

Integrating Character Values in English Teaching Material: Nurturing Students' Awareness on Environmental Caring

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Abstract: *Many of the textbook developers do not take a great concern on the crucial importance of the teaching material for building students' character on environmental caring for not so many English books contain such character. The fact that teaching material is often considered to be the psychological nutrient for students since it is through the teaching material, students explore, elaborate, and digest the content of the teaching material which unconsciously be absorbed and stored in their mind as their knowledge and psychological property. The reason why students often do vandalism, scratching public facilities like buses, trains, or building is assumed to be the lack of the knowledge of the environmental caring. This research aims at developing an English teaching material based on the environmental caring character with the expectation to find out its contribution to the awareness of the students' environmental caring character. It employs research and development (R&D) design with the participants of 306 students and 25 English teachers taken randomly from 10 Junior High Schools in Semarang City. Data were collected through questionnaire and the result shows that 72% of the respondents (teachers) expect that the learning material in the English textbook should provide texts or dialogues which contain the character of environmental caring. Likewise, 64.6% of the students also expect that English teaching material contains environmental caring character building. Thus, developing English teaching material based on the environmental caring character for the Junior High school students is of crucial importance to fulfill the needs of the students and teachers so that they, particularly students will not only learn English but also learn how to take care of the environment.*

Keywords: *development, teaching material, character, environmental caring*

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I. Introduction

In the past few days, the news of juvenile delinquency like vandalism, scratching new public facilities had decorated messmedia in Indonesia. It is embarrassing, of course for most of them who did vandalism were students of high schools who are expected to behave properly as the result of the implementation of character education stressed in the curriculum. However, the fact that it is on the contrary where the students' uncontrollable behaviour may lead to the destruction though they have been taught character education regularly and massively at schools. This students' improper behaviour incites the public opinion that it is the failure of character education. Factors influencing students' behaviour are actually very complex, not only the design of the curriculum, teaching method or teaching facilities but also teaching material. Some educators are even of the opinion that teaching material plays an important role in changing the students' mindset on life. It is just like food for a baby; the more nutritious the food the healthier the result for the baby will be.

With reference to this very crucial reason, it is of great importance for the writers to develop material that contains sufficient values on the environmental caring character with the expectation that after learning English using this material, the students will unconsciously be able to practice the language as well as taking care of the environment in the real life outside of the classroom. The term environmental caring character used in this paper is to denote the idea that: (1) the awareness of the students to take care of the cleanliness or the beauty of the environment should be built from the earliest time of their study for it is a prerequisite for their future healthy life; (2) however, the expectation is contradictory to their daily real life for they often do vandalism, throw rubbish improperly and even destroy public facilities; (3) this students' poor character of the students on the environmental caring is often associated with the failure of the education; and (4) it is assumed that the irrelevance of the education and the students' real life outside of the school is basically caused by the insufficient teaching material containing character building, particularly material that stresses on the environmental caring. Based on the preliminary study, it was found out that only a few English textbooks

contain few character values and it is therefore a curious fact that developing teaching materials for junior high school students which contain the character values is badly needed.

With reference to this very crucial reason, the researchers tried to conduct a study on the development of interesting, impressive and innovative learning materials which contain the character of environmental caring for the Junior High School students in Semarang. Accordingly, the objectives of this research are as follows: (1) To find out the availability of the English textbooks based on the environmental caring character provided for the teachers and students; (2) To find out and analyse the need of the teachers and students for the development of the English textbooks based on the environmental care character.

II. Theoretical Review

It is believed that the nation's characters can be developed through education, since during the education where the teaching learning process and the school facility take place, the students get involved directly on the knowledge and the practice of it. Teaching and learning, in this case play an important role in education for it is a process where teachers with their experiences and expertise try to help students to develop their knowledge and understanding on a certain concept or a case through activities. It is a reciprocal relation (Usman (2000:4) where teachers and students build two way traffic communication in an educative situation to achieve certain goals. In other words, teaching involves an interaction among students, teachers, and all components or elements where education may take place to achieve the expected objectives. It also implies that not only teachers who play an influential role in order to achieve the goal of education but also other factors like the environment or the society and the family as well; in the society, for instance, the family can provide a good model to show good attitudes and characters by saying "thank you" after getting an assistance or help from others (Hinkel 2001: 443; Sulistyowati, 2012:11). While learning, according to Good and Brophy (1990: 124) is the processes involved in changing through experience. It is the process of acquiring relatively permanent change in understanding, attitudes, knowledge, information, ability, and skill through experience. To highlight Good's and Brophy's idea, Djamarah (1999) states that learning is a process in which the participants try to change their behaviours as a result of their individual experience and their relation to their environment. So, character education or learning character may mean learning to change behaviour or character as it is also stressed by Lickona (1992) that education must be directed to two great goals: to help young people become smart, and to help them become good. Thus, students in this case are not only expected to be smart intellectually but also have good attitude and behaviour. This is in line with Sulistyowati's idea (2012:21) who states that character is the person's nature, attitude, behaviour and personality which develop as the internalization of various virtues to perceive, think, behave and act in his or her life. Hamzah (2013:43) proposes environmental caring character as non-fully representation of the natural talent or instinct but instead it develops as a result of the nurturing process of the education in its broad sense. Any misconduct or mismanagement in the educational process may result in a misbehaved character toward his or her environment, as it is realized that character is the result of nurturing process in the society and the environment where someone has been raised and stays and lives there. It is not merely an individual's talents given by the nature but the knowledge to be aware of the environmental caring can be obtained through education. Education enables the society to develop the person's character as expected by the other members of the society (Hamzah, 2013:42-43). He further insists that education on the environment caring is an inevitable need if the civil society is our ideal. In line with the above opinions, Atkinson (2011:143) also states that human beings are considered to be ecological organism—they depend on their environment to survive. Thus, the behaviour of the students can be a reflection of the environment they adopt. Cognition, mind, logic-like thought, plays a central role to the endeavour to promote intelligent, adaptive action in the world, and to do so it must be intimately aligned with their environment. Therefore, a good character must be developed on the individual basis so that every individual will be aware of his or her attitude or behaviour and take his or her own responsibility.

It is quite clear then that if character values are integrated in the teaching material it does not mean that students learn merely on character but they learn it through the medium of language. Character is the content in the teaching material where it is stressed in the high school syllabus that should be taught to the students. Quoting from Hawkins (2001:375) that the first goal of instruction is to teach the content, not to see the content as a vehicle for the acquisition of the language. What is meant by content here is the use of environment caring as the subject matter which may consist of topics or themes (Snow, 2001: 303) based on the students' need to be integrated to the teaching material. The themes or topics as the basis for teaching run through activities that happen in the classroom (Cameron: 2001: 180) and the teacher in this case has to provide exposure to the language as well as opportunities for learning the environmental caring. The researchers, therefore were obliged to develop an English teaching material by integrating the values of environmental caring under the consideration in pursuit of the objectives, in the one hand, students get the knowledge of environmental caring that can be practiced directly in their daily activities and on the other hand, they also learn the language.

III. Method

This study employed research and development (R&D) design (Borg dan Gall (1983: 772) because the researchers tried to develop English teaching materials based on environmental caring character for Junior High School students. The respondents of this study were 306 students and 25 English teachers taken from 10 Junior High Schools in Semarang. They were given questionnaire to be filled out in order to obtain the information on their perception toward the availability of the English teaching material used at present and on their needs for the English teaching materials based on the environmental caring character. Besides, the researchers also observed the students' attitudes and behaviours toward the efforts of taking care of the environment. The answers of the questionnaire were quantified using Likert scale and therefore, quantitative and qualitative data were obtained. The qualitative data were obtained from the observation and interview, while the quantitative data were obtained from questionnaire.

IV. Findings and Discussion

The findings presented in this section are the answers of the research questions that deal with the availability of the English textbooks based on the environmental caring character provided for the teachers and students and the need of the teachers and students for the development of the English textbooks based on the environmental care character and the result of the observation and interview.

The Availability of the Environmental Caring Character-Based English Textbooks

A team of researchers conducted interview to the respondents, 25 English teachers from 10 public and private junior high schools in Semarang. The respondents were asked about the availability of the English textbooks or supplementary books used to teach English at schools. It revealed that the teachers used the English textbook provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia entitled *When English Rings a Bell* for class VII students; besides they also used supplementary textbooks such as, *Bahasa Inggris 1* published by Yrama Widya, *Practice Your English Competence 1* by Erlangga, *Bright An English 1* by Erlangga, and *Headline English 1* by PT SEWU.

The topics in the supplementary textbooks were adjusted to the English syllabi for Class VII of Junior High School so they are quite similar to those in the compulsory English textbook, *When English Rings a Bell* as follows: Chapter 1. Good morning. How are You? (about greeting, thanking, apologizing); Chapter 2. It's Me! (about self identity, interests/hobbies, family members); Chapter 3. What Time is it? (about time of the day, days of the week, months of the year, and year); Chapter 4. This is My World (about names of things and animals, and public places around us); Chapter 5. It's a Beautiful Day! (identifying, complimenting, criticizing, animals and things around us); Chapter 6. We Love What We Do (giving information on someone's activities, about animals, things around us); Chapter 7. I'm Proud of Indonesia! (describing persons, animals, things around us); Chapter 8. That's what friends are supposed to do (learning to infer a message or moral value from a song);

The followings are the topics taken from one of the supplementary textbooks entitled *Bahasa Inggris* for Class VII students of Junior High School: Chapter 1. Hello (about greeting, thanking, apologizing); Chapter 2. My Name is Ellie (about introducing self, introducing others, using pronouns and spelling words); Chapter 3. What Time Do You Usually Get Up? (about time, time-table, birthday, cardinal and ordinal numbers); Chapter 4. How Many Cars Are There? (about mentioning numbers, singular and plural nouns, articles *a*, *an*, *the* and information on the public places); Chapter 5. He is Very Cheerful (about how to describe someone's physical appearances, and to describe someone's personality); Chapter 6. She Cares for People Who Are Sick (about someone's profession, the names of things and their uses, animals' activities); Chapter 7. It Is a Nice Small House (about describing persons, animals, and things); Chapter 8. Let's Sing a Song (the word meaning from a song, rhyme, determining the pronouns in a song, identifying adjectives from a song);

Seeing from the topics in the compulsory English textbooks and those in the supplementary textbooks, they are a bit different; however, if they are seen from their contents, they are more or less the same. Both books contain the character values of responsibility, discipline, cooperation and self-confidence. After all, it can be said that both English textbooks do not contain the values of environmental caring character. Therefore, the researchers tried to develop the English textbook based on the environmental caring character to meet the need of the teachers and students for the supplementary English textbook.

The Teachers' and Students' Needs for an English Textbook Based on the Environmental Caring Character

This section describes the results of the analysis of the questionnaire completed by the respondents where the questionnaire aimed at finding out the availability of the English learning materials for the junior high schools containing the values of character on environmental caring. The result reveals 3 (three) kinds of

information: 1) the teachers and students' opinions about the English textbook used; 2) the expected content of the English textbook; and 3) the expected physical appearance of the textbook.

The Teachers' and Students' Opinions on the English Textbook They Use

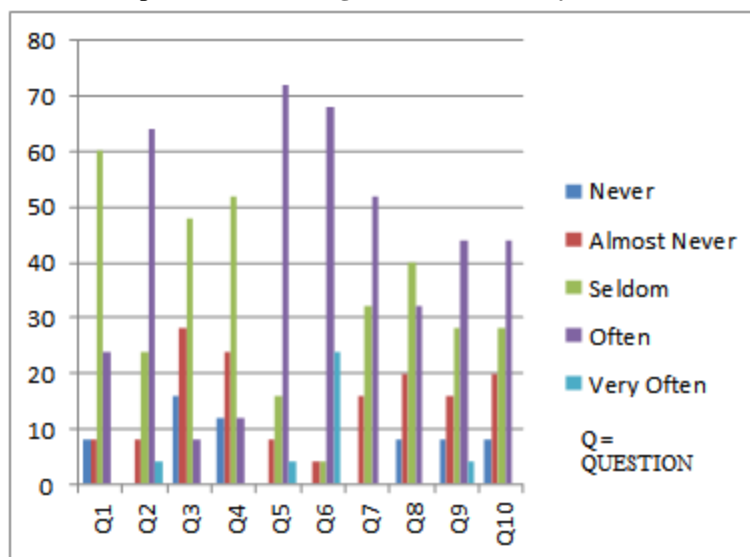


Figure 1: Teachers' Responses

Figure 1 above shows that question no. 1, "How often does the reading material cover the topic on social environmental awareness such as visiting a sick friend?" gets the following answers: 60% "seldom", 24% "often", 8% "almost never", 8% "never", and 0% "very often". Related to question no. 4, "How often is learning material completed with electronic media based on the physical environmental awareness provided?", 52% respondents replied "seldom", 24% replied "very seldom", 12% replied "never", and 0% replied "very often". Then question no. 8, "How often are the teaching material exercises on the physical environmental awareness discussed?", 40% respondents replied "seldom", 32% replied "often", 20% replied "very seldom", 8% replied "never", and 0% replied "very often".

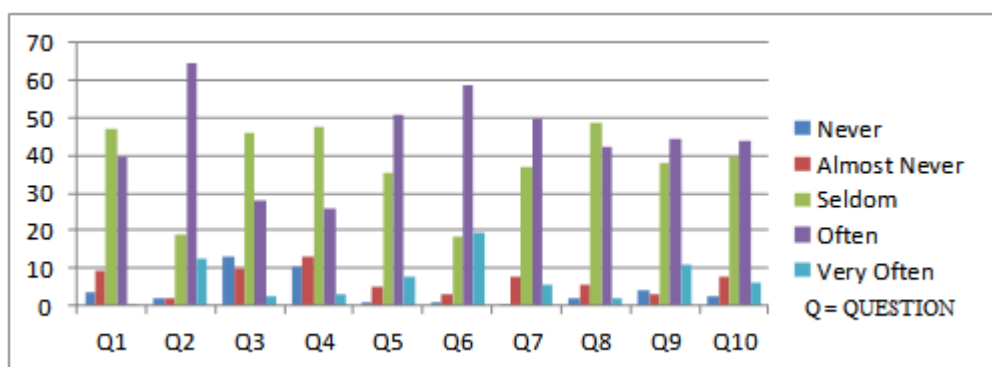


Figure 2. Students' Responses

Figure 2 shows that question no.1 "How often does a reading material cover the topic of social environmental awareness such as visiting a sick friend?", gets the following answers: 47% "seldom", 39.6% "often", 9.4% "very seldom", 3.57% "never", and 0.3% "very often". Then on question no. 4, "How often is teaching material completed with electronic media based on the physical environmental awareness provided?" 47.56% "seldom", 25.69% "often", 13.19% "very seldom", 10.41% "never", and 3.125% "very often". Then question no.8, "How often are the exercises in the teaching material discussing the physical environmental awareness discussed?" gets the answers as follows: 48.91% "seldom", 42.02% "often", 5.43% "very seldom", 1.81% "never", and 1.81% "very often".

Based on the result of the data analysis concerning the teachers' and students' opinions on the English textbook used, it can be concluded that the theme or topic about social and physical environmental awareness is seldom covered. It indicates that the English textbook developers are not yet aware of the importance of

integrating character education, particularly those concerning with the students' awareness on the environmental caring to the subject contents. The fact that integrating environment education into the content of English books may lead to better understanding on the relationship between the environment and other facets of life. It is greatly supported by Atkinson (2011:143) where he states that human beings are considered to be ecological organism—they depend on their environment to survive. Thus, integrating environmental education in the teaching material is of great importance for the students in order to be able to develop their knowledge on the environment.

The Expected Content of the English Textbook

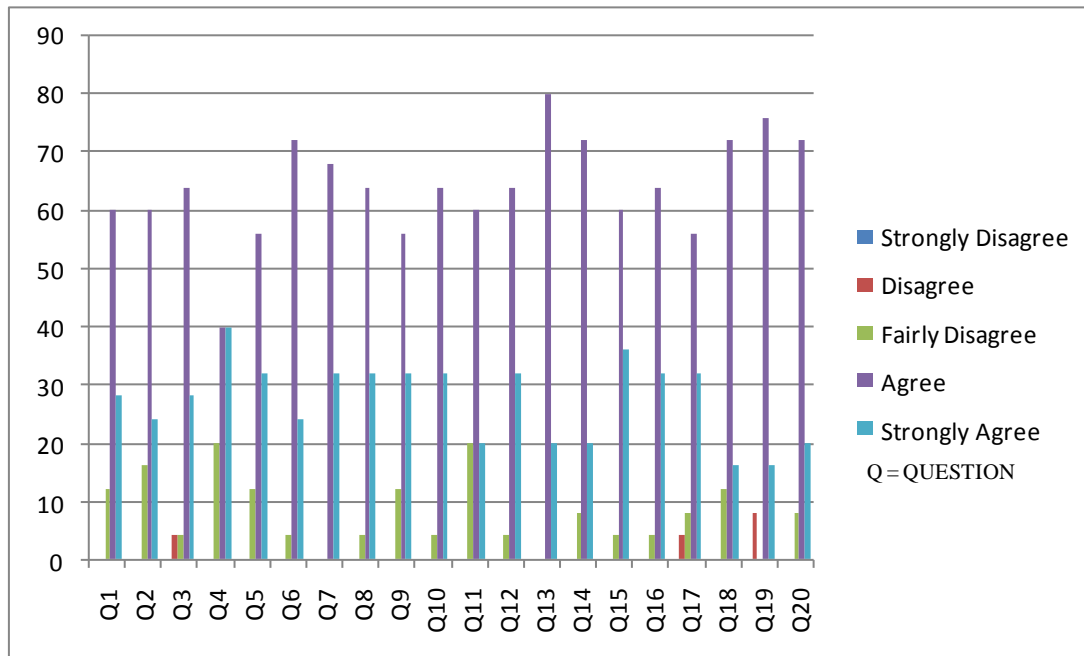


Figure 3. Teachers' Responses

Figure 3 shows that 76% of the respondents expect the learning materials in the English textbook should adopt the communicative approach (question no.19). Meanwhile, 72% of the respondents expect that the learning materials in the English textbook should provide texts or dialogues which contain the character of environmental caring (question no. 20). For question no. 18, 72% of the respondents expect that the teaching materials in the English textbook should cover the language elements such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Figure 4. Students' Responses

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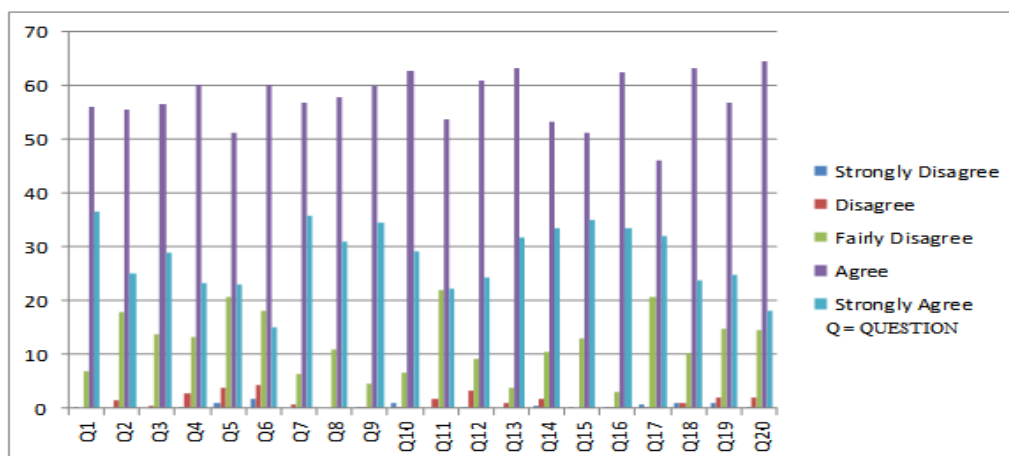


Figure 4. Students' Responses

Figure 4 shows that 56.9% of the respondents (students) expect the learning materials in the English textbook should adopt the communicative approach (question no.19). Then 64.6% of them expect that the teaching materials in the English textbook should provide texts or dialogues which contain the character of environmental caring. Meanwhile, 63.6% of the students expect that the teaching materials in the English textbook should cover the language elements such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation (question no. 18).

Based on the data stated on table 3 and 4, most of the teachers and students expect the content of the English textbook should adopt the communicative approach; besides, texts or dialogues containing the character of environmental caring as well as the language elements should be provided in the textbook.

The Expected Physical Appearance of the Textbook

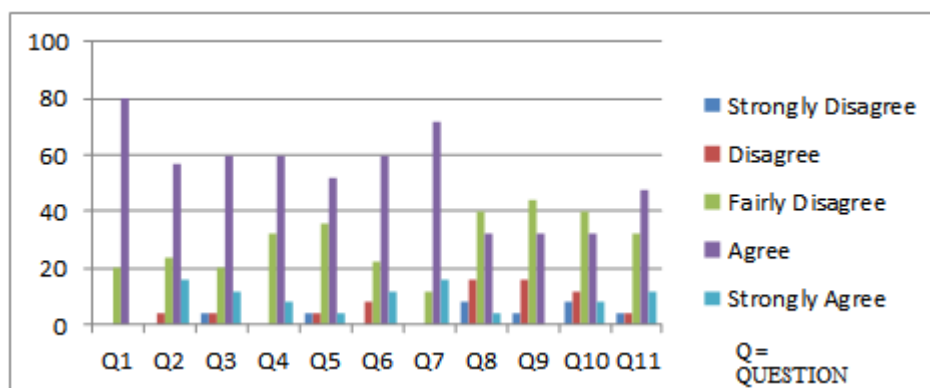


Figure 5: Teachers' Responses

Figure 5 shows that the highest percentage (80%) of the respondents agreed to say that the size of the English textbook for junior high school is A4 (question no. 1) and 72% of them were in favour of having the font in varied styles such as in Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial, (question no. 7). The third highest percentage, 60% is on the thickness of the paper where they were in favour of 80 mg (question no. 6).

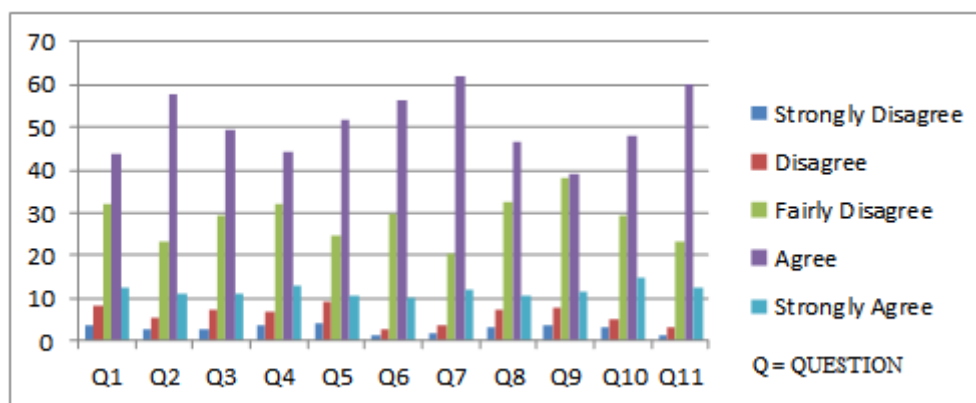


Figure 6: Students' Responses

Table 6 shows the highest percentage, 62% was in in response to question 7, “The font styles of the English textbook for junior high schools should be various (Times New Roman, Calibri, Arial, etc.) and the second highest perecentage, 57.80% was in response to question no. 2, “The length of the paper of the English textbook for junior high schools should be B5 (18.5 cm X 25.7 cm). The students’ response to question no. 10, “The font size style of writing in the English textbook should be varied (10, 12, 14)” was 47.9%.

With reference to the teachers’ and students’ response concerning the font styles or font size, the respondents were in favour of having the varied ones. Only for the length of the textbooks they are in different views where teachers prefer to have A4 while students prefer to have B5. The fact that for practicality, the length of A4 is actually much easier to hand and to be put in in the bag rather than B5 and therefore, teachers chose A4 instead of B5. Different from the teachers’ view, students, for the sake of clarity or pictures provision that should be clear enough to see wanted to have B5.

V. Conclusion and Suggestion

The result of the study shows that the English teachers used the compulsory English textbook provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture entitled *When English Rings a Bell* for class VII and supplementary textbooks chosen freely from different sources like *Bahasa Inggris I* published by Yrama Widya, *Practice Your English Competence 1* by Erlangga, *Bright An English 1* by Erlangga, and *Headline English 1* by PT SEWU. However, the English textbook issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture does not discuss much about environmental caring character and so do the supplementary textbooks. As it was discussed before that integrating environmental caring character into English teaching material, the students may not only learn English but also learn the importance of keeping the environment well due to the related consequences toward their lives. Eventually, it can be stated that teachers and students feel the need of having the English teaching material based on the environmental caring character in order to develop the awareness of the students to take care of the environment. This can be seen from the answers of the respondents where most of them gave opinion on the importance of the availability of the texts or dialogues containing the character of environmental caring. Meanwhile, for the physical appearance of the English textbook, most of them expect to be colourful and has A4 size for it is handy and practical easily to be put in the bag.

In relation to the research result, it is suggested that in order to nurture the students' mindset on the environmental caring, English teachers should actively explore English teaching material from many different sources and find the most suitable ones to fill the need of the students. Besides, it is also expected that English teachers together with lecturers or researchers actively conduct research collaboratively on developing the integrated character teaching material that fulfil the needs of the students.

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