

KEAKSARAAN BAHASA INGGRIS UNTUK PEMBELAJAR MUDA: PENDEKATAN DAN STRATEGI PENGAJARAN DAN PEMBELAJARAN 3-L

English Literacy for Young Learners: 3-L Approaches and Strategies for Teaching and Learning

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FOREWORD

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I am pleased to write a few brief remarks introducing an important book devoted to what the author calls the “Three Ls”: Literacy, Literature, Libraries. My remarks will mostly be limited to the first two Ls because I am more familiar with the author’s work in these areas. To further connect my own interests to those of the author, I shall introduce two additional L-words—Language and Lexicon, which the author mentions but does not emphasize in her book. The inclusion of five “Ls” in this Foreword will enable me to contextualize the main points made by the author.

The author’s general approach is based on the skill of Reading, which underlies the concepts of Literacy, Literature, and Libraries. She argues that Reading is the most fundamental skill that touches upon every aspect of a person’s education, in Indonesia and in other countries. Further, although the three Ls are mutually interdependent, in the typical school curriculum they are implemented sequentially, not simultaneously. Thus Literacy precedes Literature and Literature precedes Library in the educational sequence. Put differently, the use of Literature requires Literacy, and the use of the Library requires that Literature be available in the form of books, articles and magazines—and in sufficient numbers and variety to support the educational and professional needs of a society of readers.

In addition to the three Ls emphasized by the author, I would like to mention two other L-words of special interest to me as a lifelong reader and foreign language learner. My personal favorite L-word is Lexicon, which means Vocabulary development, or knowledge of the words and idioms of a language. Knowledge of words is especially important for Reading in a foreign language. Interestingly, the author of this book has published an important article on this topic¹, where she argues that the habit of reading is the most efficient means of vocabulary

¹ Diem, C. D. (2001). Pengaruh penguasaan meaningful vocabulary dan study skills terhadap reading comprehension. *Forum Kependidikan*, 20(2), 85-98.

enhancement. Other means of vocabulary development that I have explored in my teaching and language learning activities include: reading comic books in the target language; reading the subtitles of foreign language movies; and memorizing the sub-texts of Karaoke “sing-along” CDs. I especially enjoy CDs where the words in the target language can be read by “following the bouncing ball”. It’s also fun and profitable to memorize the songs, especially traditional songs that use standard, everyday vocabulary.

The fifth L-word I shall mention is Language. The question here is: Which languages does the author have in mind when discussing Literacy and Literature? Her answers include Indonesian and English, of course. But for most Indonesians, there is a third language which is also relevant, but rarely exploited in the school system. I am speaking of the potential role of regional languages in the teaching and learning of Reading in bahasa Indonesia (and ultimately in foreign languages such as English).

Educational policy in Indonesia allows basic Literacy to be taught using the children’s’ native language. However, apart from a few fortunate languages such as Javanese and Batak, the policy cannot be implemented for lack of available Literature. But in regions where some Literature is available, the children gain an important advantage by learning to read in their native language first, and bahasa Indonesia subsequently. Following this sequence, they can more quickly learn the Latin alphabet. Further, knowledge of Latin letters can be transferred automatically to hasten their ability to read Indonesian and many other world languages, should they someday wish to acquire them.

Let me conclude my remarks by describing a project of mine whose objective is to create Literature for use by speakers of Rejang, a language spoken in Bengkulu and Musi-Rawas Provinces of southwestern Sumatra. For Rejang children entering the school system, the most important goal is to learn to speak and read bahasa Indonesia. We can apply Professor Chuzaimah’s 3-L approach to say that Rejang children must first acquire basic Literacy. That’s where my project comes in. Together with my co-author, Dr. H. Zainubi Arbi, we have developed a set of ten Readers to be used in five different Rejang dialect areas². Each dialect has two Readers, one containing eight folk tales and the second a legend: “The Rich King”. The Rejang language text appears on the left-hand page, with translations in two languages on the facing page. We call this format the “tri-lingual format” because three languages are presented simultaneously: Rejang, Indonesian and English.

The folk tales were originally collected for the purposes of linguistic analysis. But I soon discovered that they were highly suitable to teach basic Literacy to Rejang children. I had some prior experience in this area. In the 1960s, as a member of the American Peace Corps, I had some success developing a Reading program for children in the Philippines. Forty years later, in Indonesia, I was encouraged to develop the Rejang Readers by colleagues who were involved in teacher training. One of those who encouraged me was the author of this book, Professor Dr. Chuzaimah Diem, who kindly agreed to write the Foreword for each of the Rejang Readers.

² Please click on [Rejang Language Archive](http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~mcginn/rejanglang.htm) or <http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~mcginn/rejanglang.htm> or <http://www.ohio.edu/linguistics/people/McGinn.html> to gain access to the Rejang Readers. Listed there is a set of eleven Rejang Readers, each divided into segments that anyone can download and print out.

The primary educational purpose of the Readers is to provide teachers and Rejang children with Literature suitable for teaching and learning basic Literacy skills. It is assumed that once a child has mastered the ability to read Rejang, reading in Indonesian will be relatively easy—at least in terms of the basic A-B-Cs. Attaining basic literacy will enable the children to direct their learning efforts toward the greater task of learning the Indonesian language. This task, too, will be facilitated by the Indonesian translations provided for each Rejang story. Finally, the English translations offer extra opportunities for children and teachers alike. Teachers who do not speak Rejang can use the Readers to learn a little about the Rejang language, or they can focus their attention on the English translations. The Rejang Readers can thus be useful for anyone wishing to enrich their language abilities through the study of Rejang, Indonesian, or English.

The Readers are also designed to give Rejang children an advantage in school which they presently lack. Many Rejang children are at a disadvantage when they arrive in school; they are monolingual Rejang speakers, whereas the curriculum is in the national language, bahasa Indonesia. The problem is compounded by the fact that, owing to social mobility and government-sponsored *transmigrasi* programs, roughly half the children entering the schools are non-Rejangs whose first language may be Javanese or a Malay-based dialect such as Bengkulu, Lubuk Linggau or Palembang. For these non-Rejang children, communication in bahasa Indonesia is typically practiced at home and in the neighborhood, and as consequence, they are well prepared to learn to read in a language they understand. By contrast, many Rejang children living in monolingual Rejang villages; these children must learn to read in a language they do not understand. The Rejang Readers are designed to help this group of children. By first acquiring Literacy in their native dialect by reading the left-hand page, they will more easily be able to read the Indonesian translation on the opposite page of their Reader. In other words, they will gain basic Literacy quickly, and this will help them sound out the Indonesian words in the translations. In this way, Rejang Readers' will fulfill their first purpose, which is to allow the children to take full advantage of their native language, and to apply it in the effort to learn Indonesian, and eventually to master all subjects in the school curriculum.