

## **The Influence of Biography-Used to Students' Personality in EFL Classroom**

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**Abstract:** Students' personality is one of factors that has influence in students' achievement. Beside having good achievement, students who have good personality is one of the goals of learning process. The use of biography in teaching learning process can help the teacher to know the students' personality. The objectives of this research are: (1) to find out the outstanding characters of biography the students read; and (2) to explore the influences of biography to the students' personality. The method used for the research was descriptive qualitative research. The subject of the research was the fifth semester of English department students in the academic year of 2016/2017. The data of this research were collected through closed and opened questionnaires. The data of this research were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings of the research revealed two major points consisting of (1) eight outstanding characters ranging over the rates the students found by reading biography; and (2) the influences of biography to the students' personality to be better. To sum up, the English lecturers who teach English prose are supposed to use biography as the main media because through biography the students can learn various characters of famous figures to be successful. In addition, biography can influence the students' personality to have more positive behaviour.

**Keywords:** *Biography, Character, Character Education.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowdays, character building is an important part of education performance. This issue is recently discussed by many schools in Indonesia. In learning process, teachers are demanded to know the characters of the students, because it has influence to build the students' character value in modern era Zuriyah in (Sokip et al., 2019).

Character is the personality inherent in a person. Theoretically, people basically have the potential love of virtue, but if it is not accompanied by the potential for education and socialization after humans are born, then people can turn into animals, even worse. This is supported by the hadith of the Messenger of Allah that: "Every child is born in a state of nature, because of its

parents make him Jewish, Christian or Zoroastrian.” This indicates that the potential cannot be left alone but need to be grown. Likewise, the characters that are part of the child's potential, must be nurtured and well educated (Kamarudin, 2012).

Character education has the same meaning with moral education. Character education is an education that organize the students' ethical behavior (Tsai, 2012; Istiningsih, 2016). The purpose is to build children's personality to be a good person, good society and good citizen. Character education in the context of Indonesia is the education of supreme value based on Indonesian culture, in order to build young generations' personality. Character education is needed to be implemented in formal education based on the grand design developed by Ministry of National Education (2010). Character configuration in the context of psychological and socio-cultural process is grouped in: (1) Spiritual and emotional development, (2) Intellectual development, (3) Physical and kinesthetic development, (4) Affective and creativity development. Those four elements cannot be separated each other, indeed completing each other.

(Kesowo, 2003) in the *Undang-undang No. 20 tahun 2003 pasal 3* about system of national education, it is stated that the function of national education is to expand the ability and build character and national civilization having good prestige to educate Indonesian people. In detail, national education is intended to develop students' skill to be religious, kind, well-informed, independent, creative, smart, democratic, and responsible. It can be clearly seen that the aim of national education in every level including in college or university must be done systematically. It has relation with students' character building to be able to compete, have good attitude, and interact with societies.

Dealing with this concern, Setia Asyanti (2012: 289) argues that the goal of character

building in higher education is as the complement to rebuild and reshape the prior characters of the students. In detail, character education in university focuses on increasing the quality of implementation and result of education to attain character building in line with graduates' competence (Hasanah, 2013). Relying on the significance of character education for university students, lecturers are the core figures to build students' characters.

Building students' characters in university can be done in various ways. One of them is through literature class. It is because literature class can facilitate character building. By learning literature, students are sharply expected to have stronger feeling to point something worthy (Yosi, 2012). To reinforce this issue, Oemarjati (in Yosi, 2012) states that the ultimate goal of learning literature is to stimulate the students' sensitivity of humanistic matter. Seen from the advantage of literature in building students' characters, it is worthy idea to discuss kinds of literary works.

According to Janovsky (2003), there are main four kinds of literary genres. They are poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and drama. Biography, form of literature, as one of non-fiction genres is defined as the subject of which is the life of an individual. As one of the oldest forms of literary expression, it seeks to re-create in words the life of a human being—as understood from the historical or personal perspective of the author—by drawing upon all available evidence, including that retained in memory as well as written, oral, and pictorial material (Kendall, 2009).

As non-fiction genres, biography is taken into account to be effective media to build students' characters. It stands for a reason that biographies provide the most valuable lessons in life. People who write biographies or autobiographies usually have an interesting story to tell about the trials and tribulations of their own lives (Blumenfeld, 2006). According to

Blumenfeld (2006), we can learn the priceless lessons of experience from biographies. Human beings have been capable of extraordinary feats in all areas of endeavor. We live in a world built by their genius and inventiveness. The secrets of success are to be found in all of these remarkable lives. If you wish to excel in your own life, there is no better place to find inspiration than in the lives of those who have changed our world and changed our lives for the better.

In line with Blumenfeld, Kraemer (2016) confirms some benefits of reading biographies. They are: (1) allowing us to see a person's life in action; (2) giving us examples to follow and not to follow (3) increasing our empathy skills; (4) causing us to think; (5) and encouraging us to persevere. Coping with benefits reading biographies as the media to build students' characters especially at university, some relevant studies were conducted to get deep understanding about this issue. One of them was accomplished by Silay (2013). She conducted a study about character building for university students. Her research was done at two state universities with the participation of academics, half of whom were female, at the faculties of Education, Arts and Sciences, Economics and Administrative Sciences, Engineering. The selected responses to the 13 semi-structured face-to-face interviews were given as raw data. In the discussion part, it is seen that some are supported by literature findings.

Concerning the issue about building students' characters at university, this research is conducted to explore more about the using of biography to build university students' characters by applying a case study design. In addition, this research is also aimed to find out how the biography influences students' personality.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

Since the major focus of this research is to find out the outstanding characters which students got through the biography and its influence to students' personality, a qualitative research is appropriate to use. According to Creswell, (1998), qualitative research is an inquiry process of an understanding that explores a social or human problem. Here, the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed view of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. Meanwhile, (Sugiyono, 2012) defines qualitative research as a kind of research conducted to investigate a phenomenon naturally in which the researcher is the key instrument, data collection is done by triangulation, data is analyzed inductively, and its findings emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

### **Subjects of the Study**

This research was conducted at IAIN Kediri in 2017. The subjects of this research were the students in the fifth semester who took English prose class from September until November 2017. Given (2008) argues that this idea is as purposive sampling in which the participants are selected because they represent the research design and the limitation of the research.

The data collection in this research was through questionnaire. According to Dornyei, (2003), the main attraction of questionnaires is their unprecedented efficiency in terms of (a) research time, (b) research report, and (c) final resources. By administering a questionnaire to a group of people, one can collect a huge amount of information in short time.

Since there are no clearly agreed rules or procedures for analyzing qualitative data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 200), the data analysis applied in this research is proposed by Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2013: 91-99) which was considered as the most appropriate with the

topic of this research. According to them, there are three activities done by the researcher in analyzing the data. They are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In doing the data reduction, the researcher summarized, selected the important points, focused on them, and looked for their theme. Through this stage, the data that had been reduced gave more obvious description and made the next step of data collection easier.

After reducing the data, the next step was to display the data. The most frequent form to display the data was through descriptive text, enabling the researcher to uncover an analysis unit among potential unites (Van Wynsberghe & Khan, 2007: 6), as one of the characteristics of qualitative research. The last step done in analyzing qualitative data was drawing the conclusion.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The Outstanding Characters Students Found through Biography

After analyzing the questionnaires, some characters are found by the students through the biography they read. There are 91 various titles of biography. From those, 77 characters are summed up in the following table.1.

**Table 1. The Students' Characters based on Biography**

No	Character	Votes	Percentage
1	Intelligence	91	100%
2	Care	70	76,92%
3	Tough	65	71,42%
4	Honest	56	61,54%
5	Discipline	44	48,35%
6	Responsible	44	48,35%
7	Patient	23	25,27%
8	Brave	14	15,38%
9	Hardwork	11	12,09%
10	Friendly	11	12,09%
11	Religious	6	6,59%
12	Wise	6	6,59%
13	Optimist	6	6,59%
14	Dilligent	5	5,49%
15	Loving	5	5,49%

16	Confident	5	5,49%
17	Humble	4	4,39%
18	Creative	4	4,39%
19	Critical	3	3,30%
20	Obedient	3	3,30%
21	Ambitious	3	3,30%
22	Fair	2	2,20%
23	Kind	2	2,20%
24	Curious	2	2,20%
25	Easy to make friend	2	2,20%
26	Selfish	2	2,20%
27	Simple	2	2,20%
28	Spiritful	2	2,20%
29	Sincere	2	2,20%
30	Kindhearted	2	2,20%
31	never give up	2	2,20%
32	strong determination	2	2,20%
33	Generous	2	2,20%
34	Helpful	2	2,20%
35	Calm	2	1,10%
36	Emphaty	1	1,10%
37	Firm	1	1,10%
38	Pleasant	1	1,10%
39	Soft	1	1,10%
40	Professional	1	1,10%
41	Strong will	1	1,10%
42	Mean	1	1,10%
43	Open minded	1	1,10%
44	Romantic	1	1,10%
45	Sociable	1	1,10%
46	Unstable	1	1,10%
47	Forgetful	1	1,10%
48	Shy	1	1,10%
49	Jealous	1	1,10%
50	Bad temper	1	1,10%
51	Careless	1	1,10%
52	Independent	1	1,10%
53	Full of struggle	1	1,10%
54	Funny	1	1,10%
55	Competitive	1	1,10%
56	Focus	1	1,10%
57	Unsatisfied	1	1,10%
58	Alone	1	1,10%
59	Active	1	1,10%
60	Loyal	1	1,10%
61	Smart	1	1,10%
62	Inhuman	1	1,10%
63	Cruel	1	1,10%
64	Not loyal	1	1,10%
65	Consistent	1	1,10%

66	Careful	1	1,10%
67	Multitalent	1	1,10%
68	Genious	1	1,10%
69	Adventurous	1	1,10%
70	Hardthinking	1	1,10%
71	Stubborn	1	1,10%
72	Leadership	1	1,10%
73	Ideal	1	1,10%
74	Gentle	1	1,10%
75	Energetic	1	1,10%
76	Polite	1	1,10%
77	Sporty	1	1,10%

Furthermore, the various characters of the students found through biography that meet the theory.

**Table 2. The Students' Character Education and Culture**

No	The values of national character education and culture based on <i>Pengembangan Pendidikan Budaya dan Karakter Bangsa (2010: 9-10)</i>	Outstanding characters the students found through biography	Percentage
1	Religious	✓	12,09%
2	Honest	✓	61,54%
3	Tolerant	✓	1,10%
4	Discipline	✓	48,35%
5	Hardwork	✓	12,09%
6	Creative	✓	4,39%
7	Independent	✓	1,10%
8	Democratic		
9	Courious	✓	2,20%
10	National spirit		
11	Loving our own country		
12	Appreciating achievement	✓	1,10%
13	Friendly/communicative	✓	12,09%
14	Peaceful	✓	5,49%
15	Loving to read	✓	5,49%
16	Environment care	✓	76,92%
17	Social care	✓	76,92%
18	Responsibility	✓	48,35%

Obviouly, based on the data findings in the table, there are 14 outstanding characters which range over various percentages and can be classified into 8 kinds. Below, the rates are presented from the highest to the lowest ones.

**Table 3. Outstanding Students' Characters through Biography**

No	Outstanding characters through biography encountering the values of national character education	Percentage
1	Environmental and social care	76,92%
2	Honest	61,54%
3	Discipline	48,35%
4	Responsible	48,35%
5	Hardwork, Religious, and friendly/communicative	12,09%
6	Love to read and Peaceful	5,49%
7	Creative	4,39%
8	Appreciate achievement, tolerant, and independent	1,10%

Dealing with the data findings about outstanding characters the students found through biography, a unique phenomenon can be underlined. Although intelligence is in the highest rate, i.e. 100%, it does not include in the values of national character education and culture based on *Pengembangan Pendidikan Budaya dan Karakter Bangsa (2010: 9-10)*.

### The Influences of The Outstanding Characters to Students' Personality

Based on the data findings from the opened questionnaires, almost all the students admit that the characters from the biography they read influence their personality as the following table.

**Table 4 The Influences of the Outstanding Characters to Students Personality**

No	Character	Vote Number	Change Percentage
1	Intelligence	48	62,34%
2	Care	49	63,64%
3	Tough	37	48,05%
4	Honest	34	44,15%
5	Discipline	28	36,36%
6	Responsible	23	29,87%
7	Patient	13	16,88%
8	Brave	5	6,49%
9	Hardwork	4	5,19%
10	Friendly	3	3,90%
11	Religious	3	3,90%
12	Wise	4	5,19%
13	Optimist	3	3,90%

14	Confident	3	3,90%
15	Creative	1	1,30%
16	Obedient	2	2,60%
17	Ambitious	3	3,90%
18	Fair	2	2,60%
19	Kind	1	1,30%
20	Curious	1	1,30%
21	Easy to make friend	1	1,30%
22	Kindhearted	1	1,30%
23	never give up	1	1,30%
24	Strong determination	2	2,60%
25	Helpful	1	1,30%
26	Empathy	1	1,30%
27	Pleasant	1	1,30%
28	Strong will	1	1,30%
29	Multitalent	1	1,30%
30	Leadership	1	1,30%

Here, only 30 of 77 kinds of influencing characters are shown. It is because not all the students described the influences of reading biography to their personality (see appendix 2). Table of frequency of students' character change after reading biographies can be checked in the following (Likert scale).

**Table 5. The Category of the Students' Character**

No	Interval	Category
1	0% -15 %	Never
2	15,01 % - 30%	Hardly
3	30,01% - 40%	Rarely
4	40,01% - 50%	Frequent
5	≥ 50,01%	Very frequent

By identifying the table of frequency, it can be concluded that students change their character after reading the biography. It means biography influence their personality. Nevertheless, only a few characters influence the students' personality. There are 2 characters which are categorized into very frequent, namely intelligent 62,34% and care 63,64%. Then, there are also 2 characters which are categorized into frequent. The characters are tough 48,05% and honest 44,15%. Discipline is the next character which is categorized into rarely. It gets 36,36%.

Responsible and patient are the characters which are categorized into hardly. Their percentage in order is 29,87% and 16,88%. 23 others of the 30 characters which are classified into the characters which influence students' personality are categorized into never (see table of frequency).

## CONCLUSION

Biography is important media to know the characters of the students. It has three major points related to the influence of biography to students' personality that can be summarized based on the problem statements as follows:

1. From 91 students who read various biographies in English Prose class, there are 77 kinds of characters found. After they were identified using the theory of kinds of characters stated by *Pengembangan Pendidikan Budaya dan Karakter Bangsa* (2010: 9-10), the result shows that there are 14 characters that dealt with. Those 14 characters were then classified based on their rate of percentage from the highest to the lowest ones, and the finding proves the conclusion as in the following chart.

No	Outstanding characters through biography encountering the values of national character education	Percentage
1	Environmental and social care	76,92%
2	Honest	61,54%
3	Discipline	48,35%
4	Responsible	48,35%
5	Hardwork, Religious, and friendly/communicative	12,09%
6	Love to read and Peaceful	5,49%
7	Creative	4,39%
8	Appreciate achievement, tolerant, and independent	1,10%

2. Referring to the data conclusion in the table above, it can be obviously seen that the highest position is occupied by the characters of environmental and social care. Actually, based on the data in reality, the highest position belongs to the character of intelligence. It reveals that qualitative research shows its uniqueness. From this, it can be summed up into two important statements. First, to be successful, we must have good intelligence. To have good intelligence, we must study and work hard by reading books, looking for information as much as possible, or doing experiments. Second, to reach our goals, we must care of our environment and our communities. It is because we are social humans.
3. Besides the students found various characters by reading biography, it can influence their personality to be better based on their description. As explained, there are 2 characters categorized into very frequent in influencing the students' personality namely intelligent 62,34% and care 63,64%. Then, there are also 2 characters categorized into frequent in influencing the students' personality. The characters are tough 48,05% and honest 44,15%. Discipline is the next character categorized into rarely in influencing the students' personality. It gets 36,36%. Responsible and patient are the characters categorized into hardly in influencing the students' personality. Their percentage in order is 29,87% and 16,88%. 23 others of the 30 characters classified into never in influencing the students' personality are.

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