



Incorporating Character Values in Indonesian EFL Context

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Abstract

There are many essential aspects of English language learning in the modern era. One of the essential aspects is the application of the character values aspect. Character values that are thought in the classroom sometimes consider as character education. There are many concepts about character values that can be applied in English subject, for example the six pillars of character values and character values that exist in Indonesia. However, in the application of character education, especially in English subject, character values are still less explored. Therefore, this paper presents several important explanations related to the concept of existing character values, especially character values that exist in Indonesia, and this book also provides a brief overview of the exploration of character values in English that can be done by teachers.

Keywords: *character values, character education, integrating values, local wisdom, Indonesian EFL context.*

Introduction

The need for English as an international language in the modern era is increasing over time, and there are many essential aspects of English language learning in the modern era worth considering. One of the essential aspects is the application of the character values aspect. Character values that are thought in the classroom sometimes consider as character education. In short, Character education is a growing discipline with a deliberate attempt to optimize students' ethical behavior (Berkowitz & Hoppe, 2009). In particular, Indonesian educational system also emphasizes character education and emphasizes moral values in its educational goals.

Moreover, the major concern of education in Indonesia concerns with character education at schools. It emphasizes that education both focuses on academic purposes and non-academic purposes such as students' character values and soft skills development as stated in UU Sisdiknas article 3,

“...pendidikan nasional berfungsi mengembangkan dan membentuk watak serta peradaban bangsa yang bermartabat dalam rangka mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa, bertujuan untuk

berkembangnya potensi peserta didik agar menjadi manusia yang beriman dan bertakwa kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, berakhlak mulia, sehat, berilmu, cakap, kreatif, mandiri, dan menjadi warga negara yang demokratis serta bertanggungjawab.”
(Kemendiknas, 2010:2)

The UU Sidiknas above explains that national education has a function to develop students' virtues. They are expected to have good moral values such as to be independent, to be democratic, to be creative, and to be responsible. Those values can make them to be good students and good citizens.

In our lives, character education is essential to educate learners to be better. Before the students receive learning activity, teachers should provide character values in the learning activity. Students should have a strong character; by teaching the learners good values, the teacher should be able to shape the character. In general, 18 values need to be implemented based on the guidelines of the Indonesian Government for the Implementation of Character Education (Indonesian Ministry of Education, 2011).

However, in reality, the integration of character values in Indonesian EFL classroom is still far from the ideal expectation to create meaningful learning with sufficient EFL classroom. Collins and Henjum (1999) prompted that the procedure for character instruction must be a long haul and continuous. To make it more transparent, Sugirin (2011) mentioned that the implementation of character education should be integrated into relevant content subject instruction. In short, EFL teachers should understand the concept of character values more deeply and integrated character education that relevant to students' needs in order to create meaningful learning.

The explanation above was in line with my experience when I participated in a practical field experience program (PPL) UIN Aalauddin Makassar at one private junior high school in Sukoharjo, Central Java in 2017. I found that English teachers only focus on teaching knowledge about language, such as grammatical, vocabulary, and language functions without exploring further potential aspects of character values and applying them to language learning. as Madya (2013, p.265) stated in her book that teachers and prospective English teacher students should explore the potential of English teaching to optimize the contribution of English learning to the formation of student character.

Therefore, the exploration of character values in language learning is not only very beneficial for students' academic field but also useful for students as people who are living in society. As shown in the result study conducted by Wiyaka and friends (2017) that integrating character values through mini-drama improved students' creativity, collaboration, the relation among the students, and the most importantly improved students' respect toward each other.

Then, this paper aims to answer the following question “what character values can be explored in Indonesian ELT context?”. In this connection, this paper will cover: a brief definition about character values, various kinds of character values, and some potential character values in Indonesian ELT context.

Definition of Character Values

In general, people understand that character values are fundamental values or goodness values that are not only spoken verbally but also shown through real actions. The application of character values is usually referred as character education. Further, the following explanations are some concepts about character values.

The word character in ancient Greek means “to engrave,” which emphasizes the engraved traits will affect us to behave in certain manners (O’Sullivan, 2004). “Good character is a concept which contains knowing good, embracing good and doing well” (Katilmis et al., 2011, p. 854). The common belief of character education is from psychological and philosophical perspective that virtues can be taught and learned through the proper pedagogy (Cooley, 2008).

Hoge (2002) defined character education as a way of adjusting the behaviors of the students, in order to become good citizens of the future. According to Pike (2010), these students were being instructed, guided, and toward having some sets of prescribed behaviors. Marshall, Caldwell, and Foster (2011) claimed that character education is perpetually believed, to some kind of ways through which the students are being nurtured in the direction of seeing things in different perspectives; in other words, training them is always to exert maturity while in the mist of challenging situations.

Six pillars of Character Values

Characters that become mold as in The Six Pillars of Character issued by the Character Counts! Coalition (a project of The Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1998). Six types of characters are as follows:

- a. Trustworthiness, the type of the character that makes a person: dignity, fairness, and loyalty. When people trust us, they allow us more leeway and they believe like we don't need oversight to ensure that we satisfy our responsibilities. They trust in us, and they hold us in higher regard.
- b. Fairness, the form of a character that makes a person have an unbiased view and doesn't like to take advantage of someone. What does justice really stand for? The basic principle seems plain, even intuitive, but it can be incredibly difficult to incorporate in everyday life.
- c. Caring, the form of the character that makes a person have a caring attitude and empathy for others and the social circumstances of the community. Caring is at the center of ethical and ethical decision-making. It is hardly conceivable to be genuinely ethical and still not concerned with the interests of others. That's because, in the end, ethics is about friendly ties with others.
- d. Respect, the form of the character that makes a person really appreciate and value others. People are not objects, and they all have the right to be handled with respect. We definitely have no legal obligation to keep these people in high regards, but we should treat all with dignity, regardless of who they are and what they have done.
- e. Citizenship, the type of character that makes a person conscious of the laws and regulations, as well as the protection of the natural environment. Citizenship requires democratic virtues and responsibilities that dictate how we can function as members of a society. The decent citizen knows the law and obeys it, yes, but that's not all. She

volunteers and keeps updated on the problems of the day, the easier to exercise her roles and rights as a member of a self-governing democratic society. A decent person gives more than he takes.

- f. Responsibility, the type of character that makes a person accountable, disciplined and always do things as great as possible.

Character Values in Indonesia

The character values implemented in Indonesian education cannot be separated from the following important foundations: religion, Pancasila, culture, and national education goals. The following explanation is a further description of the character values that exist in Indonesian education.

Intensive teaching of moral character is especially important in today's era, when our young people face numerous possibilities and risks unfamiliar to previous generations. They are bombarded with many more negative. This is in line with the awareness from the government to put serious attention on character building. Act of National Education System (UU Sisdiknas) year 2003 states that one of the goals of national education is to develop students' potency in order to have intelligence, personality, and good values. The new program 2013 reinforces the notion that learning outcomes cover not only cognitive aspects, but also skills and attitudes.

The new curriculum should be used to enhance religious tolerance, as education could not only make people smart, but also prepare Indonesians to be intellectually strong, physically safe, compassionate, and able to live in peace with other faiths, races, and tribes. Then, Curriculum 2013 is aimed at equipping learners with knowledge, skill and attitudes. One of the ultimate goals of this new curriculum is to improve the moral and character of the students. There are 18 (eighteen) values in character education according to the Ministry National Education (2013), as listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Eighteen values in character education

18 Values in Character Education		
1.	Religious	Attitudes and behaviors that are obedient in carrying out the teachings of their religion, tolerant of the practice of other religions, and live-in harmony with adherents' other religions.
2.	Be honest.	Behavior based on trying to make himself a person always trustworthy in word, action, and work.
3.	Tolerance.	Attitudes and actions that respect differences in religion, ethnicity, attitudes, and actions of others that are different from himself.
4.	Discipline.	Actions that show orderly behavior and comply with various provisions and regulations.

5.	Hard work.	Actions that show orderly behavior and comply with various provisions and rules. So, with this orderly manner can build the character of students in real life.
6.	Creative.	Thinking and doing something to generate new ways or results from something that already has.
7.	Independent.	Attitudes and behavior are not easy to depend on others in complete tasks.
8.	Democratic.	A way of thinking, behaving, and acting that values the same rights and obligations himself and others.
9.	Curiosity.	Attitudes and actions that always seek to know more deeply and extends from something he has learned, seen, and heard.
10.	National Spirit.	A way of thinking, acting and having an insight that puts the interests of the nation and the state above self and group interests.
11.	Love the homeland	A way of thinking, acting and having an insight that puts the interests of the nation and the state above self and group interests.
12.	Respect Achievements.	Attitudes and actions that encourage him to produce something useful to society, and recognize, and respect the success of others.
13.	Friendly / Communicative.	Attitudes and actions that encourage him to produce something useful to society, and recognize, and respect the success of others.
14.	Love Peace.	Attitudes and actions that encourage him to produce something useful to society, and recognize, and respect the success of others.
15.	Loves to Read.	The habit of taking time to read various readings give good to himself.
16.	Environmental Care.	Attitudes and actions that always try to prevent damage to the environment nature around him, and develop efforts to remedy this It is very important to remember that students often interact with the community around.
17.	Social Care.	Attitudes and actions that always want to help others and society in need.
18.	Responsibility.	Attitudes and behavior of a person to carry out their duties and obligations, yang he should do, to

		himself, society, the environment (natural, social and culture), country and Almighty God.
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In addition, as a multicultural country, Indonesia has abundant traditions and local wisdom values which are needed to be preserved as prevention of the negative influences come from outside. The local values can protect the good life of Indonesian people in today's globalization and information era. Kuntoro (2012, p. 6) argued that local wisdom is used to indicate that there are some components in local wisdom such as nobleness, high values, truth, goodness, and beauty. They become the guidance of making the pattern of relationship among the people as the base of the vision of life.

Then, local wisdom can be the base of character education in schools. Wahab (2012, p. 18) described that local genius or local knowledge can be the source of values as well as the academic materials. Statements above are emphasized by Madya (2013) in her book stated that:

"...An important thing that teachers and prospective teacher students need to remember is the importance of identifying values that are upheld by the local community and especially people in Indonesia in general that have not been mentioned in the curriculum but need to be instilled in students so that they become good citizens of society" (Madya, S. 2013)

In short, From the explanations above, it can be confirmed that the character values or character education in Indonesia are based on fundamental aspects such as religion, Pancasila, culture, and the goals of national education. Furthermore, Indonesia's character education is also inseparable from the abundant traditional culture and local wisdom values in Indonesia, which need to be preserved to prevent negative influences from outside.

Integrating Character Values in English Teaching

The Teacher Role as Moral Agent

Teachers should consider the teaching profession as a passion and where character education is concerned, ethical practices are inevitable. Teachers should model appropriate traits as they do not only have an innate duty to disperse knowledge but also to develop students into good human beings (Campbell, 2003; Schwarz, 1998). Here, it is understood that teachers need to give more attention to the human relationships that are transmitted in the classroom as Campbell (2003) stated that:

"...they may take a direct form, as in the case of the teacher's admonition of students (e.g. don't hit each other; don't cheat) or an indirect form, as in the respectful way teachers speak to students or their conscious attention to fairness of discipline or evaluation" (p.27).

Then, besides having a sound knowledge in theory, teachers need to practice what they have learned to develop congruent teaching in the classrooms (Swennen, Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2008). Furthermore, Kristjansson (2006) stated that children need a didactic strategy or emulation of role models in order to grasp values in a straightforward manner when other

approaches have failed. If this is so, then teachers are the most appropriate role models as the students have direct contact with them.

Explore the Potential Values in English Subjects

There are many activities or approaches that we can use in order to explore character values in English subjects, for example embedding character values with role plays, drama, etc. furthermore, teacher should provide advice or directly demonstrate character values unconsciously through behaviors and actions in class activities. Then, in order to understand more about the concept of character values exploration, we can look at the concepts stated by Madya. S (2013, p. 255-265) that exploring the potential values in English subject by exploring: 1) the potential values in English text, 2) the potential values in English learning process, 3) the potential values in English language behavior & 4) ways of embedding values through English teaching.

a) The Potential Values in English Text

Traditionally, a text is understood to be a piece of written material in its primary form. A text is any stretch of language that can be understood in context (Anderson, M., & Anderson, K. 1997). Based on generic structure and language feature dominantly used, texts are divided into several types. They are narrative, recount, descriptive, report, explanation, etc. Furthermore, teachers can explore the potential values contained in the English text by looking at two main aspects of the text: the structure of the text and the content of the text (Madya 2013, p, 255).

In terms of form (structure) at the text level, there is a cultural value of mapping factual, conceptual, and procedural information in the form of certain texts with certain language tones to achieve certain goals (Madya, S. 2013, p.255-257). Some examples of exploring values from the text structure are by paying attention to the relationship between the structure and objectives of the text, students are trained to be independent and disciplined in analyzing things and by presenting a comparison of the text structure the value of fairness and student responsibility can be explored.

In terms of text content, for example, the content of the recount text which contains the history of Indonesia's struggle to achieve independence. Several important values can be explored such as courage to defend the truth, love for the country, loyalty, etc.

In short, from English texts a variety of values can be extracted that can be absorbed by students to support character and personality education. The explanation above is only a small part of the values that can be extracted from the English text. Then, as an educator and moral agent, teachers are expected to be able to explore the values in English texts freely as long as they are in accordance with the main objectives of education.

b) The Potential Values in English Learning Process

In short, in the process of learning English, teachers can explore some essential values through pre-communicative activities and communicative activities. Littlewood (1981) used the term pre-communicative to refer to activities such as cued dialogue, drills, or question and answer activities that have a purpose to prepare students with the required skills for communication but do not necessarily require students to perform communicative arts. Whereas, the communicative activity is a process of speaking with information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Values are explored through two means: through pre-communicative activities and through communicative activities. Pre-communicative activities include drill activities such as repeating and remembering irregular verbs teach students the importance of discipline and patience, distinguishing the pronunciation of each word teaches students about accuracy and independent learning, and question-and-answer session that will foster students' curiosity and responsibility. Communicative activities include simple activities such as introducing yourself can politely teach important values such as being friendly or communicative and conversations by fellow students contain important values such as listening to the other person carefully, being friendly, and also learning to accept criticism and suggestions.

c) The Potential Values in English Language Behavior

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life so that students can practice English language behavior communicatively (Madya, 2013). Then, the behavior of communicative language reflects that speakers can pay attention to situations where, with whom, for what purposes, as well as in formal or informal contexts. Furthermore, many values can be extracted from communicative language behavior. examples such as tolerance and respect.

In general, education practitioners in Indonesia are familiar with three applications of character education: the application of character education in schools, the application of character education at home, and character education in society. In brief, the concept of applications is too general and can be described as more specific activities. Wiyaka, et. al (2017) in their study, *Incorporating Character Values in English Class Through Mini-drama Performance*. They found that by implementing mini-drama using folklore such as the golden cucumber, King Midas, etc. it can promote students certain character values such as honesty, tolerance, responsibility, friendliness, and humble. Ferdiawan & Putra (2013) in their study, *ESQ (Intelligence, Emotional, Spiritual Quotient) education for children character building based on philosophy of Javanese in Indonesia*. They found that Javanese cultural values can help students to shape their personality with good values from Javanese culture in order to avoid negative values from foreign culture.

The examples above are several ways to explore character values, especially in Indonesian ELT context. In fact, there are still many ways that can be used and developed to maximize the application of character values, it is the task for researchers, education practitioners, and teachers to improve learning quality.

Conclusion

Character values are very important for education, especially in Indonesian education which prioritizes character education as one of the main educational goals. However, in the application of character education, especially in English subject, character values are still less explored. Therefore, this paper presents several important explanations related to the concept of existing character values, especially character values that exist in Indonesia, and this paper also provides a brief overview of the exploration of character values in English that can be done by teachers. Finally, as a note, the teacher can explore character values in learning English as much as possible as long as it is in line with educational goals.

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