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Character loaded big books for young learners of English

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ABSTRACT

This research is made to produce big books that are intended to teach English, and to build character. This product is addressed for the beginner of English language learners.. The methods used by this research is Research & Development. The instrument used is questionnaire, which generates data in form of quantitative and qualitative. The result of this research is books with five different titles. Each of the titles teaches one of the five primary characters. The quality of the product is very high. Therefore, it is decent to be implemented as a learning media.

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1. Introduction

As a global lingua franca, English poses an important role among the people. Efforts to booster the ability of using English, whether in form of written or spoken are done. Researches are also made to support this goal. Many believe with the concept of critical period, younger a person learn the second language, more native like he will be. It is based on some reasons: A perfect pronunciation is demonstrated through the process of imitation, which is mostly done along with the process of a person's brain maturity. Second, younger children naturally enjoy the process of imitation as part of their learning experience. In other words, they are more adaptable to the environment. The last reason, a person's accent is basically depends on the society he lives with. Diaz (2016) have tried to compare the second language ability of students from monolingual and bilingual environments. It shows that students with monolingual environment seem not even close to the native when they speak foreign language. This trial is

tested by the native himself. Diaz relates this phenomenon to the critical period. She argues that the monolingual students already pass their critical period when they start to learn the second language. Therefore, their ability in speaking L2 is far from the natives. Diaz's research result then inspires the researcher to create a learning media that bridges the needs of Indonesian students to learn English. Furthermore, since the matter of critical period becomes the consideration of this research, younger children become the focus discussion of this subject.

Besides the importance of learning English, this research also brings the issue of character building. This character building issue comes up because of the researcher's concern on the effectiveness of a learning media. She notices that a meaningful learning is a learning process that gives value and real experience to the students. It is not one direct teaching process, but the mutual learning process between the teacher and the students (Moylett, 2014). Based on this matter, she wants to create a media that not only mediates a passive language learning, but also gives more meaning to the students. Therefore, she combines the language teaching with character building.

This goal then be realized in form of big books. Big books are chosen because of its ability to teach language and character at the same time. There are many benefits of using big books as a learning media. However, there are two things she thinks the most important. First, it builds the sense of intimacy and security between the teacher and the students. By offering the experience of shared reading that bridged by these books, the students' confidence is boosted. The late readers will believe that they are too capable to read just like other partners (Gonzales, 2010; Leou et al., 2009). Second, it gives opportunity for the teacher to exemplify the spelling of words in L2. This phase is crucial for the children because their learning nature is mostly based on imitation process.

In addition, previous studies support the argument of this research, that states big books can be used as an effective learning media. Fitriani and Aminin (2013) on their research at TK Qoshrul Ubudiyah Surabaya arrive to the conclusion that big books are advantageous sources to improve students' reading skills. In another hand, argument that big books are affective media to build students' character comes from Ashar (2015) on his research at SDN Purwoyoso 03 Semarang. Supported by those previous studies, the expected result of this reseach is creating big books that are able to teach L2 and character through reading process. The difference between this research and the previous ones lies on the language instruction, which is English. Moreover, the consideration of Kanoksilapatham (2015) is also brought to the table, that mentions one of the reasons students are not motivated in learning English is due to the culture irrelevance with their own. Therefore, the story background of these books are based on the Indonesian students real situation.

2. Method

2.1 *Research Approach*

This research applies Research and Development (R&D) proposed by Borg and Gall (2003). R&D model is applied due to the appropriateness of this model to the purpose of education, especially in developing learning media. Necessary modification is done for the interest of this research. From ten steps proposed, only eight are used by this research. The other two are considered not compatible to be used to develop the research product.

The first step taken by the researcher is assessing the needs of the students on English and character learning. The English words performed are A1 level based on CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) standard (Cambridge University Press, 2013). This level is taken because the product of this research addressed for the first learners of English. Further,

there are five characters taught, which are religiosity, nationalism, self-reliance, corporation and integrity. These characters are the priorities of the eighteen characters proposed by Ministry of Education and Culture stated in its character guidelines (*Konsep Pedoman Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter: Tingkat Sekolah Dasar dan Sekolah Menengah Pertama, n.d.*).

After the researcher assessing the needs of the students, she then analyzes the students' condition and the context. The product of this research is trialed to 4th grade students of SDI Mohammad Hatta, 24 students with agent span of 9 to 11 years old. The general character of the students of this age span is observed before the trial through literature review. In other words, previous researches are used as the basis information on children personality. As the description of Harmer (2001), children tend to respond and take information from general idea rather than individual words, they can easily understand and prefer real concept rather than the abstract, and they have short focus span.

Next, the researcher determines her performance objective, and she develops her assessment instrument. The assessment instrument is in the form of questionnaires. These questionnaires are used as a mean to validate the quality of the big books. Further, these questionnaires are design in two different formats, one is for the experts and second is for the students or it is called as a field validation. The questionnaires for the experts then be broken down into two, for the expert on material and for the expert on media. Questionnaire for the expert on material measures the content eligibility and the presentation eligibility. Aspects measured on content eligibility are material functions to support English learning, material functions to support character building, and conformity of the material to children's cognitive development. In another hand, the presentation eligibility measures the aspects of material presentation and ease of accessing the material.

The questionnaire for expert on media measures the graphic eligibility that consists of two aspects. They are the graphic eligibility and the design of the learning media. Moreover, questionnaires for the students measure three aspects, namely: the level of difficulty, the level of attractiveness, and the level of usefulness.

After the researcher develops her assessment instrument, she develops the instructional strategy which is shared reading. Later, she develops the instructional material, makes summative evaluation, and revise the product if necessary.

2.2 Research Validation

Expert validation and field validation are used to measure the quality of the research product. The data of expert validation are presented in form of quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative Data

For gaining the quantitative data, the researcher asks the experts to tick the column containing number 1 to 4, from the worst to the best to represent their opinion about the product. Following is the formula to change the numerical data into percentage. Therefore, the percentage that describes the criteria fulfillment of the product for its each aspect is known.

$$\text{Eligibility percentage} = \frac{\text{Total score of the product}}{\text{Maximum total score}} \times 100\%$$

Source: Akbar (2016, p.82)

After the numerical data are changed into the percentage formats, it is conformed to the criteria of product eligibility shown in the Rubric Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria of product eligibility

Score	Criteria of validation	Validation Eligibility	Interpretation
4	85.01% - 100.00%	Highly valid	Can be used without revision
3	70.01% - 85.00%	Valid	Can be used with little revision
2	50.01% - 70.00%	Less valid	Can be used with much revision
1	01.00% - 50.00%	Invalid	Cannot be used

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data are gained by asking the experts to express their opinion about the product without limit them with options 1 to 4. It is presented in form of essay. The experts can write down their opinion, critic or suggestion for the interest of bettering the product's quality.

3. Results and discussion

This part presents two types of information. They are the summary of the product, and the result of product validation.

The summary of the product

The product of this research are books with five different titles: Good Words, Yes I Can, Don't Cheat, Let's Take Care of Our House, and Put Others before You. Each of these books uses English as the instructional language, and contains certain learning values. Table 2 shows the simple description of the product.

Table 2. The summary of the book content

Title	Aim	Cover	Content
Good Words	Teaching religious values		<p>Value: Teaching children to remember God before and after doing some good activities.</p> <p>Language: Adverbs of time</p>
Yes, I Can	Teaching self-reliance		<p>Value: Children should make an effort or contribution on something that they want to have or achieve.</p> <p>Language: Introducing children the names of vegetable, and words related cooking process</p>
Don't Cheat!	Teaching children not to cheat, or be reliable (integrity)		<p>Value: Children should avoid the character of cheating, and implement the character of trustworthy.</p> <p>Language: Introducing the names of duration in a day, and the names of Indonesian traditional cakes.</p>
Let's Take Care of Our House	Teaching children to have feeling of caring others (cooperation)		<p>Value: Children should have the feeling of empathy and willingness to help others.</p> <p>Language: Introducing the names of day in a week, the pronouns for family member, words related to activities and common material commonly found in a household environment.</p>
Put Others before You	Teaching children the value of nationalism		<p>Value: Children should put the public interest above theirs.</p> <p>Language: Introducing the concept of time duration in a day and words related to children's daily activities (playing, buying ice cream, etc.).</p>

The result of product validation presented in numerical data (quantitative)

This part explains the results of expert validation on material, expert validation on media, and field validation. Expert on material validates each book separately. Therefore, each of the books has its own evaluation. Tables 3 shows the results of material validation, in form of numerical data and its data interpretation.

Table 3. The results of data analysis on book entitled good words (material validation)

Criteria		%	Mean	Category	Intepretation
Content eligibility	The material functions to support learning of English	82.5%	91.7%	Higly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The material functions to support character building	92.5%			
	The material conformity to the level of children's cognitive development	100%			
Feasibility of presentation	The presentation of teaching materials	92.5%	9.6%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The ease of accessing teaching materials	100%			
	Mean		93.8%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision

Table 4 shows the results of material validation on book entitled Yes, I Can

Table 4. The results of data analysis on book entitled yes, i can (material validation)

Criteria		%	Mean	Category	Interpretation
Content eligibility	The material functions to support learning of English	92.5%	95%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The material functions to support character building	92.5%			
	The material conformity to the level of children's cognitive development	100%			
Feasibility of presentation	The presentation of teaching materials	92.5%	96%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The ease of accessing teaching materials	100%			
	Mean		95.5%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision

Table 5 shows the results of material validation on book entitled Don't Cheat

Table 5. The results of data analysis on book entitled don't cheat (material validation)

Criteria		%	Mean	Category	Interpretation
Content eligibility	The material functions to support learning of English	100%	100%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The material functions to support character building	100%			
	The material conformity to the level of children's cognitive development	100%			
Feasibility of presentation	The presentation of teaching materials	100%	100%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The ease of accessing teaching materials	100%			
	Mean		100%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision

Table 6 shows the results of material validation on book entitled Let's Take Care of Our House

Table 6. The results of data analysis on book entitled let's take care of our house (material validation)

Criteria		%	Mean	Category	Interpretation
Content eligibility	The material functions to support learning of English	100%	100%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The material functions to support character building	100%			
	The material conformity to the level of children's cognitive development	100%			
Feasibility of presentation	The presentation of teaching materials	95%	97.5%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The ease of accessing teaching materials	100%			
	Mean		98.7	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision

Table 7 shows the results of material validation on book entitled Put Others before You

Table 7. The results of data analysis on book entitled put others before you (material validation)

Criteria		%	Mean	Category	Interpretation
Content eligibility	The material functions to support learning of English	100%	100%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The material functions to support character building	100%			
	The material conformity to the level of children's cognitive development	100%			
Feasibility of presentation	The presentation of teaching materials	98%	99%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	The ease of accessing teaching materials	100%			
	Mean		99.5%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision

Expert on media evaluates the books all together. He does it because of the consideration that all of the books have similar tone in terms of the design taste and style.

Table 8. The results of data analysis on all big books (media)

Criteria		%	Mean	Category	Interpretation
Graphic eligibility	Cover design	90%	90%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	Content design	93.75%	93.75%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	Mean		91.8%	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision

Table 9 shows the results of field validation. This part is assessed by the users, which in this matter are the students.

Table 9. The results of data analysis per component

Component	Question Item	Total	Mean	Category	Interpretation
Level of difficulty	1	75	75.5	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	2	76		Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
Level of attractiveness	3	76	77	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	4	78		Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	5	77		Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
Level of usefulness	6	77	72	Highly valid	The product can be implemented without revision
	7	68		Valid	The product can be implemented with little revision
Mean			74.8	Highly valid	The product can be implemented with little revision

The Results of Product Validation Presented in Verbal Data (Qualitative)

Not only giving assessment in numerical forms, the experts also present their assessment in form of verbal. Table 10 shows the experts’ verbal opinion.

Table 10. Verbal validation of the experts

Field of Expert	Title of the Book	Type of Input	Direct Statement
Material	Good Words	Question	This can be used with the Moslem students. What about other religions?
	Don't Cheat!	Suggestion	It would be better if Fatih eats different number of cakes, so maybe 4 lempers, 5 lumpurs, and 3 lapis'. Children can be asked how many cakes he eats, and what does he eat the most?
	Let's Take Care of Our House	Suggestion	<i>Agar lebih natural, cara memanggil saudara sebaiknya langsung nama saja. Tidak ada anak yang memanggil saudaranya dengan "brother Udin", atau "sister Fatimah".</i> (The way children address their siblings should be more natural by calling their names directly without using the word brother).
			<i>Judul kurang kata "of".</i> The title is lack of word "of".
	Put Others before You	Suggestion and critic	<i>Gambar toko ice cream tidak sesuai dengan konteks yang lain. Sebaiknya dicari foto toko di Indonesia.</i> (The picture of the ice cream shop is not contextual for Indonesian situation). <i>Juga foto-foto tersebut terlalu "ramai" sehingga tulisan sulit dibaca.</i> The picture is too dominant, so the letters cannot be read easily.
Media	All the books	Critic and opinion	<i>Setiap gambar harus ada sumber rujukannya.</i> (There should be stated the source of every picture). <i>Variasi gambar yang lebih menantang sesuai tema/ isi materi dapat lebih diupayakan.</i> (It will be better if there is more variation on pictures).
			<i>Secara keseluruhan sudah baik.</i> (It is already good overall).

The product of this research are big books with five different titles. The expert on material assess the books separately. Her assessment contain two eligibility standards, which are content feasibility and presentation feasibility. These two eligibility standards then be broken down into five success criteria. These five are the material functions to support learning English, the material functions to support character building, the material conformity to the level of children's cognitive development, the presentation of teaching materials, and the ease of accessing teaching materials. All of the criteria mentioned lied in the category of highly valid. It can be interpreted as the product can be implemented as a learning media, without need a revision. This evaluation results work for all of the book titles.

The assessment to measure the packaging of the product is done by the expert on media. It covers the graphic eligibility, which then be broken down into two criteria. These criteria are cover design and content design. This expert puts the product into the category of highly valid for both of the criteria. The interpretation of this appraisal is the product can be implemented as a learning media, without revision.

The appraisal of field validation covers three components, which are the level of difficulty, the level of attractiveness, and the level of usefulness. The total question items of these three components are seven. Six of these seven items lied in the category of highly valid, but one. The students do not believe that by reading and learning these books, they can be better people. However, the mean of these seven question items are still lied in the category of highly valid, which means the students believe that the product can be implemented as a learning media without need revision.

As mentioned earlier, the last step of R&D model is the product revision. The classification of the aspects revised is based on Muslich (2016) that mentions four eligibility criteria a book can be called as a qualified learning media. Those four eligibility are the content eligibility, the language eligibility, the presentation eligibility, and the graphical eligibility.

The content revision of this product related to pronoun. Formerly, the book entitled *Let's Take Care of Our House* states pronoun "brother" before the name of the person, which is "brother Udin". It is then revised by considering the nature of English. The pronoun brother is omitted, it then becomes "Udin".

The revision on language eligibility is made in book entitled *Let's Take Care of Our House*. Formerly the title of this book is *Let's Take Care Our House*, which is lack of preposition "of".

The revision on presentation is done on book entitled *Put Others before You*. There is a page of this book that shows a picture of an ice cream shop. The expert on material criticizes this image as too dominant and not contextual, which means the image clearly taken from abroad. Responding this critic, the researcher changes the ice cream image with shop located in the local town where this product trialed. Other than that, the dominance of the image also be lessen. The researcher sets the color and the image become less dominant. Therefore, it do not disturb the text on the page.

4. Conclusion and suggestions

This research generates product in form of big books. The big books consist of five titles, which are *Good Words*, *Yes I Can*, *Don't Cheat*, *Let's Take Care of Our House*, and *Put Others before You*. These books are designed to be able to teach English and build character. The standard of language difficulty is based on CEFR level A1. In another hand, the characters taught are religiosity, self-reliance, integrity, caring and nationalism. The character teachings are based on *Character Education Guidelines (Konsep Pedoman Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter: Tingkat Sekolah Dasar dan Sekolah Menengah Pertama)*, issued by Ministry of Education and Culture.

The quality of these products have passed the evaluation of expert on material, expert on media and field validation. Even though, the general results of the product validation state that the product are highly qualified to be implemented as learning media, the betterment is made based on the experts' verbal comments.

These product are approved to be qualified learning media. Keeping the research product as the researcher's personal reference definitely unfortunate. Therefore, efforts to disseminate the product are necessary. It can be done by registering the product in an online learning platform. Potential users are able to access these product, whether with expense or not. It very depends on the platform's policy. In a more conventional way, disseminating the product through bookstores also can be the solution.

Further, these research product can be used by teachers for teaching English and character. Not only that, they are also expected to explore deeper about the benefits of using big books, especially for introducing second language. Parents are also expected to be involved in a together shared reading activity with the students in a hommy setting. By cooperating with the teacher's program, the language ability of the students can be boosted faster.

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