Utilization of Reading Corners in Literacy Activities to Improve Likes to Read Character and Reading Ability of Elementary School Students

G. A. Putu Ayu Suci Widyami¹*, I Nyoman Sudiana², Ida Bagus Putrayasa³

¹,²,³ Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Indonesia
*Corresponding author: ayusuciwidyamiasesor2018@gmail.com

Abstract

Literacy activities are carried out through habituation activities for all students in the school environment. The lack of use of reading corners makes literacy learning achievements not as expected. This study aims to explore the implementation of the reading corner program, literacy activities, reading skills, and the character of fond of reading elementary school students. This type of research is descriptive explorative with a qualitative approach. Data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results of the study show that the reading corner program is part of the Bali Danu program, which is an attempt to update the previous program. The collection of books in the reading corner is used as reading material for school literacy activities, and educators use the reading corner as a place for discussion and self-development for students, especially in reading and storytelling activities. Through regular literacy activities and reading corners, students’ reading skills and liking to read can be improved. In addition to using the reading corner as a place to read books, the reading corner becomes their class identity; there is a sense of belonging to the reading corner because students are directly involved in creating and maintaining the reading corner.

Keywords: Reading Corner, Literacy, Reading Ability, Likes to Read Character

1. INTRODUCTION

One form of increasing literacy is through reading activities, which are the key to acquiring knowledge and skills (Muslimin, 2018; Sirate & Ramadhana, 2017). Mastering literacy skills from an early age will shape the child into a learner who is literate throughout his life (Mardhotillah & Rakimahwati, 2021; Marwiyati & Hidayatulloh, 2018). When a child is in the first 6 years of life, the role of an educator is to instill interest and reading habits. At that age, the child will depend on the experience he has gained (Febriani et al., 2020; Siregar & Rahmah, 2016). The conditions found in several elementary schools in Jembrana district show that the existence of a reading corner has not been used properly; the reading corner is only a display in the classroom, and no reading activities are being carried out. From
interviews with several elementary school students in several elementary schools, the activity of reading books in libraries and reading corners is not carried out on an ongoing basis.

Sangkaagung 1 Public Elementary School is one of the elementary schools located in Sangkaagung village, Mendoyo sub-district, and Jembrana district. The school has a number of students who come from various social and economic backgrounds. Even though this school already has a library, students' lack of interest in reading is one of the challenges to increasing literacy in schools. Sangkaagung 1 Public Elementary School is one of the elementary schools that also runs the School Literacy Movement (GLS) in accordance with government regulations and already has a reading corner in every classroom. Literacy activities are carried out through habituation activities for all students in the school environment. One of the habits that is carried out is that every student at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaagung is required to read. Each class conducts literacy activities before starting learning. Students are also required to read in the reading corner in class or in the library during recess in shifts according to the schedule set by the school.

In previous research, it was found that class library programs held in schools aim to improve students' reading habits (Hidayat et al., 2022; Safitri & Dafit, 2021). Then other research also shows that there is one significant thing that can be done to familiarize students with active reading, namely by facilitating a reading corner in the classroom and filling it with all kinds of reading books (Nurhayani & Nurhayani, 2022; Putra, 2020). Students are also required to read in the reading corner in class or in the library during recess in shifts according to the schedule determined by the school (Kholifah et al., 2021; Pertiwi, 2016). The purpose of this study was to explore the use of reading corners and literacy activities in improving reading skills and the character of fondness for reading in grade 4 students of SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung. In this study, the researcher intends to explain and describe in depth the use of reading corners and literacy activities in improving reading skills and the character of fondness for reading in grade 4 students at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung.

2. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive exploratory method with a qualitative approach to describe the nature of something that was taking place at the time the research was conducted and to examine the causes of a particular phenomenon. The purpose of this explorative descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon. This research tests a hypothesis but develops a variable as it is. The results of this study are also not in the form of numbers but only words or explanations. The subject of this research is SD Negeri 1 Sangkaagung, which is located in Pangkung Gondang, Sangkaragung, Jembrana District, Jembrana Regency, Bali Province, with postal code 82218. SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung has been accredited A. This school has 8 teachers, 77 male students, and 83 female students in 6 study groups. The research subjects were grade 4 students, the principal, and teachers of SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung, especially the homeroom teacher for class 4. When the research was conducted, the teacher who became the homeroom teacher for class 4 was Ida Ayu Putu Trisnawati. The researcher chose grade 4 students as research subjects because grade 4 was a transitional class from low grade to high grade, so grade 4 students were expected to have good reading skills. The objects of research in this paper are reading corners, literacy activities, reading skills, and the character of liking to read in grade 4 SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung students. Data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation.
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

According to the results of observations made by researchers in grade 4, students at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaagung already have a reading corner in each class; this reading corner is used by students in each class as a place to read, rhymes, and several other learning support books placed on a small table. As the name suggests, the reading corner is in one of the corners of the class that is designated as a reading area. The reading corner does not provide chairs but plastic mats with alphabet letter motifs, while on the wall area there are several posters, pictures, and writings in a fairly large size. There are also several works of poetry and short stories made by grade IV students.

The appearance of a reading corner at SD Negeri Sangkaragung is in accordance with the opinion, which explains that a reading corner is a room located at the corner of the classroom that is equipped with a collection of books as an extension of the function of the library (Aswat, 2020; Darmadi et al., 2022). A reading corner is a corner or place in the classroom that is used to organize books or other learning resources in order to increase students' interest in reading and learning through fun reading activities (Sukriadi et al., 2022; Teguh, 2020). The observation results of reading corners can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Observation Results of Reading Corners at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Observation Results</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is a reading corner in each class with a collection of library materials according to the number of students.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The reading corner photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Increasing the frequency of reading students.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Library visit schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The use of reading corners in the learning process.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Photos of children's activities in the reading corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The reading corner is organized and managed at the end of each lesson.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Reading corner's photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The collection of library materials in the reading corner is updated regularly.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Interview with the principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>There are teacher activities reading books aloud or students reading independently by utilizing a collection of class reading corners.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Photos and videos of children's activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>There is a collection list and a reading recap list.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 24 out of 30 students who answered that they had read books in the reading corner. In addition to literacy activities, which are routinely carried out in the morning before learning activities, students are also allowed to read books in the reading corner during recess. Literacy activities are also carried out through visits to the school library, with a scheduled visit once a week according to the schedule. The class visit schedule can be seen in Table 2.
Based on the findings of the recapitulation of grade IV students' subject scores, it was found that Indonesian language scores were directly proportional to the child's overall learning achievement. This data was reinforced by the results of observations made during student reading activities, which showed that 10 students had very good reading skills, 17 students had good reading skills, and 3 students had moderate reading skills.

**Discussion**

**Utilization of the Reading Corner at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung**

The results of research on fourth grade students showed that the use of the reading corner in their class was good; almost every student knew and regularly visited the reading corner. The reading corner is very important to their activities at school. Apart from using the reading corner as a place to read books, the reading corner has become their class identity; there is a sense of belonging to the reading corner because students are directly involved in the creation and maintenance of the reading corner. Currently, the existence of a reading corner is very helpful and beneficial for students, one of which is in the learning process.

The benefits of having a reading corner for students include helping them do schoolwork, and then, with books in a reading corner, students can easily find information or answers to the questions given by the teacher. In addition, the reading corner is also used for reference. With a reading corner filled with story books, they can be used as a medium for refreshing as well as entertainment when they are tired and bored after completing their assignments. Then, as a forum for self-existence, namely for students who have the ability to read fluently, they can read the contents of the stories from the books they read in front of the class so they can show their abilities. Not all of the students recognize the reading corner as an important part of their daily activities at school, but many more recognize the reading corner as a fun place and a place to read books besides the library. Therefore, the researcher asked the first question to a student as an initial informant, and the sound of the question was: Do you know about the reading corner? Hearing this question, one of the students answered that the reading corner is in the classroom for us to read in. Most of the students answered the question that they knew and had used the reading corner for. Some students answered that they did not know about the reading corner.

The use of reading corners is not only for literacy activities but also for positive activities to support learning in the classroom. This was obtained from the results of interviews and observations at school. All of this data simultaneously answers the first formulation of the problem, which describes how the implementation of the reading corner program at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung is carried out. The reading corner at SD Negeri Sangkaagung has started to be held consistently since Mrs. Ni Luh Putu Yus Ani, M.Pd., was appointed as the principal of SD Negeri Sangkaagung in October 2021. The reading corner is part of the school program, namely Bali Danu (literacy and numeracy culture), as a form of renewal of the existing reading corner program. Apart from being a place for literacy, as explained above, the reading corner is also used as a place for discussion by educators.
addition, students also use this location as a place for self-development, both in the intellectual and non-intellectual spheres. Students use the reading corner to fill their free time during breaks or when there are free hours. The use of the reading corner at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaagung is in line with the activities carried out by students and educators, which include the skills to seek, understand, and learn, and to practice something that is well received and useful, which can be interpreted as literacy activities. The important thing that teachers can do to build students’ desire to read is by instilling literacy from an early age and finding out important things by reading. The school literacy implementation schedule usually takes place before the 15-minute learning time starts.

Besides having the goal of attracting interest in reading in children, the reading corner can also be used as a source of information by students. (Surayya & Mubarok, 2021; Wahyudin, 2017). With the existence of a reading corner, the library is no longer the first place students will go to when they want to read, especially since the distance from the classroom to the library is quite far (Aswat, 2020; Widiyanti & Darmiyanti, 2021). This, of course, will maximize the time students have for reading. Moreover, if the reading corner is equipped with attractive decorations for students and equipped with other educational games, it will certainly increase students' responses to filling their free time to read. school reading corner (Cahyati, 2020). To invite students to realize how important it is to fill free time by reading, of course the teacher must socialize the importance of reading to students. After students know the importance of reading, the teacher then invites them to read in the reading corner provided by the school. The next step is for the teacher to direct students towards books that they might like, both school textbooks and literature books that are still related to learning (Kuraesin et al., 2022; Nurhayani & Nurhafizah, 2022). After students are used to reading activities in the reading corner, the teacher then reminds them to routinely carry out literacy activities before class starts for 15 minutes. From the three research results above, researchers have various similarities in their research results. However, there is one thing that was not listed in the results of previous research, namely utilizing a reading corner by giving children the opportunity to read stories in front of their friends. In addition to training children's fluency in reading, it can also foster children's confidence to come forward.

**Literacy Activities at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung**

SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung has developed the BALI DANU literacy program (literacy and numeracy culture) to hone literacy and numeracy skills, which are realized by carrying out literacy activities on a regular basis. From the results of observations made by the author at SD 1 Sangkaagung, the teacher has directed students to read for 15 to 30 minutes before learning starts, during breaks, and during free hours. This activity is carried out in the reading corner or school library. After conducting interviews with informants, it was stated that interest in literacy had increased after having a reading corner at school. In addition to increasing interest in reading, students are also increasingly motivated to continue reading and improve their reading from day to day.

Children's interest in reading is one of their deep-developed interests and talents, accompanied by a sense of pleasure in new activities that they carry out on their own without coercion from any party. With literacy activities at school, reading books regularly in the reading corner or in the school library is now one of the routine activities carried out by students without having to be reminded again (Chandra et al., 2021; Yulia, 2020).

**Reading Ability of 4th Grade Elementary School Students at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung**

Based on observations on literacy activities, namely reading story books in the reading corner, as well as data from semester I grades, it can be concluded that the reading ability of children in class IV SD Negeri I Sangkaagung is not evenly distributed. This is
reinforced by the statement of the class IV teacher, who stated that some children have reading skills above average, and having good reading skills also has an effect on children's learning achievement. It is proven that a child in grade IV gets the highest score. Meanwhile, children who have low reading ability, namely students who have low reading ability, have low learning achievement. In this case, the role of the reading corner is needed because, through a literacy program titled BALI DANU, students with low reading abilities are motivated to enjoy reading. Based on the fourth grade teacher's statement that students with low reading skills are provided with special books that have lots of interesting pictures and simpler writing, the teacher provides special assistance to children with low reading skills.

Based on interviews with teachers who stated that with the assistance of literacy activities in the reading corner, students' reading ability had increased. The results of this study are in accordance with research that shows that activities to increase reading interest by utilizing reading corners are already underway (Simbolon, 2019). In practice, the role of the teacher in supporting this activity is very important. One of them is educating people about the importance of reading. The teacher also always invites students to visit the reading corner when there is free time or free hours, especially if there are students who have difficulties learning. Literacy activities at school are carried out before class and last for 15 minutes. In addition to routine reading activities, the teacher also provides various kinds of educational storybooks to encourage students to keep reading consistently. This is in accordance with the BALI DANU literacy program, which is carried out at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung and requires students to read books for 30 minutes before learning begins, from 07.00 to 07.30 WITA every day.

In order to increase the reading interest and ability of SD Negeri Sangkaragung students, they have provided various facilities, such as a library and a reading corner with interesting storybooks. This is done to help foster students' interest in reading. This can be done by providing interesting books for children, such as story books and colorful picture books (Norfienti, 2019). With this, it can encourage children to read more habitually.

### The Character Likes to Read to Grade 4 Elementary School Students at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung

The success of literacy activities in which the teacher accustoms students to reading can be measured by indicators of their liking to read. If students have shown their love of reading in their daily activities, the character of reading has been embedded in them. There are four important indicators in the character of reading, which include books and writings that are read that are related to the lesson, reading material from the regional library, reading novels or short stories, and reading books that contain elements of nature, social elements, cultural elements, elements of art, and elements of technology (Rofi’uddin & Herminto, 2017). Based on the results of interviews with fourth grade students, it shows that they are used to doing literacy activities such as reading books together in the reading corner or reading books in front of friends and teachers. Homeroom teacher for grade IV, Mrs. Dayu, also stated the same thing: children's initiative to read increased after the literacy program was launched by facilitating reading corners at school.

The reading corner contains storybooks and textbooks for additional learning materials. Respondents added that to foster children's interest in reading, they asked students to ask questions, then asked them to find answers by reading books in the reading corner. Students were also asked to make their own questions after reading the book. This made them happy, and they were also asked to read the book again in front of other students. This is in accordance with the opinion, which suggests that children will be interested in reading books if the book they read has a different appeal from other books (Widyastuti, 2018). Beginning with interest, it will be followed by the emergence of habituation when students are
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Children's character can be grown by doing activities repeatedly (Hidayatullah et al., 2021). Its connection with the context of literacy is that we can grow literacy activities repeatedly, which of course will become good habits for students. To make it a habit, it must be done repeatedly (Cahya et al., 2022). This repetitive activity will become an activity that is favored by students, where the activity is a literacy activity. Students will develop a positive character as a result of this habit. Character is a collection of several habits that have been directed (Nurhayati, 2019).

Based on the findings of the research results concluded above, in order to maximize the use of reading corners in literacy activities to improve reading skills and the character of fondness for reading in grade IV students at SD Negeri 1 Sangkaragung, as formulated in the research objectives, the authors suggest that each class should facilitate children with reading corners in the classroom, which will streamline the time needed by students to read. Apart from the reading corner facility, the books prepared by the school must also be of good quality. Then, the principal must be more active in collecting quality books and working with the school committee to complete the collection of books in the reading corner. In addition to the committee, schools can also submit proposals to the government regarding the procurement of quality reading books for reading corners in schools. We can also propose foundations engaged in education and literacy for similar cooperation to achieve the objectives of the literacy program.

Apart from quality books, other important things that will encourage students' interest in visiting the reading corner are the attractive design of the reading corner and a comfortable place to read. Therefore, guidance for teachers in designing reading corners is needed. The management of the reading corner can be further improved in the administrative field, such as with a list of reading corner books, absent books, reading corner visits, and assistance during literacy activities at the reading corner. If students get a good rating, they are entitled to a reward for better motivation in the future.

The reading ability of children in class IV of SD Negeri I Sangkaagung is not evenly distributed; therefore, efforts to increase the interest and reading ability of students at SD Negeri Sangkaagung have provided various facilities, such as libraries and reading corners with interesting story books. interest in reading, as well as providing assistance to students with low reading abilities. At first, literacy activities were carried out under the direction of the teacher, but over time, students have taken the initiative to go to the reading corner and choose their favorite books to read and discuss with their friends. Efforts made by schools to increase children's interest in reading are made by giving students questions, and then students are asked to find answers by reading books in the reading corner. Students are also asked to make their own questions after reading the book. With habituation and repetition, students become accustomed to and enjoy reading books, and in the end, they will develop a character who likes to read.

4. CONCLUSION

The reading corner is part of a school program, namely Bali Danu (literacy and numeracy culture), as a form of renewal for the existing reading corner program. Apart from that, this program was also carried out to take advantage of the book collection that was previously in the school's reading corner. The reading corner is not only used as a place for
reading by students but is also used as a place for discussion about teaching materials by teachers. By participating in literacy activities to read books regularly in the reading corner or in the school library without being reminded again, students immediately take books to read and look for information that they do not know independently and know how important reading is. Efforts made by schools to increase children's interest in reading are made by giving students questions, and then students are asked to find answers by reading books in the reading corner. Students are also asked to make their own questions after reading the book. With habituation and repetition, students become accustomed to and enjoy reading books, and in the end, they will develop a character who likes to read.

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