

BALANCING BETWEEN HEAD AND HEART: A STRATEGY OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ELT

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Abstract

Character education which is variously known as values education, moral education, and transmission of core values is regarded as one of the important aspects in education. In Indonesia, character education has become a central theme of Indonesian education since 2010 which is included into School Based Curriculum (KTSP). Moreover, character education is mentioned in the objectives of national education and considered as the basis of the vision of national building to create a society which is characterized by good deeds, moral, ethics, culture, and good civilization. One of strategies in the character education is through the reactivation of the current curriculum which has already contained character education. English as one of compulsory subjects in the curriculum of Indonesian education can be a vehicle to explore values which are taught in character education. Thus, English language teaching (ELT) does not merely focus on how to lead the learners are competent in the language skills, but also guide them to internalize the values for character building. This paper highlights some strategies of character education in English language teaching. The discussion specifically is directed to the strategy of integration of character education into English teaching in terms of course design, instructional materials, classroom technique, and classroom management.

Keyword: character education, core values, contextual teaching and learning (CTL)

A. INTRODUCTION

*By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;
And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;-
Truly he succeeds that purifies it,
And he fails that corrupts it!*
al Qur'an, as-Syams (Sun), 91:7-10

Character education becomes one of central themes in the current curriculum of Indonesian education and gets the social legitimacy in Indonesia. The current moral degradation among youths which is indicated by the increase of drugs abuse problems, free sex, crime, violent action, and various immoral behaviors place character building as a vital need in education. Moreover, some characters as politeness, friendliness, solidarity, humble, helpfulness, and various more which have been our nation's identity for centuries are not completely comprehended by the youth. These indicate that the Indonesia education is more cognitive or academic oriented while ignoring the moral education. Through character education, they are guided to have skills in problem solving, including analyzing a problem, setting goal, and thinking through both the long-term and short-term consequences of an action. Thus, they have moral consideration in taking an action so that they know the matters of what is good and bad, and better or worse.

In the context of character education, English language teaching (ELT) does not only concern with the teaching of the language skills, but also in fact it is a profoundly value-laden activity. This perspective is based on the ideas that the essence of language teaching, as the essence of all teachings, lies in values or moral. ELT involves the ways of motivating the learners, treating the learners who have different proficiency, and culture, and managing classroom with its complexity. These aspects crucially relate to moral dimension. Moreover, in teaching the language skills, some moral values can be transmitted to the learners through classroom activity and instructional materials. Thus, the main purpose of this paper is to explore the particular ways in which values underlie various aspects of language teaching. Specifically, it is directed to the strategy of integrating moral aspect into the teaching of language skills, and classroom interaction.

B. DISCUSSION

1. The Framework of Character Education

Character education is aimed at fostering the development of ethical and responsible individuals by teaching them about the good values that people should apply. The learners are taught values of caring about other people, honesty, responsibility, and other important traits to make them as upstanding citizen. Lickona (1993) describes character education encompassing the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality. The cognitive dimension plays significantly to lead learners to achieve moral awareness. Specifically, moral

awareness is the learners' ability to use their intelligence to consider when a situation requires moral judgment, and then think carefully about what the right action is. A good character is also formed through internalizing the good, and applying the good things. Ultimately, the learners are helped to understand the core values, commit to them, and apply them in their own lives.

Character education is also directed to guide children to have moral consideration and act it in their lives (Megawangi, 2004:95). Thus, character education contains three main purposes, which are: reinforcing and developing core values, correcting learners' behavior, and creating a harmonious relation between family and society (Kesuma, 2011:9-10). Reinforcing and developing mean that character education in the school does not indoctrinate the learners with the dogmatic value, but it is a process which leads the learners to understand and reflect the core value and apply it (Kesuma, 2011:9). Then, correcting the learners' behavior is directed to change the learners' behavior which is not suit for the core values as developed in the school. This process is meant as a pedagogical process, not to bring pressure on them. The last, character education in the school is employed through an association between parents and society to achieve the target of character education. When character education just occurs at the classroom, its objectives will be hard to be achieved since character is built in a holistic process, not in a fragment of certain period.

The effort of character building ties in with the field of psychology. Theories of cognitive and development are purposed to explain how children develop, and thus, how to teach them appropriately in the frame of students' development. Piaget proposed a theory about cognitive development which employs in the four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational (Papalia, Olds, and Feldman, 2007). Sensorimotor occurs since birth through ages 18-24 months. The last three stages connect to the discussion on moral development. In the preoperational stage (ages 2-7), the main emphasis is the mastery of motor development skills. The preoperational stage is a bridge between the sensorimotor stage and concrete operational stage. When they are in 7-12 years, they move into the concrete stage which is indicated by their ability to think about a situation logically and concretely. They can also see things based on others' perspective instead of only seeing things from their own point of view. Then, children achieve the formal operation stage when they are 12 years and older. Through this stage, they can think things abstractly.

Furthermore, Piaget's cognitive development theory is elaborated by Kohlberg becoming a theory of moral reasoning (Papalia, Olds, and Feldman, 2007). This theory is grouped into three different levels: pre-conventional morality, conventional morality, and post-conventional morality. Through the stage of pre-conventional morality, learners will obey rules in order to avoid punishment. The stage of pre-conventional morality also deals with self-interest. Students adapt themselves to rules in order to get something they want. Then, the stage of conventional morality occurs when children enter middle school. Through this level, learners obey rules because they want to be accepted in their community so that they want to achieve an image as a "good boy or girl". The last stage is achieved by learners when they are in high school. Through this stage, they act upon what they think is the right thing to do, without considering opinion of others. Then, to move from a stage to another, everyone goes through the stages sequentially without skipping any stage. Learners do not automatically move from one stage to the next as they mature. Moreover, learners cannot understand moral reasoning more than one stage ahead of their own. For instance, a person in first stage can understand second stage reasoning but nothing beyond that. Therefore, teachers should present moral arguments that are only one stage ahead of a learner's present level of reasoning to stimulate movement to higher stages.

To apply character education in the process of teaching and learning, it is important to formulate core values which become pillar of character. Values which are acted by a person in his/her behavior become a real character. Thus, there is no a person's behavior which is free from a value. In relation to core values, Lickona (2003) proposes ten core values as underpinnings of character. The first value is wisdom. This value leads people to decide a thing logically, that is, what thing is good for themselves and others. A wise man will know the way to behave proportionally, and how to have a tolerance among differences. The second is justice, which relates to how respect the rights of other people. The next value is fortitude. It is ability to overcome the problem with the right thing. Having fortitude could avoid teenagers to do suicide, for instance, when they do not know how else to deal with their overwhelming emotions. The fourth value is self-control which is the ability to manage emotion proportionally and not give into overbearing feelings or temptations. The fifth virtue is love in term of the willingness to sacrifice for the good of others. Love can be shown in many forms such as empathy, compassion, kindness, generosity, service, loyalty, patriotism, and forgiveness. The sixth value is having a positive attitude. Those who have a positive attitude will get the chance of success and be valuable to others. Hard work becomes the seventh value. Hard work is applied through taking initiative, being diligent, setting goals, and being resourceful. The eighth essential value is integrity. This value involves the unity between what is believed and what is done. Gratitude is the ninth virtue. It entails person's mentality to accept satisfactorily for what already have, and be happy with everything that he/she is blessed to have in his/her life. The final virtue is humility that is a person's ability to accept his/her imperfections and appreciate others' special quality. These ten essential virtues can be the reference values in character education.

Another view on core value is proposed by Agustian (2009) who formulates seven main values: honesty, responsibility, visionary, discipline, cooperative, justice, and caring. Teachers can also consider the values for character education as proposed by Indonesia Heritage Foundation (IHF), which are: 1. love Allah, and all His creations, 2. Self-reliance and responsibility, 3. honesty and wise, 4. Respect and courtesy, 5. Empathy, caring, and cooperation, 6. Confidence, creativity, and enthusiasm, 7. leadership and justice, 8. Kindness and humility, and 9. tolerance, peacefulness, and unity (Megawangi, 2004:95). Nevertheless, the core values are not restricted to certain values as purposed by the experts. There are so many values in human life which can be identified as an essential value. In Islam, for instance, there are the most popular values which can be identified from the Prophet Muhammad himself (may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him). These values are formulated into four divisions: (1) *siddiq* (truthfulness), (2) *amaanah* (good commitment/trustworthiness), (3) *fathonah* (sound intellect), and (4) *tabligh* (conveying). These values are just some essential values, not the total values. In short, all values represent what character education stands for, and thus, all activities should be directed to achieve such values.

Character education should be implemented by referring to certain principles. Burrett and Rusnak (1993) propose six main principles which can be a guide in implementing character education in school. The first principle is that character education should be integrated to all subjects. Character education does not demand a separate subject. This principle can be applied through: 1. Encouraging teachers to design a lesson which can relate the core values to the content being taught. For instance, in reading class, when learners read the text about "Poverty," they do not only comprehend the text by practicing reading strategy, but also explore the values about how the importance of helping poor people. Teachers really have a lot of freedom to be creative in exploring important values in their lessons; 2. Reviewing instructional materials for themes relating to personal development; 3. Constructing a list of ideas in various subjects that are focused on character themes; 4. Selecting methods and activities that involve students in the process of reflection about moral/ethical issues; and 5. Evaluating students learning for evidence of understanding of and personal growth in matters of character. The second key principle is that creating a cooperation between the school and community. The third principle is providing a positive classroom atmosphere at the classroom that supports character education. This can be applied by several things such as promoting team building through small group work, using social learning skills like cooperative learning, and interacting with students in a way that allows them to be comfortable expressing their opinions. The fourth principle states that teachers should be a model for their students to achieve character goals. The fifth key principle clarifies the significance of school policy in implementing character education in schools. All teachers and administrators in the school do not only support the implementation of character curriculums, but also be a role model in enacting the virtues that character education stands for. The last key principle is that character education is action education. This means that curriculums should involve students in discussion, reflection, and action of worthy values and morals. It is concluded that in implementing moral education, it is important to know three main factors, which are: learners' cognitive development, ethical core values which learners should apply, and principles of implementing character education.

2. The Dimension of Character Building in Language Teaching

As in all teachings, the language teaching is inherent with character education. This fact, at least, can be seen in term of the nature of language itself, and the theory of language learning. One of the most basic underlying tenets of communicative language teaching is that language is not merely a set of forms (words, grammatical structures, etc.), but is used for something: to convey information, maintain relationships, and act in and on the social world (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983; Halliday, 1978). Moreover, Hymes (in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) states that language can be seen as a part of a more general theory in relation to communication and culture. In Hymes' view, a person who acquires a communicative competence is not only directed to know linguistic features, but also the ability for using language with respect to a context in which it is used. Thus, using a language contextually is clear character-laden activity. People should have morality awareness in using a language in terms of to whom they speak, where they speak, when they speak, and what the function of their speaking. He also described seven basic functions of language which are performed by children in learning their first language, which are: 1. the instrumental function: using language to get things, 2. the regulatory function: using language to control the behavior of others, 3. the interactional function: using language to create interaction with others, 4. the personal function: using language to express personal feelings and meanings, 5. the heuristic function: using language to learn and to discover, 6. The imaginative function: using language to create a world of imagination, and 7. The representational functions: using language to communicate information. These functions of language clearly tie to dimension of character building in using language. Children are not merely guided to use a language accurately and fluently, but also respect to the norms of using the language in a community. Even, most parents are not interested in the ungrammaticality of the utterances of their children. They are more interested in the truth value, social appropriateness, or cleverness of what their children say (Steinberg, et al., 2001:44).

Character dimension is also found in the theory of language learning. This view is based on the following reasons: Firstly, learning a language ties to learners' motivation. Motivation refers to the intensity of one's impetus to learn (Brown, 2001:75). There are two types of motivation which employ in language learning, namely integrative motivation or intrinsic motivation and instrumental motivation or extrinsic. Integrative motivation refers to a desire to learn a language emerge from a positive affect toward a community of its speakers. The learners integrate and identify themselves with the second-language speakers and culture. On the contrary, instrumental motivation relate to learners' desire to learn a language in order to attain certain career, educational, or financial goals. Some theories claim that integrative motivation is linked significantly to the learners' success in learning a second language than instrumental motivation. In fact, changing one's type motivation is begun from changing his/her core value. Moreover, the effort of changing learners' motivation in learning a second language actually is indeed as a part of character education. Integrative motivation is generated by the values such as enthusiasm, creativity, discipline, confidence, and responsibility. Those who keep and act these values in their own lives will do anything following their idealism even though their external condition is not conducive to do it.

The second strand states that learning a language is influenced by learners' attitude. Attitudes toward self, language, classmates, the teacher, and the classroom environment play a critical role in learning English. A negative attitude towards the target language, its speakers, and the other members of the class may affect learners' determination and persistence in learning the language. This attitude also can impair memory functioning and detract from focusing on the target language (Steinberg, et al., 2001:186-187). In learning English, for instance, learners' antipathy towards English culture may decrease their enthusiasm in learning the language, and even, it emerges the hate to study English. For this reason, the teachers should guide the learners on how to see cultural diversity in the world, and expose to them some ethical core values to the learners, such tolerance, empathy, and respect.

The last, learning a language needs interaction which occurs among students, students to teacher, and vice versa. Learning second language is not a separate activity of individuals, but an integral part of participation in an interaction. Such interaction should be employed in the frame of moral values, such as respect, obedience, tolerance, kindness, cooperation, and etc. When the language teachers apply these values, they will have a great care to the learners in mastering the language skills. The learners are taught in humanistic ways, so that the learners' error is seen as a creative construction process. Thus, error is placed as an inevitable and positive part, and reflections of a learners' stage of interlanguage development. This condition also promotes positive feeling toward learning and respect for the competency of every learner. Learners feel cared for, and supported in learning the target language as they learn from their successes and failures.

In fact, the evidences as explained above indicate that character building and language teaching are like two sides of coin. Ideally, the study of language should enable learners to cultivate core values to be internalized and acted in their real life.

3. Character Education in ELT

The classroom implications of character education in English language teaching (ELT) deserve the teachers' attention at least for four aspects: course design, the instructional materials, the types of learning and teaching activities, and language classroom management. Course design refers to the way of designing a syllabus to the need of character education. Then, instructional materials refer to the kinds of material which are used in teaching the target language. Then, the types of learning and teaching activities are attained through the instructional process and interaction of teachers, learners, and materials in the classroom directly. The last aspect is directed specifically towards managing learners' behavior in language classroom. These aspects are tied to learners' difference cognitively, and core values which should be internalized and acted by the teachers, learners, and those who concern with character building.

In providing a syllabus for the need of character education, the teacher must not change the existing syllabus, but adapt it to the need of character education. All materials in the syllabus can be cultivated to integrate them into the core values. In the perspective of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CLT), this strategy is in line with the principle of interdependence that drives to establish relationship to arrive at new insights. In another word, this makes possible for the teachers and learners to create a connection to reveal meaning (Johnson, 2002:29). In this case, the core value can be understood as a kind of meaning which should be found by the learners in learning the language skills.

To integrate the core values into the syllabus, the teachers must understand the curriculum, materials, and core values. Some strategies which can be employed by the teachers are as follows: Firstly, identifying standard of competency and basic competency. The curriculum contains standard of competency (goal) and basic competency (objective) for each subject which should be achieved by learners. Teachers must find ethical value which is possible integrated to the standard of competency and basic competency. Secondly, analyzing indicator, subject matter, and topics. The standard of competency and basic competency are spelled out by the indicator a basis to formulate subject matter, and topic. Finally, selecting subject matter which can be integrated

into the core values. This is the significant stage to integrate English subject and the ethical core values for character building. The teachers analyze the potency of integration between subject matter and core values by considering three main principles: principle of correspondence, principle of philosophy, and principle of clarification. The principle of correspondence entails the direct connection between a subject matter and core value. In teaching reading, for instance, the teacher uses a text which contains a direct connection to certain ethical value. Then, principle of philosophy states the teacher can integrate the subject matters to the core value philosophically since not all subject matters have a direct connection to core value. Thus, in teaching speaking, for example, any kinds of learning objectives can be connected to certain core value, such as empathy, respect, obedience, and etc. The final principle emphasizes that the teachers can clarify the content of subject matter which contains contradictory remark to the core values. Briefly, the stages of integration of core values into the syllabus can be illustrated in the following schema:

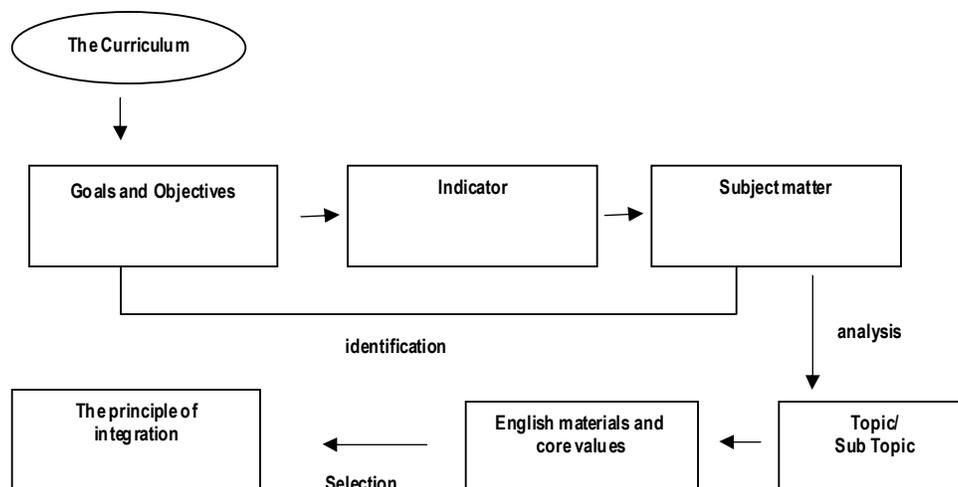


Figure 1: The schema of integration of core values into English syllabus
(Adapted from Djazuli, et al, 2006)

After designing the syllabus in the frame of character education, the next stage is deciding the instructional materials which can accommodate learners to internalize the core values with still concern with the main goal of teaching English. The teachers may select instructional material after identifying the chance in a curriculum which can be used to explore moral values (Lickona, 2012:253). The instructional materials can be in form of non authentic material (e.g. the textbook), and authentic materials such as magazine, newspaper, brochure, film, and etc. Since it is hard to meet the textbook which can meet for the need of character education, a textbook must be adapted for particular need. In adapting a course book, the teacher can identify what parts of the textbook which are still used, but need to change in some way to make them more suitable for character education. Moreover, some parts in the textbook which are not conducive for teaching character must be left out, and they are changed with supplementary material to respond the needs of particular objective. These are also used for adapting non authentic materials to meet the particular need.

Another crucial stage of strategy of character education relates to classroom technique. Some approaches in teaching character education can be used in English language classroom, which are values clarification technique (VCT), moral reasoning technique and reflective technique. Values clarification technique is a classroom technique which leads learners to discover values through behavior, feelings, ideas, and important choices they have made for their life (Adisusilo, 2012:145-151). By applying VCT, learners are helped finding, analyzing, and choosing the values which they want to achieve. Thus, they can have self reliance in deciding and directing their life without other person's intervention. This technique also enhances the ability of learners to communicate their beliefs, values, and feelings to other person. Through VCT, the learners are encouraged to empathize with other person who has different value from their own. Another strategy is moral reasoning approach. This approach emphasizes on learners' cognitive development to think logically through analyzing problems which relate closely to the values and judge them based on the moral values (Adisusilo, 2012:135). This technique is employed through class discussion which focuses on certain dilemma of morality. In reading class, for instance, some moral problems which are found in the text are appropriate to be discussed in order to encourage learners to decide reasonable ways to solve it. Reflective technique emphasizes on learners' effort to find the moral values in the subject matter. When they learn speaking skill, for example, on how to say greeting in English, and use formal and informal language, the

teachers may get learners to find the core values in it. In short, these techniques do not eliminate the learning objectives of English and their relationship is just complimentary each other.

It is also important for the language teachers should manage learners' behavior in learning the target language in the frame of character education. In facing learners' misbehave, the teachers should find its causes before deciding a good way to solve it. Then, some schools of thought on classroom management as proposed by Cohen, et al, (2004) can be selected in terms of character building. Such schools of thought are behavior modification, interpersonal relationship, cognitive behaviorism, and humanistic approaches. The former stresses the roles of rewards and punishment in the control of behavior. The second approach is aimed to produce good, positive relationship the teacher and students, and among the students themselves. Thus, emphasis on negotiation and suggestion can create a healthy classroom atmosphere. Cognitive behaviorism seeks to promote learners' desirable behavior through counseling and discussions between the learners and the teacher about the ways of solving a problem and handling their behavior in certain setting. Last but not least, humanistic approach guides the learners to discuss unacceptable behavior in a problem-solving approach rather than a punitive approach.

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In fact, the essence of English language teaching (ELT) is not only about the language skills, but also touches the moral value. Thus, the teaching of English language has a great potency to support the effort of character education. To connect ELT into the concept of character education, the syllabus, instructional materials, classroom activity, and classroom management must be modified in frame of the quintessence of character education. However, these efforts will not eliminate the effort to make the learners competent in the language skills productively and receptively. It is hoped that through integrating the essential virtues into ELT, the learners do not merely achieve good grade in practicing the target language, but also good heart in their behavior.

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