The Intertwinements of Information and Literacy in Contemporary Culture

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Abstract

This paper exposes the relations between information and literacy in context of contemporary culture. By exploring the perspective, reading culture is the main involvement in today's indication. The analysis of this article includes popular culture in literacies in which it actually involves such tensions than merely definitions. The tensions are about existence vs essence, paradoxes vs consistencies, and enlightenment vs paranoia. Later, the text as the widened matters of language puts more approaches towards recent culture of sharing information. Therefore, the condition of hoaxes indeed is inevitable and undeniable, since abundant flowing information will always result to surplus of meanings as well. In conclusion, literacy should be used as matter of finding truth than effort of merely justification. The freedom of meanings should be emphasized furthermore to attain the truth as matter of process in various matters of literacies.
Keywords Information, Literacy, Popular Culture, Reading Culture, Sharing Culture

A. Introduction

Reading is the most prominent aspect in accessing knowledge. Since childhood, human beings are told to read before they could write in language (Siebel, 2019; Intaniasari & Utami, 2022). The activity keeps going on until adulthood times in which the more people read, the more they could gain more information. It has been such great indication to state reading as cultural matter today. Reading is also the best way to increase matter of literacies (Barus, et al., 2021; Bonnell & Hunt, 2019). In this case, relations between

information, reading culture, and literacy find its meaning in which three of them correlate and intertwine each other.

Contemporary culture also could not be separated from the reading culture itself. The advancements of everything become the main reasons for people to read in contemporary concepts and contexts (Barus, et al., 2021; Bonnell & Hunt, 2019). People are not told to read things based on the past, but being interpreted in present and also the future times. In that case, reading culture is also growing in line with any advancements of technology. It is no longer suitable to say that reading culture is merely on books or written literature since the shifts on the culture also widen the meanings of reading culture. The main idea of reading is the information itself (Siebel, 2019; Intaniasari & Utami, 2022). Therefore, reading culture is gaining crucial information for people.

In matter of contemporary reading culture, there are two sides of a coin in its realities. On one side, the abundant flowing of information spreads reading culture as everyday staple food (Siebel, 2019; Intaniasari & Utami, 2022). The shifts on cultural contexts also make people think about their identities and representations every day. People think more about meanings rather than definitions, making them build their own awareness to various conditions. It is also in line with popular culture that slowly blur the fixed lines between high and low culture. Reading anything is growing higher as the usage of smartphones are rising as well (Hartley, 2020; Hasanah & Deiniatur, 2019). The crucial points of OSMU or One Source Multiple Use also increase self-involvement in sharing culture. By doing more reading, people also do more sharing which is inevitable right now.

On the other hand, the reading culture today must compete with the abundant flowing of information. People are pushed to consume more information while its meanings somehow are lost in its indications (Hartley, 2020; Hasanah & Deiniatur, 2019). They enjoy the flowing information but somehow could not totally grasp the essence of that. Then,

people could no longer transform the information into further literacy. Consequently, reading culture is not directly or indirectly uplifts matter of literacy in everyday context. Besides, more people think that consuming information is usual today. It becomes such habit recently (Hartley, 2020; Hasanah & Deiniatur, 2019). However, the consumption is not accompanied with better production afterwards. More people even think that sharing culture is the way of producing literacy. In a way, it may be true since spreading information is good to minimize any digital gap. On the other way, it shows such decline in literacy since sharing things are not really sincere, but to show such superiorities to other human beings.

Throughout the introduction above, this article would like to expose more about the relations between information and literacy in context of contemporary culture. This paper does not want to accuse any party in decreasing efforts in literacy, but this article would like to show that reading culture in contemporary condition is in ambiguity. The culture shapes such tensions between various

binary opposition in popular culture (Barus, et al., 2021; Bonnell & Hunt, 2019). The tensions are beyond definitions as stated on existence vs essence, paradoxes vs consistencies, and enlightenment vs paranoia. Sharing information may both trigger those two different conceptions. In further understandings, the widened matters of language could also flourish condition of hoaxes as abundant flowing information will always result to surplus of meanings as well.

B. Research Method

By using qualitative method, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the problem in this paper. Written through description, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between reading culture, sharing culture, and any advancement on information today. Literary concepts and cultural studies ideas are exposed alongside with online and offline scripts from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing

with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references lists. The premises and logics used in reading culture, sharing culture, and any advancement on information today are also drawn to underline matter of being suitable to values of human beings. More elaborations related to opposite analysis are also provided in addition furthermore.

C. Findings and Discussions

The Postures of Contemporary Popular Culture

Popular culture brings in widened meanings in various understandings today. Indeed, being in popular culture is always related to spirit of the age nowadays (Barus, et al., 2021; Bonnell & Hunt, 2019). The idea is about being in post-modernism and post-structuralism in which modernity and structures are still intact in between. On a way, matter of post-modernism and post-structuralism show indications of undecidability. It is a condition in which everything is actually in matter of possibility (Attamimi, et al., 2023; Coiro, 2021; Friantary, 2019). There are no definitions that could dictate

anything on earth. The meanings are loosened so that each one could shape their own perceptions culturally related to their own identities. The grand narrations are nothing since those only shape dominations that slowly eradicate freedom furthermore. It is always better to put the power in the hand of the people and their interactions than put them on the powerful and yet corrupted ones.

For instance, matter of religion nowadays is not really about Holy Scriptures anymore. People embrace religions in their own identities and understandings. Some of them may be so religious while others may combine being religious and being secular (Coiro, 2021; Friantary, 2019). Various support to wearing religious products due to information and literacy trends such as clothing and cosmetics are somehow are also matters of being religious today. The values are no longer in status quo, but being lived through what people talk in daily understandings.

On the other way, modernism and structures will never leave

indications of human beings' lives. Those may be eroded but its strength is getting more subtle and quite unknown for many people. In popular culture, people may indicate more freedom but they could not be taken out from matter of industries of culture in which capitalism is always intact inside (Attamimi, et al., 2023; Hall, et al., 2022; Kraus, et al., 2021). Definitions in various values are not also easily being eliminated since those determine the way of how human beings live. It would be quite unimaginable if people have their own moral standards. Chaos will be everywhere since everyone would like to have their own meanings whatsoever.

For example, people are pushed to be such entrepreneurs today by building more start-ups and even Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Even many higher educations create more courses for their students to be more financially independent. Rather than employed by people, students are urged to create more jobs and be the employers of their own companies. It is quite good and necessary since it may help

government to create more possibilities to enhance development. However, the matter of entrepreneurship will never stay out of interactions between productions and consumptions (Coiro, 2021; Friantary, 2019). If many people produce, then they must also find more consumers. Meanwhile, many start-ups and SMEs are quite pricy in which they could not find the ones to consume the products. Moreover, the rising SMEs also shows that consumption is getting more important today. People are pushed to work repeatedly in order for them to be able to consume more. Consumptions then are not matter of survival, but a must to follow various trends today.

Those two aspects above underline that popular culture is problematic in its diagnosis. However, it is actually how that culture lives. It does not stay in a place but it mingles with various persons, identities, and even conditions (Hall, et al., 2022; Kraus, et al., 2021). It could be this and that by doing merger, collaborations, and even cooperations with other aspects.

By embracing possibilities, popular culture explores such vagueness and ambiguities to live within those aspects. When it is tried to be defined, it will resist since its definitions are always unstable (Hall, et al., 2022; Kraus, et al., 2021). Interestingly, that is the power of popular culture. It is in line with dangdut culture today in which it may collaborate with other genre music as well such as *keroncong, campursari,* and even *jazz.* It will always loose in its definition since its living is ultimately understood through cultural ambiguity than conceptual certainty. As long as there is *gendang* in its music, dangdut will always exist through various prolonged times.

The aspects of popular culture could have various faces. A face shows that popular side of it is about *populi* which means many people in Latin word. It is the sense of many people in which each one and its community may live through experience of its culture in everyday life (Mugge, et al., 2020; Basar, 2022). In this side, matter of taste is meaningful since it also employs various cultural models of signified understandings of many aspects of identities.

For example, if Indonesian people being asked of any children literature, they will mostly mention *Si Kancil*. This deer character has been culture of many people in which it is still prolonged in today's school curriculum. Though there is no power that define this character as the characteristic of Indonesian children literature, but it has been such everyday dialogues from the years of 1980s until now. The more it is being talked, the more it becomes discourse, the more it remains as culture in language of common people.

Another face indicates popular is like a pop-up situation. It is something famous at that time. In matter of literature, this popular aspect is what has been trending topic at that time. It could be the viral one too. It is what most people consume and talk about (Mugge, et al., 2020; Basar, 2022). The pro aspect of this side is that it gives spotlight to currentness of an event by showing many people's involvements in that case. The more news is spread, the more information could be attained

from those famous and popular things. The contra aspect shows that popular side in this case will only stay as temporary (Mugge, et al., 2020; Basar, 2022). When people do not talk about it anymore, it is no longer popular at all. it works like a trend in which its existence is in line with people's interests on it. When people do not care about it anymore, its popular side is gradually eliminated.

For example, social media contents are direct reflections of this aspect. Followers and views are the ones being chased today and those are what makes people popular. More celebrities are coming out but many of them are not artists. They think that their contents are their artistic values. Indeed, it could change aesthetic perspectives of popular culture. However, those are merely symptoms of trends in which those are temporary since those will catch attention if people view and follow them. Once they are left, they are no longer popular nor get any attention from others.

Another face underlines that popular culture is used to oppose indications of high culture. By stating

popular indication, low culture is slowly uplifted since it covers more people in egalitarian senses. This is the face of mass culture in which its involvement always walks with experience of people's everyday life. It is indeed disobeying any hierarchy since everyone may have power to affect and be affected by both internal and external reasons. This aspect is matter of resistance that opposes any external power that would like to tame this culture.

For example, there are various new literature in Instagram and Twitter/X. People do not have to be a poet to shape aesthetic words and being recognized by many people. In Instagram, people could show their literary works alongside with various images to enhance their poems. In Twitter/X, people could make short stories in serials though they are limited by 160 characters of Twitter/X. They may even get involved with their audiences who could direct the conflicts and endings of such stories. Those new literature are such resistance to traditional literature in which certain authors, writings, and publishers must always

intact. Through social media, people could be anonymous, the poems or stories could be so short, and the publishers could be omitted. By stating resistance toward traditional values of literature, new and enhanced literature could enrich meaning of worldly literature either.

Another face founds popular culture in matter of subtlety. There are abundant, and even infinite, faces of popular culture and its interpretations. One may totally embrace a culture at all, while others may only know some of it but embrace others more (Nadkarni & Prugl, 2021; Pieterse, 2020). This aspect include that identities are always plural in its nature. No one only has one single identity. Popular culture is not about totality, any reduction, surplus, combination, and even degradation is always possible in any condition (Smarandreetha, et al., 2023; Wulandari, et al., 2023).

For example, since identities are plural, those are included in matters of being social either. One person could not be defined by what they wear every day. A father could be a good gamer too. A career woman is also a good wife and housewife too. This condition is stated as multitude in globalization era. However, the conditions may not always be ethically good. Religious person could be pedophile or corrupted leader. Any goodness could always demand more advantages too. The violent-game players may not always apply violence too in their life.

From those four faces above, popular culture is not static at all but dynamic through experience, taste, and closed embracement of the people to their identities. It founds its flexibility in its various possibilities by keep opening any definition involved. It is stated ontologically as its ethical sense, that is bringing more freedom of actualized power. This is the one in which post-modernism speaks of bodily phenomenology. It is known not because it is thought, but being practiced through identities of everyday life.

Moreover, popular culture works in matter of circuit of culture where production, consumption, regulation, work along with representation and identity. In this case, culture is not as it is but such

shared meanings of sign and signified of understood language (Nadkarni & Prugl, 2021; Pieterse, 2020). Therefore, it never stays out of identities embraced by people. It is due to culture is actually about language as symbolling feelings, concepts, contexts, and ideas being communicated through everyday dialogues. By accentuating language, popular culture makes more sense since it is so discursive that may be the source, media, and even the result of dialectical understandings.

Continuations in Current Reading and Sharing Culture

Throughout the discussions of language, its objects range widely from written, speech, to discourse. All of them are included in the matter of texts. By stating so, texts are taken in ids widened meanings as signs, symbols, and intertwined meanings related to identities embraced by people. The texts do not come or stand alone, but being lived through cultural decoding and encoding of meanings. In this sense, decoding means breaking down implied

meanings while encoding is shaping the symbols as the former.

Actions of decoding and encoding meanings are closely correlated with reading culture. It is true that reading is action of humans' everyday life. Yet, not many of them understand that the actions are quite complex since it communicates signs and signifiers among various symbolic points (Nadkarni & Prugl, 2021; Pieterse, 2020). It is certainly seen in an example when people do not really understand what they read. It is not because they ignore the reading materials, but it is due to different knowledge and backgrounds between the readers and the materials (Smarandreetha, et al., 2023; Wulandari, et al., 2023). Somehow, any reading is about how identity speaks and feels. It is never neutral yet free-value at all.

Reading is cultural activity in which interpreting is always intact within. People do not just spell words, but they always ask the meanings of what they have read. It is because any reading brings stimulus to self to unbox and re-create meanings out of merely definitions (Nadkarni &

Prugl, 2021; Pieterse, 2020). The act of reading essentially is negative at first.it shows that when reading something, people will never automatically agree to its content. They will always ask whether it was true or not. Some of them check the facts, some of them look at their own knowledge, while others may find the words in dictionary or other books. Reading then is not an action, but reaction in which future knowledge is potentially created (Jovchelovitch, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2021). The meanings are waiting to be understood, therefore, at some points, reading is matter of education too.

The relations between information and literacy in context of contemporary culture indeed show reading culture as the main involvement in today's indication. The raising technology is not without interpretations. Those always urge people to know and understand more. In today's consumer society, people are pushed to consume more (Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021). Abundant flowing information then is not always true at all. Furthermore,

any consumption actually requires more approaches to be explored rather than merely reading, liking, and sharing it all.

Contemporary reading culture reflects a dynamic landscape shaped by technological advancements, social media, and changing attitudes toward literature. In the 21st century, the way people engage with written material has undergone significant transformations, giving rise to a multifaceted and interconnected reading culture (Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021). One prominent aspect of contemporary reading culture is digital transformations. E-books in various apps could be easily downloaded and read. People do not have to store many printed books. They just need e-library in their smartphones. The mediums are changing; however, the reading culture is getting more confused today.

Social media platforms also play important roles in reading culture. Those provide people of abundant information. Some of them educational, some of them

entertainment, some of them dancing, and some of them social. Various role-playings are also done by content makers such as pranks, social experiments, or merely just flexing (Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021). People could find various information in order to make them more literate. Diversity and inclusivity indeed have become central themes in contemporary reading culture. Readers are increasingly seeking literature that reflects a broad range of perspectives, voices, and experiences. This emphasis on diversity extends to both authors and characters, with a growing recognition of the importance of representing various cultures and identities in literature. Through these senses, ideas of literature are widened to ideas of texts in which all matters of images, captions, footages, and even advertisements are either categorized as literature.

One main disadvantage of digital transformation is that everything is getting more personalized. Reading experiences are more affected by algorithm-driven recommendation systems on online platforms based on individual reading histories and preferences (Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Mc Carthy, et al., 2022). By stating so, people forget that they are part of wider societies. they tend to be more selfish than before. Each people think that they get better knowledge than others. However, they do not even really know whether the information is true or not. As long as they are flooded by information, they think that they are literate enough. Then, they think that they are legitimated to share any information to other persons.

Ontologically, today's abundant flowing of information has lost its essential sense. People are spoiled with images and bombastic headlines while the contents are quite trivial and cheesy (Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Mc Carthy, et al., 2022). People are also urged to consume more but the information is far from its complete form. Epistemologically, many information is provided, but how to read them are still minimal. People from children to adolescence are

getting involved in social media and online platforms but they do not really know how to deal with them (Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Mc Carthy, et al., 2022). It seems like they practice more than think more. Ethically, polite culture is eroded today. Hate speech are more common alongside with various hoaxes of information. The freedom is intact but it is getting out of any responsibility. Trueness of self is getting rarer as animosity is everywhere in digital media.

One of study case of reading culture is situated in Indonesian elementary school. The problem that many students in elementary schools currently face is that their reading ability is still low. This is because there are not too many people interested in reading and many people have the ability to read. The students get various information from many sources, but they get no channels to produce more. They are now faced with the problem of how to overcome time constraints and be able to read in a relatively short time while still obtaining a lot of information.

Reading literacy for students must be trained a lot since entering elementary school. Some aspects that hinder students' reading abilities including the lack of different learning materials to deliver learning modules should be overcome. Schools need media in which students really need to increase their imagination (Benavides, et al., 2020; Mc Carthy, et al., 2022). Another problem which is an obstacle to attracting reading skills in schools is the lack of a variety of books which makes students feel less enthusiastic about reading books. Teaching objectives must be developed before teaching and learning activities take place so that students know in advance what they will learn in a particular lesson. In teaching, teachers need to explain in advance the skills and material to be studied so that students know in advance the use and meaning of learning.

From the case above, even students are urged to consume and share more. However, they are not accompanied with any channel to produce more. They should study more to produce based on their

creativities. This is a way to make them to always stop and think about what they have read before. By doing so, they could be creative in making a new source of information. It could be anthology of stories, digital contents, or even any other known literature. This is also needed to make them aware of any hoax and hate speech that may follow. They should understand their own experience by keep re-examining them in their life.

Reading as Alternatives in Contemporary Popular Culture

The texts as the widened matters of language put more approaches towards recent culture of sharing information. Therefore, the condition of hoaxes indeed is inevitable and undeniable, since abundant flowing information will always result to surplus of meanings as well (Benavides, et al., 2020; Mc Carthy, et al., 2022). People could not really abandon hoaxes and hate speech as those are the side effects borne by every actor in social media and online platforms. This is not merely an era to say yes to abundant

information. This is also an era in which criticisms bloom.

As listed above, popular culture in information and literacy actually involves such tensions than merely definitions. The tensions are about existence vs essence, paradoxes vs consistencies, and enlightenment vs paranoia. In the first sense, essence is related to fixed definitions. In many literatures, ideas of essence speak of self, determination, and consciousness. Meanwhile, existential is more performative. It speaks of understandings of practicing identities through flexible meanings (Benavides, et al., 2020; Mc Carthy, et al., 2022). The main emphasis of being existential is through dialogues. The tensions between them rely on being stable and unstable. The stable information lists the knowledge in an exact manner, while its existential may involve more creativities in its packaging. By doing so, in many senses, the essence is quite eroded. People are interested more in images and effects that spoil their eyes than the essential information within. Existential points may bring in various possibilities to

come to surface, but somehow various petty, trivial, and even hoax information could always be pushed to show themselves to the public.

The second tension is between paradoxes and consistencies. The paradox point show that people always need various uniqueness to be consumed. Many content creators are getting more views from the other due to their uniqueness in speaking things. The more paradox is shown, the more popular and famous they are. In other senses, more incomes could also be attained. However, paradoxes are out of consistencies since somehow various information ignore ideas of values in everyday life (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Kane, 2019). Followers and views are the trends, but not in the idea of philosophical and ethical values. In this case, the audience will only see the contents as long as the paradox exists. However, formal institutions are in reverse (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Kane, 2019). Consistencies are taught to shape personalities. Those are what could not be found in current trend of information in social media and online platforms.

The third one is between enlightenment and paranoia. Any information essentially should enlighten the audience. However, today's conditions are full of sensations than knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Kane, 2019). People are more attracted to gossips, pranks, and scandals than exploring how values could enhance educations of many people. People are pushed towards paranoia and illusory feelings of otherness. Fear is more flourished than existing ethical senses. In this case, hate speech also plays roles in spreading the bad news covered in sweet images. Societies are urged not to incline more values but to derogate other people by enjoying dialogues of weakness of otherness (Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Kane, 2019). On a hand, various possibilities spread more enlightenment to various levels of societies. on the other hand, the possibilities may also enable derogations of otherness rather than uplifting values of wider senses of many persons.

From the three tensions above, the main emphasis is actually about the reading culture itself. Until

now, reading is merely needed to find various knowledge. It is so intentional especially in formal school while the realities are shown in homes outside school. The realities out there in social media and online platforms are more intriguing (Barry, 2020; Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020). Therefore, reading should be re-interpreted so that it could deal with juggernaut of information in current conditions.

Reading culture should always be an alternative that accompanies every action of touching any kind of knowledge. By stating so, reading is not just consuming, but interpreting, asking, criticizing, and comparing to other information (Barry, 2020; Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020). Indeed, the senses of reading more should always be attached to any aspect of education. Anyone should never stop in one information. It is due to possibility that the information is not totally complete. To make it so, comparing, exploring, and browsing more knowledge are urged to enrich the ideas.

Literacy then should be used as matter of finding truth than effort of merely justification. By stating so, knowledge from various sources should always be filtered, but not restricted. No one could totally stop the flood of information, but everyone could shape such tools to get aware of any bad issue about it (Barry, 2020; Tahmidaten & Krismanto, 2020). Somehow, trends must not always be followed since those may have less knowledge at all. truth should always the essential focus to be attained rather than finding more sensations or even pranks. It is always better to stay intact with the valuable ones than the unknown ones.

The freedom of meanings should be emphasized furthermore to attain the truth as matter of process in various matters of literacies. The freedom in this aspect is the positive one. It is freedom to do more things based on the creativities of the audience (Salamzadeh, 2021; Bennett, 2023). As written above, knowledge should not only be consumed, but also be urged to shape following productions. People have gone away from the real productions

and consumptions as they are alienated from that world. People consume more but they do not really know who produce it. Today's capitalism pushes people to consume without asking, making people get stuck in the realm of hyperreality between imagination and reality.

Moreover, it is always better to find any other media to accompany the flowing of madness of social media and online platforms. The classic ones are not always outdated. It is actually the interpretations of it that should change and cope up with today's reality (Salamzadeh, 2021; Bennett, 2023). One of alternative is pay attention to comic. In Indonesia, reading comic is still regarded as childish and merely for children. However, the themes could vary and deep according to the themes being shown. It is quite similar with graphic novel in which image is just a complimentary.

When comics reach the form of a novel as a complete story, not just a bundle of jokes, the parameters of a structure become visible. When a comic book story is experienced as a whole, the enumeration of its elements forms the character of a language. In other sense, comics is shaped to convey messages through language of written texts and images. In this context, learning refers to a communication process between audience and learning material sources (Salamzadeh, 2021; Bennett, 2023). Comics then could help students to practice reading skills which are often spoken monotonously and converted into conversational sentences that are easily understood by audiences. By understanding comics as alternative of reading culture, various intrinsic elements of narrations could be attained alongside with its external points of meanings.

D. Conclusion

Reading culture in popular culture nowadays are full of tensions than definitions. In many aspects, those may intersect to show more possibilities, but indeed those may also include abundant side effects either. Popular culture is about culture of many people. The knowledge is also spread more evenly. However, the strategies to reading any information and culture is still

minimal. It is better to see reading culture not as the ultimate point, but the alternative that could always accompany any action of attaining knowledge. By doing so, various media could also be dug to indicate more meanings intrinsically and extrinsically as well.

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