

## **CULTURAL ARTIFACTS IN STUDENTS' LITERACY NARRATIVE**

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### **Abstract**

Literacy narrative is students' writing. The students write their experiences in pass about how they learn reading, writing, speaking or listening in English. Students' literacy narrative tells their effort to change identity from positional identity to figurative identity by using cultural artifacts. This study presents to identify the cultural artifacts to improve the students' figurative identity through students' literacy narrative. The objectives of study are to identify the cultural artifacts that use to change their identity by using literacy narrative. Qualitative research used to identify the cultural artifacts through students' literacy narratives assignment and interview. The samples of the study are 20 students of senior high school. The finding result showed cultural artifacts are as tools to change their identity as a poor writer to be a good identity. Based on the students' literacy narrative almost all of the students change their identity by cultural artifacts as books and English program (extracurricular). But some others, they joined English course beyond the school's program. Considering the findings, this research highlights the need several times to identify the kinds of students' identity by using ethnography.

**Keywords:** *Students' writing, literacy Narrative, Cultural Artifacts*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English is an important language is used to communicate with other people in international. English for almost Indonesian people is not easy, not all people seriously learned it well. Nonetheless, all of the people learned English since elementary school indeed from kindergarten. Whereas when they learned English seriously, they can communicate with foreign language fluently. It supports to intertwine the connection with other nation in cooperation or business. Learning English for Indonesian students considered as a difficult thing to learn. In fact, some of them do not learn it well. Their experiences in learning English are very varied. Some of them have pleasant or unpleasant experience. Some of the

students are unpleasant experience in their speaking and listening. Both reputed as the most difficult to applicable easily in their daily live. Whereas in writing and reading the students have to do it as their habitual. Substantively for students of senior high school, reading and writing are not the difficult things because they have learned it since elementary school even when kindergarten. The students should learn how to understand what the content of the book which is they read and learn how to construct a characters' ongoing and social process of language acquisition (Eldred & Mortensen, 1992, p. 512). The students are not only should read fluently but also they should share their ideas into a short essay. Some of teachers do not realize that when they give an assignment to write their past experience in reading or writing or both,

the students are writing literacy narrative. Writing literacy narrative is very beneficial assignment for basic writing students who are “minority, immigrant, and working class”, it allows students to develop “narrative agency by discovering that their experience [with language] is [...] interpretable” and that their experiences can lead to a “broader critical dialogue” with other students and with another narrative (Soliday, 1994, pp. 511-512). Literacy narrative itself is a short narrative essay arranged on the topic of writer’s experience in reading and writing (Beaufort, 2007, p.187). In students’ literacy narrative, the students tell way or tool to improve their English, especially reading and writing.

Literacy narrative is telling the students' stories that they give themselves an identity. Identity is about how people come to understand themselves, how they come to "figure" who they are, through the "world" that they participate in and how they relate to others within and outside of these worlds (Urrieta Jr, 2007, p. 107). In writing literacy narrative, the students' write a personal story about their experience in reading or writing or other literature. The figured world is one of device that helps someone identify their identity in this world by telling of a particular sort of personal story (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 66). By literacy narratives, the teacher can identify the students' identity. Here, the students tell their positioning identity which refers to the ability of reading or writing. According to Holland et al. Positional identity is "figurative identity" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 127). Here, the students' writing compares with "the stories, acts, and characters that make the

world a cultural world" (127). The students also tell their effort to change their positional identity to figured worlds by cultural artifacts. The artifact itself is an evidence of culture (Culberson, 1993, p. 17). Cultural artifacts help the students to change their identity into good or bad, and positive or negative. It depends on their cultural environment.

Considering the previous study above, this study is identifying the cultural artifacts that use to improve the students’ identity in learning English based on their literacy narratives. This study uses a qualitative research. The instrument of the study is students' literacy narratives and interview. The research will be conducted in Islamic high school students that have applied literacy programs by using literacy narratives. The research questions of this study is what cultural artifacts do students use to improve their English skills.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Students’ Writing**

Writing is a method to communicating thought. It is a place to express feelings, experiences, ideas, and thought. Writing encourages thinking and learning for motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. Everyone has differences of writing skills. So, writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements (Heaton, 1988 #3).

### **Literacy Narrative**

Writing is a part of English skill that difficult becomes a habit. It has always important place in most English. More

ever, people want to write the essay or story must know the steps in writing process and aspects; they should be able to organize the ideas, to construct the sentences, to use punctuations and spelling well. Writing literacy narrative affords a sense of students' prior literacy experiences and students general feelings toward writing and reading.

Literacy narrative is an essay in which you share a story about your personal engagement with reading, writing, thinking, and or language. For this assignment, you will a narrative essay based on some past experience – either from long ago or in the recent past – related to literacy. This could be a positive or negative experience. (Givens, 2010, p. 9).

So literacy narrative is not only a media to know the students writing ability but also to know the cultural artifacts that use to improve the students' ability in English. Literacy narrative is a first-hand narrative about reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking and/or language. It often focuses on powerful memories about events, people, situations, places-times when people tried and succeeded or tried and failed; some who gave another people a chance or took one way, situations when some taught another people how to do something or when people taught someone else. It can be sad or happy experiences, poignant or funny, informative or incidental. By writing literacy narratives, they share experience to improve their skill in reading and writing through cultural artifacts.

## **Cultural Artifacts**

Cultural artifacts are used as media to improve the students' ability in English. It means that when the students improve their ability in learning English, their identities are change. Cultural artifacts itself are tools to create the students' ability. It is a cultural mediation and the constitution use of an artifacts exhibit it's temporally local as well as its historical constitution, it never distinguishes between the term of artifact and tool (Thore, 2003, p.40). Cultural artifact has the important benefits, one of them is as a tool to improve the student's ability in English, from bad skill become good skill. Good skill means figurative identity. Holland et al discussed that the purpose of artifacts is as pivots or opening to what they term figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998, p.52).

The kind of cultural artifacts are very assortment, such as; books, novels, comics, teachers, parents, families, extracurricular, courses, and others. In Retnaningdyah's book entitled "SuaradariMarjin" write that the kind of cultural artifacts like as books, pens, laptop, or other conceptual aspects such as language ability and technology. The kind of artifacts is kind of symbols or objects that written by a collective attribution of meaning (Bartlett, 2007, p.55). This statement is supported by Holland et al. (1998) who state that cultural artifacts are symbols for change the identities, a symbol for positioning themselves that crossed a number of figured worlds (p.130). In changing the students' identities, cultural artifact is as a facilitator in human action. It becomes tools engaged in process of improving students' identities.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study using qualitative research to describe the research questions “what cultural artifacts do students use to improve their figurative identity through students’ literacy narratives.” Words and sentences are used to represent the data that are going to describe a phenomenon, a process, or a particular point of view from the perspective of those involved (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 29). Based on the students’ literacy narratives, qualitative research has "traditionally" been conducted by means of personal experiences in life stories. Using this strategy allows the writer to become the key instrument in the research process, gathering information rather than using students’ writing literacy narrative assignment and interview as the basis for gathering data. The interview is beneficial to gain the respondent's deep information (Alwasilah, 2000). The students’ literacy narratives assignment will classify into three parts; positional identity, cultural artifacts, and figured worlds. Interview conducted with five students based on their positional identities in their literacy narratives assignment. The participants of study are the students of senior high school in Lamongan, especially IX-MIA 4 that consists of 20 students.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Cultural Artifact in Creating Students’ Figurative Identity**

Relating to the previous discussion about positional identity, the finding shows that several students made transition from poor (novice) to good (expert) whether in reading or writing or speaking skills. Improving from the low level to high level, the student should have tool or media to

obtain the transition. In literacy narrative, the media which is used can be called as cultural artifact. As what has been formulated in previous chapter that cultural artifact is kind of symbol or tool engaged in process for positioning themselves that crossed a number of figured worlds. A research of the interaction of “Latanya” which emphasize that the social, cultural, and historical use and transformation of artifacts in activity (Leander, 2002, p. 203). It means that through artifacts the students can change their identity because kinds of artifact used to create their identity from novice to expert in reading, writing, speaking of other skills. It also indicates the students’ positioning (Holland et al., 1998, p. 133). It is an evidence to show the students transition to create their figurative identity. Everything could be cultural artifacts that encourage the students to improve their identity. In this study, the researcher discovers several of cultural artifacts which is used by the students are book, teacher, English club, and literacy program.

### **Book**

Student and book are inseparable. Unarguably, book becomes the most used by the students in improving their identity in English rather than other cultural artifacts. Some of the students explained that they prefer like to read novels than any other books. They told that they are not only reading English books but also Indonesian books. When they were reading English books or Indonesian books, they found millions vocabulary. They felt more confidence because they asserted themselves as “anakgaul”. They choose a book which makes them fun and enjoy when they are read it. The interview has

been done to represent that books were their cultural artifacts.

[Pujiati] I think my reading skill have improved since I like to read book, especially about K-pop. But after literacy program was implemented I became more active reading books. Each class have mini library which contain of novels, comics, magazines, textbooks, and others. That all is donation from ourselves. The mini library makes us easy to read. (Interview, 9/6/17).

But it is notable that the kind of the books is different such as novel, comic, magazine, and English text book. The most read by the students were novel and the less read by them were English text book. The English textbook read by the students were decided only on the genre text such as narrative, descriptive, recount and so forth. It can be seen from the students' statement below; "I started a little interested to read book whether it's a novel or short story."

The sentence spoken by RahayuPujiati can be underlined that the students more interested in literary works to read rather than the lesson text book. In addition, this finding really helps the teachers to be aware in deciding the text used to teach their students.

### **Teacher**

As student "Long time I feel happy learning English because my teacher is fun". Another student told that the teacher has been helped them to improve their ability in English. "she taught me how to read and speak in English. Rather difficult but it will be easy if done really my master's words". Based on their

statements, it can conclude that teacher is a person who more talented and competence which makes the students motivated to learn in reading or writing or speaking or English language.

[Muafif] The people who played an important role to encourage my motivation to learn more to write are my English teacher and tutor in English club. Especially my English teacher in this grade. She always gives me suggestion to join English. (Interview, 9/6/17)

The second most courageous cultural artifacts to improve students identity in English is the teacher. Teacher who encourages the students more often will give special effect to students' motivation to learn English. The students should feel supported and trusted to be able to improve. This finding is useful for teacher to be more active in encouraging students in learning English and making them believe that they can improve their identity.

The student said, "Long time, I feel happy in learning English because my teacher is fun". Another student told that the teacher has been helped them to improve their ability in English. "She taught me how to read and speak in English. Rather difficult but it will be easy if done really my master's words". Based on their statements, it can conclude that teacher is a person who more talented and competence which makes the students motivated to learn in reading or writing or speaking or English language.

Through those cultural artifacts, the students are succeed in improving their identity from bad to good. That good condition is called figurative world or figurative identity. Understanding of

improvisation and innovation of students' ability to make choices and changes determines their new identity to be good identity. By reading English books more often than before and loving the activity encourage the students to move from bad reader to good reader. By sharing with the teacher more often about the way to write in English encourages students to move from bad writer to good writer, and so forth.

But, one condition had been analyzed in the previous chapter that one student shows her flat result since her writing did not show the improvement of her identity. She did not have cultural artifact to lead forward to figurative identity. So she did not move from bad speaker to good speaker. By this result, it is clear that cultural artifact is absolutely helpful to improve students' ability in English. Ultimately, through literacy narrative, it reveals that students really need encouragement to motivate them move their identity. Finally, the use of literacy narrative to identify students' identity in English is revealed that cultural artifact is important to improve students' positional identity to figurative identity.

### **English Club**

Besides book and teacher, extracurricular also motivates students to improve their English skills. It serves many activities in English such as English club to improve their ability. Through English club, the student can learn more about language skill whether in reading, writing, and speaking outside school activity.

English club which has been observed by the researcher shows several programs which make student fun, such

learning by game. The school deliberately held this program to help the students solve their problem in English skill because it is the important skill which is useful for their future.

In this occasion, this study reveals the influence of English club toward the formed of student's figurative identity, as has been elaborated in previous discussion that Novita who positions herself as poor reader and writer, joins English club in his school. In the beginning of narrative which is written by her, she narrates that before he joins English club, she is really poor in reading and writing. As she said in her narrative that, "I join English club in my school, it helps me"

Based on a piece of quotation above, the cultural artifact which become a medium that helps Novita is the activity which is held by English club in her school. She focuses on reading and writing skill due to she realizes her ability in conducting reading and writing skill. In this circumstance, English club plays role in creating identity.

[Novita] As I told you, since I joined in English club my reading and writing skill was improved. Now, I know the structure in writing and also I often read books. I am not only reading novels or comics, but also books about science. (Interview, 12/6/17)

Furthermore, another student named Germawan also used the cultural artifact in developing his identity. In this case, Germawan joins English club in his school because he realizes that he lack of knowledge in English skill. When joining this program, Germawan attempts to read more books and write everything in English such diaries or another thing. It is

one of the program which is held by English club where he join, as he narrates in his narrative that, “English club makes me read and write everyday”

Relating to that quotation, it strongly shows that by Joining English club, he is forced to read every day whether it is novel, magazine, or the other books. He is also forced to write everything, minimally about every single moment that he faces every day, but this program hopes that he is able to write more than his activity such short story, news, or others. In this case, English club plays role in creating Germawan’s identity from bad both reader and writer to be better.

### **Literacy Program**

The prominent cultural artifact which is used in creating figurative identity is the holding of literacy program, many schools in Indonesia often hold in order to make the students improve their skill in English language. In this program, the student must read book before school is started, student is freely to choose book as they prefer to read. After that, they are ordered to write what they get from that book. This program really helps the student to improve student’s interested in reading book and writing, by this program student can enrich their knowledge and their ability becomes increased. As in Adifa’s narrative, “When I realize that my writing is bad. In literacy program, I hope my writing skill will improve”. This statement also supported by her interview script;

[Adifa] I never realized that literacy program is very useful to improve my writing skills. Begin from ten grade, after read book every student should write the

summary of each book that we read. (Interview, 12/6/17)

In this circumstance, the researcher also observes the literacy program which is held in the school where she conducts this research. The literacy program which is held in this school not only provide book in Indonesian language, but also English book including novels, magazines, or English textbook. This program has proved that it kind of cultural artifact which influences more students in creating figurative identity. It can be proven through all of the literacy narrative which become the data of this study. Most all of students narrate that they are able to improve their ability in English skill. Therefore, it can be concluded that many cultural artifacts could help student in changing positional identity.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals an objective which is formulated in the research question. Concerning with the first question, this study identifies the cultural artifacts students use to create the students’ figurative identity. As shown in the finding that students’ identity in English ability has pointed to improvement from positioning identity to figurative identity. The change of condition of students’ ability to the good ones is passed through the cultural artifacts students had which influence the improvement of their identity. It reveals that book is the most used artifact had by the students, followed by teacher literacy programs and the last English club.

However, the result also reveals that one student shows no improvement from positioning identity as a bad speaker to the good one even she mentioned the cultural artifact such as teacher and English course

she used to get improved. And also a student has decreased identity from good writer to be bad writer. Instead, book as her cultural artifact made her identity decline. By reading some books, she realized that her writing is good. This finding leads to conclusion that some students may not have any tool or media to motivate her learning English. Through literacy narratives, this problem can be discovered because they can share their problem through written.

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