

Illustrating Morals: How EFL Textbook Represents Character Values through Pictures

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Abstract: The purpose of the problem in this research was to explore the extent and nature of character values conveyed through pictorial representations in the *English for Nusantara* EFL textbook. This research was a qualitative research. The researcher collected the data from English for Nusantara EFL textbook, a textbook that designed for seventh grade students. The researcher then reduced the data into a table. As a final step, the researcher then analysed the data by using a Pradana's framework. This framework entails a systematic approach to categorizing and interpreting visual representations of character values in educational materials. The result of this research revealed that there were 71 pictorial representation of character values found in the textbook. The most frequent character value was informative (29). It was then followed by friendly (27) and appreciation (13). The least frequent character value was religion (2). Friendly behavior encourages openness and inclusion, exemplified by a simple greeting between students. Informative values focus on sharing knowledge clearly and effectively, enhancing understanding. Showing appreciation fosters gratitude for others' interests, which helps strengthen relationships. Religion emphasizes spiritual practices, such as prayer, fostering mindfulness and unity in everyday life. These values collectively represent the textbook's strategy for integrating character education into language learning.



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the integration of character education within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning materials has garnered significant attention. Character values are increasingly viewed as essential components of holistic education, especially for young generation. These values also play a critical role in shaping the way students approach challenges, collaborate with others, and engage in lifelong learning. As the younger generation faces new social and global challenges, character education equips them with the moral compass and resilience needed to overcome adversity and make thoughtful decisions in both personal and professional contexts.

Education is a crucial factor that greatly influences the modern, industrialized world. A solid education is essential for individuals to thrive in today's competitive environment (Prasad & Gupta, 2020). In today's competitive environment, a robust education provides the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for navigating complex career landscapes and adapting to rapidly changing technologies. It equips individuals with critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and specialized expertise that are essential for excelling in various professional fields. Moreover, a solid education fosters personal development, enabling individuals to make informed decisions, contribute meaningfully to society, and pursue lifelong learning. In an era where economic and technological advancements are continuously evolving, a strong educational background not only enhances personal growth but also plays a key role in ensuring societal progress and economic prosperity.

Character development in education is especially crucial in today's society, as globalization has connected the entire world. Students are increasingly exposed to negative influences through the media and other external sources that are widespread in modern culture. The current education system is seen as ineffective in fostering students' morals and strong character. This is evident in the rise of moral issues such as drug abuse, student radicalism, criminal behavior, pornography, plagiarism, and a decreasing sense of national pride. In fact, character-related problems are more prevalent among junior and senior high school students (Iswara, 2013). During these formative years, adolescents face numerous challenges as they navigate their identities, peer relationships, and academic pressures. This period is marked by heightened emotional and social development, which can lead to conflicts related to values, behaviors, and ethical decision-making. Issues such as bullying, dishonesty, and a lack of respect for authority can become more pronounced as students grapple with their sense of self and social dynamics. As a result, schools and educational systems are increasingly focusing on character education to address these problems and provide students with the guidance and support needed to develop strong moral values and positive behaviors. By addressing character-related issues during this critical stage, educators aim to help students build a solid foundation for their future personal and professional lives.

Character is also a fundamental aspect of education, closely tied to the development of life skills. This concept has become widely recognized in teaching and learning processes (Haryanti & Setyandari, 2020). In addition to imparting subject-specific information, schools are increasingly focusing on cultivating character traits such as integrity, empathy, and responsibility. These qualities are essential for personal growth and effective interpersonal interactions. By integrating character education into the curriculum, educators aim to prepare students not only to excel academically but also to navigate life's challenges with resilience and ethical principles. This holistic approach underscores the idea that fostering strong character is as vital as academic achievement in preparing students for success and fulfillment in their lives.

Character development starts early in life, beginning in the formative years of education like kindergarten and elementary school, and continues through junior high, high school, and even higher education. These early experiences are vital in molding a person's character and values (Imawan & Ismail, 2023). Character pertains to an individual's overall demeanor and interactions with others. It encompasses moral values, ethical conduct, attitudes, and behavior. A person is deemed to have good character when their attitudes and

actions align with accepted norms. Consequently, character is evident through a person's daily habits, attitudes, and behaviors (Harmaini et al., 2022). This alignment is not just a matter of occasional actions but is demonstrated consistently through daily habits and behaviors. For example, someone with good character regularly practices honesty, respect, and kindness, and these traits become evident through their everyday interactions. Thus, character is not just about isolated acts but is a reflection of a person's ongoing commitment to ethical principles and positive social conduct.

Character education has become a major topic frequently discussed within the educational field. The government, through various institutions, has prioritized this issue, as character serves as a key pillar in the nation's development (Hidayati et al., 2014). By focusing on character education, authorities aim to instill essential values such as honesty, resilience, and civic responsibility in students. This emphasis on character development is based on the understanding that strong ethical principles and social skills are foundational to a productive and harmonious society. As a result, character education is integrated into school curricula and policies to ensure that students not only excel academically but also contribute positively to their communities and the nation as a whole.

Character education is integrated into basic education systems in countries such as the United States, Japan, China, and Korea. Evidence suggests that a well-organized approach to character education positively impacts academic performance (Kamaruddin, 2012). By embedding character education into the curriculum, schools create a supportive environment where students can develop both their personal qualities and academic skills. This holistic approach helps students manage their behavior, work collaboratively, and engage more effectively in their studies, leading to improved learning outcomes and a more positive school experience.

A variety of learning media are available to enhance and support the learning process (Aprilia & Ambarwati, 2023). Visual media, such as images and videos, can make abstract concepts more concrete and relatable, facilitating better comprehension and retention. Interactive components, such as online quizzes or digital flashcards, can provide immediate feedback and reinforce learning. Additionally, supplemental resources like audio recordings can help with pronunciation and listening skills, which are especially valuable in language learning. By integrating these diverse media into textbooks, educators can create a more engaging and effective learning environment. This approach not only supports various aspects of the learning process but also helps students connect with the material in multiple ways, ultimately leading to a more comprehensive and enjoyable educational experience.

In today's era, English plays a crucial role in everyday life, serving as a means to communicate with people from other countries and to navigate the evolving times (Fitriany et al., 2021). In many countries, especially former British colonies, it is regarded as the second language that should be learned after the native language. Although English is a foreign language in Indonesia, it holds a significant place in daily life. This is particularly noticeable within Indonesia's education system (Darma & Widiastuty, 2023). English is often a mandatory subject and a key focus in curriculum development. The emphasis on English reflects its role in global communication, economic opportunities, and access to international knowledge and technology. Consequently, students are encouraged to become

proficient in English to better navigate global interactions and enhance their future prospects.

Textbooks are essential in teaching and learning English, as each chapter offers a range of activities that support both instruction and student engagement (Aulia & Ambarwati, 2023). Beyond language skills, these activities can also help instill important character values, such as responsibility, discipline, and collaboration, by encouraging students to engage thoughtfully and work cooperatively.

In an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) textbook, pictures play a significant role in conveying character values to students. Visual representations can enhance comprehension by providing context to language learning while also subtly promoting ethical behavior and moral development. Furthermore, Purwaningtyas, (2020) explains that visual images play an essential role in helping students grasp the contextual meaning of the text in a textbook. As a result, incorporating visual elements leads to a clearer and deeper understanding of the material. When students encounter visual elements such as diagrams, illustrations, and photographs alongside the text, these images help to clarify and reinforce the information being presented. Visuals can make abstract ideas more tangible and provide concrete examples that support the written content. This multimodal approach caters to different learning styles and helps students to engage with the material more deeply. By integrating visual images into educational materials, educators can facilitate a more effective learning experience, making it easier for students to connect with and retain the information.

The use of textbook in learning process relates to character value. Character values like friendly, informative, appreciation, and religion each play a vital role in shaping well-rounded individuals, particularly within educational contexts. Friendliness emphasizes warmth, openness, and respect toward others, fostering a welcoming atmosphere that can enhance collaboration and inclusivity among students. Informative focuses on sharing knowledge effectively and clearly, promoting a culture of learning where communication is valued as a tool for understanding and growth. Appreciation as a character value underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing others' contributions, ideas, and efforts, creating an environment where gratitude and respect thrive. Finally, the character value of religion introduces spiritual and ethical dimensions, encouraging mindfulness, respect for various beliefs, and reflection on moral principles. In an educational setting, this value nurtures a sense of unity, inner peace, and compassion, contributing to a balanced development that respects spiritual diversity. Together, these values not only enhance academic learning but also promote moral and social growth, preparing students for a responsible and empathetic role in society.

English for Nusantara EFL textbook is an EFL textbook that has many pictures inside it. Each picture has its own character value that need to be learned by students. This textbook was published by Indonesian government. The aim of the publishing of this textbook is to support the implementation of the current curriculum in Indonesia, named Merdeka curriculum. The aim of the publishing of this textbook is to support the implementation of the current curriculum in Indonesia, named Merdeka curriculum. English for Nusantara EFL textbooks are divided into three types. They are textbook for seventh, eighth and ninth grade students. These textbooks are specifically developed to align with the curriculum's objectives, ensuring that the English language instruction is relevant and

effective for students at each stage of their middle school education. The structured division of the textbooks helps in addressing the appropriate learning needs and developmental stages of students in these grades.

Tracing back to previous researches, there were several researches conducted by some researches related to character value of EFL textbook. Some researches Hirdayu et al., (2022); Sari et al., (2022); Mahendra et al., (2022), found that the most common character value was friendship/communicative, independence, religious, hard work, discipline and social care, curiosity, creativity, nationalism, and appreciation of achievement, environmental awareness and honesty, reading interest, tolerance, patriotism and responsibility, and love and peace, common value, diligence, intellectual, beauty, sympathy, loyalty, hard work, love of reading, and social awareness. All of the research investigated character education of the EFL textbooks in previous curriculum, named 2013 curriculum. Furthermore, the researchers collected the data of character values from reading texts in the EFL textbooks.

Based on the previous researches, most of the research investigated about character education and character value of EFL textbook that published during the previous curriculum. The previous researches focused on text analysis of the character value. The researcher brought some novelties in this research. Firstly, the research analysed character value of an English textbook that published on the basis of Merdeka curriculum. Secondly, the researcher focused on analyzing images that contained character value. The purpose of the problem in this research was to explore the extent and nature of character values conveyed through pictorial representations in the *English for Nusantara* EFL textbook. The researcher focused on *English for Nusantara* EFL textbook for seventh grade students. As a result, the researcher proposed a research question: 1) What character values are represented pictorially in the 'English for Nusantara' EFL textbook for seventh-grade students?

METHOD

This research was a qualitative research with content analysis method. The data of this research were collected from English for Nusantara EFL textbook. It was published for seventh-grade students and consists of 5 chapters with 264 pages. The researcher chose this textbook as data source of this research because it contains many pictures. The researcher employed three steps in conducting this research. During the data collection, the researcher collected all the picture that exists in the textbook material. In data reduction, the pictures were categorized individually to determine the types of character value. Furthermore, in classification step, the researcher used framework of Pradana, (2023) to classify the character values of the pictures. The categories of classification are friendly, informative, appreciation, motivation, ambitious, and religion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher found four pictorial representations of character values in English for Nusantara EFL textbook based on Pradana's (2023) framework. They were friendly, informative, appreciation, and religion. The detail of the result can be seen in the table 1.

Table 1. Amount of Pictorial Representation of Character Values Found in English for Nusantara EFL Textbook

No	Character Value	Amount
1	Friendly	27
2	Informative	29
3	Appreciation	13
4	Religion	2
Total		71

Table 1 illustrates the amount of each character value found in the EFL textbook. The most frequent character value was informative. It was then followed by friendly and appreciation. The least frequent character value was religion. As a result, the total character values found in the EFL textbook were 71.

The predominance of "Informative" values might reflect the textbook's educational purpose and alignment with the goals of the Merdeka curriculum, which emphasizes the development of knowledge, practical skills, and critical thinking. These representations could support the idea that the textbook is designed to be an engaging and educational tool, encouraging students to acquire and apply information effectively.

The high frequency of "Friendly" values suggests that the textbook aims to foster positive interpersonal skills and collaborative learning. This aligns with the emphasis on creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, as stipulated in modern educational frameworks.

The relatively lower frequency of "Appreciation" might indicate that this value is integrated selectively, potentially in contexts highlighting cultural heritage, personal achievements, or respect for diversity.

The minimal representation of "Religion" could be due to the secular nature of the textbook, which might prioritize inclusivity and focus on universally applicable values to accommodate a diverse student population. It may also reflect a conscious effort to avoid religious bias, as the textbook is intended for nationwide use in a multicultural and multi-faith context.

The first pictorial representation of character value found by the researcher is friendly. The character value of friendliness embodies an attitude of openness, warmth, and kindness toward others. A friendly individual is approachable, easy to talk to, engage with, and often takes the initiative to ensure that others feel comfortable and welcomed.

In the context of the *English for Nusantara* EFL textbook, the depiction of friendliness is crucial as it encourages students to be more inclusive and supportive of one another. Friendliness is not just a social courtesy but a vital skill that enhances communication, builds trust, and strengthens the sense of community within the classroom, ultimately contributing to a more engaging and effective learning experience. In this term the figures provided offer a deeper understanding of self-introduction to an individual (Pradana, 2023). The representation of friendly can be seen in the figure 1.



Figure 1. Pictorial Representation of Character Value of Friendly

Based on the figure 1, the first male student greets the second male student and asking about his first day at school. By initiating a greeting and showing concern for the other student's experience, the first student demonstrates openness and a willingness to connect. This simple act of reaching out fosters a sense of welcome and inclusion, which are key aspects of friendliness. Such behavior helps build a supportive environment where students feel valued and encouraged. It also exemplifies how friendliness can break the ice in new situations, helping others feel more at ease and creating a foundation for positive social interactions. This gesture of kindness not only strengthens relationships but also promotes a sense of community within the school.

This simple gesture of greeting and showing interest, based on the figure 1, in the other student's experience reflects an open, friendly demeanor and a desire to connect. By reaching out in this way, the first student helps create an atmosphere of inclusion and welcome, which are essential elements of friendliness. Such actions are especially important in new or unfamiliar situations, as they help break the ice and make others feel more comfortable. The inquiry about the first day at school shows concern for the other student's well-being, further reinforcing a sense of care and support. This small act of kindness not only fosters a connection between the two students but also contributes to a broader sense of community within the school, where students feel valued and supported. It demonstrates how friendliness, even in brief exchanges, can lay the groundwork for positive social interactions, build relationships, and enhance the overall environment.

The second pictorial representation of character value found by the researcher is informative. The character value of being informative reflects a commitment to sharing accurate, clear, and relevant information with others. This quality emphasizes transparency and a desire to help others understand or learn. Being informative requires both knowledge and the ability to communicate that knowledge effectively, ensuring that the information shared is useful and understandable. It promotes trust, as people rely on informative individuals for guidance or insight.

In the context of the *English for Nusantara* EFL textbook, the value of being informative is crucial for fostering an environment of learning and cooperation. It teaches students the importance of clarity in communication, whether they're offering directions, explaining concepts, or giving feedback. Being informative is the action of two people talking about particular topic (Pradana, 2023). The detail of character value of informative is illustrated in the figure 2.



Figure 2. Pictorial Representation of Character Value of Informative

The female student on the left is asking about the location of the toilet. The female student on the right give the information that the toilet is located next to the laboratory and the library. The informative character value emphasizes the importance of providing useful information in communication, which in this case involves helping someone navigate their environment. It reflects how clear, accurate, and timely communication can be a valuable social skill in both formal and informal settings.

Furthermore, the interaction underscores the value of being informative in communication, particularly when assisting others in navigating their surroundings. The ability to provide accurate, clear, and timely information is not only a practical skill but also an essential aspect of social interaction. It highlights the importance of effective communication in everyday life, whether in formal contexts such as a school or workplace, or in informal, casual exchanges. By offering this useful guidance, the female student on the right demonstrates a social skill that fosters cooperation and aids in creating a more supportive environment. This example illustrates how being informative can strengthen interpersonal relationships and facilitate smoother social interactions.

The next pictorial representation of character value found in the EFL textbook is appreciation. Showing appreciation or kindness towards others, such as expressing love and affection to spouses, children, or those who assist, helps them feel valued and cherished. This sense of being appreciated and loved often feels like a form of gratitude (Cholili et al., 2023). Appreciation can also be seen when someone congratulates others (Pradana, 2023). Figure 3 bellow illustrates the representation of appreciation.



Figure 3. Pictorial Representation of Character Value of Appreciation

The figure 3 illustrates that there are two male students talking about fishing. The male student on the right appreciates the hobby of the male student on the left. This scene

exemplifies how appreciation can be demonstrated in everyday conversations by acknowledging and valuing someone else's interests or activities. The act of appreciating the hobby not only strengthens their bond but also highlights the importance of recognizing the personal passions of others, fostering mutual respect and a supportive atmosphere. The image encapsulates how appreciation, even in casual settings, can have a meaningful impact on relationships and self-esteem.

Based on the figure 3, this scenario serves as an example of how appreciation can be conveyed in everyday conversations by acknowledging and valuing someone else's interests. By recognizing and affirming the other student's passion for fishing, the interaction not only deepens their friendship but also emphasizes the broader significance of appreciating personal interests. Such gestures foster an environment of mutual respect and support, highlighting how small acts of acknowledgment can strengthen relationships and boost self-esteem, even in casual contexts. The scene captures the powerful effect that appreciation can have on interpersonal connections.

Furthermore, the researcher found pictorial representation of character value of religion. Religious education has the potential to either strengthen or weaken an ideal society rooted in diversity, depending on how it is constructed, articulated, and communicated. The way it is approached can foster inclusivity and mutual respect, or it can create divisions, making its delivery crucial in shaping societal harmony (Nuryatno, 2013). Religious value can be seen when some does some religious things. This value encourages individuals to follow moral codes, such as honesty, kindness, forgiveness, and humility, which are often central to religious teachings (Pradana, 2023). The detail of character value of religion can be seen in the figure 4.



Figure 4. Pictorial Representation of Character Value of Religion

The figure 4 illustrates four people preparing to eat. All the people in the figure 4 are praying before eating. This simple yet profound act of prayer highlights the significance of religious practice in daily life, demonstrating gratitude for the food and acknowledging a higher power. The image emphasizes the importance of mindfulness and reverence in routine activities, such as meals, where religion plays a role in fostering gratitude, unity, and humility. By showing the individuals pausing to pray together, the figure also reflects the communal aspect of religious values, where faith brings people together in shared rituals. This scene captures how religion can infuse ordinary moments with deeper meaning, guiding individuals to reflect, express gratitude, and connect spiritually both individually and collectively. Furthermore, figure 4 also illustrates that the parents invite their children to pray.

In the context of character development, religious education provided by parents to their children is essentially a way of implementing education and character building within

the family institution (Sukardi, 2016). Through religious teachings and practices, parents guide their children in understanding and embodying virtues such as honesty, compassion, and respect. This personalized, values-based education complements formal schooling by fostering a strong moral foundation and a sense of identity. As a result, religious education within the family serves as a fundamental component of holistic character development, helping children develop into well-rounded individuals with a solid ethical framework.

One essential aspect to teach students is the importance of character education, including religious values. These values are crucial as they help protect students from engaging in harmful behaviors (Hetilanjari, 2022). These religious values help guide students in making ethical decisions and foster positive behavior both within and outside the classroom. For example, EFL textbooks that include themes of compassion, integrity, and responsibility based on religious principles encourage students to apply these virtues in their interactions with peers and in their daily lives. This not only enhances their language learning experience but also reinforces the importance of moral and ethical conduct.

Based on the finding of this research, the four character values—friendly, informative, appreciation, and religion—presented in the *English for Nusantara* EFL textbook contribute to the broader goal of character education by fostering essential life skills that support both academic and personal development. These values create a well-rounded approach to character education that goes beyond academics, preparing students to navigate the complexities of life with integrity, respect, and empathy. By incorporating these principles into daily interactions and learning activities, the *English for Nusantara* EFL textbook not only enhances language skills but also shapes students into conscientious, compassionate individuals who contribute positively to their communities.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to figure out character values are represented pictorially in the 'English for Nusantara' EFL textbook for seventh-grade students. The researcher identified four key of pictorial representation of character values in the English for Nusantara EFL textbook: friendly, informative, appreciation, and religion. The depiction of friendly behavior, such as students greeting each other, emphasizes the importance of creating a positive and inclusive environment. This value fosters social skills, emotional intelligence, and a sense of community, which are essential for effective communication and collaboration in diverse settings. The informative value emphasizes the importance of clear communication, helping students learn to share knowledge effectively. Appreciation focuses on gratitude and respect for others, promoting stronger relationships and empathy. Lastly, the religion value underscores the significance of spiritual practices like prayer, encouraging mindfulness and unity in daily life. Together, these values reflect the textbook's approach to embedding character education within language learning. The researcher suggests that the future research will investigate the correlation between the character values of the EFL textbook and students' behavior in English class. Furthermore, the finding of this research serves a guideline for teachers in choosing English textbook that contains character education for teaching activity.

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