learn and responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own. Those ideas are represented in figure 2 as noted by Johnson, Johnson & Smith.

One of requirements for an effectively structured cooperative lesson is positive interdependence. Positive interdependence refers to the perception that the students are linked with others in such a way that they cannot succeed unless

they do (vice versa); that is their work benefits us and our work benefits them. It is the feeling among a group of students that they need one another to share opinion, knowledge, and experience to improve their language skills. Within cooperative learning situations, students have two responsibilities, they are to learn the assigned material and ensure that all members of the group learn the assigned material. Positive interdependence exists when students coordinate their efforts with the efforts of their group mates to complete a task. Furthermore, Olsen & Kagan confirm that cooperative context occurs when the gains for one individual are associated with gains for other that is when one student achieves, other benefit, as well.

Figure 2. The process of structured controversy adopted from Johnson, Johnson & Smith



Moreover, structured controversy emphasizes on a specific collaborative skill. This skill is important to make the members work effectively in the group, and later on outside the school and in their careers. Hence, some aspects should be paid attention in teaching collaborative skills through structured controversy. Teachers are suggested to ensure students the need for the skills, understand what the skill looks like, and practice the skill in isolation from regular class

content. Teachers should integrate the skill into course content activities and encourage students to preserve in using it.

In addition, structured controversy shares the principle of processing group interaction. Interpersonal and small-group skills do not directly appear when they are needed. Students must be taught the social skills required for high quality collaboration and be motivated to use them if cooperative groups are to be productive. When cooperative learning through structured controversy is used, it is necessary to set the time for the students to discuss how well their group is working together. Processing group interaction has two aspects, they are the good things about group functioning should be brought out; and the group should discuss what in their interaction needs to be improved. In order to coordinate efforts to achieve mutual goals, students are hoped to be able to get to know and trust each other, communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support each other, and resolve conflict constructively.

The next principle of structured controversy is heterogeneous grouping. Many experts on cooperative learning recommend that students usually be placed by teachers in groups which are heterogeneous on such dimensions as past achievement, diligence, ethnicity and sex. In so doing, structured controversy accomplishes this principle in the process of grouping students in a team or pair. According to Johnson & Johnson, the advantages of heterogeneous group are: a) mixing achievements to promote peer tutoring, b) improved relations among students of different ethnicities, and c) sex difference can bring out unique perspectives to group discussion.[10]

Moreover, structured controversy also involves the principle of individual accountability. The purpose of assigning students in pairs is to make each student becomes a stronger individual in his or her own right. Concerning with this goal, individual accountability is the key to ensuring that all group members are, in fact, strengthened by learning cooperatively. Therefore, after participating in a collaborative learning situation, it is expected that group members should be better prepared to complete similar tasks by themselves. During structured controversy, everyone in pair is encouraged to participate in doing all the work and all the learning. Shortly, structured controversy is certainly able to promote individual accountability as it ensures each student individually takes his/her own role in learning, completes a task or writes report based on the issue

[10] Johnson & Johnson, *Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom,* (Cornela Drive Edina, Mineseta 55425: Interaction Book Company 7208, 1990).

discussed, and each member of group is principally responsible for one part of his or her group's project as happened in cooperative learning context.[11]

In accord to the discussion, it can be justified that structured controversy is a group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. Shortly, it can be said that structured controversy is a cooperative form of debate.

PEDAGOGICAL ACTIVITIES THAT PROVIDE NEGOTIATION FOR MEANING AND PEER ASSISTENCE

Some researches in ESL/EFL context have revealed the essential role of classroom interaction that involves both input and output activities. As Krashen emphasizes, input plays a crucial role to the students' language development.[12] It is believed that comprehensive and right quantity input is the central concern that learners are able to learn language optimally. Like Krashen, Long has given prestige to comprehensible input but he puts more emphasis on two-way interaction, conversational adjustments as a result of negotiation, and how negotiation can make the input more comprehensible.[13] Accordingly, interactional adjustments were the most valuable way in which input is made comprehensible. These are the attempts of learners and their conversation partners to overcome comprehension difficulties so that incomprehensible or partly comprehensible input becomes comprehensible through negotiating meaning.

Negotiation is one of a range of conversational processes that facilitate learning as students work to understand and express meaning in the target language. In negotiation processes, students may check, repeat, clarify, or modify problem utterances in some ways. This process enables students to achieve the optimum level of understanding. The value in these negotiations, especially in group work, is that they can provide comprehensible input which is made to measure for individual learners and their current interlanguage level. Negotiation of meaning may help students increase their awareness towards language features

---

[11] Davidson, N. *Cooperative Learning: A Handbook for Teachers*, (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1990),

[12] Krashen, S. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition,* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982).

[13] M. Long & C.J Sato. "Classroom foreigner talk discourse: Forms and functions of teachers' questions." In Seliger & Long, *Classroom oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition*, Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, 1983), 268–86.

which do not match the standard of the target language (TL) and the parts that are still beyond them.[14] Shortly, negotiation of meaning is essential in language learning to help students obtain comprehensible input.

Long confirms that there are three types of negotiation strategies used by students in the process of interaction, they are comprehension check, confirmation check, and clarification request.[15] Comprehension check is any expression by an NS (native speaker) designed to establish whether that speaker's preceding utterance(s) had been understood by the interlocutor. Confirmation check is any expression by the NS immediately following an utterance by the interlocutor which was designed to elicit confirmation that the utterance had been correctly understood or correctly heard by the speaker. Meanwhile clarification request is any expression by an NS designed to elicit clarification of the interlocutor's preceding utterance(s).

In accord to the implementation of structured controversy, this technique is known to serve students with the nature of negotiation of meaning. Through the process of structured controversy, students attempt to negotiate with their peer and opposing team by optimizing comprehension check, confirmation check, and clarification request. This is because students are assigned to work collaboratively to critically analyze each other's positions in an effort to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the opposing argument. They make efforts to refute the opposing views while rebutting the attacks on their own position.

In line with this process, students learn information being presented and understand the opposing group's perspectives. The opposing views and criticisms of the team's position leads to conceptual conflict and uncertainty. This may motivate an active search for more information in hopes of resolving the uncertainty. Shortly, students may make a use of negotiation of meaning whenever they are assigned to present the position, argue and counter the opposing pair's argument, reverse perspective and derive conclusion.

The illustration above shows the extent to which structured controversy provides wide opportunities for students to experience input-output activities with peer assistance not only to produce the target language, but also, through conversational adjustments, to manipulate and modify it. The activities of

---

[14]Gass, S. *Input, Interaction and the Second Language Learner*. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997)

[15] M.H. Long, 'Input, interaction, and second language acquisition' Unpublished doctoral dissertation, UCLA, Department of AppliedLinguistics and TESL, in Pauline Foster & Amy Snyder Ohta, "Negotiation for Meaning and Peer Assistance in Second Language Classrooms," *Applied Linguistics* 26/3, (2005), 402–430.

structured controversy are considered significant, as the tasks require an exchange of information most likely to prompt negotiations for meaning. As Foster argues, negotiating for meaning ensures that task participants receive comprehensible input and generate comprehensible output, both of which have been claimed as crucial to language acquisition or learning.[16]

SHARPING STUDENTS' CRITICAL THINKING

Teachers, particularly who teach at university level, are aware of the importance of critical thinking as one of outcomes of student learning. It is believed that critical thinking skill help students learn optimally, facilitate them to improve their knowledge independently, as well as bring them succeed in the workplace. Hence, most teachers are encouraged to adapt or adopt various methods or best teaching practices and arrange language instruction to provide students with this skill. In accord to this, this present paper attempts to introduce and highlight the extent to which structured controversy helps students learn and enhance their critical thinking.

Some researchers and scholars use the terms "critical thinking", "higher order thinking" or "problem solving" interchangeably, while others define "critical thinking" as a form of higher order thinking or problem solving. Furthermore, some also define "critical thinking" as a part of the process of evaluating the evidence collected in problem solving or the results produced by thinking creatively.[17]

From the philosophical tradition view, it is noted that critical thinking is a thinking that is goal-directed and purposive, "thinking aimed at forming a judgment," where the thinking itself meets standards of adequacy and accuracy[18]; or "judging in a reflective way what to do or what to believe".[19] Meanwhile, from the cognitive psychological perspective, it is defined as "the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome"[20] or

---

[16] Pauline Foster, "A Classroom Perspective on the Negotiation of Meaning," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 19 (1), (1998), 1-23.

[17] T. K Crowl, S. Kaminsky & D.M Podell, Educational psychology: Windows on teaching, (Madison, WI: Brown and Benchmark, 1997).

[18] Bailin, S., Case, R., Coombs, J. R., & Daniels, L. B. "Conceptualizing critical thinking," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31(3), (1999), 287.

[19] Facione, P. A. "The disposition toward critical thinking: Its character, measurement, and relation to critical thinking skill," *Informal Logic*, 20(1), (2000), 61.

[20] Halpern, D. F. "Teaching critical thinking for transfer across domains: Dispositions, skills, structure training, and metacognitive monitoring," *American Psychologist*, 53(4), (1998), 450.

"seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems, and so forth"[21]

From the definitions, it seems hard to define critical thinking most precisely since the term involves various dimension of thinking process. To begin with, it is important to discuss the process of thinking conveyed by Dewey as noted in Jacob that it is as a sequenced chaining of events.[22] Accordingly, this productive process moves from reflection to inquiry, then to critical thought processes that, in turn, lead to a "conclusion that can be substantiated" by more than personal beliefs and images. Thought can straighten out entanglements, clear obscurities, resolve confusion, unify disparities, answer questions, define problems, solve problems, reach goals, guide inferences, shape predictions, form judgments, support decisions, and end controversies.

The discussion above suggests teachers to always aware of their teaching practices. They are required to provide various productive and meaningful language learning for students in order that they can achieve higher order thinking skill. This skill does not occur spontaneously although students have good background knowledge. In accord to this, knowledge is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for enabling critical thought within a given subject as it must be evoked by various learning experiences, for instances, by giving problems, questions, some perplexity, confusion or doubt. Therefore, teachers are demanded not only to transfer knowledge to students, but also to facilitate students and teach them to think about their own thinking processes as it is quoted by Kauchak & Eggen.[23] This effort seems crucial as students become aware of their thinking processes; they realize how their own personal makeup can play a role in how they make their choices and interpret situations.[24]

Little is known that the use of academic controversy or conflict for instructional purposes provides valuable benefits for the students. Formerly,

---

[21] Willingham, D. T., "Critical thinking: Why is it so hard to teach?" *American Educator*, (2007), 8.

[22] George Jacobs, *Academic Controversy: a Cooperative Way to Debate*, 291.

[23] Kauchak, D. P., & Eggen, P. D. Learning and teaching: Research-based methods (3rd ed.), (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998),

[24]Jacobs, S. S., Technical characteristics and some correlates of the California critical thinking skills test, forms a and b. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 373 631, 1994),

it is agreed that controversy can spur higher order thinking as it is quoted by Dewey in Jacobs.[25]

> Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention. It shocks us out of sheep like passivity and sets us at noting and contriving … Conflict is a *sine qua non* of reflection and ingenuity.

The statements above show the benefits of controversy if it is structured properly. Controversy is believed to be a powerful device to sharpen and deepen one's insight. Through controversy, students tend to always cognizant with their own position by observing what is going on more critically. It can encourage students to be aware of, take a part in any situation of learning by listening attentively to other's opinions or different point of views, and make a use of input they have to enhance knowledge, understanding, and the way of thinking.

Students who can manage controversy properly will be better able to think critically to the case and achieve learning objective well. As it is confirmed by Piaget in Jacobs, encounters with a range of views on a complex issue can lead students to reexamine and possibly revise their own ideas.[26] This statement implies that engaging students in structured controversy provides them with constructive and reflective learning situation. Students are going to be more cognizant when they should be good listeners, debaters, or problem solvers. Shortly, the benefit of engaging students in academic controversy is to stimulate their new cognitive analyses leading to a reconceptualization, synthesis, and integration of the best ideas, reasoning and conclusions.

To cope with the need of helping students to foster their learning and critical thinking, the application of structured controversy seems in line with the way students' thinking process and is potentially applied in language learning. This may happen because when teachers structure the controversy, students are encouraged to rehear orally the information or issue they are learning; advocate position; share and teach their knowledge to peers, analyze, critically evaluate, and rebut information; reason deductively; and synthesize and integrate information into factual and judgmental conclusions that are summarized into a joint position to which all sides can agree.[27]

In sum, structured controversy can encourage students' active participation in the classroom and trigger critical thinking. This justification is also in line

---

[25] George Jacobs, *Academic Controversy: A Cooperative Way To Debate,* 291.

[26] George Jacobs, *Academic Controversy: A Cooperative Way To Debate*, 291.

[27] David W. Johnson & Roger T. Johnson, *Critical Thinking through Structured Controversy,* 59.

with the idea stated by Kahneman et. al. that with time and more experience in systematic thinking, individuals and groups can develop the principles to guide decision making.[28] Providing students with opportunities to engage in structured controversy enables them to have their ideas and conclusions challenged by advocates of an opposing position. As Duffy, Dueber & Hawley argue, collaborative problem solving, collaborative inquiry, and critical thinking involve building an argument for a position by considering evidence and counterarguments.[29] They confirm that a critical thinker will develop a strong argument in defining and interpreting the problem, in developing and evaluating solutions, in developing a plan based on a selected solution, and in reflecting on the learning outcomes.

POSSIBLE CHALLENGES OF INCORPORATING STRUCTURED CONTROVERSY IN EFL LEARNING

In implementing well-organized controversy, there are some challenges that EFL teachers may encounter. First, teachers may get problems regarding with the topics or issues selected. This is because some topics may be not manageable, easy to discuss, nor provide two-equal documented positions for students to discuss. As a result, a pair team or both cannot prepare and discuss their position well. Hence, it is suggested to choose appropriate topics that are interesting and challenging for students. The topics may be taken from some current contextual issues that students are familiar enough with in order that they have sufficient prior knowledge or ideas to be confronted.

Second, in term of instructional materials, teachers may get problem to prepare the materials needed for both two sides equally. Teachers may also get difficulties to assign the students look for the materials they themselves. For this problem, teachers may help students with additional skills to search the sources from books, articles, or browse in internet. Teachers are suggested to equip students with dual competencies; the ability to find or browse the sources and ability to organize them. These are important to help pairs broaden their understanding about the issue being advocated and provide adequate evidence for and elaboration of their arguments.

---

[28] Kahneman, D., Slovic, P., & Tversky, A. (Eds.), *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1982).

[29] Duffy, T. M., Dueber, B. & Hawley, C. L., *Critical Thinking in a Distributed Environment: A Pedagogical Base for the Design of Conferencing Systems,* in C. J. Bonk, & K.S. King (Eds.). Electronic Collaborators, (New-Jerssy: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 51-78.

The next challenge is to structure the controversy. As it is discussed previously that controversy may lead to serious rifts, even violence, between students and arouse the displeasure if it is not structured well. To create successful academic controversy, teachers have to commit with the main principle requirements for promoting constructive controversy. Some important things should be well prepared, such as arranging a model of controversy that is going to implement, explaining the procedures clearly, structuring learning activities and environment in cooperative situation, grouping students heterogeneously in ability level, sex, and personality and, giving valuable ideas on how to manage the controversy in order that they can learn to value disagreements as important sources to learn new information and enhance knowledge, not as personal attacks.

The most challenge the teachers might encounter is that to train students how to work collaboratively, how to use the target language, and how to think critically. Indeed, training students with those skills needs considerable time and effort. Even to the classroom where collaborative learning situation and speaking habit is not set up yet, teachers may have great challenge to structure academic controversy. Nevertheless, it is teachers' responsibility to assist students to capitalize on their potential epistemic skills.

CONCLUDING REMARK

This present article has highlighted threefold possible benefits of incorporating structured controversy in EFL classroom. When the technique is well organized and implemented, teachers may engage students in such cooperative learning situation, provide negotiation of meaning and peer assistance, and sharp their critical thinking. Structured controversy is considered as one of cooperative learning techniques because this strategy shares the principles of cooperative learning situation, such as a task for group completion, discussion and resolution, face to face interaction in small group, an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual helpfulness within each group and individual accountability.

Engaging students in structured controversy enables them to have their own ideas and conclusions challenged by advocates of an opposing position. The conceptual conflict resulting from structured controversy promotes constructive and reflective activities. These provides context whereby students negotiate meaning, work collaboratively to present and overcome problems and make them more aware of their learning and better able to develop particular topic or issue and their thinking skills to a wider variety of situations or evidence of their reasoning. This is due to the fact that students are accustomed and motivated to develop a strong argument in defining and interpreting the problem, developing

and evaluating solutions, developing a plan based on a selected solution, and reflecting on the learning outcomes. Since the application of structured controversy is fruitful and effective, therefore, teachers are suggested to use and develop this strategy in order that students are challenged and motivated to practice their English collaboratively as well as gain the optimum result on their achievement.

REFFERENCES

Bailin, S., Case, R., Coombs, J. R., & Daniels, L. B. "Conceptualizing critical thinking." *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31(3),1999.

Crowl, T. K., Kaminsky, S., & Podell, D. M. *Educational psychology: Windows on teaching*. Madison, WI: Brown and Benchmark, 1997.

Davidson, N. *Cooperative Learning: A Handbook for Teachers*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1990.

Duffy, T. M., Dueber, B. & Hawley, C. L. "Critical Thinking in a Distributed Environment: A Pedagogical Base for the Design of Conferencing Systems." In C. J. Bonk, & K.S. King (Eds.). *Electronic Collaborators,* New-Jerssy: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998.

Facione, P. A. "The disposition toward critical thinking: Its character, measurement, and relation to critical thinking skill." *Informal Logic*, 20(1), 2000.

Foster, P, A Classroom Perspective on the Negotiation of Meaning," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 19 (1), 1998.

Foster, P. & A.S. Ohta, "Negotiation for Meaning and Peer Assistance in Second Language Classrooms," *Applied Linguistics* 26/3, 2005.

Gass, S. *Input, interaction and the second language learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997.

Halpern, D. F. "Teaching critical thinking for transfer across domains: Dispositions, skills, structure training, and metacognitive monitoring." *American Psychologist*, 53(4), 1998.

Jacobs, G. "Academic Controversy: a cooperative way to debate." *Intercultural Education,* Vol. 21, No. 3, 2010.

Jacobs, S. S. *Technical characteristics and some correlates of the California critical thinking skills test, forms a and b.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 373 631), 1994.

Johnson, D.W. & Johnson, R.T. "Critical Thinking Through Structured Controversy." *Educational Leadership,* 45 (8), 1988.

Johnson & Johnson, *Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom.* Interaction Book Company 7208, Cornela Drive Edina, Mineseta 1990.

Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R., & Smith, K.A. *Academic Controversy: Enriching Collage Instruction through Intellectual Conflict*. Washington, D.C: The George Washington University, 1996.

Kahneman, D., Slovic, P., & Tversky, A. (Eds.). *Judgment under uncertainty: heuristics and biases.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Kauchak, D. P., & Eggen, P. D. *Learning and teaching: Research-based methods* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998.

Krashen, S. *Principles and practice in second language acquisition.* Oxford: Pergamon, 1982.

Lai, E.R. "Critical Thinking: A Literature Review." *Pearson's Research Reports*, June ed., Vol. 6, 2011.

Lewis, A., & Smith, D. "Defining higher order thinking." *Theory into Practice,* 32(3), 1993.

Long, M. H 'Input, interaction, and second language acquisition' Unpublished doctoral dissertation, UCLA, Department of AppliedLinguistics and TESL in Pauline Foster & Amy Snyder Ohta, (2005), "Negotiation for Meaning and Peer Assistance in Second Language Classrooms," *Applied Linguistics* 26/3, 1980.

Long, M & C.J Sato. "Classroom foreigner talk discourse: Forms and functions of teachers' questions." In Seliger & Long, *Classroom oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition*, Rowley, Mass: Newbury House Publisher, 1983.

Mufanti, R *Optimalisasi Pembelajaran Kooperatif melalui structured Academic Controversy Model untuk Meningkatkan Kualitas Proses dan Hasil Belajar Mata Kuliah Speaking IV di Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Banyuwangi,* laporan penelitian Dosen Muda, Banyuwangi: UNTAG Banyuwangi, 2010.

Olsen, R. E.WB & Kagan, S. *About Cooperative Learning in Carolyn Kessler (Ed). Cooperative Learning: A Teacher's Resource book 1-30*. New, 1992.

Slavin, R. E. *Cooperative Learning*: *Theory, Research and Practice*. Englewood Clifts, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc, 1990.

Susilo, A. "Academic controversy Model as an Alternative Strategy for Teaching Speaking at University Level," *Cendekia*, vol. 11 no. 2, 2013.

Willingham, D. T. "Critical thinking: Why is it so hard to teach?" *American Educator*, 2007.