

Using a Hand Puppet to Increase Storytelling Skill

M. Nur Hakim¹, Zuriyati², Saifur Rohman²

¹Doctoral Student at the Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

²Faculty of Language and Art, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Keywords: Teaching Media, Hand Puppet, Folklores, Storytelling Skill, Comprehension of Stories

Abstract: This research is aimed at enhancing students' storytelling skill through a medium of hand a puppet. Media play important roles in increasing students' skills in storytelling. One of such media that grabs students' attention in teaching storytelling in elementary school is hand puppet. A hand puppet is a medium of teaching aid in developing contents of folklores. Even some researchers have conducted lots of study related to a hand puppet in order to increase students' creativity in their learning. The method used is action research comprising four stages, i.e. planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data gathering is done through observation, interview, and tests. Data obtained from observation and interview is analyzed qualitatively, while data taken from results of a test are analyzed through both descriptive and quantitative methods. The findings indicate that there is improvement in students' skills of storytelling based on their ability to comprehend the contents of stories, understanding meaning of stories, intonation, expressions, and the use of media. The improvement can also be seen from their motivation and self-confidence. The results of learning or the average score in each cycle are 55.5 for cycle 1, 63.4 for cycle 2, and 71.4 for cycle 3. Therefore, it can be implied that this research has encouraged students to increase their interest and skills in storytelling, especially stories derived from folklores or local traditional stories. It is hoped that It can also build the students' character value which can be implemented in a real life.

1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching literature subject in elementary school is essential because it is intended to increase students' ability to appreciate works of literature and the students can convey ideas both in written and spoken (Sumayasa, Marheini, & Dantes, 2015). One of teaching materials in the literature subject which is essential to be delivered to students is storytelling. By teaching storytelling in literature subject, teacher and elementary students are facilitated to preserve folklores or local traditional stories. It can be the art of learning to help the students understand the lesson (Lawren & Paige, 2016).

Storytelling is an activity related to delivery of oral stories from a certain generation to another generation by words of mouth (Lockett, 2011; Hodge., et al., 2002) to strengthen social traditions in their society (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). According to Bietti, Tilston, & Bangerter (2018), it is revealed that storytelling is the center of activities to spread cultures from generation to generation. This argument is supported by Bruner (in Lombardo

& Damiano, 2012) which states that activities of storytelling function as a tool to pass down values in a culture, so that they can be understood and implemented properly in a society.

Teaching storytelling at schools gives students opportunity to practice with their imagination and creativity (Robertson & Good, 2005) while developing a story. Teaching storytelling can also be regarded as delivering information to audience and improving students' verbal language (Lockett, 2011). In addition, storytelling can increase literacy in a particular culture (Miller & Pennycuff, 2008) and improve linguistic ability (Abdulla, 2012).

However, one of Madrasah schools at Bulukumba Regency had difficulties because the students were not capable of telling traditional stories well. Their difficulties were especially due to their inability to tell traditional stories appropriately, which could be seen through words produced. Apparently, the did not acquire enough vocabulary, besides their facial expressions seemed to be flat. For these reasons, the researcher has decided to implement a hand puppet in teaching storytelling by

making use of a hand puppet as a solution to problems faced by students.

The use of a hand puppet draws so much students' attention, so that they like to engage in storytelling, which gives solution to their problems dealing with storytelling. A hand puppet can generate students' imagination, leading to the increase in vocabulary as they become more productive telling a story through their own imagination. Also, hands movements of a puppet help students practice telling a story with facial expressions. This is in line with Synovitz's view (in Pitre, et al. 2007), as it says that the use of a hand puppet in learning gives students chances to express themselves and to increase their motivation.

In general, students like or even love a puppet, since the characters of a puppet entertain those who play a puppet for themselves and for their audience, besides building their characters more effectively (Yulianti & Latief, 2016). By getting involved in playing a puppet, students become more active in their learning activities (Maharani, 2016), while at the same time this puppet becomes a medium to show their comprehension in studying literature subject, nature, and social relationship (Korošec, 2012). We can conclude that a hand puppet functions as a medium which makes students involved in the process of telling a story more confidently by expressing their ideas and mastering the whole story while performing in front of the classroom.

Some research shows that students' success in telling a story is as a result of using a teaching aid or media. Nonetheless, there is still relatively small amount of using a hand puppet in telling folklores or local traditional stories. It is why through this article; the writer tries to investigate more deeply about the students implementing a hand puppet to increase story telling skills in an elementary school. Some previous research discusses the study of aspects in using stories during learning process (Casey, Erkut, Ceder, & Young, 2008) within context of geometry subject through mysteries and contexts of a collaborative story telling through a true story (Chang, 2010). On the other hand, Escobar-Chaves, et al. (2010) study the use of a puppet as a performance among family members to minimize their watching television.

Having said that, this research is mainly aimed at increasing student's storytelling skill through media of a hand puppet. Specifically, there are two goals needed to achieve, firstly to see the process of implementing a hand puppet, and secondly to see the improvement of students' storytelling skills.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Story or folklore telling gives its emphasis on creativity and mastery of characters (Rifà- Valls, 2011), because characters are important element inside a story, which influences the imagination of audience (Yang, 2011). Thus, the role of teacher in teaching storytelling has to emphasize on students learning while playing, in order to urge students to find new knowledge according to their own ages or ability.

Another important aspect is that story telling functions as a form of communication between teacher and students by telling their experience, knowledge, and comprehension to explore various ideas (Skouge & Rao, 2009; Savvidou, 2010). Direct interaction between teacher and students during the implementation of storytelling influences student's ability to improve the capacity of their imagination by sharing and experiencing a story together (Götzel, 2011). Plots in a story or folklore are imagination expressed through language (Parkinson, 2010) blended with movements and facial expressions (Liang, et al. 2015).

A hand puppet is an artificial teaching aid which has been used as communication media during learning process since so many years ago (Pitre, et al. 2007). The use of a hand puppet as teaching media at elementary schools is still popular nowadays. The use of hand puppet is often used until now because puppet is not only used as a media to learn but also an object to play for children (Hartwig, 2014). A main character presented through a hand puppet contains various movements supporting attractive illustrations in teaching, but it can be easily implemented by students themselves. The students can tell a story in accordance with its plot using hand puppet as it can be a media to interact (Epstaein, 2008), therefore it makes the students easier to tell the ideas of a story based on their imagination.

An important thing to consider to make their performance run smoothly is that students must prepare themselves thoroughly, especially in terms of preparation in playing a puppet, because it requires good techniques, in both hand movements and a style of a character selected (Luo, et al., 2011). Skills to move a hand according to a certain plot is indeed fundamental in playing a hand puppet, as it is a determining factor in a storytelling. This is also why before performing a hand puppet, students need to do some effective basic training, which actually can be done easily amongst students themselves in their own groups. When students find themselves

able to master contents of a story together with the harmonious movements, they are allowed to perform their puppets in front of the classroom.

3 METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in one of Madrasah schools in Bulukumba Regency, to Grade 3 elementary students. The procedures applied are action research, by referring to action research model developed by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart (in Hopkins, 1993) comprising: planning, action, observation, and reflection, where there are 18 students involved.

Data gathering was accomplished through observation, interview, and a test. First, observation data were gathered by making use of observation sheets taken during the implementation of action research, whereas the interview was completed through accurate information obtained according to the focus of research. Then, the interview was conducted according to the guidelines by adjusting to the related research being conducted. Finally, the third data were gathered by administering student's storytelling tests. The tests given were in order to see their progress during action research. Indicators in scoring storytelling tests include: (1) contents; (2) comprehension of a story; (3) voice; (4) intonation; (5) facial expressions; and (6) the use of media (or a hand puppet). The Indicators in scoring are according to the ability of the elementary student's level required to achieve. Qualitative research was carried out through data coding derived from interviews. While the data from the results of storytelling tests were analyzed quantitatively through descriptive statistical processes. The students' average scores were used to give descriptions of student's storytelling skills achieved by using hand puppet media.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Cycle 1

The first step carried out in this research is planning, which was done by designing lesson plans of storytelling through puppet media by adapting the materials according to the problems faced by students. Thus, the design was begun through the

selections of stories and media of a hand puppet according to the contents of stories. The second step was based on the implementation of teaching scenario prepared. The researcher was involved directly during teaching and observation. Unfortunately, at first, students looked clumsy holding a puppet while telling a story, and as a consequence the story seemed to be unstructured. The third step was reflection, which was done to fix the problems or students' weaknesses during action research. The findings indicate that during reflection of cycle 1, there seem to be some problems because students still do not get enough practices. Another problem is that hand puppet still does not appeal to the students' taste. This can be the reasons why the result based on descriptive statistic process of storytelling test in cycle 1, is just average scores of 55.5, with minimum scores of 50, and its maximum scores of 67.

4.1.2 Cycle 2

Cycle 2 applied the same procedure as it was done in cycle 1, which began the first step with planning, except for the revision of planning in cycle 2, especially in its teaching scenario. The puppet media selected in cycle 2 was by making use of a character of a parrot hand puppet. In this teaching scenario, students formed some groups in order to train themselves in their own groups before performing in front of the classroom. The results indicate that student's interest in hand puppet media gradually grow. It is shown through their enthusiasm while practicing story telling in each group. Nonetheless, students' facial expressions and intonation are still disappointing while telling a story, although they manage to increase their scores. Based on descriptive statistic of the result of storytelling test in cycle 2, their average scores are 63.4, with minimum scores of 50, and maximum scores of 70.

4.1.3 Cycle 3

Just like the previous cycles, the first step in cycle 3 began with planning, so its planning was the result of developing teaching scenarios from the two previous cycles based on the reflection. The design in this teaching scenario focused on students' time management by stressing the importance of practicing using puppet media while preparing their storytelling. To anticipate problems related to facial expressions, the researcher designed a teaching model by adapting between the contents of stories with the relevant facial expressions. Based on the observation, apparently students feel enthusiastic

following each step during learning process, especially because the use of a hand puppet is quite exciting, so that it is enjoyable and easy to understand. This brings good impact as based on descriptive statistic; the results of storytelling test in cycle 3 are the average scores of 71.4, with 63 minimum scores and, 77 maximum scores.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the results of the research, it shows that puppet media or a hand puppet is able to improve students' storytelling skills. The improvement in students' storytelling skill is shown through the teaching process in this action research. During the beginning of the implementation of a hand puppet, students look awkward while playing the puppet, and sometimes they are not quite interested in the hand puppet media. Consequently, in cycle 2 and cycle 3, the researcher tries to fix the problem and improve the teaching scenarios. The development of learning scenario is conducted based on the result of problems identification faced by the students in each cycle through observation and interview. Few steps carried out to overcome the problems in learning are to create group works, to practice storytelling, to choose interesting story, to use puppets which are favoured by the students. It will be not difficult for the students to develop their story using appropriate puppet and story. Over all, the students' ability increase in the aspect of storytelling, comprehension, intonation, expression, and media.

The results of the observation indicate that students become more confident and master the plots of stories better. Students' improvements in their confidence and motivation are demonstrated when students are enthusiastically raising their hands to tell a story in front of the classroom. The findings are in line with the concept stated by Remer and Tzuriel (2015) which states that the use of a hand puppet in teaching literature subject can enhance students' creativity, interaction, motivation, self-confidence, and stimulus that make them become more active in telling a story (Keogh, et al. 2008). Hence, the use of hand puppet in learning has a significant role to increase the ability to tell a story in the level of elementary students.

The findings from students' interviews demonstrate that students feel attracted in using puppet media or a hand puppet to tell a story. The following are transcripts of students' interviews:

[iya pak, boneknya lucu-lucu, karena sama dengan isi ceritanya]

Yes, sir. The puppet that I use is so interesting because it is relevant to the contents of story.

[jadi gampang Pak bercerita, karena pakai boneka]

The contents of story are easy to remember when I use hand puppet media.

[boneka burung beonya, sama dengan ceritanya Ambo Upe, jadi gampangka ingat jalan ceritanya karena ada boneka saya liat]

The use of a hand puppet with a parrot character is appropriate media, because with the story titled Ambo Upe and a Parrot, it facilitates me in delivering my story.

Some tape scripts from the results of interviews reveal that hand puppet media facilitate students in delivering their stories. It is because hand puppet media used in storytelling are adapted with the contents of story, such as the use of a hand puppet with characters of a buffalo and a parrot. The findings are in agreement with the concept stated by Pitre, et al. (2007) which suggests that the use of a hand puppet in teaching literature subject helps the process of communication and helps them to comprehend the literature subject related to social relationship (Korošec, 2012). Furthermore, the use of hand media can motivate students to develop their ideas and creativities in learning process (Lowe & Matthew, 2000). It is in line with the findings of this study describing that through the use of hand puppet, the students can develop the plot of the story and their creativity moving hands, therefore it will be interested to be watched.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on findings, it indicates that the efforts to improve students' storytelling skill are successful, by considering the scores that increase. Actually, the improvement is obvious in terms of its process and results. By looking at the process, students are able to improve their storytelling skills by using a hand puppet, and they can show facial expression relevant to stories, as well as understand the contents of the stories. In addition, students' self-confidence improve because they are motivated to perform in front of the classroom telling a story. The results indicate that students' progress in cycle 1 is only average scores of 55.5, but in cycle 2 students' average scores are 63.4, and eventually in cycle 3 students' average scores are 71.4. To sum up, hand puppet media give positive impact in increasing students' storytelling skills. Moreover, the research findings give implication toward the development of

learning literature and the students' understanding of character values through the stories conveyed and heard.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The scholarship is funded by LPDP KEMENKEU RI.

REFERENCES

- Abdulla, E. 2012. The effect of storytelling on vocabulary acquisition. *Last accessed on July, 4, 2015*.
- Bietti, L. M., Tilston, O., & Bangerter, A. 2018. Storytelling as Adaptive Collective Sensemaking. *Topics in Cognitive Science*.
- Casey, B., Erkut, S., Ceder, I., & Young, J. M. 2008. Use of a storytelling context to improve girls' and boys' geometry skills in kindergarten. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 29*(1), 29-48.
- Chang, C. W., Lee, J. H., Chao, P. Y., Wang, C. Y., & Chen, G. D. 2010. Exploring the possibility of using humanoid robots as instructional tools for teaching a second language in primary school. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 13*(2), 13-24.
- Epstein, I., Stevens, B., McKeever, P., Baruchel, S., & Jones, H. (2008). Using puppetry to elicit children's talk for research. *Nursing Inquiry, 15*(1), 49-56.
- Escobar-Chaves, S. L., Shegog, R., Markham, C., & Brehm, B. J. 2010. "The McSpoons": Using puppetry's narrative impact to reduce family TV time. *Arts & Health, 2*(1), 47-66.
- Göttel, T. 2011. Reviewing children's collaboration practices in storytelling environments. In *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Interaction Design and Children* (pp. 153-156). ACM.
- Hartwig, E. K. (2014). Puppets in the playroom: Utilizing puppets and child-centered facilitative skills as a metaphor for healing. *International Journal of Play Therapy, 23*(4), 204.
- Hodge, F. S., Pasqua, A., Marquez, C. A., & Geishirt-Cantrell, B. 2002. Utilizing traditional storytelling to promote wellness in American Indian communities. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 13*(1), 6-11.
- Hopkins, David. 1993. *A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Keogh, B., Naylor, S., Maloney, J., & Simon, S. 2008. Puppets and engagement in science: a case study. *Nordic Studies in Science Education, 4*(2), 142-150.
- Korošec, H. 2012. Playing with puppets in class—Teaching and learning with pleasure. *The Power of the Puppet, 29*.
- Lawrence, R. L., & Paige, D. S. 2016. What our Ancestors Knew: Teaching and Learning Through Storytelling. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2016* (149), 63-72.
- Liang, H., Chang, J., Kazmi, I. K., Zhang, J. J., & Jiao, P. 2015. Puppet Narrator: utilizing motion sensing technology in storytelling for young children. In *2015 7th International Conference on Games and Virtual Worlds for Serious Applications (VS-Games)* (pp. 1-8). IEEE.
- Lombardo, V., & Damiano, R. 2012. Storytelling on Mobile Devices for Cultural Heritage. *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia, 18* (1-2), 11-35.
- Lockett, M. L. 2011. Using storytelling to facilitate learning English as a foreign language. *FROM THE PRESIDENT, 97*.
- Lowe, J. L., & Matthew, K. I. 2000. Puppets & prose. *Science and Children, 37*(8), 41.
- Luo, Z., Lin, C. C., Chen, I. M., Yeo, S. H., & Li, T. Y. 2011. Puppet playing: An interactive character animation system with hand motion control. In *Transactions on computational science XII* (pp. 19-35). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Maharani, S. 2016. The use of puppet: Shifting speaking skill from the perspective of students' self-esteem. *Register Journal of Language Teaching IAIN Salatiga, 9*(2), 170-186.
- Miller, S., & Pennycuff, L. 2008. The power of story: Using storytelling to improve literacy learning. *Journal of Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives in Education, 1*(1), 36-43.
- Parkinson, R. 2010. *Storytelling and imagination: beyond basic literacy 8-14*. Routledge.
- Pitre, N., Stewart, S., Adams, S., Bedard, T., & Landry, S. 2007. The use of puppets with elementary school children in reducing stigmatizing attitudes towards mental illness. *Journal of Mental Health, 16*(3), 415-429.
- Remer, R., & Tzurriel, D. 2015. "I Teach Better with the Puppet"-Use of Puppet as a Mediating Tool in Kindergarten Education—an Evaluation. *American Journal of Educational Research, 3*(3), 356-365.
- Rifa-Valls, M. 2011. Experimenting with Visual Storytelling in Students' Portfolios: Narratives of Visual Pedagogy for Pre-Service Teacher Education. *International Journal of Art & Design Education, 30*(2), 293-306.
- Robertson, J., & Good, J. 2005. Children's narrative development through computer game authoring. *TechTrends, 49*(5), 43-59.
- Savvidou, C. 2010. Storytelling as dialogue: how teachers construct professional knowledge. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 16*(6), 649-664.
- Skouge, J. R., & Rao, K. 2009. Digital Storytelling in Teacher Education: Creating Transformations through Narrative. *Educational Perspectives, 42*, 54-60.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. 2002. Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative inquiry, 8*(1), 23-44.
- Sumayasa, I. N., Marhaeni, M. P. A. N., & Dantes, N. 2015. Pengaruh Implementasi Pendekatan Saintifik

Terhadap Motivasi Belajar dan Hasil Belajar Bahasa Indonesia pada Siswa Kelas VI di Sekolah Dasar Se Gugus VI Kecamatan Abang, Karangasem. *None*, 5(1).

Yang, J. 2011. Storytelling as a teaching method in ESL classrooms.

Yulianti, R., & Latief, M. A. 2016. Puppet and Pop Up Pictures as The Story Telling Media to Build Students' motivation in English Competition.

