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## Implementing Digital Literacy in Developing Learners' Creative English Reading Skills at Inclusive Classrooms of Ibtidaiyah Madrasah

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### ABSTRACT

The ongoing pandemic era has contributed to the application of digital literacy in learning English as a foreign language, including at the elementary school level. Students in the inclusive class also find it useful. The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the implementation of digital literacy in developing students' creative reading skills in English learning in the Inclusion class of Islamic elementary schools and their impact. This research method uses descriptive qualitative which is categorized in the regular inclusion class. The primary resource consisted of the headmaster and the teachers of the inclusion class. While secondary sources are in the form of various literature related to digital literacy, creative reading, teaching English as a foreign language, and inclusion classes. The result is that the implementation of digital literacy in the Inclusion class goes through 3 stages, namely: preparing digital media in the form of video, audio, and gadgets and compiling lesson plans, then implementing them online/offline/blended according to applicable regulations. The next stage is evaluation through short video/audio as well as study materials by the expert team of children with special needs. This implementation has a positive impact, namely the raising of social awareness from classmates of children with special needs. Meanwhile, the negative impact is the limitation of madrasahs requiring operational permits for inclusive classes from the Ministry of Religion. The addition of digitization media needs to be maximized so that it can be used for the English development of students as a whole

**Keywords:** digital literacy; TEYL; creative reading; Inclusion class

### INTRODUCTION

The pandemic era has contributed to the implementation of digital literacy in learning English as a foreign language, including in primary school inclusion classes. The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the application of digital literacy in developing students' creative reading skills in English language learning in Islamic primary school inclusion classrooms and its impact.

The implementation of learning by utilizing information technology is not new. In the modern era, the need for technology is indispensable. Of course, this need covers several aspects. One aspect that is highly dependent on technology is education. The development of education in the 4.0 era is very massive, the progress achieved by each educational unit is certainly supported by adequate technological facilities. All needs in organizing education are very dependent on the existence of technology. In the last 2 years, the world has been preoccupied with pandemic news, of course, this situation has an impact on education management as well. The use of digital technology such as the Internet is a major requirement

in the implementation of education. Digital technology is no longer a foreign item for students. The online learning policy 'forces' teachers and students to keep interacting, and the easiest and most familiar facilities are laptops, the internet, and smartphones.

With this massive digital technology, good management is needed. Understanding how to utilize these technologies requires good skills. Digital literacy is a relevant and appropriate answer to utilizing digital technology. Digital literacy is one of the six basic literacies which include; literacy in reading and writing, numeracy, science literacy, digital literacy, financial literacy, and civic culture literacy. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021) The six literacies have a synergistic relationship. Literacy in reading and writing is the initial literacy a basis for understanding other literacies.

Language development, especially foreign languages, requires very adequate tools. In training language skills, it is not just reading, there need to be other appropriate support facilities. Digital literacy is needed in teaching so that learners can be wise in technology. The ability to use technology appropriately and wisely can create good communication and interaction. Digital literacy is the knowledge and ability of users in utilizing digital media. the ability includes finding, doing, evaluating, using, creating, and utilizing it wisely, intelligently, carefully, and appropriately. (Devri Suherdi, 2021). In learning, the use of digital literacy is very effective to improve learners' abilities. Improving learners' foreign language skills such as creative reading is not only done by using textbooks alone. But other supporting tools that are practical, effective, and innovative are needed. Digital literacy can be significantly increased through media education. If students have the specific skills that computers require, the current digital divide can be closed (Pietrass, 2007). The support of each education unit for the existence of digital literacy is the key to the success and quality of education. Every education unit must prepare itself, for all communities.

Inclusive schools are schools that provide education for children with special needs. So far, the practice of learning for children with special needs only applies in special schools (SLB). Because this school is designed to learn techniques for children with special needs. Inclusive schools are where children with special needs can learn together with other regular children. Children with special needs are still accompanied by a support teacher during learning. The learning system, curriculum, infrastructure, and evaluation model still fulfill the needs of children with disabilities. Changing education systems to be able to accept the diversity of the student body and ensure their participation in the learning process, regardless of their socio-economic status, ethnic origin or linguistic minority, or physical and mental disabilities, including Roma minorities, as mentioned in the articles by Themelis and Nes, is what inclusive education is all about (De Jesus, 2018).

Based on the above background, this study will examine the implementation of digital literacy in developing students' creative reading skills in inclusive classes as a research objective.

The basis for the implementation of inclusive education is as stated in Article 4 Paragraph 1, namely "Education is organized in a democratic and equitable and non-discriminatory manner by upholding human rights ... and national pluralism". Meanwhile, Article 11 states that: "The government and local governments are obliged to provide services and facilities, and ensure the implementation of quality education for every citizen, without discrimination. Article 12 Paragraph 1 states that "every learner in every education unit has the right to receive educational services by his/her talents, interests and abilities." In Minister of National Education Regulation No 70 of 2009 Article 3 Paragraph 1 states that every learner who has physical, emotional, mental and social abnormalities or has the potential for special intelligence and/or talent has the right to attend education inclusively in certain education units according to his or her needs and abilities." (PusKur&PusBuk, 2021)

## **DIGITAL LITERACY**

The development of the digital world is like a spear that can provide benefits but also vice versa. The development of access in digital form is both a challenge and an opportunity.

According to We Are Social research, mobile phone connections reached 345.3 million with 125.6% penetration, while internet users reached 202.6 million with 73.7% penetration. Active social media users reached 170.0 million with 61.8% penetration. (www.hootsuite.com).

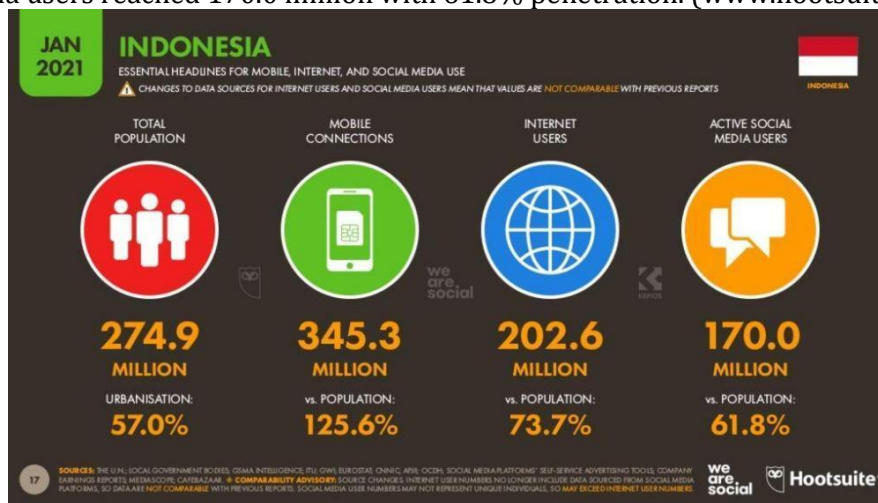


Figure 1 Internet Users in Indonesia (Januari 2021)

An average day for internet users in Indonesia takes up to 8 hours 52 minutes to surf the internet, 2 hours 50 minutes streaming, 3 hours 14 minutes on social media, so you can spend 1 hour 38 minutes reading online and offline media (https://inet.detik.com/cyberlife/d5407210/userinternetindonesia break through 2026 million).

Madrasahs can organise inclusive education using a variety of models as follows: (Directorate of PLS, 2004:27)

- Full inclusion (regular classes), where children with disabilities study with other (normal) children throughout the day in regular classes with the same curriculum;
- . Regular classes with clusters, where children with disabilities learn with normal children in regular classes in special groups;
- Regular class with pull out, where children with disabilities learn with normal children in the regular class in special groups, and at certain times are pulled out of the regular class to the resource room to study with a special teacher.
- Special classes with various integration, where children with disabilities learn in special classes at regular schools, but in certain areas can learn with other (normal) children in regular classes;
- Full special classes, where children with disabilities learn in special classes in regular schools.

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Foreign languages in primary schools are dominated by English. In Islamic primary schools and madrasah ibtidaiyyah, foreign languages generally consist of English and Arabic. Foreign languages become local content at this level of education.

In every country, the position of foreign languages is very diverse. If the existence of a language is not used as a means of daily communication both oral and written but is only learned in certain situations, then the language can be categorized as a foreign language. English and Arabic in Indonesia, for example, become foreign languages when learn at special times. These two languages are more like languages that are only taught in educational institutions and not necessarily used as languages of communication (spoken) in everyday life. Moon (2000:182) explain that:

*“English as a foreign language (EFL) goes to any situations where this language is learned as a subject at schools and used in international specific purpose but not in spoken one, children in active learning produce errors in learning English and as a foreign language as well which indicates the work of language system.”*

- a. Foreign language learning, especially reading skills in children are divided based on age. Scott & Ytberg (1995: 51-53) divide the characteristics of reading into 5-10 years, namely: a) it takes longer to read in a foreign language, b) does not understand the relationship between spoken and written vocabulary, c) regardless of sentence structure, paragraphs, and grammar and d) using visuals. Furthermore, 8-10 years old are; a) concentrating on content, b) taking a long time for children who do not use the Roman alphabet, and c) able to read in the mother tongue and a little obstacle in transferring to English [foreign].
- b. In essence, children like picture books as a reading medium, parents and teachers can provide these facilities including in digital form. Medikawati (2012:26) provides a classification of selecting good picture books for children, including a) short 5-6 pages b) clear visualization, c) enriching vocabulary, d) considering gender, e) reading books equipped with DVDs [reading/reading books than watching DVDs] and e) making it a routine.
- c. These can be developed by parents and teachers. In the digital age, digital versions of picture books need to be developed or used. Digital books/playbooks can be an alternative in introducing books in a non-hard book version but in the form of digital literacy-based books.

### **ENGLISH IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

English is one of the foreign languages taught as a subject in primary school. It is certainly not easy for students to learn. Therefore, learning must be formal and concrete. In order to learn a foreign language (English), students must pay more attention to the form and meaning of the language. Since English is not the mother tongue and is the first language to be learned, it cannot be learned immediately.

In language digital literacy, reading skills are the main focus before writing skills. Tarigan (2015) argues that reading is a successful step in the teaching and learning process. Through reading, a person can translate, interpret language signs or symbols that he understands.

Furthermore, according to Ruhena (2008) reading is the key to writing. The activity of reading books includes the activity of reading the greatness of God's nature, as if the brain is writing. Reading, which is the main command in Surah Al Alaq, shows the urgency of the process of developing language skills and creativity.

A person who does creative reading activities has criteria, among others (Nurhadi, 2004):

- a. does not stop his reading activity until the book is closed
- b. is able to apply the results of his reading to his daily life
- c. changes in attitude and behaviour when reading has been completed
- d. lifetime results can be felt after reading
- e. able to make critical and creative judgement on the materials he reads
- f. able to produce problem solvers for daily life after reading.

Creative reading activities are integrated with literacy activities. Critical reading is in itself a creative activity, since it allows the reader to extract significantly more meaning from the text than is explicitly expressed. On the other hand, not all critical reading is creative reading (Litman, 2007). Fitriyaningsih's research (2021:125) divides literacy activities into 3 reading activities: silent reading, guided reading, independent reading and shared reading. These activities are pursued through literacy infrastructure such as providing reading areas, libraries, class reading corners, and mandatory reading activities 15 minutes before entering class. However, literacy activities are also not free from obstacles, namely time constraints and different student characters.

Applying the reading process to gain knowledge to bring up creative ideas that can be developed or called creative reading skills can improve students' storytelling skills. Literal comprehension, a degree of critical thinking and a degree of emotional involvement are all necessary for creative reading (Litman, 2007). By getting used to reading creatively, students

can easily conclude the important points in the reading that they want to talk about (Andini et al., 2020)

Someone who is used to reading creatively will be sensitive to problems and always learn to solve these problems through their creative ideas. Another way to improve creative reading skills is to make a checklist after ordering them to read. The checklist will contain questions about what they felt during the reading in the form of a scale. That way, it will be easier for teachers to improve and develop creative reading skills in learners because it is already directed (Patel, 2019)

**FIGURE 1**  
**The Checklist for Assessing and Developing Creative Reading**

Complete the checklist according to the scale. Mark your responses quickly; do not ponder the questions too long.	Never	Barely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	No answer
1. I express feelings or emotions about things I read.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I apply information I read to other settings or situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. When I am reading, I make guesses about what will happen next.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I think of other ways that stories could end.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I question why characters behave in certain ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I add my own ideas to the author's ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I compare my conclusions with the author's conclusions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I relate what I am reading about to my own experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I visualize what I am reading about.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I express to others how I might change the story.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I notice when the author leaves an unanswered question.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. I ask questions about what I am reading that demonstrate insight.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I think of examples when I am reading about something.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I organize information I obtain while reading to show relationships between things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I discuss what I have read as if it really happened.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I use what I read to help me solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. I use what I read as a springboard to original ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. I relate what I read to other things I have read.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. I question why the author does certain things.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I express what I would do in a character's place.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Figure 2. The Checklist for Assessing and Developing Creative Reading (Patel, 2019)

## METHODOLOGY

This research method uses descriptive qualitative which is categorized in the regular inclusion class. The primary resource consisted of the headmaster and the teachers of the inclusion class. While secondary sources are in the form of various literature related to digital literacy, creative reading, teaching English as a foreign language, and inclusion classes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result is that the implementation of digital literacy in the Inclusive class goes through 3 stages, namely: preparing digital media in the form of video, audio, and gadgets and compiling lesson plans, then implementing them online/offline/blended according to applicable regulations. The next stage is evaluation through short video/audio as well as study materials by the expert team of children with special needs. This implementation has a positive impact, namely the raising of social awareness from classmates of children with special needs. Meanwhile, the negative impact is the limitation of madrasahs requiring operational permits for inclusive classes from the Ministry of religion. The addition of digitization media needs to be maximized so that it can be used for the English development of students as a whole

The need for digital media has risen sharply as the covid-19 pandemic era goes on and on. Its utilization does not stop when learning has returned to normal. Schools can provide digital literacy facilities that are used alternately between classes. Educators also have a portion of digital literacy training through free and paid training, workshops, webinars to adjust to the needs of students who are very quickly adapting to the world of technology.

In the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak, the government issued a policy that requires all teaching and learning activities to be carried out through digital media instead of face-to-face. This was done to reduce the ability of the Covid-19 virus to spread throughout the environment.

## **Students' Creative Reading Ability in Foreign Language Learning in the Inclusive Classroom**

The practice of reading in foreign language learning at the madrasah ibtdaiyah level is integrated into the subjects and English as local content. Foreign language learning in inclusive classes depends on the type. In regular inclusion classes, normal learners and learners with special needs are mixed in the same class and learn with the same curriculum reference. Regular inclusion classes in madrasah ibtdaiyah apply the Ministry of Religious Affairs curriculum with the same KKM standards as regular classes in general.

Children with disabilities in regular inclusion classes learn to read through listening activities. Digital media helps educators give children with disabilities the insight to follow what they hear. So digital literacy from video, audio and devices develops their creative reading activities. Children with disabilities read aloud and listen back in a calm atmosphere.

Creative reading in inclusive classrooms certainly involves the co-operation of various parties. While most children's reading activities require the collaboration of learners, educators and parents, children with disabilities require additional coordination with psychologists/counselors depending on their individual needs.

### **The Impact of Digital Literacy Implementation in Developing Learners' Creative Reading Skills in Foreign Language Learning in Inclusive Classes at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah**

The presence of digital literacy helps develop learners' creative reading skills, including in foreign language learning in regular inclusion classes. This has various impacts on educators, learners, madrasah, and learners' guardians.

The positive impact for educators and learners is that digital literacy provides a space for learning based on information and communication technology. Digital media provides a pleasant learning sensation because educators can hear the voices of children with disabilities more clearly outside of class time while children with disabilities are also happy to hear their own voices and feel satisfied with their efforts in reading and normal learners can develop their social skills by helping their children with disabilities to survive. Audio and video recordings of children with disabilities provide a track record for madrasahs and guardians to consult experts about their development over time.

The negative impact is that educators, especially those who have the dual role of teaching and assisting children with disabilities, need training and experience in handling learning in regular inclusive classrooms. In the research locations, madrasahs that have regular inclusion classes have increased the presence of accompanying teachers, especially for children with disabilities in the lower grades. For upper grades who have gone through the therapy procedure, the class teacher doubles as the assistant teacher for children with disabilities. Therefore, each class teacher prepares themselves to be a teacher for children with disabilities in the inclusion class, which is unpredictable in terms of the number of new students admitted. In these classes, the use of LCD projectors as digital media is limited so educators need to adjust their use starting with making lesson plans for regular inclusion classes. The madrasah curriculum, which is not yet inclusive with inclusive classes, requires educators to be creative so that the children with disabilities in their classes at least reach the KKM target. For learners, screen time when digital literacy is done at home requires non-stop assistance from the learners' guardians. When recording, the atmosphere at home is also quiet. The need for special assistants during school hours involves experts from outside the madrasah who cannot be present at any time to handle children with disabilities. So that the first-grade class that has children with disabilities is asked to find a separate accompanying teacher so that educators are not overwhelmed.

From these things, researchers can draw conclusions as a solution to the negative impact of implementing digital literacy in inclusive classes:

Madrasahs can be assisted to register officially licensed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs to become inclusive madrasah ibtdaiyah. Thus the teacher will be certified as a Special Assistance Teacher (GPK). The GPK can realize the potential of children with disabilities

in learning in the inclusive classroom, including their potential to speak foreign languages in English and Arabic. GPKs can also provide special treatment in digital literacy.

a. The initial step of attending training on inclusive education and providing extra hours after school is a temporary solution before licensing the inclusive madrasah.

c. Madrasahs and guardians of students can form a forum to share knowledge of handling therapy for children with disabilities with the assistance of psychologists and counselors during active school hours.

d. Learner guardians and assist children with disabilities to set screen reminders for digital literacy outside of school hours that can foster responsibility and discipline.

e. Motivation to provide good treatment for friends with disabilities can continue for learners who study with children with disabilities in one class in accordance with the Pancasila Learner Profile, namely; faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity,

## CONCLUSION

Digital literacy in inclusive classrooms goes through 3 stages. In the first stage, educators prepare digital media in the form of video, audio, devices before learning begins online / offline. The lesson plan is prepared by including digital literacy media in accordance with the characteristics of regular inclusion class children, namely children with disabilities who are integrated with regular students who use the Ministry of Religious Affairs curriculum.

Children with disabilities read aloud and listen back in a calm atmosphere. Digital media provides a pleasant learning sensation because educators can hear the voices of children with disabilities more clearly outside of lesson time while children with disabilities are also happy to hear their own voices and feel satisfied with their efforts in reading and normal learners can hone their social skills by helping their children with disabilities to survive. For regular learners, their social sensitivity is honed when they are used to helping their colleagues, especially children with disabilities. Audio and video recordings of children with disabilities become a track record for consultation with experts.

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