

## **THE DIFFICULTIES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN INSTILLING CHARACTER BUILDING THROUGH NARRATIVE STORIES AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA**

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### **Abstract**

Implementing characters value upon subjects at schools is one of the ways Indonesian government implants the nation-character program. Using narrative stories as material subject within language classes are expected to increase the students' characters at school. However, the English teachers of elementary level face such difficulties in implementing students' character through teaching learning process. There are several obstacles faced by teachers like: time allotment provided is not enough for the teacher to deliver such good values from the narrative stories being taught, he/she then tends to bring the cognitive parts up by discussing the linguistics parts and emphasize how students understand the story without even give time for them to apply the good value in their daily life. The lack of teaching materials to support the implanting process of character through narrative stories is also blamed to be the reason why teachers find it difficult to apply character building process.

**Key words:** elementary school, character education, narrative story.

### **1. Introduction**

Indonesian people are facing problems with behavior which is said not to be in line with the nation character soul of *Pancasila* (the national philosophy) i.e. religious, humanist, nationalist, democratic, justice, and the people's welfare. If the people do not try to solve the problem, it will pose a threat while character education is highly required to serve people to develop the potential base on heart, thinking, and well behave; correcting such less manners and amplifies good behavior that has been

there; and distill the culture that is deficient according to the transcendent value of *Pancasila*.

The character building which includes in the realization of national philosophy and national constitution is the background of national problems such as the disorientation and not applying the *Pancasila* values; limitation of integrated policy tools in implementing the values; the ethics value shifting in the nation and state; warning consciousness against the nation value; nation disintegration threat; and weakening of the nation independence (Puskurbuk, 2011).

Elementary school is a formal institution that establishes basic education which is part of national education systems and has a very important role in improving human resources. Through the education in elementary school, it is expected to yield Indonesian human quality (Suharjo, 2006: 1).

One of the materials that could be used in character shaping of kids in the elementary school is a narrative story including folktale which has such great value. In facilitating these materials, a narrative approach can be used within the lesson. According to Chan (2012) “a narrative approach for education is based on the idea of making meaning through reflection.” In this case, the teacher asks the students to make reflection on the material provided to be connected to the daily life so that they can get the moral value from the story easily. Reflection can lead to understanding, which can lead to action. Using this kind of material, it corresponds to researches conducted by Piaget, Kohlberg in Musfiroh (2008: 66) indicating that story plays role in the moral formation. But folk tales as cultural heritage of Indonesia will be lost and unrecognizable if English teacher prefers using stories from abroad as the learning materials. Some book publishers are very productive in producing story books which derived from abroad, e.g. Cinderella, the Beauty and the Beast, Snow White, Aladdin, and many others. The stories, however do not contain the value of characters of the nation because they are not taken from the root of Indonesian culture. Using local content as the teaching material can also increase students’ interest in the teaching

learning process, as stated by Royani (2013) in his research in teaching English reading, “using local culture text means that the texts learned by the students are the part of students’ life. By doing so, the students will feel motivated in reading class which brings a good impact to a higher level of reading class.” It is indicating that using such stories from local content, which is rich of moral values, not only can shape students moral value but also can increase students’ interest in the process of teaching learning.

## 2. Methods of the Research.

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods by means of giving questionnaires, observations and interviews to some elementary school English teachers in Central Java, while for a cross check the researcher also asks some students responses dealing with the way the teacher teaches, especially dealing with narrative texts. The elementary schools taken are of the outstanding ones (*unggulan*), coming from 35 regencies spread out in Central Java. One of the reasons for taking *unggulan* elementary schools because most of these schools possess English teachers or provide English subject. From the questionnaires, collected were 200 respondents with many qualifications, while for interviews and observations six (6) schools representing districts (*Karesidenan*) were taken randomly.

## 3. Results and Discussions

Table 1. Teachers Education Background

Education Background	Frequency	Percentage
English	56	28 %
Non English	144	72 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Faridi (2013)

From table 1, Teachers Education Background, we can see that not all teachers teaching English in elementary schools in Central Java having appropriate education background. The table says that only 56 of 200 schools or (28%) teachers graduated from English department, while the rest 144 of 200 (72%) graduated from different kinds of department like sport, religion, arts or even class teachers.

**Table 2. Teachers Status at Elementary Schools**

Teachers Status	Frequency	Percentage
Class Teacher	145	72,5 %
English Teacher	55	27,5 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Faridi (2013)

Table 2 on Teachers Status at Elementary Schools says that not all teachers teaching English are subject teachers. From the total 200, there are only 55 schools (27,5 %) employing English teachers as subject teachers, while the rest 145 schools (72,5%) do not hire English teachers, they simply assign class teachers to teach English. The common reason is about welfare. The schools prefer giving additional salary to class teachers to teach English which means to raise up their welfare.

#### **4. Elementary School Learning**

Education in elementary schools aims to provide basic skills to prepare students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will benefit them in accordance with their development level, and preparing them in continuing their education in junior high school (Suharjo, 2003: 1). Elementary school is a formal institution that organizes educational programs for students aged 6-12 years. Students should be

given a clear insight of knowledge in order not to obscure their knowledge on secondary education. They are expected to learn to behave in live, practice norms and morals. Therefore, the Government prioritizes the character education in the elementary school.

Elementary school has not only the role to shape students into a cognitively good generation, but also to form the students' attitudes and behaviors in accordance with the guideline applied. This statement is in accordance with the law of System of National Education (*sisdiknas*) No. 20 of 2003 that national education serves to develop the ability and to form character and the value of nation civilization in order to strengthen the national intellectual life, aimed at the development of learners' potential in order to become a man of faith and piety to God Almighty, precious, healthy, eagerly learned, accomplished, creative, independent, and democratic citizenship as well as be responsible.

## **5. Character Education Program**

Character is a form of behavior that is demonstrated in accordance with morals and manners rules. Character education teaches a way of thinking habitual and behavior that help individuals to live and work together as a family, community, and state and can help them to make decisions which can be accounted for. In other words, character education teaches students to think smart, activate the midbrain naturally (Khan, 2010: 1-2).

Lickona in Muslich (2011:75) stressing three components of good character that should be implanted since early ages, they are moral knowing ( knowledge about moral ), moral feeling ( feelings about moral ), and moral action ( a deed moral ). These three components are needed in order to be able to understand, feel, and pursuing the values of virtue. This condition answers the needs that education does not only give cognitive thinking, but also develop more moral to be internalized in human being. This is in accordance with the meaning of character education in the

government rule no.58 which says that education involves planting knowledge, love, and good behavior and make them as a pattern or habit. Based on the meaning then education character is education that forms someone's to conform moral in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Character education is the core of an educational process. On this basis, the functions and the role of the school become a strategy in the students' character building so that they have an understanding, feeling, commitment, and loyalty to a consistent standard of behavior in accordance with the values of goodness. The good characters include understanding, awareness, and actions based on core ethical values. Therefore, the holistic approach in character education seeks to develop the whole aspect of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor and moral life. Students understand the core values and discuss it, observe the behavior of the model, and practice the problem solving that involves values. Students learn to care about the core values and develop empathy, caring relationships forming, building, creating moral communities, hearing illustrative and inspirational stories, and reflecting on life experiences (Zubaedi, 2012: 116).

Sutarno (2008: 7-10) wrote that one of the culture-based learning model is through folklore. Folklore or fairy tale is just one example of the many kinds of oral traditions or speech. The story should have been utilized by the present society to draw back the required values (Sularto: 2011). Oral tradition offers complementary character development, while *Pancasila* serves as the core value of the national character development. In the syllabus of study, it is listed the students' characters of elementary schools which include reliable, respective and attentive, diligence, responsible, and being brave for all standards of competence. Whereas each competence standard is expected to bring up the value of the different characters.

## **6.Character Education Through Narrative Story**

Narrative story covering fairy tales, folktale, legend, fables; and cover story. Folktale according to Mustakim ( 2005: 53 ) is a story delivered verbally by words of mouth, from generations to generations whose author is unknown. Kiefer ( 2010: 233-239 ) made some features of folktale that can be distinguished from other stories, they are: plot structure, character, theme, motive, and kind of story. According to Musfiroh ( 2008: 33-45 ), the characteristic of stories for elementary school students covering the theme, trustee, the plot, figure and figuring, viewpoint, background, and literary means. Theme should be of social theme and godhood factor and traditional. Teachers are advised to choose stories containing allocution not too close overcoming the student as students become as objects insinuation in that story. A plot in the story should be simple. Clear and simple figure and figuring. Viewpoint chosen must be easy. Free background and in accordance with the cognitive and moral development. Literary means according to the stages of language development students.

Folk tales as part of the narrative story is rich with culture or local wisdom. This story is oral or written tradition that not only needs to be preserved but also developed. Needs to be done what so called multicultural approach so that comprehensive understanding can be obtained so that the result can be used as a source of learning for the development of unity and the union of Indonesian people which finally becomes a source for the formation of national character ( Sularto: 2011 ). For that matter, narrative stories in elementary schools must originate from the Indonesian where there are cultural richness can be used as reference for students' character development.

Material for Narrative stories of elementary school can be found on the sixth grade at the second semester that can open the students' potential and providing a place of expression. In addition, narrative stories also represent human life and by

learning that, students can take the lesson and knowledge, differentiating attitudes and behavior that shows right or wrong. Narrative stories study will contribute in character of students, because they can imagine and study appreciate experience of others as a basis for moral learning. Learning, ideally should be based on the syllabus narrative stories material for elementary school students loaded with a standard competence that is understanding the short functional text, very simple pictorial descriptive text in the on students' surrounding context. The competence is basically to understand very simple pictorial narrative text.

To support learning, teachers can use the references from internet or create media related to the story. Narrative story is one of the English language teaching methods in elementary school that can enhance students' language proficiency. Students are not just passively listening because after listening to the story, the teacher can invite students to discuss relates to it. The students will be involved in the use of familiar language. Students accustomed to the atmosphere of the real English language (<http://inggrissd.blogspot.com/2012/08/metode-pengajaran-bahasa-inggris-untuk.html>).

The benefit value from having narrative story for students is that they are more capable of translating problems in life through corporeal kindness and spiritual goodness. Far more than that, narrative story can be a medium of students' moral character shaper. Moral message is implicitly or explicitly delivered through narrative story. Honesty values, kindness, friendship, the kinship, the heartiness, sincerity, togetherness, and others dealing with character education, can be applied to students learning through narrative story.

Integration between character educations in learning should be applied in daily life. Narrative stories could be the right material to develop students' character. Thus, learning character's values not only on a cognitive level course, but touching at

the internalization of the students and the real application in daily life in our society. Of course, this visionary step will not mean much if not balanced with full support from various circle intensively to internalized character based education in family environment and community ( Purwanto, 2011 ).

### **7. Obstacles Faced By English Teachers**

In general, there are some obstacles the teacher faced in the character implementation at the school environment; i.e. the teacher's understanding about the concept of character education is still not comprehensive, he is not able to choose the character values that correspond to the subjects he is taching. Most teachers do not have sufficient competence to integrate the character values in the subjects, and can not be the model for the chosen character values (Noverino, 2012).

Akbar (21: 12-13) found the seven problems associated with the practice of character education in elementary school.

First, the character education in the elementary school are likely have not established upon the principles of the true value of education yet. Many elementary schools have not made the life values to be the foundation of the noble manner development as the core value in character education.

Second, almost all elementary schools do not have a grand design of character education. For example, the core values have not been included in the school vision yet, there are less school policies in favor of character education, the school policies tend to be drawn up unilaterally by the principal or the teacher; vision and goals of elementary school education have not explicitly implemented with the core values for character education; the expected student characters are also less visible on the graduates' profile who are expected for the future, schools' vision and mission are also tend to be less socialized to all the citizens of the school, parents, and the community around the school; and the commitment between them is less developed.

Third, the implementation of values and character education in some elementary school is less development and less care about the life values such as love, respect, peace, collaboration, compliance, and democracy in education practice in elementary school. It seems there are certain values that are practiced in elementary schools, for example: discipline, cooperation, and responsibility. However, in the learning practice the lesson still tend to be behavioristic and cognitivist so that the self-awareness to embody these values in practice everyday life at school is also not optimal.

Fourth, the vision, mission, and goals of character education tend to be less to be socialized to the rest of the school people, as well as the lack of shared commitment between them to realize it together.

Fifth, the order of instruction created for character education in schools is still dominated by the teachers and the principal. The rules of students tend to more demanding obligations and responsibility of students rather than fulfilling on student's rights; the relationship of teacher-student, teacher-principal, the social relationships between parents and schools tend to be not maximum yet.

Sixth, it was found the students', teachers', and principals' behavior are less in accordance with the values of the ideal life in elementary school.

Seventh, many schools do the mechanical penalty. The penalty on the basis of self-awareness and a penalty for infringement of the rules school group not so much applied in primary schools.

The cultivation of character in education, the teacher prepares a wide selection and strategy to instill any values, norms, and customs into the subject matter. Teachers can select a certain way in the process of his education, such as delivering a range of quotations of the wise words or proverbs related to characters, short stories, biographies, writings of the journal, which becomes a cross cultural activities, role playing, group discussions, make a short essay, and so on. Each school must determine specific activities that can bind the teachers to conduct such activities on an ongoing basis (Sudrajat, 2012).

Teachers are obliged to form the students' character by giving the example of a positive behavior. This includes an example of how does the teacher behave, the way the teacher speak or deliver the material, how does he tolerate, and many other things (Zubaedi, 2011: 19). In relation with the materials, the availability of local narrative stories originated from Indonesia becomes obstacles in the learning process. There are still many teachers using narrative stories originating from abroad and this is in contrast with the values developed in character education program in Indonesia.

Related to the above explanation, English language teachers in elementary schools nowadays still face several obstacles in cultivating students' character through the narrative story as cultural wealth.

First, the time allocation is not enough for teachers to explore the virtues of values contained in the narrative story. This is because many teachers use the time to dig into the students' ability in identifying the pictorial narrative text is very simple and is related to the material in accordance with the provisions in the syllabus. Sometimes the teachers cannot teach the narrative story because material intact as it only discusses title, characters and literary traits.

Second, teachers tend to prioritize in terms of cognitive literary standpoint because it only addressed and emphasized how students understand the story without giving the space to practice the characters value. In this case it reflects that the teacher can not fully support the character education programs established as part of morals building of students. Competence standards of graduates in English language subjects only read aloud and comprehend the meaning of the instruction, information, functional short text, pictorial and descriptive text which is too simple to be submitted in writing within the context of the classroom, school, and neighborhood. This condition is reflected in the assessment set out in the syllabus, where the teacher just measures how many students can absorb the information contained in the simple pictorial narrative text. The instruments used are also just a landscape reading and answering questions about the story and a little peel about the value of existing

characters. In addition, teachers rarely slip implied moral values. This happens because of the low level of knowledge and ability of teachers in developing and integrating character education aspects into the material being taught.

Third, the lack of learning materials to support the process of cultivation of the character through narrative story. Sometimes teachers teaching with a potluck. It means without having thorough preparation related to the material to be taught. So they adopted guidelines and student worksheets. While some of these books may not contain appropriate material. Many found the books containing the narrative stories from abroad so as not to accentuate the Indonesian culture. As a result the students tend to get less knowledge of the original Indonesian narrative story that much more diverse and could not adopt the character's values that carried from the typical story of Indonesia. English books published by various publishers proved to be impractical because only few touch on narrative stories originating from each region. Therefore, teachers should have more books or references that contain a variety of narrative stories in accordance with the local wisdom of each region in Indonesia. The use of well known narrative stories like *Malin Kundang*, *Tangkuban Perahu*, *Lake Toba*, etc can be a priority. However, teachers should also provide a variety of narrative story of his own. This can be seen from the various narrative stories taken from Sabang to Merauke ( the west and east ends of Indonesia) which could positively impact to reinforce national character program. For example for language learning in Semarang, English teacher could take some narrative story that comes from the local area, such as the *Rawa Pening*, *Sunan Tembayat*, *Kitab Blawong*, *Dakwah Ki Sekar*, *Nyi Tledhek*, etc.

In addition to the material readiness, teachers should also have the initiative in setting up the module, or the manual to suit the material and themes of each region. The books for the students and can be composed by the teachers in each region through the teacher forums. These books are very important as a handbook and guide. Teachers are not allowed to make LKS ( students worksheet) as a guide in teaching

because it is just a student exercise book contains a little summary of the subject matter and exercise questions relating to content or themes. Most teachers still use LKS as a guide in teaching due to various reasons. It's time for teachers to create and compile a book of quality that can be made into grip and guide in teaching, (<http://inggrissd.blogspot.com/2012/07/materi-dan-tema-sebagai-bahan-ajar.html>).

Many local wisdom to be excavated from the local content that was almost lost. It is the right time to build a positive national character through reading books presented to students (Republika: 2010). It includes narrative stories published in the English lesson for elementary level which originates from Indonesia which contain learning materials to grow good characters to be inherited.

## **8. Conclusion**

English language curriculum in the elementary school which has been in use still has some problems. In relation with character education, English language teachers face some constraints in using narrative storytelling to instill the program. In this case the parties affecting education must work together to bring about the success of the character education program. Step can be done by means of revamping the curriculum that not only emphasizes the cognitive side of students and provision of learning materials originated from the wealth of Indonesian culture.

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Resources for teachers. General English teaching resources. Webinars for teachers. Information for preparation centres. Blog.Â Learning English through stories. Tips and advice. Learning English through Stories.Â Encouraging your child to read or listen to stories should therefore help them to learn a second language in a way that is not only fun, but memorable. Let's take a quick look at learning vocabulary within a factual text or within a story. Imagine the readers are eight-year-olds interested in animals. In your opinion, are they more likely to remember AND want to continue reading the first or second text? Many birds and animals live in the world, for example, parrots, pandas, lions, leopards and rabbits. In the sea we can find whales, dolphins, sharks and octopuses.