



# Cultural Literacy-Based Reading Materials for Elementary School Students

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**Abstract.** Reading materials determine students' reading ability. Contents adjusted to students' habits, traditions, or environments make a good alternative for designing reading instructions. Cultural literacy-based reading materials fostering the values, habits, behaviour, communication, rituals, and traditional games of a local community can address reading-related problems among elementary school students. The materials are expected to encourage students' reading interest, improve their reading skills, and strengthen their interest in their own culture. This study investigated the advantages and disadvantages of reading materials based on cultural literacy for elementary school students. This study is library research that gathered data from textbooks and national and international articles from reputable journals and regulations. The data used were the results of previous studies, national and international. Additionally, there are 2 types of books relevant to the concept of cultural literacy-based reading materials. After the data were collected, they were presented, reduced, and concluded. Results showed that cultural content in students' reading materials was feasible to be applied in reading instruction to improve student's reading skills and grow their interest in their culture.

**Keywords:** Cultural Literacy · Elementary School · Reading Material

## 1 Introduction

Reading remains a concern among education practitioners, including reading activities at the elementary school level. Debates on the strategy and approach to learning to read, learning modules and the content of students' reading materials still occur following students' unsatisfactory reading skills and achievements. As pointed out in previous studies done by independent institutions and the government on students' reading ability, Indonesia has been in the lowest rank in terms of reading ability compared to other neighboring countries [1–3]. There has been a decline in Indonesia's reading ability score in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) published by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Indonesia's score was 487 which was below the OECD average score [4]. Meanwhile, data released by UNESCO showed that the reading interest of Indonesians was only 0.001%. It implies that only one in 1,000 Indonesians likes to read [5].

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The condition is quite concerning and requires a solution to improve it. Improvements can be made by providing students with interesting reading materials that go with their actual conditions and environment. Reading materials designed based on cultural literacy are believed to be good alternatives. Cultural literacy-based reading materials fostering the values, habits, behavior, communication, rituals, and local traditional games can address reading-related problems among elementary school students. The materials are expected to encourage students' reading interest and improve their reading skills while at the same time strengthening students' interest in their own culture.

Regarding the background, this study was conducted to examine how cultural literacy-based reading materials can be good alternative reading sources for elementary school students. On this occasion, the author tries to present several explanations related to the basic concepts, urgency, and stapes of cultural literacy-based reading materials in Elementary Schools.

## **2 Method**

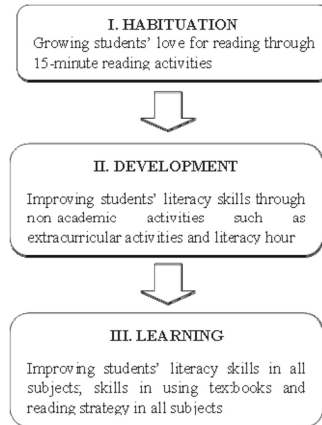
This qualitative study was conducted using the literature study method to narrate the facts and phenomena verbally [6, 7]. The data used were the results of previous studies, national and international. Additionally, there are 2 types of books relevant to the concept of cultural literacy-based reading materials. Researchers comprehensively disclosed relevant reading materials containing cultural literacy used in reading activities at elementary schools. An analysis of data sources from textbooks and teacher handbooks was conducted. In addition, articles from both nationally accredited and internationally reputable journals revealed that reading materials containing cultural literacy might be a good solution in building reading interest and skills of elementary school students.

## **3 Results and Discussions**

### **3.1 The Basic Concept of Cultural Literacy**

Cultural literacy is a part of the six basic literacies mentioned in Indonesian government policy since 2016 through the Ministry of Education and Culture called the National Literacy Movement (GLN) as part of the implementation of the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 23 of 2015 concerning the Growth of Character. The six basic literacy skills include; textual literacy, numeracy literacy, scientific literacy, cultural literacy and citizenship, digital literacy, and financial literacy. In addition to the character education and cultural development, cultural literacy in the 2013 curriculum is seen as the most prominent and important additional content [8].

Cultural literacy is the ability to understand and behave towards Indonesian culture as a national identity. Many experts defined cultural literacy as a parameter of the spirit of nationalism [9] that includes cognitive, affective, social, cultural, historical, and ethical domains throughout life [10], cognitive processes, sociolinguistic skills and attitudes [11], respect for one's own culture as well as the culture of others [12], the ability to interpret the character of cultural characteristics in terms of social organization, legal system, religious belief, and topics of concern to the social sciences [13]. Various concepts about cultural literacy mentioned by experts relate to one's attitude in understanding and appreciating culture in social life.



**Fig. 1.** Reading Activities

### 3.2 The Importance of Cultural Literacy in Elementary School Level

As a nation that has diverse customs, ethnicities, languages, and religions, it is appropriate for students to instill cultural literacy from an early age. Appreciation of culture itself is an objective of the national education – building students’ characters. Cultural literacy must be integrated into the national education that includes family, school, and community. In schools, cultural literacy should go with the technological developments. Intensive use of gadgets and unfiltered information can form negative behaviors in the community. In addition, the lack of awareness of diversity can disrupt the security stability of the nation [14]. Schools, the prominent educational institutions, need to develop students’ cultural literacy.

The improvement of cultural literacy for elementary school students has been implemented in a government policy namely the School Literacy Movement. The program, which has been implemented since 2016, focuses on several aspects; communication, culture, language, cognition, knowledge growth, and religion. In the cultural aspect, literacy is expected to form the function of certain social groups, across social groups, as well as the norms and values of the group [15]. Strong cultural literacy at schools helps to preserve and develop local culture as a treasure for the nation [16]. In addition, adequate cultural literacy and citizenship in the community can overcome disinformation-related issues among the millennial generation [17]. Cultural literacy can be learned as an alternative solution to develop students’ knowledge, attitudes, and skills [18].

At the elementary school level, students are at their best age to form their cultural literacy skills. All situations or learning environments that contain cultural literacy can build and develop students’ cultural literacy (Fig. 1).

### 3.3 The Implementation of Cultural Literacy in Reading Activities for Elementary School Students

The improvement of cultural literacy in elementary schools is basically feasible. Literacy is closely related to reading. Thus, cultural literacy should be integrated into reading

activities about the school literacy movement program [19]. This movement is expected to be able to develop virtuous attitudes among students through literacy learning at schools since education does not only develop students' intellectual abilities, but also develops students' social, emotional, and spiritual attitudes [20]. There are three stages of literacy activities that can be applied, namely habituation, development, and learning stages as illustrated in the following chart. The improvement of students' cultural literacy through reading activities should synthesize the bigger objectives of the school literacy movement that can be done through steps shown in Table 1.

For optimal program implementation, the learning steps to improve students' cultural literacy are specified in Table 2 as follows.

**Table 1.** The Implementation of Cultural Literacy in Reading Activities

Step	Activities
Habituation	1. Students enjoy a 15-min reading activity to read folklores, stories, fable, heroic stories etc. independently before the class starts. 2. Establishing physical school facilities that support cultural literacy; (1) providing books on local culture at school libraries, reading corner, or other areas that are comfortable for doing reading activities; (2) providing other facilities such as health center, canteen, and school garden that integrate social and cultural values, (3) providing texts, visual media, digital media and multimodal media that contain cultural contents which can be accessed by all school members.
Development	1. Spending 15 min to read folklores, stories, fable, heroic stories, etc. before the class starts through reading aloud in unison, reading together, or independent reading followed by other non-academic activities such as discussing about book. 2. Developing cultural literacy skills through school library activities/city libraries/regional libraries and/or reading parks with various types of activities, including; (a) reading folklore books, fairy tales, fables, stories of heroic figures or the like, reading silently, reading together, and/or guided reading, watching short movies about folklores, fairy tales, fables, stories of heroic figures or the like, reading folklore texts, fairy tales, fables, stories of heroic figures visually or digitally, responding to fiction and nonfiction tests, through simple activities such as drawing, making concept maps, discussing and talking about folklore books, fairy tales, fables, stories of heroic figures etc. 3. Developing physical, social, effective school environment that preserve cultural literacy and creating a school ecosystem that values openness and knowledge through various activities, including: (a) rewarding any achievement, positive behavior, social affection, and enthusiasm for learning every Monday during flag ceremony and other celebrations; (b) doing other academic activities that support cultural literacy at schools, such as the providing reading gardens, visiting museums, go on city library tours and so on.

*(continued)*

**Table 1.** (continued)

Step	Activities
Learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Spending 15 min reading folklore books, fairy tales, fables, stories of heroic figures or the like every day before the class hours through reading books aloud, reading silently, reading together, and/or guided reading followed by other non-academic activities.</li> <li>2. Doing cultural literacy activities based on the academic regulations stipulated in the 2013 curriculum.</li> <li>3. Implementing various strategies to understand folklore books, fairy tales, fables, stories of heroic figures, etc.</li> <li>4. Utilizing the physical, social, effective environment accompanied by a variety of printed, visual, auditory and digital reading activity that contain cultural literacy contents to enrich students' knowledge.</li> </ol>

**Table 2.** The stages of cultural literacy improvement program at elementary school level

Activity	Description
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Orientation Starting the class by praying together and greeting.</li> <li>2. Brainstorming Recalling learning materials that have previously been delivered to connect them with the upcoming materials.</li> <li>3. Motivation Explaining the learning objectives</li> </ol>
Core Activity ( <i>Model Inquiry</i> )	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students show their knowledge regarding the story of Toba Lake (<b>Character Building</b>)</li> <li>2. Students mention other examples of folklore in Indonesia. (<b>Culture</b>)</li> <li>3. Students retell the moral values that they generate from the story of Toba Lake to be compared to the real conditions in their daily life. (<b>Cultural Literacy</b>)</li> </ol>
Closing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate the learning activities that have been conducted and ask students to make a review.</li> <li>2. Close the class by praying together.</li> </ol>

### 3.4 Cultural Literacy-Based Reading Materials for Elementary School Level

It is necessary to use reading materials that contain cultural literacy content at the elementary school level to build and improve students' social, emotional, and moral behaviors. The cultural literacy module issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology through the Directorate of Elementary Schools mentions that cultural literacy materials and activities include (1) creative workshops in local languages; (2) residential; (3) the introduction of state resilience; (4) teacher training; (5) book writing program; (6) enrichment of local and national history; (7) provision of a reading corner in the classroom; (8) holding open houses; (9) Educational Game Making Training; (10)

**Table 3.** The use of cultural literacy-based reading materials in elementary school students learning activities

No	Text	Objective
1	Introducing the story of Toba Lake through videos or books.	Internalizing the moral values of “The Story of Toba Lake”.
2	Introducing the social life, including social harmony and unity through both printed and digital story books.	Students develop their knowledge and understanding of social functions and roles in the interaction with neighbors by practicing harmonious interaction every day.
3	Strengthening students’ love for the Nation, patriotism, and nationalism through both printed and digital books.	Strengthening children’s love for nation and nationalism.
4	Text on the potentials of the surrounding environment and school.	Students are expected to gain new knowledge about the history potentials of their surrounding environment and school by documenting the knowledge into written text, audio, visual and audio-visual media
5	Reading materials about traditional houses, weapons, foods, and games.	Introducing and instilling students’ love for local culture including traditional houses, weapons foods and games.

Discussion Forum for School Residents; (11) Bringing Artists to Schools; (12) Student Arts Festival; (13) Scouting Activities; (14) Celebrating Important Moments/National Days; (15) Holding Cultural Literacy and Citizenship Month Activities; (16) Organizing Book Review; and (17) Organizing a Cultural and Citizenship Literacy Festival at School [21].

Table 3 shows the use of cultural literacy-based reading materials in elementary school students learning activities.

## 4 Conclusions

The literacy skills of Indonesian citizens are not yet satisfactory as shown in several prior studies. Therefore, the government through the Ministry of Education and Culture has promoted an activity called the School Literacy Movement Program to improve students’ literacy since 2016. There are six basic literacy targets: text, numeracy, scientific, digital, cultural, citizenship, and financial literacies. The focus of this paper is cultural literacy which is reflected in reading materials used at elementary school.

The application of this literacy in learning activities is very important. Activities can be carried out in various ways, one of which is by providing charged or cultural literacy-based reading materials. The reading text was synthesized based on the master design of the school literacy movement and the culture and citizenship literacy module in elementary schools. The reading text containing cultural literacy is expected to be

able to build and improve students' nationalism, love for the homeland, and social and spiritual behaviors.

The implementation of cultural literacy awareness program at the elementary school level is considered necessary. Cultural literacy can be enhanced through a variety of activities, one of which is by providing reading materials that contain local culture. The reading materials should be synthesized based on the grand design of the school literacy movement programs at elementary schools. Reading materials containing cultural literacy can support the development, establishment, and improvement of students' nationalism, love for the nation, patriotism, and social as well as spiritual behavior.

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