Reading Literacy Based on Experiential Learning as an Effort to Increase Students' Reading Interest

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ABSTRACT

Reading literacy is a vital skill for individuals as it equips them with the ability to tackle challenges and adapt to changing circumstances. Unfortunately, not everyone has a strong interest in reading. In fact, a high level of reading literacy is only attainable when individuals have a genuine passion for reading. Therefore, it is imperative to employ effective strategies to cultivate reading interest, particularly among students. This study aims to outline alternative strategies for enhancing reading enthusiasm among junior high school students. One of the strategies is to implement a reading literacy model grounded in experiential learning. This study employs an exploratory qualitative method which aims to generate new insight and knowledge in learning to read, particularly strategies for boosting reading interest through reading literacy approach rooted in experiential learning. The results of this study showed that experiential learning strategies can be applied in the context of reading through four learning cycles: experience, reflection, insight, and action. These cycles are structured around three core activities: introduction, core, and conclusion. Reading literacy based on experiential learning emerges as a valuable approach to increase students' reading interest.

Keywords: Experiential learning, reading interest, reading literacy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading holds significant importance for individuals. Through reading, people gain access to knowledge fostering creativity and imagination, nurturing advanced and critical thinking, and serving as the fundamental step towards empowering one's intellect. Reading is an intrinsic aspect of learning process. As books are often referred to as windows to the world, engaging with books through reading serves as an investment in one's future. Roldan (in Retnaningtyas, Damaianti, & Syihabuddin, 2022) argues that reading is the main path to knowledge. Accumulating knowledge involves learning, studying, and contemplation and reading is crucial to accomplish those pursuits.

According to Tarigan, Saifulah, and Harnas (2011), interest is someone's wish or desire which can be both consciously and unconsciously being satisfied through certain behavior. If it is associated to reading interest, someone who has a high reading interest will have a strong desire to read and can only be satisfied after they have experienced reading activities. This opinion is in line with Rahim's statement (2005) which states that reading interest is a strong desire and accompanied by effort to read. Students who have a strong reading interest will try to get something to read and read it on their own accord or because of external encouragement. The conclusion from this statement is that someone who has a strong reading interest tends to always read because they have an awareness of the importance of reading for life.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to increase students' reading interest. UNESCO data indicates that only 0.001% of Indonesians exhibit a strong inclination for reading. This means that only 1 person out of 1000 Indonesians being diligent readers. Additionally, a study conducted by Central Connecticut State University entitled World's Most Literate Nations Ranked, positioned Indonesia at the 60th out of 61 countries in terms of reading interest. Seeing this phenomenon, efforts need to be made to increase people's reading interest, particularly for students. It is crucial that teachers develop a suitable reading literacy model that can boost reading interest. For example, teachers can implement reading literacy based on experiential learning as an effort to increase students' reading interest.

Clay (in Taylor & MacKenney, 2008) suggest that reading literacy is the activity to get messages that can be flexibly used to solve problems. It is as an individual's ability to learn, use and communicate written and printed information (Damaianti, 2021). It also refers to someone's ability to read actively, purposefully, and functionally in various situations and for various purposes. If students have a good reading literacy skill, they will be able to solve problems in their life well. They will have good survival skills because they have mastered various solutions to life problems contained in the reading materials. On the other hand, if their reading literacy is low, they will have difficulty in adapting to life, especially in facing life challenges that become more complex from day to day. Thus, literacy is very important in social life because it can have a positive impact on social life (Halimah, Mulyati, & Damaianti, 2020).

In the context of Indonesia, various efforts have been made by the government for enhancing students' reading interest not only in classroom learning but also outside the classroom. One of the strategies is to implement the School Literacy Movement or SLM. This movement aims to improve reading literacy among students in which the activities are carried out outside class hours. Students are encouraged to spend 10-15 minutes to read any books either fictional or non-fictional books before learning process starts.

Studies have also documented strategies to increase reading interest and literacy. Bakhri and Putri (2023) investigate children's reading interest through developing literacy homes. Abrori (2018) conducted research on increasing reading literacy through seven reading interest programs that contain *da'wah* messages. The findings showed that reading interest could be increased through developing a literacy home, and da'wah material can sharpen students' character. Another study related to reading literacy based on experiential learning methods was conducted by Susanti (2022). The study investigated the implementation of experiential learning methods in strengthening cultural literacy based on local wisdom. The findings revealed that the experiential learning method is aimed at honing the ability to appreciate and express local stories based on local wisdom. Additionally, Aristhi and Manuaba (2020) conducted research on an experiential learning model assisted by image media on poetry writing skills in elementary schools. This research show that the experiential learning model assisted by image media influences poetry media skills. Experiential learning is a process of gaining ability, competence, and expertise in doing something. To add the literature on the use of experiential learning in reading literacy, this current study applies reading literacy strategies based on experiential learning as an alternative to increase students' reading interest.

2. METHOD

The research method used in this research is exploratory qualitative method as an approach to explore and understand the meaning of individuals or groups in responding to social or human problems (Creswell, 2014). This study aims to produce new information and knowledge in learning to read, especially the effort to increase students' reading interest. In this study, the researchers present an in-depth study of the application of reading literacy based on experiential learning as an effort to increase students' reading interest. It is expected that the results of this study can contribute to further research to increase students' reading interest through reading literacy based on experiential learning methods.

The data collection technique was carried out by conducting interviews with junior high school teachers and students. After conducting the interview, a review was carried out from various sources related to experiential learning methods and reading literacy. In the interview activities, the researchers asked various in-depth questions regarding the implementation of learning to read in junior high schools, and what steps teachers have taken to increase students' reading interest. The data obtained was used as a basis for conducting a study on efforts to increase reading interest through experimental learning-based reading literacy methods.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experiential learning for reading literacy is investigated in this study as an effort to increase students' reading interest. Experience-based learning is an effort to gain abilities, competencies and skills through the experience gained from doing something. This learning has the principles of learning from doing something, experiencing motorically and cognitively on their own. In learning through experiential learning, learning is based on experience or experience-based learning, instead of learning that provides experience.

There are many lessons learned by experiencing events directly. Learning by doing will be a perfect learning. Learning by doing will have a positive impact on students. When students learn something by doing, they will gain experience that they will store in their memory. By experiencing events directly, students will easily remember and practice the knowledge they gain in their everyday life. That goal is in line with the essence of reading literacy, namely someone's ability to learn, use and communicate the written and printed information with the aim of applying it.

In general, experiential learning has four cycles, namely experience, reflection, insight, and action. Experience is a cycle of concrete experiences gained by students. The reflection cycle is when students' experiences are processed and analyzed according to the needs. The insight cycle is the reflection cycle, namely the experience gained by students is reflected on to get answers to questions that arise after students gain knowledge from experience. The final cycle is action, meaning that students do something based on the three cycles they have experienced. This cycle is the part that can be identified whether experiential learning-based learning has been successful or not.

3.1. Experiential Learning Cycle in Learning to Read

Increasing students' reading interest needs to be conducted so that students really feel that they need reading activities. If students feel that reading is important, they will try on their own to read every reading material without feeling pressured. The Reading literacy based on experiential learning Model is a learning model that combines reading learning models with the aim that students will gain experience from the reading process they do. By experiencing it themselves, students will always remember what is conveyed from the reading materials and feel interested in keeping reading again because they feel they have gained real benefits from the reading process.

The steps for a reading literacy based on experiential learning model can be carried out through the following stages. According to Kolb (in Indrajit & Susanti, 2020), there are four cycles in experiential learning-based learning, including experience, reflection, insight, and action. The cycle is explained in Table 1.

Table 1. The four cycles of experiential learning-based reading literacy activities

No	Cycle	Steps
1	Experience	In this cycle, the teacher can ask the students to learn from specific real-life experiences, this aims to make them sensitive to situations. In learning to read, this step is implemented by giving reading material provided by the teacher which sources are from anywhere, then students are asked to experience for themselves the events contained in the reading material. For example, teachers choose reading materials that are useful for students in facing this digital era. For example, he provides reading material that contain instructions or how to send letters via email. The teacher can ask the students to read the text carefully, then the students are asked to practice the content of the reading material correctly. Thus, students really experience the events happened in the reading material on their own.
2	Reflections	In this cycle, the teacher asks students to reflect on the real-life experience that they have gained from reading, then evaluate what they have learned, and determine how these experiences will be applied by students in the real world. Apart from that, students are also invited to analyze the experiences they have by asking questions, namely, is the experience correct, appropriate, good, or not? These questions are very useful for students' understanding of the content of the reading material. For example, the teacher invites students to analyze and reflect on the real experiences they have about how to send letters via email. Whether their understanding correct or not, whether the steps they take appropriate to the content of the reading or not, etc.
3	Insights	In this cycle, the teacher can invite the students to reflect or to internalize it. The experience the students gained to be reflected on so that it is stored in their memory, and it can be used when it is needed. From the results of the reflection, there will be conclusions and decisions emerging which will be carried out as a new experience. In this cycle the teacher can ask students to reflect, is this new experience useful for students? Do students feel they benefit from the experience of sending letters via email? Will the student's experience be useful someday? and some other questions that the teacher can ask as the material for reflection.
4	Action	In this cycle, the teacher can ask the students to do something based on the experience they have gained. For example, students are asked to try sending a letter via email independently, by remembering the steps they have learned before. Are students able to send letters via email correctly without having to read again the instructions in the reading material? If students can carry out these activities correctly, it means that students can utilize the experience they gained from studying for their own daily lives, it is because sending letters via email will be very useful for students' lives both at present and in the future.

3.2. The Implementation of a Reading Literacy Based on Experiential Learning Model to Increase Students' Reading Interest

Learning to read in schools today does not only have the purpose for students to understand the content of the reading, but it is more than that, it is to make students able to utilize the learning outcomes from reading to use it in their daily lives. Therefore, the reading literacy based on experiential learning model is very suitable to apply in learning to read because by offering experience, it is expected that students will be interested in carrying out reading activities because students get direct experience and get real benefits.

Creative reading is a reading process that is initially to understand the content of the reading. However, it has another more important purpose that is to apply the ideas contained in the reading to their daily lives. So, by reading creatively,

students will get many direct benefits for overcoming the problems they have in their lives. Through the reading literacy based on experiential learning model, students' reading motivation will increase because they have become creative readers, namely readers who can apply the results of reading activities in their real lives.

Experiential learning is a learning model that prioritizes the learner's experience as its learning goal. In experiential learning, students will be directed to gain real life experiences from reading. So, the experiential learning model is very suitable when it is combined with reading literacy based on experiential learning model. By mastering reading literacy based on experiential learning, students' reading interest will increase, and they will learn to become creative readers.

The implementation of a reading literacy based on experiential learning model to increase students' reading interest can be carried out through the following stages, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The stages of experiential learning-based reading literacy

No	Stage	Steps
1	Introduction	At this stage, the teacher determines beforehand about the experiences will be given to the students through reading literacy activities. This step is an important stage because it determines whether the reading literacy learning delivered by the teacher is interesting or not. The teacher needs to conduct a survey first regarding what students currently need and are interested in so that teachers can determine the suitable reading literacy activities according to what students need. Teachers must be good at reading situations. So, they can choose the reading materials that students are interested in. This way, students feel enthusiastic and excited, which then will become a useful new experience for students. For example, the teacher can choose reading material that students are likely to be interested in. For example, the teacher chooses reading material about how to create a YouTube channel. Most likely students will be interested in reading the material because currently YouTube channels are popular.
2	Core	At this stage, the reading literacy learning process is carried out. Students read the reading material carefully, understand the content of the reading material both in groups and individually. They pay close attention to the steps to create a YouTube channel properly. So, they can use the knowledge they gain from reading activities. After the students understand the reading material well, the teacher then asks the students to practice the new information they have gained. The teacher can take the students to the ICT laboratory room to learn how to create a YouTube channel properly under the teacher's supervision. After all students are able to apply their reading results correctly, the teacher can ask several students to give examples to other students. So, all students can create a YouTube channel correctly. This stage is a stage that aims to give students direct experience from reading literacy activities. By experiencing it directly, it is expected that students will understand reading material better than only reading written source.
3	Closing	At this stage, the teacher and the students reflect together on something they have just learned. The teacher asks students to reflect on the importance of learning something from the reading, that is reflecting on the benefits of learning how to create a YouTube channel. By experiencing it on their own about how to create a YouTube channel, students will feel that they have gained an experience that is useful for their lives. Students and teachers can also reflect on the importance of learning something new and find out what benefits students get from the reading literacy activities that have been carried out.

With the reading literacy model carried out through these three stages, it is expected that students' reading interest will increase because students gain real experience and feel the important benefits in their daily lives. Through these examples of reading literacy activities, students will feel interested in reading other new things because they realize the importance of reading in their everyday life.

4. CONCLUSION

There have been various efforts made to increase students' reading interest. Both the government and schools have tried in various ways. However, the various efforts made have not given expected result. This is because increasing students' reading interest is not an easy job. There are many challenges faced in increasing students' reading interest. The most obvious obstacle is the large number of distractions from external which causes students to be lazy to read and have low motivation to read. These challenges can come from both internal and external of the students themselves. The most obvious distraction is the amount of time they spend to play games, watch movies, and access social media.

To increase students' reading interest, we need to implement suitable strategies in learning, especially in learning to read. The reading literacy based on experiential learning model is a combination of recommended learning models to increase students' reading interest. Reading literacy based on experiential learning is a strategy in learning to read that invites students to master reading material by experiencing it directly so that students feel the benefits of reading for their daily lives.

There are four experiential learning cycles, namely experience, reflection, insight, and action. The experience is the initial part of the learning cycle which aims for students to experience in their own, the thing they have read. The reflection is a learning cycle that involves students in reflection activities, that is reflecting on the benefits they have gained from reading activities. Insight is a cycle in learning that involves students to internalize what they have learned to store the experiences they have gained in their memories so that they can be used later when needed. The final cycle is action. Action is the implementation of reading activities that have been carried out. Students will try new things they have learned in learning, practice something they have learned from reading in the real life.

The implementation of a reading literacy based on experiential learning model to increase students' reading interest can be carried out in three stages, namely the introduction, core and closing stages. The introduction stage is the initial stage before learning, that is the teacher determines what reading material will be taught which is considered capable of increasing students' reading interest. The second stage is core. The core stage is when the learning process is implemented. Students learn new things contained in reading materials by experiencing it directly so that students will feel interested in reading because they feel the real benefits of reading activities. The final step is the closing, namely the final part of the lesson that contains reflections on the importance of the material that they have read. Through a reading literacy based on experiential learning model, students' reading interest will increase, and they will have good reading literacy because of high reading motivation and getting sorted reading materials that are useful for their daily lives.

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