

Integrating Fairy Tales into Reading Class: Do They Catch Young Learners' Reading Interest?

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Abstract

The aim of the present research is to investigate how fairy tales attract young learners' interest in reading. Qualitative approach with ethnography method was applied. The participants involved consisted of 30 fifth graders and an English teacher of a public elementary school in Bekasi, West Java, Indonesia. The data were collected through observation, interview, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using data reduction, description, and verification. The finding demonstrated that fairy tales are proven to catch the young learners' reading interest as they provide imaginative and enchanting content. By way of addition, it was indicated that affective and cognitive factors influence the students' reading interest.

Keywords: affective factors, cognitive factors, fairy tales, reading interest, young learners.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a critical point to support students' learning and their performance at school. It is either claimed as important matter to promote students' success outside schools (Khairuddin, 2013). Reading plays multiple roles, enabling students to gain better understanding, bridge relationship, and show empathy (Collier, 2019). These infer that reading functions to develop either cognitive or affective aspect of learners.

In fact, most students including young learners show less enthusiasm in reading. In other words, their interest in reading is regarded unfavorable. Many factors may affect their reading interest. One main factor is family reading habit (Akhtar, Khan & Rahman, 2019; Geske & Ozola, 2008). Other factor is facility to motivate students to read (Pitoyo, 2020). Reading ability is also observed to give impact on students' reading interest (Lisnasari, 2018).

Consequently, providing felicitous exposure to promote young learners' reading interest is critical to perform. Fairy tales as a part of narrative genre are commonly believed to be beneficial in reading. They even are said to give significant function in childhood (Tesar et al., 2016). This is due to childhood content written in tales. As suggested by Nodelman & Reimer (1996), one of the fairy tales features is the depiction of children's life. Psychologically fairy tales give children guidance and assistance to face everyday life (Violetta-Eirini, 2016)

A number of research have highlighted how fairy tales are beneficial in reading class. Handayani (2013) conducted a research in a class of young learners and found out that fairy tales serve to promote students' reading comprehension and enrich their vocabulary mastery. Significant improvement of students' reading comprehension was also reported by Pawana, Manurung & Wahyudin (2014) and Upa & Mangalik (2018). Fanani (2013) highlighted that folk tales as one type of narrative texts could develop students' ability in reading after continuance treatment. Presenting more detail result in reading class activity with folk stories, Prabowo (2014) proved that Indonesian folk stories are able to stimulate students' participation and increase their reading achievement. Folk tales were also reported to increase vocabulary mastery (Roya, 2015; Sari, 2013).

However, those listed studies only focus on how the media can enhance the students' reading comprehension and vocabulary mastery without detailing the media function to get young learners' reading interest. To that end, detail investigation on how fairy tales catch young learners' reading interest and factors affecting the interest are worth to research.

Reading Interest

Reading interest is a significant part in supporting students' academic success. Hidi (2001) sees reading interest as a powerful willingness and effort to read. Sadoski & Paivio (2004) underline main idea comprehension reader willingness to read. While Ortiz, Stowe & Arnold (2001) emphasize that reading interest is intense desire directing someone to read in enjoyment. In short, reading interest has something to do with intense willingness and desire to comprehend text.

Crow & Crow (1958) list three influential factors to affect students' reading interest. They comprise of: 1) intrinsic motivation which has to do with curiousness in comprehending text; 2) social motive that deals with activities supported by environment; and 3) emotion involving students' feeling while comprehending text. While Hidi (2006) and Krapp (2005) propose cognitive and affective aspect to give impact on interest. Cognitive aspect relates to individual goals and values which at the end shall bring personal satisfaction once the goals are achieved. Affective aspect corresponds to personal feeling and experience. In essence, reading interest is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as well as values and experience.

Crow & Crow (1958) mention five main indicators of reading interest covering attention, time use, motivation, emotion, and effort to read. The present research adapts all the indicators except time use as the reading interest measurement. The measurement does not involve time use as the young learners are planned to be observed at schooling time only.

Fairy Tales as Instructional Media

Fairy tales are defined differently by many experts. Lane (1994) sees fairy tales as a story with spiritual feeling but not religious. Fairy tale as a part of narrative text (Gerot & Wignell, 1994), is usually characterized by other dimension setting with magical power or fantasy (Neo, 2005). To put them concisely, fairy tales pertain to story with imagination.

To be more detail, Nodelman & Reimer (1996) explicates that fairy tales are noticed for the following characteristics: simplicity, addressing childhood,

expressing the views of the child, optimistic, imagination, a form of a sacred romance, and involving innocent character. Wherefore, fairy tales are considered in harmony with childhood life which is full of imagination.

Fairy tales are excitement for young learners. They are claimed to have a function in mesmerizing young learners' world (Tesar et al., 2016). Moreover, they provide colorful imagination (Zepke, Nugent & Leach, 2003). Pedagogically, fairy tales are found to be a good instructional media to build students' behavior (Sayer, Kristiawan & Agustina, 2018) and convey basic values useful for children lives (Pulimeno, Piscitelli & Colazzo, 2020). Psychologically, fairy tales are trusted to develop children emotion for futuristic goals' attainment (Zehetner, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research purposes are to find out how fairy tales catch the young learners' reading interest and analyze factors influencing the interest. Using qualitative approach, ethnography study was applied. The research was conducted at a public elementary school in Bekasi. The participants involved were one class of 5th graders consisting of 30 young learners and 1 teacher. The instruments used to collect the data comprised of observation, interview, and document analysis. The data were analyzed by adapting the steps suggested by Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) consisting of data reduction, data description, and data verification. In reducing the data, the researchers sorted the completeness of all data obtained from observation and interview. Then, the data were classified based on the foci: reading interest and factors affecting the reading interest. To verify the data, the researchers interpreted the findings and justified them to the current theory and related previous studies. Triangulation suggested by Cresswell (2012) was applied as data confirmation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Fairy Tales Integration into Young Learners' Reading Class

From the lesson plans created by the teacher, it is revealed that the fairy tales are planned to use in class together with while-reading or BDA reading (before-during-after) as suggested by Pressley (2002). The fairy tales to learn come from Western countries, such as Rapunzel, Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty. At the end of each lesson, evaluation tests are designed to administer.

During the observation, in pre-reading activities, apperception is applied. The students are firstly given questions to stimulate their engagement in learning. In this step, most students show their enthusiasm and compete to answer the teacher's questions as most of them are familiar with the fairy tales. Pressley (2002) mentions that this step is used to activate the students' schemata to start reading.

In while-reading, the teacher firstly read a fairy tale for the students. The students are asked to pay their full attention to hear the pronunciation and intonation as well as the teacher's expression. Afterwards, the teacher guides them to do skimming and scanning. Then, discussion about the tales take place. New and difficult vocabularies are identified. The discussion is followed up by identifying main and supporting idea of the story. Then, before ending the while-reading, the students are guided to read the tales aloud. Most students get actively involved and

show their eagerness to read. Steps of think-aloud and re-read are ultimately suggested by Pressley (2002). In this phase, the students also show excitement to the tales' content, as they mainly present imagination, fantasy and appealing story.

In post-reading, the students summarize the story by the help of their teacher. The step of summarizing is one of the choices offered by Pressley (2002) to close the reading session. Afterwards, short tests are administered as planned in advance. The tests are designed simply in form of multiple choice and short answer.

The above description delineates the fact that the students pay close attention to fairy tales reading in their classroom. In other words, the students' reading interest are stimulated and enhanced by the fairy tales. The excitement is observed in pre-reading and during-reading activities.

The finding is commensurate with the research conducted by Tesar et al. (2016) revealing that fairy tales arouse strong attraction of young learners as well as their cultural understanding (Mantra & Kumara, 2018). Such attraction is also entertainment for kids during their learning (Pulimeno et al., 2020). In brief, it is worth to note that fairy tales play a momentous role to initiate the real understanding of a world in simple imagination before the language maturity is achieved (Violetta-Eirini, 2016).

Factors Influencing Young Learners' Reading Interest

Based on the data collected, the following factors are proven affecting young learners' reading interest in fairy tales.

Imaginative and enticing content

The middle and higher achievers love the fairy tales as they agree that the stories are fascinating and full of imagination. As underlined earlier, fairy tales provides captivating content (Nodelman & Reimer, 1996; Pulimeno et al., 2020; Tesar et al., 2016; Violetta-Eirini, 2016). Such magnetic story content could be motivating for them to read. This fact corresponds to the research finding reported by Alhamdu (2015) that reading interest is positively influenced by reading motivation.

Showing what they reckon, the lower achiever students dislike the story for encountering new and difficult diction. This phenomenon commonly occurs as a lot of unfamiliar words repeatedly cause difficulty in processing text (Moghadam, Zainal & Ghaderpour, 2012).

Chance to read

The higher and middle achievers love to be appointed by their teacher to read aloud in front of the class as they feel proud and confident. This points out how social motive stimulated by the teacher has made an impact on their feeling (Crow & Crow, 1958).

Meanwhile, the students of lower achiever mention that they are not keen on reading aloud in front of the class due to anxiety of making mistakes. The fact has also been researched by Arifin (2018) specifying that students might fear of making mistakes such as words mispronunciation and shame.

Vocabulary mastery

The higher and middle achievers agree that they like to read the fairy tales for the vocabularies are easy to understand. It is an agreement to what proposed by

Nodelman & Reimer (1996) that fairy tales present simplicity. Then, this further bespeaks the higher and middle achievers' reading ability. As investigated by Lisnasari (2018), students' reading interest is influenced by their reading ability.

While the lower achievers admit they are not into reading the stories due to difficult vocabularies. This is not surprising as vocabulary frequently becomes a hindrance for young learners to learn a new language (Spencer & Wagner, 2018).

The above findings substantially denote that the young learners' reading interest is affected by affective (story imaginative content, chance to read) and cognitive factors (vocabulary mastery). When reading the fairy tales, their emotion is involved (Crow & Crow, 1958), which at the end brings them to their personal feeling and experience (Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Krapp, 2005) as fairy tales are related to imagination and fantasy. At the same time, their cognitive ability is also challenged to get the understanding of story content and important messages (Pulimeno et al., 2020; VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

The present study intends to find out how fairy tales media can attract young learners' reading interest. The findings signify that fairy tales are proven to catch their reading interest due to the imaginative and alluring story content. To be more specific, their reading interest is influenced by affective and cognitive factors. To get much deeper analysis and understanding of young learners' reading interest in fairy tales, it is highly recommended for future researchers to apply more comprehensive measurement to predict the interest.

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