

READING CORNER IMPLEMENTATION TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S ENGLISH LITERACY IN KAMPUNG LITERASI 26 ILIR

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Abstract: *One of the skills that must be possessed by the younger generation in the Society 5.0 era is communicating in English. Literacy activities can improve English as a basic skill for communication. Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir tried to provide English literacy facilities for children with a reading corner to hone their ability to understand analytical, critical, and reflective information. The study aims to describe the implementation of a reading corner to improve children's English literacy. It used a descriptive analysis with a case study. Data was obtained from observation. The result is the implementation of reading corner to improve English literacy in the very good category. Increased the understanding of reading content for children aged 4-6 years is in the very good category. Meanwhile, children aged 7-11 years show excellent improvement in their ability to analyze reading content, criticize reading content, and reflect on reading results.*

Keywords: *Reading Corner, Literacy, English Language*

Abstrak: *Salah satu keterampilan yang harus dimiliki oleh generasi muda di era Society 5.0 adalah berkomunikasi dengan bahasa Inggris. Kegiatan literasi dapat meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris sebagai dasar komunikasi. Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir mencoba memberikan fasilitas kegiatan literasi bahasa Inggris bagi anak-anak dengan pojok baca untuk mengasah kemampuan memahami informasi analitis, kritis, dan reflektif. Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi pojok baca untuk meningkatkan literasi bahasa Inggris anak-anak. Artikel ini menggunakan analisis deskriptif dengan teknik studi kasus. Data diperoleh dari observasi. Hasilnya adalah implementasi pojok baca untuk meningkatkan literasi bahasa Inggris dalam kategori sangat baik. Peningkatan kemampuan memahami isi bacaan untuk anak-anak usia 4-6 tahun dalam kategori sangat baik. Adapun anak-anak yang berusia 7-11 tahun menunjukkan peningkatan kemampuan yang sangat baik dalam menganalisis isi bacaan, mengkritisi isi bacaan, dan merefleksikan hasil bacaan.*

Kata kunci: *Pojok Baca, Literasi, Bahasa Inggris*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is preparing to face the era of Society 5.0 where all aspects of life are interconnected without space and time limitations (Nastiti et al., 2022). There are several competencies that Indonesian people must master, including communicating in a foreign language

(Shahab et al., 2023), literacy (Pyles, 2023), critical thinking (Lutfiyatun & Kurniati, 2023), and collaboration (Novrizaldi, 2021). Therefore, starting from children, it is necessary to prepare competencies that are useful in the era of Society 5.0.

Several competencies that have high urgency in this era are literacy (Maruti, 2022) and

foreign language, in this case is English which is one of the international languages. Literacy is a person's language skill in communicating, especially in reading and writing (Pyles, 2023). A good literacy habit can improve language skills (Lindriany et al., 2022) and help understanding analytical, critical, and reflective information (Rostikawati et al., 2020). Introducing literacy habits can also improve children's ability to sort and absorb information (Harefa et al., 2022) and has a significant effect to children's learning outcomes (Aspari, 2020). It was done with the aim at preparing the younger generation, especially children, to face the challenges in the Society 5.0 era.

Children with low literacy showed low scores on English phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and reading comprehension (von Hagen et al., 2021). In addition, parents' literacy skills are also directly proportional to children's cognitive and language abilities (d'Apice & von Stumm, 2020). Therefore, strengthening English literacy in children is important. However, what happens on the society is that children who grow up in disadvantaged environments are more vulnerable to speech, language and literacy difficulties (Krahe et al., 2022). These abilities are very useful in improving the quality of life. Reading together in the form of literacy for children (Zgourou et al., 2021) can enrich children's vocabularies (Oxley & de Cat, 2021).

Related to the phenomenon, the Indonesian government and society implemented a program to improve children's literacy and foreign languages. The National Literacy Movement has been implemented since 2015 (Nugraha & Octavianah, 2020). In various settlements in

Indonesian regions, reading corners are held as one of the literacy movements. Literacy culture focused not only on reading and writing but also on improving the ability to communicate and think analytically and critically (Prabowo et al., 2022) and enriching cultural values and civic engagements (Susanti et al., 2022). Basically, the more time devoted to literacy activities and various literacy sources, the more literacy competence someone has. However, these reading corners have not been optimally processed.

Palembang was selected as one of 20 Satellite Cities in Indonesia with a Digital Literacy Index figure of 3.53. The research focused on teenage respondents. Therefore, to prepare the next generation who are still aged 6-12 years, the Palembang city government is promoting a literacy movement in the villages. One of reading corners that is of concern is the one in the city of Palembang, Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir. It is located in a residential complex with more than 80 children. Children are the young generation who have the potential to become Indonesia's future leaders. However, the most problematic thing is that children's literacy skills are still minimal due to lack of support from resources and infrastructure. Therefore, the English Department carried out an English literacy assistance program for children in the Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir. This program aims to provide information, raise awareness, and increase literacy to the community, especially children. The result of this activity is the creation of a sustainable reading corner in the city of Palembang.

The Reading Corner in Kampung 26 Ilir was initiated by the residents of flats in the area who are members of the Family Welfare Empowerment group. The group is chaired by Oca Tresia. The background to the establishment of the reading corner was community anxiety about the quality of children's literacy around the 26 Ilir flats and the desire of the community and government to provide a means of strengthening literacy and education for children in the area.

Previous research on reading corners has been carried out at Roudlatul Ulum Cendekia Islamic Elementary School of Bantur succeeded in improving habits and basic literacy skills (Sallam et al., 2022). Literacy, especially reading was successfully applied to schools in London to improve children's cognitive and language comprehension (Henning, 2023). Apart from that, it is similar to a reading corner, namely a reading terrace in Kuala Pasir Bintan (Cahya et al., 2022) and Sumber Pasir in Malang Regency (Rahayu et al., 2022) which succeeded in improving children's memorization and literacy, especially skills, likewise the implementation of community reading parks that succeeded in increasing children's interest in reading (Harefa et al., 2022).

Based on this explanation, researchers carried out observation techniques to see the phenomena that occurred in Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir in establishing and developing reading corners. The research aims to describe the implementation of a reading corner to improve children's English literacy in Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir Palembang.

2. METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Researchers carried out observation techniques to obtain the data. The data obtained was described using a qualitative descriptive technique. Aspects observed was how children understanding an analytical, critical, and reflective information.

Researchers carried out mentoring activities for the reading corner program at Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir and observing behavior to find out the development of children's English literacy during the implementation of the program. Apart from being carried out by researchers, reading corner volunteers also help in controlling activities.

The data analysis technique was carried out according to the Huberman technique (Huberman, 2014) including data collection, data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, and verification. Qualitative data were analyzed using a reflective thinking and interpretation approach. In general, interpretation seeks to understand the situation through the meaning of people by comparing relevant theories with the results of field tests to determine gaps. The gap needs to be solved with reflective thinking.

The activities were carried out in Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir, Palembang, Sumatera Selatan. The population were 80 children. The sample of this research was 25 children selected through purposive sampling. The time for carrying out the activity was on March 1-30, 2023 divided into 3

phases, namely the first phase was the preparation of the reading corner assistance by compiling a schedule of activities and providing the necessary facilities, the second phase was implementation by providing assistance to children in the reading corner and literacy counseling activities English, and the last phase was evaluation and reflection by providing feedback about activities that have been carried out.

3. RESULT

The management and implementation of the reading corner program were carried out by volunteers, one of whom was a team from State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya as the program facilitators. This activity was carried out starting from the stages of preparation, implementation, and evaluation. It required five weeks or a month starting from the first week of March to the fifth week of March.

The preparation phase lasted for two weeks. This stage was carried out from the 1st to 11th of March 2023. The activities carried out in the preparation stage include:

- a. Setting up reading corner activity schedules and selection of activities and materials presented during implementation.
- b. Assigning a team responsible for reading corner activities.
- c. Determining the method of implementing a reading corner that was appropriate to the psychological age of the children.
- d. Supporting facilities and equipment for the reading corner, especially story books and

light references to support English literacy activities.

The next stage was the implementation of reading corner activities with English literacy assistance for children at Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir. This stage was carried out for 2 weeks from the 12th to the 25th of March 2023. The reading corner program was carried out with the help of the management team in Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir as supervisors, children from flats as participants in the reading corner, and the State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya team as facilitators of English literacy assistance for children.



Picture 1 Book Collection in The Reading Corner

(source: a researchers' directory)

The implementation was started with outreach activities related to English literacy for children. In this stage, the participants were given counseling regarding:

- a. The importance of literacy in Society 5.0 era.
- b. Types of literacy, such as reading and writing.



Picture 2 Introduction to Literacy with Participants
(source: a researchers' directory)

The next activity was assisting reading corners as a means of strengthening English literacy. The stages of the activity were:

- a. The team from the State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya and volunteers accompanied the children to read bilingual story books (Indonesian-English) in the reading corner (7-11 years old) and in the gazebo (4-6 years old).



Picture 3 Participants Aged 4-6 Years Reading Books in The Gazebo
(source: a researchers' directory)

- b. The children in the reading corner chose their reading material freely and were assisted by facilitators and volunteers.



Picture 4 Participants Aged 7-12 Years Reading Books in The Reading Corner
(source: a researchers' directory)

- c. The children in the gazebo were guided and given directions when reading because they were still at preschool age and not fluent in reading.
- d. The facilitators guided and helped the children translate the sentences in English reading.
- e. The children discussed the information or knowledge obtained from literacy activities; reading bilingual books.
- f. The children took turns presenting the results of English literacy activities.
- g. The facilitators invited the children to draw conclusions and provided feedback related to literacy.

The stages of implementing this activity were carried out in groups according to the age level by applying standard health protocols. The activity was carried out by reading books that the researchers had prepared and adjusted to the age level of the children. This activity was carried out three times. At the first meeting in the

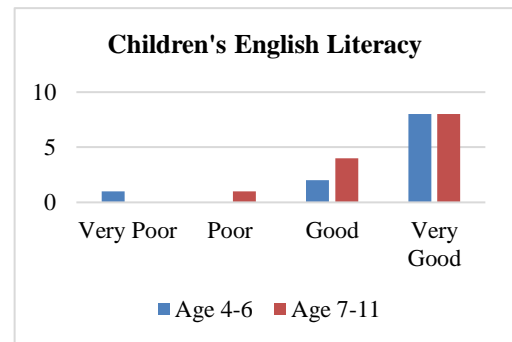
implementation, the children were only given printed books such as fairy tales, poetry, comics, lessons and others to see the children's interest in reading books.

As a result, children felt interested in reading books. Reading activities for lower age level were carried out by guided reading aloud and reading silently. While for the high age level, it was done independently by reading silently. The children chose the reading books freely. Before starting to read, the researchers asked some questions related to the cover of the books they were going to read and then related the information from the cover of the book to the children's daily life and gave predictive questions, such as "What do you think the story will be like?".

The activity lasted for an hour. The first half hour was spent on reading books. The next half hour was for retelling the contents of the story orally and in written forms as well. In addition, at the end of the activity a discussion about the theme, characters, setting and message in the story was held. The result of the three meetings was the growth of students' enthusiasm for reading texts which was indicated by the students wanting to read the story again after the activity was over.

The final stage was monitoring the competence of the children after receiving assistance and evaluating the program. This stage was carried out on March 26-31, 2023. The research team conducted a thorough evaluation and recorded the obstacles that occurred from planning to carrying out the reading corner activities in Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir.

The data on improving children's English literacy is showed in this graphic.



The chart above shows that there was an increase in English reading literacy. At first, children aged 4-6 years only saw pictures in story books. However, after being accompanied in the reading corner, they were able to understand what the volunteers were telling them. The understanding of reading content for children aged 4-6 years was in the very good category. Meanwhile, the children aged 7-11 years is good at reading, but the competency to analyze, criticize, and reflect reading content was very poor. After the reading corner, the children showed excellent improvement in their ability to analyze reading content, criticize reading content, and reflect on reading results.

The Reading Corner in Kampung 26 Ilir which is provided to improve children's English literacy is one of the solutions and efforts to prepare the younger generation to face future challenges. This is in accordance with the theory (Pyles, 2023); (Maruti, 2022) which stated that literacy and English are one of the abilities that people must have in the era of Society 5.0. The reading corner which was initiated by the community is evidence of the community's efforts to provide an environment that can facilitate children's development, especially in the field of English literacy. This is in accordance with the theory (Lindriany et al., 2022) and the research result (Harefa et al., 2022) that a literacy habit

which is well developed in the environment where children live can improve language skills and information comprehension.

The stages of the reading corner program starting from preparation, implementation, to evaluation are structured to obtain maximum results in terms of increasing children's English literacy. The provision of supporting facilities and equipment for reading corners, especially story books and light references aims to support English literacy activities. This is in accordance with the results of research conducted by (Zgourou et al., 2021)) and (Oxley & de Cat, 2021) which showed that literacy skills can improve a person's quality of life and through reading English together, English vocabulary, which is an important element in communication, can continue to increase. The selection of story books is intended to adapt the psychology of children who like picture stories, but still contain meaning and lessons that can be drawn. The books used are bilingual books so that children can easily understand the meaning of the story. Moreover, the facilitators still accompany and guide the children in the process.

The stages of implementing reading corner activities with English literacy assistance for children were carried out with the help of the management team of Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir as supervisors, children from flats as participants in the reading corner, and the team of State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya as facilitators of English literacy assistance for children. Literacy habits do not only focus on reading and writing according to research results (Prabowo et al., 2022), yet it can also enhance communication skill and

analytical and critical thinking. The implementation is started with outreach activities related to English literacy for children. At this stage, the activity has been adapted to the procedures of the National Literacy Movement that are already implemented in Indonesia so that the activities carried out do not contradict the procedures and in accordance with the principles set by the government to increase literacy.

Reading corner assistance as a means of strengthening English literacy by accompanying bilingual (Indonesian-English) book reading sessions is divided into two groups, namely those in the reading corner (aged 7-11 years) and in the garden gazebo (age 4-6 years). The children in the reading corner chose their reading materials freely and are assisted by a team of facilitators and volunteers. The main objective of the activity is to improve children's cognitive skills in terms of reading and recognizing vocabulary because this group is at preschool age. This is in accordance with the results of the study (Henning, 2023) to focus on improving children's cognitive and language comprehension. The children in the gazebo are guided and given directions when reading because they are still at preschool age and on average they are not fluent in reading. The facilitator team guides and helps the children translate the sentences in English reading according to the results of the research (Cahya et al., 2022) in Kuala Pasir Bintan and (Rahayu et al., 2022) Sumber Pasir in Malang Regency.

Discussions on information or knowledge obtained from literacy activities reading bilingual books in groups in the garden gazebo, presentations on the results of English literacy

activities in turns, and drawing conclusions together and providing feedback related to literacy are in accordance with the theory (Prabowo et al., 2022) that literacy activities must be able to accommodate and strengthen the quality of analytical, critical and reflective thinking abilities.

The stages of implementing this activity were carried out in groups which are in accordance with the research conducted by previous researchers (Sallam et al., 2022). This activity was carried out by reading books that had been prepared by researchers and adjusted to the age level of the children. This activity was carried out three times. At the first meeting in the implementation of mentoring children's reading activities, the children were only given printed books such as fairy tales, poetry, comics, lessons and others to see children's interest in reading books.

The implementation of a reading corner in Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir has helped to increase children's enthusiasm for reading books, especially bilingual (Indonesian-English) books. Thus, the reading corner becomes a community program that can improve English literacy as an effort to prepare the younger generation to master the skills needed in the Society 5.0 era.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of a reading corner to improve children's English literacy is in Kampung Literasi 26 Ilir. With a reading corner, children's English literacy has been enhanced which is proved by the children's ability to analyze the

contents of the reading, criticize, reflect and present what has been read. The understanding of reading content for children aged 4-6 years was in the very good category. Meanwhile, the children aged 7-11 years showed excellent improvement in their ability to analyze reading content, criticize reading content, and reflect on reading results.

It is hoped that the existence of this reading corner as an effort to increase English literacy for children in Palembang City can become an example and many other reading corners can be developed broadly in other regions with the same goals, namely advancing and increasing Indonesian children's literacy.

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