

# Primary Literacy Activities in Basic Education in Bali: Describing Implication on Children Reading and Writing in EFL

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**Abstract**—The results of PISA (Program of International Student Assessment) revealed that Indonesia students still have a low literacy level. This research aimed at investigating the implementation of Primary English Literacy activities at elementary school and finding out the effect of the activities toward the students' language competency in English. This quasi-experimental design was implemented at a primary school in Singaraja, Bali. The data were collected using English tests and supported with observation. The implementation of literacy activities was applied in three stages: 1) the introduction stage; 2) the implementation stage; and 3) the establishment stage. All of the stages gave a good impact on the students' attitude and the students' language competence. The result of the paired t-test showed that the primary literacy activities gave a significant effect on the students' language competence. It implied that the literacy activities are suitable to be used for teaching English at primary school.

**Keywords**—primary English literacy; students' attitudes; students' language competence.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the ability that refers to reading, writing, speaking, and listening [1]. Literacy is important because students can develop their ability to read and understand written information and to write properly in a range of contexts [2]. In the scope of education, literacy skill is important because it is needed by students to master a variety of knowledge. The purpose is to achieve the objectives of each subject learned by the students (including mastery of knowledge, skills, and attitudes). Literacy does not only refer to cognitive aspects but also some aspects such as social aspects, linguistic aspects, and psychological aspects. Because of this reason, literacy can help the students to identify some issues and practice to solve the problems in their environment. Thus, they must have literacy ability.

The government of Indonesia implemented School Literacy Movement (SLM) since 2015 [3]. School Literacy Movement program is a program which instructs students to read a book for 15 minutes before the lessons begin. School Literacy Movement (SLM) is designed to assist students in

developing a culture of reading in their school environment. As an obligation, schools in Bali have implemented this government program. However, this School Literacy Movement (SLM) still focuses on Indonesian literacy. A guideline and material about how to develop English literacy is not available yet and teachers do not have any knowledge of how English literacy is introduced to students.

Primary literacy program is one of the important programs that should be applied in the elementary school level [4]. There are several reasons for the importance of introducing English as a foreign language in primary school [5]. First, young students are considered to have a more flexibility to absorb information in learning the language. It means that students can easily learn the language through media such as books, songs, and games related to language learning. Second, the demands of using English in society can result in a positive attitude toward the existence of foreign language learning. The demand to be able to use the English language is one of the phenomena that occurred in Indonesia due to the need of the global era and society nowadays. For that reason, people are expected to learn English as a foreign language to face the global situation in the coming years. Realizing the importance of English, English is taught in the Elementary School curriculum. The time allotment of the English subject is limited, which is only 1x35 minutes /week in most government schools, and the scope of teaching is mostly dealing with vocabulary and grammar which is text-book oriented in nature.

The phenomenon of literacy in Indonesia also shows that the literacy skill of the children is lower than the other countries. Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2015 stated that students' reading ability in Indonesia ranks 69 out of the 76 countries [6]. The result was lower than Vietnam which ranks 12<sup>th</sup> out of the total countries surveyed. This problem is also cited in the guidebook of SLM that the result of an international survey (PIRLS 2011, PISA 2009 and 2012) about the reading skill of learners in Indonesia is still in the lowest rank [7].

Previous research developed a guideline of primary literacy program for basic education and the product has

been successfully conducted in Bangli regency [8,9]. Inspired by its effectiveness and the need to improve the students' English literacy, this study then aimed at implementing the guideline of the primary literacy program in Buleleng regency North Bali, and analyzing its effect toward the English literacy achievement of the students.

**II. METHOD**

This research was designed in the form of triangulation mixed-method design [10,11]. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously. Vocabulary test and reading tests were used to collect quantitative data. In this study, teaching scenarios were designed for implementing the program. Observation sheet, interview guide, field note, and camera were also used to collect qualitative data.

The setting of this research was in an elementary school in Singaraja, Bali. The school was chosen based on purposive sampling techniques that the school has English in their curriculum as a local content and does not implement English literacy program yet. For that reason, the researcher chose this school because this school has not conducted English language literacy program yet because of no guidelines provided. The subjects of this research were the fourth-grade students and the English teacher. The total students in this class were 32 students, consisted of 12 males and 20 females. The object used in this research was the implementation of primary English literacy guidelines.

There were five methods of data collection used in this research. Those methods were test, observation, interview, note-taking, and taking picture/video. The test conducted in this research was a dependent t-test. Pre-test was given to the students before the treatment and the post-test was given to the students after the treatment. The observation conducted in this research aimed at observing the students' reading and writing activities not only in the classroom but after hours. In order to do that, a reading log was utilized, which must be filled in by the students and approved by their parents.

To explore further, the researcher used unguided interview towards the teacher and the students. Besides the interview, the researcher took note of the important things happened during the implementation of primary literacy guideline. The researcher also took the data using visual media for recording all the process of the implementation. The data were analyzed qualitatively and also quantitatively using a dependent t-test or paired t-test. The purpose was to determine the impact of the Primary Literacy guideline toward the students' attitude and the students' English language competency.

**III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**A. Findings**

The first finding was about the implementation of primary English literacy guidelines in the basic education. The second finding was about the impacts of the implementation of primary English literacy guidelines on students' attitudes and language competency in English.

The implementation of the teaching and learning process using primary literacy guidelines was conducted in eight meetings. Each meeting consisted of three stages with some learning activities. Those three stages were the introduction stage (pre-activity), implementation stage (whilst activity), and establishment stage (post-activity). The teacher also used the Lesson Plan or teaching scenario for the implementation of Primary English literacy guidelines. The lesson plan consisted of the topic of learning, allocation of the time, teacher's activities, students' activities, the visual aid used in the learning process, and the task for the students. Those lesson plans were arranged based on the Primary English Literacy Guideline book and prepared for eight meetings [12]. In the introduction stage, the teacher checked the students' logbook and implemented interactive storytelling activity or read the story to the students. During the interactive storytelling, the teacher told a story by reading the storybook for the students in front of the class. After telling the story, the teacher asked the students to answer several questions related to the story. Then, the teacher gave a chance for students to read aloud the same story in front of the class. The followings are the examples of the writings made by the students.



Fig. 1. An example of student's writing

Figure 1 shows a picture as one of the results made by the students concerning the part of the story read by the teacher. In this activity, the teacher read a story in front of the classroom. During the process of reading, the teacher

sometimes interacted with the students by providing additional information related to the students' activities. The purpose of the activities is to engage the content of the story with the students' life.

After the story reading finished, then the students had to write the most interesting part of the story that they like best. In doing this, the students were asked to write a paragraph using their own words. They had to write individually on a piece of paper. Besides writing the part, the students could draw a picture explaining that interesting part.

Observing the process of writing this part, the students looked relax. They started by drawing the picture. They spent more time in drawing because they drew the sketch first and after that they color it. They did not share ideas nor asking questions. They just focused on doing the assignment. After they finished, they wrote sentences explaining the picture. From the paragraph made by the students, it can be stated that they comprehended the story very well, but they still faced problems pertaining to the use of past tense. They used "was" correctly, but they made mistakes about changing "go" into "went".

In Figure 1, it can be seen that the student made a drawing about the story and wrote the part the like from the story under the picture they made. From the writing, it can be seen that the student also still made a mistake in putting the apostrophe 's' to show ownership. The student wrote "Mr. Crup house" instead of "Mr. Crup's House".

Despite the grammar mistakes the student made, it is very obvious that the student was able to self-direct himself on what to draw and what to write.



Fig. 2. Another example of a student's writing

Another example can be seen in Figure 2. The picture in this figure also reflects another student's achievement in their writing ability. The picture looks very interesting and should have more stories to explain what happens in the drawing, who is the actor in the drawing, and the reasons for drawing it. However, the student only wrote a sentence about it. Despite one sentence, the form of the sentence is a complex sentence and it is grammatically correct.

The two figures mentioned previously were the products of the students taken from their regular classes. From the process of drawing the pictures and the behavior performed by the students, it can be stated that they were always on-task, engaged, and focused. They did not have a look at other friends' works. They just enjoyed their activities and looked very confident. The product of another student can be seen in Figure 3.

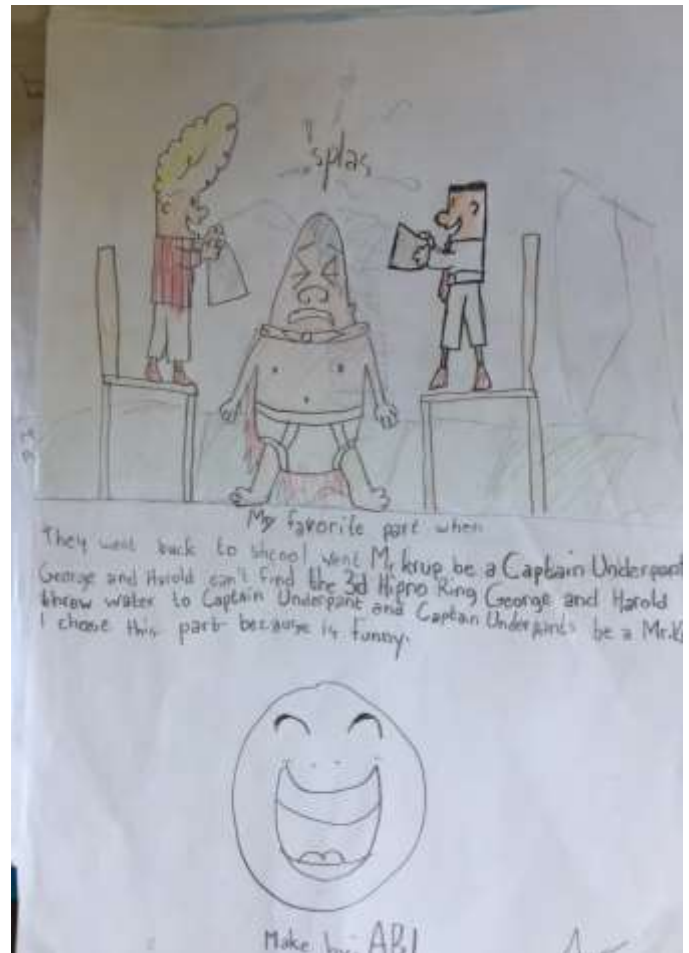


Fig. 3. Example of a figure caption

From Figure 3, it can be seen that the picture seems to be rich with information. The sentences reflect the student's comprehension of the story. By reading those sentences, it can be stated the student was obviously able to give a reason why he likes that part of the story.

The samples provided previously indicates that the students' literacy develops well and they enjoyed the process of learning in the classroom.

The success of the implementation was also supported by the literacy-rich environment provided in the school. The teacher introduced the literacy environment by showing the poster with the picture and some vocabulary related to the story. They students always love pictures and they like posters. Their vocabularies seem to be stimulated by the pictures and posters they show. They had ideas about what to share when they showed the pictures and the posters.

The students' literacy learning was always accelerated by reading simple storybooks. In order to sustain the habit of reading, in the implementation stage, a reading response journal was always provided and the student must be able to write in the journal the books they read. The teacher had to check this journal regularly and every student who can do it regularly is always provided with any reward.

The reading response journal was considered successful not only in maintaining the habits of reading, but also improving their vocabulary. It was implemented by asking the students to read novels they like, and then made a summary of the novel in their own language. Then, the teacher checked and responded to their summary. In this activity, students learned to be responsible for their own learning. The teacher also added some activities in this stage such as the students learned in group work, the students practiced a certain conversation in front of the class and did language games in the classroom.

Besides using the reading response journal, the teacher also used posters related to the topics of reading. The teacher stuck the posters with some vocabularies and pictures in front of the class and the teacher taught the students how to pronounce those vocabularies to the students.

For establishing positive behavior of love-reading, in the establishment stage, the students were given rewards. The reward given was in the form of chips given to the students who did reading aloud, reading at home, making a good summary at home, and telling the story in front of the class. The students who got the chips should put their chip in the box. If all of the students in the class collected 50 chips, the teacher should give a special gift to the students.

With all the process conducted, it is obvious that the literacy activities was able to improve students' achievement. The success of the literacy activities was also reflected in the students' attitude and behavior, which is the second finding of this study.

The second finding was about the impacts of primary literacy guidelines on students' attitudes and students' language competency. The data were collected from observation, note-taking, and tests. The results of observation reveal that the students enjoyed reading activity in the classroom. It can be seen when the teacher told them to read in front of the class, many students raised their hands. They looked so enthusiastic to read the book. They were happy when the teacher asked them to read in front of the class.

The results of checking the reading log also show that the students read at home every day, and approved by parents' signatures. More and more students got chips every week. Looking at the reading logs it can be stated that the students not only read for their study but also reading for pleasure by reading downloaded simple stories provided by the teachers. The reading frequency of the students is consistently maintained as recorded in the reading log, and the writing ability is also consistently improving when the students have to write about the books they read. At the beginning, they wrote the summary of the stories in their language but after several sessions, they were trained to write in simple English. The writing ability was slowly improving which can be seen from the number of sentences they made and the vocabulary they chose for writing.

The impacts of primary literacy guidelines toward students' language competency were gathered from the quantitative results of pre-test, post-test and dependent t-test. The purpose of the pre-test was to record the students' English competence before the teacher implemented the primary English Literacy guideline. The researcher did the treatment in 8 meetings. After the treatment, the researcher gave a post-test to the student. The purpose was to analyze the students' English competence after the researcher gave the treatment. After that, the researcher conducted a dependent t-test (paired sample test) by using SPSS24.

TABLE I. THE RESULT OF DEPENDENT T-TEST.

	Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper		
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	25.03125	4.75520	-26.74568	-23.31682	29.778	.000

From the result of paired samples test, a significant difference is indicated by the value of Sig. (2-tailed). In this case, the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is .000 which indicates there is a significant mean difference between pretest and posttest. Thus, it means that there was a significant effect of the students' competence before they learned by using primary English literacy guidelines and after they learned by using primary English literacy guidelines. The significant effect of this result means that the students had improved. After the treatment was given to the students, they got better score compared to the score they got in the pre-test.

### B. Discussion

Analyzing the finding of this research, it can be stated that the guideline provided by Padmadewi, Artini, and Dewi [12] was effective to be used in teaching primary literacy program. According to their design, there are three steps in primary English literacy program. The three steps are the introduction step, the implementation step, and the establishment step.

There were some activities implemented by the teacher in each step for every meeting. In the introduction step, the teacher used interactive story-telling. In this strategy, the teacher read the story in front of the class. After that, the teacher gave chances to the students to read aloud in front of the class. In the implementation step, the teacher used reading the response journal. In this strategy, the teacher asked the students to read at home and asked the students to make a summary from the book that they read at home. In the establishment step, the teacher used reward or chips in order to establish the positive behavior of the students.

All of the steps and activities were very effectively implemented for the students. Those steps and activities can help the students to introduce and practice literacy skills to the students at the primary level. This theory is in line with the result of previous research [13]. In this research, the researcher found out that the use of interactive storytelling, reading log, and reading response journal can help the students to develop their literacy skills. Those activities not only can motivate the students to learn reading and writing but also can develop their cognitive psychomotor aspects such as counting and coloring.

The result of this research is also the same as the previous study [14]. In this research, it was confirmed that reading log and reading response journals can build the students' reading habits in the elementary level. The reward used can improve the students' motivation in learning, and their reading habits can be maintained. The writing ability of the students also consistently improved as indicated by the sentences made by the students when they wrote in English.

The implementation of Primary English Literacy Guidelines in basic education gave a significant impact on the students. The finding showed that the students showed a very positive attitude during literacy class. Enjoyment reflected during the teaching-learning process indicates that the students love their English class. The results of this research confirmed the reading attitudes that were identified [15]. The impacts of the students' English competence can be seen from the students' score of pretest and post test. Before the teacher implemented primary English literacy guidelines, the teacher gave pre-test for the students. These results were in line with the results of the students' daily performance in reading and writing.

From the result of the posttest, it can be seen that all of the students get above 70 score. It means, the primary English literacy program can help the students to develop their English competence. The result of this research reconfirmed the result from the previous study [5]. In this research, the researcher found that literacy can give influence to the students' language

learning environment and can give a good impact to improve their English competencies in reading and writing.

The success of the program was indicated clearly when the teacher provided students with rewards after they fulfilled the requirement like reading daily and made the summary. The joy of having the rewards make the students repeated their positive behavior of reading and making the summary. This is in line with the previous research that rewards used by the teacher can accelerate students to read more frequently at home [16]. The power of repeating the reading habits during this research is also evident that the students can improve their achievement every time the formative tests were given. Not only that, the students always read at home with their parents.

The support of parents cannot be ignored in establishing the students' reading habits. Helping students at home and establishing the consistency of reading is so beneficial for reading improvement. It is in line with the theory of Epstein about parents' involvement, and the previous research about the importance of parent involvement in improving students' literacy [17, 8]

The consistent successful effect of the program towards the students' achievement in English literacy suggests that the literacy program can be implemented in primary school in global contexts where English is used as a foreign language or as a second language. Despite its success, the implementation requires strong commitment and hardworking of the teacher in providing suitable reading materials and the implementation was provided with limited reading materials. Further research is recommended to be conducted on how the impacts of literacy programs can be accelerated using literacy-rich involvement.

### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the finding and discussion presented previously, it can be concluded that there was a significant effect of the implementation of Primary English Literacy guidelines on the students' English literacy achievement in reading and writing. The result of t-test showed the value of Sig. (2-tailed) which is .000 indicating a significant mean difference between pre-test and post-test. It also gave impacts on the students' attitude in reading English storybooks. Students enjoyed reading books provided by the teachers and they always loved their English classes. The success of the implementation was also contributed by the parents' involvements who accompanied their children to read at home. The use of the reading response journal and the reading log used was very beneficial in supporting the success of the implementation.

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