INVESTIGATING EFL LEARNERS' MORALS TOWARD CHARACTER EDUCATION AT STKIP MUHAMMADIYAH ACEH BARAT DAYA

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ABSTRACT

Being smart and having good grades are the dreams of students in learning process. However, to achieve those goals they have to be aware that affective or character aspect is equally important as cognitive and psychomotor aspect in the learning process. Thus, this study aimed to reveal the learning process of EFL learners' morals toward education character. The research method of this study was quantitative; the questionnaire was used to collect the data. A total number of 34 participants were selected from each semester of English education department (EED) at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya by using convenience sampling. The data were analyzed quantitatively by using percentage. The results revealed that (1) most of students had positive attitudes toward character education in the learning process and (2) the common positive responses implied by EED students toward character education were in terms of commitment, responsibility and discipline. In summary, most of the students had a good character toward the implementation of education character in the classroom while having courses. However, there were only a few of EED students who were still not able to imply a good attitude toward education character in the classroom. Therefore, it is recommended for lecturers to give more attention toward the implementation of students' education character in the classroom and continuously create strategies to develop students' good character so that they will have good moral and knowledge.

Keywords: EFL; learners; english teaching; education character

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many students do not seriously pay attentions toward their character education. They just want to focus on receiving information (knowledge) by reading and training in a specific area or field or studies, achieving good grades (skill) by doing some activities such as teaching, training, or direct experience that are able to help them in dealing with daily problems and challenges without being aware of their bad or good values as a person or as a member of society. These phenomena lead toward character degradation such as moral crisis, where moral crisis has been the ongoing issued in which racism, xenophobia, violence, dishonesty, sexual harassment, intolerant, terror, corruption and cheating happened so often around the world (Al-Hamdani, 2014).

English is a foreign language in Indonesia, it will affect the students who are studying English and requires them to be able to communicate and adjusts its culture. Therefore, to observe and absorb the materials given in or out of the classrooms, they also need to encourage their character to be aware of what happens in their environment. Developing character education is one of the solutions to help people build their good character also their good societies. Fortunately, Indonesian education system has been recommended to promote character education since elementary school until college students which is hoped it can be a bridge for the betterment students, especially their morality. In addition, Curriculum 2013 has provided a role that the teacher at school is a counselor not only a teacher which means she or he is not only has a task to teach the lessons but also life and religious value. Hence, the institution should include character education (students' morality) in order to help students not only to become clever but also to become good (O'Sullivan, 2004; Putri, Harto, & Moecharam, 2017).

A number of studies figured out the positive results of applying character education programs in the schools, including higher academic achievements, fewer suspensions as well as dropout, and fewer risks behavior of students (Bergmark, 2008; Berkowitz & Hoppe, 2009; Katilmis, Eksi, & Ozturk, 2011; Parker, Nelson, & Burns, 2010). Thus, in the EFL classroom, there are many ways to support character education such as the lecturers need to integrate character education into subject

matters, create good approaches or strategies in teaching and learning process, provide activities and practices which refer to character education. To overcome students' character education problems in learning process, the researchers formulated the research questions as follows: (1) Do EFL learners at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya have positive attitudes toward character education in the learning process? and (2) What are the common positive responses implied by EFL learners toward character education in the learning process?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Character Education

The word character in ancient Greek has a meaning "to engrave" which emphasizes the engraved traits will affect us to behave in certain manners (O'Sullivan, 2004). "Good character "is a concept which includes knowing good, embracing good and doing well' (Katilmis et al., 2011, p. 854).

Character education is a plus moral education, which include the cognitive, emotion, and action aspects. A systematical and continuous character education, a student would be emotionally intelligent. This emotional intelligent is the important foundation for the students' future, therefore the students will be more successful in facing every life challenge, including the academic challenge. According to Suyanto as cited in Agung (2011), there are many types of characters values that can be promoted to students, one of them is noble values which have nine fundamental characters the first is the character of loving God and all of god's creation, second is independence and responsibility, the third is honesty and diplomacy, fourth is respect fullness and politeness, the fifth is generosity and helpfulness, the sixth is confidence and hard-working quality, the seventh is leadership and fairness, the eight is good manner and humble, and the ninth is tolerance, peace and unity.

In addition, character education can be defined as a system to develop the students' character values which include the component of knowledge, awareness or willingness, and action to be implemented into religion, self, common people, environment, and nation as a complete human. In the implementation of the character education at schools, every stakeholder of learning must be involved in the process, including the education components, which are the curriculum, learning

and evaluation process, relationship quality, lesson handling or management, school management, co-curricular activities implementation, facilities, funding, and performance of any and all school's component. To sum up, character education is an act to form a person to behave and have good morals in order to be able to judge which one is correct and which one is wrong.

Current Issues of Students' Behaviors

According to Anderson (2000) mentioned that the efforts of renewing, revamping, or re-introducing the character education will not be a project that could be accomplished with urgency. It surely has to be gradual progressions with the notion to embed the program into educational institution's curriculum. Furthermore, he emphasized that the teachers should deliver overwhelms impact, or teaching the students in these institutions. In other words, "the teacher is central to character education" (Anderson, 2000, p.139). Character education must be taken as a serious problem because it is a crucial thing and has everlasting effects on the children or the students in displaying their character in the future. Moreover, the plans should be well started from elementary, middle and high school year, and even to college, meanwhile it is distinguishingly embracing a wide range of well-built character classes (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999). As explained by Edgington (2002), morals are needed to be promoted to students for the advantage of our country, and particularly, that our communities.

Either the students of the past or the present generations who have no attention to anything, would dive into some detrimental acts of drinking, indiscriminative kind of behaviors, substance abuse, stealing, and felony crimes. In the past, these behavioral irregularities quickly brought about some concerns for educators, teachers, parents, organizations like religious concerns, government entities, and all others (Stiff-Williams, 2010). It has also been noticed that the beneficial of character education might give a good effect, broaden the students' knowledge and welcome others respectively without looking at people's background. They also have spirit of caring, and are tolerant in perceiving things (Pamental, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quantitative data was used to address the research problems in this study. Creswell (2012) defines that quantitative research emphasizes on the measurement and analysis of causal relationship between variables not process.

Participants

The present study involved 34 college students; 4 male students and 30 female students from English Education department at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya, Susoh, Abdya. They are selected by using convenience sampling. Students' age ranged between 18 to 25 years old. Most of the students' native languages are Acehnese, while the rest of them use Bahasa and Jamenese. Regarding to the length of time in studying English, half of them (55.9%) had experience in studying English more than 12 years. 20.6 % of them had experience in studying English between 9-12 years, and 11.8% of them had experience in studying English between 4-9 years.

Instruments

For the purpose of the research questions, the researchers made questionnaire which consisted of 10 items in a 5-point Likert's format ranging from 1= never, 2= seldom, 3= sometimes, 4= often to 5= always. The questionnaire had two parts; the first part was the information background of the participants such as: name, student number, major, university, age, gender, address, e-mail, phone number, native language and the period of learning experience. Meanwhile, the second part was the questions which were related to character education in which were adopted from Syafitri (2019) and referred to students' attitude and behavior in the classroom. Although the participants were students at English Education department, the questionnaire was written in Bahasa in order to make the students easily understand all the questions well. Half an hour was given to students to fill out the questionnaire.

Data Collection Procedure

At the beginning of the course, the researchers explained the learning contract that must be followed by students. Several parts of the contract contents explained some attitudes toward the character education that were investigated for instances: the risk of cheating on the exam, the risk of doing assignment with responsibly, the risk of not attending the class, etc. Next, while having the class, again the researchers not only explained the lessons in the classroom but also reminded them about the morals toward character education for examples to know what they have to do and what they cannot do in the learning process. After that, at the end of the semester, the researchers administered the questionnaire to the students. To address the research questions, the percentage was used to calculate the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RQ 1: Do EFL learners at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya have positive attitudes toward character education in the learning process?

Table 1.

EFL Learners' Responses towards Character Education

No	Questions	EFL Learners' Responses				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Cheating on the exam	23.5%	32.4%	41.2%	2.9%	0.0%
2	Delivering ideas in the classroom honestly	0.0%	2.9%	67.6%	20.6%	8.8%
3	Having commitment in academic policy	0.0%	2.9%	5.9%	35.3%	55.9%
4	Doing academic tasks with responsibility	0.0%	0.0%	14.7%	35.3%	50.0%
5	Giving academic message honestly and responsibly	0.0%	0.0%	11.8%	32.4%	55.9%
6	Asking classmates to sign the attendance list	88.2%	2.9%	2.9%	0.0%	5.9%
7	Cheating on the attendance list or other academic forms	91.2%	2.9%	0.0%	5.9%	0.0%
8	Citing good references when writing scientific work	0.0%	0.0%	26.5%	17.6%	55.9%

| 9 | Attending to the classroom on time | 0.0% | 0.0% | 32.4% | 47.1% | 20.6% |
| 10 | Submitting assignment on time | 0.0% | 0.0% | 14.7% | 29.4% | 55.9% |

Note: 1= never; 2= seldom; 3= sometimes; 4=often; 5=always

Table 1 showed the students' responses toward character education. The results of question no. 1 described that (23.5 %) of students *never* cheated on the exam, (32.4 %) stated that they *seldom* cheated on the exam, (41.2%) described that *sometimes* they cheated on the exam, (2.9%) of them *often* cheated on the exam and no one (0.0%) stated that they *always* cheated on the exam. It can be concluded that there was no student who cheated on the exam all the time however if they had a chance to do it, they would do it. Thus, there were many strategies could be done in cheating such as using crib notes or written science terms on their shoes, wrists or other parts of their body even if on their tables, cheat-sheets, copy students' answer, look at the textbooks, etc. (Lord & Chiodo,1995; Shariffuddin & Holmes, 2009; Shon 2006;). In addition, Vandehey, Diekhoff & LaBeff (2007) revealed that even if the students had a code ethic in the classroom, they were not aware of it and it did not give any impact to do cheating. Besides, individual factors namely age, gender, and GPA could be a trigger to do it. For example, a study conducted by Smyth and Davis (2003) figured out that male students do most cheating than female students. Moreover, willingness to have good-grades, parental pressures, laziness, lack of responsibility, lack of character, poor self-image, and lack of personal integrity could be others influence to do cheating (McCabe, Feghali, & Abdallah, 2008).

Based on students' responses of question no 2, it is revealed that there were no students chose the option of *never* delivered ideas in the classroom honestly. While (2.9%) of them chose *seldom* delivered ideas honestly. Besides that there most of students (67.6%) chose *sometimes* delivered ideas in the classroom honestly, and (20,6 %) of them *often* delivered ideas in the classroom honestly. However, only (8.8%) of them *always* delivered ideas honestly. The results indicated that few students tried to deliver ideas in the classroom honestly, meanwhile the rest of them might gave ideas in the classroom because of pressure such as an obligation task to get a good score, friends' support and lack of confident so that they asked their

classmates to help them. To encourage the students, the lecturers must create and build learner autonomy, thus if the students have autonomy learners then the students will be able to motivate themselves to deliver ideas in the classroom (Gagne, 2003).

Next, students' responses of question no 3 explained that no one of students (0.0%) mentioned that he or she *never* had a commitment in academic policy, (2.9%) of them *seldom* had a commitment in academic policy, (5.9%) of students mentioned that they *sometimes* had a commitment in academy policy, and (35.3%) of them *often* had commitment in academy policy. However, more than half students (55.9%) revealed that they *always* had commitment in academy policy. The results implied that all students at English education department obeyed the rules given by academic and they also had developed their awareness which means a person is willing to do the good because that person loves the good manner (Agung, 2011).

Then, students' responses of question no 4 stated that no one of students chose that they *never* and *seldom* did academic tasks with responsibility. In addition, (14.7%) of them *sometimes* did academic tasks with responsibility. Moreover, (35.3%) of them *often* did academic tasks with responsibility and unsurprisingly, half of them (50.0%) at STKIP Muhammadiyah Abdya stated that they *always* did academic tasks with responsibility. As a conclusion, even though only half of English education department students of STKIP Muhammadiyah showed that they always did academic task with responsibility, no one of them showed that they ever did academic tasks without responsibility. This behavior reflected the moral development was considered as developmental level of thinking in creating moral level from the lowest level towards the highest level for students especially for the stage of autonomous, at this stage a person acts or behaves regards to the reasoning and judgment itself, does not fully accept group criteria or support from outsider (Al Hamdani, 2014).

Thus, students' responses of question no 5 explored that there were no one of students selected *never* and *seldom* categories in delivering academic messages honestly and responsibly. Only (11.8%) of them showed that *sometimes* they delivered academic messages honestly and responsibly and (32.4%) of them often

always delivered academic messages honestly and responsibly. Thus, most of EED students (55.9%) at STKIP Muhammadiyah Abdya confirmed that they *always* delivered academic messages honestly and responsibly. In brief, it was pointed out that they knew how to behave well and responsible for what they did.

The responses of question no 6 revealed that almost all students (88.2%) at STKIP Muhammadiyah Abdya affirmed that they *never* asked their classmates to sign their attendance list. Only (2.9%) of them stated that they *sometimes* and *seldom* asked their classmates to sign their attendance list. However, no one confirmed that he or she *often* asked their classmates to sign their attendance list. Surprisingly, there was (5.9%) of them conveyed that they *always* asked their classmates to sign their attendance list. Therefore, it is showed that they had a great moral of religious values and independent or autonomy learners' values as part of character education (Mutaqqin, Raharjo & Masturi, 2018). As a result, the students had maximally implemented the character education in terms of following commitment in academic rules.

After that, students' responses towards question no 7 explained that most of them (91.2%) informed that they *never* cheated on the attendance list or other academic forms. Only (2.9%) of them confirmed that they *seldom* cheated on the attendance list or other academic forms. A good point that no one of students who conveyed that they *sometimes or often* cheated on the attendance list or other academic forms. However, (5.9 %) of them stated that they *always* cheated on the attendance list or other academic forms. To sum up, the students had maximally implied the character of it, it could be seen that most of them had been good but had not been part of being honest with the percentage (5.9%) in cheating on the attendance list or other academic forms.

Regarding to question no 8, it is revealed that similarly, no one of them confirmed that they *never* and *seldom* cited good references while writing scientific work. Moreover, 6.5% of them *sometimes* cited good references while writing scientific work. In addition, 17.6% of them *often* cited good references while writing scientific work. Thus, 55.9% of students explained that they *always* cited good references while writing scientific work. It could be assumed that they had a good

character in doing their task by citing good references while writing scientific work. Also, they encouraged moral reflection of themselves to do their own task (Pala, 2011).

Based on students' responses to question no 9, it is described that no one of students gave a response *seldom* and *never* attended to the class on time. 32.4% of them *sometimes* attended to the class on time, 47.1% EED students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Abdya *often* attended to the class on time and 20.6% of them who *always* attended to the class on time. It could be described that not all of students had been implied to attend to the class on time but no one ever came to the class late. In brief, the students realized that discipline was a key factor to be successful in all aspects so that they really need to improve and train themselves to be more discipline if they want to be a successful person in the future (Syafitri, 2019).

Finally, students' responses of question number 10 confirmed that first, no one of them mentioned that they *seldom* and *never* submitted the assignment on time. Second, (14.7%) of them *sometimes* submitted the assignment on time. Third, (29.4%) of them often submitted the assignment on time and more than half of them (55.9%) described that they *always* submitted the assignments on time. In a conclusion, most of them had a good character in submitting their task on time.

RQ 2: What are the common positive responses implied by EFL learners towards character education in the learning process?

Table 2.

The Highest Students' Responses toward Character Education

No	Questions	Percentage
		1
1.	Cheating on the exam	41.2%
2.	Delivering ideas in the classroom honestly	67.6%
3.	Having commitment in academic policy	55.9%
4.	Doing academic tasks with responsibility	50.0%
5.	Giving academic message honestly and responsibly	55.9%

6.	Asking classmates to sign the attendance list	88.2 %
7.	Cheating on the attendance list or other academic forms	91.2 %
8.	Citing good references when writing scientific work	55.9%
9.	attending to the classroom on time	47.1%
10.	submitting assignment on time	55.9%

Regarding to Table 2, it can be described first; mostly English education department students at STKIP Muhammadiyah showed a great character in terms of commitment in academic rules; namely (91.2%) of the students never cheated on the attendance list or other academic forms. Moreover, (88.2%) of them never asked their classmates to sign the attendance list. Thus, half of them (55.9%) always had a commitment in academic policy. Second; more than half of them also showed a good character in terms of responsibility for examples (55.9%) of them gave academic task with responsibility and cited good references when writing scientific work. In addition, (50.0%) of them did academic tasks with responsibility. Third; more than 50.0% of students had a good character in terms of discipline such as (55.9%) of them always submitted their assignment on time. Finally, (67.6%) of them showed a good character in terms of persistence for instance: sometimes they delivered ideas in the classroom honestly.

On the other hand, the percentage which was lower than (50.0%) was assumed as the weak of character education implied by the students and needed more practicing and training in their learning habits so that their attitude toward education character in terms of honesty became better. Although, no one of students said that he or she always cheats on the exam, the percentage of students' responses still counted as $\leq$ 50.0%, for instance: (41.2%) of them showed that sometimes they cheated on the exam. It could be indicated that some of them will cheat on the exam while they have a chance to do it. Additionally, the lecturers should be more aware or be stricter and try to find other strategies to monitor the students' examinations. Another attitude was in terms of discipline, only (47.1%) of

the students often attended to the class on time, in this case, the lecturers need more attention to train them be more discipline when they are going to have the class.

CONCLUSION

It can be seen that most of English education department students at STKIP Muhammadiyah Aceh Barat Daya showed a positive behavior towards character education in the learning process. Additionally, the common percentage of positive behavior could be seen in term of commitment in academic rules, responsibility, and discipline. Meanwhile honesty in examination and persistence still need to be practiced by students. To sum up, those good morals can be embedded if all roles (parents, teachers, and administrators as stakeholders take a part together in encouraging students to manifest those good values in their lives (Agboola & Tsai, 2008).

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