

## Representation of Moral Values in the When English Rings a Bell Textbook for Eighth-Grade Students

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### ABSTRACT

English textbooks function not only as tools for developing language competence but also as media for shaping students' character and moral values. However, studies examining how moral values are systematically represented in junior secondary EFL textbooks, particularly in the eighth-grade When English Rings a Bell textbook, remain limited. This study aims to analyze the types of moral values represented in the textbook, their dominance and distribution across chapters, and the ways in which they are represented. This study employed a qualitative approach with a document content analysis design. The primary data source was the When English Rings a Bell textbook for eighth-grade junior high school students. Data were collected through intensive reading and note-taking and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that all eighteen moral values were identified in the textbook, although their distribution was uneven. The most dominant values were discipline (20%), hard work (16%), and fondness for reading (9%), followed by social care (6%). In contrast, religious values and tolerance were the least represented, each appearing only 1%. The distribution of values across chapters was thematic, with some chapters emphasizing discipline, while others highlighted hard work or curiosity. Moral values were predominantly represented through concrete actions and everyday situations familiar to students. These findings suggest that the textbook functions as a non-neutral pedagogical text that systematically prioritizes academic-performance-oriented character values, particularly discipline, persistence, and reading habits, over more reflective or pluralistic values. This study concludes that EFL textbook evaluation should address not only the presence of moral values but also the balance of their representation. Therefore, teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum developers may use these findings to enrich learning materials and strengthen character education in a more proportional manner.

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## Introduction

English textbooks at the junior secondary school level function not only as tools for mastering vocabulary, grammar, and language skills but also as media that convey social and moral orientations for students. In the Indonesian educational context, this function is important because school learning is expected not only to support academic achievement but also to strengthen character education. Through dialogues, instructions, reading texts, images, and learning activities, EFL textbooks can introduce certain values that shape students' understanding of moral attitudes and behavior in everyday life. A number of recent studies have also shown that EFL textbooks in Indonesia carry moral, cultural, and ideological messages through both verbal and visual elements (Rostiawati, 2025; Supriatna et al., 2025). Therefore, analyzing the representation of moral values in EFL textbooks is important to understand how character education is integrated into English teaching materials.

Previous studies have examined moral and character values in various EFL textbooks in Indonesia. Arwanto et al. (2024), for example, found that curiosity, honesty, and friendliness were the dominant values in elementary school English textbooks and were represented through dialogues, chapter covers, and student activity instructions. Amalia (2024) also showed that government-endorsed ELT textbooks contain diverse moral values, while Miranda et al. (2025) found that character education values in the *Interactive English* textbook appeared with unequal intensity across categories. Other studies on *English for Nusantara* also indicate that EFL textbooks can serve a dual function as language learning resources and media for moral education (Basya et al., 2025; Supriatna et al., 2025). These findings suggest that moral values are indeed present in EFL textbooks, but their patterns of representation may differ according to grade level, unit, and mode of presentation.

Although research on moral values in EFL textbooks has developed, several research gaps remain. First, most previous studies have focused more on elementary school textbooks, seventh-grade textbooks, or EFL textbooks other than *When English Rings a Bell* for eighth-grade students. As a result, studies that specifically map moral values in this textbook remain limited. Second, several previous studies tend to stop at identifying the existence of moral values without explaining in more detail which values are most dominant, how they are distributed across chapters, and how they are represented through concrete actions or students' everyday contexts. Third, recent studies on Indonesian EFL textbooks show that moral and character representations still need to be analyzed more deeply, especially in terms of value hierarchy, distribution across chapters, and forms of representation in junior secondary school textbooks (Basya et al., 2025; Supriatna et al., 2025). Thus, the research gap of this study lies in the need to analyze the representation of moral values in the eighth-grade *When English Rings a Bell* textbook in terms of value types, patterns of dominance, chapter distribution, and forms of representation.

Based on these research gaps, this study is guided by three main questions. First, what moral values are represented in the EFL textbook *When English Rings a Bell* for eighth-grade junior secondary school students in Indonesia? Second, which moral values are most dominant, and how are they distributed across the chapters of the textbook? Third, how are these moral values represented through textbook elements such as dialogues, instructions, activities, images, and concrete actions that are close to students' everyday lives? These questions enable the study not only to identify the presence of moral values but also to explain how these values are organized, prioritized, and represented in the textbook.

In line with these questions, this study aims to analyze the representation of moral values in the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook for eighth-grade junior secondary school students. Specifically, this study aims to identify the types of moral values that appear, map the dominant values and their distribution across chapters, and explain the forms of value representation through verbal elements and concrete actions in the learning materials. This study contributes to EFL textbook evaluation by emphasizing that the analysis of moral values should not be limited

to identifying whether certain values are present or absent, but should also consider the balance, dominance, and pedagogical meaningfulness of their representation. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to help teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum developers enrich the use of textbooks and strengthen character education in a more proportional and reflective manner.

### Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a document content analysis design. This design was selected because the research data consisted of texts, dialogues, instructions, illustrations, and learning activities in the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook for eighth-grade junior high school students. Qualitative content analysis is appropriate for interpreting meaning in written documents and systematically grouping data into specific categories (Kyngäs et al., 2020; Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023). Thus, this study was not intended to examine causal relationships, but rather to explain how moral values are represented in an EFL textbook in a descriptive-analytical manner.

The primary data source of this study was the eighth-grade *When English Rings a Bell* textbook published by the Ministry of Education and Culture and used in English language learning at the junior high school level. This textbook was selected purposively because it is an official textbook, widely used, and relevant to the research focus on the representation of moral values in English language learning. The units of analysis in this study included units of meaning in the textbook, such as chapter titles, dialogues, sentences, exercise instructions, illustrations, activities, and statements that indicate moral values. The analytical categories referred to the eighteen moral values in the Strengthening Character Education policy.

Data were collected through intensive reading and systematic note-taking. First, the researcher read the entire content of the textbook to understand the chapter structure, themes, and forms of material presentation. Second, the researcher marked sections that contained indications of moral values. Third, the data were recorded in a working table consisting of chapter numbers, textual or visual units, quotations or data descriptions, moral value categories, and forms of representation. This procedure was carried out so that the relationship between textual evidence, value categories, and interpretation of the findings could be clearly traced.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2020), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data condensation stage, quotations and initial findings were selected and grouped into eighteen moral value categories. In the data display stage, the classification results were organized into frequency and percentage tables to identify the most dominant values and their distribution patterns across chapters. In the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher interpreted the emerging value tendencies, patterns of dominance across chapters, and forms of moral value representation through both verbal and visual elements in the textbook.

Data trustworthiness was maintained through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was ensured by rereading the data and checking the alignment between quotations, value categories, and chapter contexts. Dependability was maintained by systematically documenting the analytical process, from category determination and data marking to the preparation of frequency tables. Confirmability was ensured by preserving data evidence in the form of textual quotations, visual descriptions, and coding tables so that the relationship between the data and findings could be traced. In addition, coding consistency was strengthened through category rechecking and peer checking with fellow researchers or supervisors. Transferability was enhanced by explaining the textbook context, units of analysis, value categories, and analytical procedures in detail. This strategy is in line with the principles of trustworthiness in qualitative research, which emphasize credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

In summary, the study was conducted through the following stages: determining the research focus, establishing the eighteen moral value categories, selecting the eighth-grade *When English Rings a Bell* textbook as the data source, reading and marking relevant data units, grouping the data into value categories, calculating the frequency and percentage of value occurrences, and interpreting the patterns of moral value representation in the textbook.

## Results

### General Distribution of Moral Values in the *When English Rings a Bell* Textbook

The results of the analysis show that the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook for eighth-grade junior high school students represents all eighteen moral values referred to in the Strengthening Character Education framework. However, the occurrence of these values is not evenly distributed, but rather shows different frequency patterns across indicators. The three most dominant values are discipline at 20%, hard work at 16%, and fondness for reading at 9%. These are followed by social care at 6%, while honesty, curiosity, patriotism, friendliness/communicativeness, environmental care, and responsibility each appear at 5%. Nationalism is recorded at 4%, creativity, appreciation of achievement, and love of peace each at 3%, independence and democracy each at 2%, while religious values and tolerance are the least frequently represented, each appearing at only 1%. These findings indicate that the moral content in the textbook is more strongly directed toward shaping learning habits and an ethos of action than toward reflective or spiritual values.

To clarify the distribution of moral values found in the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook, the results of the analysis are summarized in Table 1. This table presents all eighteen moral values along with their relative frequencies and percentages, allowing the patterns of dominance and unequal distribution of values to be read more systematically.

**Table 1.** Summary of the Frequency and Percentage of Moral Values in the *When English Rings a Bell* Textbook

No.	Moral Value	Relative Frequency	Percentage
1	Discipline	20	20%
2	Hard work	16	16%
3	Fondness for reading	9	9%
4	Social care	6	6%
5	Honesty	5	5%
6	Curiosity	5	5%
7	Patriotism	5	5%
8	Friendliness/communicativeness	5	5%
9	Environmental care	5	5%
10	Responsibility	5	5%
11	Nationalism	4	4%
12	Creativity	3	3%
13	Appreciation of achievement	3	3%
14	Love of peace	3	3%
15	Independence	2	2%
16	Democracy	2	2%
17	Religious values	1	1%
18	Tolerance	1	1%
Total		100	100%

Based on Table 1, discipline is the most dominant moral value, with a percentage of 20%, followed by hard work at 16% and fondness for reading at 9%. In contrast, religious values and tolerance have the lowest occurrence, each appearing at only 1%. This pattern indicates that the

*When English Rings a Bell* textbook emphasizes values related to orderliness, perseverance, and academic habits more strongly than reflective, spiritual, or socio-plural values.

The presence of this table strengthens the findings because readers can clearly see that the inclusion of all eighteen moral values does not automatically indicate balanced representation. The textbook does contain all moral values, but the intensity of their occurrence differs clearly. Therefore, the main finding in this section is not only that moral values are present in the textbook, but also that the textbook constructs certain character priorities through an uneven frequency of value representation.

Analytically, this pattern shows that the textbook functions not only as a medium for language learning but also as a means of transmitting character values that are implicitly structured through learning content. The dominance of discipline, hard work, and fondness for reading indicates a strong orientation toward character formation closely related to academic routines and students' everyday behavior. This is important because it shows that the integration of moral values in the textbook is carried out through selective emphasis rather than equal distribution across all values. Thus, the novelty of this finding lies in the mapping that the complete coverage of eighteen moral values is not necessarily followed by balanced intensity of representation. Nevertheless, these results should be interpreted proportionally because they are based on the frequency of value occurrences in the text and therefore do not fully reflect the pedagogical depth or internalization strength of each value among readers.

### **Patterns of Moral Value Dominance in Each Chapter**

Further analysis shows that the distribution of moral values differs across chapters, meaning that each chapter has a distinctive character emphasis. In Chapter I, the most dominant value is curiosity at 22%, whereas in Chapters II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, IX, XII, and XIII, the most dominant value is discipline, with percentages ranging from 15% to 43%. The highest dominance of discipline is found in Chapter XIII, at 43%, making it the single value with the highest percentage in one chapter. Meanwhile, hard work is the most prominent value in Chapters VIII, X, and XI, at 21%, 21%, and 20%, respectively. This pattern shows that the structure of the textbook content does not distribute moral values uniformly, but rather builds particular value emphases according to the context of the material, dialogues, and activities presented in each chapter. Thus, the textbook demonstrates a thematic, rather than random, pattern of value integration.

This finding is important because it shows that the representation of moral values in the textbook is closely related to the organization of learning materials. Certain chapters appear to be more directed toward instilling orderliness, compliance, and positive habits, while other chapters emphasize effort, perseverance, or interest in learning activities. From an academic perspective, this indicates that moral values are not merely present as additional elements, but are integrated through content design with particular tendencies. The novelty of this finding lies in the fact that the study not only identifies the types of moral values that appear, but also reveals patterns of value prioritization across chapters. However, these data remain limited to mapping value occurrences and do not yet assess whether the dominance of certain values in each chapter correlates with learning objectives or the effectiveness of character formation among students.

### **Forms of Moral Value Representation through Concrete Behavior**

The findings also show that moral values in the textbook are more frequently represented through concrete actions and everyday situations that are close to students' experiences. The value of discipline, for example, is shown through the behavior of arriving at school on time, as illustrated in the narrative that student characters always arrive punctually even though they walk to school. The value of hard work is represented through the routine activity of cleaning animal cages every morning, which illustrates sustained effort in completing tasks. In addition, creativity is displayed through the experience of making a garden bench from an old mango tree, showing the ability to

transform available resources into something new and useful. Independence is represented through the ability to carry out activities without assistance, while democracy appears through dialogue and deliberation among students to improve classroom conditions. This pattern shows that the textbook tends to instill moral values through operational behavioral examples rather than abstract normative definitions.

Substantively, this concrete form of representation strengthens the function of the textbook as an applicable medium for character education. Students are not only introduced to moral value terms but also to examples of actions that can be observed, imagined, and imitated in everyday contexts. This is an important finding because it shows that value integration in the English textbook is carried out through narratives, dialogues, images, and instructions that are close to students' world. Thus, moral values do not stand as separate messages, but are embedded in the language activities being taught. However, this study also has limitations because the identification of values still depends on the researcher's interpretation of textual and visual content, so the possibility of subjectivity in categorization remains. Therefore, these results are more appropriately positioned as a mapping of moral value representation in a textbook, as well as a basis for further research using more diverse analytical instruments.

### Discussion

The findings show that the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook contains all eighteen moral values, but their distribution is unequal. Discipline, hard work, and fondness for reading emerge as the most dominant values, while religious values and tolerance are represented the least. This pattern indicates that the textbook functions not only as a medium for language learning but also as a pedagogical text that prioritizes certain character orientations. In this context, the textbook more strongly presents performative character values related to orderliness, perseverance, compliance with school routines, and learning habits. This finding is in line with the view that EFL textbooks are value-laden texts that contain social, moral, and ideological messages through the selection of themes, dialogues, activities, and illustrations (Sitio et al., 2023; Imelwaty et al., 2022).

Critically, the dominance of discipline and hard work can be viewed as both a strength and a limitation. On the one hand, the emphasis on discipline and hard work is relevant to the need to develop students' learning ethos, especially at the junior secondary school level, where students need habituation to academic responsibility. On the other hand, an excessive dominance of these values may narrow the space for the representation of other important values, such as tolerance, religiosity, democracy, love of peace, and social empathy. When tolerance and religious values appear only in very small proportions, the textbook risks constructing a character orientation that emphasizes compliance and productivity more than ethical reflection, spiritual awareness, and the ability to live in diversity. Thus, the main issue is not the absence of moral values, but the unequal prioritization of values that may influence the direction of character education in English language learning.

Compared with previous studies, this finding reinforces the argument that the presence of moral values in textbooks does not always indicate balanced representation. Puspitasari et al. (2021) showed that English textbooks can teach moral values through discursive constructions close to students' lives, while Amalia (2024) and Miranda et al. (2025) found that character values in textbooks appear with uneven intensity. In the context of this study, such imbalance is more clearly seen because discipline and hard work receive dominant space, whereas socio-plural and reflective values are relatively limited. Therefore, textbook evaluation needs to move beyond the question of "Are moral values present?" toward more critical questions: "Which values are prioritized, which values are marginalized, and what are the implications for students' character formation?"

The distribution of moral values across chapters also shows that the textbook does not distribute values randomly, but follows certain thematic patterns. Some chapters highlight

discipline, others emphasize hard work, while curiosity dominates the early section. This pattern indicates the presence of a kind of “hidden character curriculum” in the textbook, namely a sequence of moral experiences constructed through the organization of chapters, themes, dialogues, and learning activities. This finding is in line with Arwanto et al. (2024) and Basya et al. (2025), who emphasize that value representation in EFL textbooks appears not only through verbal texts but also through images, instructions, activities, and the sequence of material presentation. Thus, textbooks need to be read as spaces of character construction, not merely as collections of language materials.

The forms of moral value representation in this textbook also tend to be concrete and operational. Discipline is shown through punctual behavior, hard work through routine activities and perseverance, creativity through the ability to produce something new, and democracy through deliberation in the classroom context. This pattern shows that the textbook does not often present moral values as abstract definitions, but rather through actions that students can observe and imitate. Pedagogically, this is a strength because students can understand moral values through situations close to their everyday lives. However, this concrete approach also has limitations if it is not accompanied by space for critical reflection. Without teacher mediation, students may perceive values only as normative behaviors, rather than as ethical principles that need to be understood, questioned, and applied contextually.

The main implication of these findings is the need for critical reading of EFL textbooks. Teachers should not use textbooks mechanically, but need to engage in pedagogical mediation by adding discussions, reflective questions, and enrichment activities related to values that are less dominant, especially tolerance, religiosity, democracy, love of peace, and social care. For textbook writers and curriculum developers, the findings of this study emphasize that integrating character education into textbooks is not sufficient by merely ensuring that all values are included; attention must also be given to the proportion, context, and depth of representation. A good textbook should not only instill compliance and work ethic, but also strengthen empathy, plurality, spiritual awareness, and the ability to engage in dialogue within diverse social life.

Thus, the contribution of this study lies in its critical mapping of the hierarchy of moral values in the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook. This study shows that the textbook does contain all moral values, but systematically prioritizes academic-performative values over reflective and socio-plural values. This finding is important for the development of EFL textbook evaluation because it emphasizes that the balance of value representation should be part of textbook quality assessment, not merely the completeness of language materials or the general presence of character values.

## Conclusion

This study shows that the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook contains all eighteen moral values, but their representation is not evenly distributed. The most dominant values are discipline, hard work, and fondness for reading, while values such as tolerance and religiosity appear in lower proportions. This finding emphasizes that English textbooks function not only as media for developing language competence but also as pedagogical texts that shape certain character orientations through frequency, chapter distribution, and forms of value representation.

The representation of moral values in this textbook tends to be realized through concrete actions and everyday situations close to students' experiences, such as arriving on time, working hard, helping others, discussing, and completing tasks. This pattern indicates that character education in EFL textbooks is more often constructed through operational practices than through normative explanations. However, the dominance of discipline and hard work also indicates the need to pay attention to value balance, especially values related to tolerance, religiosity, democracy, love of peace, and social awareness.

The main contribution of this study lies in mapping the representation of moral values by not only identifying the presence of values, but also showing the hierarchy of occurrence, patterns of dominance across chapters, and forms of representation in teaching materials. Nevertheless, this study is limited to one textbook and is based on document content analysis, so it cannot yet explain how these values are mediated by teachers, understood by students, or internalized in classroom learning practices. Therefore, future research is recommended to compare several textbooks across grade levels or curricula and to involve teachers and students through reception studies, multimodal analysis, or critical discourse analysis so that understanding of moral value representation in EFL textbooks becomes more comprehensive.

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### **Research Ethics Statement**

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of academic research. Since this study employed document content analysis, it did not involve direct human participants, clinical intervention, classroom experimentation, or the collection of personal data from students, teachers, or school communities. The primary data source was the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook for eighth-grade junior high school students, which was analyzed for academic purposes. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. Nevertheless, the research process was carried out responsibly by maintaining academic integrity, accurately representing the analyzed textbook content, and properly acknowledging all cited sources.

### **Author Contributions**

Dela Leka Andromeda: conceptualization, textbook data collection, intensive reading, initial coding of moral values, data analysis, and writing of the original draft.

Rahmadi Nirwanto: research methodology, coding verification, organization of frequency and percentage data, literature review, and manuscript editing.

Zaitun Qamariah: academic supervision, theoretical framework development, validation of the analysis, critical review of the findings and discussion, final revision, and approval of the final version.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

### **Artificial Intelligence Use Statement**

The authors declare that artificial intelligence, if used, was employed only as a technical support tool for language editing, grammar checking, translation assistance, and improving manuscript

readability. All research processes, including textbook selection, coding of moral values, data analysis, interpretation of findings, arguments, and conclusions, remain the full responsibility of the authors.

### Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of coded textbook excerpts, notes from document analysis, moral value classification tables, frequency and percentage summaries, and analytical interpretations related to the representation of moral values in the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook. Since this study is based on document content analysis and does not involve primary data from human participants, no confidential participant dataset was generated. Additional information regarding the coding process and analyzed data may be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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