

# Analysis of English Text Based on Character Education: Student's Perception and Comprehension

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the students' perceptions and comprehension of English texts based on character education at a State Vocational. This research is descriptive using qualitative and quantitative on its approach. The research involved 40 students of class XI from the accounting/financial expertise program at SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi and 40 students from class XI from the technical skills program at SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi as the participants. Questionnaires and written tests were used as the instrument to collect the data. Based on the analysis of the results of the questionnaires taken in the two vocational schools, it is found that 55% of students gave positive perceptions of learning English texts based on character education, 64% agreed that character education-based English text learning materials were given in schools, 57% of students agree that learning character education will help develop attitudes. In addition, the results of the written test showed that 56% of the student were at an average level in terms of their level of understanding of character education-based English texts.

**Keywords:** Comprehension, Character Education, English Text, Perception.

## Introduction

During this period, reading books for students are growing according to the existing curriculum, this can affect the character of students for what they read. In Ireland and New South Wales, Australia, textbooks, and syllabi are determined according to the content of the material according to the criteria used to select literature shaped by explicit or implicit which serves to build the character and interests of students both consciously and certain types of subjectivity in students (Zajda: 2005).

English is taught in Indonesia as the first official foreign language and is studied in school by students other than the original language and Indonesian as a second language. Likewise in teaching and learning English, students' competence in reading is as important as competence in mastering other skills. This is as stated by Akubuilu, et al. (2015:1) that reading is one of the skills to understand and interpret written language symbols so that they will get meaning from what they read. The education curriculum in Indonesia designs English learning intending to develop students' abilities and competencies so that they can communicate orally and in writing using the foreign language. In language learning, mastery of four basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) is very important.

Directly related to learning English, the main activity of reading activities is to understand and get meaning from the text read. Reading an English text is not just an activity to find out the topic, content, and information contained in a text. In reading activities, we are required to think about what we read, so that the process of understanding and mastering the text itself will provide benefits and can be implemented in everyday life. According to Kweldju (2015:125–42), reading means that there is a series of work processes that occur in our brains to obtain understanding results. In other words, reading is an important skill to be trained so that students

can understand the information from the text they read. The position of English as a foreign language in Indonesia makes it the language studied by the Indonesian people after the mother tongue and Indonesian itself as a second language. As a foreign language, English has been included in the Indonesian education curriculum from elementary school to secondary level (junior high school, equivalent vocational school), English has become a compulsory subject for students. This is as stated in the attachment to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 70 of 2013 (page 14) (Peraturan Pemerintah RI 2013:14). In the 2013 curriculum currently implemented in Indonesia, English subjects at the vocational high school (SMK) level are categorized in the Compulsory Subject Group (A) with an allocation of 2 hours per week.

Furthermore, the 2013 curriculum currently in effect in Indonesia aims to prepare Indonesian people to have the ability to live as individuals and citizens who are faithful, productive, creative, innovative, effective, and able to contribute to the life of society, nation, state, and world civilization. These goals indicate the direction and character-based education (Kaimuddin 2014:59). Therefore, the implementation of character education should be carried out through a process of integrating learning outcomes and the teacher appears as an exemplary figure.

The implication of the integration of character education in the 2013 Curriculum is that Basic English skills taught at a State Vocational are also expected to reflect existing character values even though the material content varies. Students are expected not only to learn English in general, but they can take the character values that exist in the English text material being studied. The majority of English subject matter cannot be separated from reading text that must be studied by students. The reading text is divided into several genres which are taught in grades X, XI, and XII. The character values taken will of course be attached to their daily lives so that it will be easier to apply. In line with the integration of character education into the 2013 curriculum that is currently in effect in Indonesia, of course, it is hoped that students will not only follow English language learning solely to get high scores. However, what's more, important than that is that students get a learning experience regarding the attitudes, character, and moral values of all the things they learn. In addition, they will also have a good impression of a constructive perception of learning and do not have the notion that learning English is difficult. Ideally, if students have a good impression and perception of learning English, it will be followed by progress in achievement and the ability to practice English in everyday life. Indirectly, he has acquired moral values and self-confidence, and enthusiasm for learning.

In general, perception can be interpreted as a process that is preceded by a sensory process, which is the process of receiving a stimulus by the individual through the senses or called a sensory process, which is the process of receiving a stimulus by the individual through the senses or called a sensory process (Saguni 2012:122–23). In addition, perception can also be understood as a person's perspective in believing or feeling something (Dagnev and Asrat 2016:248–253). Perception is an important thing to know because one's view of an object is not the context of this study, students' perception of understanding English texts based on character education refers to students' responses, impressions, and personal opinions on English text reading activities which contain the values of character education. Textbooks represent “the visible heart of any ELT program” (Sheldon, 1988:237) forming the basis for much of the language input learners receive in the classroom (O'Neill, 1982). Richards (2001) suggests that in some situations, textbooks may provide the basis for the content of the lessons and the kind of language practice the students take part in. In other situations, textbooks may supplement the teacher's instruction. For learners, the textbook may provide the major source of contact they have with the language apart from input provided by the teacher. Textbooks may also serve as a kind of teacher training in that they provide ideas on how to teach lessons. In addition to

functioning as a basic teaching tool in the regular teaching and learning of English, textbooks may play an essential role in the process of innovation. As argued by Hutchinson and Torres (1994), the importance of the textbook becomes even greater in periods of change. Textbooks may function as intermediary roles and potential agents for change during educational innovation due to a number of reasons; first textbooks act as a vehicle for teacher and learner training; second textbooks provide a picture of what the change will look like; and third, they provide the psychological support to teachers.

Based on the importance of providing students with an understanding of moral values and character, one of which is integrated into the activity of reading English texts, the researchers conducted this research several reasons are underlying this research. First, learning English in school in Indonesia is still dominated by aspects of memorizing vocabulary, translating, and reading. Rochman (2012:842) states that in Indonesia, teaching English in educational institutions emphasizes its cognitive use. Therefore, emphasizing these aspects makes it easier to administer the exam because the aspect of the language being tested is easier to assess. Mastery of English by the students in secondary schools is measured through national exams, the material of which mostly emphasizes receptive language mastery. Therefore, reading and understanding English texts are more likely to be researched because this activity is often encountered in learning English at school. Second, the allocation of time is very limited for learning English at the SMK level. Based on the regulation of the minister of education and culture of the Republic of Indonesia number 70 of 2013 concerning the basic framework and structure of the SMK/MAK curriculum on page 14, English subjects at the SMK level which are included in group A (mandatory) are allocated of 2 hours per week. This means that vocational students only acquire and study English once a week compared to other subjects. As a consequence of the very limited time to learn English, students tend to make English an additional subject.

As for the synthesis of previous research that is relevant to this research, namely; Yasemin Kirkgöz (2009) by the title Evaluating the English textbooks for young learners of English at Turkish primary education This paper discusses an evaluation of the three English textbooks which have been prescribed for use in grade 4 classes by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in state primary schools. Donna (2005) The prescribed textbook accompanying a syllabus, at any given point in the history of a society, can suggest a great deal about the values and assumptions of that society, and at the same time provide understanding of the political and social forces shaping the choice and prescription of texts. Katsura (2010) English text book in japan and korea, the goal of English textbook in each country is slightly different: Koreans aim to express themselves and exchange ideas in English, while Japanese textbook are designed to arouse learners' interest in foreign culture and to foster their communicative attitude. Sun Yon (2015) this study argues that English teachers need to take an important role in selecting English textbook applicable to the teaching practices under the multicultural perspective. Mona Syrbe (2018) by the title an evaluation of the global orientation of English textbooks in Germany, this article investigates textbooks used in English classes in German schools to evaluate current trends of teaching English as an international language.

Vocational students who take certain skills programs will usually tend to learn things that are linear with their skills program only. Very few of them take the initiative to learn the English language to gain additional knowledge, get information, or get moral values from what they read. In principle, if we examine more deeply, English texts based on character education can then also form an understanding of students' lives with character. Thus, this study was conducted to determine the perceptions of Vocational Student in understanding the values of character education implied in the English text and knowing their level of understanding of the text.

After the researcher describes the explanation, further research will be carried out to describe English reading books based on the character of education in vocational schools. Therefore, there are two research questions discussed in this study;

1. How is the perception of vocational students towards English text based on Character Education?
2. How is the Comprehension of vocational students towards English text based on Character Education?

## Method

This research is a descriptive type using qualitative and quantitative approaches. The research location is two vocational high schools in Tebing Tinggi City, namely SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi and SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi. The reason for choosing research locations in these two vocational high schools in Tebing Tinggi City, among others is because the two vocational schools have various majors or expertise programs, the number of students is relatively large, and it is known that the students' backgrounds are also diverse. Among these diverse student backgrounds, for example, the variety of school origins of students from junior high school level, the varying number of students who choose skill programs according to their talents and interests, and the variety of their English learning experience at the previous level.

The sample of this study was 80 people who were taken randomly from class XI SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi. A total of 40 students were taken from the accounting skills program at SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi and 40 students were taken from The Technical skills program at SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi. The data collection technique in this study used questionnaires and written reading tests. Before conducting the research phase in the form of a questionnaire, the researcher first asked permission from the participants who took part in this study in the form of "willing to be a participant" format. First, qualitative data was extracted by distributing questionnaires to students. The questionnaires were made by the researcher by which contains several questions that require students' responses based on their respective English learning experiences. This questionnaire consists of 5 questions that have available answer options. The contents of the questionnaire question focus on personal opinions, impressions, and perceptions of students regarding English tests that contain character and character values.

In addition, the questionnaire also asked for responses to the extent to which they gave an assessment related to the integration of character education materials contained in the English text. The results of the questionnaire were then mapped into a table containing the contents of each student. Next, the researcher analyzes and interprets the data by seeing how many answers appear in the answer choices. The results of the answers are then presented in the form of percentages and graphs.

Furthermore, quantitative data were taken using a written test. The written test used in this study aims to measure students' ability to understand English texts that contain character education in it. In this request reading test is presented with 10 essay questions and must be answered based on the text. In this method using the model method of Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) which uses 3 cycles including planning, implementation, observation and reflection. The results of the written test were assessed using *the reading scoring rubric* adapted from O'Malley and Pierce (1996). These final values are grouped into the value intervals listed in the table below:

Table 1. Student Reading Test Score Interval

NO	VALUE INTERVAL	CATEGORY
1	70-80	High
2	61-69	Moderate
3	50-60	Low

## Results

In the following, the results of the study are presented where the data sources come from questionnaires that have been filled out by students and the results of the character education-based English reading test given by the researchers to the students.

The initial activity carried out to determine the situation before the action was taken was by observing and documenting the process and learning outcomes of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 students using the PQRST technique.

The results of the tests carried out in cycles I, II, and III showed significant results. The average score in the first cycle of SMKN 1 and SMKN2 is 63.64. In cycle II, the average score increased to 73.94. And in the third cycle, the score again increased to 84.85.

Below is the research data in the first cycle.

Table 2. reading results of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 students in cycle I

CATEGORY	THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Pass	36	45%
File	44	55%

The results of the implementation in the first cycle showed 36 out of 80 students of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 who obtained minimum completeness or only 45%. The results obtained have not yet reached the expected target of 100% for learning achievement. As for the reflections carried out, it was found that in the first cycle the students were not maximal in carrying out the learning steps using the PQRST technique because it was the first time and students were also less active in the implementation of learning.

Table 3. reading results of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 students in cycle II

CATEGORY	THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Pass	56	70%
File	24	30%

In the second cycle, the results obtained were 70%, namely 56 of 80 students of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 obtained a score of 70 as KKM. As for the reflection in the second cycle, some students began to be enthusiastic and active in following the lesson. Students are more interested in reading English texts using the PQRST technique, students begin to find it easier to understand reading.

Table 4. reading results of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 students in cycle III

CATEGORY	THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Pass	76	95%
File	4	5%

And the results in the third cycle reached the expected target of 95%, namely 76 out of 80 students had scored above the KKM. The results of the increase in scores indicate that the PQRST technique is proven to be able to improve students' reading comprehension.

## Discussion

### *Students' Perception Results Of English Texts Based On Character Education*

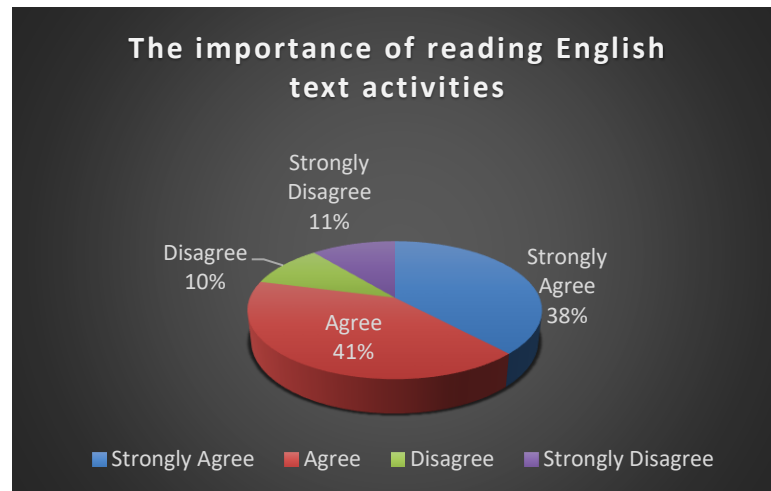


Figure 1. Students' perception about the importance of reading English text activities

Figure 1 shows that 41% of students agree on the importance of reading text in English. Most of them consider that English is the most widely used language in communication by people around the world. The use of communication is certainly not only verbal but also in writing. Reading English text is one of the activities that can support a person's ability to communicate using the language. Therefore, the majority of students agree that reading English texts is very important to get used to. However, there are 11% of students do not agree with this. Among them, they expressed their personal opinion that English is a complicated foreign language. Of course, this requires deep thought to motivate students not to think of English as a difficult language to learn.

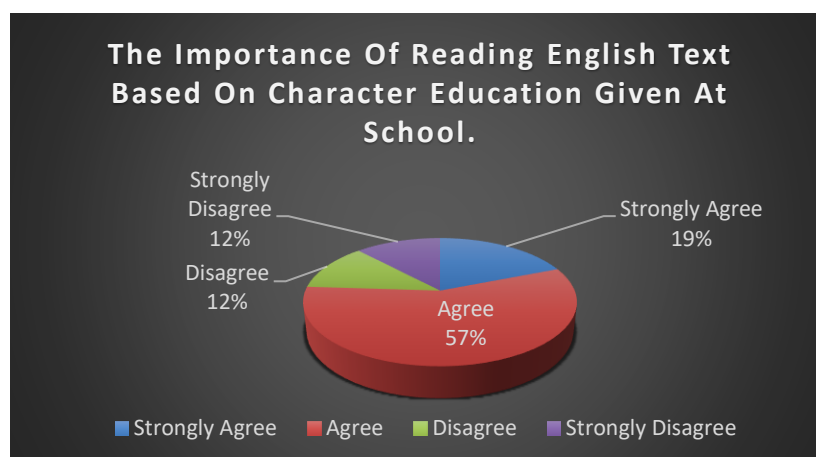


Figure 2. Student perception regarding the importance of reading English text-based character given at school

Figure 2 shows that 57% of students agree on the importance of reading English texts based on character education given in school. Of course, this is a positive response given by the

students that being given and taught character and moral values in school through English texts, they will get a lot of learning experiences. Not only getting a new learning experience related to the content of the English text that is read, but interpreting the character education implied in the text, it will add insight into attitude or behavior.

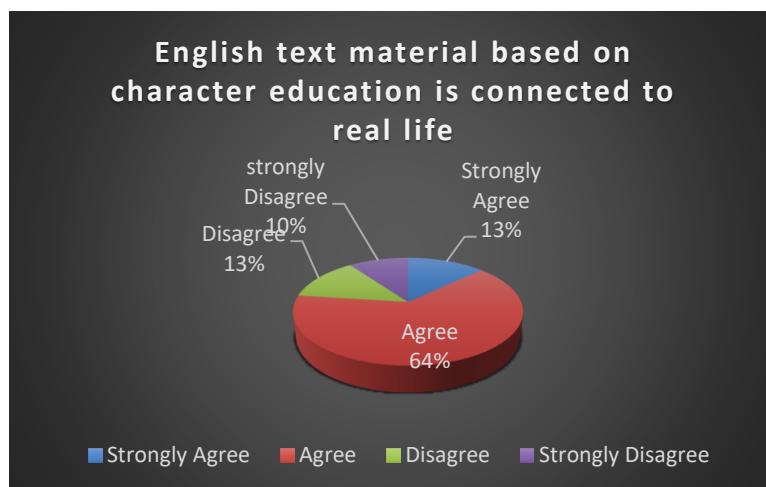


Figure 3. Students' perception of character education-based English text material

Based on the information in figure 3, the majority of students at SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi (64%) are of the opinion that studying English texts that contain character education content will be more easily absorbed if the material is connected to everyday life. The English subjects they get in SMK are more general in nature. Of course, this is a challenge for them to learn and get the content of the character values in it. Therefore, the content of the character education-based English material provided by the teacher will be more easily absorbed by students if it is adapted to everyday life.

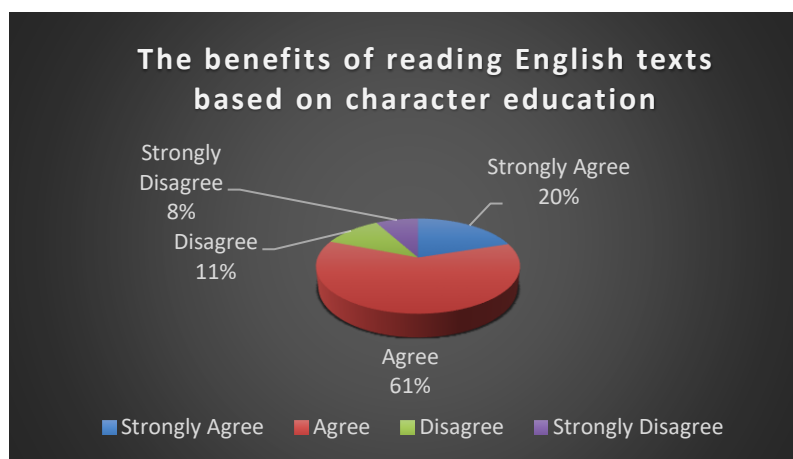


Figure 4. Students' perception of the benefits of reading English texts based on character education

From figure 4 above, the majority of students (61%) agree that reading English texts will increase knowledge about the values of goodness in life. Studying English texts will not only increase their vocabulary but also increase their knowledge of the values of kindness. This is in line with their previous statements that character education materials will be easier to interpret when connected to their daily lives. The good values obtained can be directly applied and put into practice. Thus, students get two benefits by studying English texts based on character

education. First, by studying and reading English texts, they have learned to recognize and increase vocabulary. Second, by learning and reading English texts based on character education, they gain knowledge about the values of goodness which are certainly beneficial for them.

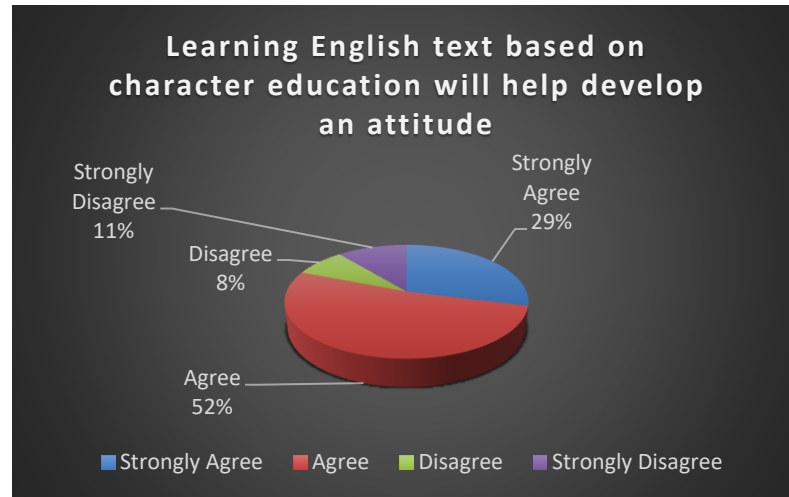


Figure 5. Students' perception of the benefits of reading English texts based on character education will help develop an attitude

Based on figure 5 above, 52% of students agree that learning English texts based on character education in schools will help develop students' attitudes. This is quite reasonable because their behavior is also attached to everyday life. Courtesy, respect for elders, responsibility, and so on are some examples of character education values that can be incorporated into English Texts that can help students develop a good attitude.

#### **Result of Students' Understanding of English Texts Based on Character Education**

As explained in the previous section, in addition to digging up data by distributing questionnaires to students, the researcher also conducted a reading test to students. This reading test aims to find out how far the students' ability to understand English texts contains character education. First, the reading test results are shown by students of SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi. A total of 40 class XI students from SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi were given a test in which there was an English text charged with character education. The results of the data analysis on the written test of students of SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi are presented in Figure 6 below.

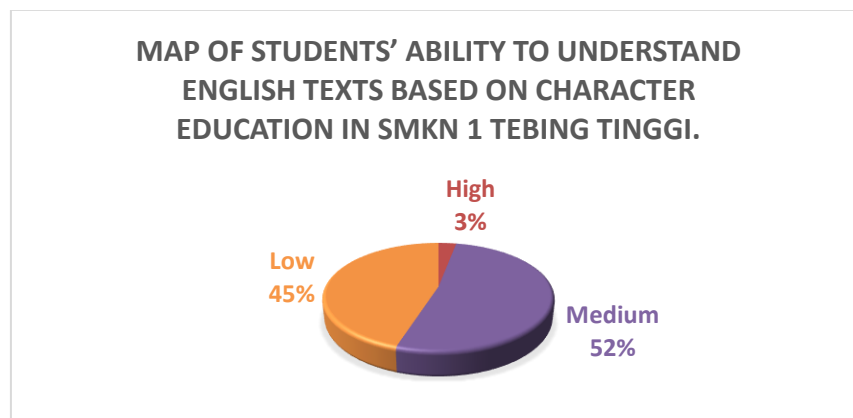


Figure 6. The result of the analysis student writing test of SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi



Based on Figure 6 above, it is known that as many as 52% of students of SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi get an average (medium) score on this written test. These results are sufficient to explain that students' ability to understand English texts that contain character values is still at a certain level. This means that most students are not able to understand the text and most of the other students are not able to understand the given English text. In addition, 45% of students still showed low written test results. This figure is certainly not a relatively good number. Based on the researcher's assessment of the results of their written tests, most of the answers they gave on this test seemed careless. Some of them even answered questions with answers that did not match the English text they were reading. Some students also did not complete in answering all the questions given. The conclusion obtained is that the level of understanding of the students of SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi towards the English text based on character education tested through this test has not shown encouraging results.

Second, the test results were obtained from students of SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi. As many as 40 students of SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi were given the same test questions as SMKN 1 Tebing Tinggi. The results of the written test of students of SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi are presented in Figure 7 below:

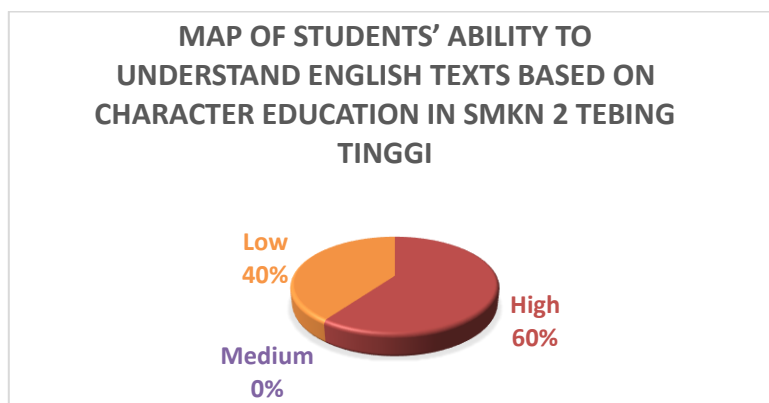


Figure 7. The result of students' ability to understand English text of SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi

Based on Figure 7 above, it can be concluded that 60% of the students of SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi showed good results in the written test given. This shows that they are quite able to understand English texts based on the character education they read. In other words, their level of understanding in understanding a text can be said to be quite good. Most of the students were able to read with focus, answered the questions related to the text quite well, and of them were able to give communicative answers. Only 40% of students still showed low written test results. The conclusion obtained is that the level of understanding of students of SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi in understanding English texts based on character education is relatively good. The combined results of the written tests from the two schools are shown in Figure 8 below.

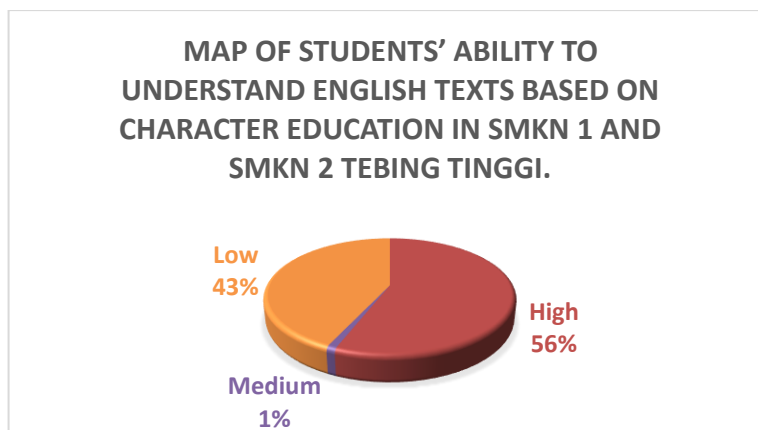


Figure 8. The result of the written tests from the two schools of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi

Based on Figure 8 above, it can be seen that the overall written test results of students at SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi are moderate. It is known that on average the students of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi have basic English skills. Furthermore, it is hoped that it can help them understand English texts that are more specific in the content of character education in it.

Meanwhile, a fairly high number is shown by students who still have a low level of understanding character education-based English texts. As many as 46% of the total 80 students showed poor results in this written test. This means that some students still have difficulty reading the English text, have difficulty understanding the meaning of the stars, and do not complete the answers related to the English text given.

Based on the results obtained, it is known that on average 55% of students give a positive perception of learning English texts based on character education, 64% agree that character education-based English text learning materials are given in schools and in real life, and 57% of students agree that learning character education will help develop student attitudes.

The average positive perception of students in giving their opinions about learning English texts based on character education needs to be given appreciation. At least, they have the initiative to open English subjects that are integrated with character education content. Character values contained in an English text are not only expected to be just discourse, but students can apply them in everyday life. This is as stated by (Aromandani 2014:205–210). He emphasized that the application of character education can be integrated through the teaching and learning process (PBM) that carries daily local culture based on the student's environment. In other words, character education is very possible to be applied in learning English according to the interests and objectives of learning at school.

Furthermore, it relates to the benefits obtained by studying English texts based on character education. Students agree that learning English texts based on character education will increase their knowledge of new vocabulary. Of course, this is very closely related where the basic ability to learn and understand English texts is with vocabulary. Liuolienė and Metiūnienė (2007:108–14) in their study stated that students must present a positive attitude towards the foreign language they are learning. Thus, they will be easier to develop and have difficult words.

Positive perceptions given by students in this study will provide full support for how they carry out learning activities. This means that the greater the positive attitude towards learning, the easier their level of understanding of English will be. Cacho and Cacho (2015:78–84) provide the view that positive attitudes in foreign language learning must be strengthened by contextual and culturally sensitive learning. This means that the cultural sensitivity approach is another

asset in teaching foreign languages to students. English teachers in teaching foreign languages need to use contextual and culturally sensitive learning while still being guided by the learning objectives themselves.

Second, it relates to the level of understanding of the students of SMKN in Tebing Tinggi towards the English text based on character education which has been carried out through a written test. Overall, 56% of students from a total of 80 students of SMKN 1 and SMKN 2 Tebing Tinggi have good basic English skills at a moderate or average level. Although there are still 46% of students who show low results, this is not an absolute weakness of students. The level of students' understanding of a learning object is not only determined by the cognitive factors of the students themselves. However, there are many other factors that determine a student's ability to understand something.

According to Gilakjani and Saburi (2016:180–187), there are several factors that affect the level of students' understanding of a reading text. These factors include: level of text difficulty, environmental conditions when students do reading activities, student conditions when reading activities are carried out, student motivation, student vocabulary mastery, as well as physical factors, and student health.

The first factor that affects the level of students' understanding of a text is the level of difficulty of the text being read. The difficulty level of the text is determined by how students understand each vocabulary displayed in the text. Various new vocabulary that appears in a text will encourage students to try to understand the context and ideas implied in the text. The more variations of new vocabulary that appear, the higher the difficulty level of the text. The more students are able to understand the meaning of each vocabulary that appears, the easier it is for them to understand the content of the text. This is in line with the results of students' perceptions that appear in this study that one of the benefits of understanding English texts based on character education is that students will gain knowledge about new vocabulary.

Second, the environmental conditions when students read are also factors that affect the level of students' understanding of a reading text. A student will calmly read if he is in a quiet environment, not noisy, and away from crowds. Conversely, if the environmental conditions are crowded, noisy, close to the crowd which can cause disturbing sounds, it can break the concentration of students. When students are in a comfortable learning environment, students' efforts in understanding a text will be more focused and better.

Third, the student's academic situation also determines the level of students' understanding of a text. Exams, assignments, and projects given by the teacher, homework (homework), and the like that must be done by students as part of the learning evaluation, will tend to burden students. On the other hand, texts that are read in relaxed situations, relaxed discussions, group work, can help reduce students' anxiety in trying to understand a text. The anxiety experienced by students will result in students being confused and misunderstanding the text (Shao 2014:300).

Furthermore, the interest and motivation of students to read are also very important. If students find that the text material is very monotonous then they do not have the enthusiasm to understand it. Therefore, teachers who teach English texts must provide varied materials with interesting activities in learning.

The next factor that affects the level of students' understanding of a text is the mastery of vocabulary to help interpret the text. Students with limited vocabulary mastery will read the text slowly and often have difficulty understanding the text compared to students with rich vocabulary mastery. This is because students who are rich in the vocabulary will be able to clarify the meaning of vocabulary in the text better than students who only guess the meaning

of foreign vocabulary in the text. Therefore, it is important for students to always learn and improve their mastery of English vocabulary.

Finally, students' health conditions also affect the level of students' understanding of a text. According to Mahapatra (2015:8), students' poor understanding of a text may have something to do with physical disabilities. In addition to physical disabilities, mental disabilities and disabilities related to the five senses (sensory disabilities) also prevent a person from being able to read. Students who experience limitations like this tend to be passive in discussion activities related to texts. Therefore, parents of students need to participate in monitoring the physical health condition of their respective children since childhood.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that SMKN students in the city of Tebing Tinggi give a positive perception of the English text based on character education given to them. English texts provide benefits in developing students' attitudes, where they will learn to recognize the characters and moral values that are starred in a text. In addition, the level of understanding of SMKN students in Tebing Tinggi City towards English texts based on character education is relatively at the sufficient level or at the average level. It is stated that in general students already have basic English skills. However, there are many other factors that affect the level of students' understanding of a text.

Students who are at the upper secondary level need to train themselves to learn various types of English texts, especially for students who are at the SMK level. As students who are prepared to go directly into the world of work, the English language skills of SMK students should not only study material related to the Expertise Program they are involved in. The job market demands that we have good foreign language skills to communicate orally and in writing. Therefore, in the long term, students need to train themselves to get used to instilling a positive attitude in learning foreign languages on an ongoing basis so that in the future it can be applied in the world of work.

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