PROMOTING CHARACTER INTEGRATION IN SKILL-BASED ACTIVITIES IN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Character integration in learning process is one of signatures of the Curriculum 2013, but there are some issues in its implementation. This study investigates the activities from which character integration in EFL can be promoted. This employs case study design in which documentation and text-books analysis are used in the data collection. The findings of the study reveal that it is possible to integrate character in an EFL classroom setting. This study suggests that teachers must try different kind of tasks from which they know which one work best for their classrooms.

Keywords: *character integration, EFL classroom, skill-based activities.*

INTRODUCTION

To shape well-qualified human resources that meet the qualification of 21st century demands, education must be taken consideration as one of the main important factors (Putri, Harto, & Moecharam, 2017). In Indonesian context, government has applied different kind of education system to create high qualified learners. Since 2013, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) launched a new curriculum that is still used to the present, namely the Curriculum 2013. This curriculum is updated every year to meet the requirements of today's challenges. The latest update is that the curriculum focuses not only on the students' cognitive development but also on the students' attitude improvement. This is done with the purpose of the betterment of the students, particularly their morality. Even though character education system has been emphasized since previous curriculum and been an important part of national education mission (Murtako, 2015), it has some problems and issues in its implementation (Zurqoni, 2018).

One of the issues is the limited number of teachers that are creative and innovative enough in developing their materials from which they can integrate character into their learning activities (Simarmata, 2016). In addition, Nova (2017) stated that many EFL teachers faced several obstacles in inserting character education in classroom such difficulties in connecting the character values with the learning materials. It means that the character

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education implementation has not met the expectation of the purpose. To shed light on the problems faced by teachers in Indonesia in terms of character education implementation, this study will focus on studying the literature on how to promote the character integration. This study takes the setting on the EFL Classroom because this kind of study is still scarce. It is hoped that the study will give some insights to the ELT practitioners on how to promote character building in their teaching practices.

Character Education

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). According to Presidential Regulation No. 87 / 2017, characters in PPK program are divided into main-character, and sub-character.

Main-character:

1.   Religiosity

The value of religiosity character reflects the faith in God Almighty which is manifested in the behaviour of implementing religious teachings and beliefs that are embraced, respecting religious differences, upholding a tolerant attitude towards the implementation of religious worship and other beliefs, living in harmony and peace with followers of other religions. This religious character value includes three dimensions of the relationship at once, namely the relationship of individuals with God, individuals with each other, and individuals with the universe (environment). The value of this religious character is shown in loving and maintaining the integrity of creation.

Religiosity sub-values include: peace, tolerance, respect for religious differences and beliefs, firm stand, self-confidence, cooperation between followers of religions and beliefs, anti-violence and violence, friendship, sincerity, not forcing the will, loving the environment, protecting the small and marginalized.

2.   Nationalist

The value of nationalist character is a way of thinking, behaving, and doing that shows loyalty, care, and high respect for the language, physical environment, social, cultural, economic, and political of the nation, placing the interests of the nation and state above self and group interests.

Nationalist sub-values include: appreciation of the nation's own culture, safeguarding the nation's cultural wealth, willingness to sacrifice, excel and excel, love the motherland, protect the environment, obey the law, discipline, respect cultural diversity, ethnicity and religion.

3. Independent

Independent character values are attitudes and behaviors that do not depend on others and use all energy, thought, time to realize hopes, dreams and ideals. Independent sub-values include work ethic (hard work), resilient resilience, fighting spirit, professional, creative, courage, and become lifelong learners.

4. Cooperation

The character value of cooperation reflects the act of appreciating the spirit of cooperation and working hand in hand to solve common problems, establish communication and friendship, provide assistance / help to those in need. The cooperation sub-values include respect, cooperation, inclusive, commitment to joint decisions, consensus agreement, help, solidarity, empathy, anti-discrimination, anti-violence, and voluntary attitudes.

5. Integrity

Integrity character values are values that underlie behaviour based on efforts to make themselves people who can always be trusted in words, actions, and work, have commitment and loyalty to human values and morals (moral integrity). The character of integrity includes an attitude of responsibility as a citizen, actively involved in social life, through consistency of actions and words based on truth. Sub-values of integrity include honesty, love for truth, loyalty, moral commitment, anti-corruption, justice, responsibility, example, and respect for the dignity of individuals (especially persons with disabilities).

EFL Classroom

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia (Suharjati, 2010) and becomes the most-learned foreign language in Indonesia (Ratih, 2017). In some places, particularly in big cities, some schools even use it as a medium of instruction starting from kindergarten. It is a compulsory subject that is taught from the lower education level to the higher education level. Language is beneficial to teach good character by using good words and expressing the words in a good way. Therefore, character values can be developed through English subject. The character values development through English subject is expected to give a positive impact to the children and nation development.

According to Broughton (2003), all good language teaching classes share some basic principles that are derived from the interaction of aspects that contribute to the theory and practice of EFL. It means that the teachers have to understand about teaching approach, method, and strategy in language teaching. Approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching, and learning. An approach is

axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter taught. Method is theoretically related to approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realized in procedure. It is an umbrella term which specifies the relationship between theory and classroom practice. Strategy in teaching context, is a generalized plan for a lesson which includes structure, desired learner behaviour in terms of goals of instruction and an outline of planned tactics necessary to implement the strategy, (Gill & Kusum, 2017).

METHOD

This study aimed at unravelling the activities that can be used in EFL classroom to promote character education. It employs case study design in which documentation and literature analysis are used to gather the data. Data was taken from literature of character education and some books about English language teaching.

In the data collection process, the researcher studies some literatures like academic articles from journals and books about character education by reading and making notes on important points of character education integration in a classroom. Then, the researcher connects the idea from previous data collection with some theories of second language acquisition and second language learning. From these activities, the data were then analysed and conclusion was arrived at.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that character education can be promoted in EFL Classroom. This can be done through the following ways:

Project-based

Project based can be done in EFL Classroom at the same time as character integration. During the completion of the project, students can strengthen their characters. For example, when a class is learning a topic of *giving suggestion,* a teacher can give a project to the students to make a poster about healthy life during pandemic in a group of four. In the poster, students are required to give some illustration and some suggestions on how to live a healthy life. When they submit the project, they must explain the project to their peers in the form of short presentation that will be followed by questions and answers session.

Through this project, the students practice their speaking and writing skills. The first is done when they perform the presentation and answer the questions given, while the latter happens when they put some suggestions in the poster. In addition, this project also meets the requirements of the Curriculum 2013, because it can be classified as an authentic assessment. In completing the project, the students must apply

their creativity in designing the poster, discuss with their peer group for deciding the design, and create sentences using grammatical rules correctly. It means that they have completed other requirements of the Curriculum 2013; creativity, communication, collaboration and higher order thinking skills.

The characters that are promoted during the completion of this project are tolerance (respecting others' opinion in discussion), self-confidence (performing the presentation) and friendship (working in a group). These are the sub-characters of religiosity. In addition, the character of independent, integration and integrity are also strengthened. This kind of project can be changed to other project, depending on the materials being discussed. For example, when the topic is about *Holiday,* students can be asked to plan a trip for one week, etc.

In-Class activities

This kind of activity can be done individually or in group. For example, students are given some questions from which every student gets the sense of responsibility. The following are the questions that can be given.

a. What are your responsibilities as a student at home?
b. What responsibilities will you assume as you get older?

c. How do you hold others accountable for their behaviour?
d. How do you hold yourself accountable for your behaviour?

The questions above are given to the students as a reflection practice during the learning process in class. The students must answer the questions in written form. This activity will strengthen students' understanding of responsibility and help the students to improve their writing skills. If the language proficiency of students is still low, the activity above can be done in group. After the activity is completed, it can be followed up by asking the students to explain their answer to others. This can be done to improve the speaking of the students.

In-Class activities can be focused on different kind of skills, depending on the materials. For example, listening skills can be done through listening a song that are followed by discussion. In the discussion, the students must answer certain questions prepared by the teacher. To integrate the character in the activity, every student must be responsible by giving their ideas related to the song from which the discussion will be active.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that character integration is possible to be done in an English classroom setting. It can be done by Project-based and In-Class activities from which different kind of character can be strengthen and

harnessed. To know which activities that work best for the teachers, they must try different kind of activities and learn from the experience.

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