

IMPLEMENTATION OF MOTHER TONGUE BASED LITERACY EDUCATION IN IMPROVING LITERACY

Muhamad Affandi

Faculty of Teacher and Education, Univesity of Palangka Raya

¹affandimuhamad@edu.upr.ac.id

Received: September, 2024; Accepted: September, 2024

Abstract

Literacy is not just about the ability to read and write, but also about how these activities are related to social, cultural, and power structures in society. Some types of literacy have a stronger influence because they are promoted by powerful institutions. However, in various rural areas, especially in remote areas such as Tumbang Masukih Village, Central Kalimantan, the challenges in increasing literacy are still very large. One of the causes is the existence of language barriers, especially for people who use their mother tongue as their daily language. This research aims to examine how the implementation of mother tongue-based literacy education in Tumbang Masukih Village can increase the literacy level of the community. This research was carried out using a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods. Furthermore, the choice of this method focuses on an intensive study of the process of implementing mother-based literacy education learning, especially regarding learning services and techniques in an effort to empower and increase community literacy. From the results of this research, it can be concluded that mother tongue-based literacy education is very effective in improving literacy among the people of Tumbang Masukih Village. Theoretically, these findings support the arguments put forward by various language education experts who state that learning using their mother tongue allows students to understand basic literacy concepts more easily. The process of internalizing knowledge occurs more quickly when the language used is a language that is familiar to students.

Keywords: Mother tongue, literacy education, literacy

Abstrak

Literasi bukan hanya sekadar kemampuan membaca dan menulis, tetapi juga berkaitan dengan bagaimana aktivitas-aktivitas tersebut terhubung dengan struktur sosial, budaya, dan kekuasaan dalam masyarakat. Beberapa jenis literasi memiliki pengaruh yang lebih besar karena didukung oleh institusi-institusi yang berkuasa. Namun, di berbagai daerah pedesaan, terutama di wilayah terpencil seperti Desa Tumbang Masukih, Kalimantan Tengah, tantangan dalam meningkatkan literasi masih sangat besar. Salah satu penyebabnya adalah adanya hambatan bahasa, khususnya bagi masyarakat yang menggunakan bahasa ibu sebagai bahasa sehari-hari mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana penerapan pendidikan literasi berbasis bahasa ibu di Desa Tumbang Masukih dapat meningkatkan tingkat literasi masyarakat. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan pendekatan kualitatif menggunakan metode fenomenologi. Pemilihan metode ini difokuskan pada studi intensif terhadap proses pelaksanaan pembelajaran pendidikan literasi berbasis bahasa ibu, khususnya terkait layanan dan teknik pembelajaran dalam upaya memberdayakan serta meningkatkan literasi masyarakat. Dari hasil penelitian ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa pendidikan literasi berbasis bahasa ibu sangat efektif dalam meningkatkan literasi di kalangan masyarakat Desa Tumbang Masukih. Secara teoretis, temuan ini mendukung argumen yang diajukan oleh berbagai ahli pendidikan bahasa yang menyatakan bahwa pembelajaran dengan menggunakan bahasa ibu memungkinkan peserta didik lebih mudah memahami konsep-konsep dasar literasi. Proses internalisasi pengetahuan terjadi lebih cepat ketika bahasa yang digunakan adalah bahasa yang akrab bagi peserta didik.

Kata kunci: bahasa ibu, pendidikan literasi, literasi

How to Cite: Affandi, M. (2024). Implementation Of Mother Tongue Based Literacy Education In Improving Literacy. *EMPOWERMENT: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Luar Sekolah* 13 (2), 159-165.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy is an important indicator in measuring the quality of education and human development. The ability to read and write as a basic component of literacy plays a role in increasing an individual's capacity to participate in social, economic and political life. Based on the 2022 BPS National Economic Survey, the number of illiterate people in Indonesia has fallen to 2.67 million people or only 1.51 percent of the total population remains (BPS, 2023). These data indicate that literacy is an important element in interpreting the success of educational implementation in Indonesia.

As an effort to facilitate community literacy, various literacy services are currently being provided through community education programs organized by the government, private sector, community, and individuals. The implementation of various community education programs is not only based on policy or science, but more so because of the felt needs by a particular community or group of people. As stated in article 26 paragraph (3) of the National Education System Law, it states that the various programs in question are literacy education, life skills education, entrepreneurship education, women's empowerment, equality education, as well as vocational education and training (Depdiknas, 2003). Of the various community education programs that have been held in Indonesia, researchers are interested in conducting studies in the scope of literacy education.

In another study on literacy, researchers view literacy as a social practice and define it as a common or cultural way of using the mother tongue and other related semiotic systems that also serve as a reference for society (Hamilton, 2016). Literacy is viewed as a community resource used collectively and shaped through social relationships, rather than as individual property. From another perspective, literacy studies offer a powerful way to conceptualize the relationship between reading and writing and social structures (Duckworth & McNamara, 2021).

Researchers refer to the existence of various types of literacies, where individual and group oral, reading, and writing practices are related to different real-life contexts and activities. They argue that although literacy studies often focus on written or printed texts, in literacy events, reading and writing are integrated with various other semiotic systems (Gee, 2015). Literacy is also hybrid, as it relates to both formal and vernacular forms of language. Barton and Hamilton explain that, due to the influence of social institutions and power relations, some types of literacy become more dominant, visible, and influential than others (Hamilton, 2016).

In other words, literacy is not just about the ability to read and write, but also about how these activities are related to social, cultural, and power structures in society. Some types of literacy have a stronger influence because they are promoted by powerful institutions. However, in various rural areas, especially in remote areas such as Tumbang Masukih Village, Central Kalimantan, the challenges in increasing literacy are still very large. One of the causes is the existence of language barriers, especially for people who use their mother tongue as their daily language.

In previous research in Greece, a project was developed to address several issues with specific aims to modify the pedagogical approach in teaching the mother tongue to: 1) involve and actively engage children in learning Greek for functional use; 2) involve parents in the learning process and support them in doing so; and 3) increase regular attendance of children in Greek community schools (Papatheodorou, 2007).

The mother tongue plays an important role in learning, especially in the early stages of literacy introduction. Research shows that mother tongue-based learning can speed up the literacy process because students can more easily understand learning material in the language they have mastered. Implementation of mother tongue-based literacy education, therefore, is an effective strategy to bridge the literacy gap, especially in communities that have limited access to formal education in the national language.

In Tumbang Masukih Village, the mother tongue used by the local community is a very strong cultural element and is the main means of communication. However, the implementation of literacy programs which still predominantly use Indonesian often becomes an obstacle to the effectiveness of program achievements. Therefore, there is an urgency to implement a literacy education approach based on mother tongue in order to increase community literacy, while maintaining and preserving the richness of local languages.

This research aims to examine how the implementation of mother tongue-based literacy education in Tumbang Masukih Village can increase the literacy level of the community. This study is important in providing a practical picture of the effectiveness of this approach and its implications for literacy development in regions with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is hoped that the results of this research can become the basis for developing literacy education policies that are more inclusive and based on local culture in Indonesia, especially in remote areas such as those in Central Kalimantan Province.

METHODS

This research was carried out using a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods. The choice of this method is based on the focus of research problems that are closely related to social phenomena relating to individual thought patterns, perspectives, attitudes and behavior in society (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the choice of this method focuses on an intensive study of the process of implementing mother-based literacy education learning, especially regarding learning services and techniques in an effort to empower and increase community literacy.

On the other hand, this study also observes the process of cognitive and character changes experienced by students through their interactions with learning components that are explored as they are (Affandi, 2020). The instruments used are interviews, observations and documentation studies. The data analysis technique carried out in this study uses data reduction, data display, and conclusion (Suharsimi, 2013).

This research was carried out through data collection activities during the implementation of a literacy education program in Tumbang Masukih Village, Central Kalimantan Province. Apart from conducting an action study at the research location with ten literacy education students,

the researcher also interviewed several related parties, including the person in charge of the program, related stakeholders, or the community as service beneficiaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Literacy education represents a manifestation of the concept of lifelong learning for all members of society. Essentially, lifelong learning programs are developed based on the principles of socio-cultural theories of learning and developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood. According to socio-cultural theories, language and thought are interdependent and closely connected; they influence and are influenced by each other. Language and thought are also rooted in the culture of specific social groups, and in turn, play a role in the change and development of that culture (Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki, 2019).

Tumbang Masukih Village is a village located in the interior of Central Kalimantan. This village is located in an area surrounded by dense tropical forests, with people's lives still very tied to local culture and traditions. The majority of the residents of Tumbang Masukih Village are Dayak, who use the regional language as their mother tongue in everyday life. Most of the population's livelihoods are farming, gardening and collecting non-timber forest products, such as rattan and resin. This village is relatively remote, with limited access to infrastructure, so formal education and health facilities are still not optimal. However, the people of Tumbang Masukih Village have a rich culture and strong values of mutual cooperation. Limited access to education means that the illiteracy rate is still quite high among adults, but several efforts have been made through literacy programs based on mother tongues to improve literacy and welfare of local communities.

Given that literacy programs are designed for the benefit of literacy learners, the design of such programs must take into account the needs, lifestyles, and cultures of the learners. Even a well-planned and properly implemented literacy program can encounter difficulties if incorrect assumptions are made about the learners, or if it is assumed that all learners or learning situations are similar (Hasselbring, 2004).

The implementation of mother-tongue-based education also aims to: (1) emphasize the cultural and contextual aspects of language learning; (2) focus on the active engagement of adult learners in the learning process and utilize their existing experiences; (3) encourage and facilitate the functional use of the language; (4) strengthen the connection between educational providers and families; and (5) support parents in assisting their children's learning within the context of continuous education (Papatheodorou, 2007).

The results of research regarding the implementation of mother tongue-based literacy education in Tumbang Masukih Village show that this approach has a significant impact on increasing community literacy. The following are the main findings of this research:

1. Increased understanding of the material

Literacy program participants who use their mother tongue as a medium of instruction demonstrate a better understanding of the material being taught. On average, participants who take classes with a mother tongue-based approach are able to complete literacy tasks more quickly than participants who take literacy programs in Indonesian. They feel more comfortable and confident when learning to use a language they already master, so the learning process becomes more efficient.

2. Higher Learning Motivation

One of the most prominent positive impacts is increasing learning motivation. Most participants expressed that they felt more motivated to learn when their native language was used. This is because their mother tongue allows them to interact more freely with teachers and fellow participants. In this way, communication barriers that often occur in learning using Indonesian can be minimized.

3. Strengthening Cultural Identity

Implementation of mother tongue-based literacy programs not only has an impact on increasing literacy, but also on strengthening local cultural identity. The use of mother tongue in the education process reminds people of the importance of preserving local language and culture. This helps strengthen people's pride in their identity and increases participation in community-based activities.

4. Technical Obstacles

Although this program showed positive results, there were several technical obstacles faced in its implementation. One of them is the limited teaching material in the mother tongue that can be used to teach literacy. Apart from that, the lack of teaching staff who have pedagogical skills and mastery of the mother tongue is also a challenge. However, this obstacle can be overcome with intensive training for teachers and the development of a local language-based curriculum.

Discussion

From the results of this research, it can be concluded that mother tongue-based literacy education is very effective in improving literacy among the people of Tumbang Masukih Village. Theoretically, these findings support the arguments put forward by various language education experts who state that learning using their mother tongue allows students to understand basic literacy concepts more easily. The process of internalizing knowledge occurs more quickly when the language used is a language that is familiar to students.

The significant increase in learning motivation in this program also shows the relevance of using the mother tongue in non-formal education contexts. Motivation is one of the key factors in the success of educational programs, especially in community contexts with minimal access to formal education. In this case, mother tongue-based literacy programs not only play a role in improving reading and writing skills, but also raise the enthusiasm for learning in the local community.

Another impact that is no less important is strengthening local cultural identity. The implementation of mother tongue-based education helps strengthen community awareness of the importance of preserving their language and culture. This is in line with the approach promoted by multicultural education theory which emphasizes the importance of respecting the richness of local languages and cultures in the educational process.

However, the success of this program still requires further support from the government and related institutions in terms of providing teaching materials, teacher training and other resource support. Developing literacy materials based on local languages is a strategic step that needs to be taken to ensure the sustainability of mother tongue-based literacy programs. Apart from that, collaboration with formal and non-formal educational institutions at local and national levels is also important to strengthen the impact of this program.

Overall, the implementation of mother tongue-based literacy education in Tumbang Masukih Village provides a positive picture of how a local language and culture-based approach can improve literacy while strengthening social cohesion and cultural identity in the community. It is hoped that these results can become a reference for developing literacy programs in other regions that have similar characteristics.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of mother tongue-based literacy education in Tumbang Masukih Village, Central Kalimantan, has proven effective in increasing community literacy. The use of mother tongue as a learning medium not only makes it easier for participants to understand literacy material, but also increases their learning motivation. In addition, this approach strengthens local cultural identity and encourages the preservation of mother tongues in society. However, there are several technical obstacles, such as limited teaching materials in mother tongue and a lack of competent teaching staff, which need to be addressed for the sustainability of this program. Therefore, further support from the government and related institutions is needed to overcome these challenges. The results of this research indicate that mother tongue-based literacy education can be an effective strategy for increasing literacy in remote communities and has the potential to be applied in other areas with similar characteristics.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank the Directorate of Community Education and Special Education, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology as well as PKBM Bunga Bangsa for the facilitation and various access supports provided so that this research activity can take place and provide benefits to the community of Tumbang Tihis Village and can be published in the Empowerment Journal of the IKIP Siliwangi.

REFERENCES

- Affandi. (2020). The Contribution of the Literacy Village Program to Community Empowerment (A Descriptive Study on Nonformal Education Services in Literacy Villages). In *Jurnal AKRAB*, Volume XI, Issue 2/October.
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2023). Illiteracy Rates by Province and Age Group (Percentage), 2021-2023. Diakses dari <https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/2/MTAyIzI=/angka-but-aksara-menurut-provinsi-dan-kelompok-umur--persen-.html> pada tanggal 28 Juli 2024.
- Creswell, J. (2013). Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. In *Research design*.
- Depdiknas. (2003). *Undang-undang sistem pendidikan nasional*.
- Duckworth, V., & McNamara, M. (2021). Literacy and transformation: Shedding of spoilt identities. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*.
- Gee, J. P. (2015). The new literacy studies. In *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315717647-11>
- Hamilton, M. (2016). Imagining Literacy: A Sociomaterial Approach. In *Beyond Economic Interests : Critical Perspectives on Adult Literacy and Numeracy in a Globalised World*.
- Hasselbring, S. (2004). Flexibility in adult literacy programmes: Lessons learnt from Botswana. *Language Matters*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10228190408566225>
- Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki, M. (2019). Vygotsky, Education, and Literacy. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3325989>

- Papatheodorou, T. (2007). Supporting the mother tongue: Pedagogical approaches. *Early Child Development and Care*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430701379231>
- Suharsimi, A. (2013). *Prosedur Penelitian : Suatu Pendekatan Praktik (Edisi Revisi)*. In *Jakarta: Rineka Cipta*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>