



Character Building through English Language Teaching: A Case Study at One Junior High School in Palembang

Afifah Marshalina

marshalina4@gmail.com

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia

Dewi Warna

dewiwarna@radenfatah.ac.id

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia

Eka Sartika

ekasartika_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah, Palembang, Indonesia

Abstract

The aim of this study was to find out the teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom. The participants of this study were two teachers of English at SMP IT Izzuddin Palembang in the academic year of 2020-2021. In this study, the writer applied a qualitative study with case study design, which employ interview instrument for collecting the data. Meanwhile, in order to find out the teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom, the data obtained from the interview sessions were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The finding of this study revealed that there were six teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom: 1) giving valuable message and model, 2) creating active learning involvement, 3) focusing on students' outcome, 4) using suitable material resources, 5) applying various activities to shape students' character, and 6) evaluating students' character. In short, teachers had applied character building in English classroom. Through the teaching strategies implemented by the teachers regularly, it would affect students' competence in English skill and improve their character.

Keywords: *strategies, character building, English classroom*

Introduction

It is commonly believed that education is very important thing in someone's life. The state has also regulated the right of every Indonesian citizen to obtain education as a means to improve the knowledge and quality of life. The Indonesian national education system law number 20 the year 2003 explains that the functions of national education are to develop capabilities and shape the nation's character. In the same spirit, Lickona (1993) affirms that helping the students become smart and helping the students become good are the goals of education throughout the world.

Moreover, building students' character through education is a crucial aspect to create good quality of the students. On the other hand, today's fact shows that there is a moral decadence. There are lots of issues related to Indonesian students that need to be solved effectively for instance discipline

problem, bullying, violence, crime, drugs, and students' unexpected behavior. This condition becomes one of the activators for the Indonesian government to implement strengthening character education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter*). Law No. 87 of 2017 explains that the aim of *PPK* program is to build and equip students as the golden generation of Indonesia.

Therefore, character building through education is very important to be integrated into all subjects, including English subject. According to Hutami (2012) by applying character building in English class could provide positive influence for the academic achievement and behavior of the students: the English proficiency was getting better and their characters develop well. This means that character building should also be able to be integrated into learning English reflected in all English learning activities. Thus, by integrating character building in English classroom, the teachers do not only teach English for the sake of the language itself, but also introduce moral contents and instill the students with the values. In accordance with that, a study on the teaching strategies of English language teacher to build students' character is needed to be taken into consideration. Thus, I conducted a qualitative study of character building in English classroom at SMP IT Izzuddin Palembang, in order to find out the teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom. The study entitled: "Character Building through English Language Teaching: A Case Study at One Junior High School Palembang".

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Character Building

Character can be interpreted as the combination of qualities in a person that makes them different from others. Tsai and Agboola (2012) state that character can be defined as a measurement of manners. The importance of building students' character through education should be stressed since it has great impact on students' character development. Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis (2003) define character building in education as the conscious effort that necessary to be developed in core ethical and performance value of young learner.

Components of Character Building

Characters are expanded through knowing, acting, and habit. Accordingly, characters represent how a person acts. If person acts well and properly, they certainly reflect have good characters. Park (2009) asserts that good character is central to individual and societal well-being. A good character should implicate some components. According to Lickona (1991) there are three components of good character, they are; (1) moral knowing, (2) moral feeling, and (3) moral action.

Character Values for English Subject

Each country has different version of character values depend on the core value, religion, and culture. There are many values that need to be instilled in students. To help focus the integration of the values, it needs to be sorted or grouped, then integrated into the most suitable subjects. Hence, based on the guideline of character education published by Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional (2010) which explains the character values that should be developed for English subject, they are: (1) respect for diversity, (2) polite, (3) confidence, (4) independent, (5) cooperate, and (6) obey the social rules. Thus, it focuses on the certain main values that are closest to the characteristics of the subject concerned.

The Concept of Language, Teaching, and Learning

Language is a tool to express the thought of people. Kumaravadivelu (2006) divides language into three concepts, they are: (1) language as a system, (2) language as discourse, and (3) language as ideology. Additionally, teaching and learning are the main concern in language teaching. Teaching and learning are both interwoven that cannot be separated each other.

Teaching is defined as guiding, facilitating, enabling the learner to learn, and setting the conditions for learning (Brown, 2000). Teaching could not be defined apart from learning. Brown (2006) claims that the theory of teaching is the theory of learning which stood on its head

The Concept of Integrated Islamic School (SIT)

An integrated Islamic school is a school that implements the concept of Islamic education. Muhab (2017) as cited in Fuadi (2019) explain that an integrated Islamic school is a school that tries to implement an approach that integrates *Kauniyah* verses represented by general education and *Qauliyah* verses represented by religious education into one curriculum.

Integrating Character Building through English Language Teaching

In Indonesian education system, character building is belonging to the newest curriculum designed by the governance, the 2013 curriculum. The governance demanded that every subject was entirely integrated with the values of character including English subject. In addition, English language teacher can apply various strategies in classroom in order to integrate character building in teaching and learning activity in the class. In line with this, Shaaban (2005) indicates some strategies for incorporating character education into ESL/EFL classroom mentioned as follows: (1) message, (2) method, (3) outcomes, (4) resources, (5) activity, and (6) assessment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was included in qualitative research with a case study. According to Creswell (2012), a case study is a problem to be studied, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The data of this study was obtained by using interview as the research instrument. The interview was conducted in order to find out the teaching strategy to build students' character in English classroom. The participants of this study were determined by using purposeful sampling method. The participants were two teachers of English subject in junior high school level. These teachers were chosen in order to get depth understanding and develop many perspectives. Therefore, all of them were chosen as the participants of the study.

In collecting the data, interview was chosen as the research instrument. The interview consisted of 20 questions distributed to the participants to obtain the data of the teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom.

In order to understand the teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom, the data gained from the interview were transcribed. The interview transcription was analyzed by using thematic analysis. Lastly, themes and codes were determined.

In this study, member checking was employed in order to determine the accuracy of the findings. According to Creswell (2012), member checking is the process of checking the accuracy of the finding by asking one or more participants of the study to check the accuracy of the account, by taking the finding back to the participants and asking them about the accuracy of the report.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research finding of this study is the result of the teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom at one junior high school in Palembang.

Teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students’ character in English classroom

Tabel 1: Themes and codes for the teaching strategies to build students’ character in English classroom.

Theme	Code
1. Giving valuable message and model	A. Teachers inserted character values through verbal message. B. Teacher played as role model.
2. Creating active learning involvement	A. Teachers engaged students to be active in the classroom through individual assignment, group discussion, and presentation
3. Focusing on students’ outcome	A. Teachers attempted the student to gain English competency and good character development.
4. Using suitable material resources	A. Teacher created the module in order to incorporate character values and include verses from the Qur’an and Hadith related to the lesson. B. Teacher used the story or literature from textbook
5. Applying various activity to shape students’ character	A. Teacher used some games such as words category and vocabulary memorizing to attract students’ interest and attention. B. Teacher gave short quiz after explaining the material. C. Teacher conducted pair work or group work activity in order to build students’ interaction and cooperation among students.
6. Evaluating students’ character	A. Teachers evaluated students’ character by giving direct feedback or reward and utilizing evaluation format.

Giving valuable message and model

Based on the data obtained through interview, we found that teachers applied the strategy by giving valuable message and model to the students. The English teacher felt it was necessary to implement character building in English classroom. P2 stated, “*English language teacher needs to insert the character values into teaching and learning processes*” (personal communication, October 22, 2020). Nevertheless, English language teachers cannot deny that surely there will be students’ inappropriate behavior during teaching and learning processes. Hence, teacher inserted character values by giving verbal message to the students. Teachers always remind and advised the students to behave properly by inserting the character values through verbal message in the class activity. P1 said, “*There must be students’ action that we can put good message. I often advise and remind students*” (personal communication, October 20, 2020).

Additionally, we also found that English language teacher plays as role model in the classroom. Teacher tried to give good example and behave properly during teaching and learning process in English classroom. P1 mentioned, “*Every teacher should be an example related to good character in front of students, so the students can imitate these good things*” (personal communication, October 20, 2020). P1 also added, “*I realize that my role as a*

facilitator in building the character, that is why the way I behave will influence the student” (personal communication, October 20, 2020).

Therefore, teachers attempted their role as a model in the class.

This strategy greatly impacted the teachers to build students’ character in English classroom because by giving valuable message and model could lead to a successful integration of character building.

Creating active learning involvement

We found out that teacher was using various methods in order to create active learning involvement and building the character of students in English classroom. P1 mentioned, *“I usually apply lecturing, individual assignments, and presentations method. These methods make students more active in joining the lesson and could build their character”* (personal communication, October 20, 2020).

In addition, to develop students’ critical thinking and respecting other people, P1 asserted, *“By applying discussion in the class, students became more active in expressing their ideas and could respect others’ opinions”* (personal communication, October 20, 2020).

Furthermore, another teacher uttered that emphasizing the students to be brave in learning process could develop their character and improve the competence of English lesson. P2 explained, *“In my class, students must be brave in answering the questions, delivering opinions whether during discussions or presentations”* (personal communication, October 22, 2020).

From having those kinds of method, teachers believed that it would be affected the students’ activeness in learning English. In addition, students could improve their English skills and develop their character through those methods by creating an active learning involvement in English classroom.

Focusing on students’ outcome

We found that teacher needs to understand their objectives of teaching English. P1 uttered, *“For the knowledge of English, I hope that the students understand the material being taught, are able to improve their English language skills and have noble character and good personality”* (personal communication, October 20, 2020).

In addition, by understanding the aims of teaching English and focusing on students’ outcome, teacher will realize that in English language teaching, they do not only provide students with English skill but also build their character. P2 added that, *“Although English lessons, they must get both, the skill of English and character values”* (personal communication, October 22, 2020).

In short, English teachers needed to find out their role as facilitator and focusing students’ outcome in the classroom and teach the students maximally. Therefore students could improve their English skills and develop character value.

Using suitable material resources

We found that teachers used suitable material resources as a strategy to build students character. This strategy was creating the module of English materials by inserting the character values inside. P1 stated, *“Teacher makes their own module, so that there is an inserting character values in it”* (personal communication, October 20, 2020). In relation to this, teacher added the verses from *Qur’an* or *Hadiths* in the end of the chapter that relates with the English lesson. P2 explained, *“From the module, there are verses from the Qur’an or Hadiths related to English material, because this is an Islamic school”* (personal communication, October 22,

2020). The teacher believed that by creating the module, they could choose the appropriate character values based on the lesson being studied.

Additionally, the teacher used story or literature from the textbook as way to build students' character. P1 mentioned, *"I often use stories from reading texts or literature"* (personal communication, October 20, 2020). Through this source, students could get the experiences and moral message from the passage. The teacher uttered that, *"By reading, students could get moral values from the text"* (personal communication, October 20, 2020). Furthermore, character can be built by using suitable English material resources with the appropriate character values based on the lesson.

Applying various activities to shape students' character

One of English teacher was using variety of games in order to attract students' interest and attention in learning English. P2 stated, *"Through games it will improve social skill and team work between the students and also by having the game students will feel motivated learning English in fun ways"* (personal communication, October 22, 2020).

In addition, to check students comprehension towards the materials explained, P2 said that, *"I prefer to have quiz, by using the quiz, it trains students to think fast and develop students' self-confidence"* (personal communication, October 22, 2020). From having the quiz, it makes students feel brave in delivering their idea and trained the students to develop self-confidence as a way to build their character. In relation to this, other teacher had different strategy. Teacher conducted pair work or group work activity in order to build students' interaction and cooperation among students. P1 explained, *"In the classroom, I asked students in pairs or groups to do the activity based on my instruction"* (personal communication, October 20, 2020).

Evaluating students' character

It was found that the last strategy used by English language teachers to build students character in English classroom was evaluating students' character. The use of evaluation was to assess the students' character development through formal and informal evaluation. P2 stated that, *"I evaluate the character development of my students by using the evaluation format in the form of checklist observation of the characters that have been achieved"* (personal communication, October 22, 2020).

In addition, P1 also added, *"I used direct feedback to evaluate students' character"* (personal communication, October 20, 2020). From the finding it revealed that, teacher utilized direct feedback and rewarding students if they well behave, and the teacher preferred to talk with the students personally, if students did not show good attitude and behave in proper way.

By evaluating the students, they will realize that they are in the process of developing character and could improve a good character value.

Discussion

After we analyzed the result of data by using thematic analysis technique, we found out that there were several teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character.

The first strategy was giving valuable message and model to the students in the class. English language teachers tried to insert character by giving good messages of character values and model to the students in teaching and learning activity in the class moreover the school is considered as Islamic school that has vision and mission in emphasizing good character in its

students. In addition, to overcome students' inappropriate behaviour during teaching and learning process, teacher reminded the students to behave properly by inserting character value. Hence, even though the lesson is English, the teacher still introduced character values by giving good messages through teaching and learning process to the students. This result was in line with Sachar (2015) who claimed that teacher can inculcate values among children/learners which will help them to form good character and develop the personality of the learner as a whole. In relation to this, Rahmi and Erlinda (2014) argued that in the context of language learning, the responsibility of teacher in the class is not only about teaching the linguistic structure of English language but more than that the teachers have major part as character educator.

In addition, from this study it was also found that teacher tried to give good example and behave properly during teaching and learning process in English classroom. The teachers attempted their role as a role model in the class. It is in line to research finding conducted by Harney (2014) who found that integrating character in English classroom can be done by teaching the students about character through modeling. Apart from that, Harmer (2007a) elaborated that good personality and does not hide it from the students is the characteristic of good teacher. It means that, teacher in the class has position not only as someone who teach students the English matter but the way teachers behave in the front of the students play important point in building the character of the students. Hence, teachers have a power to influence and demonstrate the good personality of character value. In addition, Lickona (1991) revealed that teachers can serve as models which mean ethical persons who show a high level of respect and responsibility inside and outside the classroom. It can be said that, English language teachers are the key role in developing students' English skill and as example for the students therefore teachers should have great attitude. Hence, the students can imitate good attitude and behavior by modeling on their teacher.

The second, we also found that the teaching strategy of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom was creating active learning involvement. The teachers tried to engage students' participation to be actively in learning process in order to build their motivation in learning English and promote character building into teaching and learning process. This result was in line with Ratih (2017); Rahmi and Erlinda (2014) who revealed that character building in English classroom also can be integrated through learning activities where all students engage in every activity. Through the activeness of the students during teaching and learning process it will develop their character and improve students' English skills. This result was supported by Vale, D., Scarino, A. and McKay P. (1991) who claimed that learners learn a language best when they are provided with opportunities to participate and being involved in learning activities. In relation to this, the teacher used various methods to create active learning involvement toward the students. Shaaban (2005) argued that the methodology for integrating character in the ESL/EFL classroom by creating an active learning environment in the class. Therefore, by creating active learning involvement, the English language teachers could be able to build the character of students in English classroom.

In this study, teachers had implemented various methods such as individual assignment, group discussion, and presentation in order to create active learning involvement in English classroom activities. This finding was related with the guideline published by Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional (2010) which explains learning activity that potentially to develop students' character is attempting the activity which focus on learner-centered. This can be done through discussion, observation, debate, presentation, and doing the project. Through this activity students will be involved and active in English learning activity and at the same time develop their character.

Furthermore, the next teaching strategy applied by English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom was focusing on students' outcome. Teaching English

to the students will be meaningful when the teacher can integrate the teaching process into the development of students' character. In relation to this, Tsui (2008) explained that goals of teaching English as a foreign language are to be reframed to prioritize not only academic learning of language, but also social, emotional, and ethnical competencies of the students. In this study, Teachers attempted the student to gain English competency and good character development. Therefore, by focusing on students' outcome, teacher would teach English lesson and integrate character building maximally. This finding was supported by Hutami (2013) which revealed that the implementation of character education in learning English as a foreign language can provide positive effect to the academic achievement of the students and their behavior. Their English mastery is getting better and their characters develop well. Hence, by attempting students' outcome, they will gain two objectives both the improvement of English and also good character development.

Another teaching strategy was using suitable material resources. The strategy applied by English language teachers was creating the module of English materials by inserting the Islamic values inside the module related to the English lesson being taught. Harmer (2007b) claimed that the most important aspect of a course book use is for teachers to try to engage students with the content they are going to be dealing with. Therefore, by preparing the material instilled with the Islamic character values, teachers were able to engage students in developing their character in relation to English material. This finding was supported by Rahmi and Erlinda (2014); Yandles (2008), who found that to integrate character education can be done through the use of book.

Additionally, the teacher used story or literature from the text book as the way to build students' character. It is in line to research finding conducted by Harney (2014) who found that teaching character through literature and current event as the strategy to integrate character education in English lesson. Shaaban (2005) revealed that the two most recommended resources to build moral education in ESL/EFL are history and literature. In relation to this, according to Nord and Haynes (2000) these two subjects helps make up for the deficiencies of personal experience and insight. In English subject, there are various texts that will be studied by the learners. Through reading, the students could get moral values from the passage by connecting their own experiences to the experiences of others. Tyra (2012) stated that the strategy that supports teacher in applying character education in EFL classroom is through children's literature. In the same spirit, Smith (2002) explained that stories provide the reader an experience of living through the trials and thrills of character, whether told in the books of children or adult. In addition, Yeasmin, Azad, and Ferdous (2011) argued that stories can both entertain and educate for students.

The next, we also found that another teaching strategy of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom was applying various activities to shape students' character. This finding was supported by Rahmi and Erlinda (2014); Ratih (2017) who revealed that learning activities in a class also give a chance for the teacher to expand the behavior of the students. Hence, classroom activities that chosen by the teacher will be suitable in improving English competence based on the lesson and developing the character of the students. From this study, it was found that teachers had applied several activities such as; applying the games, quiz, and conducted pair work or group work activity in the class. In relation to this, Leifeld (2015); Eliasa (2012); Lie (2017); Fang (2005); Brown (1994) found that several activities such as group discussion, games, pair work or group work activity could improve cooperative learning among the students. Therefore, students could develop their character though these activities and improve their English skill.

The final teaching strategy was evaluating students' character. The use of evaluation was to assess the character development of the students. This finding was supported by Ratih (2017); Harney (2014) from the studies found that the effective character education involves

evaluation to evaluate students' character development. In relation to this, Lickona, Schaps, and Lewis (2002) claimed that effective character education must include an effort to assess progress. Additionally, Shaaban (2005) mentioned that the assessment is important for the effective integration of character in ESL/EFL classroom. Further, Assessment instrument are implemented not only to measure students' academic/cognitive development, but also measure students personality development (Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, 2010).

In this study, teacher evaluated students' character by giving direct feedback to the students, in relation to this, teacher praised the students and gave reward if students had achieve good character progress. Apart from that, Harmer (2007b) elaborated that one of teacher's role is to encourage students by praising them for work that is well done. He added praise is vital component in student's motivation and progress. In addition, from this study it was also found that teacher utilize evaluation format in the form of checklist observation of the characters that have been achieved. This finding was supported by Shaaban (2005) incorporating character education into ESL/EFL classroom teacher can evaluate the performance of students' character by using formal and informal assessment techniques and procedure as well as; observation checklist, dialogue, self- and peer-assessment. By evaluating the students, they will realize that they are in the process of developing character and could improve a good character value.

Conclusion

Based on the data obtained from interview as well as the data analysis trough thematic analysis, the results of this study were revealed. The results of this research showed that there were six teaching strategies of English language teachers to build students' character in English classroom. Those teaching strategies were presented through several theme, they were: (1) giving valuable message and model; (2) creating active learning involvement; (3) focusing on students' outcome; (4) using suitable material resources; (5) applying various activities to shape students' character; and (6) evaluating students' character.

Thus, it is suggested in order to have effective teaching and learning activity, especially teaching in school that emphasizing students' character, the English language teachers should motivate the students to participate actively in the process of English language teaching and learning. Teachers should apply the appropriate and varieties of teaching method and strategy to engage students' participation in learning English. Therefore, students will achieve two objectives both the English competence and good character values. Additionally, the teacher should try to integrate character building into suitable material more often. Further, the teacher should be more aware that they are as role model and example for the students. And finally, teacher needs to evaluate students' character regularly in terms of giving direct feedback or evaluation regarding the character of the students.

Additionally, it is suggested that the school principal should give financial support or facility therefore the teacher could provide various media and activities to increase the motivation of the students in learning English. And also, the school principal should pay more attention to upgrade teachers' quality by providing teachers' training program for skill, and professional development about character building in English language teaching. Furthermore, it is also recommended that the school principle can give appreciation for the teachers who work hard in building the character through English classroom since integrating character in English class is not easy to do. Therefore, this appreciation could encourage the teachers to always apply innovative and effective strategies in building the character of the students.

Finally, since this study was only aimed to find out the teaching strategies of English language teacher in building students' character in English classroom, it is necessary to conduct further study to complete this study. The researcher recommends for other researchers to investigate the challenges encountered by the teachers in integrating character building in

English language teaching as well as the ways to cope with the challenges. In addition, since this study only focused on investigating the teachers' perspective, it would be great to find out from the students' perceptions.

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