

THE USE OF PICTURE BOOK IN TEACHING READING FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Maulana Restanto

maulanarestanto@gmail.com

Department of English Education, Indonesia University of Education

Abstract: The research was aimed at discovering the use of picture book in helping junior high school students learn reading narrative, and the students' responses to the use of picture book in teaching reading for junior high school students. The picture book in this research was Dr. Seuss's "The Lorax" book and the students in this research were second grade junior high school students. The qualitative method was delivered in order to collect the data with observation and questionnaire as the instruments of the research. The use of "The Lorax" book as the tool of picture book was believed to be helpful in students' learning reading activity for junior high school by facilitating teacher and students to carry out all of the steps in reading narrative activities proposed by some experts. The result displayed that picture book has important roles in helping students learn reading narrative with more than 50% responses were positive.

Keywords: *Picture Book, Teaching Reading, Learning Reading*

Introduction

Reading activity is one of the ways for the students in school to improve their English proficiency. Harmer (2001) points out that reading is a beneficial media to ease students in learning language such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the way of constructing sentences, paragraphs, and texts. Reading turns out to be an effective way to learn English language, if learners know how to read words in English appropriately and know how to figure out the implication of words, sentences and the meaning of text as a whole (Blank, 2006).

Students in junior high school often find problems in learning reading narrative text. Students are facing this problem when they hardly find appropriate book for their age and struggle to understand a narrative text (Marchand-Martella & Martella, 2010). Brown (2004, p.180) points out that using a variation of media will rise the chance that the learners will learn more and recall better what they learn in developing the performance of ability they are projected to improve. There are many kinds of teaching media that can be used to carry the lesson and one of them is picture.

According to Hurst (1997), picture books have important role in every classroom. The wonderful combination of visual and textual story that picture books offer is a valuable literary experience. Theodor Seuss Geisel, well known as Dr. Seuss, is a famous picture book author and illustrator from the United States that had published 46 children's books. Books by Dr. Seuss provide a variety of high-interest stories that can be used to address a wide range of social competencies while improving reading skills (Wolf & Baker, 2012, p.172).

The research about the use of picture book in teaching reading for junior high school students is still rare based on the observation about this topic on the online journal website, especially in Indonesia. Therefore, an investigation is needed to discover the use of picture book in EFL classroom. This research focuses on investigating the use of picture book in helping junior high school students learn reading narrative. This research also aims to discover the students' responses to the use of picture book in teaching reading for junior high school students.

Literature Review

- **Reading Visual Images**

Werner (2002) states that visual images in education textbooks have to be dynamically read by learners. Portraying on literature from cultural lessons there are three instructional circumstances for teaching learners to read visual texts: readers have the chance, capability, authority, and community for appealing in the assignment of reading in several ways.

According to Walsh (2006), by visual images, interaction among reader and text is dissimilar because of the use of images and how images cooperate with words. The image is diverse from the words that we read chronologically and syntactically. For both the reading of pictures and the reading of words the related procedures that would arise would be prediction, the initiation of schema or repertoire and signaling in to several contexts. The reader would be searching and visualizing a plot while portraying on background information of the world, and information about narrative genre whether it is provided through pictures or words. A reader would also be answering to interpersonal implications in the text. The purpose of reading visual images is to engage a reader in the story at an amount of diverse levels.

- **Picture book as Media for Learning Reading**

Brown (2004, p.180) states that using a variation of media will increase the chance that the learners will recall better what they learn in developing the performance of skill they are expected to improve. There are many varieties of teaching media that can be used to deliver the lesson and one of them is picture.

Harmer (2001, p.134) states that picture is one of the variability of teaching supports which is used to describe language meaning structure, to employ learners in a topic, or as the base of an entire activity.

According to Matulka (2008), a good picture series in a story links the reader to the pictures and generates the implication of the pictures. Story and pictures work together to push the story onward.

Lee (2015) points out that students enjoyed picture books and felt they had made development in their English language ability, especially in terms of motivation and confidence. The use of picture book that has imaginative characters such as comic is more efficient to teach reading than those of general texts and pictures Roozafzai (2012).

- **Dr. Seuss's Picture Book**

Kennedy (2016) defines a picture book as a book in which the illustrations are as significant as the words in carrying the story and have conventionally been 32 pages long, for example is Dr. Seuss's "The Lorax" book. In picture books, there are illustrations on one of every pair of pages or on every page. Dr. Seuss's books typically have illustrations in the form of pictures and imaginative characters on every page. Books by Dr. Seuss offer a variety of high-interest stories that can be used to address a wide range of social competencies while improving reading skills (Wolf & Baker, 2012, p.172).

Schulze (2009) points out there are five reasons why Dr. Seuss's books are good for reading activity. Firstly, the book is good for beginning readers and mastering phonics. Secondly, it is a great read-aloud book. Thirdly, the unique words and rhyme in the book is good for reluctant readers. The other reason is the book great for teaching life's lessons. Last reason is the book great for gift giving and children of all ages.

Dr. Seuss's books are also known for the messages delivered in the story, such as the ecological message in the story of "The Lorax". Dr. Seuss advises that young children need to be educated on how to live in a maintainable way without corrupting the environment, so that forthcoming generations have an unsoiled

place to live. The message depicted by the Once-ler teaching the small boy about the dangers of pollution and degradation of the environment, then give him the last "Truffula" seed as the analogy of tree seed to be planted and grown after (Lowell, 2008, pp.218-222).

- **Steps in Reading Narrative Activities with Picture book**

There are nine steps in reading narrative activities adopted from Honig, Diamond and Gutlohn (2008) that can be categorized into three activities, which are initial steps, main activities' steps, and post activities' steps.

The initial steps in reading narrative activities based on Honig et al. (2008) are categorized into three: Students pay attention to the teacher modelling of types of questions that readers need to ask while reading, students pay attention to the teacher modelling of questions that can encourage deeper levels of comprehension, and students connect their relevant prior experiences or to other stories with the guidance from the teacher.

The first initial step of reading narrative activities is students pay attention to the teacher modelling of the types of questions that students need to ask to themselves before start reading. According to Wood et al. (1995) this step includes

readers asking themselves questions during the reading of a text. Asking the correct questions let readers to emphasis on the most significant information in a text.

The second initial step of reading narrative activities is teacher directs the students to ask some questions that can make them understand the story better. As Wood et al. (1995) state that the capability of readers to ask themselves related questions as they read is important in assisting them to integrate the information, find the main ideas, and digest the information.

The last initial step of reading narrative activities is students relate their background knowledge or experiences, which are relevant with the story. Anderson and Pearson (1984) point out that this step requires readers to trigger their background knowledge and to use that information to help them comprehend what they are reading. Background knowledge is come from somebody's experiences, along with his notions for how a text works containing word identification, meaning, and how a text is structured.

The steps of the main activities in teaching reading are delivered into four steps based on Honig et al. (2008). The steps are: Students create mental images as

they read with the help of illustration and teacher's explicit teaching, students make predictions based on prior knowledge or story structure with the help of the teacher, students look at the illustrations to aid comprehension with the instructions from the teacher, and students use context to figure out difficult words with the guidance from the teacher.

The first step in main activities is students create mental images as they read with the help of illustrations while the teacher provides explicit teaching. Gambrell and Bales (1986) state that this step includes the capability of readers to make mental images of a text as a way to comprehend procedures they face throughout reading. This skill can be a sign that a reader comprehends a text. Visualizing mental images is essential when it is applied to the narrative texts. In reading narratives, readers frequently can improve a clear comprehension of what is occurring by visualizing the characters, setting, or activities in the plot.

The second step in main activities is students predict what happen next in the story with the guidance of the teacher. According to Gillet and Temple (1994) this step includes the skill of readers to get meaning from a text by creating familiar predictions. Readers use foreseeing as a way to associate their current knowledge to new information from a text to get

meaning from what they read. Throughout reading, readers might make predictions about what is going to occur, or what ideas the writer of the book will deliver to support an argument. They tend to assess these guesses unceasingly and review the predictions, which are not confirmed by the reading.

The third step in main activities of reading narrative activities is teacher directs the students to look at the pictures or the characters to help them understand the story better. As Matulka (2008) points out that, the pictures in a story associate the reader to the illustration and produces the inference of the pictures, then story and pictures work together to push the story ahead.

The last main activities' step in reading narrative activities is students look at the context when they found difficult words and then comprehend the story with the guidance from the teacher. Writers of the books do not continuously offer complete descriptions of information about the character, event, or setting. Nevertheless, they frequently offer hints that readers can use by making conclusions that combine another information in the text or with their background knowledge.

According to Honig et al. (2008), post activities of reading narrative activities is involving the activity of reasoning the story, summarize it, and

retell the story in collaborative discussion. Ediger (2000) points out some ways to help learners improve positive attitudes to the reading narrative activities, which are discussing in the innate subject matter of a text and sharing the ideas from content read. This step includes the capability of readers to combine information in a text and describe in their own words what the story is about. Summarizing is very essential because it can support readers to recall the story quickly, make readers more attentive of text structure and the important information in a story, and tell readers how notions in the story are connected.

Methodology

Qualitative research in the form of descriptive method was employed in this research to describe the use of picture book in helping junior high school students learn reading narrative and the responses to it. The qualitative research finds the information about someone's perspective, belief, or attitude towards past events or present circumstance (Best, 1970 cited in in Cohen et al. (2007).

As this study was purposed to investigate the use of picture book in helping junior high school students learn reading narrative and to reveal the students' responses to it, it was essential for the researcher participate in the study

to perceive the participants' activities within the setting provided in the classroom sessions. Questionnaire also required in getting students' responses to the use of picture book in teaching reading.

Participants

The participants of the study were the second grade students of Junior High School in Bandung For the research purpose, 29 students from class A and 30 students from class B were selected.

Data Collection

To gather the data, there were two instruments to find out the use of picture book in helping students learn reading narrative and students' responses to it in junior high school. The instruments were observation and questionnaire. The observation sheet was used while reading activities with picture book conducted in the classroom. The questionnaires were delivered to all of the students from both classrooms after reading activities finished.

Data Analysis

In this research, observation data was elaborated descriptively while questionnaire data was elaborated statistically since it provided the calculation result from students' answers.

Data Presentation and Discussion

• The Use of Picture Book in Helping Students Learn Reading Narrative

The first initial step of reading narrative activities is students pay attention to the teacher modelling of the types of questions that students need to ask to themselves before start reading. Teacher triggered the students to ask some questions that they should ask to themselves before reading the story. In different meeting and class, the types of the questions were quite similar such as the plot and characters of the story. As in line with Wood et al. (1995) that point out readers that asking the right questions will focus on the most important information in a text.

The second step is students pay attention to the teacher modelling of questions that can encourage deeper levels of comprehension. During the lesson teacher gave an example to the students what types of questions they need to ask that can also encourage deeper comprehension of the story for them.

Some questions such as “What is that?” given by teacher for the example of questions types that student need to ask to get deeper comprehension of the story. After the teacher generated them in

different class and meeting, another example of questions given by the students are quite alike, the students gave an example such as “What is the character doing?” As Wood et al. (1995) state that the ability of readers to ask themselves associated questions as they read is important in helping them to integrate the information, find the main ideas, and summarize the information.

In the third step, students connect their relevant prior experiences or to other stories with the guidance from the teacher. Teacher guided students to connect the story of “The Lorax” as the media, with students’ experiences or other story. Seglem and Witte (2009) point out that when teacher links popular culture and traditional texts with pictures or visuals, students become genuinely interested and involved in their learning activities.

Most of the students connected the story of “The Lorax” book with their experiences reading similar book with pictures, thus when the students look at the cover of “The Lorax” they can guess that “The Lorax” is picture book. Some students also relating their experiences in watching the adapted movie version of “The Lorax” in television. They also linked their daily life activities with the activities in the story after the teacher guided them. This is in line with Anderson and Pearson (1984) who state

that in guiding students to connect to relevant prior experiences, students are expected to generate their background knowledge and use that information to help them understand what they are going to read.

The first step of main activities in reading narrative activities is students create mental images as they read with the help of illustrations while the teacher provides explicit teaching. Teacher provided explicit teaching with “The Lorax” book as media especially when the students could not get the meaning of the conversation. Students in different class and meeting, who find problem in understanding the story eventually can visualize what is the story about after the teacher explain with explicit explanation and directed students to look at the pictures in the book. As in line with Gambrell and Bales (1986) who state that in providing explicit teaching to the students it includes the ability of students to make mental images of a text as a way to understand events they face throughout reading. This ability can be a sign that a reader understands a text.

The second step in main activities is students predict what happen next in the story with the guidance of the teacher. Walsh (2006) states that in the reading of pictures, the procedure that would arise

would be prediction, the initiation of schema or repertoire and signaling in to several contexts. The students’ prior knowledge from their experiences in daily life was beneficial for them to make predictions of the storyline and plot of the story. The picture book also helped students to make predictions what will happen next.

The students in different class and meeting that asked by the teacher to guess what was going to happen next in the story were able to answer with the help of pictures in the book. For example, when the pictures in the book showed the trees were cutting down and big factory was built, the students can predict the land will be polluted. Gillet and Temple (1994) state that in guiding students to make predictions based on prior knowledge or story structure, it involves the skill of students to get meaning from a text by creating predictions. Readers use predicting as a way to connect their current knowledge to new information from a text to get meaning from what they read and readers might make predictions about what is going to occur.

The third step is teacher directs students to look at the illustrations to aid comprehension. Teacher was assisted by “The Lorax” book when directed students to look at the illustrations, “The Lorax”

book has pictures in every page of the story with the imaginative characters that aroused students to look more at the book's illustrations.

The illustration such as "The Super-Axe-Hacker" in the book helped the students to imagine the tools that made cutting down the tree faster. This is in line with Matulka (2008) who points out that the pictures in a story associate the reader to the illustration and produces the implication of the pictures, then story and pictures work together to push the story ahead. It can be showed that pictures in "The Lorax" book helped the students to imagine the story and helped the students to push the story onward.

The last step in main activities of reading narrative activities is students look at the context when they found difficult words and then comprehend the story with the guidance from the teacher. Many students face problem in finding the meaning of the words, thus Freeman et al. (2010) propose early childhood teacher to enhance their teaching by reading children's books to their students. Teacher guided the students to look at the other words in the same context when they face difficult words in "The Lorax" story. When the students still have the problem to comprehend the story, then teacher directed them to look at the book's

illustrations that still in the same context with the difficult words.

For example, when the students faced the word of "pond" and "splash" in the book that they could not figure out their meanings, the illustration in the book helped students to find out that the meaning of pond is *kolam* and "splash" is a sound made by fish striking in the pond. As Hansen and Pearson (1983) state that in guiding students to use context to figure out difficult words by using context, students are expected to make inferences from information in a text. Writers of the books do not constantly provide whole descriptions of information about the character, event, or setting. However, they regularly provide hints that readers can use by making conclusions, which combine another information in the text with their background knowledge or with the illustration in the book.

In post activities, teacher directed the students to discuss with the others about the story and emphasized they need to collaborate in reasoning and summarizing the story. Teacher asked the students to discuss the moral value and message contained in "The Lorax" story with their friends. The teacher instructed the students to retell the story in a simple way to each other while teacher ensured all of the students in the classroom

participates collaboratively in the discussion activity.

The transcriptions showed that students were able to retell the story based on the key features to be assessed from the student's story retelling proposed by Palmer (2001), which are: Orientation (when Once-ler meet the boy), complication (when Once-ler cut down the trees), and resolution (when Once-ler give the last seed to the boy). All of the students from all levels also retell story in the right order, which is one of the key features of retelling assessment. As in line with Ediger (2000) who states that discussing in the innate subject matter of a text and sharing the ideas from content read will help learners to improve their positive attitudes to the reading narrative activities.

The pictures in "The Lorax" book, such as the pictures of polluted air and pond helped the students to get the message that the book tried to convey to the readers. The pictures in "The Lorax" book also helped the students to recapture the story, the illustration of what happened before and after the environment was polluted in "The Lorax" book helped the students to retell the main point of the story.

- **Students' Responses to the Use of Picture Book in Teaching Reading**

There were four statements in the questionnaires related to students' responses to the use of picture book, which are: I like learning to read English books with pictures, I like learning to read English using "The Lorax", the use of "The Lorax" book to learn English vocabulary is more interesting, the use of "The Lorax" book expands my English vocabulary.

In statement number 1, there were 24 of 29 (83%) students in class A and 22 of 30 (73%) students in class B who stated that they like reading activity with the use of picture book. There were also 3 (10%) students in class A and 5 (17%) students in class B that really agree with the reading activity that use picture books, however 4% students in class A and 7% students in class B disagree with the use of picture book. There was 1 student (3%) in each class of A and B really disagree with the use of picture book in learning reading. The statistics show that more than half of students in both classes agree with the use of picture books in reading activity.

The high percentage of students who agree with the use of picture book in learning reading is in line with the

statement of Brown (2004), who states using a variation of media would raise the chance that the learners will learn more and recall what they learn in developing the performance of ability they were projected to improve better.

Statement number 2, that replace picture book in statement 1 into “The Lorax” book, has 24 of 28 (83%) students in class A and 17 of 30 (57%) students in class B agree with the use of “The Lorax” book in the classroom. There were 20% students in class B and 7% students in class A that really agree with the use of “The Lorax” book. Students who disagree with the use of “The Lorax” book were 10% in class A and 23 % in class B. More than half of students from both classes were agree with the use of “The Lorax” book in reading activity.

There were 76% (22) students in class A and 77% (23) students in class B that agree with statement number 3 which is the use of “The Lorax” book to learn English vocabulary is more interesting. In statement number 4, 76% students in class A and 60% students in class B agree that the use of “The Lorax” book expands their English vocabulary. There were also 21% of students in class A and 33% students in class B that really agree that “The Lorax” book expands their vocabulary in English language.

Regarding with the use of “The Lorax” book that displayed with the statement number 2, 3, and 4, more than half of the students in the classroom agree with the use of the book in reading activity. As in line with Schulze (2009) Dr. Seuss’s book is good for beginning readers that proven with high percentage in statement 2 and 3 that agree learning reading and vocabulary with “The Lorax” is interesting. It also proven “The Lorax” book is suitable for mastering phonics by high percentage of students in statement number 4 that agree “The Lorax” book enlarges students’ English vocabulary.

There were three statements in the questionnaires related to students’ responses to the pictures and imaginative characters in the book used as media in reading activities, which are: Learning to read using picture books is more interesting than using books without pictures, the illustrations and imaginative characters in “The Lorax” is attracting, the illustrations and imaginative characters in “The Lorax” help me understand the story.

The result shows that 48% of students in class A agree and 28% of students really agree that learning reading with picture book was more interesting than the book without pictures. While in class B, 57% of students agree and 33% of students really agree with the statement number 1. As in line with Hurst (1997)

that picture books have important role in every classroom because the wonderful combination of visual and textual story that picture books offer was a valuable literary experience for the students.

In statement number 2, students were asked about the pictures and imaginative characters in “The Lorax” book. In class A, there were 62% of students agree and 37% of students really agree that the pictures and imaginative characters in “The Lorax” book was very interesting. Meanwhile, in class B there were 63% of students agree and 37% of students really agree with the statement number 2.

The finding in statement number 3 supports the statement of Wolf and Baker (2012) that books by Dr. Seuss provide a variety of high-interest stories that can be used to address a wide range of social competencies while improving reading skills. The finding in class A shows 62% of students agree and 38% of students really agree that the pictures in “The Lorax” book helped them in understanding the story. Whereas in class B, 77% of students agree and 23% of students really agree with the statement number 3. There were 0% of students in both classes which disagree or really disagree that the illustration in “The Lorax” book helped them to comprehend the story.

There was one statement in the questionnaires related to students’ responses to message in “The Lorax” book, which is *belajar dengan buku “The Lorax” meningkatkan kesadaran terhadap lingkungan di sekitar saya.*

The last statement that were asked to the students was the effect of “The Lorax” story to the students’ environmental awareness. In class A, there were 41% of students agree and 52% of students really agree with the statement that the “Lorax” book improves their ecological awareness. While in class B, there were 47% of students agree and 53% of students really agree that the story of “The Lorax” increases their awareness to the environment. There were 0% of students who disagree with the statement. This is in line with Lowell (2008) who points out that “The Lorax” story with the picture book advises young children to live in a maintainable way without corrupting the environment, thus the forthcoming generations aware of the dangers of pollution and degradation of the environment.

Conclusions

The research was focused on the use of picture book in teaching reading for junior high school students. The research was intended to investigating the use of

picture book in helping junior high school students learn reading narrative. This research also aims to discover the students' responses to the use of picture book in teaching reading activity for junior high school students.

The result of the research revealed that picture book helped the teacher and students in reading narrative activities. The use of picture book was observed during the lesson in A and B classrooms in which students achieved better comprehension to the narrative story in the reading activities. The use of "The Lorax" book as the tool of picture book facilitated teacher and students to carry out all of the steps in reading narrative activities adopted from Honig, Diamond and Gutlohn (2008).

The result also displayed that more than 50% responses were positive regarding the students' responses to the use of "The Lorax" book, which was the tool of picture book as media for learning

in teaching reading. The book with pictures can be used as a media in which the students can improve their vocabulary mastery in English language during the reading activity. This teaching media had encouraged the students to be more interested in learning English, especially in understanding the narrative story. Most of the students stated in the questionnaire that the pictures in "The Lorax" book helped them to comprehend the vocabularies and story in the book.

Most of the students also agreed that learning with picture book helped them to understand the moral value in the story. Moreover, the elements that helped students learn English in reading activity such as pictures and imaginative characters were believed to provide the connection in helping the teacher to deliver the reading activity as well in helping students to receive the information in reading activity based on the data collected in this research.

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