



The Role of Home and Classroom Environments in Promoting the Students' EFL Literacy at an Elementary School in Bandung, Indonesia

Lilies Setiasih
Bandung Islamic University
lies_hadi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article reports on a case study of the role of home and classroom environments in promoting the Indonesian students' EFL literacy at an elementary school in Bandung, Indonesia. This study was an attempt to fill the gap of a controversy among decision makers about the idea of offering English at elementary schools and the reality that at the school where the research was conducted, English was fully used as a means of instruction for three subject matters in the fourth grade: Mathematics, Science, and English. Considering that literacy is shaped in socio-cultural contexts, the researcher assumed that the students acquired and developed their English literacy at school and outside of school. Both home and classroom environments might contribute to the students' English literacy development. The purpose of the research was to describe the level of the students' English literacy and to identify the factors in both the home and classroom environments that played a role in promoting the students' English literacy.

Key Words: literacy, English literacy, parental involvement, classroom practice

Introduction

Teaching English at the elementary school level in Indonesia is still controversial for several reasons (Abdul-Hamid, 2002; Alwasilah, 2001). A key reason is that English literacy is very difficult to accomplish for students in elementary schools. According to Wenden and Rubin (1987, p. 28), "learning a new language is a complex process that involves constructing knowledge of the language by employing cognitive, external, and internal processes." This nature of literacy becomes a more complex issue with regard to English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia. However, at the school where the research was conducted, English was fully used as a means of instruction for English, Mathematics, and Science in the fourth grade and the books used for those subjects were those commonly used in Singapore wherein English functions as a second language (ESL). Where English was used as a means of instruction, English literacy skills became important for the students because they were learning tools to understand the three subjects. In other words, without having English literacy skills, the students would have difficulty in understanding the content of the subject matter.

With this in mind, the fourth graders were assumed to have the English literacy skills, especially reading and writing skills, needed to do academic English literacy practices. Considering that literacy is shaped in socio-cultural contexts, the students were also assumed to acquire and develop English literacy not only at school, but also outside of school because their English literacy practices were embedded in their daily lives. In this way, the students' home environment might contribute to their English literacy development. This issue lacked thorough investigation in the Indonesian context. Little is known about the studies investigating the external factors, such as what, how, and why students read and write in