

# ENGLISH DAILY NEWSPAPER AND ITS IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL LITERACY FOR ENGLISH LECTURER

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## **Abstract**

The present study aims at finding the impacts of English daily newspaper on the development of professional literacy for lecturer. The literate daily habit of English lecturers is the underlying reason why this study is carried out. The literate habits can be found where lecturers used to be reading printed mass media written in English besides reading other primary textbooks and references. They designate The Jakarta Post mass media which is the biggest mass media in Indonesia written in English. As the study focuses on how the daily newspaper contributes to their professional literacy, a qualitative descriptive research design is used to execute the study. The respondents are English lecturers of Teacher Training and Education (IKIP) Budi Utomo Malang consisting of seventeen lecturers. The data is gained through observation and interview. Based on the data analysis, it is found that English daily newspaper has impacts on lecturers' professional literacy. Respondents were challenged to how Indonesian phrases are expressed in English. They are also challenged to be more critical reader, both editing and content critical based. While on their duties of Tridharma, the newspaper is leveraged as classroom supplements for teaching language skills and components as well as linguistics and literature studies. Their writing stamina also boosted as their input from the news increased. Finally, their experiences are very often expressed in their last Tridharma duties, i.e. public services by sharing and upgrading teachers' literacy at schools.

**Key words:** *Newspaper, professional literacy, English lecturer.*

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## **Introduction**

There have been good traditions for English lecturer in Indonesia, more particularly for those English lecturers of Teacher Training and Education (IKIP) Budi Utomo Malang in developing their professional work. Besides reading a heap of books and other printed references, the English lecturers used to be reading daily news which comprises English magazine and daily newspaper. Reading newspaper however seems to be the most frequent mass media to be designated. They designated *The Jakarta Post* daily newspaper for

their comfortable outflow and *Time* magazine for very seldom occasions. The area of interests falls into many different columns. Some fall into business column, and some other fall into sport, opinions, feature and education column. Leveraging the printed mass in such a way is beneficial not only to absorb information but also more crucially to their development of professional literacy (Majed, 2015).

As an English lecturer, being literate is paramount. An English lecturer takes and endures obligations to update what the latest and current knowledge are as they are to suit the

zeitgeist. In so doing, the roles of mind and language cannot be ignored and become the most fundamental treasures. It is not an exaggeration that being literate is further purely viewed as an activity of cognitive and linguistics (Cho, 2015). Pertaining to Cho, Kern (2000) defined literacy as practices to create and to interpret meaning through texts in a situated social, historical and cultural. Kern also stated that literacy entailed awareness of textual convention and contextual use. In this case, an English lecturer is necessarily to be able to interpret a text towards suitable context. Therefore professional literacy means “understanding the landscape of the academic

field and its explicit and implicit structures and strictures”. (<http://intranet.library.arizona.edu/users/brewerm/sil/prof/>). The context might fit best here is the realm of lecturers' work and profession.

As a profession, a lecturer, including English lecturer requires a performance standard (Morison, 2013) of duties which is simply known as Tridharma of Higher Education (The Three Principals of Higher Education). Tridharma comprises, education, research and community service which well described by Fortunanto and Waddel (1981) as follow.

Duties and Responsibilities	Standard of Performance
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet all classes on time.</li> <li>• To provide service assistance / guidance to students at a given time.</li> <li>• To renew the lecture material on a regular basis.</li> <li>• To formulate and develop test materials.</li> <li>• To discuss test results with the help of students as a positive feedback.</li> <li>• To give a lecture effectively.</li> <li>• To creating facilities for the implementation of a class discussion and student learning activities.</li> <li>• To summarize the course material as set forth in the plan and course syllabus.</li> <li>• To use a variety of media to learn, to clarify and generate student interest in learning.</li> <li>• To guide students in student seminars, scientific reports, making paper, and other academic activities.</li> </ul>
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To design and conduct both group and independent research.</li> <li>• To make scientific work or research report accurately on the basis of scientific terms.</li> <li>• To present papers in scientific discussions, seminars majors and lecturer, regional, national, and in international.</li> <li>• To write scholarly books.</li> <li>• To guide student research.</li> <li>• To review recent scientific materials such as research results.</li> </ul>
Public Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide training, outreach to the community both benefits about areas of specialization as well as those related to community development issues in general.</li> <li>• To take an active part in solving the concrete problems facing society and the environment.</li> <li>• To write community service work.</li> </ul>

The three principals above are a lecturer's focus of work with much time to spend and surely entails a good literacy. In contribution to the three major duties, Gentikow (2007) suggested that media, both printed and electronic, contributed to the development of professional literacy. In line with Gentikow, Wilbur (2013) in his descriptive study towards pharmacy students also argued that the use of daily newspaper contributed to the literacy development of health professional degree program.

Depart from the assumptions and some previous studies, this research aims to seek the answer the following two research questions; 1) What are the useful impacts of English daily newspaper in contribution to English lecturer's professional literacy?, 2) How do English lecturers perceive being professionally literate in their three main duties; education, research and community service?

### **Literary Review**

The word 'literacy' is derived from Latin 'littera' (letter) whose meaning involves the mastery of writing systems and convention that accompany it. Literacy can be both easy and complicated depending on how it is perceived. In the narrow sense, literacy is simply defined as the ability to read and write texts. To this point, these crafts are easy to find in lecturers' work. Almost lecturers' work and realm entail reading and writing activity. Lecturing and writing paper by lecturers are simple observable examples within this narrow definition.

Far beyond this original definition, Kern (2000) comprehensively defines that "literacy is the use of socially, historically, and culturally-

situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationship between textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships. Because it is purpose-sensitive, literacy is dynamic-not static- and variable across within discourse communities and cultures. It draws on a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge."

From this deeper definition, literacy has further dimensions (Gentikow, 2007). (1). Literacy means the mastery of a nation's cultural norm. Frechette (2002) adds that a literate person in this definition is familiar with high culture and the ability to write proper-polite essay writing. (2) Literacy also means to go beyond the surface meaning of texts as Meyrowitz (1998) stated that literacy deals with the ability to comprehend a certain text through other texts and messages.

### **Level of Literacy**

The level of literacy is considered to have stages, meaning that one stages requires another. Wells (1987) proposes the level of literacy which orderly involves, *performative*, *functional*, *informational* and *epistemic* literacy. In the performative level of literacy, one is able to read and write as well as to speak by using language symbols. While in the functional level of literacy, one is utilizing the ability to read and write to fulfill daily needs such as reading manual book, etc. For informational level of literacy, one uses the ability to read and write for access of information. And finally, with epistemic level of

literacy, one utilizes his/her reading-writing ability to transform his/her knowledge.

Similar to Wells, Barton and Hammilton (2000) proposed literacy linked to social theory which further referred to as *literary is a social practice*. It is "... the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives. In the simplest sense, literacy practices are what people do with literacy." (Barton & Hammilton, 2000, p. 25).

### **Media Literacy**

It is unquestionable that media gives such vast information that it requires critical reading skill. Media can be printed such as newspaper, magazine, or electronic which covers radio, television and internet. Media literacy as Potter (2010) stated is then a perspective which is actively used by people in accessing media information with aim to interpret the messages being conveyed. Hobbs (2001, p.7) further stated that it "... is to the ability to access, analyze and communicate messages in a variety of form". While Rubin cited in Baran (2004, p.5) stated that "Media literacy is about understanding the sources and technologies of communication, the codes that are used, the messages that are produced, and the selection, interpretation, and impact of those messages". Therefore, *The National Communication Association* in Potter (2010) suggested that people need to be reflective and critical in consuming media. This surely takes good understanding how words, graphics and images work together in profound and subtle ways.

The following four prevailing themes proposed by Potter (2008) might be the general

agreement across media literacy writings. (1). The mass media have the potential to exert positive and negative effects, (2). The purpose of media literacy aims to help consumer protected from negative effects, (3). Media literacy has to be developed as none was born being literate (4). Media literacy has multi-dimensional range of effects. It can be in ways such as, cognitive, attitudes, emotion, psychology and behavior. From all those senses, it can be stated that navigating information through media requires comprehensive awareness and skills to put yourself in front of media as an active agent so as to be able to interpret codes, messages as well as their impacts.

### **METHOD**

As has been stated earlier, this study carries a qualitative descriptive research design. The respondents are English lecturers of IKIP Budi Utomo Malang consisting 17 lecturers. To collect data, first, I as a researcher do participatory observation. In this step, I take part with respondents while reading *The Jakarta Post* followed by small unstructured discussion happened in very natural ways and settings. Second, I conduct an interview session and record it. This interview takes in-depth and open-ended interview. The interview, however, covers three major works of a lecture, i.e. education, research and development and public service. Third, I transcribe the record into words and sentences.

After the data are collected, they are analyzed using several steps. First, the data from observation is compiled including their literacy

works such as paper and research reports. And then the data are sorted and noted from which possibly contributive to lecturers' professional literacy. Second, the data transcript from session of interview is sorted and noted from which the data are priceless or not. In this part of step, I take quite long data analysis as I have to be careful selecting and deciding the results. Coding also belongs to this step. Here I code any words, phrases or event sentences which I consider relevant. Third, I analyze the data by describing the relevant codes. After analyzing the data, I do discussions by relating to the theoretical frameworks.

## RESULTS

Reading daily newspaper contributed to professional literacy as well described in the following respective results.

### Being Challenged to Phrases

Along with this study, almost respondents read all columns of *the Jakarta Post* in phases. The first fifteen to twenty minutes, respondents did scanning to highlight issues of the day, the second fifteen to twenty minutes, they went deep reading on issues they considered interesting and finally read entertainment column for refreshing such in sport, music and art. All the columns and rubrics read were adding meaningful information to digest and containing relatively new words. Each column contained and offered respondents different and unique words, phrases and sentences. In this respect, respondents found new words which were not typically used by them for daily needs and considered them important especially for their vocabulary enrichment. To take advantage of it,

the words, phrases and sentences were gathered in mnemonics to be further memorized. Respondents also noticed how a sentence was made up together or structured to be applied in further similar context and situation, both in written and spoken needs. For example, respondents used the new phrase '*in conjunction with..*' instead of common "*in relation to..*" phrase.

Besides being surprised to how a mass media written style, based on observations respondents were also challenged to how a name of Indonesian institutions were expressed in English. For example, "*Satpol PP (Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja)*" was expressed into "*Public Order Agency*", "*Densus 88*" into "*Police Force's Counterterrorism Unit*", "*Bappenas*" into "*The National Development Planning Agency*", "*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*" into "*Corruption Eradication Commission*", and those sort of other phrases. Those groups of words were found new in their daily learning intake.

### Being a Critical Reader

There were at least two spots where respondents fell into a critical reader through reading English daily news. First, they fell into pertaining to editing and wording. Second, they fell in contents of the reporting.

#### *Editing critical based*

This critical based reading was performed when respondents found mistakes in grammar, punctuations, and letter capitalization. They did scrutinizing what was being read. Nonetheless, very seldom they found those mistakes in *The Jakarta Post* newspaper, instead,

the newspaper was preferable to their own writing style, use of punctuation and principles of capitalization.

### ***Content critical based***

For respondents, this critical based reading was paramount skill as it played how a reader did interpretation of a text. In this respect, they had never taken the news for granted. What was written in the news was the mass media's own interpretation based on facts which was then presented in front of readers (respondents). For example when dealing with issues of education, most of news reportings, for instance were presenting the dark side of education in many rural areas unfolding across the country, rather numbering the achievements. In this case, as a lecturer of teacher training institution, respondents did not take it for granted. They sought to find what was behind the reporting if there were any political or any other interests of the company owner. This content critical reading was performed in almost columns and rubrics but more intensively in column of opinions. For them, column of opinion was the very observable writing type to whom it was written and meant to.

### **Impacts on Tridharma Duties**

#### ***Leveraging mass media in English classroom***

Leveraging the English newspaper as one of the classroom supplement was performed by respondents. For them, newspaper offered the real English which is opposed to text book way or school way. They then chose appropriate themes to the topics being discussed. As English lecturers, they used the media in courses such in English skills and components, linguistics and literature. In speaking class, it was used to update

current issues to be further discussed. Students were asked to read and to perform by retelling what it was. For reading class, it was used to supplement text book. Students were asked to find synonym or antonym of words available in the newspaper and to find out main idea. In writing class, the lecturers were challenged to perform teaching innovation as the different column provides different writing styles. A supplementary tabloid of the daily news which published once in a week was commonly used to supplement semiotics class, because the tabloid provides multifold pictures of advertisement. These advertisements were collected and heaped for other classroom necessities.

#### ***Language development analysis***

The respondents designated daily newspaper written in English in order for another reason they could scan the development of language usage. Abundance of language shifts were found in the news further led them do linguistics research. The columns of the newspaper very often were used to be source of study in corpus research.

#### ***Writing for international forum***

As the respondents perceived that reading daily news could give them more synonymous words selection, another professional impact on reading daily news was the development of writing skills. This aroused considerable writing stamina. The respondents' writing stamina gradually improved which led them to more productive writing habit. Their writing quality and the way how an idea was constructed tremendously improved from time to time. Some even had produced articles which were worth

presenting in international forum and seminar.

### ***Upgrading language teachers' literacy***

In terms of public service, one of the efforts done by the respondents was upgrading the language literacy of teachers at schools. The services were organized by respondents by collecting language teachers to share academic experiences. The experiences covered the current issues of language teaching, how to use mass media as an authentic source in classroom teaching, and more importantly how to be a critical reader.

### **DISCUSSION**

The first finding showed us that reading daily news written in English had challenged respondents to phrases. Respondents even

sometimes surprised how an Indonesian phrase was expressed in such a way. This experience expressed how a reader undergoes literate which further coincides with the statement of Gentikow (2007) and Frechette (2002). They respectively said that being literate is mastering a nation's cultural norm, the ability of writing proper-polite language and the understanding beyond surface meaning of a text. What was faced by respondents like feeling challenged and surprised to how words were made up has shown that they were literate. An Indonesian phrase like SATPOL PP or "*Satuan Polisi Pamong Praja*" which means a units of police who take care of public order, like those who sell goods in public places might be difficult to translate in English. One might do word-to-word translation such "*Police Units of Pamong Praja*" which is totally confusing. *Pamong Praja* is hard to find in English. In Bahasa Indonesia,

*Pamong Praja* literally means nurturing a leaner which has no connection to any work of police.

What was found by respondents in English translation was beyond the surface meaning. This nation cultural norm may be found in English speaking countries, so that SATPOL PP is expressed as "*Public Order Agency*" in the English daily news. Agency of public order also means similar to *Pamong Praja* which originally means nurturing kids. In this sense, respondents undergo literate just like Gentikow and Frechette argued.

Being a critical reader was also performed by respondents in terms of editing and content critical based. As Wells (1987) stated earlier that literacy level consisted of performative, functional, informal and epistemic literacy, respondents in this respect have experienced the highest level of literacy, i.e. epistemic literacy. It has been shown how they could utilize their reading-writing ability to transform their knowledge, even further respondents could criticize the contents of news. The criticisms fall into areas of topics. But mostly topics of politics and policies had more biting criticisms from readers. This is in line with what Potter (2008) says that media literacy can function to protect oneself from negative effects. This then clearly indicated that critical reading enhanced through reading news.

As being a lecturer is to work on academic duties as well as duties of Tridharma of Higher Education as Marison (2013) called as performance standard of a lecturer, therefore concerning to teaching, they used mass media in their classroom. Unlike Marison, Majed (2015)

added that leveraging the printed mass in such a way is beneficial not only to absorb information but also more crucially to their development of professional literacy. Respondents could renew the materials on regular basis by leveraging the mass media. This had led them to more creative ways of teaching. The issues of the day can directly be discussed as material in speaking or be analyzed to support reading comprehension of students.

To further extent, active reading on English daily news had brought some lectures to such enrichment of writing stamina that led them to more productive writing. This coincides with what Wells (1987) said that one might undergo highest level of literacy i.e. epistemic literacy. In this level of literacy, some respondents utilize their reading-writing ability to transform and exhibit their knowledge through writing for international forum and seminar which surely enhanced both their academic and professional development.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings and interpretations of the study, it can be concluded that reading English daily news had impacts on lecturers' professional literacy. The realm of works of lecturers enhanced as in their curiosity of how Indoensian phrases are expressed in English. Lecturers are also challenged to be more critical reader, both editing and content critical based. While impacts on their Tridharma duties, mass media can be leveraged as classroom supplements for teaching language skills and components as well as linguistics and literature studies. The abundance of information provided

in the news also enables lecturers boost their writing stamina, and very often, they produced article which is worth spreading in both national and international forum. In terms of public service, very often, lecturers organize agenda to upgrade teachers' literacy at schools.

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