

TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVES OF CREATING STORYBOOKS FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

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Abstract: Storybooks are important materials for teachers in assisting pupils during the teaching learning process in the classroom especially for the young learners because it gives a motivating and meaningful context for language learning. Nowadays, teachers have to be creative and innovative in creating their own storybooks for the teaching learning process. The project of making storybooks had been given to the undergraduate students of 8th semester (2010) at English Language Department, University of PGRI Adi Buana during TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) class. Through the results of storybooks project, this research was intended to know whether the undergraduate students' storybooks met the criteria of a good storybook or not. The authors obtained the data from the questionnaires that distributed to ten English teachers in some elementary schools in Surabaya. The result of this research showed that 75% of students' storybooks met the criteria of good storybooks, such as the content is suitable for age level, interesting, memorable, attractive, and easily to understand by children. The result of creating a storybook hopefully will support and help teachers in the teaching learning process in class.

Keywords: *Storybooks, Teachers' Perspective, Primary Students*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English for children is not easy, but it is certainly challenging because children are full of energetic, have shorter focus and attention spans, and learn language according to specific level of development. Children tend to play and imitate while they are learning. The main purpose of teaching English in the early years of schooling is to motivate and develop children to be ready and self-confident in learning English at higher levels of education (Hashemi, 2011: 2084). Brewster (1991: 5) insists that one of the seven main features of good primary practice of reading for children is 'reading literature for enjoyment, responding to it critically, and using that reading for learning'. Reading is one of essential language skills and a highly complicated activity that every learner must learn. Reading is not only a single skill but a combination of many skills and processes in which the readers will interact with printed words and texts for content and pleasure to get information (Al Mansyur, 2011: 70).

In order to gain joyful activities in reading literature for children, the teacher should use variety of reading resources or media. One of the media for teaching reading literature is storybooks. Storybooks are important materials for teachers in assisting pupils during the teaching learning process in the classroom especially for the young learners (Ghosn, 2002: 173) because it gives a motivating

and meaningful context for language learning, since children's language are naturally acquired to stories.

Ghosn (2002: 173) stated that storybooks are chosen as the effective media to develop students' positive attitude toward foreign language and stories in the storybooks serve as an authentic contextual framework through which children are introduced to vocabulary and language structures and through stories, children develop literacy skills which help them later in reading and writing.

Nowadays, teachers have to be creative and innovative in creating their own storybooks for the teaching learning process because through innovative and creative storybooks, the students can raise their critical thinking, have learning and social experience and learn the value of story as well. There are several criteria that English as foreign language (EFL) teacher need to consider for creating a storybook that would be accessible and relevant for the learners and comply to the major objectives; linguistic, psychological, cognitive, social and culture (Loukia, 2006: 27-28). The aim of the study was to find out the perspectives of teacher in creating good storybooks and would like to see whether the storybooks made by the students of English Language Department meet all those criteria in creating storybooks or not.

Significance of the Study

This study gives more information especially to the subject of Teaching English of Young Learners (TEYL) for students of English Language Department in Adi Buana University, in creating a storybook in which they must follow the criteria of a good storybook so that storytelling activities can create a productive environment where the primary students develop their whole personality and more positive attitude to learn the foreign language.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Importance Stories for Children

Why use stories?

As stated by The Writers Bureau (2009), stories play a vital role in the growth and development of children. They discovered stories to be a great tool for teaching English in context and developing children's cognitive and language skills. The books they read and the characters they get to know can become like friends. It is also good for children to understand that storybooks are a useful source of information and that good reading skills are important for success in their future lives. Reading storybook also helps children with their confidence levels, coping with feelings and language and learning.

Ellis and Brewster (1991: 1-2) also give several reasons why teachers should use storybooks. The first reason is that storybooks can enrich the pupils' learning experience. Stories are motivating and fun and can help develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language. The second reason, stories exercise the imagination and are useful tools in linking fantasy and the imagination with the child's real world. While reading to stories, the children can listen to the stories in class and at the same time they can share what they know based on their social experience. The third reason is that children enjoy listening to stories over and over again. This repetition allows language items to be acquired and reinforced.

Another advantage for reading stories to children is by listening to stories, the children's listening and concentrating skills will be developed. Then, stories create opportunities for developing continuity in children's learning (among others, school subjects across the curriculum)

The Story-Based Framework

Loukia, (2006: 27-28) states that the story-based framework is designed to show students how the language, they have already learnt, is used in a different context alternative to the course book. It aims to create a productive environment where the students will develop their whole personality. Implementing a story-based framework really need a great energy, creativity and excellent classroom management skills and flexibility from teachers. Learners are expected to start developing a more positive attitude to learning the foreign language for the following reasons:

1. The stories are memorable, as the language is repeated, and this encourages students to participate. This recycling of patterns incites students to predict what is coming next in the story and, at the same time, exercises their imagination.
2. The pictures are closely related to the text, sometimes they even structure the text (see *Meg and Mog* going down the stairs, where the text appears going down the stairs also). This can support the learners' understanding. The strategy of inferring meaning of words from the text is also supported by the illustrations. The colors, the simple shapes and figures do not distract the learners but rather guide them to key points of the texts. Another merit of this kind of illustrations is that they are easy to imitate or copy, so it comes natural for many creative activities to fit in the framework.
3. The stories are expected to motivate the learners and arouse their curiosity about the target language and its culture. The fact that Spot's stories are also well known in Greece (they have been translated and published), indicates that some of the children may have read them in their mother tongue. This, far from being discouraging for the selection of the stories, was actually one of the reasons for choosing them for this framework: making such associations with the children of the other culture is welcoming, so that learners discover by themselves that they can have many things in common.

What Makes a Good Storybook for Young Kids?

NSW Education (2014) viewed that what the things make a good storybook for young kids. Books with vivid imagery, exciting stories and strong characters will not only entertain your child but set them up to enjoy reading for the rest of their life. Good storybooks have several characteristics; the first one is storybooks teach kids things subtly while still telling a great story, secondly, they are authentic, credible and captivating, thirdly, their words appear bigger as children will easier to read and language used is simple so it will help children understand the story.

Criteria for Selection of Storybook

Loukia (2006: 27-28) stated that there are several criteria that a teacher could use for selecting a story that would be accessible and relevant for her learners. The successful choice, however, is not enough to ensure the good use of a story in class. The activities designed for each story and the exploitation of the rich material in the story itself are very important also. There are six (6) criteria; the first, storybook should fulfill appropriate **language level** such as, vocabulary, structures, notions/functions. The second, it has **content** which is interesting, fun, motivating, and memorable. The third, it has **visuals** that are attractive, potential to work with, big size, has high quality of illustrative styles which synchronize with the text to support children understanding. The fourth, the storybook's content also should encourage **participation** so the children will easily remember the story and its moral. The fifth, the book has **colors, shapes and figures** that guide the students to understand the story and develop their imagination and curiosity. The last one is the storybook should cover **language used** which consists of skills development of language practice, and potential in terms of learning other subjects, target/other culture, meta-cognition.

The Process of Creating Storybook

Kenyon (2014) stated that children love stories, and it will be better that teachers are able to create their own storybook rather than buy them in the bookstore. These are simple steps to make teachers own storybook:

1. The first step is to figure out what kind of story teachers want to write. Story ideas could be anything from favorite birthdays or favorite fairy tales to time-travel fantasies or science-fiction adventures. If they are not sure what to write about, start by going through magazines to find pictures they like in and make up a story to go with the pictures.
2. Once the story is written, the book will need illustrations. Together teachers can cut out pictures from magazines, draw their own pictures or if they have duplicates of family photos they can use those too. If using glue to stick on pictures don not forget to wait for it to dry.
3. Now it's time to create the cover of their new book. They would suggest using construction or heavy paper. How teachers decorate it is completely up to them. Usually the cover will contain a drawing and of course the story title. They could also use stickers, glitter or some other adornments for even more fun. Construction or heavy paper for cover
4. Put all the pages of the story in proper order. Once in order staple the pages together or alternatively teachers can punch a couple of holes on the left side and attach together with yarn or thread.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used descriptive qualitative design in which the project of making storybooks had been given to the (15) fifteen students of 8th semester (2010) in University of PGRI Adi Buana during the TEYL (Teaching English to Young Learners) class which produced five storybooks. Besides, the questionnaire about five storybooks made by the students of English language Department had been given to ten primary English teachers in three private

primary schools in Surabaya. The profile of the teachers included the information about their experience of teaching English using storybooks and personal backgrounds. This descriptive study had been conducted to find out whether the storybooks made by the students of English language Department meet all those criteria in creating storybook or not.

Figure 1.

1. Bath Time for Baby Strawberry



2. The Independent Day



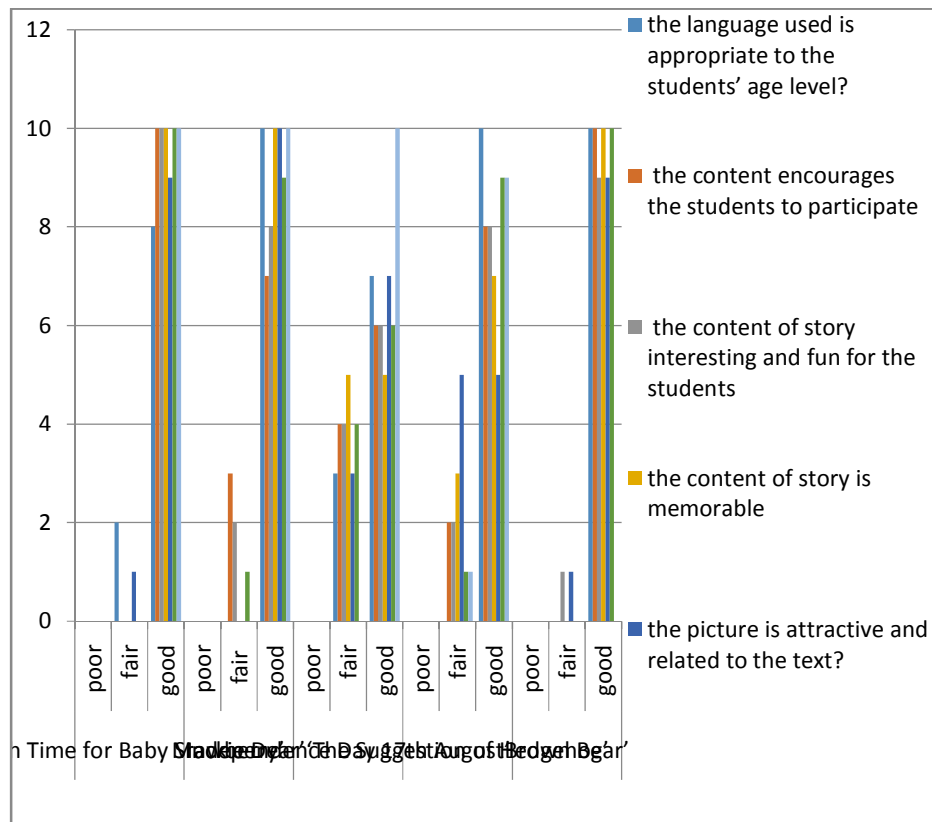
3. Mackie Dear



4. The Suggestion of Hedgehog



Figure 2



FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Through teachers' perspectives in creating storybooks, according to Loukia (2006: 15), there are several criteria that English as foreign language (EFL), teachers need to consider for creating a storybook which would be accessible and relevant for the students in primary students which cover:

- The appropriate language used to the students' age level
- The content encourages the students to participate
- The content of story interesting and fun for the students
- The story is memorable because of repeated language
- The visual picture is attractive and related to the text
- The colors, shapes and figures guide the students to understand the story
- The language used in the content improve the students' understanding of target language and its culture

The graphics performed what the English teachers' perspectives toward five storybooks made by the students of English Department and analyzed whether the storybooks meet the criteria of creating good storybooks. It was found that 75% of English teachers showed the positive response to the five storybooks even though in "Independence Day" and "The Suggestion of Hedgehog" storybooks, some teachers showed only "fair" response in almost all criteria but others still showed "good" response to it. The storybooks made by the students are truly their own creation and innovation and this will give good impact to the English teacher in future.

The result of this research showed that 75% of students' storybooks met the criteria of good storybooks which contain of a good illustrated cover, having repeated and predicted language which suitable for the age level, the organization of the ideas and the content of the story related to each other, the story flows make sense, and has fewer spelling or grammar mistakes. The result of creating a storybook will support and help teachers a lot in the teaching learning process in class.

CONCLUSION

A storybook of teaching and learning can become a very powerful tool in the hands of a teacher. Even though storybooks are often not perfect, that is to say there are may be some wonderful things about a particular item in it, and also some aspects of the book that are not so wonderful, but the teachers can raise the children's critical thinking through the stories. Besides, a well-organized storybook can also intrigue the children and make them want to explore many features of the language, although the activities designed for each story and the exploitation of the rich material in the story itself are also very important.

From the result above, It was found that The storybooks made by the 8th semester English Language Department students met several for creating a storybook which would be accessible and relevant for the students in primary schools which cover:

- The appropriate language used to the students' age level
- The content encourages the students to participate
- The content of story interesting and fun for the students

- The story is memorable because of repeated language
- The picture is attractive and related to the text
- The colors, shapes and figures guide the students to understand the story
- The language used in the content improve the students' understanding of target language and its culture

Therefore, creating storybooks innovatively and creatively is really essential for the English teacher, especially primary English teacher.

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Appendix 1

	Question Item	‘Bath Time for Baby Srawberry’			‘Mackie Dear’		‘Independence Day 17 th August’		‘The Suggestion of Hedgehog’		‘Brown Bear’	
		1	2	3	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Is the language used appropriate to the students’ age level? (in term of vocabulary, structures, notions/ functions)											
2	Does the content encourage the students to participate?											
3	Is the content of story interesting and fun for the students?											
4	Is the content of story memorable? (Language is repeated)											
	Question Item	‘Bath Time for Baby Srawberry’			‘Mackie Dear’		‘Independence Day 17 th August’		‘The Suggestion of Hedgehog’		‘Brown Bear’	
		1	2	3	Yes	No	Yes	No				
5	Is the picture attractive											

	and related to the text?										
6	Do the colors, shapes and figures guide the students to understand the story ?										

Appendix 2

Grading Rubric for the Children's Picture Storybook

(Adapted from ReadWriteThink, 2006)

Criteria	3	2	1
Cover	Title and illustration on cover clearly relate to the story and entice readers to pick up the book.	Title and illustration clearly relate to the story.	Title and illustration are poorly done or do not relate to the story.
Text	The font and legibility of the text do not interfere with or disrupt communication of ideas to the reader in any area of the work.	The font and legibility of the text interfere with but do not disrupt the communication of ideas to the reader.	The font and legibility of the text interfere with and disrupt the communication of ideas to the reader.
Grammar and Spelling	There are no grammar or spelling errors anywhere in the work.	One or two grammar or spelling errors occur in the work.	Three or more grammar or spelling errors occur in the work.
Use of Literary Devices	Three different literary devices are used in the work.	Two different literary devices are used in the work.	One or no literary devices are used in the work.
Plot Development	All five areas of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution) are	One of the five areas of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution) is not	Two or more of the five areas of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and

	present and are clearly developed.	present and/or is not clearly developed.	resolution) are not present and/or are not clearly developed.
The Illustrations' Support of the Plot	The illustrations help present the plot throughout all areas in the work.	The illustrations help present the plot in a majority of areas throughout the work.	The illustrations help present the plot in only a minority of areas throughout the work.
Execution of Illustrations	Illustrations are neat and visually pleasing throughout the entire work.	Illustrations are neat and visually pleasing throughout a majority of the work.	Illustrations need more details and attention to visual appearance.