

## The Construction of Literacy Competence of Junior High School Students in Semarang Based on PISA Standards

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### Abstract

The objective of this study was to analyze the construction of literacy competence of junior high school students based on PISA standards. The construction of literacy competence in junior high school students could be viewed from reading competence and writing competence. This study used quantitative descriptive method with quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. The results showed that 96% students were able to find and get information in the text, 88.3% were able to understand and interpret the text, 66.7% students were able to identify the text, 35% were able to reflect the contents of the text, and 37.5% were able to evaluate the text, while for writing competence 78% students were able to write well according to the organization, language use, and function of the text. The analysis results of the construction of literacy competence could be used as references to improve the literacy competence of junior high school students.

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## INTRODUCTION

Literacy is an ability to be literate which includes reading and writing skills (Goody, 1978). Different from the opinion suggested by Alberta (2009), the meaning of literacy is not only the ability to read and write, but also to add knowledge, skills, and to make one think critically, to solve problems in the construction of literacy competence of junior high school students in various contexts, to communicate effectively, and to develop potential as well as actively participating in the social life. Therefore, literacy is an ability to understand a text and to interpret it in a writing, and to apply the results of reading and writing in daily life. In line with this, Subyantoro (2009) explained that the students are expected to convey their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in writing.

Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) is a measurement of students' literacy at the secondary level or 15-year-old students (OECD, 2013). The results of PISA literacy understanding in 2009, Indonesia ranked 57 out of 65 participating countries. In 2012, Indonesia ranked 64 out of 65 participating countries. Hence, the Indonesian students' literacy competence is low compared to students in other countries.

The low of Indonesian students' literacy competence in the PISA International Study is caused by standardized tests used by PISA which have higher levels of difficulty for Indonesian students than the standardized tests normally used by teachers at schools. The basis for the literacy performance assessment of PISA includes curricular and cross-curricular knowledge.

The questions in PISA tests are constructed to understand, respond, criticize, reflect, evaluate, and relate various experiences to meet the real life challenges based on the social life context. This indicates that PISA is a literacy-based assessment model (Nurgiyantoro, 2014).

In the context of learning in Indonesia, cultural and linguistic diversity is an important variable. However, Bahasa Indonesia learning models which include listening, reading,

speaking, and writing are presented and implemented relatively monocultural. In line with this, in planning and implementing the lesson, the approaches, methods, and techniques which explore cultural potential of the students are not used (Zulaeha, 2013). Therefore, the curriculum that becomes the standard of planning the learning process which is the 2013 curriculum also has a significant role in developing and enhancing cultural potential, one of which is literacy culture in Indonesia. Hence, it is necessary to know what components should be considered to improve the literacy culture in accordance with Indonesian context.

In this context, it is necessary to analyze and innovate to improve the students' literacy competence. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the relationship among variables related to the high-low of students' literacy competence. One of which is by knowing the construction of literacy competence of junior high school students in Indonesia.

Sulzby (1986) asserted literacy as an ability to read and write. Similar to Sulzby, Tompkins (in Resmini, 2014) stated that literacy is an ability to apply reading and writing in performing tasks related to the world of work and life outside of school. Literacy aims to develop students' ability to understand, interpret, and create texts appropriately, accurately, fluently, and confidently while studying at school and for social life.

The construction of literacy competence is an arrangement of students' knowledge set in understanding, interpreting, and creating text. In the construction process, language becomes the main instrument (Hasanah & Mardikantoro, 2017). These competences include reading and writing competences. In this concept, learning to read is no longer by only listening to the teachers' explanation and taking notes, understanding, and memorizing (Afandi & Zulaeha, 2017). Reading really needs an ability to analyze and synthesize information, so the understanding has a complex meaning structure (Hahn, 2002).

Writing, according to Zulaeha (2016), is one of the most important aspects of language skills, which can only be done after listening,

reading and speaking skills. Writing is the most difficult language skill, as it requires us to have good language mastery. Teaching materials affect the success of students in the language mastery process (Wijayanti, Zulaeha & Rustono, 2015). However, the lack of teaching materials leads to the lack of students' understanding of the text concepts, and the low students' interest in writing (Purnomo, Zulaeha & Subyantoro 2015). Likewise, Bahasa Indonesia learning does not train students in writing aspect, students are given more knowledge and grammatical rules, without understanding how to relate them in writing exercises (Pratama, Suci & Nuryatin, 2017). Moreover, the evaluation model for learning results which is developed by teachers especially for measuring language competence according to Wardani (2012) generally has not given higher-order thinking space for the students.

Relevant to the explanation, the construction of literacy competence of junior high school students has an important role in determining the aspects of literacy competence assessment. The construction also becomes a reference in assessing literacy skills of students from different countries participating in the PISA study. Therefore, the construction of literacy competence needs to be analyzed, especially in Bahasa Indonesia learning, because it includes reading and writing skills.

## METHODS

This study used quantitative descriptive method. The study which used this method, according to Sugiono (2008), described the quantitative data obtained related to the subject condition or phenomena of a population. Furthermore, the description of the subject status under certain circumstances would be obtained.

The techniques of data collection used in this study were non-test techniques (questionnaires, interviews, and documentation). The documentation technique was used to collect data from non-human sources (Sugiyono, 2011). The documents in this study were in the form of mid-term test results and students' workbook, which consisted of linguistic units in the form of

discourse, paragraphs, sentences, and clauses containing the students' thoughts or competence.

The techniques of data analysis used in this study were quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative data analysis was used to determine students' literacy competency level. The qualitative analysis was used to describe students' literacy competence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study included reading and writing competences of junior high school students in Semarang.

### Reading Competence

Reading competence in PISA was divided into five levels, i.e. level 1 students were able to find and get information from the text they read, level 2 students were able to understand and interpret simple passage, level 3 identifying information in the text, level 4 reflecting contents of the passage, level 5 evaluating contents of the passage.

The results of analysis showed that 58 out of 60 students were able to correctly answer the questions which aimed to find and get information. Here are some examples of questions tested.

### Item 1 Question 4 of the Mid-Term Test in SMP Negeri 2 Semarang

*Ide pokok teks tersebut di atas adalah ....*

- a. *Gadis itu*
- b. *Ruangan kecil*
- c. *Rambut*
- d. *Leher*

Text format: continuous discourse

Level: 1

Aspect: Text interpreting

The above question used continuous discourse text format which was descriptive text. The question was at level 1 level with text interpreting aspect which was giving opinions or views on the text they read, so the students should be able to answer the questions properly and correctly.

Based on the results of analysis, 23% students were always able to understand and

interpret the information in the text, 73% students were sometimes able to understand and interpret information, and 3% students were unable to understand and interpret the information in the text. This was because the students assumed that to interpret information, it was necessary to understand it first. Some students sometimes found difficulty with words, sentences used in the text, such as new vocabulary and or ambiguous sentences that made them difficult to understand, even to interpret them. The following is an item of mid-term test related to literacy competence at level 2.

#### Item 2 Question 4 of The Mid-Term Test in SMP IT Hidayatullah Semarang

Ide pokok teks tersebut di atas adalah ....

- Gadis itu
- Ruangan kecil
- Rambut
- Leher

Text format: continuous discourse

Level: 2

Aspect: Text interpreting

Question 4 of the mid-term test in SMP IT Hidayatullah Semarang oriented to the students' competence of understanding and interpreting the text. The main idea of the text mentioned above is (04B), indicated that the students should be able to understand the main idea, then interpret the text which was included in the main idea.

The competence to identify the text should be mastered by the students to achieve competence at level 3 in the PISA standard. Based on the results of analysis, 66.7% students were able to identify the text well, and 33.3% students were unable to identify the text well.

#### Item 3 Question 25 of The Mid-Term Test in SMP Hasanuddin 10 Semarang

Tanpa diduga sang singa datang dari belakang dan menerkam si Kancil

Unsur kebahasaan yang terdapat pada kalimat tersebut adalah ....

- Kalimat berkelanjutan
- Kalimat dialog
- Kalimat panca indera
- Kalimat berimbuhan

Text Format: continuous discourse

Level: 3

Aspect: Text interpreting

The question about language feature in the sentence was (25C) indicating that the students should determine the language feature in the text. In other words, to answer question number 25, the students should identify language feature in the sentence *tanpa diduga sang singa datang dari belakang dan menerkam si Kancil* (25C).

Reflecting on the text, one of the competences in the difficult category that students should achieve.

#### Item 4 Question 33 of The Mid-Term Test in SMP Negeri 2 Semarang

Sepulang sekolah, Cak Rat tergesa-gesa pulang karena ingin membantu ayah dan ibunya bekerja di ladang. Di tengah jalan dia bertemu dengan segerombolan monster yang berwarna hijau. Monster hijau itu bertarung dengan segerombolan monster berwarna hitam. Awalnya Cak Rat tidak memedulikan, tetapi karena kedua kelompok monster itu mulai beringas dan merusak fasilitas umum, mulai dari kantor kecamatan hingga puskesmas, dan sekolah. Cak Rat bergegas mengambil pensil ajaib miliknya. Cak Rat menggambar tali raksasa. Tali itu bisa mengikat monster hijau dan monster hitam. Kedua kelompok monster itu bisa diredam oleh Cak Rat.

Berdasarkan teks fantasi di atas, jawablah pertanyaan berikut ini! Jelaskan watak tokoh Cak Rat dalam teks fantasi di atas! Berikan juga alasannya!

Text format: continuous discourse

Level: 4

Aspect: Reacting and Reflecting

Question 33 of the mid-term test in SMP Negeri 2 Semarang indicated that the students should be able to analyze and reflect the contents of the text, so that the students were able to provide opinions related to the text they read. Based on the results of mid-term test, some students were able to reflect the contents of the text they read such as in the following student's answers.

Watak tokoh cak Rat yaitu berbakti, cuek, pemberani, dan baik hati. Cak Rat suka membantu kedua orang tuanya. Dia tidak suka ikut campur urusan orang lain. Selain itu, pada akhirnya cak Rat menolong orang-orang sekitar dengan melawan monster-monster yang telah merusak fasilitas umum di daerahnya. (Data 19A)

Based on the sentence of student's answer in data 19A, the student was able to answer the question 'jelaskan watak tokoh Cak Rat dalam teks fantasi di atas! Berikan juga alasannya!' the student got 4 points from 1-4 points range. In the

sentence 19A, it was described that Cak Rat had an obedient character because he liked to help his parents. Ignorant, because he did not like to be involved in others' business. Kind-hearted, he helps people, and he was also brave to fight against the monsters.

Furthermore, in literacy competence at level 5, some students found difficulty because the students were required to think critically. Besides being able to conclude, the students should also be able to integrate the relationship between the text and the previous knowledge. 36% students were able to understand the relationship between some information and summarize it, 35% students sometimes understood the information and found difficulty in concluding it, and 29% students concluded by taking a few sentences in the text. Here are the student's questions and answers related to the competence of evaluating the text.

**Item 5 Question 33 of the Mid-Term Test in SMP IT Hidayatullah Semarang**

*ANAK REMBULAN*

*Nono, si Anak Rembulan, berangkat berlibur ke Wligi, tempat tinggal Mbah Sastro. Ia selalu suka liburan di sana, karena ia bisa bersepeda keliling Wligi dan mandi di Sungai Lekso yang menyegarkan. Tak jarang juga Nono membantu Mbah Mas yang punya warung makan di Stasiun Wligi. Suatu hari, Nono ditugaskan untuk membeli tahu goreng ke Njari, ke tempat Mbah Pur, kakek buyutnya. Di tengah perjalanan ia berhenti sejenak untuk melihat sebatang pohon kenari besar di tepi kali Njari yang pernah diceritakan Mbah Pur. Menurutnya, dulu ada seorang anak bernama Trimo yang menghilang di dalam pohon kenari itu. Trimo menghilang saat berlindung dari Serangan Belanda.*

*Pada cerita yang berjudul Anak Rembulan nampak peristiwa aneh yaitu? Jelaskan mengapa demikian!*

Text format: continuous discourse

Level: 5

Aspect: Evaluating

The sentence 'pada cerita yang berjudul Anak Rembulan nampak peristiwa aneh yaitu? Jelaskan mengapa demikian!' explained that in the text entitled Anak Rembulan there was a strange event, the students should find and explain the strange event. Question 33 of the mid-term test in SMP IT Hidayatullah Semarang referred to the competence to evaluate the text. In the question, the students would do a reading process as well as analyzing to explain events that seemed

strange in the text. Here is one of the student's answer on question 33.

*Dulu, ada seorang anak bernama Trimo yang menghilang di dalam pohon kenari itu. Trimo menghilang saat berlindung dari serangan Belanda. Peristiwa tersebut terdengar aneh, dan tidak mungkin terjadi, karena tidak mungkin ada seseorang yang dapat masuk dan menghilang dalam sebuah pohon. (Data 13B)*

Based on the data 13B, there was a strange event, which was unlikely to happen by the disappearance of a child named Trimo in a walnut tree. The answer indicated that the students' competence to evaluate the text entitled *Anak Rembulan* was good. 7 out of 20 students got 4 points in answering the question.

Evaluating a text was included in the difficult category because we were required to understand the whole text, analyze, compare, and explain the results of the analysis. However, some students in grade 7 which was 15 of 40 students becoming the samples were able to answer questions referring to the competence to evaluate evaluating the text well. Therefore, the students' competence could be considered good.

**Writing Competence**

Writing competence which was analyzed included students' competence to answer the essay in the mid-term test and students' competence to write descriptive text. The text written by the students was descriptive text based on the abstract category which had been prepared by the students. The students' competence to reflect the abstract category in the form of descriptive text was 78% good and 22% was less good.

**Table 1.** Competence to Reflect Abstract Categories in Writing

Score	Number of data	Description	
		Good	Less good
70	6		√
75	7		√
80	13	√	
85	24	√	
90	10	√	
Total		47	13
Percentage		78%	22%

The table above showed that the students' writing competence was good. 47 students got

score above the minimum mastery criteria set by the teachers in each school, which was 75 points. Text written by the students was a reflection of the students' literacy competence in a writing. 13 students were still categorized less good at writing a text, 6 students got 70 points and 7 students got 75 points. The discourse type written by the students was continuous discourse, in the form of descriptive text. The text written by the students had various topics, the topic written by the students of SMP Negeri 3 Semarang was about schools, by the students of SMP IT Hidayatullah Semarang was about tourist attractions, and by the students of SMP Hasanuddin 10 Semarang was about family. The topics were set by the Bahasa Indonesia teachers in each related school.

The results of analysis showed that 64% students had no difficulty in writing, 25% students had difficulties, especially in starting and finishing the writing, 8% students had difficulty due to lack of writing materials, and 3% students had difficulties because they did not use to write a story. To start writing, 56% students would determine the topic and prepare the material first, but 22% students tried to understand the structure and prepared the material. In addition, 13% chose to directly write down the ideas and thoughts (spontaneously), and 9% students did nothing, they found it difficult to get ideas or thoughts. Here is an example of student's writing related to writing competence.

### **SMP N 2 Semarang**

*SMP Negeri 2 atau biasa dibilang espero merupakan sekolah peninggalan Belanda yang terletak di jalan Brigjen Katamso, Semarang Timur. Bangunan paling depan SMP 2 adalah tugu bertuliskan SMP Negeri 2 Semarang dan gerbang sekolah. Begitu masuk ke lingkungan sekolah di sebelah kanan ada gedung berhuruf A dan di tengah-tengahnya ada lapangan basket. Serta ada beberapa kelas yang bernuansa kuno karena pintunya yang tinggi.*

*Tidak hanya itu, di sebelah kiri ada mushola untuk beribadah. Di dekat mushola ada dua jalur. Jika kita ke jalur kiri, kita bisa menjumpai kantin. Jika ke jalur kanan, kita bisa melihat ruang kelas berjejer. Di SMP Negeri 2 Semarang kita dapat belajar dengan nyaman karena di setiap ruangan ada fasilitas AC. Tak jarang murid-murid lainnya mendapat prestasi dalam bidang akademik maupun non akademik. [Data 7D]*

In the data 7D, the students' writing competence in the writing organization sub-

aspect of descriptive text was good, as well as the sub-aspect of relevance and the completeness of the contents was good. However, in the sub-aspect of language use, for example in the use of grammar, too much words repetition of 'SMP 2', there were still words with capital letter errors, such as jalan should be Jalan, mushola should be musala. Competence in the sub-aspect of language appropriateness with the context and function of the essay, was appropriate. Hence, the students' competence to reflect the reading results in writing form on the data 7D was good.

### **Pantai Watu Bale**

*Pantai Watu Bale merupakan pantai yang sangat indah. Pantai ini terletak di Kebumen, Jawa Tengah. Pantai ini, terletak sekitar 40 km ke arah selatan dari kota Kebumen. Pantainya sangat luas, ombaknya besar. Selain itu, terdapat bukit dan bebatuan yang dihiasi hijaunya tanaman sehingga menjadi pemandangan alam yang sangat mempesona.*

*Banyak tempat yang sangat menarik untuk dikunjungi misalnya terdapat bukit yang menyerupai kapal titanic. Dari bukit itu, kita bisa memandang lautan yang biru. Kita juga bisa bersantai sambil duduk-duduk di gasebo. Ada juga rumah pohon dan gardu pandang yang menyerupai menara Eiffel. Pantai ini selalu ramai oleh pengunjung, apalagi ketika hari libur. [Data 10E]*

The relevance and completeness of the descriptive text in the data 10E was good enough. The first sentence at the beginning of the paragraph was identification part. The next sentence in the first paragraph and the sentence at the beginning of paragraph 2 were descriptions. The sentence pantai ini selalu ramai oleh pengunjung, apalagi ketika hari libur was part of closing description. Likewise, grammar, punctuation, and spelling were good. No errors were found in the language use. In line with the language appropriateness with the context and function of the essay. Therefore, the students' competence based on the data 10E had already been in good category.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis results of literacy competence of junior high school students, it can be concluded as follows: 96% students were able to show their competence in finding and understanding text. They have mastered the level 1 of basic literacy competence of PISA standards.

88.3% were able to understand and interpret the text, 66.7% students were able to identify the text, 35% were able to reflect the contents of the text, and 37.5% were able to evaluate the text, while for writing competence 78% students were able to write well according to the organization, language use, and function of the text.

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