Developing Students' Character and English Proficiency through News Item Text Learning

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Abstract
Success in teaching and learning English is closely tied to the development of positive student character. Strong character traits help students harness their talents and build the resilience and self-confidence needed to face challenges and compete beyond the school environment. This study focused on the tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Pemalang whose English proficiency was initially below the Minimum Competency Standard of 75. Pre-test results showed that 9 students (28.12%) did not meet the standard. After implementing character-based learning strategies, post-test results indicated significant improvement, with only 2 students (6.25%) falling short of the standard. The average score increased by 10.66 points, from 75.97 to 86.63. The integration of character-building activities fostered positive traits such as helpfulness, cooperation, care, confidence, sportsmanship, mutual respect, and high motivation. Feedback from questionnaires and interviews revealed that students felt more comfortable and happier in class, viewing it as a supportive and inclusive community. They learned in a relaxed environment, developed positive attitudes, and engaged in healthy, respectful competition. Ultimately, the cultivation of good character contributed significantly to their academic success.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia needs enough amounts of quality human resources to support the development. In this case, education has the main role to cover the quality human resources. Base on the Law Number 20/2013 the National Education system on section 3 states that National Education has function to develop the nation ability, character, culture, and prestige civilization in a framework of educating the life nation. The purpose of the National Education is to develop the students' potential to be the faithful men, pious to God, sublime morals, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, stand alone, democratic, self-confidence and responsible. Related to the purpose of the National Education, the school strives to form the students' character through teaching and learning so that the students grow to be able to compete, have ethical, have moral conduct, be polite and interact to the society. Harvard University searched that successful is not determined by hard skill but it is determined by how they manage their soft skill. It means that the student's education character is very important to be increased. Democratic is one of education character requires one to be openly self-critical. Practice of democratic moral wisdom requires a soul-searching honesty. This good character should be practiced in the students' life to form their democratic good life. In this case, Henderson and Kesson (2004: 13) write that character is one of curriculum wisdom to be applied as the practice of democratic moral wisdom.

Emotional ability determines 80% of our successful in the world (Goode: 2005). The statement means that relieve emotional condition will grow the students' self-confidence and their energetic. Research has shown that happiness, relax, cheerful and relieve emotional condition will affect physiologically positive. When they feel relax their creativities grow well and they will be open-minded. It means that they will be

easy to get in touch with others. Students will be able to learn and keep their emotion integrated when their surrounding keep their love, care and appreciate them. Then everything due to the teaching and learning will go on comfortable and smooth.

Character Education can be integrated in teaching and learning process in every subject. The educations, which are related to the norm and value need to be expanded, connected and explicitly with the context of the daily life. Character Education should be taught to the students through values cognitively, life comprehensions totally and ended with the real doing of good deed to face global challenges as stated in the Policy Brief 2011 on Character Education for Developing Nation's Character.

Furthermore, Character Education improves the students' good character and prevents the bad behavior, namely building positive relationship with their family and creating sense of connection especially among their classmate and commonly their friends in the school (Cynthia:2012).They have trained at school the good characters such as integrity, failure led to success, commitment, ownership, flexibility and balance. The school positive habitual behavior training leads the students' confidence and increases their motivation. The characters grow in their capacity to commit to do their best work to get the right thing to lead their purpose of living. Bennett (2008) stated that. in the family living, the characters have done as early as they were born by their own family and put them toward successful life outcomes.

Building students' character and a sense of community in the school focus on the six pillar. According to Jovan (2013), the Six Pillars of characters are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Trustworthiness: it is the important role to grow the students' recognition of honesty, integrity, reliability and loyalty to what they say the students will do. Respect: it provides them to open their eyes to admire the true heroes who pursue at great personal cost and risk. Suggest the students to keep peace avoid conflict and handle it when it does occur. Showing that bullying is a complete disregards others. Responsibility Behavior uses their self-control to be discipline and think before acting to consider the consequences. Suppose to be accountable for their words, actions, and attitudes. Fairness: it encourages students to play by the rules in taking turns and share. Let them open-minded and listen to others' opinion. Being fairness is not to give chance to the students to take advantages to others and not blame others carelessly. Treat all people fairly and proudly to be themselves due to their creativities. Caring: it is one address to help the students to become good people, express gratitude and forgive others. The act of kindness has them developed to help and care to others their community in the school. Give students some opportunities to help life skills such as tutor their classmates, assist in the computer lab, aid in the library, provide support to other students who are recovering from their illnesses and injury or to whom are dealing with a medical condition and also gather work to the students who miss their school, loyal in helping others in need. Citizenship: it is a trial to personify the students' good character. Get students involve in sharing to make the school and its community better, cooperate to each other. It is not only in their school but also in their neighborhood they should involve in community affairs.

Character education save our fallen nation (Bennet: 2008). By training the students good characters in their daily school life-working together hand in hand to do their assignments, giving a help to other student who is missing with the instruction, finding some solution of the friends' problem, having appreciate to each other, having encourage and never discourage others, always doing positive thinking without having feel suspicion to everyone, asking apology when they make some mistake, forgiving anybody and never feel revenge at all, having democratic and open minded, and also keep smiling to anybody wherever they are- we hope that those characters will affect them in their activities in the class while learning their subjects. They will not clumsy to do the work their teacher given in groups or in pairs and even individually. They will accustom to share the experiences to each other. They are not awkward to discuss new materials they offered by their teacher to others, find out some solution from

everything they face in their classroom and, even, when they are given some problems or issues individually. The upper students voluntarily explain the difficult problems and others who have worse ability (lower) than others do. They are not embarrassed to ask a help to the upper, while some others (middle) doing some debate and share their knowledge to find solution of the issues before finally they create their own sentences as their individually result. In this case, we name in tutorial action or peer tutor. The way their learning with the peer tutor makes the students motivated and the result is more satisfied. At finally yet importantly the students will stay in class comfort and happily.

METHTOD

The approach of the study is quantitative. The types of finding data are data collection with pretest and posttest, questionnaire, and interview. Pretest was administered to see the ability of the students how far they comprehend the materials and posttest was applied to see the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Questionnaires for the students were done to analyze the students' learning condition and interview was applied to make a crosscheck whether they responsibility answered the questionnaire based on their feeling when they attended the English class. The study was conducted at SMA N 7 Pemalang. The object of the study is the first grade namely X.10with 32 students male and female sit in this class. The study lasted during the April 2013 after giving some training of the good characters in their daily school life. Pretest administered before an implementation of the teaching and learning process with "News Item Text" as the material to discuss. During the discussion and generalization of the materials the character buildings such as good attitude, appreciating each other, doing hand in hand, sharing, forgiving and apologizing, etc. were integrated in the classroom.

There are two meetings teacher implemented the interactive teaching and learning in class, each meeting conducted in 90 minutes. The steps of the first meeting are: 1. Opening: teacher gives apperception by asking the students background of knowledge about the genre "News Item" and gives some motivation by explaining about the important of comprehending the genre relating to their daily activities in life. 2. Core Activities: a. Exploration: Students are asked to read the text loudly. In a group of four, they are asked to generalize the text while discussing. b. Elaboration: With the group, they find out the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. The students are asked to answer the questions; find out the main ideas, topic and any problems of each paragraph and any other problems relating to the text. c. Closing: The students are answered the questions given and asked to make a summary and expressed it in front of class. 3. Confirmation: The students were guided to draw a conclusion and reflection about the activities and the materials given some homework by the teacher. The second meeting is the continuation of the previous activities: 1. in pairs, the students are given another text of News Item to generalize and discuss. The students are asked to find out the main idea, topic and generic structure of the text. 2. Still in pairs the students are asked to answer the questions given related to the text. Finally, the students do their posttest individually.

FINDINGS AND DISSCUSIONS
Findings

In the field, after the pretest given, we had the students' score before they got some treatment. The treatments like as follows: a) outside the classroom: gathering to clean surrounding their own class, watering and gardening the park in front of their own class, composing, etc. b) inside the classroom: having responsibility of the classroom condition, keep the class as their big families, and helping to do the assignment to one another. Table 1 comprises the percentage of the students' scores in pre-test. From 32 students, there are not any student -0 % who got the score 90 to 100. There are 50% students who got the score between 80 to 89 and 21.88 %

students who got the score 75 to 79. Therefore, there are still 28.12 % students who got the score less than 75 namely 64 to 74. From the total students 32, there are nine students or 28.12 % do not get the minimum thorough standard. The standard is 75.00. The mean of the score is 75.97.

Table 1. Pre-Test Scores Distribution (32 Students)

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
90 - 100	0	0.00%
80 - 89	16	50.00%
75 - 79	7	21.88%
64 - 74	9	28.12%
Total	32	100%
Mean Score	75.97	

After having some treatment, there is an improvement in getting some scores. Table 2 comprises the percentage of the students' scores in post-test. There are sixteen or 50 % students got the scores 90 to 100. While the students who got the scores 80 to 89 are 25 % and 18.75 % students got the score around 75 to 79. The rest 6.25 % students got the scores 69 to 74. Therefore, we can conclude that after having some treatment, the improvement of the students' score is 10.66 from the mean 75.97 increases become 86.63. At last, only two students who still do not get the minimum thorough standard.

Table 2. Post-Test Scores Distribution (32 Students)

Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
90 - 100	16	50.00%
80 - 89	8	25.00%
75 - 79	6	18.75%
69 - 74	2	6.25%
Total	32	100%
Mean Score	86.63	

Discussion

Table 3 contains of the percentage of the students' condition before treatment. Based on the questionnaire given to the students we got the data as follows. There were 81.25 % students namely twenty six students like studying English but there were 18.75 % students namely six students did not like to study English before they got some treatment. The condition of the teaching and learning changed after the treatment. From the interview to the students, we made some cross check to know whether they were responsible with their answer about the questionnaire. It was seen that the result changed.

Table 4 contains of the percentage of the students' condition after treatment. The students who stated that they like studying English were twenty-eight students or 87.50% and the rest four students or 12.50% stated that they like studying English very much so, there were none of the students who did not like studying English.

After the treatment, student attitudes toward studying English significantly improved. Initially, 18.75% (6 students) did not like studying English, but post-treatment, all students expressed positive attitudes, with 87.50% liking it and 12.50% liking it very much.

From the questionnaire. most students 93.75% answered that they agree if they study individually to generalize and comprehend the new material. they found many problems and some difficulties and they did not get any solution. Finally, they

went on board and less motivation to study. They found they felt any burden to do their assignment anytime they got from their teacher because they judge themselves that the obstacle will occur during the learning. On the other hand, it was not occurred to the two students namely 6.25% who stated that there were not any problems with them to study individually. Somehow. they expressed that there was not any difference in learning individually or in pairs. Other answers shown that by learning and doing in pairs, all of the students felt lightly with their assignment and responsibility. Moreover, they felt more encourage expressing their ideas orally. In this case, because they were appreciating to each other and opened their minded to accept anyone ideas and views.

Table 3. Students' Attitude Toward Studying English (Before Treatment)

Condition	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Liked studying English	26	81.25%
Did not like studying English	6	18.75%
Total	32	100%

Table 4. Students' Attitude Toward Studying English (After Treatment)

Condition	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Liked studying English	28	87.50%
Liked studying English very much	4	12.50%
Did not like studying English	0	0.00%
Total	32	100%

Furthermore, when they were asked to learn in a group of four, worked together, discussed ideas, shared knowledge to generalize and comprehend the materials they felt happy doing them. They were responsible to do their own work as the part of the work they got. They were sincerely helped their friend where they needed. They felt that one group was family, so they were together preparing their work. Finally, when they finished with their work, they felt confidence and not shy to raise their ability by showing their work in front of class.

CONCLUSION
The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating character development into the teaching and learning process is not only beneficial but essential for fostering both academic success and a positive classroom environment. Character-based learning strategies significantly improved students' English proficiency and overall engagement. This is evidenced by a notable increase in mean test scores, from 75.97 to 86.63, with the number of students failing to meet the Minimum Competency Standard decreasing from 28.13% to 6.25%.

Moreover, student attitudes towards learning English transformed positively. Initially, 18.75% of students expressed a dislike for the subject. After character integration, all students reported enjoying English classes, fostering a collaborative, supportive atmosphere where they worked together in pairs and groups, encouraged one another, and demonstrated respect and responsibility.

These results underscore the importance of embedding character education across all subjects, not just English. Students with strong character traits—such as care, respect, and open-mindedness—contribute to a more inclusive and effective learning environment. This holistic approach cultivates a sense of community and mutual trust, ultimately enhancing both personal and academic development. Therefore, character education should be a core component of pedagogical practices to support comprehensive student growth.

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