

Transformative Learning on Social Studies: Case Study of the Independence Meaning for Students

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56707/ijoer.v2i4.77>

Sections Info

Keywords:

Transformative Learning
Meaning of Independence
Elementary School
Social studies
Case Study

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to analyze the implementation of transformative learning as an alternative learning model to improve the students' perception about the meaning of independence, as the learning material for the sixth grade students in elementary school. **Method:** The research utilized a qualitative approach, with data collection methods include surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. The analysis revealed that students through the transformative learning in action research can come out and relate their minds about the meaning of being free, the meaning of independence in general, and lasted to their awareness about how hard was the warriors' struggled to reach the Indonesian's independence. Keywords such as transformative learning, meaning of independence, elementary school, social studies, and case study. **Results:** One of the results of this research was that at last the sixth grades students of Magersari Elementary public school can join the flag ceremony every Monday morning peacefully and seriously, because it was one of their efforts to respect the struggled of the heroes. Last, the sixth grades students could be a good role model for the younger students. **Novelty:** By analyze the implementation of Transformative learning on social studies as a Case study of the independence meaning for students which has never been researched using the latest year's data, the researcher expects this article can bring novelty and useful for elementary education.

INTRODUCTION

Flag ceremony is a named of an activity to raise the Indonesian National flag, or "Bendera Merah putih", that done by the government staffs and the public school communities throughout Indonesia every Monday morning. According to Direktorat pembinaan kesiswaan, Dikdasmen Dikbud, 1998, Flag ceremony is an activity to raise or to set the national Indonesian flag, *Bendera Merah Putih* that done in some special moments or the settled moment, that attended by teachers and all students, that arranged orderly and peacefully. This ceremony proved that our country always respects their heroes struggles to reach the independence (van Dijk, 2005). It was ever said by one of Indonesian proclaimer, Ir. Soekarno, on his November 10th 1961 speech, that "great nation will always respect their heroes". This attitude called as Nationalism. Nationalism is a meaning to love the nation and country, that keep growing (Nikolov, 2022; Ray, 2024). There are wide and narrow meaning of it. The wide meaning said that nationalism is to love and proud for your country. While the narrow meaning said that it is a deeper feeling to love the country, but see lower the other country. If we tried to understand the meaning, the narrow meaning can bring us to *Chauvinism*. Indonesia choose the wide meaning for its positive reason (Dwi Latifatul Fajri. 2021).

Nowadays, students are no longer have a big attention on doing the flag ceremony, and it happened especially to the sixth grades students. Some of them are getting used to talk with or tease their friends. The teachers then will warn or punish them. Because as the oldest students, they must show a good character, so the other grades can follow

them. Actually, it happens because most of them do not have any reason about why they should attend that ceremony every Monday morning. They feel boring because they just think that it just something formal that don't have any connection with them. They think that it just a formality, something they have to do, they must join, without any meaning. It is the education's responsible to explain the reason for them, through the learning process.

One of the best learning material that have a connection with the importance meaning of ceremony is "The meaning of Independence". It is one big chapter of the second theme learning material that studied by the sixth grade students. In this chapter, students will learn about the process of the Indonesian proclamation, that struggled by many warriors, young and old, that time. But it is not easy to reach the independence, especially for a nation as Indonesia. Due to the different circumstances of each ethnic group, the choice of the road to save the country is also different. With a country geographically dispersed, diverse in culture, language, and religion like Indonesia, national reunification must be a top priority to realize national independence. Of course, improving people's living conditions, as well as creating a prosperous society are also goals that Indonesia is aiming for, but national independence must be achieved first, as Sukarno affirmed: "an independent Indonesia as quickly as possible. This requires us to strive for independence to improve the difficult living conditions in our country" (Huy, Hanh, et al., 2021:87).

Those sentences remind us how urgent was the condition that time, that forced the young warriors to ask Mr. Soekarno and Mr. Hatta to proclaim The Indonesian Independence. There were many people suffered, because of the poorness, the lack of education, and wars that couldn't be ended with many negotiations. After having many discussions, they were agreed each other at last, then Indonesia had announced their national independence on August 17th 1945 (Dhont, 2019; Hui, 2004; Steedly, 2013).

But, if the learning material is just about that history, students still can not take the real meaning (Anas, 2010; Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Pagès, 2019). According to Wahyuningsih (2022), The learning process has not given any meaningful knowledge because of too much playing and still focused on the teacher. They still need another learning material that have a deeper meaning. The students have to know how hard was the Indonesian warriors' struggled. The warriors had to give everything to reach the independence, included their wealthy, their family, or even their own lives. They just think that through this independence, they can make the Indonesian people's live better. It means, that the warriors did not think about themselves, but they just want to save the Indonesian people's life. So that Indonesia can feel as a free nation. This is the best value that the students must take and imitate. This article wants to find out how to reach out the students mind about being free. Why we have to be free. After that, the researcher can relate the students' free life meaning with the national independence.

Learning according to Ausubel (1963) is a connecting process between information or new materials with the cognitive structure concepts. There are three factors that influenced the meaningful learning, present cognitive structure, knowledge explanation of certain learning material, and an exact time. That Vision or perception belongs to each

student, while the great aim is how the students can be more aware and praise anything other people had done to them. This learning method called a transformative learning.

Transformative learning is “a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thoughts, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world” (Transformative Learning Centre, 2016:104). Transformative learning has emerged from the field of Western adult education as a way to understand how adults learn. Its core idea based on the fundamental changes in perspective or frame of reference (King, 2002:52). When someone undergoes such a change, she has, in essence, “transformed” her view of herself or of the world or of how she interacts with others and her environment. By the case study, observation, or simulation, students can see the real connection between the social concepts through some issues they face on their neighborhood. It can help students to develop deeper their understanding, strengthen the connection between learning at school with their real life, and motivate themselves to be the positive changing agents in society (Ode, 2023). As Fitriyah (2023) also said that students actively join to think critically, analyze the social contents, the rules, and environment, also make the connection with their real life

There are generally four different strands of thought within the research and theory on transformative learning, represented by four different theorists-Paolo Freire, Jack Mezirow, Laurent Daloz, and Robert Boyd- that each of them has their own specifications. Because we will discuss about the student’s perspective, so the researcher will talk about transformation as individuation. Individuation involves discovery of new talents, a sense of empowerment and confidence, a deeper understanding of one’s inner self, and a greater sense of self-responsibility. This perspective of transformative learning has been mainly developed by Robert Boyd (Boyd, 1991:124; Boyd and Myers, 1988:130). Like Mezirow and Daloz, Boyd is interested in understanding and facilitating personal development. However, unlike Mezirow, who emphasizes rational thoughts and discourse, Boyd is interested in the expressive or emotional-spiritual dimensions of learning and how it can be integrated more holistically and consciously into daily life (Dirkx, 1998:74). This psychoanalytic view of transformative learning (Taylor, 2000:61) is seen as a process of individuation, a lifelong journey to continually understand oneself through reflecting on the psychic structures (ego, shadow, persona, collective unconscious, and so on) that make up an individual’s identity.

This study aims to get the real students’ understanding about the Indonesian’s independence meaning, through the transformative learning. The researcher will try to come out the students’ being free perceptions, then she will connect and reflect the perceptions with the reason why Indonesia should be a free nation. When they already connected, then the students can get their own consciousness about how great were the Indonesian’ warriors struggled to get the independence that time. From that moment, the students would get their high respectful and thankful for the warriors and of course to their God who had made it happened.

The findings of this study will contribute to show how the teacher can make another kind of learning method. If the students can understand the meaning, why Indonesia has

to be a free nation, what were the warriors reason to struggle that much, then the students can be more wise and at last, want to join an activity such as attend the ceremony, as their respect for the Indonesian independence warriors. Because they can understand how important to be a free nation as their own thoughts.

In the following sections, we will delve into the methodology, findings, and discussions of this description study, shedding light on the perceptions and experiences of sixth grade students in their 6th years at Magersari Elementary Public School in relation to the meaning of independence.

RESEARCH METHOD

This case study utilized a qualitative approach to explore students' perception of being free understanding in relation with the meaning of Indonesian Independence. The study design allowed for a comprehensive analysis by comparing the students' perceptions with the warriors' thoughts. The research process consisted of the following key components:

Sample Selection: The study population comprised students enrolled in the 6th years at Magersari Elementary Public School Sidoarjo. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure a diverse perception of students with varying backgrounds. Magersari village placed around the central of Sidoarjo City. It is also near with the Sidoarjo big stadium, Gelora Delta Sidoarjo. A promised place for the people, especially sellers. That's why, this village has full of many various sellers, who stay a while or stay in a long term. People not only from all over cities of East Java but also from other side of Java Island gather in this village, such as from Lamongan, Madura, Bojonegoro, or even Sukabumi of West Java. It makes the people here have various background or characters.

Data Collection: Data collection involve two primary methods: surveys and interviews. Firstly, a structured survey questionnaire was developed based on the research objectives and relevant literature. The survey items measured students' perceptions regarding their cultural background and thoughts. The survey was distributed to the selected participants, who were given a specified time to complete and return it.

Secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to gain deeper insights into their perceptions and experiences. The interviews focused on exploring students' thoughts on specific aspects of being free and understanding of the national independence. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis: Qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Transcripts were coded and categorized into themes and sub-themes to identify recurring patterns and central ideas related to the students' individual perceptions and their national independence' understanding.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary

participation and anonymity. Confidentiality of data was maintained, and participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any point.

By employing qualitative approach, a comprehensive understanding of Sixth grade students to the national independence understanding at Magersari Elementary Public School Sidoarjo was obtained. This approach allowed for triangulation of data, ensuring the reliability and validity of the study's findings. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), action research is participatory: "It is research through people work towards the improvement of their own practices."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The observation were done on September 27th and 28th 2023, Wednesday and Thursday. The researcher chose those days because she has more time to do the observation and interviews with the students. Started on the first term, the teacher called one by one student and asked the same questions. The findings of this case study shed light on the perceptions of sixth grade students of Magersari Elementary Public School regarding the meaning of independence.

Teacher tried to open through the psychoanalytic method to get as truthfully as the student can share their minds. This psychoanalytic view of transformative learning (Taylor 2000) is seen as a process of individuation, a lifelong journey to continually understand oneself through reflecting on the psychic structures (ego, shadow, persona, collective unconscious, and so on) that make up an individual's identity. Central to his (Mezirow) theory, is that we learn by making meaning from our experiences, through reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection. He distinguishes this type of learning from our daily experiences by calling it "perspective transformation," reflecting changes in our worldwide (Yee et al, 2019). The analysis of survey responses and interview data revealed several key findings:

The meaning of being free: The majority of sixth grade students regarding that being free is how they can life as they want (Cook et al., 2008). Such as choose friends, choose their school, or even to choose their clothes. They don't want any other interruptions from their parents or relatives (Bank et al., 2004; Fosco et al., 2012). Based on the transformative theory, there is also a meant about being free, where they can share their thoughts freely, based on their last experience that combine with their new experience (Cushing, 2024). If they can do that such things, then they get their free life. But they have to know that the rights always followed by responsibility. It means that when they get the right, they can't get it as their own wish. They also have to be aware with other people's right.

The meaning of independence in general: When the students heard this question, they started to say that independence is a condition of being free from any kind of oppressed and pressure from other side or country (Hoagland & Arias Cubas, 2024; Kozák, 2007). It means that if a country can get this right, then it can make its own rule, it can choose its form of government, fearlessly. In civic education, there are many ways to be given to answer any question. We call it as an open-ended question. Then what we have to do is finding the best way or answer that suitable with the condition.

The meaning of Indonesian Independence: After proclaimed the independence, the students say that it was the moment for Indonesia to rise from other country's pressure.

We could prove to the world that we can get the independence by our own effort. And then, Indonesia could try hard to go further and compete with other countries to reach its greatness. To reach that dream, Indonesia should be united well. The large region should not be an excuse not to manage a unity. Through social science education, students will be asked to do a critical thinking in learning (Bermudez, 2015; Morancho, 2024; Verburch, 2019). One of those critical learning is to get a better understanding about the diversity in Indonesia. If students can find the similarity rather than to make bigger diversity between each culture, than they can manage the unity for Indonesia.

The teacher then explains that to get this condition is not as simple as we can imagine. It needs many sacrifices from the warriors that came from the Indonesian soldiers or the citizens themselves. Many people had to die in the war, many families had been separated, many people had to lost their house and wealthy, and any other suffering things for Indonesia. Even after Indonesia has proclaimed their independence, there are still many problems that came from The Dutch or from Indonesia itself. During the struggle to consolidate independence (1945-1965), Indonesia experienced many internal division and then reunification, It was the split between political parties (PKI-Partai Komunis Indonesia: Communist Party of Indonesia with the Madiun uprising in 1948; the conflict between the traditional muslim party Nahdatul Ulama and the modern Islamic party MASYUMI), divided the split between the autonomous states and the government of the Republic of Indonesia, the conflict between the president and the military force, the conflict between the PKI and the military force... But in the end, that division still had to come to a consensus in decisions to ensure the interests of the nation such as: fighting to protect national independence from the Dutch re-occupation, abolishing the Federal system without the colonial regime imposed to establish the Republic of Indonesia, fought for the recovery of western Irian, and fought to eliminate the influence of colonialism in socio-economic issues (Alfian, 1989).

Overall, the findings of this study underscore that students understand how important to be a free country. As a free country, we can choose what kind of government to build, we can make the perfect rule for our country, go further and compete with other countries to reach the greatness. That is why Indonesia tried hard to get their independence, although they have to feel suffer because they have to give their life, lost their family, their house, or wealthy. They feel very light to do it, because they know that they do it for their country. A spirit that our country need, especially nowadays, where many Indonesian people do not have any heart to respect their parents, their family, moreover to their country, including the people and the government. Then, those respects can make a new good character of nationalism that important to choose new leaders for Indonesia. Chasanah and Utomo (2019) wrote that "It is proved that the study of history is really important to build nation character, because nationalism can grow after someone has a historical awareness. While Agbola & Tsani (2012) said, "Outcome of character education has always been encouraging, solidly, and continually preparing the leaders of tomorrow".

Discussion

The discussion section presents a comprehensive analysis of the findings from this case study, to find deeper the perceptions of the sixth grades students about the independence

meaning. By examining the similarities and differences of their perceptions, we hope the students themselves can take the true meaning why they have to respect their independence heroes, by for example, join the flag ceremony peacefully.

Due to the result of observation and interviews that the researcher did, through the transformative learning the sixth grades student can express their perceptions about being free, about the meaning of independence, and about the meaning of Indonesian Independence smoothly. At first they felt strange for the questions. But after the teacher explain that they can give their own answer without any interruptions, then they could feel relax to share their minds.

Just like King (2002) said, that "When someone undergoes such a change, she has, in essence, "transformed" her view of herself or of the world or of how she interacts with others and her environment". After they said their perceptions and then compare it with their friends' answer, they become more understand and aware about how the Indonesian warriors struggled hard to reach the Indonesian independence that time. Indonesia has to be a free and independence country first if they want to be a big nation. There is no other choice or way to do except struggled even if they have to give their own lives. So, as a new generation, it is also the students' responsibility to respect what the warriors' done for Indonesia. They become more understand that they have to study harder, not only to reach their better future, but also to fulfil their nation with good progress and greatness. And the best result of this research is when the students join the flag ceremony.

That Monday morning, the sixth grades students, boys and girls, become happier and enjoy the ceremony well. It happened because they aware that it was not easy to reach the independence, to make the Indonesian flag flies on the sky. So, to respect the struggled, the students think that they must attend and join the flag ceremony peacefully and seriously. The other flag ceremony participants especially the headmaster and teachers feel glad and give thanks to God to see that changing. Because as the oldest students, the sixth grade students must be a good role model for the younger students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this case study examined the perceptions of sixth grade students at Magersari Elementary Public school in Sidoarjo regarding learning the meaning of Indonesia Independence during their first semester. The findings shed light on several key aspects that build the students' awareness about the Indonesian warriors struggled to reach the Independence. That makes the difference on students, that they become more calm and serious while doing the flag ceremony. **Fundamental Findings:** The study revealed that the sixth grades student at possess a reasonable level of awareness regarding the meaning of being free and impact. They recognize the importance of being free, whereas to get the rights to choose whatever they like, without any interruption from others. They have the rights to choose their job, their school, or even their clothes. However, to be free also means that we have to do it in a full of responsibility, without taking anyone's right, so they will not have any problem with others. The next aspect to search is the meaning of independence in general. Based on their perspective of being free, independence in general means that a country has its right to rule itself, not behind any other country's rule. An independence country can choose its government system,

so they can manage their nation or citizen fearlessly. One of the ways to express their respect is by joining the flag ceremony peacefully and seriously. The other is that the students can be more respect to other people, moreover who are older than them. And the final is they can be more understandable about the Pancasila Education material, where they can enjoy the learning material more than before. They are no longer boring in the classroom. **Implications:** Taking the transformative learning in teaching independence meaning for students can help students to praise their independence heroes. The students become aware about how big are their responsibilities for their nation. **Limitation:** This research is only limited to the use of transformative learning for teaching the meaning of independence. **Future Research:** The expected results of the application and development of learning method in elementary school learning will be published.

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