

## Developing Joyful Story Sheets (JoSS): an Effort to Build Character for EYL Learners in Indonesia through Reading JoSS

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### **Abstract**

In response to character education stated in Indonesian Curriculum 2013, to build characters for students of early ages is significant. This can be built through establishing reading habits and building character education to young learners living in urban and suburban areas simultaneously. However, there is lack attention paid to those living in suburban areas. Thus, this research is intended to provide them with some appropriate character-based reading materials. In order that they enjoy reading, the reading materials should be joyful and arouse imagining. This research employs Research and Development (Borg and Gall, 1983 & Ari, et.al., 1985) with the data were collected through doing need analysis by means of distributing questionnaire to EYL in suburban areas in East Java Indonesia, interviewing EYL teachers and parents having children at elementary schools. The results of the data collected in Need Analysis were used to develop the product. This R and D produced collection of Joyful Story Sheets (JoSS) for EYL of the 3rd, the 4th, the 5th, and the 6th graders with each grade consists of 40 joyful story sheets written based on some characters, i.e. hard working, independence, discipline, honesty, and tolerance. The research reveals that the product of this research-namely JoSS- is proved to inspire the students' moral values, to build love of reading, and to encourage learning English. This research result is pedagogically implemented not only as a means of character education

but as supplementary materials for reading class as well. To prove its effectiveness, it is suggested for further researchers to experimentally investigate.

**Keywords:** character education, EYL, Joyful Story Sheets, suburban areas

## A. Introduction

People agree that reading is a cornerstone of being literate. As in Islam, “Reading in the name of Allah“ is the very first verse delivered to the last Messenger, Muhammad SAW. Reading is fundamental for learning and the development of reading habits serves as the major fundamental academic performance (Owusu-Acheaw, 2014). Moreover, studying less difficult texts contributes to learning performance (De Bruyne & Valcke, 2015) and the increasing access to independent reading materials equipped with effective teacher training brings about the significant improvements in academic performance (Gao et.al., 2018).

Because reading is the key to achieve the success of life, each individual in Indonesia is demanded to be able to read either in Indonesian language or in the global language, such as English. Moreover, in this digital era, all innovation and advancement is delivered in English. Therefore, Indonesian students should equip themselves with the ability to read and good habit of reading. However, research conducted by Iftanti (2012) indicates that they do not establish good habits of reading yet. This is affected by some factors, such as literacy environment such as *the availability of reading materials* (Iftanti, 2012); motivation (Iftanti, 2015), personal characteristics of the students (Adetunji, 2007); and the accessibility to electronic facilities such as internet (Akyay et.al. 2009; Iftanti, 2015). In some media, it was also reported that the Indonesian students’ reading habits are considered low. In addition, at present, the facts indicate that students prefer spending their time doing activities other than reading e.g. watching television, playing online game, window shopping or online surfing through their gadgets.

The fact resulted from the preliminary study done through observing some elementary schools in suburban areas in East Java, Indonesia, it is revealed that the students’ reading practices in both Indonesian language and English are considered low. One of the most significant reasons is the lack of reading materials. Unlike those living in urban areas in which public library, school library, and bookshops are easily accessible, for students living in suburban areas, it is not easy to find bookshops and libraries. To buy books is also believed to be expensive. School libraries do not provide them with sufficient reading resources in terms of the number of the books and the topics that attract them to read. This fact does not attract much to researchers to take into account yet. In consequence, it is hardly found a study focusing on giving attention to the needs of students staying in suburban areas on mainly the reading materials, although they should have equal proportion of opportunity to get improved. Meanwhile, it is unavoidable to accept the fact that English as an international language is one of the important keys to

get success of life. Everything concerning the issues of life such as economy, education, culture, politic, and the advancement of technology is addressed in English, so that for those willing to hold the world they must have good reading practices and establish good habits of reading especially in English. On the other hand, to hold and possess good character is also significant in order to bring about a peaceful and prosperous life as prescribed in Curriculum 2013. In addition, people also agree that a developed nation is built either on valuable natural resources or character human resources that are characterized as being literate people.

Because reading is the cornerstone of being literate, thus reading should be well nurtured in every individual since his early age. However, it is critical to note that learning to read relatively needs a lengthy process that begins very early in development. As stated by Rivers (1981) that the ability to read in another language with direct comprehension and with fluency should be cultivated in progressive stages, and practiced at first with carefully selected materials which students can read with ease and enjoyment. Thus, in response to the demands of establishing the joy of reading in English and the lack of reading materials for mainly students of Elementary schools living in suburban areas, it is significant to conduct a research on developing English reading materials which are appropriate with the their needs and preference. Moreover, in order that the developed reading materials are in line with the government program on establishing cultural and characters-based education, they are developed on the basis of some character values such as discipline, tolerance, independence, hard working, honesty, creativity, curiosity, and religiosity.

In accordance to the above mentioned facts, it is essential to provide the EYL students living in suburban areas with informative and entertaining reading materials suitable with their needs so that they are willing to see, touch, then curious to read it. This is hopefully triggering them to read and nurture love of reading. Because the interesting stories with the appropriate level of students' language competence, time, lay out, theme, and its advantage are hardly found by EYL living in suburban areas, such reading materials need to be developed for them. This study is, therefore, intended to develop stories used as an effort to establish good traits and characters namely hard working, independence, honesty, discipline, and tolerance through reading so that this stimulates love of reading in English. In order that each student has equal chance to read and provide them with great numbers of stories, then they are developed separately in the form of sheets. Accordingly, the specification of the product is in form of sheets containing joyful and interesting stories, then it is named *Joyful Story Sheets* (JoSS).

## **B. Literature Review**

Research shows that reading is an important part of successful language acquisition. Discovering the joy of reading is the key to experiencing a life long love of books. Hence, it is essential to provide children with an access to literature and to introduce them to books for pleasure reading at a very early age which intends to give the children links to higher intellectual development. Theoretically, children are considered learn things such as languages more easily than the elders. As stated by Saucedo (2005) that children learn

languages relatively easily. He further found some characteristics of young language learners including students of Elementary schools that they are good at language understanding at holistic level and are inhibited in language production which means that they already have great skill in using language creatively. They are also willing to get involved in language construction within their cognitive capacity. This means that they have fun with language.

Reading love should be nurtured since the early ages of the EFL students. As according to Ur (1996) that younger children learn languages better than older ones and children learn better than adult. Furthermore, he pointed out that foreign language learning in school should be started at as early age as possible and it is easier to attract and motivate children than adults. As a result, it is significant to establish good habits of reading English since elementary school level even though English, as based on the Indonesian Curriculum 2013, is as local content course. People also agree that to cultivate good reading habit is significant. This is parallel with Thames (2012) who states that it is important to help children develop active reading habits due to the fact that reading is a cornerstone of all learning. Reading is advantageous for both emotional and cerebral which means that reading can make the readers smarter and keep them sharp. For those who already set good reading habits, reading can be as a great way of freeing from everyday life's burden. Therefore, the love of reading is the single most important gift that parents can present their children or teachers can give students.

Why is nurturing love of reading at early as possible? It is because early childhood is taken into account as the critical stage in the process of development. The developments of good habits in reading at the early years can strengthen language learning and knowledge acquisition. The early years of childhood are the critical years for learning to read and developing reading as they build the foundation. Studies have proved that the benefits of reading to young children are critical for language development and children have better language comprehension and cognitive development if their parents start reading to them at an early age. This is because by six to 12 months of age, a baby will seek tactile responses and want to touch the book, or place it in his/her mouth. Then as the child gets older, he/ she will enjoy the basic stories contained within the pages of the books. Gilkerson et.al. (2017) in their study found that reading to young children enhance the language interaction between them and their parents that yields adult word counts, conversational turn counts and child vocalization counts. Then the ability to create a coherent mental representation of presented information in texts starts to develop at early reading age. As proved by Van den Brook et.al. (2017) that text comprehension skills can be fostered in preschool and early elementary school children. In addition, a study by Connor et.al (2016) elucidates that the synergistic and reciprocal effects of learning to read on other important linguistic, self-regulatory, and cognitive processes; the value of using complex models of development to inform intervention design; and how learned skills are developed during middle childhood.

However, as children grow older, it is increasingly difficult to keep them interested in reading due to a number of reasons such as chatting, watching movies, and the business of theirs. Thus, it is necessary to nurture the joy and values related to reading from an

early age. Research has shown that children who frequently read books at the age of ten, they had higher test results at the age of sixteen (16) compared to children who read less. So that it goes without saying that to develop reading habits in young age is something that parents should strive far from the early ages. Good habits of reading are affected by three key success factors namely: (1) teachers' emphasis on and implementation of reading activities; (2) the reading habits of parents and other family members; (3) teachers' professional knowledge and skills in guiding the students to read Huang & Huang (2015). It can be developed through several steps. Gambrell (2015) in his study found that there are three promising practices for supporting and nurturing the reading habit: design reading instruction based on principles of motivation, make reading relevant to the real world, and provide reading texts and tasks that are high-interest and moderately challenging (Babauta, 2017) such as: 1). *Pick up a book/reading materials*; 2). *Practice your reading habits by setting a regular 10 - 15 minutes a day*; 3). *Don't give up reading because a winner never quits, but a quitter never wins*; 4). *Don't put too much pressure on yourself-make reading as your pleasure activity*; 5). *Make it pleasurable and make your reading time as your favorite time of the day*, 6). *Have a reading hour or reading day*. Moreover, Aguilar (2013) in her classroom observation toward her students also found ten suggestions to cultivate a love of reading which can be conducted by any teacher teaching any subject, parents, and administrator as well. They are 1) modeling; 2) sharing your reading experiences; 3) inviting students to socialize around reading such as setting up book clubs, reading groups, or literature cycles; 4) Organizing a Read-on-Thon; 5) taking a field trip- to school library for example; 6) Listening to audio books such as playing short passages; 7) Inviting authors to speak; 8) making connection between reading and other issues; 9) *Learning about specific needs for specific populations*; 10) Teaching reading strategies.

To know the types of book that children like is important to encourage them to read. It is also important for children to have a wide variety of reading materials in the classroom or at home. Teachers should create a comfortable reading space for children. Additionally, it is significant to set an understanding that reading should not be used as punishment. Reading to your children is very significant as well, because children love to hear when a good story is read to them. Accordingly, motivating young learners to learn English through stories at an early age provides them with the opportunity to widen their horizons and stimulate their early enthusiasm and enhance their awareness of the rich use of English. Stories are unquestionably a significant part of children's literacy development. This is in line with Mart (2012) who found that stories are motivating for young learners and they can create a happy and enjoyable learning environment. In addition, Astuti (2014), in her research revealed that the availability of English supplementary reading cards which are mostly in the form stories are proved to be able to be an influential trigger of reading interest for young learners. Moreover, reading to children is also useful to extend the children's emotional and behavioral (Ai Lian Kim, 2008 as quoted Mart, 2012).

Talking about reading is mostly related with reading books. Yet, there are actually a various reading materials that children can use to practice their developing reading skills such as magazines, comics, manuals, newspaper, poetry, travel brochures, encyclopedias, sport programs, catalogs, recipes, dictionaries, play scripts, atlases, road sign, and books

they write (McDonald, 2013). Reading materials might include all kinds of print. They are written materials intended to be read. They should cover a variety of topics fulfilling every student's needs. As being claimed by Brown (2004) that appropriate selection of children's literature can give students' exposure to new, illustrated vocabulary in context and can provide repetition of key words and phrases that students can master and learn to manipulate and provide a sense of accomplishment.

In order that the stories as part of children literary works are really attracting young learners, to consider the criteria of reading selection is demanding. They include: age appropriateness-theme, simple language, limited use of metaphor and unfamiliar experiences, use of rhyme, unambiguous plot, realistic but simple dialogue, potential for reading aloud, brevity and good illustration, content appropriateness to children's age/intellectual level, slightly above the level of the learner, repeated, predictable language pattern, and clear illustration (Smallwood, 1988). In addition, Steinbeck (2008) lists the characteristics of using stories with young learners namely action oriented, personal (use of familiar characters), not too detailed both in terms of the story and the visual used, allowing for content extension, and using comprehensible input.

When the stories are not available yet, to write attracting stories is necessary. Further to the previously mentioned criteria of good children stories, Green (2011), mentions several elements that can be brought into a real story: *Idea*. It is to find ideas from many sources and combine them to make an original story and search ideas in real life; *Sketch the "basics" of the story* which includes such as sympathetic character who faces a problem and solves the problem; *Fill in the details*: Character with some important traits namely having problem and ways to solve it and *Conflict* with the idea that the stronger the story problem, the stronger the story; *Planning the plot*; *Planning the scene*; *Write*; and *Revise*. In short, to consider the criteria of joyful and interesting stories is significant to create good and meaningful children stories.

### C. Research Methodology

As the objective of this study is to develop and produce joyful reading materials for students of suburban elementary schools, the design employed is Research and Development (Borg, 1983 & Ary, et.al., 1985) consisting of four broader phases i.e.: Research, Development, Validation and Finalization Phase which are done sequentially. *In the Research Phase*, the researchers do some activities namely reviewing literature on joyful and interesting reading materials, characters education, and English for young learners used as the basis to develop instruments- questionnaire and interview guide used in doing Need Analysis. The questionnaire containing some elements of interesting and joyful children stories was distributed to the Elementary School students living in suburban areas. To validate the data collected through the questionnaire, an interview to both the students and the teachers of such schools was conducted. Meanwhile, *in the Development Phase*, the product of Joyful Story Sheets (JoSS) was drafted in accordance with the data resulted in the stage of Need Analysis. The draft which are in the form of story sheets for the 3rd, the 4th, the 5th, and the 6th graders were developed according to the selected characters i.e. hard working, discipline, independence, honesty, and tolerance equipped

with 8 story sheets for each character. If there are five selected character basis, so that there will be about 40 story sheets. The number of story sheets is decided based on the fact that normally there are 30 students in each class. With this number of sheets, it is expected that each student has an equal chance to select their own reading sheet. Subsequently, *in the Evaluation Phase*, the draft of JoSS was evaluated through 2 ways i.e. proof read and expert validation and pilot project done sequentially. After being validated by expert(s) in the fields of reading and EYL, the draft was revised accordingly. Then, the pilot project was carried out to the users of the product of two (2) suburban elementary schools in East Java. This was done in collaboration with the English teachers and classroom teachers of the selected schools. The classroom teacher is responsible for observing the students' interest in English reading practices and the English teacher is responsible for observing the difficulty level of language and readers. This pilot project was done for the first fifteen minutes of the class for a week during 2 weeks. In addition, at the end of the pilot project, a questionnaire was addressed to the students aiming at finding out their opinion on the appropriateness of the reading material, the difficulty level of the language used, and students' interest level to read the product. Finally, *Draft Finalization Phase* was conducted in accordance to the result of the evaluation phase to describe the weakness and the strength of the proposed product. The final product of this study is Joyful Story Sheets (JoSS) used to build character education and to establish love reading for the Elementary School students living in suburban areas.

#### **D. Research Findings and Discussion**

By referring to the Indonesian Education System Constitution no 21 year 2003 article 4 no 1 stating that *education is established democratically and fairly and is not discriminatory by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values, and the progress of the nation* and 8 values of character education as stated in the 2013 curriculum, JoSS was developed under the consideration of some aspects, namely lay out which is equipped with appropriate font size and forms, pictures, colorful paper; themes which contain life lesson, cultural values; and characters namely hard working, discipline, independence, honesty, and tolerance. By reading JoSS, the EYL students mainly living in suburban areas can take some moral values and at the same time establish their love of reading. Having been proved read, validated by the experts in EYL and Reading Comprehension, and tried out, there are some points that need to be noticed.

The findings obtained in *the research phase* indicate some characteristics of JoSS. They are classified into three points: lay out, the appropriateness of the language use, and the goals of readers. In terms of the lay out, it should use clear and various font sizes and different font forms. In addition, it should also be equipped with various colorful pictures on a variety of colorful papers as well. The appropriateness of language used deals with the simplicity of the diction, terms, and sentences. Meanwhile, the goals of the readers are concerned with the theme and moral values reflected in the developed stories. Those three elements are integrated each other. Stories are considered to be joyful if they possess these characteristics: they use simple sentences of the EYL competence level, contain character education and moral values which are close to their daily lives, and are presented

in various font and font sizes with colorful images. JoSS was developed in the development phase of R & D based on those characteristics. After passing through several steps of validating the product by expert validation, proof read, and try out of the product, findings are discussed below.

### **1. Interesting Images Provided in each Story of JoSS Stimulates Students' Interest in Reading**

It is revealed that the language in the developed stories used should be at an equal level of students' language proficiency, namely using simple words, terms and sentences, and taking Islamic heroes, cartoon characters, names of animals and plants, and toys as the main characters. In addition, they should also take daily lives and heroes as the themes of the stories, use children idols; and should be developed in the form of *fairy tales*. Concerning with the goals of the readers, this research shows that JoSS should be developed to help young learners to be interested in English, to build good characters, and to nurture good habits in reading English. Meanwhile, the criteria of joyful story are comprehensible and interesting for the young learners, appropriate with their imagination and arouse-curiosity of reading the other stories.

By referring to Education System Constitution no 21 year 2003 article 4 no 1 and 8 values of character education as stated in 2013 curriculum, JoSS was developed under the consideration of some aspects, namely lay out which is equipped with appropriate font size and forms, pictures, colorful paper; language which should use simple word choice or terms and simple sentences of about 5 to 25 depending on the school grade; themes which contain life lesson, cultural values, and characters consisting of *hard working, discipline, independence, honesty, and tolerance*.

This research reveals some points. First, the selection of color and image has triggered the students of elementary schools to read. This can be clearly seen from the student's comment that she likes to read JoSS, "I like this story entitled "Let's Toss" because the figures illustrated is fascinating. I understand the content of the story and I am keen on reading these story sheets if they are available in my school (*Citra*). There are some other students' quoted comments claiming about their interest in reading the stories provided in JoSS due to the interesting pictures and images.

I read the story "A Farmer" and I am interested in the content of the story and its pictures. I understand the content of this story. If it is available in my school I want to read it. (*Anonim*)

I like the story entitled "My School Bus" and I am interested in its pictures. It tells about having vacation. If this story is put in my school, I will read it" (*Faiq*).

This indicates that figures and pictures illustrated in each story sheet of JoSS contribute much in attracting young learners to read. This fact tells that pictures or images are the powerful battery for energizing love of reading among the EYL. There are also some other quoted statements proving that funny and attracting pictures on a story sheet affect the establishment of reading love and understanding on English, as stated in this



quoted statement: "I like a story entitled "Smart Students". The story and the pictures are interesting. If I have this book, I want to read it and the other stories are also interesting. I am impressed with this book because the picture is interesting and this makes me understand English." This is parallel to Bohlin (2005) stating that narrative images feed the readers imagination and help them to set their understanding about what people select and why as well as how they conduct themselves in private and public life.

## **2. JoSS Product is Really Needed**

The absence of reading materials appropriate with the needs of the young learners living in suburban areas has led to the need of providing those stories for them. There are some quoted statements from the students stating that they really need interesting readers to read as reflected in one of the quoted statements: "...*My impression towards this book "A Clean House" (while showing the story sheet she was reading) is that I like it because I don't have any book to read at home. So, If I have this book I want to read it because I like it.*"(Cinta). There are some other students' statements indicating their needs and willing to own these Joyful Story Sheets so that they can read and enjoy reading. This fact indicates that students need interesting readers. Thus, to write joyful stories is necessity. As stated by Golden (2010) that it is significant to write literary works such as short stories, picture stories, and the other types of stories for children that should be integrated as part of the instructional process.

## **3. The appropriate theme of JoSS can promote moral development and triggers EYL students to read**

The interesting theme does not only encourage the EYL students to read but also attract them to appreciate meanings and moral values reflected in the stories. This is implicitly stated in the students' quoted statement: *A story entitled "Doing my homework" is about a smart and diligent student who always does his homework. I like this story because it is interesting and meaningful. If this book is available at school, I will read it everyday.*" (Salsabila). This can be clearly seen that JoSS products as one of the literary works are powerful to sharpen students' intelligence, to define meanings and to deeply influence their moral development. The findings are in line with Crippen (2012) stating that children literature is helpful to develop emotional intelligence and it has power to promote emotional and moral development.

Moreover, the appropriate theme provided in stories of JoSS has attracted the EYL students to read. This is proved from some quoted statements of students stating that the stories of JoSS are interesting so that they are interested to read. For example: *I like the story entitled "Learning to read" because it is interesting. It is about learning to read books.*"(Hadi). JoSS is interesting readers because the themes of the stories are simple but they were developed into interesting stories for children by using simple languages of their own level of understanding. In the other quoted statement, it is explicitly written that *"I like this story because it is about Math. I like Math. This story is good, interesting and it contains about lesson."*(Indiana). This indicates that the interesting theme which is usually close to the students' interest is meaningful to impress them to read and encourage enjoy reading. This

fact says that the product of JoSS is considered as good and interesting stories because they contain interesting themes with which the EYL can enjoy reading, mainly reading English text as main goal of developing these readers of JoSS for EYL students. The appropriate interesting theme is powerful to stimulate the students' love of reading and nurture them to understand texts written in English. This finding is parallel with Prendergast, et.al. (2018) who found that one of the recurring themes of literature which make children enjoy and engaged in the instruction is the one that can make personal connections with the literature or relate the way the stories in the books resonates with certain aspects of their personal life. In short, it can be noted that by reading JoSS, the elementary school students who mainly live in suburban areas can take some moral values and at the same time establish their love of reading, because the themes are of their interest.

#### 4. JoSS Readers Bring about the EYL to be Critical

The findings of this research also show that stories in JoSS have inspired students of elementary school to be critical towards texts. This can be seen from the students' recognition that even though the appearance of the color is interesting and the picture portrays the content of the story, but the picture illustration indicates sadness, sorrow, pain, disappointment, or the other negative states, the EYL students' interest is disturbed. This fact shows that the EYL students are very critical. Take for example, although they enjoy reading the story, the picture of fighting between two characters in the story entitled "Mangoo Juice" has made them criticize that it is not good one. Fighting is bad manner, so picture of fighting is also thought to be bad. *"I like the story "Mango Juice" because it is good, but I don't like the picture because of a fight, if this book is mine I want to read it, because it is interesting"* commented Julian. The quoted statement of the EYL student indicates that young learners have high sensitivity and detail attention, so that establishing good manner through reading stories in JoSS among them is appropriate because each sheet of the stories reflects character and moral values. Thus, they will naturally learn and are expected to build characters as prescribed in the stories. The young readers' criticality towards the actual readings can be as an additional benefit for assimilating moral values and character without having to go through an exhaustive process of the readers' thought and values. This finding supports Almerico (2014) who reveals that literary-based instructional program can be brought into the curriculum in helping to develop character traits in a meaningful, substantial manner and reinforce literary skill such as reading and enjoying stories. This appears from their ability to retell content of the story the have read, as reflected in this quoted interview: *"I like the story "We Can Go to School Together", because it is very good. This sorry is about going to school together with friends, as I usually do."* (Roghhib). The statement shows that the reader expressively shows the results of his reading activities and is able to share the story with the others. The ability to retell the story proves that the story he chose is suitable with the level of his English competence. There are some other proofs showing the appropriateness of the theme and the level of English competence which then encourage the EYL students to enjoy reading.

“I like the story “My Son” because it is interesting and...the story is about the sun which is very discipline to do its task and I always wait everyday. If it is in my school, I want to read this book” (Nikmatul)

“I like this story...”My Days”, this story is about daily activities.” (Bilqis)

The ability of each reader to understand the content of the story and then retell the reading results make him want to read it further. This proves that JoSS product is worthy of reading that can make the EYL students interested in reading. This shows that JoSS is able to become a medium to foster love of reading while instilling positive behavior contained in the stories.

Thus, JoSS as example of children stories can be used as an instrument to naturally reinforce love of reading and nurture moral values for the EYL students who read it. As stated by Golden (2010) that literary work is as an incentive for assimilation of provision of ideological infrastructure and values. It is also a means of educating to a way of life without brainwashing.” Furthermore, Bohlin (2005), in his book states that literature gives students privileged insight into the moral journey of a life.

### **5. Stories in JoSS Increase EYL Students’ Passion of Learning**

Another important finding is that stories provided in JoSS have power to arouse greater learning passion. This can be explicitly seen from this quoted students’ statement:

“This story is about lesson that I like, and I like to go to school. This book is good, interesting, and it contains lesson. The lesson attracts me to keep learning. If this book belongs to me, I will read it everyday and understand it.” (Indana).

From the above statement, it can be noted that the reader has passion to learn because she finds that the content of the story she read is about their favorite lesson. Moreover, the stories offered in JoSS have made her enthusiasm and passion of learning gets increased. Her expectation to have JoSS with her also indicates that the stories available in JoSS trigger her to set love of reading and studying. There are some other EYL students’ statements proving that the stories in JoSS bring them about having set love of learning lessons and reading. One of them is “*I like this storybook because the story is very good. The title is “Going to School”. It is about going to school with my friend. My impression is that this storybook is interesting and I want to read it.*” (Hima). This shows that the reader feels happy and interested in reading. This is the goal of developing this story book for EYL students namely to foster their love of reading. The growing interest and love of reading is the main point that must be sustainably maintained because reading is the underlying basis to nurture literacy so that they can take various kinds of lesson and inspiration to support their life.

## 6. The EYL Students can Take some Moral Values Reflected in the Stories

The other important finding which can be revealed is that the EYL students are able to take some moral values reflected in the stories of JoSS they have read. This is considered at high level of understanding for them, because moral values are not explicitly written and expressed in the stories. Instead, they can be revealed after having criticized and comprehensively connected one event to the other events in the story they are reading. This fact can be found in the students quoted statement: "...I like reading this story entitled "An Honesty Canteen". The story is about the advantages of being honest" (Gani). The reader understands that buying and selling activities carried out in the place illustrates the meaning of honesty and that honesty is exactly advantageous in everyday life. Through the reading process, the EYL students are able to take some moral values useful for their lives. Another proof obtained from the EYL students is as follows:

"I like this storybook "A Small Elephant", because it is interesting. The story is about a small elephant. My impression about this book is that this book makes me smart. If this book is mine, I want to read it, because it is funny." (Calista)

The above-quoted statement of students shows that reading the story can make the student smart. He/She was impressed with the story and was able to take moral values. This fact is the evidence that she enjoys reading the story and can find the meaning of the stories and can take some moral values. This finding is consistent with the study of Baratz and Haziera (2012) revealing that the process of acquiring children's norms and values can be obtained through the process of reading stories with the guidance of the adults.

## 7. The Theme is Closely Related with the EYL Daily Lives

The stories available in JoSS products offered to students positively impressed them. The stories are worthy and interesting to read so that almost each student who reads their own selected sheet of JoSS is willing that the JoSS product can be provided at their school. This is because they want to be able to read it at any time they want to. This indicates that the product can help the students to foster sense of reading and strengthen those who already established love of reading. One of the reasons of this phenomenon is that the stories employ characters which are close to the students' lives such as popular cartoon characters in Indonesia i.e. Dora, Upin Ipin; popular Javanese names like Bambang, Jono; Indonesian idol i.e. Zohri; famous Islamic heroes i.e. Fatima, Ali; and familiar animal characters i.e. Lion, Monkey, Crocodile. As reflected in one of the quoted translated students' statement "*I like and am interested in reading the story "Dora" ...If the book is available at school, I want to read it" (Jesi)*". The themes included in the stories are concerned with the young learners' daily lives so that they can easily feel being engaged in the stories when they are reading, i.e. daily prayer, keeping clean of the surrounding, learning to read, helping parents, daily routine activities and so on. All the themes should reflect certain characters and values namely: discipline, honesty, independence, hardworking, and tolerance which become the focus of developing this JoSS. The finding shows that one of the EYL, who read a story containing about a theme appropriate with his hobby, namely

“running”, mentioned that the story entitled “*Yes, I can*” tells about a character who likes to run. The theme of the picture used in the story also describes that of the story. Therefore, he likes to read it and want to own the stories of JoSS. This fact can be clearly seen in his quoted statement below:” ...a story “*Yes I can*” is about a child of fisherman who lives in a distant coastal range. I like the picture because the character likes to run as I do...If the story is available in my class, I will read anytime I will.” This impressing moment is also experienced by Yusuf, one of the subjects of this study. He was really impressed with the story entitled “Cleaning Classroom”, because it tells about cleaning a classroom together. He then correlates with his home activities which are usually done together with his families. He further tells about what he like and unlike to do, for example, he feels funny if he is assigned to clean bathroom and he does not like to be assigned to clean the pool. This can be clearly described in his following statement.

The story of "Cleaning Classroom" is about how to clean a class on Wednesday. I like the picture, because the picture for me is funny. I like the story because I like to clean the class together. For me, to clean the bathroom is very funny. I don't like cleaning the pool. (Yusuf).

Stories are considered as joyful if they possess these characteristics: they use simple sentences of the EYL competence level, contain character education and moral values which are close to their daily lives, and are presented in various font and font sizes with colorful images.

### **8. The Stories of JoSS are Inspiring**

One of the findings that can be noted is that the story available in JoSS is considered to be inspiring. For example, a student reading a story entitled “To My Regret” was inspired with the character of the story who regrets because of getting zero score as reflected in following quotation.

“I like the story entitled “*To My Regret*”, because it is good, but I don’t like the picture because the character gets zero point and the story is about his regret to fail...’ (Jazeera)

He thinks that to get zero score is an academic failure and he does not want to experience the same so that he has to be discipline and to work hard. Commonly, for the young learners, zero is the indicator of failure and not to get academic success is embarrassing among their classmates and it is a nightmare. They are worried to experience the same as the character in the story. This is due to the above mentioned-fact that the student reading his own selected story of JoSS gets involved in either the lay out or the life of the story. This proves that the stories are able to inspire and encourage the readers’ value of being discipline and of working hard in order not to regret. This fact shows that stories of JoSS which are classified as children literature have power to trigger the students reading the stories to build character and mediate moral values. As stated by Ewers (2009) that there are some responsibilities of children’s literature. Two of them are to mediate either knowledge or values and to serve either religious or moral education. Children’s literature

should serve the intellectual development of children or young people and their acquisition of knowledge as promoted in the Indonesia Curriculum 2013 which gives much attention on building character values within Indonesian students. In other words, the product of this research, JoSS, is proved to be able to inspire young learners to avoid from having bad manners contrasting to their religious values such as putting something in inappropriate place (sitting on a luggage), being lazy, cheating, being intolerance and dishonest. Moreover, this inspires them to be able to distinguish between good and bad manners which shows that the the goal of developing JoSS namely to establish some certain characters as prescribed in the Indonesian curriculum 2013 is seemingly believed to be achieved.

The other important point found is that the students reading the stories of JoSS are inspired to build love of reading. This can be seen they are eager to have the stories so that they can both enjoy reading the stories and retell the stories to their peers. It is clearly reflected in this student' translated quoted statement- "...I like the story entitled *"We can go to School Together"* because the story is very good. The story is about an interesting experience of going to school together." (Roghiiib). To be able to comment that the story is very good shows the reader enjoys and is inspired with the story. The following quoted student' translated statements describes that the student needs reading books and is inspired to read as well.

"...My impression towards this book (while showing the story sheet being read with the title *"A Clean House"*) is that I like it very much because I have no reading book at home. So, if this belongs to me I will read it because I like it." (Cinta).

Those facts describe the students' willingness to build love of reading because of the availability of reading stories appropriate to their needs in terms the appropriateness of their needs. As insisted by Golden (2010) that it is impossible to disregard the importance of literature written for children on the subject and it should be installed as part of the teaching process." However, the reading books for students living in suburban schools are found to be almost absent. This is supported by one of the quoted teacher' statement below:

"Because of limited media (English books, magazines, storybooks), students are difficult to get the book. Therefore, these story sheets are very meaningful to fulfill the students' need on reading. This is useful to build students' love of reading" (Bu Nur)

In addition, the students' inspiration of reading the stories provided in JoSS points out that they enjoy reading the stories containing about themes of their own lives and engaged in the life of the stories' character. This can further make the readers' personal connections with the literature and relate the plot of the stories with certain aspects of their personal life such as academic and moral building. This finding supports the study of Prendergast, et.al. (2018) that one of the recurring themes of literature which make children enjoy and engaged in the instruction is the one that can make personal

connections with the literature or relate the way the stories in the books resonates with certain aspects of their personal life.

In conclusion, it can be point out that story sheets compiled in JoSS inspires the students to be interested in reading which further triggers them to build love of reading English stories especially for some reasons:

1. The stories are simple, nice, and interesting.
2. The stories are easy to be understood because they are equipped with the pictures drawn appropriate with the content of the stories.
3. The pictures are good and interesting.
4. The lack and or the absence of reading books either at homes or at schools.
5. The stories successfully encourage the young learners reading the stories to learn English.
6. The stories teach some moral and life values.
7. The themes of the stories are closely associated with the students' daily lives.
8. The level of reading difficulties is proved to be suitable with the EYL of school in suburban areas.

#### **E. Specification of "JoSS" Product**

The product offered in JoSS is classified based on the students' level or grades, namely JoSS for Students of the third, the forth, the fifth, and the sixth grade of Islamic Elementary School (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*). The product consists of 40 different story sheets which are developed based on 5 character values. They are discipline, hard working, honesty, independence, and tolerance. Each character value is developed into 8 different story sheets. They are described as follows:

##### *a. The Titles of JoSS product for the third grade students*

1. Discipline: Let's Brush Our Teeth, Wash Your Hands!, My Days, Fatima's Garden, My Sun, Keep Studying, Going to School, and Reading Lover
2. Hard Working: Smart Student, A Clean House, My Mom's Day, A Toy Car, Learning to Read, A Good Boy, Let's Work Hard!, and Learning to Walk
3. Honesty: Not Anymore, An Honesty Canteen, To My Regret, No Cheating, Mirror, Mango Juice, Bubble Gum, A *Sempol* Seller
4. Independence: We Can Go to School Together, Sleeping Alone, By Myself, Learning to Tie My Shoes, A Small Elephant, My Father's Car- Bobby, I Can Do It, dan No Feeding Anymore
5. Tolerance: Bicycle, Drawing Class, Helping Ijat, Visiting Paula, Yusi and The Cat, A Broken Dish, Sharing for Meals, dan Let's Buy Fruits

##### *b. The Titles of JoSS product for the forth grade students*

1. Discipline: Wake Up Late, Checking Luggage, Toothache, Wearing Helmet, My Name is Aziz, I Want to Be..., My School Bus, and Jogging Together
2. Hard Working: Taking Care of Kittens, Mr. Supandi, Joining Speech Contest, My Mother, My House, A Farmer, My Bag, My Brother Can Do It

3. Honesty: The Stars and The Moon, Nana and The Ostrich, Mahmud's Pen, Keeping My Little Brother, My Beautiful Hair, I Must be Honest, To Cute Cats, and Because of Yanto
4. Independence: Zaenab, An Independent Girl, Taking a Bath, Alone at Home, Dora, My Regular Activities, Doing Homework, My Mother's Job Training, and A Cute Ant
5. Tolerance: A Wise Lion, Friendship, Helping Bagas, Let's Toss, George and Friends, The Colorful Rainbow, Lowering The Volume of Music, and Thank You, I Am Fasting

*c. The Titles of JoSS product for the fifth grade students*

1. Discipline: Five, Education Day, Wash Your Hand!, Mrs. Betty's Prize, My Cute Baby Sheep, My Fruits was Gone, 5 Praying Times, and Yes, I Can
2. Hard Working: Regretful, Practice to Ride A Bicycle, My Father is My Hero, A Lucky Poor Boy, Cutting The Grass, A Porter, Bobo and Momo, dan Hamish's Dream
3. Honesty: Bad Score, Be Honest!, Finally, Nina Admits, Mrs. Belinda's Admission, Pretending to Get Sick, Wallet, Train Ticket, and The Truth is Good.
4. Independence: Save Your Money!, Cleaning Classroom, My Daily Activities, My "Pussy", A Penguin and Seagull, I Try and I can, Angga's Hobby is Doing Exercise, and Yola, An Independent Girl;
5. Tolerance: Cheerful Morning, In The Library, Time for Lunch, Let's Play a Game, Lower Down The Volume, Where is Paulus?, Village Competition, and Let's See Doni's Mom

*d. The Titles of JoSS product for the sixth grade students*

1. Discipline: Traffic Signs, Taking Shower!, The Mud, Haryono, A Discipline Boy, Four Rabbits, Red Light and "Stop", Praying Dhuha, and Cleaning the White Board.
2. Hard Working: Dream of Being Policeman, Finally, I Can Do It, Mr. Sukino- My Favorite Teacher, Tom and Jerry, The Monkey and The Lion, Learning to Eat, A Mouse deer and A Farmer, dan Ismail's Dream
3. Honesty: Sorry, Doraemon, We Won't Make Any Trouble, The Princess and The Cashew, The Fisherman and The Goldfish, Yoga and The Cheating Sheet, Momo- A Good Monkey,
4. Independence: My Activity in The Boarding House, My New School, Doing My Homework, My Experience, Kiky, The Cute Rabbit, I dare to Sleep Alone, Jonas' Mother, and My Lovely Cat
5. Tolerance: Accepting Others, The Beauty Contest, Rizky, A Special Boy, Jody- An Indian Student, Australia and I, Why do We Have to be Different?, Guan Lin and Friends, and Raka's Father and Mr Roland .



## **F. Conclusion and Suggestion**

To sum up, this study reveals two significant points. They are the specification of the product and its contribution towards establishing certain characters as prescribed in the Indonesian 2013 Curriculum and nurturing love of reading English. JoSS was developed on the basis of the students' needs which is characterized by various colorful pictures illustrating the theme of the stories with different font sizes and forms; theme, characters, and language level appropriate with the EYL students' needs. In addition, this Research and Development reveals that JoSS as the product of this research is proved to be as a means to stimulate the EYL students' love of reading, to encourage them to learn English, and more importantly to build characters.

The product of this study which is in the form of Joyful Story Sheets contributes to build good traits and characters of elementary EFL students such as discipline, hard working, independence, honesty, and tolerance. In addition, the product of this research is also advantageous in helping students promoting their interest of reading English which leads to the interest of learning English so that their English will also get improved. To the long-term use of this product, it will also help students establish good reading habits. Moreover, JoSS has pedagogically great contribution in providing the students of elementary schools with reading materials used in "*Classroom Sheets Corner Program*" (CSC Program for example) which is intended to create a literate atmosphere and nurture their love reading in English. With the help of a classroom teacher and or an English teacher, this CSC Program can be implemented through "*Reading Aloud*" or "*10 minutes morning sustained silent reading (TeMiMoSSR)*" or "*Story Telling*" Activities which will greatly contribute to give a role model of fluent and accurate reading to their elementary school students. Therefore, it is suggested for further researchers to conduct experimental study which intends to scientifically prove that pedagogical implication of JoSS.

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