

## INTRODUCING LITERATURE THROUGH ART WORK TO YOUNG LEARNERS

**Fitra Elia  
Betty Sailun**

Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Riau Islamic University.

fitraelia74@gmail.com 081261245124

betty sailun@gmail.com 085374190320

### Abstract

There are various ways in introducing and teaching literature to young learners. One of them is by telling stories. Some teachers tend to avoid this activity because of lack materials. Most teachers only use story books provided by schools. The research aimed to build students' creativity by making their own story books through art work. The sample was the fifth semester students of Riau Islamic University who have taken English for young learner subject. Total sample was 25 students by using random sampling technique. This is a descriptive research design which focused on teaching media created by students, and interview as the research instruments. The students were asked to create *peek-over book*, *envelope book*, *pop-up book*, *paper bag book*, *shirt book*, *step book*, *fold-out book*, *video book*, *journals*, *flip book*, *accordion book*, and *big book*. The result was satisfying. Most of the students were able to input famous stories such as *A Little Red Riding Hood*, *Malin Kundang* and *Pray of the Frog*, rhymes, and poems into colorful and artful books they created. They could also improve adapting literary works which were presented visually throughout video into a written form such as *A Hungry Caterpillar* and *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*. The most favorite books created were pop-up books. Based on the interview, the students said that it was more challenging and interesting. It has been more effective to encourage and motivate them to write and be confident with talent they have. They were also enthusiastic to read more literary works being adapted into their art work. It can be concluded that introducing literature through art work is one of teaching media alternatives which can motivate young learners be more creative and more enjoyable in learning English.

**Keywords:** English literature, art work, young learners

### Introduction

Teaching English to children is regarded as something that is challenging and fun. The characters who are inquisitive and enthusiastic in learning something new often "forces" teachers to be more creative in creating a fun learning environment. Infrequently, the class is so boring when teachers do monotonous learning activities by providing teaching materials in a manner that is focused on teacher-centered rather than on student-centered learning. In some cases, many English teachers are stuck in teaching four language skills and three language components. They finally focused teaching only on grammar and vocabulary. Disintegrated of teaching and learning process is causing students are just memorizing words but not knowing how to be a productive language learner in speaking and writing skills.

Reading activity has been dominated by reading the text loudly and answering further questions. In fact, the students only listen to the text read by the teacher without drilling students' phonetic skill. Not surprisingly, in its development, the students are not trained to pronounce English words properly. In the course of telling stories, the students are only asked to memorize and retell a story in front of the class without having the opportunity to interpret the story with their own version.

Introducing the literary works especially English literature such as short stories, folk tales, poems, rhymes, etc. are mostly avoided by teacher. According to Bassnett & Grundy, 1993, many EFL/ESL teachers consider that literature just as the work of art and beyond the proficiency level of their students and ignore it as a source of learning and teaching. Moreover Wasanasomsithi, 1998 said that some teachers use literature as a filler type activity and not as an integral part of their instruction (Khatib, Amir Husein & Rahimi 2012:32).

In some cases, this is caused by lack of knowledge of the teachers themselves about literary works and their motivation to provide various materials. They mostly often rely on compulsory textbooks and LKS (student worksheet) where literary works are limited. For the English language teachers, the difference in the level of English amongst children in any classes is even more remarkable. Many teachers still think that literature cannot be used in English classes because it is thought to be too difficult for pupils but they do not think about the variety of work and many ways of using stories in ELT. As a matter of fact, literature has been proved as a rich source for English language teaching (Dymešová, 2005:5). Literature can be used in classes

of English according to the age, the language level, the cultural background, and the tastes and interests of the learners. Lack of instructional media for literary works is the main goal of this research by encouraging students to read and make their own books through art skills.

#### Brief Review of Related Theories

Language and literature are interrelated materials which can be taught at the same time. There are four reasons why a language teacher should use literary texts with classes: a) Literature is a valuable authentic material because readers have to deal with language intended for native speakers (different linguistic uses, forms and conventions), b) Cultural enrichment, the imagined world of literature reveals thoughts, feelings, customs, and other features of life of the country where English is spoken, c) Language enrichment. Literary texts offer many features of written language that can broaden learners' skills, d) Personal involvement. Engaging imagination with literature helps learners to change their attention from language system to the story itself. Sometimes the readers are drawn into the development of the plot. "The language becomes 'transparent' – the fiction summons the whole person into its own world (Collie and Slater, 1987:8).

Texts should be chosen according to students' needs, interests, cultural background, and language level. Selected books must be relevant to the life experiences, emotions, or dreams of learners. Moreover, Collie and Slater (1987:9) suggest that choosing a work is not much above the student's reading proficiency. Interest, appeal, and relevance are all more important. Duff and Maley, 1992 provide many interesting activities which are addressed to teacher trainers, training teachers, and teachers who are interested in using literary texts in ELT. The primary aim of Maley's approach is "to use literary texts as a resource for stimulating language activities." They are interested in involving students in the text, in the group and in the tasks concerning literary texts.

To put it simply, it is suggested that there are three main reasons for using literature: linguistic, methodological, and motivational. First in terms of linguistic reasons, literary texts can develop the student's knowledge of language at the levels of vocabulary and structure and at the level of textual organization. Second, when it comes to methodological reasons, meanings in literary texts bring out different understanding, reactions, and interpretations. This means variety in opinions and this variety may inspire discussions and sharing feelings, and all these mean that literature encourages interaction. Finally, literature involves affective, attitudinal, and experiential factors and so may motivate learners to read. With the use of literature, learners may build new vocabulary as well as they expand their understanding of words they already knew. Literature may also help students to have the habit of reading. They can develop the habit of reading especially for enjoyment and interest. They may increase confidence and fluency, and gain the habit of reading in a foreign language. This is important for students' further independent motivation in learning a foreign language (Haldun, 2013:16)

In general, children's literature has been categorized into some genres. Based on Instructional Materials Centre, the genres have been defined as follows:

- a. *Contemporary realistic fiction* includes stories that could happen to people or animals. The characters are made up, but their actions and feelings are similar to those of people we could know. These stories often take place in the present time and portray attitudes and problems of contemporary people. Realistic fiction includes family stories; realistic animal stories; sports stories; adventures; mysteries.
- b. *Historical fiction* is set in an historical time period which blends authentic historical settings and facts with imaginary characters and plot. It may include real historical figures as secondary characters. It is generally considered to be a story written about a time in which the author has not lived or set in a time no later than one generation before the composition.
- c. *Nonfiction or Information books* emphasize documented facts. They inform and entertain young readers by the excellence of presentation, illustration, and research. They can be written about any aspect of the physical, biological, or social world.
- d. *Biography* tells the story of an actual person's life, or portion of his or her life. Often the person's life is notable for his or her accomplishments or a significant triumph. An *autobiography* is simply a biography written by a person about him- or herself.
- e. *Traditional literature*, the ancient stories or poems of many cultures, originate in the oral, or storytelling, tradition. These books are often attributed to different groups and cultures, but have no known original authors. Traditional literature has been used as a way of passing down traditional wisdom and knowledge necessary for the survival of the group as well as a way of explaining myths, epics, legends, tall tales, fables, and religious stories.
- f. *Poetry* is the artistic expression of ideas and feelings through a rhythmical composition of imaginative and beautiful words carefully selected to achieve the desired effect in the listener or reader. Types of poetry include Mother Goose and nursery rhyme books; anthologies of many kinds of poetry in one volume; poetry books in which all the poems are on one theme or topic; and single, illustrated poems.



- g. *Modern fantasy* refers to works of literature in which the events, settings, or the characters are outside the realm of possibility. The author must convince the reader to suspend disbelief by creating an internally logical and consistent world. There are many types of modern fantasy, including the modern fairytale (by a known author); animal fantasy; personified toys and objects; quest stories and high fantasy; time travel; and stories about miniature worlds and people.
- h. *Science fiction* is a type of imaginative literature in which the author convinces us that something unusual could happen because the story is grounded in scientific principles or technical possibility. It is sometimes called *futuristic fiction*.
- i. *Picture books* (which are a format, not a genre) are profusely illustrated books in which the pictures are essential to complete understanding and enjoyment of the story. The illustrations may provide clues to setting, plot, characterization and mood. Types of picture books include baby and toddler books; alphabet, counting and other concept books; wordless books; picture storybooks; pattern books; and beginning readers.

Therefore, the general purpose of this study was to encourage students to read literary works and adapt them into art work based on their own interpretation. It was not only facilitating students' talent at art skill but also involving their reading and writing skills all at once.

Henceforth, the paper aims at finding answer to the following research question: "Can the use of teaching media created by students contribute to learning literature for young learners?"

### Research Methods

The design of this research was a descriptive research where some important aspects of this design were explained as follows.

#### Participants

The participants of this research consisted of 25 students of English Department of Teacher training and Education Faculty of Riau Islamic University, Pekanbaru. They took part in this study voluntarily and their ages ranged from 19 to 25 with the average of 22. The heterogeneous participants consisted of 13 male and 12 female. At the time of data collection, they had studied English for Young Learners subject. They made books and created other teaching media which can be applied into teaching literature.

#### Instruments

In order to collect the data, the instruments used in this study were

1. *Books and art works made by participants*, The students were guided in making books referred to *Read! Write! Publish! Making Books in the classroom* written by Barbara Fairfax and Adela Garcia (1992). The books made were *peek-over book, envelope book, pop-up book, paper bag book, shirt book, step book, fold-out book, video book, journals, flip book, accordion book, and big book*.

2. *Interview*, The type of interview was a semi-structured where the participants were asked to give their comments and opinions about the problem or the purpose of the research. The questions focused on the books they have created and its relation with using it as teaching media for teaching literature for young learners.

#### Procedure

The materials about kinds of children's literature were given to students during their classes. Most of the stories were abridged and simplified books. Each student must read some famous literary works such as folk tales (*a Little Red Riding Hood, a Lion and a Mouse, Snow White*, etc.), poetry, rhymes, etc. After choosing a literary work, they were asked to make a book in group or individual. Each group prepared an art work by inputting a literary work into their creation.

### Result and Discussion

#### Results

The results in art works created by participants were satisfying. The contents of the books varied from traditional to modern literature. Some students decided to make the book individually. Most of the materials used were crayons, colorful markers, scraps of colored paper, writing paper, scissors, glue, stapler, etc. Because of limited space for this paper, there are only six of twelve books presented here. Those books were considered suitable for story telling activity.

#### a. Pop-Up Book

The literary genre of two pop-up books selected below were traditional work that was animal book; *Pray of the Frog* and information book; *Corn*. The first book was categorized into fable where the main characters were mostly animals. The story was interesting that was about the frog which always prayed for the rain. The moral value behind the story was reminding readers not forgetting praying to God. The story

had been simplified through short dialogues. Unfortunately, there were many grammatical errors in the language used. It would influence young learners' misconception about their grammar understanding.

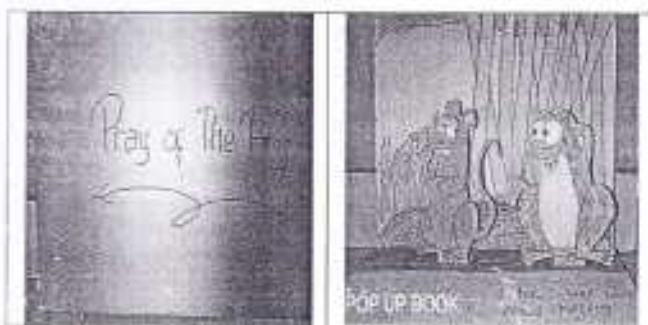


Figure 1. Pop-Up Book (Fable)

The second book was categorized into nonfiction which informed about facts. It was presented interestingly with colorful and artful pictures. The situation described was daily activities which commonly experienced by young learners such as enjoying roasted or boiled corn. The main purpose of the book was to inform the readers about the process of planting corn. The language used was quite communicative which suited young learners. Smartly, the text was presented in two languages, English and Indonesian, but it was not as bilingual books in common which usually put both languages on the same page. Indonesian text (translated form) was hidden folded behind English text. It can minimize students' habit in reading Indonesian version before reading English.



Figure 2. Pop-Up Book (Information)

#### b. Big Book

The size of this book is 43,5cm x 61cm. It is categorized into big book because it can be seen and used for big class. The book was a famous legend story from West Sumatra Province; *Malin Kundang* which was about an insubordinate son who did not want to confess his own mother. The good point of this book was moral values and useful vocabularies which were attached behind the book.



Figure 3. Big Book (Legend)

#### c. Plastic Spiral Binding Book

The idea of this book was adapted from video by Simitri Crane, created and illustrated by James Dean, and story by Eric Litwin at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoovsCngvYY>. It was categorized into



modern fantasy in which the character was a cat named Pete. Pete was described as a cheerful animal which always be happy in any unfortunate events he experienced. A skillful story teller needed who is going to use this media because there was no text provided on the book. The activity of story telling should be also supported by musical background or sound effect to add a lively situation of the story.



Figure 4. Plastic Spiral Binding Book 1 (Modern Fantasy)

The second plastic spiral binding book was a famous fairy tale from Europe; *a Little Red Riding Hood*. The story was about a girl with a red hood and a wolf. **The moral to the story is that children must obey their parents and that they must never talk to strangers.** Even a very friendly stranger is capable of having bad intentions.



Figure 5 : Plastic spiral binding book 2 (Fairy Tale)

#### d. Fold-Out Book

This fold-out book was designed for rhyming. There was a stripe zebra as the first word used in the rhyme; *stripe zebra, stripe zebra, what do you see? I see a spotty toad looking at me. Spotty toad, spotty toad, what do you see? I see a yellow bee looking at me,* and so on. The book is suitable for introducing names of animals through rhymes. The rhyme can be made more complicated by adding adjectives before nouns introduced.



Figure 6. Fold-Out Book (Fable)

**Discussion**

After presenting and analyzing the results above, here is the discussion about how those literary works contribute into English language learning. Based on the interview results, almost all participants agreed that creating own teaching media in this case making books for introducing literature to young learners will be much more interesting than using provided ones. It also motivated students to read more various books. They were also encouraged to write the new version of the story based on their own interpretation. At this activity, most of them were still found difficult to produce sentences in correct way. Most of them tended only recopied the text from the source book. They need more practice in how to retell a story in written form. Of twelve books made, pop-up book was considered as the most favorite and challenging because they spent much time for creating pop-up objects on each page of the book.

**Conclusion and Suggestion**

In summary, this study reveals that the use of teaching media created by students in ELT classrooms may motivate them better than reading printed course books. The results show literature can be used as a positive stimulation to motivate students, and a good means to improve reading and writing skills. Telling stories would be an ideal activity in introducing literature to young learners. Creative and interesting media will give positive input for classroom usage. The results imply the importance of the use of literature in ELT, and that literature should be part of teaching-learning process. This research has given positive results about encouraging students to read, write, and create a teaching media of literature to young learners; however, further research needed to explore the issue with students at different levels.

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