

Students' Perception of the Teacher Characters in EFL Face To Face Classroom Interaction

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Abstract

This research aims at 1) finding out how students perceive teacher character in face-to-face EFL class interactions. 2) finding out the impact of teacher character on students in face-to-face EFL classroom interactions. This research uses qualitative descriptive methods to know students' opinions about the teacher's character and the impact felt by students. The participants in this research were class XII MIPA at SMA Negeri 17 Makassar. In this study, the instrument was an interview. Interviews were conducted face to face. The samples were chosen using the snowball sampling technique. The first student was selected by one of the English teachers at the school and the next student will be selected directly by the first student. The findings showed that 1) three themes can categorize English teachers' characters: interaction characters, personal characters, and teaching characters. The findings also revealed that students prefer an English teacher who can be a motivator during interaction, that the teaching style can build students' sense of enthusiasm and ambitiousness, and that students can emulate. 2) students feel the impact of the English teacher's character, which has both positive and negative sides. From the research results, it can be concluded that the character of an English teacher varies depending on the personality of the teacher. Apart from that, the teacher's character can also have an influence on students where they can also asses and build students' enthusiasm for learning.

Keywords: Teacher character; classroom interaction; student's perception.

1. Introduction

An English teacher's character is one of the essential things in the educational environment that will reflect the teacher's personality. Teacher's character is essential because students think that someone who teaches them at school is a role model. According to An (2022), teachers have a responsibility to be disciplined, which is inherent in the teacher due to these educational characteristics. Therefore, teachers must take responsibility for carrying out their duties and ensure a suitable model of proper attitude.

The character of a teacher can affect the learning process in the classroom. According to Wirantaka & Wahyudianawati (2021), the character of an English teacher is divided into four parts: social affective skills, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge, and personality characteristics. These characteristics of the teacher will make one look capable of being a decent teacher. A teacher who can provide motivational interactions can manage and attract their students' attention. Kurniatillah et al. (2022) said that one of the successes of classroom learning is the ability of students and teachers to express opinions or questions in social and communicative interactions.

Interacting with students in the classroom means a teacher can have a perfect teaching strategy or technique. According to Suryarini & Bahtiar (2021), English learning activities must use learning strategies that are easy, fun, and effective, and many other essential things must be considered by a language teacher. These happen by finding out what they like to teach so that they feel the teacher is ready and there is a sense of enthusiasm in imparting endless knowledge. Applying learning strategies can show how they behave in managing and providing space for them to show that they can follow what the teacher wants.

The proper technique will be seen if the teacher can master the learning material with a broad understanding. A competent teacher will not think of teaching material as trivial because it will make them understand and learn a lot of English and what the model of the presentation of the material looks like. The teacher who understands this will always behave appropriately and respond spontaneously to their personality. Rasyid et al. (2021) noted that a teacher's character can influence students in the learning process because the teacher's personality and interest in learning influence student development. These characters can show a sense of responsibility, positive thinking, patience, professionalism, caring for students, and creativity that can make it easier for students to catch the material being taught and enthusiasm about their profession during the learning process. In addition, Busyaeri & Muharom (2015) said that teachers are one of the main sources of success, influence, and role models that can make students a person with character. Teachers greatly impact students because their role is always a reference for students in doing something.

Several students of SMAN 17 Makassar, a well-known school in Makassar, Indonesia, answered these questions to see whether the English teacher there achieves the teacher's character by the provisions. The reason for making students there as the sample is because

the students have experienced being taught by many English teachers, so they may know what characteristics they like the most from English teachers.

Some research has been conducted on assessing teachers' character. The research conducted by Khaerati (2016) examines the characteristics of teachers in general who are effective and ineffective for English teachers, such as personality, appearance, and professionalism. However, this current research only discusses the teacher's character, which often occurs in English classes where the students themselves feel and the teacher may be aware of what has been done during the learning process. Besides that, the place and the research sample used are different.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction is an unavoidable aspect of the learning process that can directly determine the success of learning. Kurniatillah et al. (2022) explained that classroom interaction between teachers and students is a way that requires objective observation of what happens in the classroom and is a very important tool in improving learning in the world of education. Adaba (2017) says that classroom interaction is very helpful for teachers to make it easier to control students when/who will speak, the type of discussion, and even what language will be used.

2.2. Teacher Characters

The teacher's character is one of the important things in creating the right and good teaching staff. Lukman et al. (2021) argue that the teacher's character becomes one of the main roles that a teacher must have in carrying out his duties as a teacher who will build students' personalities both in education and everyday life. A teacher can be the highlight of conscience, sincerity in action, concern for social and personal ethics, honesty, tolerance, and agility in dealing with problems.

According to DiNçer et al. (2013), the character of an English teacher is divided into 4 parts, namely:

a. Social Affective Skills

Refer to how teachers interact with students using a method according to personal character. Astutik & Indriani (2021) commented that the purpose of social affective skills is to provide access for teachers who must always communicate with students of various types for successful learning, and teachers must be able to organize conversations that can lead to classroom activities.

b. Pedagogical Knowledge

Iffah et al. (2023) argue that pedagogical knowledge is a place for a teacher to manage student learning, which includes student understanding, the learning process, evaluation, and developing students maturely on the goals to be achieved by knowing their students remotely.

c. Subject Matter Knowledge

The right teacher will certainly know how the students can understand the content knowledge of the discipline itself. Rollnick & Mavhunga (2016) provide an overview of subject matter knowledge that is the heart of a teacher's practice when teaching in class, which is called the starting point to complete all aspects of the teacher to find out all the material that must be done or in other words materials for teachers to increase knowledge.

d. Personality Characteristics

A teacher does not only reflect academic competence but must also have competence in his character. Whatever happens to him, his attitude and behavior to his students must be controlled properly. According to Tandikombong & Sendana (2019), English teachers have several personality types: enthusiasm, warmth and humor, knowledge, and encouragement and support. The teacher must synchronize his behavior with actions

that can be seen in his daily life. A teacher must also have a sense of professionalism and can handle all activities in the classroom until the lesson is over. The hands of the teacher will produce quality students, both academically and skillfully, maturity, emotional, and morally spiritual so that educators with qualifications and high dedication are needed to carry out their duties professionally (Elawati & Ainiyah, 2021).

2. 3. Perception

Nasution & Ahmad (2020) said that perception is an individual observation of what is seen in life and this view can contain meanings or factors that can be accepted by other people externally and internally. Arifin et al. (2017) mentions that there are several perceptual factors as follows:

- Internal factors are factors that come from the person concerned
- External factors are factors that come from outside the individual concerned

Handayani (2020) said that there are 2 types of perceptions, they are:

- Positive perception is a perception that can manifest all knowledge and even responses that align with the perceived object, and these results can be accepted by an environment that is like-minded with that person.
- Negative perception is a perception that describes all responses that are not in harmony with the object seen to express the perception.

3. Research Methodology

3. 1. Research Design

The research design is qualitative research. This research focuses on understanding questions that apply humanistic and idealistic approaches. In answering the questions of this study, the researcher used one of the methods in Qualitative Research, namely Descriptive Inquiry to Collect Data.

3. 2. Data Resources

The researchers used students' perceptions to get answers to the research question. This research used snowball sampling. The researcher chose students of the third grade at SMA Negeri 17 Makassar, especially in the third grade of MIPA and IIS. The researcher estimated the target respondents as many as ten people. This research included the role of one of the English teachers in selecting the first respondent to be interviewed. After that, the first respondent chose the next respondent to be interviewed.

3. 3. Procedures of Collecting Data

The researchers interviewed in gathering all the data. The interviews were conducted after the English teacher selected the first respondent based on the results of the previous discussion. During the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the research, especially the interview, which required some information that must be given to the respondent in advance.

After the first interview was completed, the researcher asked the first respondent to appoint another student to be interviewed. This process continued until the desired target was achieved and the expected data was fulfilled. All the interview results were put together, and the researchers analyzed the data based on the techniques that have been chosen so that the results obtained can answer the objectives of this study.

3. 4. Techniques of Collecting Data

The data collection techniques were interview, observation, and documentation. In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews with an interview guide. The semi-structured interview allows the interviewees to answer the questions independently according to their perspectives. The researcher chose this method to get relevant data by the context to get answers to the research problems and did not

want tension or stiffness between the researchers and the interviewees.

3. 5. Techniques of Data Analysis

The technique carried out to analyze the data is thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) say that thematic analysis is a data collection process carried out to identify patterns or themes in qualitative data. Based on that, six stages were used in this research to analyze qualitative data thematically. The six stages are familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

4. Findings

4. 1. How do the students perceive the teacher characters in EFL face to face classroom interaction?

The researchers obtained the themes from the previous coding. The result of the analysis showed that three themes show the character of the English teacher in this study: interaction characters, personal characters, and teaching characters.

a. Interaction Characters

The interview results obtained by the researchers stated that students prefer interactions that can show their enthusiasm and comfort in class during the learning process. The researchers obtained all positive characters from the ten students in the interaction characters theme. They are good at communication, speak formally in class, are close to students, have nothing special to call students, like a friend when interacting, are more open, provide motivation or encouragement, are wise to reprimand directly, enjoy speaking, good advisor, appreciate students, not rude, and spontaneously.

b. Personal Characters

The researchers got one negative characteristic from the students' answers in the personal characters section. The results of the interviews showed teacher characters regarding social personality characteristics, which include rarely getting angry, not being arrogant, being kind and firm, friendly, patient, being fair, helpful, disciplined, responsible, caring, confident, humble, very serious, emotionless, delightful, and not lazy, yet the negative answer is that the teacher is boring sometimes.

c. Teaching Characters

In the teaching characters, some positive answers were obtained from the interview. The positive answers are that the teacher can make a comfortable classroom, be professional, have enthusiasm for teaching, be creative in building students' active skills

4.2. How do the teacher's characters impact students in EFL face-to-face classroom interaction?

a. Positive Impact of Interaction Characters

For daily interaction, the teacher's character can make the students feel comfortable in learning and make the students feel equal in the eyes of the teacher.

Extract 1

"Sangat nyaman karena beliau juga terbuka kepada kami sehingga jika kami dalam kebingungan kita bisa dengan spontan bisa bertanya secara langsung dan mendapatkan respon yang baik juga". ("It's very comfortable because the teacher is also open to us so that if we are confused, we can spontaneously ask questions directly and get a good response, too.") (S3, Q2)

b. Positive Impact of Teaching Characters

The teacher's teaching characters can affect the teacher's teaching ability, which may affect students' understanding of the materials the teacher delivers. Teachers with good teaching

characteristics can make the teaching and learning activities not boring and make the learning materials easy for the students to understand.

Extract 2

"lebih gampang dimengerti karena menyenangkan cara mengajarnya." ("It's easier to understand because the teacher's teaching style is fun.") (S10, Q1)

Extract 3

"Lumayan membuat saya terbiasa dengan situasi sehingga kami tidak bosan dan banyaknya dorongan untuk berdiskusi dan memecahkan sebuah masalah bersama teman yang lain". ("It was good enough to get me used to the situation so we did not get bored, and there was a lot of encouragement to discuss and solve problems with other friends.") (S3, Q4)

c. Positive Impact of Personal Characters

The teacher's personal character can make the students feel more comfortable and confident in following the teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, a teacher with good personal characters can make the teacher to be a favorite teacher.

Extract 4

"bagi saya mereka adalah guru favorit saya dengan berpegang pada sikap pribadi mereka." ("for me they are my favorite teachers by sticking to their personal attitudes.") (S3, Q3)

Extract 5

"saya merasa langsung happy apalagi ketika melihat beliau masuk dikelas dan tidak ada rasa malas yang muncul dengan tiba-tiba". ("I immediately felt happy, especially when I saw him enter the class, and there was no laziness that appeared suddenly.") (S10, Q3)

Extract 6

"Saya lebih percaya diri dalam menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dan menambah kosakata yang belum saya ketahui sebelumnya". ("I feel more confident in using English and adding vocabulary I didn't know before.") (S2, Q4)

d. Negative Impact of Personal Characters

One negative impact of the teacher's personal character on students is that the teacher's character may make the students feel bored and lazy.

Extract 7

"Yang saya rasakan dampak kurangnya itu dimana pada saat presentasi itu terkadang membuat saya malas dan bosan karena susah dimengerti kalau bukan guru saya yang menjelaskan." ("What I feel is during presentations, it sometimes makes me lazy and bored because it's hard to understand the teaching material if it's not explained by my teacher.") (S6, Q3)

5. Discussions

5. 1. How do the students perceive the teacher characters in EFL face to face classroom interaction?

By analyzing several lists of student answers, the researchers grouped three themes of good teacher's character: interaction characters, personal characters, and teaching characters. These three themes can show the teacher's overall character directly during the classroom learning process.

a. Interaction Characters

Based on the theory from Kurniatillah et al. (2022), the relationship between teachers and students is needed in class to create effective learning when discussing or giving opinions. According to students, a good teacher can create a good discussion with their students. In addition, the students also feel that the characters of the English teachers can bring the teacher and the students closer in terms of social distance, so the students may feel confident to communicate with the teacher, especially when they want to ask questions to the teacher.

A teacher will always need to be able to give advice that can encourage students to be

confident by using positive words so that the students may feel that their teacher cares about them. The opinion of the students in this study is obvious: motivation from the teacher will always make students want to learn and try new things related to English learning. Sometimes, a good teacher can also correct students' words that are less precise in the sense that it becomes a reference for students to always pay attention to every word used, and the results of the correction can make the students even more encouraged to get closer to the teacher and like the lesson. Students who are encouraged to learn are typically more motivated to follow the learning activities. Amriyati, Salika & Thalib (2022) say that motivation is a vital aspect of teaching and learning, where students who are not motivated are not moved to learn. A teacher can also motivate his students by showing appreciation to them, such as "good job," which can attract students' attention and encourage them to improve in everything in class continually.

Amiruddin & Zuhri (2020) said that the character of a teacher is the beginning of an interaction in the learning process. English learning especially requires a good relationship between teachers and students, which is the key to smooth learning. Kurniatillah et al. (2022) explained that interaction between teachers and students is needed to create practical learning when discussing and giving opinions. The research result showed that a teacher's openness or flexibility when communicating is important to make the students feel comfortable with the teacher and the teaching and learning activities.

b. Personal Characters

According to Tandikombong & Sendana (2019), there are several types of personal character for English teachers: enthusiasm, warmth & humor, knowledge, and encouragement & support. The statement mentions enthusiasm, which means a teacher must always create an active classroom atmosphere and be able to give the impression of fun beyond the way he teaches. The next is

warmth and humor, which means a teacher must be able to make students interested in learning English. As in the results of this research, several characters that describe this are not arrogant, patient, friendly, confident, humble, unemotional, and pleasant. This character becomes a reference for teachers to understand how the class situation is maintained, and the teacher's humor is always maintained to make students feel comfortable in class.

The statement also mentions encouragement and support, where a teacher must always be at the forefront at school to become a parent for students. This research showed some characteristics that can be described as encouragement and support, such as being kind & firm, being fair, and liking to help. A firm teacher will reflect sincerity from within himself and have a fair attitude when dealing with all students who are different. That way, students will always feel cared for, and sensitive teachers will help students in difficult situations.

c. Teaching Characters

The result of this study showed that the students mentioned several teacher's characters related to the teaching characters. They are creating a comfortable situation, the classroom atmosphere must be quiet, and often form study groups. That is an action of the teacher's character in class management that requires hard work because a comfortable and orderly class needs to avoid noise. The comfort created by a teacher is the main foundation for students to be able to always focus on learning. According to Sari et al. (2022), a teacher's character can be seen from how to organize strategies during learning, which is done by a teacher so that it can become a habit that can be emulated when doing the same thing. Professional educators highly uphold the ability to teach. According to Syahrani, Weda, & Sunra (2022), a teacher is a professional educator in controlling, assessing, and evaluating the students, and a teacher becomes the core of the learning process. The professional character of the teacher can be

seen from how they express themselves in the classroom. English teachers have to be professional in teaching in class because the teaching process requires more action to convince students of what is taught.

5. 2. How do the students perceive the teacher characters in EFL face to face classroom interaction?

The findings showed that the students felt several impacts from the teacher's characters. The first is the teacher's interaction character. The students consider that the English teachers' interaction characters positively impact the students. This impact may be in the form of fairness in interaction, which radiates from how the teacher behaves appropriately towards students so that students feel that their English teacher never makes or rejects them when interacting. From these fair actions, communication between teachers and students becomes smooth, like talking with friends, so it is more relaxed.

The second impact is regarding the teaching character of the English teacher. The effect that students get from this looks positive in that they feel that the English teacher who enters their class has made them feel safe and comfortable in following the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. As Iffah et al. (2023) said, pedagogical knowledge is a place for teachers to organize student learning to achieve students' primary goals. Teachers are expected to impact students by encouraging them to like English and changing their mindset. Saifudin & Sukma (2018) say that a teacher must understand all pedagogical knowledge to be a professional educator. However, there are times when students will feel bored and lazy in the learning activities if the learning uses presentation methods because not all students can learn well with the teacher's guidance.

The personal character of an English teacher is also no less important because not all students think of English as an important subject, so to get students' interest in learning, the teacher needs to make sure that his personal character

is interesting to students. Teachers who are good listeners, especially listening to students' problems, even if the problems have nothing to do with the students' academic life, can positively impact students' attitudes toward the teacher. Another example is discipline, where a disciplined teacher is considered more interesting to students than one who is not.

6. Conclusion

The character of an English teacher can determine how students perform in class. The character of an English teacher can be assessed using three themes: interaction characters, personal characters, and teaching characters. Teachers' character can make students to be more enthusiastic about learning English.

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