

**EXPLORING THE USE OF PICTURE BOOKS ABOUT
ENVIRONMENT IN SUPPORTING MARGINAL CHILDREN'S
DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLITERACY**

A THESIS

by

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FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the most kindhearted woman I've ever met, to the woman who always prays and leads me to be a good student and future educator. This is for you, Mom.

This thesis is also sincerely dedicated to my one and only first love, to the man who always prays and teaches me the life lessons: to be a strong and brave woman; this is for you, Dad.

Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to my very best friend, to those who were always there for me when I didn't know how to be there for myself, those who take good care of me, and my gentle little brother.

MOTTOS

“Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity.” (Q.S Al Baqarah : 286)

“You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.” –Darren Hardy.

“Don't compare your life to others. There is no comparison between the sun and the moon. They shine when it is their time.” –Unknown.

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Palembang, 8 April 2022

The Writer,

Cantika Putri

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EXPLORING THE USE OF PICTURE BOOKS ABOUT ENVIRONMENT IN SUPPORTING MARGINAL CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT OF ECOLITERACY

ABSTRACT

Increased environmental disasters we are currently experiencing have raised global actions on ecological and sustainable development. UNESCO has called for education for ecological awareness, particularly among school aged children. This research was inspired by such encouragement to incorporate environmental issues into the curriculum. Hence, this study focused on the exploration of marginal children' ecoliteracy. Ecoliteracy should be instilled in each individual from primary education because children's intellectual growth as well as behavior molding flourish during this period. In this study, the researcher explored the use of picture books as the media for inviting students to think about their environment. Books about various environmental issues were used in the literacy mentoring program with a group of 10 children living in a marginal community of Sungai Rengas, Kelurahan Pulokerto, Kecamatan Gandus, Sumatera Selatan. Using qualitative case study, the researcher explored how students engaged in literacy learning while developing environmental awareness. Data collection involved interview, artifacts of children's learning, and observation. Drawing from the framework of ecoliteracy proposed by the Center for Ecoliteracy (2013), the researcher analyzed the data to understand the different aspects of the children's ecoliteracy. Findings show that children's works and responses indicated four domains of ecoliteracy, which include the cognitive, emotional, action, and spiritual aspects. It can be concluded that engagement with books and texts with environmental topics helped to foster children's awareness of environmental issues.

Keywords: *Ecoliteracy, Picture Book, Literature Discussion.*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents (1) background of study, (2) problems of the study, (3) objectives of the study, and (4) significance of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

Literacy is defined as a reading and writing ability known as '*melek aksara/keberaksaraan*' (Cooper, 1993; Alwasilah, 2001). This skill is to be able to form an independent person and adjust themselves to the development of science and technology (IPTEK). Thus, literacy awareness signifies a society is growing (modern), as in the 21st century, the community is called to be literate (melek). Being referred to as the ability to: 1) access information efficiently and effectively, 2) evaluate information critically and competently, 3) use information accurately and creatively (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Literacy is necessary for all classes of individuals, as evidenced by its inclusion as a subject in school and university curricula. Literacy is essential for self-improvement, education, professional growth, personal branding, and national development. Literacy-educated citizens are the cornerstone of national growth (Rintaningrum, 2019). Reading skill provides a variety of strengths, including the capacity to learn new material from a new area of knowledge, the ability to share or transmit further information to others, improve one's attention, and enjoy oneself. In this era of internet-based information, readers also deal with digitally mediated texts (Silvhiany, 2019). Consequently, they have to be able to evaluate the sources and the credibility of the information widely available in the internet (Silvhiany et.al., 2021).

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) 2019 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, Indonesia is rated 62 out of 70 nations. Many factors cause the lack of literacy level of Indonesian students. The elements may be from inside and outside the school environment. The factors inside the school environment

include poor reading facilities and infrastructure, a lack of role models (teachers) for students in order to literacy, and the unsuitable method during the learning process. While the factors outside the school environment, such as unawareness of families about the importance of reading tradition, the affordability of people's purchasing power for books, the rise of 'thumb' technology (mobile phones, the internet), has affected people's interest in books, and electronic media is more exist than printed media.

Environmental literacy is one of the many varieties of literacy that exist today. According to Kusumaningrum (2018), environmental literacy is a conscientious attitude to preserve environmental balance and contribute to dealing with environmental concerns. According to the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance in Rahmah et al. (2019), environmental literacy is a person's comprehension of environmental issues, principles, and attitude to preserve environmental conditions implemented in daily actions. Children's stories are usually about a person or event, which their logic can accept. Logically, they have children's intellectual and emotional abilities to understand things about human life, human relationships, and human interactions with other divine beings, including human relations with the universe (Hasanuddin, 2015, p. 3). This is true because, in essence, children's literature will contain everything related to the surrounding environment (nature).

Rosenblatt (1983, p. 38) stated that literary texts provide a living through the experience, meaning that children's experiences with nature can be explored through children's experiences reading literary texts. So, one indicator of literary literacy (literate) is that children can take attitudes and meanings to their environment. In other words, literature can encourage the creation of environmental intelligence (ecological intelligence), or what is known as ecoliteracy.

Ecological intelligence describes a person's ability or capacity to take action related to environmental aspects, namely nature preservation (Supriatna, 2016, p. 24). This ecological intelligence is often referred to as ecological literacy (ecological literacy or eco-literacy). Ecological sustainability is an

essential and potential concept (Hampson, n.d., 2012). According to Capra (Cited in Supriatna, 2016), ecoliteracy is a condition in which people understand ecological principles and live according to those principles. It has principles in organizing and building a life together with humanity on this earth and realizing a sustainable society.

This ecological intelligence is not only about cognition. The content of ecoliteracy prioritizes experience and is student-centered rather than just the cognitive aspect (Carver, 1996; Carver, 1997; Corney & Reid, 2007). Therefore, ecoliteration must include everything available to students, namely something that will encourage students to be sensitive in realizing (cognitive aspect), feeling (affective aspect), and having the desire to act (psychomotor aspect) to protect the earth.

The environment has a vital role in the life of living things. With the protection of their natural habitat, the existing living things also continue to grow. Maintaining environmental well-being makes us comfortable and can avoid various problems that come from the environment. Nonetheless, the advancement of technology and the Industrial Revolution have negatively affected the environment. Almost every year in Indonesia, disasters happen, such as forest fires, floods, landslides, etc. Flood disasters have become a common occurrence in our country. This is caused by individuals who do not care about the environment.

Another example of imbalanced nature is the forest. According to Walhi (Chakrawati, 2011, p. 25), there has been forest shrinkage in Indonesia. In 2004 the forest was depleted of 3.4 million hectares. In 2005 it became 2.8 million hectares, and in 2006 it had reached 2,73 million hectares of land. The decline in the number of forests in Indonesia is because of illegal logging without replanting. These Indonesian forests also cause smoke due to forest fires. These forests significantly impact people, especially in metropolitan areas that rarely have green shades.

Shades of green in the metropolitan area have been replaced by sturdy buildings and affect water accessibility. Water has become very scarce. The air

for breathing also becomes dirty because it has been polluted by chemical compounds produced from various sources of pollution. The clean environment is made unclean by carbon dioxide. Based on the results of research in America called CGD (Community for Worldwide Turn of events) in a data set called CARMA (Carbon Checking for Activity), Indonesia is claimed as one of the largest countries that produce carbon dioxide on the planet; it is around 92,900,000 tons of CO₂. This will significantly affect human well-being (Chakrawati, 2011, p. 25).

The research mentioned above shows that our current environment is in danger. Seeing environmental conditions that are getting worse day by day, understand and protect the environment. Understanding the importance of protecting the environment must occur through education to build a society aware of the importance of the environment. This is related to a statement by Fritjof Capra called ecoliteracy (ecological understanding).

Capra (cited in Stone and Barlow, 2005, p. x) stated that education for sustainable living fosters both an intellectual understanding of ecology and emotional bonds with nature that make it more likely that our children will grow to be responsible citizens who genuinely care about sustaining life, and develop a passion for applying their ecological understanding to the fundamental redesign of our technologies and social institutions, to the bridge the current gap between human design and the ecologically sustainable systems of nature.

The statement above is that education for extended living encourages an ecological understanding of the environment and an emotional enthusiasm for nature which makes our children grow up to be responsible citizens who genuinely care about sustaining and developing life—also increasing the spirit to apply their ecological understanding to reset the technological foundations and social institutions, between the human plan and natural ecological systems.

Therefore, the researcher observed marginal children who lived in Sungai Rengas, Gandus, Sumatera Selatan. The results after observation show that marginal children's conception of ecoliteracy is still low. Most of them still have no idea about ecoliteracy and ignore the environment. Their behavior could

see in daily activities that, often doing littering. Therefore, the researcher had a desire to do research aimed at investigating their conception of ecoliteracy and increasing their awareness to keep the environment.

Based on the statement above, investigating their conception and increasing their awareness of ecoliteracy is needed to learn that can interest marginal children to be active participants. The way of knowing that the researcher will use is literature discussion by using picture books. Picture books are one of the exciting media that have the potential to engage children to learn in early education. This study investigates the marginal children's perspective and awareness about their environment by using picture books. It specifically written to convey increasingly complex ecosystem concepts and their influence on the environment. Under the central theme of "ecoliteracy", the books introduce four sub-themes (animals, plants, natural disasters, and garbage.)

Picture books serve as a perfect tool for learning and cognitive engagement in young children (Cleveland, 2015). The use of picture books has also been linked with enhanced language development. Debby (2007) noted that thinking and speaking about the pictures and expressing opinions or emotions improved language acquisition. Picture books have also been used successfully for interventions that encourage language development in children. For instance, language development in children from low-income backgrounds greatly improved when provided with picture book reading intervention sessions (Kim, Lee, & Pae, 2013).

Several studies report the successful use of picture books for providing environmental education. Hsiao & Shih (2016) used eight picture books to instruct environmental concepts, especially the problems and the overuse of resources resulting from human activities. As an outcome of the project, children learned to conserve resources by bringing their handkerchiefs to school to replace disposable tissues, using less water while washing their hands and brushing their teeth, and reducing the amount of drawing paper they used for doodling. While their use of plastic bags did not change, the students in this study responded by undertaking several necessary pro-environmental actions.

Wordless picture books also promote a unique and symbolic relationship between humans and nature (Ramos & Ramos, 2011). Young children tend to have a positive attitude towards nature and science (Osborne, Simon, & Collins, 2003). Thus, more picture books about nature and animals are for young children than books about either engineering or technology (Cleveland, 2015). This positive attitude can be leveraged with picture books to tutor critical thinking skills at an early age (Roche, 2014).

With the development of ecoliteracy-based children's literature books, it is hoped that besides being able to increase children's ecological intelligence (ecoliteracy) towards the phenomena around them, they can produce ideas or solutions (problem-solving) to problems in the surrounding environment.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background above, the problems are formulated as follows:

1. What are the children's perspectives regarding the environmental issue?
2. What aspects of ecoliteracy are visible in the children's responses to the book discussions?

1.3 The Objectives of Study

In relation to the problem statement mentioned previously, the objective of the research is to describe:

1. To describe the children's perspectives regarding environmental issues
2. To describe the aspects of ecoliteracy are visible in the childrens' responses to the book discussions

1.4 Significances of the Study

This research is expected to be able to give information to the researcher herself and people in the social and educational field dealing with ecoliteracy and literature discussion, especially by using picture books.

a) Children

This research is dedicated to marginal children about the importance of keeping the environment from an early age. Because there are a lot of earth problems that will come because of human error, such as global temperature, rising sea levels, climatic change, natural calamities, and global warming.

b) Teacher or other researchers

It is expected that picture books about ecoliteracy can be a teaching method and reference for teachers to increase student awareness of their environment, especially in school areas. Also, supporting media or teaching materials for learning (especially learning PLH and biology) to produce human beings who are literate about environmental issues (environmental literacy).

c) Parents and the Community

It is expected to help parents and the community be role models aware of their environment. It also leads them to make interesting planning enjoyable to children to keep the environment. One way is to create a table of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and provide some presents to appreciate it.

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