

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRENGTHENING CHARACTER EDUCATION IN EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening Character Education is an educational program in schools to strengthen students' character with moral values. The Indonesian government launched this program to faced students' moral degradation. As the country that used English as a Foreign Language (EFL), this study investigates the challenges faced by a teacher in the implementation of Strengthening Character Education in the EFL classroom and to know teacher strategy to change the challenges become opportunities. This study conducted a case study of the EFL teacher in Junior High School. The data collection consisted of classroom observation, interview, documentation, and data triangulation. The findings gained, the teacher has implemented several character values in the EFL classroom activities. The teacher faced challenges coming from the students, learning situations, and learning materials. For the opportunities, there was classroom management and being a role model.

Keywords: *Strengthening Character Education, English as a Foreign Language.*

INTRODUCTION

Since 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture established a new curriculum, namely the Curriculum 2013. Curriculum 2013 has some important components that relate to each other. Ministry of Education and Culture (2013) mentions those components are: first, the Scientific Approach. The learning process can be stated scientific if it fulfills the following criteria: objective, factual, systematic method, accurate, logical, actual, and verified. Second, optimize the role of the teacher in the implementation of 21st century learning. The 21st century learning is simply interpreted as learning that provides 21st century skills to students, namely 4C (Creative and Innovative, Critical thinking, Communication, and Collaboration). Through the program, students' abilities in both their personality and life skills will be developing well along with the

development of existing technology and certainly can reduce the bad impact (Andiarini, Arifin, & Nurabadi, 2018).

The 21st century learning also relates to the HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills). The HOTS is the expertise and ability to find answers or achieve target goals through various forms of thinking processes. Third, integrate literacy and Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) in the teaching and learning process.

The implementation of character education has become a big issue in Indonesia (Zurqoni, 2018). Since character becomes the vital core in education, a good character should be developed in the whole teaching and learning process (Suherdi, 2016). Therefore, the experts researched in the implementation of Strengthening Character Education. It was conducted by Ratih (2017), and Agustini (2014).

First, Ratih (2017) found that the EFL teachers on one of Junior High School in Banjar used the common way in the implementation of character education. It means, there was no special technique that can be used by the teacher to implement the character education. In her study, Ratih (2017) assumed that character education is not about how to teach students about being polite or having good attitudes. But it is habituation or naturally happened to someone. The character can be formed by design or build good habits for the students. So they can behave and act based on the values that become their characters.

The other study was conducted by Agustini (2014), which took place in Junior High School. According to the results and discussions in her study, it can be concluded (1) all English lesson plan's studied show that, in all four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing), character values are planned and carried out in learning and teaching activities by English teachers at school the researched. However, character values are not specifically spelled out in indicators and assessments; (2) in the learning and teaching process activities, character values are carried out by planned skills and topics in the English lesson plan at the school. Besides, evaluation of the implementation of character values in the class is carried out by the teacher by making direct observations and marking the attendance lists of the students.

There were similarities between the two researchers above, from the empirical review. Meanwhile, this study focuses on Strengthening Character Education classroom-based, which can be integrated through classroom learning, extracurricular, and habituation. Furthermore, the researcher looked more deeply at classroom learning to know the teacher's challenges. It also to know the teacher's strategies to change the

challenges becomes opportunities in the implementation of Strengthening Character Education in the EFL classroom.

Strengthening Character Education (Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter or PPK)

Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) is an educational movement in schools to strengthen character through of students' formation, transformation, transmission, and potential development, in addition to being the core of educational activities that lead to the creation of a national character revolution (Presidential Regulation No. 87/2017). While character education is a soul of education before the students get learning activity (Ratih, 2017). Character education has been intensively started since 2010 (Listiwati, 2018), which is *Gerakan Nasional Pendidikan Karakter* but MoEC launched the PPK program in 2016.

Stakeholders emphasize the PPK program because there are issues affecting students: moral degradation, reflected by violence (including bullying), drug use, free sex, and teenage pregnancy (Kurniasih, Valentina, Utari, & Akhmadi, 2018).

According to Presidential Regulation No. 87 / 2017, characters in the PPK program divided into main-character, and sub-character. The five character values in the main-character of the PPK program are: religious; nationalists; independent; cooperation; and integrity. Besides, the 18 character values in the sub-character of the PPK program are: religious; honesty; tolerance; discipline; hard work; creative; independence; democracy; curiosity; national spirit; love the motherland; appreciating achievement; friendly/communicative; peaceful love; likes to read; care for the

environment; social care; and responsibility.

The Purposes of Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK)

According to Presidential Regulation No. 87 / 2017, PPK program has some purposes as the following:

1. Develop a national education platform that places character meaning and value as the soul or main generator of education administration.
2. Building and equipping the Indonesian Golden Generation 2045 to face the dynamics of change in the future with 21st century skills.
3. Restore character education as the spirit and foundation of education through harmonization of the heart (ethics and spiritual), the feeling (the aesthetic), the mind (literacy and numeracy), and sports (kinesthetic).
4. Revitalize and strengthen the capacity of the education ecosystem (principals, teachers, students, supervisors, and school committees) for support the expansion of the implementation of character education.
5. Building a community engagement network as a source of learning inside and outside of school.
6. To preserve Indonesian culture and identity within support National Movement Mental Revolution (*Gerakan Nasional Revolusi Mental*).

Nova (2017) added, the main purpose in PPK is the students not only recognizing what is right or wrong, but also being able to feel and internalize the good values and have the habit of practicing the good values in their daily life.

Possible Constraints in the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) in EFL Classroom

According to (Simarmata, 2016), one of the real challenge is not all teachers are creative and innovative enough to develop materials on their own. Suherdi (2016) stated that is the reason why the teachers have to do the real action in implementing PPK program. Whereas, according to 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 material (Almerico (2014); lack of time in implementing (Nova, 2017); ineffective learning situation (Pane & Patriana (2016), such as a big class in EFL classroom (Hadi and Arante (2015). The teachers have to find various strategies to handle the possible constraints. Therefore, the students internalize the good values and have the habit of practicing the good values in their daily life.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesia (Suharjati, 2010) and becomes the most-learned foreign language in Indonesia (Ratih, 2017). EFL is only taught in schools; it has nothing to do with the national or social life of the learners. Therefore, character values can be developed through an English subject. The character values development through English subject is expected to give a positive impact on the students and nation development.

Moreover, in the EFL classroom, the teachers have to understand Approach, Method, and Strategy. Some experts define below:

a. Approach

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986) as cited in Samaranayake (2015), “an 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.

b. Method

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986) as cited in Samaranayake (2015), “a method is theoretically related to approach, is organizationally determined by a design, and is practically realized in the procedure.” They state that method as an umbrella term which specifies the relationship between theory and classroom practice.

c. Strategy

Strategy in the teaching context is a generalized plan for a lesson that includes structure, desired learner behavior in terms of goals of instruction, and an outline of planned tactics necessary to implement the strategy, (Gill & Kusum, 2017).

METHOD

The study investigates the challenges faced by a teacher in the implementation of PPK in the EFL classroom and to know teacher strategies do to overcome those challenges become the opportunities. This research conducted Qualitative which is the Holistic Single Case Study. It means that the participant for this study is a person only. According to Yin (2003), Holistic Single Case Study is the best choice to study one single thing (for example a person from a specific group). This makes the researcher get a deeper understanding of the subject. For instruments that involved that is classroom observation, interview, and documentation, and data triangulation.

Observation is an instrument to gather the data that can be used to get a comprehensive picture of a situation that is being observed (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Further, a non-participant observer is used. It means that the researcher is not involved in classroom activities.

An interview is a purposeful interaction in which a person obtains information from another (Gay, Geoffrey & Petter, 2012). The researcher interviewed the teacher after the classroom observation was over. The type of interview that used in this research is a structured interview, which means that the interviewee is required to answer the same question, in the same way, the questions are already arranged. The questions were open-ended, which allowed the interviewee to share the idea, and opinion freely regarding the implementation of the PPK program in the EFL classroom.

The study also used documentation. It consists of public and private records about a site or participant in the study (Creswell, 2012). The documentation is used to support the data by providing evidence, and insight from the result of the discussion.

The last, this study used triangulation to maintain validity and accurate data. Triangulation can be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection (Cohen, 2000, as cited in Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017). The data is obtained from the participant who teaches in seven grade EFL classroom of Junior High School in Bogor.

FINDINGS

First, a researcher found that the teacher implemented some character values.

Implemented		
Pre-Activity	Whilst-Activity	Post-Activity
Religious Curious	Discipline Friendliness/ communicative Appreciative Democracy	Responsibility Likes to read

Table 1 provides some character values of PPK that implemented in the EFL classroom. Further, the teaching and learning process had separated the class activities into three categories: pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity:

Pre-Activity

The teacher implemented *religious* values by greeting the student. Religiousness also through the prayer before the EFL classroom began. The teacher and students prayed with each religion together.

Excerpt 1:

“Assalamu’alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh (peace and mercy and blessing of Allah be upon you).”

Excerpt 2:

“Lead the pray, please.”

The teacher stimulated students’ *curiousness* by showing a picture of the chameleon because the materials were about animals’ activities. The teacher told the interesting thing about that animal, how its color can change at any time. This session was done to stimulate the students’ motivation in the materials. Students looked to focus on the picture and paid their attention.

Whilst-Activity

To implement *discipline* value, the teacher looked at a student who teasing his friend. This action indicates that the teacher tried the students to have discipline character.

Excerpt 3:

“Don't act playfully, it is time to study, you have to pay attention.”

In the implementation of *friendliness/communicative*, the teacher asked a group to come forward and report their task. After that, the other group had to give their opinion.

Excerpt 4:

“Please each group gives a question to them (a group in front of the class).”

Other intense interactions also showed by the teacher when she asked the students’ opinions about something. The teacher also often asked the students, it helped students feel free to communicate with the teacher or their friends.

Excerpt 5:

“Do you have any questions?”

In the habituation of *appreciativeness*, the teacher implemented it by asking the student to give their appreciation after some of the students came forward and told descriptive text.

Excerpt 6:

“Well done, please give applause to your friends.”

Democracy, a group reported the students’ worksheet (*Lembar Kerja Peserta Didik* or LKPD), and the teacher looked fair of the opinions given by the students. The teacher took a decision and concluded after heard the opinion from all groups of students.

Excerpt 7:

“Give your opinion about your friends’ report.”

Post-Activity

The value of *responsibility* was implemented by asking the students as depicted below.

Excerpt 8:

"...all of you have to submit the task on page 52 to 53 on Monday; you must do your task by yourself at home."

The teacher stimulated the students to have *liked to read* the value by asking them to read the materials that they just learned. The teacher also suggested reading not only from the book but also from the internet.

The Challenges in the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) in EFL Classroom

First, the challenge came from the number of students in the EFL classroom.

Excerpt 9:

"Sometimes I feel like unable to control 38 students, I tried to discipline one student but other students made other problems."

Other evidence also proved on classroom observation that did by the researcher. When the teacher commanded some students to be silent, the students obeyed it just for a second. Other students would be noisy in another way. It shows the teacher tried to discipline the students but could not apply it to the big class equally.

Second, there were many students could not realize character education whereas the character values have to be students' habituation.

Excerpt 10:

"They feel like this kind of action (implementing character education) just for the benefit of this school, they do not realize that it is for them."

Third, the challenge came from the learning materials. There was a character value of PPK which was being difficult to apply in the EFL classroom; it was the spirit of nationality. Most of the content in the EFL classroom was about countries out of Indonesia.

Excerpt 11:

"I use books that have been provided by the school, the disadvantage is I just don't find easily the learning materials that talk about Indonesia."

The Opportunities in the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) in EFL Classroom

The strategies below can be used to get the opportunities for the teacher in implementing PPK in the EFL classroom. The researcher has summarized the opportunities based on teacher statements on the interview session, and the analyzed-data research in classroom observation.

First, the teacher had got the opportunity in the implementation of PPK through class management. Class management could be seen by the seating arrangement of the students. The teacher used separate tables' strategy when the students did group work. This strategy could increase students' friendliness/ communicative. Although the EFL classroom was a big class, the teacher could see all of the students. Another strategy in classroom management that implemented by the teacher was the use of worksheet. The teacher distributed papers which were students' worksheets. This could keep students discipline up.

Second, in the interview session, the teacher showed the indication that the teacher tried to be a role model for the students.

Excerpt 12:

"I behave according to the attitude that I teach students, indirectly I can set an example for them."

DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Character Values of Strengthening Character

Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) in EFL Classroom

The character values had implemented in the EFL classroom was observed by the researcher: religiosity; curiosity; discipline; appreciativeness; friendliness / communicativeness; democracy; responsibility and likes to read. It is appropriate with the statement of Presidential Regulation No. 87 / 2017.

The Challenges in the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) in EFL Classroom

The first challenge is the learning situation. Sulistoyawati (2012) mentions the Indonesian government suggested that the ideal number of students in one class is ranged from 20 to 32 students. As the class was more than 32 students, 38 exactly. Then it was classified into a big class. According to Hadi & Arante (2015), some studies suggest that teaching English in a big class may create an array of problems. Furthermore, British Council (2015) as cited in Hadi & Arante (2015) reported teaching English in big classes would get result in the difficulty to keep good discipline. It is relevant with the theory that stated by Pane

& Patriana (2016) one of the challenges to implementing character education is an ineffective learning situation, such as a big class would make teacher in the EFL classroom unable to pay individual attention to all students, (Hadi & Arante (2015).

Second, students did not realize character education. Whereas the main purpose of the PPK program is the students not only recognizing what is right or wrong but also being able to feel and internalize the good values and have the habit of practicing the good values in their daily life. This finding suits with the theory by Nova (2017).

Third, the challenge came from learning materials. Theory by Almerico

(2014) that relevant to this challenge is that one of the educators' challenges in conducting character education is related to the materials. The reason was that, so far, teachers are already used to using materials that are already (commercially). It is also confirmed by Simarmata (2016) one of the problems in learning material is that not all teachers are creative and innovative enough to develop materials on their own especially when relating to using literary texts.

The Opportunities in the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education (*Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* or PPK) in EFL Classroom

The first opportunity about optimized *classroom management* that was *the seating arrangement*. According to Levin, Nolan, & James (1996: 126) as cited in Retnaningtyas (2011) stated that seating is planned so that the teacher can easily reach any pupils in the class without disturbing other students. Besides, seating is arranged so that all students can see instructional presentations. According to Harmer (2001: 19-20) as cited in Retnaningtyas (2011), when students sit in small groups at individual tables, the atmosphere in the class is much better to develop students' cooperation. It is also much easier for the teacher to work at one table while the other gets on with their work. In separated tables, students might see the teacher walks around.

Another strategy that includes classroom management was the use of *students' worksheets*. Harmer (2001: 128-129) as cited in Retnaningtyas (2011) stated that teachers could hand out worksheets for many of the tasks which they would normally do with the whole class if the class were smaller. When the feedback stage is reached, teachers can go through

worksheets with the whole group and all the students will get the benefit.

Second, the teacher was *being a role model*. When their teacher models certain behavior, students not only hear and read about teaching, they experience it. This strategy is confirmed with the theory by Suherdi (2016), character education cannot be established by having a speech in front of the class only, but it needs real action from the teacher.

CONCLUSION

Related to the findings and discussions, in the implementation of PPK in the EFL classroom this section has been concluded by three important points: the implementation itself; the challenges; and the opportunities.

The teacher who participated in this study implemented PPK with different focus and emphasis in classroom activities, which are pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post- activity. The teacher also has implemented the character values of PPK with various strategies. Moreover, the teacher's strategies can be categorized into two: explicit mode and implicit mode.

The explicit mode strategies include: inserting the character values in teaching and learning materials; giving advice on having a good character; and giving examples of good character value briefly.

On the other hand, the implicit mode strategies include: asking the students to work in a group; conducting a real action of character education in classrooms; setting a rule in the assignment; asking the students to learn independently; solving real case problems; and being a model of its value. Even though the teacher has inserted character education in the teaching and learning process, the teacher also could not avoid the challenges faced along with its implementation. The teacher faced several challenges in the implementation

of PPK in the EFL classroom which came from three major aspects: the students; the learning situation; and the learning materials.

First, the challenge of the students' aspect did not realize the character values of PPK. Whereas the students have to be able to feel and internalize the good values and have the habit of practicing the good values in their daily life. Second, the challenge of the learning situation, it was the number of students in the EFL classroom. That class was categorized into a big class; it would make the teacher unable to pay individual attention to all students especially in the implementation of PPK. Third, the challenge the learning materials, the of character values of PPK which was the spirit of nationality was being difficult to apply in the EFL classroom, because the teacher has used materials that are already (commercially). Most of the content in the EFL classroom is about countries out of Indonesia.

There were some strategies to face the challenges above. These strategies can be used to get opportunities for the teacher in implementing PPK in the EFL classroom. First, the implementation of PPK trough class management, which was the seating arrangement and the use of worksheets. Because the class was categorized into a big class, those two strategies could be the best opportunity to handle the challenge. Second, it was being a role model. The teacher did a real action that set the example of character education. The teacher tried to be a role model for students to make students realize

& recognize about character education.

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