Developing EFL Primary School Teachers' Storytelling Technique to Support Their Students' Language Learning in Class at Maitreyawira School Palembang

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Abstract: This research aimed to develop EFL primary school teachers' implementation of storytelling in primary school class. Storytelling has been one of the popular activities held in schools' competition. However, storytelling is not yet well promoted and implemented within EFL primary school classroom in Palembang. Three EFL teachers were trained on how to develop a lesson plan involving storytelling and given a demonstration on how to conduct storytelling. Four classes were observed for the EFL teachers' storytelling implementation using storytelling rubric. A questionnaire, an interview and teachers' reflection were used as other types of measurement. The findings suggest that EFL teachers still needs help in developing their storytelling technique skills and in implementing storytelling in class. However, the EFL primary school students were very eager in learning English through storytelling activities.

Keywords: *storytelling, EFL teachers, primary school*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan penerapan kegiatan mendongeng pada guru bahasa Inggris di kelas sekolah dasar. Mendongeng menjadi salah satu kegiatan yang populer diadakan pada kompetisi sekolah - sekolah. Namun, kegiatan mendongeng belum dikembangkan dan diterapkan dengan baik di kelas sekolah dasar di Palembang. Tiga guru Bahasa Inggris dilatih bagaimana cara mengembangkan rencana pembelajaran yang melibatkan kegiatan mendongeng dan diberikan demonstrasi bagaimana mendongeng cerita. Empat kelas diobservasi untuk melihat pelaksanaan kegiatan mendongeng guru Bahasa Inggris menggunakan rubrik mendongeng. Kuesioner, wawancara dan refleksi guru digunakan sebagai alat ukur lainnya. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa guru Bahasa Inggris masih membutuhkan bantuan dalam mengembangkan keterampilan teknik mendongeng mereka dan dalam menerapkan kegiatan mendongeng di kelas. Namun, siswa dan siswi sekolah dasar sangat bersemangat dalam belajar bahasa Inggris melalui kegiatan mendongeng.

Kata-kata kunci: *mendongeng, guru bahasa Inggris, sekolah dasar*

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The purpose of this research is to explore the use of storytelling activity at Maitreyawira Primary School, Palembang. Furthermore, this research focuses on the EFL primary school teachers' developing storytellling technique and its implementation in class, particularly, in finding out how the use of storytelling techinique supports the EFL students learning language achievement. At the moment, the school faces several challenges, demanding parents who expect their children to be able to communicate fluently in English and students' requirements in language learning achievement.

Studies have indicated positive benefits of story. Firstly, a research conducted by Dujmovic (2006, p.76) indicated that storytelling develops the students' language acquisition and emotional intelligence. Next, Flynn (2013, p.4) explained in his findings of research about story circle, that children independently connect with others, willingly share experience and interest. Furthermore, children are able to determine the learning process in their classroom. Another research by Falukner (2014, p.89), mentioned children storytelling develops the students' learning process by listening. Additionally, Trivette and Dunst (2007, p.2) highlighted postive benefits of reading towards their language aspects. Finally, Anggraini (2016, p.9) proved in her research that storytelling is able to develop children's behaviour positively.

Storytelling activity has been one of the most held activities at English competitions in Palembang at any level of schools. However, it is rarely promoted by EFL teachers at schools. This is because it is not strongly embedded in the curriculum. In this study, we are focusing on the curriculum of EFL primary schools. Moreover, for teachers to understand and apply the concept of storytelling, it is strongly suggested that storytelling activity be included in the curriculum of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education as a course. Hence, EFL teachers know how to develop and conduct storytelling activity appropriately in their class.

From five English Education Study Program of five universities in Palembang, storytelling is not developed as a course within their curriculum. Furthermore, storytelling activity in EFL curriculum for primary school level is not much focused, either in KTSP curriculum and 2013 curriculum.

Research concerning storytelling have been conducted throughout Indonesia.

Among these research, some are conducted at junior high schools but little has been done at primary school level. Some of this research investigated the use of media in storytelling activity in class such as puppet (Boeriswati, 2013, p.411). Others investigated storytelling in developing one of the language skills (Marzuki, Prayogo and Wahyudi, 2016, p.20).

A research conducted by Tridinanti (2017, p. 2543) in Palembang, looked at a kindergarten school involving 5 to 6 year old students using digital storytelling to develop their vocabulary acquisiton in which the result showed positive feedback from the children. However, in previous research, EFL teachers' experience and challenges in conducting storytelling in class has not yet been much discussed on. Whilst in this study, we investigated on how EFL teachers implemented story-telling activity within their class. It is our aim to help solve some of the issues faced by the EFL primary school teachers at Maitreyawira Primary School, Palembang.

Hence, the research questions in this study are what are the challenges and issues faced by EFL primary school teachers of Maitreyawira Primary School, Palembang in conducting storytelling implementation in their class; and how should storytelling be implemented and promoted in EFL primary schools for EFL teachers to support the students' learning language activity?

Storytelling in EFL Context

The National Storytelling Association (cited in McWilliams, 1998, para.3) mentioned four definitions of storytelling. Firstly, storytelling is defined as an interactive performing art form in whic there is a connection and interaction between the storyteller and the audience; secondly, as co-creative process in which the audience depend totally on the storyteller›s performance that involves elemnts such as eye contact, voice, intonation, storytellers› experience, story content and the culture of storytelling; thirdly, as interpretive and uniquely human meaning that storytelling is one means of communication in human›s life; and finally, as a process - storytelling is the platform to convey the value and content of the story told.

Kalantari and Hashemian (2015, p.231) conducted a research that used storytelling as an approach to teach English to Young EFL Iranian learners from 8 to 14 years old.

The implementation of storytelling focused on students' improvement of vocabulary knowledge. It was an experimental research design in which vocabulary test were given before and after the treatment that involved storytelling. The teachers used power-point as visual aids, pictures and gestures. The result of the research indicated that the students' vocabulary development progressed positively.

Tridinanti, (2017, p.2543) found out that the use of digital storytelling which complemented music and involved sounds at a kindergarten in Palembang, Indonesia, enhanced the children's English vocabulary acquisition. The research design was action research design consisting of three cycles. The teachers were not using teaching aids but body movements whilst storytelling. Positive interaction between teachers and students were observed. Furthermore, the students showed enthusiasm in learning vocabulary using digital storytelling.

Damayanti (2016 p.232), conducted an action-oriented case study at a junior high-school in Bandung Barat region, Indonesia using storytelling to support the students' writing by applying reading to learn (R2L) pedagogy. The lesson initiated with oral story sharing that consisted of four stages. Those are preparation, modelling, joint retelling, and individual retelling. After-ward, the students underwent three phases consisting of detailed reading, joint rewriting, and individual rewriting. The significant finding of this research is that students' written structure developed positively.

From these research, storytelling plays a vital role in shaping the EFL students' language component and skill. However, teachers' role in using storytelling technique is not deeply discussed. Therefore, in this research we unfold the use of storytelling technique from the EFL teachers' perspective firstly, in developing their students language learning. Furthermore, this research aims to support EFL teachers' storytelling implementation in class.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach, specifically it was a case study taking place at Maitreyawira School, Palembang which collects data by observing, interviewing of the participants, analysing the participants' reflection about storytelling activities in their class (Creswell, 2014, p.451). The participants were three EFL primary teachers at Maitreyawira School, Palembang. Four classes were observed for the teachers' storytelling implementation. Two classes were first graders while the other two are second and third graders. There were a total of 105 students. Student teachers of English Education, Musi Charitas Catholic University were also involved to help the EFL teachers arrange the primary school students.

Procedure and Implementation

The three EFL teachers attended a one day workshop on storytelling technique. Before the workshop, the EFL teachers were asked whether they have used storytelling technique. Furthermore, they shared and explained the technique used in their classes and how they integrated the storytelling technique. Next, they demonstrated the storytelling technique and its elements such as sitting arrangement,voice-gesture-facial express-ion, and intonation.

They explained that storytelling is different than drama, poetry recitation and theatre act. This was highlighted since the storytelling conducted in Palembang has a unique nuance that emphasis heavily on theatrical act. Additionally, the EFL teachers were presented with a lesson plan that includes storytelling activity. Finally, they were encouraged to conduct simulation of storytelling.

In the class, the teachers and students sat on the floor forming a circle. The teachers read the story using English story books of classical stories such as the Goldilocks and Jack and the Bean Stalk. The teachers used a mixture of English and Indonesian language for certain words. Whilst doing the storytelling, the children were encouraged to participate in the storytelling by reading several sentences and asked whether they could guess the next story plot.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

Based on the EFL teachers' reflection at the workshop conducted before the storytelling implementation, the EFL teachers positively participated with enthusiasm. Some of their excerpts are,

> *"...diberi materi mengenai intonasi saat menyampaikan storytelling dimana berbeda penekanan dan intonasi akan memberikan arti dan kesan yang berbeda pada cerita yang disampaikan kepada anak-anak. Ekspresi juga mempunyai pengaruh besar dalam penyampaian cerita dan menarik perhatian*

siswa."

"...given a material about intonation when delivering storytelling where stress and intonation will give meaning and different impression toward the story read to children. Expression also have huge impact in storytelling and in drawing children's attention".

"Saya sangat mendukung dengan dibuatnya reading corner untuk siswa disetiap kelas."
" I strongly support reading corner establishment by students in every class."
"I knew the ways how to teach storytelling to my students…"
"…new knowledge about storytelling, how to use this method to teach reading in my class"
"It is very useful and enrich my knowledge how to teach English by using another method, storytelling."
"During the workshop I also got new knowledge about library management.."

Yet, based on the recording of storytelling activity in the class, the teachers had difficulty in arranging the class because the students were not used to sit on the floor. Some children complained and one insisted not to participate in the storytelling activity. Furthermore, they were reluctant to be organised in small groups to read the stories.

Below are several excerpts of the students' feedback on storytelling before the implementation.

"...saya dak mau duduk di bawah, nanti baju kotor, kena marah Mama."
"...I do not want to sit on the floor, my clothes will get dirty and Mum will be angry."
"ceritanya sudah tahu…"
"I know the story."
"ceritanya kenapa cuma satu…terlalu cepat selesainya…"
"howcome there is only one story..the ending is too fast..."

The teachers also experienced challenges in the implementation. Specifically, in grade one students, some of their excerpts taken from the interview were,

"ada anak yang merasa bosan karena waktu terlalu lama dan cerita terlalu panjang"
" there is a child that gets bored because the story is too long."
"dibandingkan kelas 2 dan kelas 3, anak kelas 1 sangat sulit diatur."
"compared to grade 2 and grade 3, the first grade was quite difficult to cope with."

The interview results show that the teachers hardly ever applied storytelling techniques in class due to limitation of time and not knowing how to apply storytelling appropriately and effectively. Furthermore, they mentioned that the classrooms were not set up for storytelling atmosphere where students are able to sit down comfortably in a circle. Hence, the EFL teachers found it challenging to implement in class since storytelling technique is not yet a culture in the EFL primary classes. While for second graders and third graders, the students were more cooperative and followed the storytelling with enthusiasm. The EFL teachers of these classes mentioned it maybe because the students love to read books.

There are several limitations found in this research and suggestions for further research improvements. The storytelling implementation needed to be conducted within one semester for these EFL teachers to grasp the gist of storytelling activities. Furthermore, only one teacher was given the opportunity to conduct demo on storytelling before the implementation. The other teachers were not fully prepared. This study also recommends EFL teachers to closely partner work with school librarian and conduct a complete microteaching before the implementation phase.

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