

THE INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS ROLE AND HABITUS TOWARD CHILDREN LITERACY

Rohmatul Fitriyah Dewi¹⁾ and Zuvyati A. Tlonaen²⁾

State University of Surabaya, Surabaya
rohmatulfitri25@gmail.com, aryanietlonaen@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper set out to examine a sample of study of the relation between home literacy and school literacy experienced by the children in seven years old as the participant in this research. The research was conducted in Bluluk, Lamongan. The study employed qualitative approach. The data were collected by naturally observing the child's literacy activities. In addition, interviewing the parents and teacher was also conducted to gain more relevant information in terms of home and school literacy development. Bourdieu's theory of habitus was applied to find out parent's role in shaping naturally children's habitus at home to school. The data analyzed showed that participant parents, regardless their educational background, purposed to achieve children's successful in formal and religious contexts. In this case, reading and writing practices, pop culture as the supporting materials of the secondary practices whereas religious practices were set as home literacy activities. Children literacy and competence can't develop well without the involvement of parents' role as their caregiver at home. Thus, parent's role in developing children literacy at home has impact on child achievement at school.

Keywords: literacy, habitus, parents' role, home and school literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

Parents bear important role in children academic development. They can mold their children as they wish, which is often, by preparing their children from the very young age. Family, i.e.: parents inject powerful influences on children literacy development (Douglas, 1964). In the context of literacy, children development can be planed and shaped. According to Hannon (1995), parent role in children's literacy development are embedded in four main ways; opportunity, recognition, interaction and models of literacy users; which respectively suggest that parents provide learning opportunities for their children's literacy development, provide encouragement for children in their recognition of their early achievement, need to interaction with children, and act as a model. These four ways tell that children's academic success is not formed within one night. It involves a continuous process in which parents' awareness of literacy is indispensable and the way how literacy is interpreted and practiced by them at home.

Parents and home are two figures from which children gain their early literacy. In the context of children literacy acquisition, the former provides support for their children and the latter is the setting in which children learn firstly about literacy skill (Pahl, 2005: 25). A good combination of parents and home atmosphere gives children with an outstanding literacy. Before sitting in the school, home is the place where children are introduced to many dimensions related to literacy. These could be writing and reading materials, some popular culture, and even religious material. The continuous recognition of them naturally shapes children's habitus, a term firstly introduced by Bourdieu. So, parents' background and disposition, material used in home and home play big role in children literacy transformation. As stated by Bourdieu (1977) that one of two influential keys to the formation of children habitus is the family, i.e.: parents and the other is the education system.

In the process of habitus formation of children literacy development, a sound relationship between parents and children is surely needed. Positive relationship between them serves strong

foundation for children's literacy (NCPFCE, 2013: 1). A habitus is the constellation of disposition shaping the individual to perform in the social life (Stahl, 2015: 21). It is an agency-and-practice-directing norms, values and disposition (Burke, 2015: 57). Parent is a pivotal figure in the home from whom children learn many things, including copying their traits and routine. Surely, parental practices play a significant role in shaping children's academic achievement and attainment (Bourdieu, 1986). Because habitus is 'system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures' (Bourdieu, 1977: 72), parents role is very influential in children literacy formation. Furthermore, the way how parents interact with their children; play big role in children literacy development. The sensitive, responsive and predictable care to children raises their capacity to be more academically successful (NCPFCE, 2013: 1).

Globalization abruptly sets the benchmark for education all around the world. It triggers many countries to compete each other. They inject skills to their society by strengthening their education system (Graddol, 2008). Even, it is started from the very low level of education. On one side it sounds good, but on the other side it tends to group children by their academic performance. Parents should adapt to the latest situation. Their main job now is not only caring and feeding their children but also preparing them for their success in educational life. In fact, children who are academically prepared by their parents from home find themselves easy to adapt compared to those who are not prepared (Abu Bakar, 2008: 395). Of course, the adoption of habitus in children life is very essential since it does not only prepare children for their educational achievement it also shapes their personal identity, disposition and behavior which fully have the capacity to guide them to attain their academic goal.

In the framework of habitus, parents' role is needed. They two, habitus and parents' role, donates valuable contribution to children literacy. In relation to this, in this study I investigate a sample of study of the relation between home and school literacy experiences of a seven years old child. It involves the investigation of how parents' roles can support children literacy and effect of child achievement in the school context.

1.1 Habitus

Bourdieu defines habitus as a system in which people personality, schemata, mental and physical competence are shaped through continuous socialization (Bourdieu in Swartz, 2002: 625). People live with children, i.e. caregivers or parents and surrounding more or less affect the formation of children character, thought and in the broad term their mental and physical competence. These children's competences may be recognized by the external and internal factors that condition, restrict and promote change (Costa & Murphy, 2015). Furthermore, as it is stated by Kraiss, habitus allows children to naturally and gradually develop their linguistic competence and physical action (Walter, 2014). In the formation of children's competence, mental, oral, or physical, children conform to their disposition or character to suit the schemata living in their mind history by which they can determine whether to adopt or obviate it; it is because the condition of children's surrounding is flexible and changeable. Because of this changeable environment, then in the framework of habitus, children adjust themselves to the latest context or environment to perform or produce the new experience, i.e. competence (Walter, 2014). The formation of children's character, way of thinking and both mental and physical competence, to be a habit does take time. In addition, Bonnewitz defines that habitus is gained periodically: (1) by socialization with the family during childhood and (2) by socialization with the education in the school context. During this periodical habitus formation, some capitals are involved, depend on the context in which children live and actualize them.

1.2 Parents Role

Parental involvement plays a pivotal role for school success at an early age in children's literacy development (Carroll, 2013). Parents as the second teacher, have a significant role in helping children's competence through literacy activities and practices. For instances, parents can participate in the activities such as pointing to and naming objects, storytelling and reading (NCPDFCE, 2013). In this case, engaging families in the education of their children at home and at school is increasingly viewed as an important means to support better learning outcomes for children (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008). Parent involvement has a significant positive impact on students' outcomes throughout the elementary, middle school and secondary years (Carter, 2002). One of the factors that influence children's literacy development is parents' role. As stated by Desforges and Abouchaar in Bonci (2008), there are three aspects of parent roles including parental attitudes and aspirations; parental education level and child; and parents' literacy practices and activities. Involving parents' role can enhance children's skills and achievements which are impacted both inside and outside classroom activities.

1.3 Maktab Literacy

One of literacy practices is maktab literacy. It is derived from a historically mixed oral and literate tradition (Street, 1984). Particularly, this kind of practice is involving in Muslim's community which obviously shows their activities regarding to a value of religion. Mc Carty points out that the *Maktab* literacy practices associated with the primary Qur'anic school and religious practices (as cited in Street, 2013). Learning about Qur'an and religion is both two important things to be achieved by children since early childhood. As stated by Baker (1995), in religious school or '*Maktab*' children learn, among other things, to recite by heart whole passages of the Qur'an. Furthermore, the needs of spiritual approach can be deeply studied in the domains of religious context in Islamic education and community of learning Al Qur'an. Through these domains, children may obtain varied skills of reading Al Qur'an as well. It is because the skills which children need for reading the Qur'an are very different from those required in school (Baker, 1995). In developing *Maktab* literacy, children recognize passages they have memorized by the position on the page, layout and style, rather than by cracking the phonemic code (Street, 1984). In this sense, memorizing will become the first phase for children to recall their mind of reading Al Qur'an that is written in Arabic scripts. It helps to develop children's sense of what constitutes a word (Baker, 1995). Finally, Baker (1995) confirms that *Maktab* literacy evolves skills for non-sequential reading, a learning skill of selection and of 'thumbing' texts (Street, 1984).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in Bluluk, Lamongan in 27th of December 2016. It is considered as a small village that has some schools and only one school with basic Islamic education. This research sets out to examine a sample of study of the relation between home and school literacy experienced by a seven years old child. The child was selected due to an equal literacy competence he has in formal and informal contexts that is performed through different literacy activities conducted in the school and home domain. The participant in this study is Mamak who studies in Islamic Elementary School. Both of his parents have same level of education, the graduate of '*Pondok Pesantren*' or Islamic Boarding school.

This study applied qualitative approach. Qualitative approach is fundamentally interpretative, which means that the research outcome is ultimately the product of the researchers subjective interpretation of the data (Dornyei, 2007). In conducting this research, the writer draws several methods of data collection: (1) observing the child activities in home domain along with his friends and parents, (2) observing the child literacy events, (3) documenting the data by taking photos and notes, (4) interviewing the teacher to obtain an objective perspective connected to the

child competences in the school, by using audio recorder and (5) interviewing the parents to know an early development of the child's literacy at home.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Home Literacy

3.1.1 Reading and writing practices

Literacy emphasizes the ability to read and write using conventional system of written signs of particular language (Whitehead, 2007). In this sense, language can be found in written texts to be read. At the time before Mamak enrolled in the school, he had been taught how to read and write. He was struggling to recognize and spell the words. In this context, Mamak used his mother tongue, i.e. Bahasa Indonesia. Besides, Indonesian language, Mamak also learns English. His parents taught him how to recognize the alphabet words. Mamak was asked to repeat, spell and drill, after that, he said the word. According to Heath (1983), in Whitehead (2007), young children may take great pleasure in the alphabets which are so traditional a part of literacy learning in literate culture. It is aware of the significant contribution towards children's learning by stimulating reading and writing (Clark, 2007). Besides learning alphabets, Mamak was taught by his father how to read simple sentences such as *"ibu menggoreng ikan di dapur"*. Mamak is expected to read the words fluently. These activities were conducted every night after *adzan isya'*, as the great time to do learning process at home.

He is not only interested in learning Indonesian sentence. Mamak seems to be interested in learning English as well. For instance, when working on his English homework, Mamak read the sentence aloud for example *"we use the glass to take the water"* and spelt every words carefully and slowly. Mamak's disposition towards reading practices could be obviously seen when his ability to read simple words was developed more. In addition, learning the writing will automatically follow as the upcoming outcomes. His ability to write was still limited to write small pieces of words in a simply way.

Figure 1.



3.1.2 Popular culture as the supporting materials of the secondary practices

In addition to Mamak's literacy activities previously mentioned, other supporting activities were required to construct his competence through the use of children's pop culture as the secondary practices. Pop culture may refer to the three definitions of word culture defined specifically by William in John (2001) as: 1) to refer to "a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development, 2) as lived cultures or cultural practices in which it allows us to speak of practices for instance youth subcultures, celebration of Christmas, etc and 3) as signifying practices in which it allows us to speak of soap opera, pop music, film, and comic". Therefore, those practices are usually referred to as cultural texts (William in John, 2001). In this case, the activity connected

to pop culture cannot be neglected. Marsh in Pahl and Rowsell (2005) mentioned that there are a lot of children's popular worlds such as television, film/movie, computers, games, toys, etc. At home, Mamak conducted many activities related to pop culture materials (John, 2001). Mamak and his friend watched a hero movie entitled 'Superman Returns'. In understanding the movie, Mamak told the researcher that "*Superman was getting weak, then when a doctor attempted to inject him, he failed because he has strong body*". This activity shows us that pop culture references could strengthen the students in exploring narrative (Parry in Friesem, 2015). In the middle of watching, he heard a word of 'will be back', then directly repeated and spelled it. Next, he also heard the word 'lives', then he directly asked the meaning of the word. Overall, the most prominent act was when Mamak was interested in asking information that he did not know well. Secondly, playing games was also beneficial. Games contain varied characters that allows the player who takes a part by choosing specific one. In some games, the simulation is available to coach child before playing the real game. Child as the player has a surrogate in the simulation namely the virtual character that control the virtual world, e.g. *Solid Snake in Metal Gear Solid* (Gee, 2007). After Mamak watched the movie, he continued his activity by playing the game, the war game. While playing the game, Mamak seemed to be very enthusiastic and to understand the rules of the game. It indicates that Mamak's digital literacy exists because of habitus. Moreover, the existence of game could teach him how to build good strategy in solving the problem. As supported by Gee (2007) that the player must recognize problems and solve them from within the inside of the stimulated world, in the games, for reaching a goal. Third, trying to repair a toy was an interesting activity. Mamak and his friends took a big car, the car was a broken one. Mamak directly attempted to repair the toy, even though it still did not work. Mamak's attempt showed that he had initiative to repair it. Basically, children has a strong feeling to do new experiences which contributes to their world; it is shown by its surrounding of playing environment. Fourth, after failing to repair the toy, Mamak and his friend was playing chess. Mamak's friend played the chess well. Then the researcher asked him why he was good at playing chess and he said that it was his uncle who taught him. Mamak attempted to enjoy the flowing of the game. They were familiar with the regulation and played it very well.

Figure 2.



Figure 3.

3.1.3 Religious practices

Horwath, et.al. (2008) assert that religious beliefs and practices have the potential to influence many aspects of life, including family life and parenting. Based on this notion, it is an obligatory for children as a part of family life, to engage and practice the religious values. As an input of literacy event, religious practices were performed by Mamak's parents as the basic Islamic education through 'Ubudiyah' activities. At the age of 3, the parents showed an obligation of 'Sholat' which should be performed by the Muslim. In this way, their parents asked him to take 'wudhu',

the way to purify and clean the body using water before praying to God, and then he followed them by praying together (*Jamaah*). In addition, *Maktab* literacy was also introduced to him such as the activity of reading *Iqro* and Al qur'an. At the age of 4, his parents guided him to begin a fasting before the sun rises until the sun sets (*Puasa*) until mid day. The application of *Sholat Dhuha* and Five times praying was also performed by Mamak in his early learning of Islam. At the age of 6, Mamak had been motivated to do fasting along day, until the sun sets.

In terms of *Maktab* literacy, Mamak's ability in reciting Al qur'an was better than other children around his age. In this event, the learning of Al qur'an was guided by a religion teacher (*Ustadz*); correcting students' misspelling in reciting Al qur'an and adding next material. After that, he repeated over the new materials individually. Through this method that he was able to develop *Maktab* literacy.

Figure 4.



Figure 5.



3.2 The Involvement of Parents' Role and Habitus Viewed by Parents

One of the factors that influence children's literacy development is parents' role. According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), there are three aspects of parent roles including parental attitudes and aspirations; parental education level; and child and parents' literacy practices and activities. These three aspects are applied by Mamak's parents to encourage children literacy in his daily activities. Parental attitudes and aspirations lead to good behavior and great aspiration. From the age of 3-4, parents taught him how to behave well, for instance: 1) using right hand during eating, 2) shaking hand to parents when he was about to go and had arrived home, 3) saying Islamic greeting '*Salam*', and 4) not using bad language.

Parental education level is pivotal. Both of Mamak's parents were graduated from '*Pondok Pesantren*'. It is one of many forms of educational Islamic institutions and centers which advocate the spread of Islam (Zakaria, 2010). It is Mamak's parents intention to send him and his sisters to study in Islamic institutions. In fact, both of his sisters became parts of boarding school students learning both formal and religious knowledge. As stated by Badawi (2006), there are three important reasons to put child in an Islamic school; they provide Islamic environment and religious education, and preserve their children's religion and identity. That's why Mamak as the only boy in this family would be enrolled in Islamic institution where Islamic literacy is taught, including learning history of Islam i.e. prophet Muhammad, reciting Al qur'an verses, conducting prayers and learning his religion values.

For children, home is the best place to learn much of their literacy skills (Pahl and Rowsell, 2005). At home, parents are recognized as an important role in encouraging children's interest, for instance drawing on children's pop culture. Based on Mamak's observation, parents allowed him to watch a series of cartoon program in the television such as *Upin and Ipin*, *Naruto* or *Power Rangers*. Through children program in tv, infant communication skills such as attention,

interaction, visual and responses are appropriate in learning language (Close, 2004). Here, after watching a movie, then he was able to retell a plot of the story in a detail. In addition, parents try to develop his ability by asking him to tell his experiences that relates to the story of a movie. Parents may bring in their stories and their worlds to children's text-making (Pahl and Rowsell, 2000).

The parents are the caregivers in helping the formation of children character. Since from the early age, Mamak's parents motivate him to do literacy practices in terms of formal and religious knowledge. The way of constructing their child and motivating him reflects Bourdieu in the use of habitus that is practiced continuously for enhancing his mental and physical competence in acquiring literacy process. Bourdieu states that habitus is a system in which people personality, schemata, mental and physical competences are shaped through continuous socialization, as cited in (Swartz, 2002: 625). For them, teaching both common and religious knowledge remind to put together, by means that learning common knowledge can sharp his intelligence, while religious knowledge can support his spiritual approach and the way how to behave. The notion of learned and habituated can be modified and reconstructed through educational practices (Farrell, 2010).

3.4 The effect of home literacy to school towards child achievement

Parents are their child's first teacher and most of the literacy experiences that a child brings with them to school are born out of the context of that child's home environment (Heath as cited in Bonci, 2008). These statements can be obviously proven since at home children conduct many literacy activities within their environment. Home literacy is very influential in children competence. It is believed that parental participation may be active because they bear the primary responsibility for children's educational achievement (Berthelsen and Walker, 2008). At home, parents have role as the guidance to give children a good example of how to behave, to learn and how to believe his religion, especially Islam. These practices bring the effect toward child achievement in the school.

In the school domain, Mamak is known as the smart student in his class. In terms of academic achievement, he was on the third rank in his first grade class. During interview with his teacher, Mamak is popular as a smart student compared to the other students in his age. In his first grade, he was able to master reading and writing skills fluently. These abilities are developed more with the support of the teachers in teaching him Bahasa Indonesia lesson. The level of his reading can be achieved up to three syllables. In addition, due to his educational focused on Islamic base, religion lesson is also taught by the teacher to motivate students' knowledge of Islam. Moreover, Mamak always does *Dhuha* praying every morning when he is at home.

Belonging to an active participation in the class, Mamak tried to answer teachers' question by solving a task that is written in the white board. He has initiative to come forward and complete the task. Moreover, while teacher is explaining the materials, he will be active in asking question related to something that he does not know before. Mamak's teacher really appreciated him for his achievement in the school. That is to say, the role of parents affected his literacy competences. As said by his teacher, he was considered as a good child who is polite to his teacher. Indeed, he has good relationship with his friends. Thus, parents help to understand the importance of literacy experiences from birth and beyond, children will be better prepared and better equipped to succeed in both school and in life (Padlick, 2011).

4. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the relation between home and school literacy experienced by a seven year old child. This child conducted many literacy practices such as reading and writing, pop culture as the supporting of the secondary practices and religious context. In this case, children literacy and competence cannot develop well without the involvement of parents' role as their caregiver

at home. By applying Bourdieu's theory of habitus, the parents role in teaching both common and religious knowledge can sharp the child's intelligence, religious knowledge and support his spiritual approach which in turn has impact on the child achievement in the school.

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