

# Literacy Development Through Discussion of Literature for the Book Community in Semarang

1<sup>st</sup> Maharani Intan Andalus  
 Universitas Negeri Semarang  
 Semarang, Indonesia  
 intan\_andalus@mail.unnes.ac.id

2<sup>nd</sup> Ema Zuliani Sembada  
 Universitas Negeri Semarang  
 Semarang, Indonesia  
 emazulianis@gmail.com

**Abstract**—The word ‘community’ is used to indicate the circle of people who are united by similarities of hobbies and values while ‘literacy’ refers to the meaning of reading and writing. There is also a form of community initiated by the government with the aim of creating a knowledgeable society that is also connected with literacy. The example is ‘Rumah Pintar’. Rumah Pintar can be a means of community empowerment that accommodates various activities including literacy activities. ‘Rumah Pintar Puri Indah’ in Gedawang, Semarang, Central Java has potential to be developed so that it supports the literacy movement in the community. The purpose of this community service program is to improve the existence of Rumah Pintar Puri Indah through children’s literature discussion as a form of literacy development and provide knowledge also motivation about the importance of literacy. This activity was attended by Puri Indah managers and community representatives. In the results and discussion, this activity can generally be said to be successful. In the evaluation of the benefits of activities, participants agreed that they have gained knowledge about literacy, especially in children’s literature.

**Keywords:** *literacy development, book community*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The influence of technology and information development has made Indonesian society needs to improve ability and competence in different areas for facing competition among nation. Therefore, enhancing human resource skills needs to be taken seriously. One effort to improve human resource is by development of literacy. As stated by [1], literacy as a mean of enhancing competitive human resources is worth to be propagating in the era of industrial revolution 4.0. Furthermore, [1] said that the establishment of literacy skills is carried out simultaneously from family, school, and society in addition to ability and personality, as one of the 21st century skills.

The literacy movement in Indonesia is nothing new. Since 2016, the government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, has emphasized Gerakan Literasi Nasional (GLN/National Literacy Movement) as part of implementation of Permendikbud (Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture) No. 23 of 2015 concerning the Growth of Manners. Moreover, this National Literacy Movement is an effort to

strengthen the synergy among the main units of the literacy movement actors by gathering all potentials and extending public involvement in developing and accustoming literacy in Indonesia [2]. It covers the literacy movement in schools, families, and societies. Thus, various activities or programs to support literacy need to be further enhanced.

[3] said that reading book was basically personal, but it becomes communal at present. They—book readers share their reading experiences, exchange information about new books, and so on. People clearly named them as literacy community. The word community is used to indicate the group of people who are united by the similar interests and values, while the word literacy refers to the meaning of the ability to read and write. There are various literacy communities or book communities in Indonesia.

Furthermore, there is also a form of community that initiates by the government of Indonesia which has goals to create knowledgeable society, both directly and indirectly connected with literacy. The example is the establishment of ‘Rumah Pintar’. Rumah Pintar is a term that has the meaning of a house to learn for the community that is carried out according to the needs of the local society [4]. Rumah Pintar could be carried out as community empowerment that accommodates various activities including literacy activities. One of the Rumah Pintar that gives attention to literacy issues is Puri Indah in Gedawang village, Banyumanik district, Semarang, Central Java (Fig 1).

Rumah Pintar Puri Indah which is managed by the community, specifically by the residents of Puri Gedawang Indah has the potential to be developed so that it could help to support the literacy movement in the society. This article explains about the development of literacy for Rumah Pintar Puri Indah as community. In the field of literacy, especially those related to reading, Puri Indah provides a room that is functioned as a library equipped with cabinets containing various types of books from the society self-help. These books could be borrowed by the society freely. However, the library has not yet been used maximally by society. According to observation conducted by the writer, activity of reading and or borrowing books in Puri Indah was likely to decrease so that literacy activities in this Rumah Pintar need to be improved and

developed more. For instance, one of activities that could be done to show the existence of Rumah Pintar Puri Indah while developing community literacy is through discussion of children's literature.



Fig 1. The Location of Rumah Pintar Puri Indah

## II. THEORY

In term of Indonesian, the word 'literasi' is adapted from the word 'literacy' in English which means 'keberaksaraan' in Indonesian. Etymologically, 'literacy' comes from Latin word 'littera' (letters). According to UNESCO, literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and calculate, using printed or written material related to various contexts. Literacy involves a series of learning that allows individuals to achieve and develop their knowledge and fully participate both in limited and large societies [5].

[1] said that in the present context, literacy has a very broad meaning. Literacy could also mean a skill possessed by people to be knowledgeable in technology, politics, critical thinking, and sensitivity to their surroundings. In conclusion to the statement above, literacy skills are not only related to reading, writing, and calculating but in other way, literacy could be linked to various aspects of life. Therefore, the ability of multiple of literacy is surely become something to be done. In the implementation of 21st century education, multiple of literacy consist of literacy in reading and writing, digital literacy, cultural and social literacy, scientific literacy, financial literacy, literature and language literacy, as well as numeracy literacy are necessary skills to be owned [6].

[5] stated that literacy issue in Indonesia is not only about the lack of interest in reading, but also related more to the root of the problem of literacy itself, namely the low ability to think critically. The ability to think critically has a basic concept of understanding or identifying what the problems (conflict, contradiction) are, to direct the thinking with specific purposes of problem solving; apprehend the term of references or points

of view involved; identify and comprehend the underlying assumptions; identify and understand the basic concepts and ideas that are being conveyed; note the evidence, data, and reasons; as well as to interpret the problems. Therefore, Rumah Pintar as a component or driving agent of literacy in the community are expected to be able to carry out forms of activities that encourage critical thinking skills of the society, especially through books.

One example of activity that could be applied to the society in order to enhance the significant role of Rumah Pintar, especially in literature and language literacy, is through a children's literature discussion. Literature literacy could be interpreted as the ability to become 'literate' or the ability to understand literature. To improving reading interest in literature as well as an effort to overcome literacy issues, Rumah Pintar could take a pivotal role in increasing literacy activities of children's literature or 'sastra anak' in Indonesian.

The word 'sastra' in Indonesia, or namely 'literature' in English, comes from Sanskrit which consists of the root sas-, which in derivative verbs means directing, teaching, or giving instructions; and the ending -tra usually denotes aids, tools or media. In conclusion, the word 'literature' means teaching aids, manuals, instruction books or lectures.

In terms of terminology, literature conveyed many meanings or definitions. [7] identified some definitions about literature including (1) literature is the art of language; (2) literature is a spontaneous expression of deep feelings; (3) literature is the expression of thoughts in language. What is meant by thoughts in this statement are views, ideas, feelings, reasoning, and all human mental activities; (4) literature is the inspiration of life which is manifested in a form of beauty; (5) literature is all books that contain deep feelings and moral strength with a touch of holiness, freedom of view, and dazzling form. Furthermore, according to [7], there are three things to distinguish between literary works and other non-literary writings, namely fictionality, aesthetic values, and special use of language. According to these various meanings and definitions, literature could be understood as work of art which is created through imaginative language media and has aesthetic functions.

The definition of children's literature is inseparable from the meaning of literature. However, it is found to have specific aspect in children's literature which is related to the understanding of the children themselves. According to the United Nations, people under the age of 18 are categorized as children except according to the law that applies to children, maturity is achieved earlier. In accordance to the age limit as stated above, it means that literary works created by them who are not yet mature are referred to children literature. Actually, the definition of children's literature is not only related to the age suitability.

Characteristics of children's literature includes the aims of making it interesting for children, being written for children,

talking about their lives, reflecting their feelings, involving children's experiences, starting from the needs of children and according to the level of experience and maturity of children [8]. These children's literature examples could be taken from local/native stories, such as folklore, fables, fairy tales, legends, puzzles, myths, rhymes, poetry, poems, short stories, picture books, as well as children's novels.

### III. METHOD

In conducting the community service program, the writer carried out approach method in the form of "Discussion of Children's Literature in Rumah Pintar Puri Indah". Generally, this program consisted of two main activities: (1) program planning was carried out to identify the needs of Rumah Pintar which the results are in the form of knowledge or insight of: understanding the characteristics of participants in the discussion, comprehending the concepts of children's literature discussion materials, understanding the planning of children's literature discussion activities, understanding the implementation of children's literature discussion as well as evaluation activities; (2) the phases of community service program implementation which included several activities such as introducing the understanding and importance of literacy, enhancing the understanding of children's literature, carrying out questions and answers or discussion, and doing evaluations.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Literacy enhancement activities for the book community, in this case is Rumah Pintar Puri Indah, practically conducted through presentation by the researcher then followed by discussion involving the target participants, namely the Rumah Pintar's manager and representatives of Puri Gedawang Indah residents. This activity was conducted on Wednesday, October 31, 2018. The explanations conveyed in this community service program activities included the understanding of literacy itself and children's literature as well.

Actually, the implementation of community service related to literacy was the first activity carried out in Rumah Pintar Puri Indah. The activity began with opening and filling in the attendance list. During the activity, participants were enthusiastic by giving responses and asking out questions. Questions and responses conveyed by the participants showed their attention and concern for literacy issues, for instance they concluded that books are no longer being the main source of information for children and the children have different interests recently. During the question and answer session, there were questions related to the use of gadgets or devices for literacy of children's literature and the differences from the reading children's literature books. Furthermore, there were question related about how to overcome the hobby of children who prefer watching TV rather than reading books. At the end of the activity, a number of children's literature books were donated to add to the collection of books in the Rumah Pintar Puri Indah.

Based on a thorough evaluation of the materials and benefits, this community service program activity in the form of literacy enhancement through discussions of children's literature in Rumah Pintar Puri Indah could be said to be successful. In term of materials, participants were able to understand about literacy and the importance of children's literature. And in term of participant, the number of participants in this activity which was originally planned to be attended by ten participants, but then there were twelve participants joined this activity. This showed that the enhancement and empowerment of similar activities are needed by the target audiences or participants in the future ahead. Not only in terms of quantity of participants but also in terms of quality, the participants were enthusiastic from the beginning until the end of the activity. They were listening to the speakers, asking questions, and giving responses.

Before the activity was finished, the manager and the participants agreed that in evaluating the benefits of activities, they had gained knowledge about literacy. They believe that literacy development and enrichment activities through literary discussions, specifically children's literature, are actually needed by the society. The evaluation has been done through participants' responses after the activity had finished. It showed that the participants were enthusiastic because of the activity is relevant to the role of mothers in educating their children and families. Additionally, other activities that support the development and enrichment in the field of literacy in Rumah Pintar need to be followed up again.

### V. CONCLUSION

According to the explanation above, it can be concluded that literacy development and enrichment activities through discussions of children's literature in Rumah Pintar Puri Indah need to be done and improved. Other forms of activities that support the development of literacy in the community need to be carried out and intensified so that Rumah Pintar will continuously exist and develop as well.

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