

Sociocultural Intervention Strategy for Primary Literacy Teaching

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Abstract—Currently Indonesia ranks low in literacy culture, especially reading and writing. This means that the education system in Indonesia has not been able to create a culture of literacy among learners. In addition, communities and families have not become a model for their children in conducting various literacy activities. This study involved 187 parents and 251 elementary school teachers in ten districts/cities of West Java. The two-year study shows that parents rely heavily on schools or teachers to guide children in literacy activities. They feel that school assistance is indispensable when children have reading difficulty. Therefore, parents recognize that communication with teachers is essential to know and understand the development of their children's literacy. In fact, parents need to improve their language and literacy skills but they only show interest in getting the training but are not willing to follow it due to various factors, including time and cost. On the other hand, the time that teachers provide to encourage students to develop their literacy skills is lacking. In some cases, they need to improve their teaching performance by learning from literacy experts. Based on the findings, it is indeed necessary to encourage parents and teachers to improve literacy skills of schoolchildren by the socio-cultural collaboration to get rid of mismatch between home and school literacy cultures.

Keywords: *culture, formal education, intervention, literacy, socio-cultural*

I. INTRODUCTION

In April 2016, researchers of Central Connecticut State University released data on the world's most literate country and placed Indonesia at 60th of 61 countries studied. In this case, Indonesia is ranked one on top of Botswana. It is sad and ironic that this data describes the literacy conditions in Indonesia today because this shows how far the distance between Indonesian people and books. In 2012 UNESCO also released data showing that Indonesia's reading rate index is only 0.001, which means that out of 1,000 residents, only one person is familiar with reading and writing. This condition is weakened with other data collected by UNESCO in 2014, namely, Indonesian children read only 27 pages of books in one year (Kompas, April 23, 2016). Meanwhile, Indonesian children only spend 2-4 hours per day reading while the UNESCO reading standard is 4-6 hours per day. Children in developed countries read for 6 - 8 hours per day (Kompas, May 12, 2016).

Public awareness of the development of children's reading and writing skills is an important social fact, but this fact is often not supported by a serious and comprehensive political response. Surely, this condition is not easily corrected, especially amid a culture that mainstreams the oral inner speech and reasoning. However, this culture must be changed and improved so that the Indonesian nation and state are not always shamed in the face of the world every time data on the international literacy index is published by certain competent institutions.

Various factors should be considered in measuring the level of literacy of individuals or communities, both social, cultural, economic and academic factors. These factors seem to be interlinked as well. One is the availability of reading materials in the home, school and other places that allow individuals to undertake various literacy activities. This factor enables the creation of a "print-rich environment", an environment that can stimulate children or adults to remain with reading material. The second factor is the practice of literacy in the home environment. The data show that when children are prepared early on in-home literacy activities, they are academically and mentally ready at school (Dean, 2000). The last two factors are teaching and economic conditions. Schools and teachers are often the factors that determine the success of children in practicing daily literacy activities for a variety of purposes and needs. Although schools are a place that encourages every child to read and write, they will fail to become literary people if teachers, principals, and adults in the school environment do not model them in literacy activities. The last factor is the economic condition that is often associated with purchasing power and public access to reading sources.

A. *The need for a socio-cultural intervention model*

Today's literacy learning has penetrated previously unspoiled areas. In the past, literacy was only related to reading and writing. Nowadays teachers are required to not only introduce students to the written cues or symbols in a text but also to a new understanding of the relationship between the cues and the values or aspects related to student life. Therefore, in the last few decades schoolchildren have been introduced to criticism literacy, to develop their language skills not only for academic interest but also for their social, personal or professional interests.

Meanwhile, mainstream literacy continues to uphold literacy as an effective means for citizens to participate actively

in the sociopolitical process and in developing their skills or knowledge (Christie & Misson, 1998). On the other hand, the flow of literacy criticism complicates the relationship between literacy and social processes. In this case, according to Christie and Misson (1998), criticism literacy can bring the reader and writer (student) into the world of contemplation to accept or reject the ideas in the reading. In other words, criticism is a high level of general literacy. Based on the above statements, it can be concluded that criticism of literature develops in areas not only related to language but also with other fields of study such as natural sciences, social sciences, and others.

In the context of this literacy learning, the teachers will know and understand other aspects of the student's self. For example, Pinnell and Fontas (1998: 15) state that "children's writing samples provide another kind of behavioral evidence". Thus, reading and writing activities performed by children always imply aspects of their behavior. Therefore, further Pinnell and Fontas (1998) suggest that effective literacy learning should follow the following eight principles:

- (1) To understand the purposes of literacy so they can fully appreciate and enjoy literacy in their lives;
- (2) To hear written language so they can learn its structure and take in new information and ideas;
- (3) To become aware of the sounds of language, to enjoy those sounds, and to use this knowledge as a tool in becoming literate;
- (4) To have many experiences working with written symbols so they can learn how to look at letters and use this information to read and write;
- (5) To explore words and learn how words work so they can use this information effectively and efficiently in reading and writing;
- (6) To learn the conventions of print and how books so they can use this knowledge as readers and writers;
- (7) To read and write the continuous text so they can use and expand their knowledge about letters, sounds, words, and language;
- (8) To develop flexibility and fluency to enhance comprehension and enjoyment of reading and writing.

By considering the eight principles above, it can be concluded that any subjects taught by teachers at the level of basic education is to teach reading and writing.

In this study, the model of socio-cultural intervention to be developed is based on four approaches: sociocultural, psychological, pedagogical and linguistic. The sociocultural approach is adopted from three concepts: genetic analysis, social learning, and mediation. These three concepts are used by Wertsch (1991) in interpreting the literacy process. From this perspective, the process of learning to read and write is a social skill, not an individual skill.

The psychological aspect is also involved in developing this model to consider the developmental stages of the learner as an important factor in teaching them literacy skills. Furthermore, a pedagogical approach is applied to adjusting pedagogical practices to the learning needs of learners. In this case, educators are expected to be able to combine various personal,

social and cultural factors in learning literacy at the level of schooling through supervision of literacy practices in society. From a linguistic perspective, language is a social communication tool dominated by individuals to express significant feelings, thoughts, beliefs, values or ideas in society (Gee, 1990). Learners not only learn vocabulary or sentences but also have to understand complex language use patterns in their social processes.

II. METHOD

The study involved 187 parents and 251 elementary school teachers in ten districts/cities in West Java. At this early stage, research has achieved many proven results through data processing of teachers and parents. Questionnaires of teachers are developed taking into account many constructs, namely teacher experience and educational background, learning strategies, problem-solving and training acquisition or follow-up education. Meanwhile, parent questionnaires are structured based on daily activity constructions, availability of reading materials at home, out-of-home literacy activities and professional assistance required.

Concerning their highest level of education, almost 100% of teachers have academic qualifications of S1 and only four are still holding academic qualifications of Diploma 4. Of 251 teachers, some have completed a master's degree.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To provide a diverse literacy learning experience, teachers claim that they perform many relevant reading activities. Common classroom activities are: (1) the teacher listens to the students reading aloud and correct the mistake, (2) the teacher tells the students to stop reading read and ask them to correct unknown words, (3) the teacher discusses new words before reading, (6) the teacher gives the students time to read according to their preferences, (4) the teacher involves writing activities while teaching reading, and (5) the teacher taught the spelling during reading learning. Finally, the availability of reading material is very important in building literacy habits in schools. In the use of reading material, the teacher also tries to carry out activities relevant to the nature and type of reading material available in the school.

As an integral part of the literacy process, writing activities should be taught balanced through activities such as reading. In the study, the teacher questionnaire tries to capture information about the frequency of teacher activities in teaching writing skills. The activities are (1) the teacher dictates the sentence or paragraph to write, (2) the student writes the vocabulary first, (3) the student writes the sentence or paragraph, (4) the student writes a summary of a text, (5) the teacher corrects the error students' writing, and (6) the students corrected their writing errors.

Reading in Indonesian is an everyday activity for children in elementary education, but it does not mean that this activity is always easy. For some of them, the reading may be a problem in itself because it can also cause difficulties, either in words or comprehension. In dealing with students' reading difficulties, most teachers sometimes provide additional hours and implement small group learning to overcome reading difficulties facing their students.

In the context of learning, a teacher should be able to assess or measure students' abilities in a variety of ways, including mastery of literacy skills. This knowledge and evaluation skills are important for teachers to help students improve their skills and provide feedback to teachers to improve performance. In the context of this research, teachers are asked to conduct self-evaluation about the students' ability and their ability to evaluate students' learning progress.

Teachers' readiness and preparedness also constitute an important factor for the success of the learning process. In this case, teachers are prepared to implement various activities that encourage students to develop their literacy skills and skills. The study has generated information on teacher readiness in teaching word recognition, mastering grid, reading comprehension, fluency in reading, spelling, and writing in the Indonesian context. Almost all teachers are ready to do all that.

Training is one form of refresher activity for teachers to strengthen or enhance their knowledge, abilities, and skills. In the teaching of literacy teaching, in the past year teachers have attended training programs with resource persons and various training hours. Most teachers get training from the core teacher. But there are still many teachers who have not received training in the past year.

The data presented above show that teachers generally have sufficient academic qualifications, namely S1 and D4, as required by the Teachers and Lecturers Act. Even among them, some teachers have completed a master's education. They understand the importance of literacy when viewed in terms of the amount of time provided to implement reading and writing learning. However, the amount of time provided is still less when compared with the amount of time students study at the level of basic education. Literacy activities do not appear to be the main program in school learning. Literacy still seems to be translated as another part of the learning process in general. The data also reveal that ordinary teachers guide children to literacy activities within the scope of classes, small groups, and individuals. Most teachers recognize that literacy learning is supported by a variety of relevant activities. However, they also acknowledge that these support activities are only occasionally performed. This means that literacy activities are not designed in such a way as to become an integral part of the whole series of classroom learning. This condition is also not supported by the availability of adequate printed material.

Meanwhile, data on family literacy situations indicate that in general, the family provides only a few days (3-4 days/week) to guide children reading. Of course, many families do not make reading activities as a necessity. In reading activities, Mother became the main character in guiding children to learn to read and understand the text. However, the father also became an important figure in family reading activities.

Storytelling about interesting and fun things becomes the choice for many families in developing a reading hobby. Surely this activity is in accordance with the oral culture that grows in the community but is not suitable for developing a literacy culture based on written language. Based on the data, most families have 1 - 15 reading materials for their children. This amount is certainly not enough for children who are constantly

developing reading interest. Most families rely on reading materials available at home to make the home a literate environment. It is also inadequate in terms of giving children a reading experience because inadequate reading cannot provide a good reading experience for children. To increase literacy practice, most families choose to take their children to a book store or just browse through the book collection. The library became the second place chosen by many parents.

When examined further, parents rely heavily on schools or teachers to guide the children in literacy activities. They feel that school assistance is indispensable when children have difficulty reading. Therefore, parents recognize that communication with teachers is essential to know and understand the development of their children's literacy. Parents have a need to improve their language and literacy skills but they only show interest in getting the training but are not willing to follow it due to various factors, including time and cost.

It should be acknowledged that families play an important role in building a culture of literacy. This culture will live if family members cultivate the habit of literacy and make it a necessity. When viewed from the number and age categories in the family, the pattern of family interaction shows a significant difference but the role of father and mother is very dominant because most families have pre-school age children and school. Parents should be a model of literacy for children at such an early age.

Furthermore, the use of home language helps the development of children's literacy. The use of Indonesian and local languages at home is a perfect combination to adapt to bilingual or bilingual literacy processes as a hallmark of our society. But language and literacy are not two fields without rules because in essence both are governed by the rules that should bind its usage. Again, parents should serve as models of language and literacy at home by teaching the agreed language rules.

IV. CONCLUSION

Several conclusions can be drawn from many preliminary activities in this research process. First, literacy practices are essentially part of the growing culture within a society. Secondly, this culture of literacy should be well implanted in a solid educational system so that literacy becomes an important need for the school community and society at large. Teachers, parents and the general public are stakeholders who determine the level of literacy at the level of schooling and society.

Thirdly, literacy education is less supported by an integrated and clear learning program, the performance and quality of teachers are adequate so that the teaching of literacy is seen as a normal daily practice that serves as complementary language learning. Teachers indeed spend enough time each week to guide literacy activities, but basically, the focus on literacy is not yet sharp. Even the habits and habits of reading and writing have not grown consciously among the students. Fourth, the availability and provision of reading materials have not been a priority in schools. The collection of reading material is dominated by textbooks so that children cannot expand and enrich their reading experience.

Teachers have academic qualifications and a good degree of readiness to address the literacy issues faced by children but the opportunity to practice for teachers is lacking. To hone skills in teaching literacy, they need professional help. Therefore, without ongoing training, their readiness could be just a false phrase. On the other hand, people have a good concern and concern for family literacy activities but most of them have not made literacy a daily necessity. Therefore, they still rely on schools or teachers as the main resource for their children in learning literacy and when they are faced with the difficulties of reading and writing. People recognize the importance of communication between themselves and teachers to share information about the development of their children's literacy. These data suggest that communication between teachers and parents can be a determinant to eliminate the mismatch between the literacy culture of home and school.

Based on the results of the interim research, several suggestions can be submitted to various parties. First, the government gives full attention to the development of literacy culture as part of efforts to strengthen national resilience. School literacy programs and communities need to be developed continuously so that literacy culture can thrive. Secondly, language teachers, in particular, are expected to

develop themselves through the habit of literacy and professional development to encourage harmony between the literacy culture of home and school. In this case, as a very important figure in building a culture of literacy, teachers should be given more opportunities to develop self-efficacy and performance in literacy teaching. In addition, school leaders are also encouraged to demonstrate support for literacy activities through the provision of enrichment reading books. Finally, parents and communities are advised to devote special time to literacy activities with children to foster the belief that a developed nation is a literary nation.

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