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Media Literacy Strategy for Teenagers Based on Local Wisdom of Yogyakarta

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Abstract

The rapid development of media technology makes teenagers easy access to media. Although the development of media technology allows ease of access, but also paradoxically presenting media information overload and possible loss of local cultural values due to intrusion of foreign cultures. Since media are ubiquitous, it cause media have a role in everyone's life. Impact of media presence can be positive or negative. The impact of the media is determined by the ability to consume media critically. Knowledge about media literacy will help teenagers in distinguishing which information that should be consumed from the media. This ability can be helped with ownership selecting filter media materials that are beneficial to their needs. Cultural values to be one of the filters that can be used in media literacy.

This paper is the result of research conducted in Yogyakarta. It is interesting to find out how people put local wisdom as the basis of society in contact with the media. Yogyakarta is known as a centre of Javanese culture. People in this place hold the traditions of society as a part of way of life, so that Yogyakarta is known as a city of culture. People are trying to preserve the traditions of society. These activities enrich the study of media literacy based on local wisdom. Local wisdom contained in the culture leads people to act and behave towards the media. By using a qualitative approach with ethnography method, the authors sought to explore local wisdom possessed by the people of Yogyakarta. Local wisdom is used by teenagers to respond changes brought by the influence of mass media. Data of local wisdom are categorized in order to have a map related to media exposure. In conclusion, local wisdom mapping is useful in creating media literacy strategy for teenagers.

Keyword: *Media Literacy, Teenagers, Local Wisdom*

1. Introduction

The high dependency of human beings on mass media affects how the thinking process and attitude is formed. The formation happens because of the continuous exposure of mass media on the audience. The condition makes it possible for media to dominate the values in terms of how people think. It happens mostly to the young generations who have no knowledge on how to differentiate between real world and “imaginary” one. The problem is with the abundant, unselected and uncontrolled information. It is possible that such a condition will yield to distracted behavior among teenagers

Based on the study conducted by Hendriyani and Guntarto (2011), the concern is understandable. In the study on the Media Literacy in Indonesia, they compiled data from various sources and found out that that early teenagers (10-14 years): spent 4.2 hours in 2000, 4.6 hours in 2005, and 4.4 hours in 2010. TV programs (11 national TV channels) were not the only media they consumed. They also consume internet that can be easily accessed from their mobile phones. No doubt, the growth of internet users increases drastically. In 1998 internet users in Indonesia were 0,26% of the population, in 2010 it increased to 20% (Nugroho, Putri, & Laksmi, 2012, p. 82).

UNESCO through Grunwald declaration since 1982 has paid attention to the growing strength of media in the modern society, especially among teenagers. (Buckingham, 2001; UNESCO, 1982). Teenagers are deemed as the parties that must be empowered since the existence of media is unavoidable. Teenagers are more enthusiastic about digital technology and autodidactly they develop their knowledge to have access to those media (Celot, 2009, p. 86)

The development of information and communication technology in Indonesia has made it easier to have access to media (Birowo, 2012b; Lim, 2012). On one hand, media can be used as cultural bridges among different cultures. On the other hand, the easy access to abundant information has the potency of withering local culture. The situation causes culture shock among the local community.

Based on the situation above, it needs a serious effort to provide media literacy based on culture, especially local culture. The study conducted by Darmastuti about the use of local wisdom to provide media literacy among the Samin can be used as as a good reference (Darmastuti, 2005). According to the study conducted by Darmastuti, by using and applying the local wisdom, the Samin community is able to select the appropriate messages conveyed by mass media.

Based on the experience of the Samin community, the researchers came to a conclusion that local wisdoms possessed by communities in Indonesia might be used as filters of mass media. Ashley, Maksl and Craft (2013) discussed the non-media approach for teenagers in media literacy.

Due to the facts that Indonesia has rich cultural heritages, it is understandable that there are various local wisdoms. Based on the explanation above, the researchers will discuss about media literacy strategy based on local wisdom of Yogyakarta. The local wisdom of Yogyakarta has the possibility to be used to make a local wisdom-based media literacy program.

2. Methodology

The paper uses "Research and Development" approach. It means that a research program is followed by a development one in order to improve it (Borg and Gall, 1989:784-5). The media

literacy strategy based on local wisdom of Yogyakarta is developed by means of qualitative approach. The data were collected by using observations, focus group discussions and direct interviews with some key resources in Yogyakarta.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Media Literacy

The National Telemedia Council (dalam Art Silverblatt 2008, p.4) defines Media Literacy as

The ability to choose, to understand, -within the context of content form/style, impact, industry and production – to question, to evaluate, to create and/or produce and respond thoughtfully to the media we consume. It is mindful viewing, reflective judgment

David Considine (1995) defines media literacy as “*The ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate information in a variety of format including print and nonprint*”. Considine is supported by Potter (2008, p.19) who defines media literacy as “*“a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter”*”. From the two statements above, it can be concluded that a media-literate community is a community having the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate the information.

3.2. Media Literacy for Teenagers

The exposure of media toward the society is very high, especially among the teenagers in Indonesia. From data presented above it is stated that early teenagers (10-14 years) spent 4.2

hours in 2000. In 2005 they spent 4.6 hours and in 2010 they spent 4.4 hours. The data are very important facts showing the high exposure of media faced by our teenagers.

On the other hand, many teenagers do not have the expertise about how to consume the media. Referring to the terms used by Clause, he uses the term audience participation to show the amount of exposure faced by the audience. Based on the participation, Clause (1968) divides audience participation into three groups, namely: a. Population accepting the offer to communicate, b. Population accepting things being offered and c. Population subsiding things being offered. Those accepting the offer to communicate are those having TV sets but they do not use the TV. They consider the TV as a symbol to build their "prestigious" life. The population accepting things being offered are those who watch TV programs, but they do not use the programs as their main references. They only use important information in their life. The population subsiding things being offered are those who do what they are told to do. They belong to effective audience.

According to the classification made Clause, many teenagers belong to the third category. Due to lack of knowledge about the negative effects of TV, our teenagers take mass media as their main references. The message and reality constructed by mass media are considered as guidances and references in their life.

Based on the phenomenon, it is concluded that media literacy for teenagers is urgent. It should be done as a part of the movement to empower the society in dealing with media. A strong society can develop the quality of the media contents. Media literacy can enable the teenagers to be free from being dependent on mass media. Thus, teenagers will not be alienated from their social surroundings. One of the ways is by giving them the opportunities to be involved in other activities. Nina Armando (2010), an activist of media literacy states that there

are at least three benefits of media literacy for teenagers:

First, to help teenagers to think, ponder, get new knowledge and link it to other ideas.

Second, to train teenagers to be able to think critically. Third, to help them to enjoy their activities.

Media literacy movement is the answer to the capital owners who use media for the sake of profit only. *Profit oriented*- TV programs make them dangerous for the society. The situation is supported by lenient *law enforcement* for the TV stations that violate the rules.

In the context of teenagers, the purposes of media literacy are: to build the ability to think critically and to be actively involved in the use of media. Media literacy enables the teenagers to assess and interpret the media content that can be useful for their life. Media should be used smartly to help the teenagers to be creative and strong audience (Babad, Peer & Hobbs, 2012: 97-98; Buckingham, 2001: 2).

3.3. Culture as a means of Media Literacy

Douglas Kellner (2010) in his book titled "*Budaya Media: Cultural Studies, Identitas dan Politik, antara Modern dan Postmodern*" states that the society can reject the negative effects of media culture by using its own culture. The dominant messages conveyed by the media can be blocked by the culture existing in the society. At this phase, the society can function as the source of self-empowerment and create the meaning of identity. It means that there is one way to create a smart society in dealing with media, i.e. by using its own culture. Recently, there have been many theories emphasizing on the strength of audience in opposing media manipulation. Those theories state that active audience has the ability to create meanings in consuming mass

media. Consequently, the society can empower itself by means of materials from its own culture (Kellner, 2010: 3).

Gerry Phillipson defines culture as “*A socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbol, meaning, premisses and rules*” (Griffin, 2003: 420). Supporting Phillipson, Spradley defines culture as gained knowledge which is used to interpret experiences and it produces social behaviors. The system of meaning in a culture can be used to regulate behaviors, understand them, and understand the world in which they live (Spradley, 1997: 5), so that what they do and think is always based on life philosophy of the existing culture.

Given the fact that local cultures have been tested over time, it can be concluded that the values can be used as the guidance to behave. The problem of changes happen fast as a result of the abundant information in mass media. New things suddenly appear in the society. New values are interesting and enticing for teenagers. For example: Korean culture infiltrates through K Pop and K Drama (Birowo, 2012b). The infiltration can detach the teenagers from their cultural roots. Thus, in such a situation they need to be empowered by their local wisdom.

3.4. Local Wisdom as a strategy

There are many ways that can be used to build the awareness of the society to preserve local cultures such as; through school activities, extracurricular activities, plays performed on TV. One of the most successful plays was ‘Si Doel Anak Sekolahan’ (SDAS). The success of ‘Si Doel Anak Sekolahan’ (SDAS) made it the topic of discussion in the 1990s. The protagonist Doel, his family and friends with their Betawi background made it a successful play to introduce and build the awareness of the grandeur of the local cultures.

Klarijn Loven in the essay titled "*Watching Si Doel Television, language, and cultural identity in contemporary Indonesia*", states that si Doel was able to entertain all segments of RCTI audience. The play was able to defeat its rivals. According to Klarijn Loven, the play 'Si Doel Anak Sekolahan' (SDAS) was able to unite people of different classes, ages, sexes, and ethnicities. Garin Nugroho (a producer and media critic) stated that the success of the play was caused by the high quality of artists and crews involved and it was also caused by its ability to approach Indonesian culture in a realistic way. Still according to Nugroho, the use of Betawi dialect and culture was the main factor in the success of the play. He further stated that the play had a local sensitivity wrapped globally. Through the protagonist si Doel, Betawi cultures were explored professionally so that the play met internal standard (Loven, 2008: 2).

The success of si Doel is actually similar to findings in other places that show' if options are available on TV, people tend to choose local programs (Moran 2004: 4 in Loven 2008 : 2). The local audience's preference shows that globalization process does not always decrease the love of people to their nation. According to Moran (in Loven 2008: 2) this phenomenon shows the importance of national producers to present local programs that can strengthen the national interest. At this phase, the government plays very important roles. The government can protect national and local media in order to preserve national cultures and to minimize the unwanted effects of global cultures. (Crane in Loven 2008: 2).

Crane's opinion can be used as the basis to make literacy strategies for teenagers by making use local wisdom. Building cultural and understanding is one of the ways that can be used to minimize the effects of other cultures. Yogyakarta, in this context, provides an interesting description about the use of local wisdom in media literacy movement.

3.5. Media literacy and Local Wisdom

Local wisdom is an effort by a group of cultural entity in providing meaning about various phenomena. Local wisdom can also be used to solve problems that happen in each cultural entity. According to Stuart Hall (Hall, 1997: 1-5), providing meaning is the core of a culture. He further emphasizes that human beings actively try to understand what happens to them.

Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta is a province in Indonesia consisting of a union between the Sultanate of Yogyakarta and Kadipaten Pakualaman. It lies in the southern part of Java Island. Its closest borders are Central Java Province and the Indian Ocean. Its width is 3.185,80 km² which consists of one township and four regencies. There are 78 counties 438 villages. According to the 2010 census the population is 3.452.390 consisting of 1.705.404 males and 1.746.986 females, with the density of 1.084 jiwa per km².

Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta has various *tangible* and *intangible* cultural heritages. The tangible ones include historical sites while the *intangible* ones include ideas, value systems, and norms existing in the society. One of them is called the local wisdom. Local wisdoms cover health, agriculture, education, arts, and others.

Sartini, in her essay titled *Menggali Kearifan Lokal Nusantara sebuah Kajian Filsafati* published by *Jurnal Filsafat* (Agustus 2004, Vol 37, Nomor 2, p. 119) states that local wisdom is local ideas having the characteristics of being wise instilled and embraced by a certain community. Local wisdom is a shared experience formulated as a common guidance. A community always tries to sustain the existence of local wisdoms by passing them from one generation to another.

One of the activities done in Yogyakarta is through the cultural community. Known as a cultural city, Yogyakarta presents some interesting phenomena. The citizens are willing to build

tradition-based community. One of the communities is located in nDalem Pujokusuman. It is led by Ms. Siti Sutiah, a prominent cultural figure specializing in Javanese dance. She stated that local wisdom can be learnt from traditional dances.

During the interview conducted on May 6, 2014 she said that

“Classical javanese dances are local wisdoms belonging to the Javanese especially in Yogyakarta. Dancing is closely related to Javanese culture, especially when the dancers enter the hall. There is a term called ‘munduk-munduk’ as a sign of respect. It teaches us to respect one another, especially to those who are older. Thus, it is taught through Javanese dances”.

According to her, local wisdoms belonging to the Yogyanese can be introduced and taught to the young generation by means of dancing. Indeed, children are easy to be taught about dances containing the teaching of respects, norms, and ethics. Children are sensitive in accepting values taught through Javanese dances. Through the dances the children are taught about “sense” in developing themselves. Dancing can be used as a means of local wisdom used to teach norms, ethics, and behaviours.

Siti added that the effects of Javanese culture are not permanent, depending on the social environment. Personality traits also play important roles in accepting or rejecting cultural teachings. Learning how to dance also influences the acceptance of Javanese culture for students, it can strengthen local culture. She further stated that a Javanese dance has the elements of *wirogo*, *wiromo* dan *wiroso*. Javanese dances influence attitude, patience, and respect. For example: a dance teacher always reminds his/her students to respect the hall/ the place where they practice the dance. He/she always reminds the students to conserve Javanese culture.

Javanese dances are full of meaningful symbols. Meaning is the main factor in the culture because the members of a community produce and share the meaning of their daily experiences. Meaning is human creation as a response of events around them. The response is then communicated among the members of the community by using the same conceptual (see Hall, 1997). Traditional dances are the medium of communicating the symbols. There are values attached to traditional arts, those values are then transmitted by the older generation to the young one so that the noble values can be understood. Thus, it can be concluded that a dance can be used to communicate values among different generations.

Although traditional arts face serious threats from modern ones, they are still attractive. Traditional dances are performed regularly in nDalem Pujokusuman and Balai Budaya Minomartani. Besides, some communities use radio stations to preserve local wisdom. Puppet shows often make use of radio stations.

Referring to the the concept of Douglas Kellner, a society actually has the ability to reject negative effects of media culture by using its own culture. Thus, the people of Yogyakarta can also use their local culture to filter the negative effects. Media literacy can be done by using strategies involving the local wisdoms.

One of the benefits of local wisdoms, according to Sri in the in-depth interview on May 6, 2014, is self-control. Self-control is taught through dances. Self-control, restraining emotion, respecting others are local wisdoms that can be used to filter the messages conveyed by mass media. The meaning of self-control is to invite an individual to respect others, especially those who are olders. It is the key to build a harmonious community. A harmonious community is the goal in Javanese culture since it belongs to collective one.

Through dances, teenagers can be taught about local wisdoms. However, in order to instill local wisdoms, there should be a unity among the personality pattern, environment and the role of the parents.

In the perspective of communication science, exchanged daily experiences contain unique information or knowledge that can be used as life guidance. Gradually, the knowledge forms a pattern. The society keeps the knowledge through traditions, and passes it to the next generation in order to form group identity. At the same time, they construct the identity through local symbols. In order to be preserved, they give values to the local symbols.

Through understanding, awareness, and efforts to preserve local wisdoms, it is hoped that they can be used to filter inappropriate messages conveyed to teenagers. This is the way that can be used as a media literacy strategy for teenagers in Yogyakarta by means of the existing local wisdoms.

4. Conclusion

Media literacy can be based on local wisdoms. The activities involve traditions to empower teenagers. Through cultural activities such as traditional dances, teenagers will lessen media exposure and at the same time they have other references. By doing so, teenagers will not be trapped into becoming heavy viewers. Teenagers are expected to have broad horizon and to have maturity which will be useful in filtering cultural values conveyed through mass media.

Cultural activities can strengthen local wisdoms by means of providing symbolic meaning of the traditional art. Interaction among the participants provides rooms for positive dialogues to understand local wisdoms.

Unearthing local wisdoms can be used as a capital to create messages in mass media as shown in Si Doel Anak Sekolahan. Local wisdoms can walk hand in hand with modern ones. They can enrich one another.

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