



Building Literacy in Reading Foreign Language Books for Arabic Education Students

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Abstract

Arabic Language Education study program students at IAIN Palangka Raya are prospective Arabic teachers who are prepared to have foreign language competence, but students still experience difficulties for various reasons. It makes all PBA Education study program lecturers simultaneously implement several activities in selected subjects to build literacy in reading books in foreign languages, both Arabic and English. This research aims to describe the process carried out by lecturers in building reading literacy of foreign language books, either Arabic or English, on PBA students in IAIN Palangka Raya. This research used the descriptive qualitative method. Data was collected from the interview, observation, and documentation, then further analyzed through data reduction, presentation, and verification, and validated with the triangulation method. The initial result of this research indicated that the lecturers do various activities to build students' reading literacy, those are: introducing reading references in Arabic and English language, explaining the advantages of reading these references to the students, giving insight into reading steps, assigning students to review the references, and assisting students in composing and publishing scientific papers. This research suggests writing literacy for students and further research on different subjects and locations.

Keywords: *Arabic Education Students, Foreign Language Books, Reading Literacy*

Introduction

Some obstacles encountered by university students in reading literacy are laziness, lack of motivation, lack of focus, tiredness and distraction, boredom, no interesting reading materials, and less foreign language references. Similar problems also found by Ainiyah (2017), that most of Indonesian population listen and speak more often, while reading and listening activities are lower compared to other countries. This is in line with the statement Saadati & Sadli (2019) that reading literacy in Indonesia was in the third lowest rank as surveyed progress in International Reading Literacy Study (2011), similar result was shown in an evaluation conducted by

PISA (Program of Indonesia for International Student Assessment, 2011), and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007; Sari & Pujiono, 2021). From these results, it can be seen that level of students' literacy skill in Indonesia is relatively low.

Therefore, reading literacy should have been habituated from early age due to the importance of its impact. One way to build awareness in reading literacy is by providing prospective teachers who understand well the importance of thorough knowledge of literacy itself. Those intended teaching candidates are students in advanced level.

Arabic Education students in IAIN Palangka Raya are prepared to be Arabic teachers with foreign language competence. This is stated in learning achievement of 2020 curriculum in Arabic Education Department IAIN Palangka Raya as follows; As for the learning outcomes in the field of general knowledge number 3, it is stated that students are expected to have ability to communicate both orally and written using Arabic and English alongside the developments in academic world and the world of work (non-academic world). Thus, in the learning process, Arabic Education Department (further abbreviated as PBA) students should be directed to get themselves accustomed to (literacy culture) reading foreign language books, both Arabic and English. Understanding Arabic literature is a must for PBA students, apart from their choice to study in Arabic department, it also because theories and practices of Arabic language studies are more complete in the original book versions, not from translated ones, likewise with English references. Lately, many Arabic learning theories are adapted or translated from English. For this reason, as students and prospective teachers in the future, mastering literacy in reading foreign language books is inevitable.

This condition starts to alarm, in accordance to the situation in the field, where the pre observation showed that PBA students in IAIN Palangka Raya tend to use references in Indonesian for their assignments (specifically for Arabic subjects), even when they are assigned for scientific writing such as papers, research proposal, and thesis. Several attempts have been made to minimize this issue by applying some policies. For instance, setting minimum number of Arabic or English references in scientific papers, research proposals and theses, maximizing the use of online Arabic learning platforms, requiring students to write journal articles as requirement for *munaqasyah* (thesis examination) and other activities. These policies are intended to increase students' awareness in building literacy culture in reading foreign language books so that students have proficient language skills. Nevertheless, students still find difficulties for various reasons. This makes all Arabic Language Education lecturers simultaneously implement activities in selected subjects, as a form of effort to build literacy in reading foreign language books, both Arabic and English books.

This makes the issue becomes interesting to be investigated. The researchers aim to elaborate in depth all activities or treatments of the lecturers to the PBA students in IAIN Palangka Raya in building literacy in reading foreign language books. The problem formulation for this research focuses on what activities done by the

lecturers to PBA students to build literacy in reading books in foreign languages and how the activities are implemented.

In the past few years, many studies on literacy have been carried out A'yuni (2015), Asrizal et al (2017), Rohman (2017), Amalia (2018), Assidik (2018), Asari et al (2019), Nahdi & Jatisunda (2020), & Ngainun Naim (2020). However, some previous studies that are relevant to current research are as follows:

First, the research conducted by Eka Yanuarti and Devi Purnama Sari entitled "The Role of Lecturers in Using Social Media as Means of Student Learning Literacy", where the purpose of this study was to describe the role of lecturers in applying social media as means of literacy learning for Islamic Education (PAI) study program students at IAIN Curup. By using a descriptive qualitative method, the results of this study indicated that the role of lecturers in using social media was carried out by; first, instructing students to analyze current phenomena that are being updated in various social media, and to link to the learning material being studied. Second, instructing students to analyze various daily behaviors that are expressed through stories and writings updated on social media and then to link to the learning material being studied. Third, instructing students to share learning materials and products in the various social media they have. Fourth, asking students to analyze news spread on various social media which is used as a learning reference by accessing other sources as reinforcement or comparison of information on social media as to avoid hoax news (Yanuarti and Sari, 2019).

Second, Hasnadi's research entitled "Building a Culture of Information Literacy in Higher Education". The purpose of this research was to describe the strategies to build a culture of information literacy in higher education as an effort to produce graduates who are able to compete both nationally and globally. By using library research method, the results of this research showed that the information literacy in higher education can be carried out by giving assignment to students, optimizing library functions, implementing literacy-based learning processes, holding literacy training, building awareness of using media, establishing and developing literacy study centers, making use of ICT, creating a literacy-friendly campus atmosphere and social environment as a forum for good communication interactions between campus residents, and building a comfortable and pleasant academic environment for literacy activities (Hasnadi, 2019).

Third, research conducted by Esti Swatika Sari and Setyawan Pujiono with the title "Literacy Culture Among FBS Students in UNY". The goal of this research was to describe forms of literacy culture and obstacles faced by students in carrying out literacy culture activities. By using qualitative descriptive study, the results of this research revealed that; first, the culture of student literacy is manifested in reading and writing activities. Reading activities are carried out because there are tasks related to the subject as many as 60%, and students who enjoy reading is up to 11%. Writing activities are favored by the students with percentage range of 17% -40%, and are carried out because of the demands from the subject course up to 25-42%. Students who associate reading and writing activities reach 53%. Second, there are intrinsic and extrinsic obstacles on literacy culture. The intrinsic obstacles are from within the

students themselves such as laziness, lack of motivation, not being focused, tiredness and boredom, no ideas in writing, difficulty in composing words and sentences, and confusion, while the obstacles originating from the surrounding environment include lack of references in the library and foreign language references (Sari & Pujiono, 2021).

Based on the preliminary researches that have been described above, the conclusions can be drawn as follows: the similarity between previous researches and the current research lies on the research methods used which is qualitative research methods. However, although the subject of the researches is university students, it is different in terms of its places. In addition, the previous researches were broader in its object of research, namely literacy culture, while in the current research the researchers focus on reading literacy. In the previous researches social media was used for literacy activities, then in this current study, the researchers reviewed reading activities in foreign languages. Thus, there is a relationship as well as fundamental differences between the previous and the current research that the researchers conducted.

Method

Identify Subsections

This research will describe activities carried out by PBA lecturers as an effort in building literacy in reading Arabic and English books. To gain the data, the researchers used data collection techniques by, firstly, interviewing PBA lecturers, students, and fellow lecturers in IAIN Palangka Raya as primary and secondary sources. Secondly, observing ongoing process of efforts made by PBA lecturers in building literacy in reading foreign language books. The observations were made periodically within different periods. Thirdly, collecting documents in the form of photos of activities, references, power points, and materials used in learning.

Participant (Subject) Characteristics

The research subjects were lecturers of PBA IAIN Palangka Raya with PBA students as the main informants and fellow lecturers in the research site as additional informants.

Research Design

This research is a field research with descriptive qualitative method. The research was carried out from January to March 2021 in Arabic Education Study Program in IAIN Palangka Raya. The data analysis techniques were done through data reduction, data display and verification (conclusions drawing). To test the validity of the data, triangulation technique was implemented, namely triangulation of sources and data collection technique.

Result and Discussion

Literacy can be defined as language ability of someone to listen, speak, read, and write (Moss, 2021). However, this definition is narrowed by Grabe & Kaplan, as quoted in Sukma et al (2017), that basically literacy focuses on two abilities, reading

and writing. This reading ability or reading literacy is the process of thinking, evaluating, assessing, imagining, reasoning, and solving problems (Manarin, 2019). Husna (2021) further explained that reading literacy means to understand information, to process and analyze reading materials. It is an essential aspect to create reading awareness among society. This can shape one's personality and help them develop new ideas, particularly students in university level.

Theories in this research centered on the theory of literacy culture, the principles of reading literacy, reading literacy, reading skills and various types of books in foreign languages. As a reference material and a basis for analyzing data on research results, the following describes some definitions related to the theoretical basis that the researchers use.

Broad definition of literacy according to Arifian (2018) is formulated as “a tool to gain, process, communicate, and empower information”. The tool in this definition does not refer to nouns such as gadget or laptop, but more to a person's ability to acquire, process, use and communicate knowledge or skills for self-empowerment. In other words, literacy is an ability that enables a person to access, process, and communicate knowledge and skills while at the same time to foster and enrich enthusiasm for learning.

At first, the term literacy was only used in language field (language literacy), but over time, the interpretation of literacy concept became universal representing various disciplines. Thus, literacy begins to be interpreted into several fields, such as cultural literacy, internet literacy, information literacy, legal literacy, and digital literacy (Abidin & Mulyati, 2017). However, it needs to be underlined that even though it represents all kinds of science, the basis of language literacy remains prominent and inherent in each of these interpretations. This can also explain the basis for placing language literacy through reading and writing activities. Reading and writing literacy always involve creativity, because these two language skills are interconnected and affecting each other (McDougall et al, 2018).

The language literacy process requires a range of cognitive abilities, knowledge of written and spoken language as well as genres and culture. It is stated by Arifian (2018) in his article that there are seven principles in language literacy. First, language literacy is related to interpretation activities. From the literacy perspective, language activities deals with perception or interpreting reality at hand, and that reality is interpreted into language. This activity means conveying opinions, impressions, and views on something. Second, literacy means collaboration. It is an important stage in language learning (Ahmadi and Ibda, 2019). By working together, students get chance to practice language use and gain confidence before using language independently. Third, literacy means using conventions. Conventions are habits existed in culture that affects various aspects of the language being studied. Learning a language also means learning to adapt to these conventions.

Fourth, literacy involves cultural knowledge. In line with the third point, the application of conventions generally relates to cultural knowledge. Fifth, literacy is the ability to solve problems. In the perspective of literacy, language learning needs to engage thinking processes both factually and imaginatively to solve problems.

Everyone who performs an action of language, such as speaking, is basically solving a problem about the topic of conversation, including how to express ideas and choose vocabularies according to the target audience. In reading activity as well, readers essentially solve problems by finding relationships between meanings in order to understand the author's ideas (Nikolajeva, 2010). Sixth, literacy is a reflection. Reflection is an activity to assess language use by oneself and others. In daily life, someone interacts with others using language. In that dialectic, a learning process occurs. Every correct and good language use needs to be exemplified, otherwise the use of bad language should be discarded or corrected (Van Staden and Bosker, 2014). Seventh, literacy is the ability to use spoken and written language to create discourse. In the literacy perspective, language learning means improving oral skills up to the ability to understand written texts (literacy). This principle is related to the ability in using spoken and written language in practical everyday life (Naidoo et al, 2014).

Focusing on reading literacy, it is defined as the ability to understand text and use the form of written language needed by society or individuals (Ismayani, 2017), so that readers can construct meanings from various kinds of texts (Lubis, 2017). They read to learn, participate in readers' community or for personal enjoyment. In other words, reading literacy is considered as a constructive and interactive process where the readers apply effective reading strategies for the purpose of acquiring information and building interaction between the readers and the texts.

Reading skill consists of the following sub-skills: (1) skill in choosing reading strategies based on reading objectives and types of reading, (2) skill in understanding the organization/structure of text presentation, (3) skill in criticizing truth, accuracy of sources, and completeness of text, and (4) skill in constructing meaning of words used in a particular field. Reading skill is one of the important ways to understand information or data that has developed with high acceleration in this modern era.

Meanwhile, books in foreign languages refer to all kinds of learning resources, including books, teaching materials, modules, journal articles, papers that are presented in languages other than Indonesian.

The purpose of reading referred to in this study is to read to gather knowledge. In this type of reading, readers refer to a number of sources and gather the specific knowledge needed. This type of reading is like reading that is used as research, papers, theses and so on. According to Thu'aimah, the most important reading goals are: a) Good reading mastery is achieved. b) by reading students can be better able to absorb foreign language references more quickly and accurately. d) Modern society often uses reading skills in carrying out its duties. e) Reading can add insight in all fields. f) Meet the objectives of teaching Arabic, so that students are skilled in reading. These five goals indicate the importance of literacy in reading books, not only as reading as an Arabic language skill, but also as an initial foundation in building knowledge and insight.

Based on the results of observations, interviews and documentation conducted by the researchers, it is found that:

First, the lecturers introduce books of reading references in Arabic and English. This means that PBA lecturers give scientific reading list and provide examples of how to access it, either available offline or online. Offline reading materials can be easily searched in the library. As for online reading materials, lecturers provide examples of how to access them, give input on more valid references, and also introduce scientific papers by paying attention to the reading content, writing themes, writing style, interesting things in the writing and new information that can be taken from reading results. On this occasion the lecturers shared experiences related to finding references for reading material. This is done during the learning process in certain subject in which the assignments are in the form of papers, book reviews, scientific writing, articles, or journal publications. In the era of information and communication technology (ICT), the concept of reading literacy includes not only reading printed texts but also the evolution of reading electronic or online texts (Lee and Wu, 2012). Reading literacy activities both offline and online, print and digital form are supported by research conducted by Lee and Wu (2013), where they stated that providing instructions for reading in print or digital formats can improve students' reading literacy. The challenges in online or digitally reading literacy require readers to have the ability to select, explore and evaluate reading material as needed. Many of the available links tend to make the readers not read the text completely and thoroughly (Benedbaek, 2020). However, on the other side, by reading online, the reading materials become more extensive, and when reading digital text, the readers need basic technology skills such as using the mouse, scrolling pages down and clicking on links, as well as advanced cognitive skills such as scanning and skimming across hyperlinks to find meaningful and relevant material or to assess the credibility of a text and at the same time they also trains digital literacy skills directly (Spante, 2018).

Second, the lecturers explained the advantages of foreign language books for PBA students. It means that the lecturers build awareness of PBA students to adapt or to take references from original sources, not only from translated books or adapted books, especially for PBA students who focus on special educational background in learning Arabic. Therefore, they should be able to take references from the original language resource. In relation to the objective of studying Arabic as a foreign language in Indonesia, it is stated that there are three competencies that must be achieved in learning, they are; linguistic competence, communication competence and cultural competence (Muradi, 2016). This is also in line with a statement Afriani (2019) that learners of a foreign language should prepare themselves to read textbooks in foreign languages, both in Arabic and English. In relation to reading literacy, one of the basic principles that must be done is to read thoroughly, effectively and efficiently (Lundgren, 2013), so that actual information can be conveyed properly, and also can minimize misunderstandings, presumptions or doubts. That way, in reading literacy, it is essential to choose reading sources.

Third, the lecturers help the students understand the steps of reading. The reading steps presented by the lecturers to students of PBA in IAIN Palangka Raya are; 1) determining the reading themes, 2) determining the duration of reading time 3)

asking students to compose main ideas from reading results, 4) drawing conclusions, 5) constructing concept map from the reading results. From these reading steps described by this PBA lecturers, it is known that the first step in reading activities is to determine the theme of the reading. By defining the theme clearly and significantly, it can help students to create common ground for the concepts to be read, to narrow the search for reading material, to save time and focus on the concepts they want to find. As stated by Dewi (2019) that limiting the reading theme can train students to concentrate on the text that has been selected (Joseph et al, 2015). In reading literacy skill, it is very important to understand what steps need to be taken before making progress in reading (Watkins, 2020).

Fourth, the lecturers assign the students to review reading materials. After students are led to create concept maps from their reading results, the lecturers instruct them to make reading reviews. This means to review reading by providing information related to empirical facts, strengths or weaknesses into a summary that sourced from books, magazines, journals, films, news, or a product (Siregar, 2020). By reviewing a reading material, the students can narrate the reading results in their own language, express their opinions or compare the obtained results of the information with realities or real conditions in the field. According to Howard et al (2016), reading review can help the students to formulate problems, identify, categorize and visualize research areas in a large literature corpus. In its relation to reading literacy, reviewing can help us revisit more clearly and more detail (Bezemer and Cowan, 2021).

Fifth, the lecturers assist the students to produce and publish scientific papers. After training students to make reading reviews, the lecturers guide the students to write an article then publish it. This strategy is carried out as a continuation of reading literacy activities as for this reading literacy habit can produce a meaningful product. Besides, PBA lecturers often give project-based assignments so that the assignments can be more useful. In addition, Kartika and Mastuti (2011) stated that publishing written results can encourage a spirit of literacy, both reading and writing literacy. Basically, PBA study program in IAIN Palangka Raya has a special scientific writing program for students, and this can be a place for the students who want to publish their writings. This is also as part of effort made to motive the students to be more productive in terms of literacy.

As the results of the research above, it can be understood that simple activities will ease us to achieve goal if they are implemented according to the right basics and principles. Here the researchers will criticize each activity carried out by the PBA lecturers in IAIN Palangka Raya in building reading literacy of foreign language books: *First*, introducing book reading references in Arabic and English. This first activity is in line with the first principles of language literacy, namely interpreting activity. By introducing references to reading books in foreign languages, it is the same as the lecturers are inviting the students to understand, look further, comment on and convey their opinions on a concept and then get an initial impression or view of the interpretation activities.

Second, describing advantages of foreign language books for PBA students. This activity is in line with the second principle of language literacy, namely

collaboration. By explaining the advantages of foreign language books, the lecturers ask the students to explore more foreign language books. In other words, the students are asked to combine and collaborate their ability in foreign language skills (especially Arabic) and the ability to understand the content of the reading. This activity, of course, can be done together between lecturers and students, or among students. With this collaboration principle, lecturers and students can exchange opinions, provide input or work on assignments collaboratively.

Third, helping students understand reading steps. This activity is in line with the third and fourth principles of language literacy, namely convention and culture. By determining the steps in reading, the lecturer uses the principles of convention and culture which means applying standards habits that should be done.

Fourth, assigning the students to review reading materials. This fourth activity is in line with the fifth principle of language literacy, namely problem solving. An assignment is equal to a problem that needs to be solved. Here the lecturers make one of the language action assignments, namely reviewing a reading material. It means that the students solve problems by finding relationships between meanings in order to understand the author's ideas. Then, the students make a narrative that reveals the reality of the reading with the interpretation of their own understanding by choosing the right word.

Fifth, assisting students produce and publish scientific papers. This activity is relevant with the sixth and seventh principle of language literacy, namely reflection and the ability to create. Assistance activity is similar to learning process that requires interaction between two parties. Of course, this learning process cannot be limited, therefore the lecturers allow students to ask as many questions as possible, to try and reflect according to their abilities, then to create a work. In the principle of language literacy, creating a work is an effort to improve one's abilities.

Of all the processes of reading literacy carried out by PBA lecturers, it leads to improve reading skills through simple activities that implemented optimally. This will build new habits regarding to literacy in reading foreign language books for PBA students

Conclusion

The findings in this study are a description of the efforts made by Arabic Language Education study program lecturers in building literacy in reading foreign language books, research that focuses on the actions taken by PBA study program lecturer, towards students as an effort to improve literacy culture, previously it was very rare. done. Moreover, those specifically discussing literacy in reading books in foreign languages which aim to increase insight and knowledge. While research in Arabic actually leads to research in the field of language skills, this study explores reading skills as a means of increasing insight and knowledge in language skills.

In brief, reading literacy to build habit in reading foreign language books carried out by the lecturers to PBA students in IAIN Palangka Raya, involves: introduction to book reading references in Arabic and English, explanation of the

advantages of foreign language books for PBA students, providence of understanding on reading steps, instruction to reading reviews assignment, assistance on students to produce and publish scientific papers.

The research results are expected to develop further research on reading interest and efforts to improve the literacy skills of the Indonesian people. The results of this study are also intended to serve as a basis for stakeholders in making policies in encouraging higher education. This research is still limited to the efforts of lecturers to make students read. So it is not possible to know the extent to which students are interested in reading.

However, the shortcoming in this research is that the effectiveness of mentoring process implemented by PBA lecturers in building literacy has not been scientifically measured. Therefore, it is necessary to have further research both qualitatively and quantitatively as a follow-up so that the research on language literacy, especially reading literacy, can be sustainable. In addition, this research also suggests additional issue on writing literacy for students and/or on reading literacy that can be carried out in different subjects and locations.

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