



Strengthening National Character through Learning Indonesian as a Compulsory Subject in Higher Education

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¹Language Indonesian Tadris, UIN Raden Mas Said

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Abstract— *Strengthening student character is an important foundation in learning Indonesian in tertiary institutions in the era of educational disruption. This study aims to describe the results of strengthening student character through Indonesian language courses in tertiary institutions. This research method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The subjects in this study included students and lecturers supporting the Indonesian language as the national curriculum subject for all level of education and all Indonesia students, called MKWK, at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The informants in this study were the coordinators of the MKWK at UIN RMS Surakarta (the study program coordinators were taken in part from the number spread across five faculties). Collecting data in this study using documentation methods, in-depth interviews, and observation. Data analysis in this study used an interactive model which consisted of four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The results of this study indicate the strengthening of student characters through Indonesian language courses including: discipline, honesty, communicativeness, curiosity, responsibility, creativity, independence, tolerance, hard work, democratic, and religiosity. This shows that Indonesian language courses strengthen the various student characters. This study recommends that the values of character buildings can be developed effectively through the implementation of Indonesian language learning in tertiary institutions.*

Keywords— *strengthening character, Indonesian, compulsory subject*

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of learning Indonesian as a compulsory subject is to strengthen students' nationality character. Strengthening student character through learning Indonesian is seen as very strategic because each study program is required to carry out Indonesian language learning. Therefore, it is important to develop a model of strengthening student character through learning Indonesian as a compulsory curriculum subject.

The urgency of strengthening student character is relevant to the issue of weakening the character of youth as the nation's generation. This is a serious problem in tertiary institutions (primary, high education, or higher education), so it is necessary to determine the direction of policy patterns in formulating educational goals. In line with the context of the current growth rate of globalization,

it has influenced the turmoil of changes in negative social attitudes in the younger generation, especially students. Thus a model for strengthening the character of students in tertiary institutions is needed for backing up the influence of the negative global effects.

Strengthening character in tertiary institutions has been carried out using various models, such as character education based on active learning (Samal, 2018), character education based on folklore (Engliana et al., 2020), character education through civics education general courses (Dewi et al., 2020), character education based on local wisdom (Faiz & Soleh, 2021), and character education through general Islamic religious education courses (Hermawan et al., 2021). Based on the character-strengthening model in tertiary institutions above, various models have been carried out, such as through folklore, local wisdom, and general courses.

Models of character strengthening through general courses have been carried out, namely in religious education courses and civics courses. Even though there are four general subjects in tertiary institutions, namely religious education, citizenship, Pancasila, and the Indonesian language. Thus, it appears that strengthening character education in tertiary institutions has not been carried out in Pancasila and Indonesian language courses. Therefore, this research focuses on strengthening student character through Indonesian language courses. This is because the Pancasila subject is incorporated into citizenship. So, the focus of this research focuses on strengthening student character through Indonesian language courses.

The purpose of this study is to describe the strengthening of student character through Indonesian language courses. The results of this study will be very useful for raising the awareness of lecturers and students in strengthening student characters through Indonesian language courses. In addition, theoretically, this research will develop a model of character education in tertiary institutions through Indonesian language courses, as national language.

II. LITERATUR REVIEW

1. Character Concepts and Values

The word character comes from the Greek language which means "to mark" and focuses on how to apply the value of kindness in the form of action or behavior. The term character is closely related to one's personality. A person can be called a person of character if his behavior is by moral principles (Zubaedi, 2011). Character is often associated with personality, so character formation is also associated with personality formation (Nashir, 2013). Thus, character strengthening is carried out by forming student personalities.

Character in its realization relates to self-behavior that has an impact on others. Good character includes the right actions related to oneself and others (Lickona, 2012). In contrast to people who do good, people of good character are firm in their moral convictions (Wright & Emich, 2020). People with character have good beliefs and are manifested in language and behavior by the beliefs they have.

The character can be interpreted as a basic value that builds a person's personality, formed both due to heredity and environmental influences, which distinguishes him from other people and is manifested in his attitude and behavior in everyday life (Samani & Hariyanto, 2011). Character is formed from good

knowledge and good deeds. This means that the good actions taken are based on the knowledge of that goodness. Characters of person shapes habits in the way of thinking, habits in the heart, and habits in action. These three things are needed to build a life and moral maturity (Lickona, 2015).

Character according to Lickona (2012) is an inner disposition that can be relied upon in responding to a situation with good morals, consisting of moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral behavior. Another opinion regarding character was expressed by (Raka, et. al., 2011) that character is related to distinctive or special traits; moral strength; a person's behavior patterns.

According to Lickona, the character is related to moral concepts (moral knowing), moral attitudes (moral feeling), and moral behavior (moral behavior). Based on these three components it can be stated that good character is supported by knowledge of goodness, the desire to do good and good deeds. Based on these three components, it can be stated that good character is supported by knowledge of goodness, the desire to do good, and to do good deeds (Lickona, 2015).

Based on several opinions regarding the character above, it can be concluded that character is a character, character, personality, or character that is inherent in a person so that it can give birth to behavior without any prior thought and consideration.

The character education values developed in the Indonesian educational environment include 18 characters. The eighteen characters include religious character, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love of the motherland, respect for achievement, friendly and communicative, love peace, love to read, care for the environment, social care, and responsibility (Kemendiknas, 2010). The eighteen characters are values that are developed in strengthening development and instilling character values in students

2. Character Strengthening in Higher Education

Samani & Hariyanto (2011) explained that character education is the process of guiding students to become whole human beings with character in the dimensions of heart, mind, body and feeling, and intention. Character education is character education that involves aspects of knowledge (cognitive), feelings (feeling), and action (action) tied to values and norms (Akhmad, 2011). Character education can be done in three ways, namely: (1) integrating character values into all subjects, local content, and self-development activities, (2) habituation in daily life in schools/madrasas (service, management, and teaching), and (3) increasing cooperation between

schools/madrasas, parents of students, and the community in terms of cultivating/familiarizing character values in the school/madrasah environment, home environment, and community environment.

The basis for implementing character education is based on the goals of national education and the message of the 2003 National Education System Law which expects that education will not only form smart people but also have personality (character) so that later generations of young people will be born, grown, and developed with personalities that breathe noble values of Religion and Pancasila (Mulyasa, 2013).

Based on some of the theories above, character education is not just teaching what is right and what is wrong, more than that, character education instills habits (capitalization) about what is good so that students become aware (cognitive) about what is right and wrong, able to feel (affective) good grades and used to do it (psychomotor). In other words, good character education must involve not only aspects of good knowledge (moral knowing), but also feeling well or loving good (moral feeling), and good behavior (moral action). Character education emphasizes habits that are continuously practiced and carried out. Thus, the basis and reasons for implementing character education in Indonesia are clear.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

1. Research design

This study used a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research aims to gain insight regarding the construction of reality that occurs to be interpreted (Cropley, 2019). This research was conducted at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The choice of this research object at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta was because the students are conducted religiously and the implementation of MKWK at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta was carried out as a compulsory subject to take and pass in five faculties (FIT, FAB, FUD, FASYA, and FEBI).

2. Research Subjects and Informants

The subjects in this study included students and lecturers supporting the Indonesian language MKWK at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta. The informants in this study were the students and coordinators of the MKWK at UIN RMS Surakarta (the study program coordinators were taken in part from the number spread across five faculties).

3. Data collection

The data collection technique in this study was by using document analysis techniques, in-depth interviews, and observation (Creswell, 2017). The document referred

to in this study is in the form of a semester learning plan (RPS). The interviews in this study were conducted openly and in-depth with the lecturers who taught the Indonesian language course and their students. Researchers before making observations have compiled observation guidelines. Observation techniques are carried out by observing the Indonesian language learning process as a strengthening of student character.

4. Data analysis

Data analysis in this study used an interactive model (Miles et al., 2018). The interactive model data analysis steps include four steps and areas. The four steps include data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The data analysis process is presented in Figure 1.

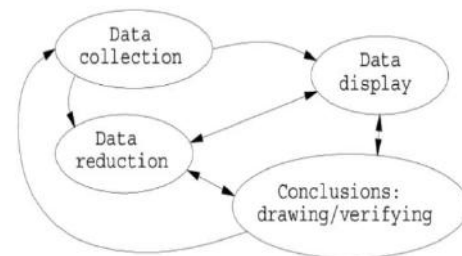


Fig.1. Schematic of Interactive Data Analysis Model

Data reduction in this study was carried out by selecting, sorting, and simplifying the data according to the focus of this study, namely the character forms that were carried out by students in the process of learning Indonesian. This means that data that has no relevance to the focus of the research is not used in this study.

The presentation of data in this study was carried out through a brief description of each subject and informant of this study separately based on the formulation of the problem in this study. All identities of subjects and informants in the research are presented hidden by using initials which are then converted into the data code of this research. This was done to maintain the confidentiality of the identities of the subjects and informants in this study.

Drawing conclusions in this study is done by interpreting the conclusions of the theme. This means that conclusions are made based on themes and research problems, namely related to the forms of student character in learning Indonesian. Drawing conclusions in research is based on the results of data collection, namely interviews, observation, and document analysis besides the instruments of collecting data are triangulated for having the data saturation. Drawing conclusions are interactively

crossed-checked with the data collection, data reduction, and data display.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion in this study show that strengthening student character through Indonesian language courses in tertiary institutions found 11 strategies. The eleven-character education values found in this study differ in priorities from the eighteen characters developed (Kemendiknas, 2010) The eleven-character strengthening found includes discipline, honesty, communication, curiosity, responsibility, creativity, independence, tolerance, hard work, democracy, and religion. Further strengthening of the eleven characters is presented below.

Table 1. Strengthening the Character of MKWK Indonesian Language Students

No	Lecturer	Character Education Values										
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	EU	√	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	-
2	SL	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	-	√	-	
3	ER	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
4	AW	-	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	
5	FA	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	-
6	SAW	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
7	AHDF	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	√
8	MY	-	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	

Notes

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Discipline | 6. Creative |
| 2. Honest | 7. Independent |
| 3. Communicative | 8. Tolerance |
| 4. Curiosity | 9. Hard work |
| 5. Responsibility | 10. Democracy |
| | 11. Religious |

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that strengthening the character of students in tertiary institutions through learning Indonesian were found eleven-characters strengthening. Based on the eleven characteristics found, the lecturers emphasized: the characteristics of honesty, responsibility, curiosity, discipline, and communicative character. The focus on strengthening character in the five forms is because several characters have been carried out in other subjects, such as religious character, tolerance, and

hard work which are strengthened through religious learning. Strengthening creative, democratic, and independent characters are strengthened through Pancasila learning. Thus, learning Indonesian focuses on the five values emphasized by the lecturers. An explanation of each character form is presented below.

1. Honest Character Strengthening

The emphasis on character strengthening by the first lecturer was honest behavior. This can be reflected by adopting an attitude of not cheating, doing assignments alone, not copying and pasting, and being open with other assignments. By being an honest person, someone will always be trusted in speaking and acting. The character value of honesty is also interpreted as an attitude and behavior to act truthfully and as it is, not lying, not making things up, not adding or subtracting, and not hiding honesty. Strengthening the character of honesty in language learning has done this. This is in accordance with the results of the interview below.

"I am more concerned with the honesty of assignments, re-checking students' final assignments with Turnitin. If Turnitin is small, it means that the student can be said to be honest in doing his work, in contrast to those who have a high percentage of Turnitin. Of course, the attitude value is different" (CLHW/AW/15/02/23)

The observation results show that the strengthening of the character of honesty is shown by the attitude of students doing independent assignments and not plagiarizing. This honesty is tested through an anti-plagiarism application or Turnitin. This was done because the final task of learning Indonesian was writing scientific papers.

Strengthening the character of honesty by doing tasks independently is important. Apart from being independent, students are also not allowed to plagiarize. This is an effort to build the character of honesty. Strengthening the character of honesty in accordance with the problems students often face, namely plagiarism. Plagiarism is currently a common problem faced by students and if it is not handled properly it can lead to low academic integrity, education, and student careers in the future (Chu et al., 2021). Therefore, learning Indonesian is carried out not only to produce scientific papers but how the process carried to by students must be honest.

The use of the Turnitin application as a medium to find out student honesty in completing assignments is an effective thing. This is in accordance with the findings of Stapleton (2012) Turnitin can increase the deterrent effect on students to avoid plagiarism or dishonesty in an academic context. In that study, Stapleton compared a class that was assessed with Turnitin with a class that was

not assessed with Turnitin. The results showed that the class was not graded with Turnitin had a higher level of plagiarism.

2. Strengthening Character Responsibility

Based on the data and results of the research, it shows that the use of Turnitin as a strengthening of the honest character of students is an effective thing to do. However, what needs to be considered is that bad practices have occurred, such as students taking various forms to trick their work so that Turnitin is not detected. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention and improve the use of Turnitin to see student honesty.

The subsequent character-strengthening emphasis is on the character of responsibility. Responsibility is the attitude or behavior of a person to carry out their duties and obligations based on the values prevailing in society. In connection with the Indonesian language learning process, several lecturers emphasize the cultivation of the character values of responsibility. This is by the results of the interview below.

"Students' responsibility is like that of a group, when the group doesn't send it, even though the paper is good, I still reduce the score because it's not on time. Consequently, he didn't go to campus that day and his grades weren't optimal." (CLHW/SL/15/02/2023)

The results of observations on strengthening the character of responsibility in learning Indonesian were carried out by looking at whether each assignment given by the lecturer was carried out independently or plagiarized. In addition, the strengthening of the character of responsibility in learning is also seen when doing projects in groups, namely participating in doing assignments or only including names. This can be seen in doing the assignments given, completing the assignments on time, being disciplined, not cheating, and complying with the set rules. Sanctions for students who are known to be irresponsible in carrying out assignments are to repeat the assignment or fail.

Strengthening the character of responsibility in learning Indonesian is done by looking at the extent to which students are responsible for doing assignments in groups. This is what was stated by Arfiah & Sumardjoko (2017) individual and group assignments are given to students to the formation of independent character and responsibility. Responsibility in the context of learning is the attitude and character of students in carrying out their duties or obligations (Wibowo, 2012). Thus, strengthening the character of responsibility is built through assignments that must be completed by students.

Strengthening the character of responsibility in learning Indonesian apart from being seen from the contribution of doing group assignments is also seen from the time of completion of the task. This means that in every assignment given to students, efforts must be made to collect it according to the set deadline. If students collect assignments beyond the set deadline, it shows a lack of responsibility for the assignments given. This is what was stated by Ardila et al. (2017) a person can be called a responsible person if he can submit assignments on time. This does not mean that students only look at the time aspect and ignore the quality of assignments. Both are the best reflection of the character of responsibility.

Strengthening the character of responsibility is also seen from the aspect of student discipline, both in the learning process and in doing assignments. Student discipline in carrying out assignments is not a character that stands alone but has a close relationship with the character of responsibility. This is to the findings of Yasmin et al. (2016) the relationship between the coefficient of discipline and responsibility is 0.823. This value shows that the more disciplined the student is, the better the responsibility is. This shows how important it is to build the character of student responsibility by paying attention to student discipline in carrying out each assignment given by the lecturer.

Strengthening the character of responsibility can be seen when students do assignments without cheating. Student cheating in carrying out lecturer assignments is an irresponsible character. Therefore, it is important in learning Indonesian to emphasize to students not to cheat. Cheating in academic terms will have implications for students in the future. This is by what was stated by Nursalam et al. (2016) students who are allowed to cheat will become repetitive behaviors and students will grow into irresponsible adults.

Strengthening the character of responsibility is also seen from the aspect of student compliance in carrying out assignments given by the lecturer. Compliance with this regulation can be seen from the time aspect as well as the task instruction aspect and the criteria or standard task aspects that must be completed by students. Student compliance in doing each task is a representation of the character of student responsibilities. This is to the findings of Kestiana (2018) showing that there is a very significant positive relationship between responsible behavior and the discipline of complying with the rules.

Based on the description that has been described, strengthening the character of responsibility in students is done by giving assignments to students. The indicators of student character will be seen from the participation of

students in group assignments, completing assignments on time, being disciplined, not cheating, and complying with established rules. The formation of the character of responsibility in students is an important thing to do to produce graduates who can be responsible for every task carried out by students. In addition, the position of Indonesian language courses as personality-forming courses should build the character of responsibility.

3. Curiosity Character Strengthening

Strengthening curiosity in learning Indonesian is important in strengthening student literacy. The emergence of deep curiosity makes someone better understand anything they learn. For students, this attitude is reflected through the desire to learn and the questions asked. This is according to the results of the interview below.

"How to measure student activity in class during discussion forums or when students ask questions (what kind of questions do I pay attention to)." (CLHW/AW/15/02/23)

The results of learning observations show that the character of curiosity is strengthened through four aspects, namely paying attention to the course of learning, asking questions, seeking information in discussion activities, and learning resources. One of the scientific attitudes that a person has is an attitude of curiosity, that is, when faced with a problem that is new to him, he will try to find out and like to ask questions about objects and events, the habit of using as many senses as possible to investigate a problem; show enthusiasm and sincerity in completing experiments.

Strengthening the character of curiosity in learning Indonesian can be seen in the attention of students when a lecturer or friend conveys learning material. Paying attention to the material is a form of character curiosity because there is knowledge that the student wants to gain. This is by what was stated by Fitriyani et al. (2020) concentrating and paying attention are efforts to gain an understanding of the material presented to students. Therefore, the curiosity of students in participating in learning Indonesian can be seen from the level of attention given to these students.

Strengthening the character of curiosity in learning Indonesian can also be seen from the activeness of students in asking questions. This means that the strengthening of the character of curiosity in learning Indonesian at UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta is done by observing students who actively ask questions. The questions posed by students are a form of curiosity. This is what was stated by Fauzi et al. (2017) the activeness of asking questions in learning is an indicator of the character of curiosity. Thus,

it is important in learning Indonesian to create an atmosphere that encourages students to ask questions.

Strengthening the character of curiosity is also done by looking at the activeness of students in discussions. The liveliness of student discussion in the learning process is an indicator of student curiosity. This is in accordance with what was stated by Silmi & Kusmarni (2017) curiosity in learning can be seen from behaviors such as reading, asking questions, and discussing during learning. This means that the activeness of students in discussions shows a high curiosity. However, on the other hand, student inactivity in the learning process who is not active in discussing is an indicator of low curiosity.

The important thing to note in strengthening learning is that the activities carried out are able to encourage student activity to discuss. Learning that is able to encourage discussion activities will be able to build student character to find out various knowledge that is the topic of discussion. This is also in accordance with the paradigm of student-centered learning. Thus, learning is able to build students' abilities in the future.

Strengthening the character of curiosity in the Indonesian language learning process looks at the aspects of student activity in finding learning resources. If a student is willing to explore various sources to get answers to every question that requires an answer, it is an indicator that the student in question already has the character of curiosity. This is important because students can directly read information from various sources, such as books, modules, textbooks, and so on (Fatkul et al., 2021). Based on this, it can be concluded that the strengthening of the character of curiosity in learning Indonesian is seen from four aspects, paying attention to the course of learning, asking questions, seeking information in discussion activities, and learning resources.

4. Discipline Character Strengthening

Discipline is a trait that can be manifested by order and obedience to various rules and regulations. The character values that exist in an individual are manifested by always respecting time. This is done by being on time for class, submitting assignments according to deadlines, and so on. Strengthening the character of discipline in learning Indonesian was also carried out. This is in accordance with the results of the interview below.

"If discipline related to the new task. For example, sending an email must be on time, if it's late, you won't get a score." (CLHW/AHDF/15/02/23)

The observation results show that the strengthening of the character of discipline in learning Indonesian is focused on discipline in the learning process, especially

attending at the appointed time and submitting assignments according to the allotted time. Disciplinary character in the context of learning is able to form students with disciplined character. Furthermore, the character of this discipline also has implications when students graduate and build a career.

Strengthening character through learning Indonesian as a vehicle for building student disciplinary character. This is done with the habituation process of students when attending lectures on time. This is in accordance with what is stated (Bary & Febrinda, 2020). Therefore, it is important to make habituation to students in building the disciplinary character.

Following are some important things to note in strengthening the disciplinary character of students. The matters referred to include: (1) learning Indonesian is not only oriented towards scientific paper writing products, (2) the learning process needs to pay attention to the disciplinary character of students in lectures, and (3) disciplinary character assessment can be expanded not only to be present on time lectures, but can be expanded with a wider context in learning Indonesian.

5. Communicative Character Strengthening

Humans are social creatures who always need the help of others. Therefore, it is important for someone to have a good relationship with anyone. One way to make this happen is to always be friendly to others. Strengthening the communicative character in learning Indonesian has been carried out. This is shown in the results of the interview below.

"Communicative is the main point, I measure it from the language used by lecturers, polite or not, friendly or not." (CLHW/FA/15/12/23)

Strengthening communicative character in learning Indonesian is carried out with a friendly attitude from students to lecturers, courtesy in language, and communicative and interactive in understanding learning material. Strengthening communicative character is important in the context of learning Indonesian. This is understandable because the context of language learning is not only limited to mastering language concepts but rather the practice of using language in various contexts, both written and spoken. Strengthening communicative character in learning Indonesian is described below.

Strengthening communicative character is done by looking at the extent to which students behave towards students, namely the friendliness of students to lecturers. Friendliness in communicating between lecturers and students can be seen in every learning process that is carried out. Friendliness in learning is important as an

effort to build a more comfortable and conducive learning situation.

The strengthening of friendly and communicative characters then looks at the politeness aspects of the language used by students to lecturers. Politeness in the context of learning is an important thing to build in the learning process. Even in the context of language learning, politeness is key to the process and a result of language learning (Kusmanto & Widodo, 2022). This can be understood because language politeness is an aspect of communication skills. That is, someone who has a polite attitude to the speech partner in various communication contexts shows communication skills, both orally and in writing.

Some things that need to be considered in strengthening communicative character include: (1) every communication between students and lecturers should be carried out in a friendly and communicative manner, (2) politeness in student language in the learning process is an important aspect in building communicative learning, and (3) politeness Language becomes a pillar in building students with character in various communication contexts.

V. CONCLUSION

The formulation of the problem that has been presented in the introductory section, strengthening student character through Indonesian language courses in tertiary institutions. Strengthening student character is carried out on a class basis, which can be seen from the planning documents, learning implementation, and learning assessment. This study found eleven characteristics, namely the characteristics of discipline, honesty, communication, curiosity, responsibility, creativity, independence, tolerance, hard work, democratic, and religious character. Based on the eleven characteristics found, there are five characteristics emphasized by the lecturer, namely the characteristics of honesty, responsibility, curiosity, discipline, and communicative character.

Nonetheless, this research still has limitations in terms of research locus, namely in one tertiary institution so there is no comparative data on student character building through Indonesian language courses in tertiary institutions. However, in other more comprehensive studies, the limitations of this locus will be overcome by researchers so that forms of character strengthening will be found through learning Indonesian in tertiary institutions. With the discovery, the form of strengthening student character through learning Indonesian can be used as the development of character education in tertiary institutions.

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