

“THEJAKARTAPOST” AS A DRIVING FORCE OF LITERACY TO ENHANCE STUDENTS’ ENGLISH SKILLS

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Abstract

This article aims at facilitating literacy empowerment for Indonesian students learning English by utilizing one of Indonesian English Newspapers, “TheJakartaPost” as a driving force of literacy. The rationale is that “TheJakartaPost” newspapers have a built-in capacity to motivate students to be literate readers due to real life contexts of Indonesia, up-to date information, and frequently used words. This, at the end, will enhance their English skills. Some research found out that the main medium used by English teachers to empower literacy is a number of books. However, a number of research reveal that Indonesian students are poor in literacy. Of course, this reaseach finding correlates to poor litaracy in English which leads to low ability in English skills. Therefore, this article discusses pedagogical reasons of using “TheJakartaPost” as a driving force of literacy and suggested teaching procedures. It is expected that English teachers use “TheJakartaPost” as one of the alternatives to help students literate for enhancing their English skills.

Keywords: *TheJakartaPost: Literacy; English Skills*

A. INTRODUCTION

The word “literacy” has been the focus of attention in education. It is a key of education and improvement of the lives of millions of people (Unesco, 2006). Since many people interprete literacy differently, Unesco(2006)uses the term ‘functional literacy’ for easier interpretation. It means that a person who is functionally literate can engage in all activities required for his/her group and community. This person enables to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his/her own and community. Literacy helps people understand decontextualized information and language, verbal as well as written.

A variety of affords have been studied, invented and applied to help students literate. Literacy is one of the educational keys to achieve educational objectives (Cambridge Assessment, 2013). Indonesian government is keenly concerned with literacy. A lot of efforts have been realized, such as a great number of schools built, policy in place, large number of recruited teachers, amount of resources invested including e-book, and a large number of researches funded.

However, having literate students is still highly expected as revealing by the two survey results. International Student Association (PISA) in 2015 indicated that from 72 countries reviewed, Indonesia ranked 62nd in literacy (Pellini, 2017). This means Indonesia has few literate people. Central Connecticut State University in the US. did a survey in 2016 and found out that Indonesia is the second-least literate nation in the world in the list of 61 countries (Gunawan, 2016). These survey results raise thoughtful questions for all education practitioners.

Many education practitioners strive to find out the root of problems. One of the problems is that Indonesia has large number of people who are able to read, but not interested in reading (Syofyan, 2017). With a great number of schools, policy in place, large number of recruited teachers, amount of resources invested, and a large number of research funded as stated previously, PISA strongly suggests to use existing resources more efficiently. Indonesia is not lack of educational resources. The problem is that teachers and students do not make use the existing resources to provoke students to literate. EFL (English of Foreign Language) teachers have used many tools as his/her teaching aids like text books, LCD, and board, but those tools do not help students to develop English efficiently in real-life situation because those tools are not able to drive students to know and use English more (Patel, Patel, & Agrawal, 2013)

The above surveys are strongly assumed to correlate with English literacy. Even though the survey does not state the rank of Indonesian English literacy, it is strongly predicted that English literacy is also low. For EFL learners, low literacy in English means language limitation. This impacts on accessing information either in international or in local contexts (Johnston, 2014). It becomes a barrier for students to enhance their English skills as well. Surprisingly, with a lot of the internet resources easily accessed and utilized (Susanti, 2014), the ranking of Indonesian literacy is still low. With the number books and “click and share” resources, English teachers need make use the existing resources as suggested by PISA. This article suggests English teachers to have a look at the JakartaPost as one of the alternatives to drive students to literate.

The JakartaPost is a daily English language newspaper in Indonesia published in printed and online version. It is published by PT Bina Media Tenggara, and the head office is in the nation's capital, Jakarta. The first issue was printed on 25

April 1983. The Jakarta Post, a member of Asia News Network, has won several awards and been described as being "Indonesia's leading English-language daily". It has variety of features, such as news, business, se asia, community, opinion, travel, and job. With these features, it leads readers to perceive how English can be dealt to maintain readers' enthusiasm. Providing real and current situation, this daily newspaper will surely enhance the English skills of students. Therefore, this newspaper is chosen as driving force of literacy to improve students' English skills. Pedagogical reasons and suggested teaching procedures are described to confirm its force in literacy.

B. DISCUSSION

Pedagogical Reasons of Utilizing TheJakartaPost as Driving Force of Literacy

Learning English as foreign language is best by making sense of issues on real life. This can provoke students to literate. Exposing students to real life issues make sense for literacy to take place. Their motivation to enhance their ability in English is strongly driven. Becoming literate, in fact, gains mastery of English skill.

As previously stated by Johnston (2014), the majority of EFL teachers use English textbook. Polisda (2016) found out that even though textbooks are written by the native speakers of English, they do not motivate students to improve their writing. It is true that exposing them to the contexts of other country lives was necessary, but exposing to the contexts of students' real lives strongly motivates them to capture their attention and stimulate interest. This means if the context in one textbook is far from students' lives, the results can be unmotivated class. A good language lesson consists of not only a series of activities, but also a positive learning environment to students' lives. Therefore, accommodating students' cultures and lives is important to create a positive learning environment (Patel et al., 2013). A positive learning environment drives students to literate in English.

Pedagogically, educational Resources should meet some criteria. There are four indicators: content, language input, language skills, and language practice (Kerns and Knight, 2007). Content must be relevant to students' needs and integrate language and culture. Language input must provide students with

receptive language skills and facilitate them to achieve productive skills. Educational resources should provoke students to develop of four language skills. These resources motivate students to practice language practice. To do practice, the authenticity of the resources plays an important role as a great motivator.

TheJakartaPost meets the four criteria above. It contains real life contexts of Indonesia which drive students to literate. Every daily news is clearly written and focuses on issues in the real contexts which students actually live(Johnston, 2014). Being exposure to rich context of students' lives, the ability to use English is definitely improved because they can make sense of the real issues(Cambridge Assessment, 2013). Since TheJakartaPost writes the current issues of national and international, it best suits for pedagogical purpose. Its contents reflected in its features, like news, business, seasia, community, opinion, travel, and job, are what Indonesian students need to know. It provides English language input which makes sense of variety of round-o'clock events which facilitate Indonesian students to literate. Since its contents contains up-dated information equipped with pictures, they must be interesting for the students to read, retell to others, listen each other news, and write their own opinion on what they have read. It therefore is best English language practice.

Suggested Teaching Procedures

There are many teaching models and procedures that teachers can apply to drive students to literate for enhancing their English skills by utilizing TheJakartaPost. One of them is Genre Process Approach (GPA) models as been implemented and proved significantly to improve students' academic essay writing (Polisda, 2016). Even though this teaching model has been proved to in writing, it is strongly believed that it can be applied to improve students' English skills. This model and its procedures derive from synergizing strong points and drawbacks of genre based approach and process based approach. The combination of these two approaches accommodates the ideas that there is no single best approach to teaching English, especially to EFL learners. Focusing on single approach fails to completely address students' needs. Therefore, English teachers should use the combination at least two approaches to assist them to improve their English skills.

As the name suggests, this teaching model incorporates knowledge about language (as in product and genre approaches), knowledge of the context in which articles is understood by 5W+H questions, skills in using language (as in process approaches), strategies in producing a well written essay by drawing out the learners' potential (as in process approaches), and by providing input to which the learners respond (as in product and genre approaches).

The following teaching procedures are based on GPA model of teaching English:

Table 1. GPA model and Teaching Procedures

GPA	Procedures
Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The teacher greets students. 2. The teacher asks students questions about current issues and lists them. When it is not possible using English all the time, teachers may use code mixing.
Developing Control over the genre	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The teacher has students sit the group of three or four. 4. The teacher distributes the same article in each group from ThejakartaPost and has students to find out 5 W +H questions from the articles. In this step, every student must be equipped with printed or online dictionary. Students are also asked to write down new words they get from the article.
Joint Construction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. The teacher has students discuss the article in the group related to 5W+H for in order to have good understanding about the article. In this step, it is strongly suggested that the discussion is conducted in English or by code mixing.
Independent Construction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The teacher has students retell the article by writing or speaking with their own expression in English.
Revising	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. The teacher had students go back to their group and read his/her writing or utter their notes on his/her own article. 8. The teacher has other students in group to listen, give suggestion (if any), and praise. In this step, the teacher walks around to assist and to make sure that they are on the right tract.
Live Conference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. The teacher has one of the students on each group retell the article to all students in English. In this step, the teacher has to note that in one semester or period all students get turn.

Closing	10. The teacher compliments students to what they have done and encourage them to read more.
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In utilizing TheJakartaPost as a driving force of literacy, teachers may use both printed and online versions or alternate them. However, I strongly suggest teachers to use the printed ones. This is because online newspapers include advertisement which may disturb students' attention from the articles. If the network is in trouble, it will be another barrier. Sometimes it is also difficult for teachers to have a control from preventing students chatting or playing games while literacy activity is going on. In case of printed version is not available or not enough, teachers may select and print out articles appropriately needed.

C. CONCLUSION

English literacy is as important as Indonesian literacy. Driving students to literacy in English leads them for fun English literacy. As English literacy is fun, there will more students who are able to use English either in writing or in speaking. This, of course, is an effective way to motivate Indonesian students to enhance their English speaking skills. One of the effectively existing resources is theJakartaPost, one of Indonesian daily English newspapers which can be a reference for teachers to drive students to literate. This newspaper has its pedagogical reasons to use in education context. GPA model of teaching English is suggested as one of the alternatives for teachers to help students experience fun literacy and gain better English skills.

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