

Home Literacy Environment to Support the Teaching English to Young Learner (TEYL)

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian literacy culture still has been in a very worrying condition. The study was aimed to know how often do the upper-level students and their parents practice literacy activities and how the home literacy environment supports the TEYL. This present study was a case study of 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade students at one primary school in Bandung with a qualitative approach. The samples of this study were 53 students of class 4th, 5th, 6th and their parents, and one English teacher at one primary school in Bandung. The data were collected through questionnaires, home visits, classroom observation, and interviews. Based on questionnaires' results, most of the 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade students answers, exactly 31,68% were often practicing literacy activities with their parents. Based on home visits, classroom observations, and interview results, overall students who were familiar with the home literacy environment tended to learn actively, joyfully, and enthusiastically in attending the lesson. Thus, the home literacy environment moderately supports the TEYL.

Keywords: *English as Foreign Language, Home Literacy, Teaching English to Young Learner*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian literacy culture has been in a very worrying condition. The Central Connecticut University, 2016 reported that Indonesia was above Botswana or 60 from 61 countries that placed the lowest ranking of the literate country in the world (Handoko, 2016; Setiadi, 2010). English plays a strategic role in young learners' life in the future (Sepyanda, 2013). Therefore, learning English at primary school was the best phase because they are in the golden age or well known as a critical period hypothesis (Contesse, 2008). Meanwhile, young learners in Indonesia do not get sufficient time allocation to learn English since it has become a local content (Jalal & Musthafa, 2001). Besides that, most English teachers in primary school were not graduated from English education so that their educational background did not qualify them to teach.

In regard to improve young learners' needs of English, TEYL should be promoted at school and home. Over the past decades or so, orthodoxy has developed that it is in children's best educational interests if the parents (home) and teachers (school) work together in partnership (Edwards, 2002). Therefore, I am interested

to conduct research entitles Home Literacy Environment to Support Teaching English to Young Learner (*A Case Study of 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade students at One Primary School in Bandung*). The present study aims to know how often the upper-level students practice literacy activities with their parents and how the home literacy environment supports TEYL.

1.1 Literacy Education

According to van Dijk and van Deursen (2014) as cited in Sunaga (2016) literacy is closely related to the activity of reading and writing. Literacy gives many benefits to human life include the aspect of education (Setiadi, 2010). It influences peoples' thoughts about its importance in their lives for a variety of purposes. Christie and Mason (1998) stated that literacy becomes a field for a lot of educational theories to define, understand, teach, do research, and develop it in different education levels. Hanover Research (2014) has proven that literacy experiences are very important for students' life at primary school because most of the learning process at the primary level is the practice of literacy. For students, the literacy curriculum proved the

ability of their limited understanding of print usage (Cousin, Weekly, & Gerard, 1993).

1.2 Home Literacy Environment

Home literacy environments are considered to consist of the age of starting to read and the parent-child book reading, several books at home, the frequency of library visit, and the frequency and enjoyment of reading by the primary caregiver (Payne, Whitehurst, & Angell, 1994). According to van Steensel (2006), there were three types of HLE: (a) rich HLE; here parent and children actively interact in several literacy activities; (b) child directed HLE, here literacy activities are less, but important activities exist such as shared reading, library visits, etc.; and (c) poor HLE, where both parent or child just interacts a little in literacy activities. As stated by Hart and Risley (1992) in van Steensel (2006) home environments that provide many opportunities for children to learn through interaction with younger and age-appropriate materials will guide them to positive reading performance.

1.3 Teaching English to Young Learner

In the Indonesian context, the TEYL changes in line with the curriculum's changes and its policy. Since the 2013 curriculum was implemented, decentralization of education has determined that English changed to be the local content (Musthafa, 2010). Therefore, many aspects must be improved, such as teacher qualification, curriculum, and time allocation.

According to Musthafa (2010), TEYL has deep meaning. There were two focus points in it, namely teaching and young learner. Firstly, teaching is the activity that is given by the teacher. Secondly, a young learner is classified as children who enter pre-school between the age of 5-7 years old and finish the study at 11 or 12 / 13-14 years old (Pinter, 2006).

An English teacher should know the characteristic of children and the principle of how children learn (Musthafa, 2010; Puskás, 2016). In their perspective, children have unique characteristics where they have their own culture and way of learning especially in learning a language. By so, it is right that early English education not only means the place where EYL occurs, but it is an active process of young learners learn at school (Johnstone, 2019).

TEYL should be given with fun and nice. It can be done by creating the language reach environment (Yelland, 2006). In her perspective, EFL learners can learn naturally through real and meaningful contexts. It is right because children learn a language through direct experiences where it contains a real and meaningful context. Besides, Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (2007) emphasized the rich language environment supported

Primary English Language Teaching because it maintained the students' feeling enthusiasm. In the Indonesian context, surely it is relevant to the government policy namely *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* (GLS) that promotes literacy, especially in primary school. An English Teacher asks their students to read a book for about 10-15 minutes before they enter the classroom.

2. METHOD

This study exactly was a case study and employed a qualitative method where the data being observed and investigated were taken from real circumstances. This study was a qualitative case study because it attempts to seek an understanding of social phenomena naturally (Merriam 2009). In this study, the researcher physically went to the people (parent and student) to investigate students' home literacy environment, the teacher, and to the institution (school) to observe the behaviours of the students in attending the process of TEYL, and interpret the phenomenon in the classroom (Cresswell, 2007). This study took place at a primary school in Bandung City, West Java Province. As Hamied (2017) stated that research setting in qualitative research must be selected purposively. The suitability and accessibility were becoming the consideration. The suitability was assuming this elementary school as one of parts of the university and often used as the research site by the researcher to conduct their studies. Meanwhile, the accessibility means that this elementary school is located at the centre of the university so that the researcher can easily access the school.

This study involved some participants consist of 53 upper-level students and their parents, and 1 same English teacher that taught at those classes in one primary school in Bandung. The 53 upper-level students were they from class 4, 5, and 6. They were selected purposively. It means that the researcher used judgment to select a participant for a specific purpose (Cresswell, 2007). Meanwhile, the reason to choose these classes were based on the consideration that the students of class 4, 5, and 6 have learned English so that it was suitable to be explored in case of their HLE in relation with TEYL. Next, these classes were assumed to have a source of English literacy that most of their parents are lecturers, the administration staff of university whose economic status or educational background are supported to provide several sources of literacy including English literacy. That consideration was about the research setting and participant. It might help the researcher to have rich data about issues being studied.

In collecting the data, this study employed several sources of data to maintain the quality of data. Four primary sources of data in this study were questionnaires, home visits, observation, and interviews. This data collection method showed that the research

established and maintained the validity of the data. These several data collection method also has a function to produce the data gathered from a variety of perspectives individually.

The first data collection was questionnaires. It was given to the parents to know and investigate how often do the upper-level students practice literacy activities with their parents. The second data collection was a home visit. It was conducted to investigate how children's literacy environment covers the experiences of students' HLE in English. The third was classroom observation. It was used to understand and interpret particular research issues that cannot be done only from what has been done by participants, but it needs to conduct observation to see how they act (Alwasilah, 2000). Classroom observation was conducted 6 times for each class of 4, 5, and 6 at this elementary school. The researcher observed teacher and student activities in the process of teaching and learning English in the classroom. The last was an interview. It was given to the teacher to investigate how students' home literacy environment supports the TEYL in the class.

To analyze the data, the researcher used coding and memoing. According to Hamied (2017), both data analysis led to abstraction, comparison, and concluding. Coding is a process of tagging, labelling data into symbols or word descriptions (Hamied, 2017). In this stage, the researcher labelled the data result from questionnaires, home visits, observation, and interviews into description form. Meanwhile memoring or creating memos is the process of theorizing ideas about codes and the relationships contained in them. In this stage, the researcher made memos or field notes in the form of sentences so that became a paragraph. The validity of the data became higher because the researcher supports coding analysis with theory. At this stage also, the researchers could improve and making narrower the codes, developed categories, and showed their relationship. Thus, an integrated understanding of events, processes, and interactions regarding what is observed will be formed.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, findings and discussion were elaborated to answer the research questions. The finding section displayed the data result from overall data collection based on sequences of the research question. Then, the discussion section discussed the findings supported by the theories and findings on another related research report.

3.1 How Often Do Parents and Children Practice Literacy Activities

Literacy activities gives a positive effect on children learning the language. Farrant and Zubrick (2011) found

that parent-child book reading is positively correlated with the children's vocabulary development. Moreover, Katzir, Lesaux, and Kim (2018) was also found that overall literacy practices among children and family influenced the reading comprehension of children.

From the table above we can sum up that most of the parents' answers were *often* as many as 31,81% on the aspect of parental belief and attitude toward literacy and as many as 31, 68 % on literacy activities with their children at home. By so, these aspects of the home literacy environment moderately support the TEYL.

Table 1. Total percentage of home literacy environments of the upper-level students

HLE Aspect	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
PBA	4.31	13.21	29.11	31.81	21.56
LA	4.17	9.63	29.20	31.68	25.32
ALS	15.90	19.14	34.77	20.75	9.43

Descriptions:

HLE: Home Literacy Environment

PBA: Parental Belief and Attitude toward Literacy

LA: Literacy Activities

ALS: Availability of Literacy Sources

The tendency of those answers showed us that in Indonesia itself the frequency of literacy activities *often* was good enough because Indonesia is not a literate country. Based on data released by the Central Connecticut State University, Indonesian literacy culture was on 60 from 61 countries. In this report, Indonesia was only above Botswana that placed the lowest ranking of the literate country in the world (Setiadi & Ilfiandra, 2017). Even in the previous time, Kompas (2016) reported that UNESCO in 2014 gathered the data that Indonesian Children approximately read only 27 pages along the year meanwhile children in developed countries read for 6-8 hours every day (Kompas, 2016). Thus, the data of literacy frequency of upper-level students at one primary school in Bandung at least represented the condition of literacy culture in Indonesia.

Nevertheless, if we look deeper at the table above, there was interesting data to be more investigated on the aspect of the availability of literacy sources. Although most of the parents' answers were often in practicing literacy activities, to provide the literacy sources they ticked *sometimes* as many as 34,77 % and followed by *often* as many as 20,75%. From the data of family profile, it was raised an issue that the social-economic status of the parent was believed to influence children's home literacy environment. Then through a home visit,

the researcher can directly observe that this social-economic status was influenced by the number of literacy sources at students' homes. By so, this additional data was in line with Niklas and Schneider (2013) who found that the social-economic status has a significant correlation which affected children's home literacy environment in case of reading and spelling (phonological, vocabulary, and letter knowledge then for further it impacted on reading and spelling ability. Even, Payne et al. (1994) stated that there was also variation result of the influence of socio-economic status toward children's home literacy environment.

3.2 Home Literacy Environment Support the TEYL

HLE is very important in facilitating children to learn the language. A study in the USA had highlighted the importance of HLE that stimulated the development of children's cognitive and language skills (Bradley, 1985; Farkas & Beron, 2004). Moreover, Shi (2013) stated that HLE supported English language literacy (ELL) and literacy acquisition on both heritage language maintenance and second language acquisition.

Based on my first home visit to a student in class 4 (S4), when I came to her house, she was learning. Her mother described student 4 as a very good child who helps a lot at home. She also said that S4 made an activity log every day and it was implemented regularly. She also attended the private lesson of Mathematics and English once a week. To review S'4 learning English, her mother sometimes made a little English conversation with S4. Her mother also informed the researcher that they often shared reading together and went to the cinema if they have free time at least once a month.

The second home visit was conducted to a student in class 5 (S29). At that time S 29 did homework, after that he played the guitar, and his daughter sang an English song entitled Brother John. Her mother knew exactly to make their children enjoy their learning. She gave an appraisal by saying, "nice ". According to the information got from her, student 29 had a specific experience in reading. When student 29 read the book if he found the unfamiliar word, he would write it then search in the dictionary or asked her for the meaning of the words. So that he almost had a new topic besides his homework to discuss together when learning at home.

Next, the third home visit was to one student in class 6 (S44). He has a little daughter whose age is 4 years old. When the researcher visited his home, he was reading a comic book. His mother said that he usually did it and often played outdoors. At home, he often told his mother or another family member about the experiences that he passed that day included asked her mother about what she have done when he went to

school. They often share experiences. S'44 curiosity was high enough. He was interested in multi-literacy. Besides, he likes to play many game applications on the internet.

According to classroom observation that was conducted firstly in class 4th, the observed students were still S4. One time in my observation class, the teacher started the class by said greetings, and then she prepared a tape as the learning media. The teacher said that they would get a listening session for one hour of the lesson. Firstly, the teacher turned on tape to play the song. she taught about the movement and gave the instructions that when the music sounded *dancing*, they have to dance. Then when it sounded *birdie* they have to flap their hands like a bird flap its wings and fly. And the last if it sounded *statue*, they have not to move like a statue. In given the instruction, the teacher talked in English then translated it to Indonesia. At that time, Student A was very outgoing and not afraid to perform moves or dance, even she sang followed the music. Overall, her demeanour daily was happy, enjoyed the lesson. Based on what I observed in school, S4 showed self-confidence, academically and socially, and was always willing to participate and share in the classroom without inhibitions.

In classroom observation to class 5th, the observed student was S29. He is a happy child and enough much talked to his friends. When the teacher gave greetings to start to teach, he always answered loudly. He showed enough spirit and ready to learn. Before starting the lesson, the teacher asked students to open the book in chapter 2 exactly on page 22 about *sequences* for ten minutes. S29 read like what the teacher instructed although some of the students made kidding or had a little chatting with other students.

The last classroom observation was conducted in class 6th and the observed student was S44. In the class, he was a very energetic child. His high energy sometimes gave both an advantage and disadvantage to his learning activity. When the teacher asked students to pay attention to listen to a story that would be told by her, his attention was still on average. But not long, he began not focused on the learning. He seemed difficult to sit for a long period. He began fidgeting, calling out, and leaving his seat and tried to talk while the teacher told a story. Even though, student C was an outgoing, funny, and friendly child who has many companions at school. He was comfortable in interacting with adults as his other friends.

Based on the teacher's interview, it was gained that HLE moderately supports the TEYL. The researcher can interpret much information obtained from her to describe it. In the opening question, the researcher asked the teacher about the important role of literacy as the general information. The teacher explained that in general literacy has an important role in teaching and

learning processes. For the young learner, it was as basic ability to read, write and count, develop critical thinking, and as preparation to enter the school. Based on this first answer, the next related question was asked about her opinion towards the policy to integrate literacy on every subject included English at school. She answered that she strongly agreed because by integrating literacy into the subject, she can foster students' literacy habits. By this answer too, the researcher is interested to know what she has done to integrate literacy with TEYL and its challenges. It was gained that she encouraged students to like reading and directly involved reading activity, often made group discussion when teaching English in class, but the challenge was on the lack of students' motivation to read independently and their concentration to attend the lesson.

Concerning HLE, the researcher then asked about her opinion about how HLE supports the teaching she gave in the classroom. Based on her teaching experiences, students who have a good literacy environment such as usual to read, do homework, would be more ready to learn and have basic knowledge about the material that would be taught in the classroom. Then, the researcher asked how the students who have a good home literacy environment absorb English lessons in the classroom. The teachers answered that they are enjoying the class, actively learn and discuss with their friends, ask and state their opinion, also felt enthusiastic about learning. Recognizing the benefit and importance of HLE to TEYL, it was interesting to know what effort the teacher gave to increase students' awareness of practicing literacy activities at home. The teachers said that conducted communication with parents was the best solution to realize it. It can be concluded that the overall home literacy environment moderately supports the TEYL for the upper-class level.

From the coding results above, it can be described that the home literacy environment moderately supports the TEYL. Because it facilitates children to be more active and enjoy the lesson. Meanwhile from classroom observation, the researcher can see directly that students who have good background knowledge because they often do literacy activities at home, attend the learning process with pleasure. They are actively involved in group discussions. They asked the meaning of unfamiliar words to the teacher. When the teacher asked them to read a certain chapter before the class begins, they did it.

Thus, those results of the teacher's interview similar to the previous study conducted by Burgess, Hecht, and Lonigan (2002) that found the home literacy environment essential played an important role in the development of emergent literacy that was necessary to be provided to facilitate children learning the language. Furthermore, Farkas and Beron (2004) in Park (2008)

stated that the importance of the home literacy environment could stimulate the development of children's cognitive and language skills. By so, this result of this teacher's interview about the home literacy environment also moderately supports the TEYL.

4. CONCLUSION

This research is one of many studies on Teaching English to Young Learners in-home literacy environment. This research is intended to answer two purposes of the research were as follows; how often do upper-level students practice literacy activities with their parents and to analyse how the home literacy environment support Teaching English to Young Learner.

In terms of the research question, all aspects of the home literacy environment were found, and each aspect described also gave detail of how the home literacy environment supports the TEYL. Each aspect of the home literacy environment was taken and adapted from the previous studies conducted by Shi (2013) and Park (2008). Both of them were parental belief and attitude towards literacy, literacy activities at home (between parent and students), and the availability of literacy sources.

From questionnaires, it can be concluded that most of the upper-level students at this primary school were often done several literacy activities with their parents at home. Based on questionnaires, home visits, classroom observation and teacher's interview the home literacy environment moderately support the TEYL. The students who were familiar with the home literacy environment and often practice it with their parents, tended to learn actively, joyfully, enthusiastically to learn English in the classroom.

Meanwhile, recognizing that the study on this topic in the Indonesian context was still minimum, other related research is very possible to be conducted suggestion for further research is to investigate deeper about the aspect of HLE affected students' literacy skills or the impact of family profile on children's literacy learning. Another further research can be the effect of HLE on children's literacy performance. The next research can comprise both quantitative research, e.g. several different questionnaires and structured interviews administered at different points, and qualitative research, e.g. observation of classroom sessions and structured interviews.

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