

CONCEPT OF ANIMATED ELECTRONIC BOOKS IN INCREASING YOUNG LEARNERS' LITERACY SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract: Process of literacy teaching influences young learners' future education. Childhood experience of literacy learning in EFL classroom becomes one of the factors that contributes to young learners' motivation in learning English. Consequently, the implementation of literacy instruction to young learners in EFL classroom must be conducted interestingly in order to engage them in the enjoyable and understandable English learning process. One of the efforts to encourage young learners to improve their literacy skills is by the use of ICT in EFL classroom. Importantly, the use of animated electronic books in EFL classroom is considered as one of the beneficial tools used to increase young learners' literacy skills. Therefore, this article discusses how to implement animated electronic books in increasing young learners' literacy skills in EFL classroom.

Keywords: *Animated electronic book, EFL classroom, ICT, young learner.*

INTRODUCTION

It is very important to explore literacy skills of young learners since it is something urgent in this era to have them become literate. Consequently, literacy as the ability to use language and images in rich and varied forms to read, write, listen, speak, view, represent, and think critically about ideas must be considered as the priority in young learners' education. It is in line with the importance of literacy to young learners stated by Fatimah (2012) who explains that young learners need to be facilitated to develop their literacy skills to adapt themselves as early as possible to cope with their environment. In other words, teaching literacy to young learners has its own wonderful potential benefits in order to help them understand, and communicate with their surroundings, in spoken and written forms of communication channels (Fatimah, 2012). Therefore, because of the urgency of literacy to young learners,

literacy must be instructed meaningfully to the young learners by the use of appropriate strategy facilitated by beneficial media to engage them in the effective teaching and learning process.

On the other hand, proficiency of Indonesian learners is at low level since the mean score is below the OECD average (OECD/PISA, 2010), that is 57th rank of 65 countries. Similarly, PIRLS (2012) also reports that Indonesian students' reading achievement is insufficient, that is 42nd rank of 45 countries. The average scale score of the Indonesian students is 428 while the PIRLS scale conterpoint is 500 (PIRLS, 2012). Meanwhile, the writing proficiency of Indonesian students is at low level since according to UNDP 2009 three-quarters of the world's 775 million illiterate adults are found in ten countries, one of them is Indonesia. Specifically, UNDP (2009) reports that the score of Indonesian adult literacy rate puts Indonesia at 88th place out

of 180 countries. It really means that the ability to read and to write of Indonesian students is insufficient. Therefore, the ironic facts above prove that Indonesian learners' need to be improved.

In addition, in relation to the poor score of Indonesian learners' literacy rate, Diem (2011) found that one cause of the insignificant low progress of literacy skill of Indonesian students was the insufficiency of related literature or reading materials to meet the needs of the students. In other words, the limitation of reading materials causes the problem in form of having some of the Indonesian learners become illiterate. Furthermore, it is shown by Yoon (2013) that the lack of the interesting strategy and the limited reading resources used in the class become the problems faced by the teachers of young learners. Consequently, to overcome the limitation of the printed reading materials, it is very beneficial to facilitate the young learners by the use of interesting electronic reading material in form of animated electronic books.

In relation to the important issue above, it was investigated by Yoon (2013) that the use of animated e-books is very effective in exploring 78 Korean elementary ELL students' literacy skills in the English language classroom in form of improving students' reading and vocabulary ability and increasing young learners' affective factors such as interest and motivation. In other words, it is possible to integrate literacy and ICT by the use of animated electronic book in the classroom to improve young learners' literacy skills. By the use of animated e-book that consists of many kinds of interesting electronic features, young learners are able to engage in meaningful learning process. In conclusion, by facilitating the literacy learning process in EFL classroom to young learners through the application of animated electronic book, hopefully, it is easy for them to enhance their literacy skills.

In relation to the whole of illustration above, this article has five objectives, namely (1) describing briefly the importance of early literacy instruction experiences to young learners, (2) illustrating the link between literacy and ICT, (3) introducing the problem solving to the insufficiency of ICT facilities at school, (4) pointing out the beneficial role of animated electronic book in teaching literacy to young learners in EFL classroom, and (5) underlining the important consideration of the use of electronic book to young learners.

METHODOLOGY

This article is a conceptual paper that was written based on library study. To carry out the undertaking, various journal articles which are related to the topic of discussion were reviewed. The reviewed articles included both theoretical papers on concept of animated e-books in young learners' EFL classroom and research-based papers of a number of recent studies on concept of animated e-books in young learners' EFL classroom. The former provided solid ground for revisiting concept of animated e-books in young learners' EFL classroom along with its pertaining principles.

The Importance of Early Literacy Instruction Experiences To Young Learners

The improvement of the young learners' literacy skills totally depends on the early meaningful education experiences. It is in line with Yoon's statement (2013) who explains that much research has already revealed that most of the ELL learners can expand to productive use of language which includes speaking and writing after starting with receptive understanding of the new information. In addition, the importance of early education experiences is also explained by Moon (2000) who stated that children learning literacy also makes errors which give the teachers windows to look through

and see what they have discovered about language so far. Therefore, it means that teaching literacy to young learners is very important since childhood as a foundation of the education.

Linking literacy and ICT in EFL Classroom

ICT has become an important need in all aspects of life including education since educational efforts have been made to integrate ICT into the teaching and learning process at all levels of education including young learners' classroom. Specifically, the important uses of ICTs in education fall into three broad categories: information resources, tools and portals for educators; supplements to classroom-based activities; and tools for distance/online learning (Paas & Creech, 2008, p.9). Consequently, the role of ICT in education is very urgent to be applied in teaching and learning process.

In relation to the concept of ICT above, it is very important to integrate ICT and literacy in young learners' education to enhance their literacy skill. This is because ICT as the tools, facilities, processes, and equipments that provide the required environment with the physical infrastructure and the services for the generation, transmission, processing, storing and disseminating of information in all forms including voice, text, data, graphics and video (Asabere and Enguah, 2012, p. 62) is very beneficial in literacy learning. In other words, the function of ICT effectively support the literacy teaching and learning process because of its important various features.

In addition, as the evidence of the urgent role of ICT instruction in EFL classroom, there are much research prove how electronic book enable the learners to improve their literacy skill. Those are Emily, Skinner and Haggod's research (2008) which developed literate

identities with English language learners through digital story telling and Barakat and Bataineh's research (2008) which investigated Jordanian student teachers in using the computers to develop primary stage pupils' literacy skills. In addition, Kervin and Mantei (2010) also conducted a research which studied the importance of incorporating technology within classroom literacy experiences. Moreover, Saucedo who also conducted a research was able to explore the impact of using stories and ICT to teach English to three and four year old Spanish children. Therefore, it is important to consider well the results of large numbers of research prove the importance of literacy and technology to young learners.

The Problem Solving to the Insufficiency of ICT Facilities at School

Actually, although it is very beneficial to implement electronic book in teaching literacy to young learners, there must be the consideration that each school level in each area has its own limitation. In relation to the consideration of ICT use in the education in Indonesia, the fact shows that there is still ICT facility limitation in some school in Indonesia especially in the Kindergarten and Elementary School. Based on the Global Information Technology Report in the year of 2010-2011 reported by Dutta and Mia (2011) from World Economic Forum which ranked the countries in the world based on the restrictiveness of ICT facilities placed Indonesia on the rank 53 out of 138 countries. That was better than Indonesian rank in the year of 2009-2010, rank 67 out of 133 countries. Moreover, Indonesian ICT indicator team of Indonesian information and communication ministry (2011: xxii) reported the research conducted by International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which showed that the use of ICT in Indonesia is lower than the use of ICT in states assembled in ASEAN since the use of

internet in Indonesia is under Filipina, and Thailand but it is above Laos and Cambodia. In conclusion, that fact above must be a consideration of the application of ICT in the school since there must be solution of the ICT limitation.

Ironically, ICT use in education is still very limited since Indonesian ICT indicator team of Indonesian information and communication ministry (2011) reported the survey result conducted in 801 schools in 17 cities that in learning process 22.6 % schools in Indonesia use radio, 48.81% schools use television, 94.38 use telephone, 98% schools use computer and 80.03% use internet, 86,5% computers are used for teaching and learning activity and 13. 5 % computers are used for school administration activity. Indonesian ICT indicator team of Indonesian information and communication ministry (2011) also reported that the ratio of the teachers that use ICT in teaching and learning activity is 0.39, the ratio of the teachers that have followed ICT training is 0.34, the ratio of the students that access internet for learning purpose is 0.39. That ratio is still low since the proportion of the schools which have internet connection is still 80%. In addition, it was also reported by Indonesian ICT indicator team of Indonesian information and communication ministry (2011) that the subjects that are often utilized by ICT are Language and Computer Skill since those subjects have the same average, 3. Therefore, based on the above facts, it can be inferred that the use of ICT in teaching and learning process in Indonesia is still very limited.

Actually, the limitation of ICT infrastructures in education should not be considered as a big problem which forbids the teachers to use ICT in form of electronic books in learning activity if they comprehend and realize the important function of ICT in education. Those are as

the information resources, tools and portals for educators; supplements to classroom-based activities, and tools for distance or online learning (Paas & Creech, 2008, p.9). In other words, ICT in education plays very urgent roles so that the learning activity in Language Subjects including English must be integrated by the use of ICT to gain the educational purposes including to enhance emergent literacy skills in young children.

Correspondently, to provide the appropriate solution for the insufficient use of ICT in the school, it is important to know the cause of the problems. According to Adeosun (2010: 205) the causes are such as lack of time, lack of infrastructure, insufficient knowledge, lack of information on exisiting software, lack of technical support, lack of funding, resistant to change, and low internet connectivity. In other words, the insufficient infrastructure of ICT is not as the single main problem that must be overcome by single stakeholders. There must be coordination between government, school, teachers, and students. Therefore, it is clear that the solution is in form of the appropriate coordination between government, school, teachers, and students.

In addition, by realizing the urgency of ICT use in education, it is reasonable to the Indonesian government to obligate the use of ICT in education by determining Indonesian Act No. 20 of the Year 2003 on the system of national education of the Republic of Indonesia, article 35 section 1 and article 40 which states that one of the facilities in the school is ICT and article 1 section 15 which explains that the teaching-learning processes in distance education are conducted by means of the utilization of ICT and other media. Moreover, based on strategic planning of Indonesian national education ministry, year 2010-2014, it is stated that one of the policy direction is reinforcement and expansion of ICT in education. Furthermore, based

on the government regulation 19/2005 it is clear stated that the use of ICT is needed in learning process. Therefore, based on the above education regulations, it can be inferred that the use of ICT is an obligation in Indonesian education so that it is a must for teachers to use ICT in learning activity. It means that it is also a must for teachers who are able to utilize enough ICT facilities in their school to integrate ICT learning activity. Specifically, it is advised to the teachers of young children to use electronic book to enhance emergent literacy skills. However, it should be adapted to the condition of each school connected to the sufficiency of ICT facilities. It is hoped that the government supplies enough ICT facilities in each school level so that the teachers are able to use electronic book in learning activity.

The Impementation of Animated Electronic Book in Teaching Literacy to Young Learners in EFL Classroom

By realizing that there are certain smart solutions for the insufficiency and limitation of ICT infrastructures, it is clear that the teachers of young learners are not allowed to take for granted the beneficial advantages of the implementation of ICT in the classroom, particularly, the use of animated electronic book. According to Yoon (2013) e-book is published and downloaded through the internet, viewed on the screens of diversified portable electronic devices and instantly purchased with no shipping costs and no waiting. In relation to that electronic book definition, it seems interesting to the teachers of young learners to teach them literacy trough the use of electronic book since similarly Wepner et al. (2000, p.80) defined electronic book as a powerfull tool for introducing students to rich array of literature and to imaginative pleasure embended in reading process. Based on the illustration above, by considering the interesting multimedia

features and the important function of e-book, it is clear that electronic book is one of the beneficial learning media used in the literacy instruction of young learners.

As the evidence of the beneficial role of electronic book in enhancing young learners literacy skills, it is found by Yoon (2013) that young learners are accustomed to using e-books and have preference of using them to their counterpart, particularly on additional English learning outside the classroom. In addition, they showed high degree of expectation on the learning effects of using e-books in their English studying. Furthermore, based on the research findings of the second instrument conducted by Yoon (2013), pre-and post-reading comprehension and vocabulary test, it is known that the use of automated e-books in the class improved students' reading comprehension and vocabulary ability. Meanwhile, the research findings of his third instrument, e-book survey, shows that the young learners are highly satisfied with the multimedia features on e-books. In addition, the data analysis resulted from the fourth instrument of Yoon's research (2013), students' written comments, shows that the young learners thought using e-books for learning English was convenient and interesting. It is also mentioned that the young learners also presented that to read e-books helped them improve their English skills in terms of reading comprehension and vocabualry enhancement. Therefore, it is known that e-book is the beneficial tool since it is found that the students had positive attitudes about the features of an e-book, and such remarkable functions encouraged them to have a sense of pleasure in learning. Therefore, it is recommended that the use of animated e-book is as the alternatif teaching media to be used to enhance young learners' literacy skills.

In addition, in relation to those electronic book potential benefits,

Moody (2010) similarly also explains that e-storybooks may support reading engagement, scaffolding for emergent literacy development during storybook reading activities and allowing young children and struggling readers to enjoy books independently due to electronic features. Moreover, Wepner et al. (2000) also added other electronic book potential benefits which inspires the teachers of young learners such as allowing students to revisit the text without teacher assistance, and heightening students' attention. Finally, it is hoped that the teachers of young learners are encouraged to facilitate the literacy learning activity especially in EFL classroom through the use of the animated electronic books by considering the potential benefits of the electronic book.

The Important Consideration in Implementing Electronic Book to Young Learners

It is clear that animated e-book has many advantages to be used to enhance young learners' literacy skills. However, it is also very important to the teachers of young children to motivate their students to read printed books because reading printed books also plays very important role in cultivating reading habit since childhood. Importantly, it must be realized by the teachers of young children that electronic book is just as one of the additional tool in learning activity and must be supported by the printed books as the main sources to cultivate children's reading habit. Therefore, it is hoped that the use of electronic book does not reduce young learners' reading printed book habit but as the complement of that.

In addition, it is also important to consider that the misuse of electronic books must be anticipated by the teachers of young learners. According to Moody (2010), electronic books can decrease young learners' comprehension toward the content of the story if the teachers choose

the distracting e-storybook features young children. Moreover, Moody (2010) also provides the important consideration to choose suitable electronic book to enhance literacy skill of young learners.

Consequently, it is very important to select appropriate e-book to educate the young learners well. This is because the wrong chosen e-book is harmful to them. In relation to that, Moody (2010) suggested that in choosing and using e-storybooks in the classroom, educators should consider specific strategies such as choosing developmentally appropriate storybooks that limit digital features that are unrelated to the story, pairing adult instruction with e-storybooks, and monitoring distracting features embedded in e-storybooks. Additionally, in relation to those important considerations in choosing appropriate electronic storybook, Wepner et al. (2000) stated things to consider in choosing electronic books such as the curriculum, specific goals for the students, personal philosophy of teaching, and the needs of the students. Therefore, the educators of young learners must consider those aspects to enhance their literacy skills significantly.

CONCLUSION

Early literacy instruction experiences is very important to young learners as a foundation of their future education. Because there is a great link between ICT and EFL education, it is significant to apply ICT in young learners' EFL classroom. However, there is an ironic problem in form of the insufficiency of ICT facilities at school. In order to solve the problem, there must be a great support from the government in form of providing ICT facilities needed in EFL classroom. In addition, developing literacy skill of young learners is not separated from the support of the beneficial media in form of animated e-book. Therefore, there must be consideration in implementing electronic book to young learners. It is very important

to note that it is not allowed that the use of electronic book reduce young learners' reading habits toward printed book since the function of e-book itself is just as the additional tool in learning activity.

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