ENCOURAGING LITERATE STUDENTS TO EMBRACE MORE LITERACY BEHAVIORS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Students’ activities are mostly related with school’s matters. What are there being done at school will also be there as the activity that students do as part of learning. Now that education is using the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), there are two major subjects as compulsory courses at school; they are: Literacy and Numeracy. Both can be done all at once or even separately. As stated in the official website of Kemdikbud (2023), the three essential characteristics of Kurikulum Merdeka are: (1) Soft Skills and Character Development; (2) Focus on Essential Courses; and (3) Flexible Learning.

Soft Skills and Character Development refers to the profile of Pancasila Student guided by Puspeka (Rodiyana et al., 2023). There are six characters that supposed to reflect the image or figure of Pancasila Student or Student of Indonesia. They are: (1) Beriman, Bertakwa kepada Tuhan YME, dan Berakhlaq Mulia (Religious and Noble); (2) Berkebinekaan Global; (3) Bergotong Royong; (4) Kreatif (Creative); (4) Bernalar Kritis (Critical Thinking); and (5) Mandiri (Independent). As adult learners, those characters are already there as a unite character. Moreover, in the process of doing school activities, adult learners manage and combine those skills to gain the learning objectives.
Being focus on essential courses refers to the students’ creativity and innovation in gaining the competence of literacy and numeracy. This character shows a very specific skill that having sufficient level of creativity and innovation will lead to the adequate competence of literacy and numeracy. Creativity and the spark of critical thinking can urge one’s intention to read and find more resourceful information on certain issue independently. Hence, generating innovation will not be a long path to go. Adult learners are also supposed to be flexible learners. As stated in Kurikulum Merdeka that one of the essential characteristics is a flexible learning. Being flexible in learning can gain and rouse the students’ creativity and critical thinking. Thus, solving problem or even creating innovation will not be a tough obstacle to go through. In conclusion, combining all the three characteristics of Kurikulum Merdeka might be a brilliant way to pursue a much better level of students’ literacy and numeracy through the learning process.

However, the focus of this article refers to the second characteristic of Kurikulum Merdeka, which can be elaborate as courses that are relevant and deepen the creativity and innovation of students in gaining the base competence of literacy and numeracy. Unesco ("WILEY SERIES IN SURVEY METHODOLOGY," 2014) stated that literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. It also encompasses numeracy, the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations, which can be distinguished from measures to quantify it, such as the literacy rate and functional literacy. Becoming able to contribute in literacy activities, students are acquired at adequate literate level. Being literate is not merely able to read and write a language, but also speak and listen in a way that lets ones to communicate effectively. Moreover, it is also having the knowledge of a particular subject, or a particular type of knowledge (Szech, 2022). As what is concerned in this article, the literate students and literacy activity being studied are related to the knowledge of English courses.

Some sources gathered at a Research Report Commissioned Cambridge Assessment, ("Developing Emotional Literacy in School," 2007)) showed that they are having a one-line concern about English. As mentioned below:
1) English is a subject in which reading for pleasure is fundamental to effective study and learning English Association, ("WILEY SERIES IN SURVEY METHODOLOGY," 2014)
2) English subject is declining in popularity among pupils (Abazov & Alim, 2012)
3) Understanding of the critical link between enjoyment and attainment in reading and writing is ever more firmly established (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2011)).

Considering the concerns compiled above, there is a trigger that interest the researcher to arrange a study under the talks about literate students and their literacy behaviors. It is undeniable that literacy behaviors are mostly related to the study of language and literate students. Though there is also a question whether students are able to qualify themselves as literate. This made the purpose of this article to know whether students considered themselves as literate students as well as to describe their literacy behaviors. While the setting correlate to this article is the English subject, so the respondents being targeted for the data in this article were the English Education Study Program students of Universitas PGRI Wiranegara. Seeing the problems that are mostly faced by the English students, it is considered necessary to also figure out if the difficulty in learning English as a foreign language is due to the students’ activities in their literacy behaviors.

Among the literature will be reviewed here are supported the detail information of the article’s keywords, they are literate students and literacy behaviours. Both are given interrelated so as to make it easy to know the connectivity of being literate and the literacy behaviours in it. Though many students could consider that they are literate, but many are still referred to the behaviour of literacy is reading. Whereas, there are various activities which categorized into literacy behaviours. Being literate means having the skills to be able to read, write and speak to understand and create meaning (O'Rourke, 2011). While Common Core State Standards ("Developing
Emotional Literacy in School,” 2007) stated there are five characteristics of literate students, they are:
1) Literate students demonstrate independence.
2) Literate students build strong content knowledge.
3) Literate students respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.
4) Literate students comprehend as well as critique.
5) Literate students value evidence.
Combining from both definitions, it can be said that being literate is a condition where students can demonstrate their knowledge and comprehension through responding messages in the form of oral or written as well as able to give the value evidence as the result of their critical thinking. Consequently, students must have adequate literacy skills supported by the relevant literacy behaviours so as to be called literate students.

Going into a more comprehensive matter that being literate cannot be separated with the importance of literacy, Trust (Alfredsson & Aunet, 2007) proposed that lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child, they will not be able to succeed at school; as a young adult, they will be locked out of the job market; and as a parent, they will not be able to support their own child’s learning. This intergenerational cycle makes social mobility and a fairer society more difficult. Moreover, people with low literacy skills may not be able to read a book or newspaper, understand road signs or price labels, make sense of a bus or train timetable, fill out a form, read instructions on medicines or use the internet.

One easy way to show the manner of literacy activity is through reading. As described by Sibanda (“Developing Emotional Literacy in School,” 2007), the steps of literacy skill while reading is first to predict what will the matter about; then, to do the reading activity; after that, clarify the ideas of the reading materials; ask questions and discuss where necessary to cover the critical thinking activity; lastly, sum up the materials and show whether new innovation gained after the process.

Through predicting, students will have to refer to their prior knowledge and have good guessing. This can be done by looking at the reading title or even from the illustration given along with the reading materials. The result of the prediction can variously be delivered in the form of speaking or writing, whereas both are literacy skills. The next phase is reading activity which is to also clarify the ideas and information gained from the text. Then if there is a possibility of unanswered questions, then a discussion could be held as part of deliberating the critical thinking during reading. As the final conclusion of the activity, student or group of students will be able to end up a summary as well as making part of a summarizing ability.

In order to pursue the adequate level of literate and literacy, at the stages of learning a language, students are needed to be exposed with what it is called literacy behaviours. Szech (Alfredsson & Aunet, 2007) suggested some ways of using and practicing literacy in everyday life, such as oral arguments, taking a stand, using literacy to further one’s position in life or better their community. Furthermore, Erickson & Koppenhaver (Adult and Youth Literacy: National, Regional and Global Trends, 1985-2015. UIS Information Paper, 2013) showed examples of emergent literacy behaviours which may include: interpreting a story through Figures rather than through text, manipulating books in nonconventional ways (e.g., looking at the book from back to front or holding it upside down), scribbling, and the use of invented spelling.

As supported by UniQuest (Szech, 2022), there are seven items of literacy elements. Those are mentioned below in Figure 3. As seen that the line among the seven elements is connected one and another, thus each of the elements may either stand alone or even sequencing 2 elements at once.
It has already been stated previously that literacy is mostly related to reading. As seen in the Figure, reading is put above and hence becoming the main activity among the literacy behaviours. Categorized as a complex activity, reading involves the ability to construct meaning and understand what has to be done after reading. It may be sequencing with writing as the follow up activity, whereas students are able to result a writing text based on the reading materials they have read. A comprehensive understanding upon the relationship between reading and writing will arouse when there is a publication of the writing results. Writing publication may in the form of various literacy products; such as: poems, short stories, essays, or articles.

Other form of sequencing may be produced by reading and talking/speaking. Students are able to speak their opinion and critical judgement regarding the reading activity. As one of the ways in communication, speaking is considered effective to directly deliver one's intention or message to other people or audience. This activity can also be used as medium to present the competence gained from reading and writing activities.

Viewing is also part of literacy elements which means the things that are seen can trigger critical thinking and develop literacy activities. This is called the visual literacy, whereas Figures, photos, TV shows, and even movies can become the bridges for students to practice the talking, reading, and writing. Analysing the visual literacy are most widespread among the literacy behaviours because those are the closest and easiest things to find.

Lastly, technology and creativity, these two are interrelated since technology can facilitate most of creativity activity digitally, from creating stories, designing photos, video editing, recording listening materials, and many others. As a result, by utilizing technology at its maximum, students will be able to not only use the facilities of literacy by themselves, but also creating a literacy innovation through technology. Those self-centred literacy activities would spread and give effect to others so as to establish various literacy behaviours.

A more complex of new literacy today are explained by Wohlwend (2023). She categories literacy into: (1) Traditional Literacy; (2) Information Literacy; (3) Visual Literacy; (4) Critical Literacy; (5) Media Literacy; (6) Tool Literacy; and (7) Digital Literacy. The activities and abilities belong to those category are stated briefly in the Figure below.

At a point to sum up this literature part, applying literacy skill activities might be beneficial in order to maximize students’ literacy behaviors. However, this cannot be done all at once at an instant time. The exposure of literacy skills should be there whenever students are being literally literate. The literacy materials may start from simple Figure of an animal to the complex reading topics. The existence of today’s technology also plays an important part to fulfill the activities of today’s literacy regarding the modern technology that are now here in the future.

2. METHOD

Concerning the data and analysis result that will come into description and narration, the research method used in this article is using descriptive qualitative. Hence, a case study in language learning was chosen to run the research and gather the data needed. A case study is one of qualitative research methods used to study in-depth a unit of a person, a family, a social group, a social institution, or a community for the purpose of understanding the life cycle or an important part of the life cycle of the unit (Fesi, 2021). The case study being done here was to gather and describe information about the literacy behaviors done by the literate students of English Education Study Program at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara.
Hence, the result of this article cannot be generalized to all literate students other than the subjects above.

The students of English Education Study Program of Universitas PGRI Wiranegara was chosen among students of other study programs based on the criteria of gathering data related to the use and the study of English as a Foreign Language. In addition, the lecturers of English Education Study Program were also complaining about the minimum time that the students use to spend for doing literacy activities. Thus, this article is composed to describe the information needed related to students’ literacy behaviors along with their activities as called literate students. The data collected for this study was using the online questionnaire via Google Form (link: https://bit.ly/LiterateStudents). As stated by Dudovskiy (Fitzgerald, 2012), there are several types of questionnaires, they are: (1) Computer Questionnaire; (2) Telephone Questionnaire; (3) I-house Survey; and (4) Mail Questionnaire. He also added that the types of questions are: (1) Open Question Questionnaire; (2) Multiple Choice Questions; (3) Dichotomous Questions; and (4) Scaling Questions.

Here, the researcher used the computer questionnaire and combined the types of questions among the open questions, multiple choice questions, and scaling questions. These three combinations were needed based on the information that the researcher would like to gather and arrange them to answer the purpose of this study. The Google Form link was given to the students as primary respondents via WhatsApp Group. Within a period of 3 days, students were given the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire.

The questions in the questionnaire concerning to the definition and students’ knowledge about literacy; the kinds of literacy behaviors that they usually do; whether they are literate students and the scale of their literate level. Additional information gained through the form is also asked about the course and subjects which can motivate and support the students in doing more literacy behaviors.

By the end of the responding period, the link was closed and cannot accept for further responses. The next thing to do was the researcher, as human instrument, analyzed and interpreted the results of the questionnaire. Creswell (“WILEY SERIES IN SURVEY METHODOLOGY,” 2014) stated that researcher as key instrument in qualitative method. Researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior; or interviewing participants. They may use a protocol—an instrument for collecting data—but the researchers are the ones who actually gather the information.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results presented in this part are the findings based on the questionnaire results and the discussion based on the researcher’s interpretation toward the findings and related review. As stated previously that the questionnaire was given to the students of English Education Study Program at Universitas PGRI Wiranegara with the amount of 84 respondents. Again, these number can only represent the literacy behaviors of literate students of the designated respondents and might not be similar to any respondents other than those at Universitas PGRI Pasuruan.

The first finding that is described here is the number of students’ respondents. The overall 84 respondents are divided into the classification below:

![Figure 3.1. Number of Students’ Respondents](image)

There are 14 respondents from Class 2019, 26 respondents from Class 2020, 24 respondents from Class 2021, and 20 respondents from Class 2022. They are all the active students of English Education Study Program at Universitas PGRI Pasuruan. They join the English classes and participate the courses’ activities in and/or out-side the class. Some of them also enroll into the Kampus Mengajar Program to promote and initiate the literacy programs at school for students of primary schools around Pasuruan. This way, students of Universitas PGRI Wiranegara have already contribute their literacy behaviors not only for themselves but also for the students who are also studying language.

Secondly, the students’ knowledge about literacy. As shown in the figure below, there are still 19 students who are not sure whether they have the correct definition of literacy or not.
In this part of question, most of the students agree that literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets ones to communicate effectively and make sense of the world. This definition is in line with Trust (O’Rourke, 2011) who stated that literacy is needed in order to read a book or newspaper, understand road signs or price labels, make sense of a bus or train timetable, fill out a form, read instructions on medicines or use the internet. As a result, by having good literacy, a person will be able to live the life well and be able to pursue every stage of their life. While for students, if they have the adequate literacy level, they would be able to survive the learning process as well as the challenges during learning. Thus, the final result of success by the end of the learning process will be gained sufficiently.

The next part of the finding related to the literacy behaviors that the students execute as literate students. Among the literacy behaviors that the students do based on the data taken from the online questionnaire are: 

Interestingly, English is not the only language that the students explore for their literacy behaviors, it is proven above that Korean and Chinese are also popular among students. They enjoy watching movies in different languages to practice listening to the language as well as being entertained through the storyline. As supported by UniQuest (2023), listening is part of the literacy elements and thus students show one of their literacy behaviours by listening (watching) movies. Wohlwend (2023) also added the statement that movies belong to visual literacy. Here, the students have the understanding that literacy behaviour is not only related to reading and writing. Students are sequencing listening the language used in the movie and reading the available subtitles at the bottom part of the movie screen.

Reading books is considered the most relatable activity to literacy behaviors. As seen above, students are not only read printed books but also electronic books accessed from their smart phones. Both have similar reading activities with different satisfaction and availability due to the manual and electronic based device. On other photos are students having the reading activities with young learners. Here, the students are not only reading for their own literacy behaviors but also trying to become a model of doing literacy behaviors. This way, young learners will be able to imitate the activity and as well implement the literacy behaviors. In this activity, students sequencing traditional literacy of reading and digital literacy of using mobile phone to access online or offline reading platform Wohlwend (2023). UniQuest (2023) also has the agreement that technology is part of literacy elements. Students are also going beyond self-centred literacy into spreading the literacy activity to others through reading aloud and telling story.

Students show their literacy behaviors on using written language is in the form of writing activity. From the documentation above,
students have various ways to practice using their written language: (1) Language Quiz; (2) Manual writing on notebook; (3) Digital writing on online writing account; and (4) Captions on social media. There are also options for various kinds of media that they use to keep or publish their writing products. As seen on the last two Figures, students use storial.co account to write their creative writing products and social media Instagram to write caption writing challenge.

In this third description of literacy behaviors, students are sequencing traditional literacy of writing and tool literacy of using online digital platform to produce writings. Tool literacy is the ability to manage, consume, and create information (“Literate, Adj.& N.,” 2023) By utilizing tool literacy, students are not only writing for their own archive, but also possible to publish it so their writing creation can be read by other online/offline readers.

Figures 3.7 Interpreting

Figures apparently also part of literate materials and as well part of literacy. Few students mention interpreting Figures in their literacy behaviors. The interpretation is derived from paintings and comics. This least activity can still be considered literacy behaviors since they have to be able to comprehend the Figures appropriately to interpret the message well. In the process of interpreting, students need to apply their ability of critical thinking. Thus, interpreting Figures are also a worth literacy behavior to practice.

As supported by Wohlwend (Saal, 2021) that visual literacy is the ability to understand and produce visual messages. In this part of activity, students are enjoying looking at the painting and try to figure out what the painter is going to talk about the painting. Similar thing happens when students enjoying comics. They try to impersonate the dialogue and try to understand the situation and setting given by the author by analyzing the illustration. Some students may prefer to enjoy this behavior rather than looking at reading text which consist of a lot more text. Here, creativity and imagination are needed so as to gain proper comprehension toward the message brought by the Figures.

Figure 3.6 Respondents as literate students

Above is the chart that shows students interpretation of themselves as literate students or not. It is shown that among the 84 respondents, there are 25 students who are apparently not sure whether they belong to the category of literate students or the other way around. The previous data supported by the graph below which consist of a number range from 1 to 5. Number 1 refer to the lowest level of literacy and so on consequently until number 5 to refer the highest level of literacy.

Here is the figure based on the students’ respond:

Figure 3.8. Students’ level of literacy

The graph above shows that still there are 2 students who considered themselves at the lowest level of literacy (score 1). On the other side, 5 students confidently state themselves at the highest level of literacy (score 5). Various point of views and opinions on why they chose certain level number for their literacy. The students detail statements are presented in the most and similar answer as the explanation in the table below:
Table 3.1 The Level Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The lowest level (score 1)</th>
<th>The highest level (score 5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he/she is rarely watching movies, but there are some interesting documentaries and he/she used English subtitles to watch, and still tried to see it to the end.</td>
<td>literacy is critical in making sense of our world, from the time of waking up to the time of sleeping, we are constantly making meaning of the world around us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the level of the ability to read is low.</td>
<td>he/she likes to read, whether it is a story or a novel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as educated person, it is a compulsory to be aware of one-self’s capability and to be seen as educated is related to the quality of being literate.</td>
<td>adults can search for and integrate information across multiple dense texts; construct syntheses of similar and contrasting ideas or points of view; or evaluate evidence-based arguments. Adults understand subtle, rhetorical cues and can make high-level inferences or use specialized background knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he/she can read the alphabet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The low-level students thought that they cannot comprehend text easily and also has a low reading ability. Other reason than reading is because they tend not to watch movies unless it used a subtitle on it. Those reasons made literacy as a difficult activity to do and resulting the drawbacks of literacy behaviors.

The high-level students categorized themselves as literate based on a simple reason as being able to read alphabet. But again, that is not quite an adequate reason of literacy activity. Interestingly, a more detail explanation from other students stated that literacy is critical in making sense of the world, and as educated person, it is a compulsory to be aware of oneself’s capability and to be seen as educated is related to the quality of being literate.

As mentioned by Brown (Fitzgerald, 2012) that literacy is considered as a whole activity and a way of thinking which allows individuals to speak, listen, read and write a set of beliefs or ideas. Additionally, Alberta Education (O’Rourke, 2011) defines literacy as the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living. In conclusion, due to the limitation of knowledge toward literacy, students seem to categorize themselves into a different category as what they truly are.

Based on the findings and discussion above, it reflects the title of this article that literate students should scream for more literacy behaviors. It can also be concluded that not all students are truly aware of what literacy is, the activities, and even its behaviors. Half of them consider the literacy behaviors for self-contentment, while some others do the literacy behaviors to share positive effect to younger learners. Moreover, students’ knowledge about literacy is limited to only reading, writing, and watching movies. While actually, literacy is more than that, it involves more activities of complex language skills in collaboration with critical thinking so as a result, students will be able to attain more and more knowledge to walk along with the challenges in the society.

The suggestion that the researcher could add here is dedicated for teachers, especially English and/or other language teachers, to facilitate and guide the students to deepen students’ awareness of the importance of literacy behaviors for the development of their knowledge. Creativity and innovation are also needed as the colorful lights to brighten the students’ path toward their future. Also, to motivate students that literacy behaviors are not only through reading and writing but also through visual activities such as analyzing Figures, photos, and even watching TV or movies. Listening to songs is also part of literacy behaviors that most students do but did not realize that it is part of literacy activities. The sequencing of traditional literacy (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and the today’s modern technology can become suggestions to create the innovative ways for teachers/lecturers to collaborate literacy activities with students as well as to expand the students’ literacy behaviors.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and regression tests, in this study the following conclusions were obtained: listening to English podcasts can affect students’ TOEFL scores. This can be proven by the significant results of the regression test obtained by 0.724, namely R square. Which means the number is included in the category of significant numbers. So, the more often students listen to English, the more effective it will be in influencing TOEFL scores. (2) other variables that affect the TOEFL score are physical, motivational, environmental, technical, time efficient factors.

Based on the research results, the suggestions given by the author are as follows: students are expected to be able to prepare for the TOEFL test well. One of them is honing English skills with English podcast media. Because with a lot of practice and more often, students’ abilities will be honed and students will be more prepared to face the TOEFL test. In addition, many things must be prepared, namely good health, high self-motivation to increase enthusiasm for learning, the environment, namely family and society as a social sphere that can provide positive support for students, good TOEFL technical implementation, and efficient time. before taking the TOEFL test.

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