

THE IMPACT OF USING ENGLISH SHORT STORIES IN BUILDING STUDENTS' CHARACTERS

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the impact of using English short stories in building Students' characters. It employs a qualitative research method with a qualitative descriptive design involving 7 students in the third grade of SMA Negeri 3 Makassar. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this research found that the study reveals five impacts on students' characters. The impacts are, students' behavior that lead to positive behavior, increasing students' empathy and responsibility character, help students prevent the negative traits, and the last one is students find that there are positive impacts of using English short stories including, increasing language skills, increasing the interest of literacy, and also there is positive character formation in students.

Keywords— *Factors, Students' Understanding, Daily English Vocabulary.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of character is an important aspect of education. In today's globalized world, character building has become more crucial than ever, especially for students who will face challenges and opportunities in various aspects of their lives. The development of students' character is essential for their overall well-being and success in life. Character development involves cultivating positive qualities and values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and perseverance. Duckworth and Seligman (2005) pointed out that character development is positively associated with academic achievement. Students who possess positive character traits tend to be more motivated, focused, and persistent in their academic pursuits. As we know, character building such as honesty, responsibility and intelligence are important aspects needed by every student in achieving success. The Development of National Character Education (Depdiknas: 2010) states that there are 18 national character values that must be earnestly developed, including: religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hardworking, creative, independent, democratic, curious, nationalistic, love for the homeland, appreciating achievements, friendly/communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, caring for the environment, social concern, and responsibility. This characters must be given to the students. Decree of the Minister of National Education and Culture number 23 of 2015 stated that, another way to develop student's character, one of the program is through literacy activities. Literacy is an activity that really helps students, with literacy activities at school it will be able to help students to improve their character. Reading is the important activity for students. Through reading, students can get pleasure and also knowledge as develop character and intelligence.

Reading habits will provide a positive activity for students. Reading give students character education skills, attitudes, behaviors and also important values such as religious values, educational values and social values. According to Almerico (2014) said that, reading

character-themed books to and with children, encouraging older children to read on their own, and discussing the books with children can help them absorb and develop the values of strong character. When it comes to reading, short story is one of the forms of reading. English short stories are types of narrative text that is often used in learning English. By reading English short story, students can improve their ability to read English texts, get a lot of vocabulary, enrich grammar and also to improve writing skills. The use of English short stories is potential improving reading skill, reading comprehension, and also reading ability because the use of English short stories as a media can possibly make the students exchange the knowledge in learning process. There are so many advantages when we read short stories, especially short stories in English. Students get a lot of learning contained in short stories, especially in improving various language skills including in building character.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Character

Character is defined as acting morally despite external pressure to do otherwise (Lickona, 1991). The origin of the word character comes from the Greek “charassein” which means to carve. When character used in reference to people, it alludes to the enduring imprints of life that distinguish one person from another. Usually, our religious convictions, parental influences, and a child’s early interactions set lasting imprints early in life. According to Ryan & Bohlin (1999), character is a pattern of someone’s behavior. Individuals with good character have an understanding of goodness, appreciate goodness, and act upon it. Kirschenbaum (1995) identifies several attributes that define individuals with positive character, including respect, accountability, compassion, self-discipline, loyalty, bravery, and tolerance. Character is also marked when we participate in significant divisions in our country’s history or resolve moral quandaries throughout our lifetimes.

2. Character Education

David Elkind & Freddy Sweet (2004) stated that character education is an effort to help students to understand, care about, and behave in accordance with prevailing ethical values. Character education refers to the deliberate and systematic effort to develop positive character traits, values, and virtues in individuals. It focuses on nurturing essential qualities that contribute to ethical behavior, responsible citizenship, and personal well-being. Character education involves guiding students to develop an understanding, empathy, and adherence to appropriate social norms. They further explain that character education encompasses all the actions taken by teachers that have the potential to shape students’ character. According to Berkowitz and Hoppe (2009) stated character education can be seen as a discipline that has both historical roots and ongoing development, combining traditional and contemporary elements.

3. Character Building

Character building was launched by the government in 2010 in order to build new generation’s good character through education. This program mandates not only schools but also universities and colleges in Indonesia to adopt character-building programs with the objective of nurturing a strong moral foundation in the new generation. Dodds, D.M. (2016); Montonye, M; Butenhoff, S; Krinke, S. (2013); Patella, C (2003); Branson, C. (2004); Berkowitz, M. W & Bier, M. C. (2004); and Thompson, W. G. (2012) found that character building activities can impact students’ positive behavior. The findings consistently indicated a positive influence, leading to strong recommendations for implementing character building

programs in schools. Character building refers to the intentional process of developing and cultivating positive qualities, values, and traits that shape an individual's behavior, actions, and interactions with others. According to the decision of the Ministry of National Education in Indonesia (Kemendiknas, 2011), the primary objective of character building is to enhance the overall quality of education by instilling a comprehensive and harmonious moral foundation in students. By implementing character building, the goal is to nurture individuals who embody the principles of Indonesia's ideology, Pancasila, in their lives.

4. Building students' character by reading English short stories

Education is the key to creating a high-quality and highly competitive generation. In addition to academic learning, the formation of students' character is also an important focus in education. One effective way to improve students' character is to cultivate a regular reading habit. Reading not only expands students' knowledge and skills but also has a profound positive impact on their character development. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Communication and Outreach in Almerico (2014) suggested, with reading books, discussing a story that is read, and advising students to read on their own is one way that can help students absorb and develop strong character values. Short stories are one of the forms of narrative text. Reading English short stories offers numerous benefits, which contribute to language proficiency, cognitive development, and personal enrichment. Short stories often focus on relatable human experiences, emotions, and dilemmas. Engaging with these narratives fosters empathy and emotional intelligence as readers connect with the characters and their struggles. Moreover, reading short stories also helps enhance students' critical thinking skills. In short stories, students encounter various issues and conflicts faced by characters in stories. They are prompted to analyze, evaluate, and understand the motivations and actions of these characters. In addition to cognitive benefits, short stories also have significant emotional and moral impacts. Lazar (1993) said that reading stories provide the teaching and learning material which is motivating, authentic and great educational value, enjoy and fun.

5. Definition of Impact

In various contexts, such as scientific research, social issues, business, environment, or personal life, impact is used to evaluate the significance of an action or event. Based on the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, impact is described as the potent influence that something exerts on someone or something. It represents the significant change or result that occurs due to a particular cause. JE. Hosio (2007) defined impact as. In various contexts, such as scientific research, social issues, business, environment, or personal life, impact is used to evaluate the significance of an action or event. The tangible changes in behavior or attitudes resulting from policy outputs. Additionally, (Peter & Yenni, 1991) stated, impact is a strong influence that can be positive or negative.

6. Definition of Short Story

A short story is a work of fiction that typically focuses on a single plot or event with a limited number of characters. Short stories are literary works that are shorter than novels (Solikhah & Sari, 2022). It is shorter in length compared to a novel and aims to convey a complete narrative in a concise and condensed form. MacMillan (1985) defines a short story as a concise piece of prose narrative. The main characteristics of a short story include brevity, a strong and engaging plot, and a clear beginning, middle, and end. Short stories often explore a specific theme or idea and are known for their ability to evoke emotions, convey a message, or provide a unique perspective in a brief and impactful manner. Keegan (2003) describes a short story as a narrative that usually falls within the range of rarely exceeding 1,000 words or going below 500 words, while more commonly ranging from 1,500 to 5,000 words.

METHOD

A. Research Design

According to Sugiyono (2010), qualitative research is characterized by its descriptive nature. This implies that the data gathered in qualitative research is presented in the form of words rather than numerical values. Qualitative research focuses on collecting and analysing non-numerical data, such as text, video, or audio, with the aim of comprehending concepts, opinions, or experiences.

B. Research Place

The place where the research has been conducted in SMA Negeri 3 Makassar.

C. Population & Sample

Students of SMA Negeri 3 Makassar takes up the sample in this research. Purposive sampling was the selection technique used in this research. In the English Education Study Program, the researcher used the students from the population a research sample.

D. Instruments of the Research

Interviews is indeed sorts of the research instruments used by researchers. The researchers did a short interview before to starting the research.

E. Procedure of Collecting Data

In collecting data, the researchers use several steps, as follows: 1) the researcher asked the English teacher about students who are active in learning English and selected 7 appropriate students as the subjects of this research. 2) The researcher explained this research to the selected participants. 3) After getting participants, the researcher gave them several short stories that have positive moral values to read one to three times. 4) Data collection procedures consist of interviews. After reading several short stories, the researcher asked further questions regarding students' experiences in reading short stories related to the topic of the impact of using English short stories to build student character. 5) The researcher used a recorder or take notes during the interview.

F. Technique of Data Analysis

The researcher will use a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. A researcher will hold an interview and give students open-ended questions. The technique that will be used in data analysis for this research is the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (2014).

RESULTS

1. Students' behavior that lead to positive behavior

Based on interviews, all the students felt a positive impact in using English short stories based on the question "What effect does Reading English short stories base on your behavior?"

Extract 2 (Student 2): *Menurut saya efek dalam membaca cerita pendek Bahasa Inggris terhadap prilaku saya yaitu saya merasa terdapat perbedaan prilaku saya yang mengarah bahasa positif.* "In my opinion, the effect of reading English short stories on my behavior is that I feel there is a difference in my behavior which is in a positive direction."

Extract 3 (Student 3): *Menurut saya, setelah membaca cerita pendek, terkadang mindset/fikiran saya menjadi terbuka dan berubah karena melihat perilaku serta nilai yang ada di dalam cerita yang saya baca.* “after reading short stories, sometimes my mindset/thoughts open up and change because I see the behavior and values in the stories I read.”

Extract 7 (Student 7): *Efek terhadap perilaku saya yaitu saya dapat mengambil hikmah dari cerita pendek yang saya baca dan menerapkan hikmah itu ke dalam diri saya selain itu saya merasa lebih kritis dalam menghadapi sebuah masalah.....* “The effect on my behavior is that, I can take lessons from the short stories I read and apply those lessons to myself. Apart from that, I feel more critical in dealing with a problem.”

2. Increasing students' empathy character

The researcher found that there were kinds of answer given by the students based on the question “After reading English short stories, is that any difference of empathy character that you feel? Please explain based on your opinion!”

Extract 1 (Student 1): *Ya, ada. Sebelum membaca cerita pendek Bahasa Inggris, saya merasa kurang memiliki rasa empati terhadap orang lain, tetapi setelah banyak membaca cerita-cerita pendek Bahasa Inggris yang mengandung nilai moral, saya merasa bahwa rasa empati yang ada di dalam diri saya menjadi lebih baik.* “Yes. Before reading English short stories, I felt that I lacked empathy for other people, but after reading a lot of English short stories that contain moral values, I feel that my sense of empathy has become better.”

Extract 4 (Student 4): *Menurut saya, membaca cerita pendek Bahasa Inggris yang memiliki nilai empati didalamnya itu dapat membentuk bahkan meningkatkan karakter empati para pembacanya.* “..... I think, reading English short stories that have empathy value in the story can build and even improve the empathy character of the readers.”

Extract 7 (Student 7): *Saya merasa tidak ada perubahan secara signifikan dalam karakter empati saya, akan tetapi saya hanya merasa sedikit perubahan terhadap karakter empati saya yang mungkin sedikit lebih berkembang.* “I feel there is no significant change in my empathy character, but I only feel a slight change in my empathy character which may be a little more developed.”

3. Increasing students' responsibility character

The researcher found that there were kinds of answer given by the students based on the question “in your opinion, what is the impact of reading English short stories in responsibility character?”

Extract 6 (Student 6): *Menurut saya, setelah membaca banyak cerita pendek yang mengandung nilai karakter tanggung jawab, saya diajarkan untuk selalu bertanggung jawab dengan apa yang saya lakukan dan mencontohkan sifat tersebut ke dalam diri saya agar tidak semena-mena dengan apa yang telah saya perbuat, jadi saya merasa bahwa terdapat pembentukan karakter tanggung jawab di dalam diri saya.* “according to me, after reading many short stories that contain the character value of responsibility, I was taught to always be responsible for what I do and exemplify this characteristic in myself so that I am not arbitrary with what I have done, so I feel that there is a responsible character formation within me.”

Extract 5 (Student 5): *Menurut saya, saya tidak merasakan bahwa membaca cerita pendek Bahasa Inggris itu berdampak pada karakter tanggung jawab, karena sejauh ini saya belum membaca cerita pendek Bahasa Inggris yang mengajarkan secara detail sifat tanggung jawab.*

Tetapi mungkin jika saya membaca cerita pendek yang mengandung nilai tanggung jawab, mungkin saja terdapat perbedaan karakter yang saya rasakan. "I don't feel that reading English short stories has an impact on the character of responsibility, because so far I haven't read any English short stories that teach in detail the nature of responsibility. But maybe if I read a short story that contains the value of responsibility, there might be differences in my character"

4. Help students prevent negative traits

Based on interviews, all the students thought English short story can help prevent the negative traits based on the question "according to you, is the English short stories help you prevent the negative traits?"

Extract 6 (Student 6): *Ya, membantu. Dari cerita-cerita pendek yang saya baca, ada beberapa pesan moral yang saya ambil. Contohnya seperti jangan menjadi orang yang jahat atau jangan mencontohkan sifat-sifat negatif yang ada di dalam cerita karena mungkin saja akan merugikan diri saya. Jadi saya merasa bahwa cerita pendek menjadi salah satu bacaan yang dapat mencegah sifat negatif.* "Yes, that helps. From the short stories I read, there are several moral messages that I took away. For example, don't be a bad person or don't exemplify the negative traits from the story because it might harm for me. So I feel that short stories are a type of reading that can prevent negative traits."

Extract 4 (Student 4): *"Ya pasti membantu dalam mencegah sifat negatif. Cara saya dalam mencegah hal negatif tersebut yaitu dengan sadar apa yang saya perbuat dan belajar dari kesalahan untuk menjadi pribadi yang lebih baik* "Yes it definitely helps in preventing negative traits. My way of preventing negative things is by being aware of what I make and learning from mistakes to become a better person."

Extract 3 (Student 3): *Ya membantu, karena terkadang setelah membaca cerita pendek, sifat-sifat negatif yang sebelumnya ada di dalam diri saya itu menjadi berkurang karena saya mendapatkan dampak dan nilai positif dalam cerita.* "Yes, because sometimes after reading short stories, the negative traits that previously existed within me become reduced because I get positive impacts and values in the story."

5. Students find positive impacts of Using English short stories

Based on interviews, all students agreed that English short stories had several positive impacts. During the interview, the researcher asked the question "Do you get any of positive impact of the English short stories? What are they?"

Extract 1 (Student 1): *Ya, saya merasakan dampak positif contohnya seperti saya dapat menambahkan kosa kata Bahasa Inggris.....* "Yes, I feel positive impacts, for example, I can add English vocabulary."

Extract 2 (Student 2): *..... Saya merasa bahwa skill berbahasa inggris saya menjadi meningkat.* "... I feel that my English language skills have improved."

Extract 3 (Student 3): *Ya, saya merasakan dampak positifnya. Saya merasakan peningkatan nilai karakter saya seperti peningkatan nilai karakter dan tanggung jawab dan selain itu membentuk beberapa nilai karakter positif lainnya setelah saya membaca banyak cerita pendek Bahasa Inggris atau naratif teks lainnya.* "Yes, I feel the positive impact. I felt an increase in my character values such as increasing character values and responsibility and apart

from that, it forming several other positive character values after I read a lot of English short stories or other narrative texts.”

Extract 4 (Student 4): *Dampak positif yang saya dapatkan yaitu pertama, saya jadi punya minat literasi karena cerita pendek itu menarik untuk di baca “The positive impact I got was first, I became interested in literacy because short stories were interesting to read”*

Extract 5 (Student 5): *Ya, dampak positifnya itu saya mendapatkan banyak pengetahuan tentang berbagai macam karakter positif dan menerapkan nilai positif tersebut ke dalam kehidupan saya. “Yes, the positive impact was that I gained a lot of knowledge about various kinds of positive characters and applied these positive values to my life.”*

DISCUSSION

This research was done by the researcher at SMA Negeri 3 Makassar. It required for the interview.

1. Students' behavior that lead to positive behavior

From the analysis results, on the first question about students' behavior, it showed that some students, especially 5 out of 7, felt that they have an impact in their behavior that lead to positive behavior after they read the short stories. Apart from that, both of them think that short stories can make them critical people in responding to problems and open their minds in looking at life. Short stories can prompt students to think critically about the motives and actions of the characters. This type of analysis can help develop critical thinking skills and a more thoughtful approach to one's own behavior. This research might have highlighted how English short stories expose students to different cultures and lifestyles, promoting cultural awareness and acceptance. This exposure is crucial in building open-minded and well-rounded characters. They admitted that they got a lot of positive values in the short story and they wanted to emulate these values in themselves to become better humans. According to Ryan & Bohlin' theory (1999), character is a pattern of someone's behavior.

2. Increasing students' empathy character

From the analysis result, on the second question about students' empathy character, it shows that 5 students answered that they felt the difference in the empathetic character within them after and before reading short stories. Some of them said that before reading short stories, their empathetic character was lacking, and after reading, their empathetic character developed. Several students said that they wanted to apply the moral values from the story in themselves. Additionally, there was one student who did not feel any significant difference after reading the short story because previously he had rarely read short stories that contained empathetic values. This proved short stories can be a powerful tool for improving students' empathy. Short stories offer a unique opportunity to engage students emotionally and intellectually, which can lead to a deeper understanding of and connection to the experiences, emotions, and perspectives of others.

3. Increasing students' responsibility character

From the results of the analysis on the third question about the character of students' responsibility, it can be seen that 6 from 7 students answered that they felt the impact of increasing their character of responsibility before and after reading short stories. They said that they were taught to always be responsible for what they do and not to take things lightly. Some students also said that they learned about a sense of responsibility in the story, and wanted to apply the values in themselves.

4. Help students prevent negative traits

From the results of the interviews, the fourth question about the negative traits, it can be seen all students agreed if English short stories can help them to prevent the negative traits. They say that what they read can reflect our behaviour, for example, if there are antagonists or bad characters in the story, they would only take the positive values and discard the negative values. Some students said that the way to prevent these negative traits was by applying the positive traits conveyed in the story. Apart from that, they also said that, they took a lot of moral knowledge from the English short stories about the character values and they learned from a mistake made by the character in the story and make the learning a lesson for them.

5. Students find positive impacts of Using English short stories

In the last question about whether there is or there is not positive impact of using English Short stories, all of the students answered Yes to the question. All of them agreed that there are several positive impacts that they felt. They are, English short stories can increase their language skills, their interest of literacy, and also make them become better human. They also stated their opinion and experiences when answering the question.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the interviews section that was conducted with 7 students from 12 MIPA 1 in SMA Negeri 3 Makassar as respondents, it can be concluded that there are five impacts of using English short stories in building Students' characters. They are, English short stories can influence students' behavior, English short stories can increase students' empathetic and responsible character, English short stories help students prevent the negative traits. Apart from that, students found positive impacts from reading English short stories, including being able to improve language skills, increase interest in literacy and build positive character of the students.

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