

ENCOURAGING READING INTEREST USING PICTURE STORY BOOKS TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract

Reading is one of the fundamental skills needed to improve language skills and global knowledge. The key to increasing students' reading interest is to get them used to read from an early age. The purpose of this study was to describe the use of picture story books to increase students' reading interest in literacy activities and to find out teacher and student responses to it. This research is a qualitative descriptive study that includes teachers and 32 first-grade students in an elementary school in Trenggalek as research subjects. Based on the study's results, the use of picture story books in literacy activities was carried out in six steps with a different story at each meeting. Furthermore, teachers and students gave positive responses about it. Teachers agree that learning with picture story books can increase students' reading interest because pictures can help them understand the meaning of unknown words. Also, the use of picture story books can be an illustration to guide students in understanding the storyline and help develop students' cognitive aspects in critical thinking, as well as creating a sense of pleasure and enthusiasm during the reading process.

Keywords: *Reading Interest, Picture Story Books, Young Learners*

1. Introduction

The importance of reading is undeniable. As stated by Clarke et al. (2013), there are some reading benefits obtained such as texts may ignite individual's imagination, enhance knowledge, increase vocabulary and stimulate critical thinking. Further, since English becomes an International language in every part of people's life in the world, sciences, news, philosophies, academic matters and many others are mostly written in English. It leads fact that English reading has important role and becomes part of people's daily life. Therefore, reading is a key to enrich people's insight and leads them to get answer that has arisen on their minds. The idea above is in line with Harmer (2007) that

reading is fruitful not only for career, study and pleasure but also for language aquisition. He further states that reading becomes good model for English writing. It provides opportunities to study vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, and demonstrates the way to construct sentence, paragraph and whole text. Reading is closely related with literacy activity since literacy is most commonly understood as reading and writing ability. Clay (2001) revealed that reading should be applied in early age habits as early literacy. It is important to improve reading interest, motivation and ability to the learners since in the young age. As recognizing by the educators, raising the literacy level begins with the early childhood. The learners who have had comprehending various of language from early

age are more likely to develop a solid literacy foundation. It can be said that the younger a person learn, the better his performance comes to be.

Considering to the importance of reading above, it is necessary as learners to understand what they read, get knowledge based on the text and enjoy what they have read. As it is known, comprehending a text is not easy to young learners. However, it does not be the main focus to be achieved by young learners, especially for early grade of students in elementary school. To young learners, maintaining the motivation to keep their interest in reading is the main goal. Unfortunately, nowadays a lot of young learners show their lack of interest in reading because of some reasons. First, they feel reading is a chore. Second, the process of reading makes them easily get bored so they try to avoid reading. Third, they look the text is excessive and some of them do not understand the vocabulary of the text. Fourth, they have not found the right book yet. It may be caused by the application of learning model and the guidance is not optimal, so reading activity has not come to be effective and meaningful learning process. Moreover, those conditions mentioned above may give bad effect to learners' process and achievement in reading.

Based on that case, it becomes a challenge for teacher to find an appropriate and effective learning device in concerning that reading is very important skill to be taught. The teacher should give more attention to the learners' problem. As a teacher, he has to do everything in teaching reading to be successful for their learners. He should be able to manage classroom activity by engaging all of the learners actively participate in teaching and learning process. There

are many ways that could be done by teacher such as choosing an interesting learning device. It becomes the teacher's task because applying the right learning device is able to motivate and attract the learners in improving their reading skill. Beside, an appropriate, effective and interesting device used in a classroom will help learners understand the lesson quickly and clearly. There are some learning devices that can be implemented in order to encourage young learners' reading interest. For instance, using picture story books in literacy activity.

A picture story book is kind of book dealing with special design for young learners that combine text and picture drawn as the story illustration. The detailed picture helps the readers to extract meaning, and understand unknown word from the book context. Picture story book combines art of story telling with art of illustration. It is usually kinds of children's book that its illustrations are as important as word in the story telling. Good picture story book provides not only a pleasure but also knowledge for the readers. Most of picture story books are written for young learners, but in recent years, an excellent picture story books for elementary and middle school readers have been published. According to Smeets & Bus (2014) the advantages of presenting pictures and text simultaneously may be resulted by stronger encoding when information is processed through both visual and verbal channel, instead of only one channel. It means that children's recall of the story improves when a narration is accompanied by picture as an illustration. Further, picture story book has some advantages such as leads reading becomes enjoyable activity. It also helps young learners to develop a larger vocabulary and

increase their understanding by looking at the text and picture drawn. Moreover, it can be concluded that picture story books play an important role to develop positive reading interest, habit and attitude among the young learners since it was displaying something eye-catching to them. In addition, it provides a special design since picture story books offer more unusual words and pictures that are different as used in daily language or on television.

Concerning to the issued being discussed, they are some previous studies that presents related discussion. It had been written by Dewi & Prawita (2019) entitled “Improving Young Learners’ Interest in Reading”. Their paper revealed that reading interest played important role in reading instruction and improvement. Therefore, they outlined some great ways of method to encourage the young learners to read by using wall magazine, flash card, and humor that can be applied in strategies of reading aloud, reading the book in several times, reading favorite books, and show many picture books. In line with the insight above, Smeets & Bus (2014) presented a study related to the interactive animated e-book as a word learning device for learners. He examined whether or not these additional elements assist word learning and story comprehension, and what effects accumulate in making the animated e-book that also includes hotspots as the most promising device. He used a sample group of 136 of 4- and 5-years old kindergarten children that randomly assigned to one of four conditions: static e-books, animated e-books, interactive animated e-books, and a control group. The findings suggested that electronic storybooks are valuable additions.

Related to those previous study above, the researcher is interested to conduct a research regarding to the young learners’ reading interest. This research was focused on the application of picture story books as learning device to stimulate learners’ interest in reading. In detail, it was intended to describe the use of picture story books to encourage reading interest to young learners in literacy activity. This research also aims to discover the teacher’s and students’ responses to the use of picture story books to encourage reading interest to young learners in literacy activity.

2. Research Method

This study used descriptive qualitative as a research design. Bogdan & Biklen (2003) stated that the term of qualitative research refers to the broadest sense of the research that has some characteristics: (1) a natural setting in classroom is adopted as source of data; (2) using the researcher as the key instrument; and (3) describing the facts of the subjects. In line with the definition above, Ary et al. (2010) said that descriptive qualitative research deals with the study of human behavior and social life in natural setting, and applied when it does not use stastically analysis. Thus, this method is used for interpreting and presenting the data descriptively. Furthermore, Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) stated that descriptive qualitative focus on the events in natural settings, so that it has a strong handle on what real life is like. In other words, it is a naturalistic approach that produces descriptive data of individual’s own written or spoken words, and their observable behavior where researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest.

The subjects of this research were teacher and 32 first grade students in one of elementary schools in Trenggalek. The data were collected by using observation and interview. The first data was the interaction between the teacher and students or among students in teaching and learning process. It was gained by observing teacher's and students' activities during the use of picture story books to encourage students' reading interest. The observation was carried out in one semester. The researcher observed once a week in a classroom, especially in English literacy activity section. It was non participant observation since the researcher was not involved in the learning process. She only sat at the backward of the class during the observation, observed, recorded and made notes concerning to the teaching and learning activity. Further, the second data was gained from interview. It was used to know teacher and students' responses regarding to the use of picture story books to encourage students' interest in reading. As stated by Ary et al. (2010), interview is one of data collection techniques that widely purposed to obtain qualitative data, and used to gather data from individual's point of view, opinion, belief, and feeling about certain situation in their own words. In addition, interview provides information that could not be obtained through observation, or it may be used to verify observation.

After getting the data needed, it was analyzed by using three stages as proposed by Ary et al. (2010), those are familiarizing and organizing, coding and reducing, and interpreting and representing. In the familiarizing and organizing, the data were read and reread, checked and rechecked to organize all of the data. Then, the researcher came to the next

stage, that was coding and reducing. Here, the data that have no relation were reduced. Finally, interpreting and representing became the last stage of data analysis technique in this study. Interpretation is bringing out the meaning, telling the story, and providing explanation, while representation is about how the data are presented. In other words, on this stage, the researcher elaborated the data referred to the related theory and finding, then represented it in the form of word, sentence, paragraph, or even diagram or table. In addition, the data of this study were analyzed in descriptive manner.

3. Discussion

Dealing with the research aims, the results were described in two sections. The first section was related to the use of picture story books to encourage reading interest to young learners in literacy activity. The data gained from the observation. There are six steps that could be elaborated during the use of picture story books on the classroom, especially in literacy activity. The first step was students paid attention to the teacher modelling of giving questions. Here, teacher triggered students' motivation and prior knowledge by asking some questions related to the material that would be discussed, included the plot and characters of the story. It was done by teacher to make students focused on most of information in a text. Some question asked are "Do you know the story?", "Who are the characters of the story?", "Can you tell the story?" and so on. The second step was students connected their prior knowledge relevant to the story pointed by the teacher. Many of students were enthusiastic to answer teacher's questions. It proved that the students showed their interest of

the story carried by the teacher. The third step was teacher asked students to read the first page of the picture story book in turns. Here, all of the students are paid attention to their friends reading. The fourth step was teacher stimulated the students to predict what happen next on the story along with teacher guidance. In this activity, some students tried to express their opinions related to their predictions of storyline by looking at the picture as an illustration. The students were looked very happy engaged in the learning process. In addition, this activity was used by teacher to develop students' critical thinking. It looked quite success since most of students were tried to develop their thoughts in higher order thinking. The fifth step was the teacher asked students to read the next page of the picture story book. The students were excited reading until the last page. The last step was the teacher asked students' feeling after reading the story, and guided them to comprehend and try to retell the story in their own words. The teacher also stimulated and helped the students to found and explained the moral value gained from the story. Further, the transcription of observation showed that students were able to retell the story in right order of sequence events, and mentioned what they could learn from the story. It was because the pictures of story book could help them to understand the story. In addition, those six steps elaborated above were done by the teacher on each meeting of literacy activity. However, there were different story on each meeting.

The second section was related to the teacher's and students' responses to the use of picture story books to encourage reading interest in young learners. The data gained from interview. The interview was applied to both

teacher and students. However, they were given differents questions. For the teacher, the researcher provided some questions as interview guideline, and those questions were based on three main categories, those are what kinds of picture story book used, the advantages of using picture story book as learning device, and whether or not picture story books was applicable to be applied in literacy ativity to encourage reading interest in young learners. The result of interview revealed that there were some picture story books that used by teacher. For instance, fairy tale, folktale and fable. Those kinds of book used were the picture story books that had clear purposes, because reading is not only for pleasure but also the key for getting knowledge and information. In addition, choosing an appropriate, effective and interesting picture story book becomes a great challenge for teacher since it determines the success of teaching reading. Before choosing the book to be applied, teacher had to know what kinds of book which became favorite for students of elementary school. The teacher's interview result also revealed that creating an enjoyable classroom atmosphere in teaching and learning process was necessary to be considered. Positive learning environment might allow students to feel comfortable, and increase their concentration during learning process. Further, concerning to the second category of interview question that discussed the advantages of using picture story books as learning device, the teacher thought that engaged picture story book could make students' reading activity more interesting. It also became effective learning device to help learners comprehend the text easily by looking at the picture. Moreover, as the answer of the last category of interview question, the teacher agreed

that picture story book was applicable to be applied in literacy activity. It has positive impact to encourage reading interest to young learners. While, for the students, the questions of interview were focus to know their feeling related to the use of picture story books in literacy activity, and the most favorite story that they have ever read. The interview result showed that most of students were happy and enthusiastic joining literacy activity since the teacher used picture story books as learning device. Here, the students have positive responses by looking at their active participation in reading class. In addition, regarding to the most favorite story book, some male students preferred to read fable story, while some female students preferred to read fairy tale story.

4. Conclusion

The research was focused to investigate the use of picture story books to encourage reading interest to young learners in literacy activity, and to discover teacher's and students' responses on it. Based on the result of observation and interview, it can be concluded that picture story books were able to encourage students' reading interest in literacy activity. It could solve students' reading problem so that they were able to improve their reading ability, especially to express their opinion related to the story which they have read. The use of picture story books in teaching and learning process was conducted in six steps with different story on each meeting. In addition, the teacher thought that choosing an appropriate, effective and interesting picture story book should be the main concern. The teacher has to know students' intention, and what kind of

book which becomes their favorite so that they will love and interest in reading. The book should give both pleasure and knowledge or information because the more students read, the better they get. The teacher also thought that creating an enjoyable classroom atmosphere in teaching and learning process was necessary to be considered. In addition, the teacher and students had positive responses to the use of picture story books in literacy activity. The teacher agreed that learning with picture story book helped students to understand the storyline, and it could develop students' cognitive aspect of critical thinking. The students also feel happy and enthusiastic during the reading process.

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