

Parents' Perceptions of Their Young Children's English Literacy Acquisition: A Narrative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the families' perceptions of their contribution in promoting their young children's early English literacy acquisition. The researchers used questionnaires and interview to collect the data. The researchers applied an in-depth open-ended interview to two families who have a role in promoting their children's English literacy development. The researchers also applied questionnaires to support the data. The researchers used a survey to apply the questionnaire to the respondents. The result showed that most of the parents in Indonesia hadn't given their awareness of their children's early English literacy acquisition. Since English was categorized as the foreign language of Indonesian people, most of the families did their mother language (L1) at home with their children. Thus, there are two implications of this study. The first implication of this study is to increase the parents' awareness of the benefit of implementing children's early English literacy. The other implication for English Language Teaching is to help the teacher and school institution to have collaborated with the parents to increase the development of children's early English literacy. Thus, the teacher can teach English easier and may achieve the learning goals which are very useful for all parties (parents, children, and teachers) in the future.

Keywords: early literacy development; english reading; family context; young children; narrative inquiry

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays English becomes really important language in Indonesia. English becomes not only as the subject of the school lesson, but everybody needs to master English as their future jobs need. As the teachers' forum on the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2017) stated that introducing English right from the early ages (the golden ages) has many benefits. One of the benefits of introducing English in the early ages is to gain the children's interest, thus the children become familiar with the English vocabularies. Thus, families become important influencer and resources in their children's literacy learning in home-based environment (Saracho, 2010). One of the activities to improve the children's English early literacy is by implementing English storybook reading by parents to children.

A good reader and poor reader are influenced by the habit of children's reading since they were in the early ages (Baker et al., 2001). A child who had low interest in reading before age 5 had weak reading skills in grade 4 (Olofsson & Niedersøe, 1999). Children who had high interest in reading started from age three (3) will not find that much difficulty in reading skill. The International Children Foundation (UNICEF) adds that early child development represents the interrelated of physical, linguistic, social, emotional, and cognitive capacities. This period shows the most rapid development in the first seven (7) years of life. This investment in early childhood gives the

greatest impact in preparing the readiness of the next stage of education.

For the previous research of this study, in 2016, Saracho conducted a research under the theme of literacy in the twenty-first century. She believed that the involvement of the family can develop the children's literacy. She conducted some research for bilingual study in some countries. Most of her researches are discussing about the impact of introducing L1 and L2 to the very young children. In Asia context, she has conducted the research in some countries such as in China, Malaysia, and Singapore.

In 2017, Saracho continued the research. In this year, she focused on the children's level of development according to International Reading Association (IRA) and National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) data (Saracho, 2017). Based on those two Associations, the level of infancy to pre-school grade is for awareness and exploration. Meanwhile, the level of kindergarten grade is starting to experiment the reading and writing phase. Thus, she emphasized that both parents and early childhood education teachers should put their awareness on the children's level of development to support their children's literacy development itself.

In 2018, Saracho researched the social practice of the parents' storybook reading (Saracho, 2018). The result of her study showed that parents use several approaches in storybook reading practice, such as using their teaching behaviors and

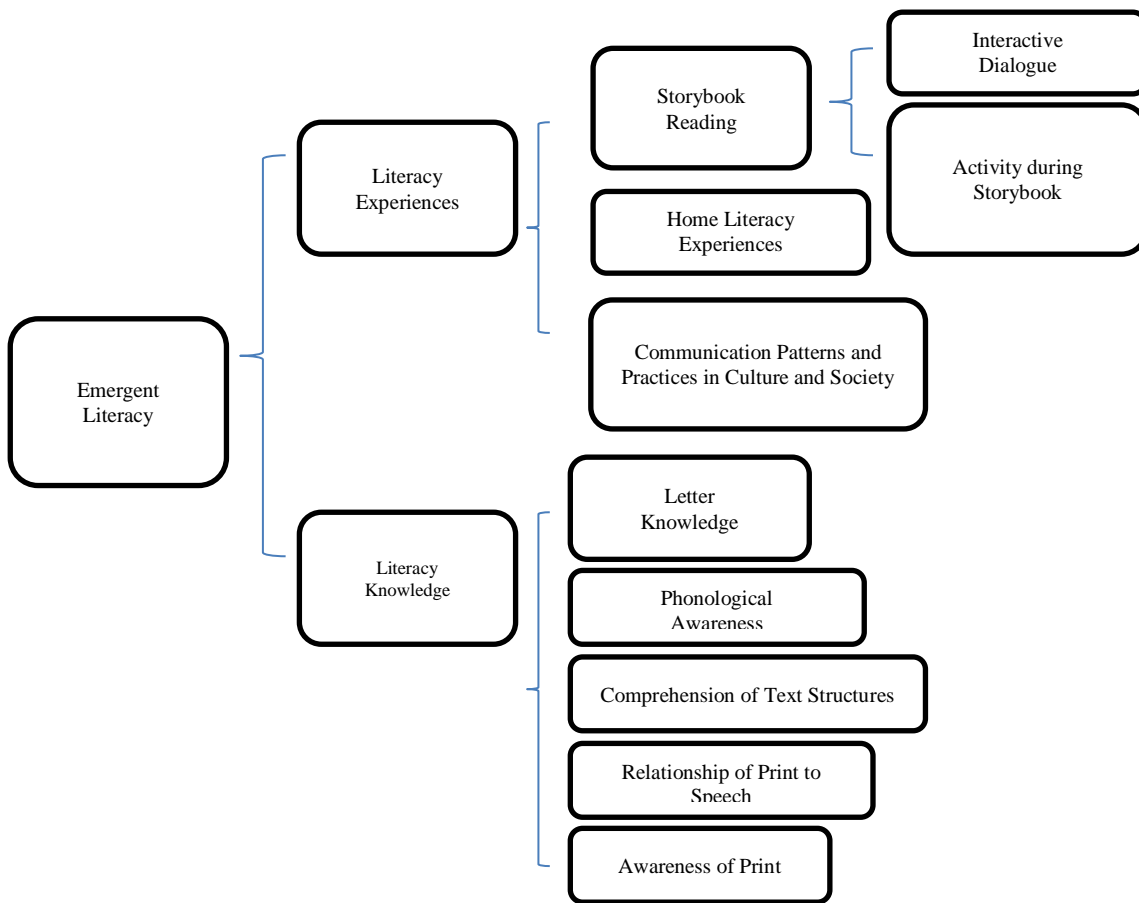
trying to engage the process with high-quality interactions with the children.

Based on the issues above, the researcher uses an empirical gap. In the empirical gap, the research about the family's role in early childhood literacy in the Indonesian context using narrative inquiry is still limited. Thus, here the researcher wants to research the children's early English literacy, especially in the Indonesian family context using narrative

inquiry. Thus, the research question of this study is "How does the Parents' Perceptions of Their Young Children's English Literacy Acquisition?".

The Concept of Emergent Literacy Development

The term emergent reflects the developmental process of literacy acquisition and recognizes early behavior.



Picture 1.1 Overview of Chapter on Emergent Literacy (Gunn et al., 2004)

There are five broad areas may motivate the children's literacy development in a family setting which is also can engage the reading activity between parents and children: (a) *Valued placed on literacy*: In this first point, the parents read and stimulate children to read, (b) *Press for achievement*: Parents communicate their expectations

concerning their children's achievement, reading instruction, and reading interest, (c) *Availability and instrumental use of reading materials*: Parents present literacy experiences at home that include children's reading materials, (d) *Reading with children*: Parents read to children at home as well as listen to and help them when they read orally, (e) *Opportunities for verbal interaction*: Parents are having interaction with their children in a variety of ways (Hess et al., 1964; Saracho, 2006).

Here are the elements which will support young children's literacy development: (1) the availability of reading materials and technologies such as televisions and computers, (2) observation of adult reading, (3) parents reading to children regularly and providing them enough space and sufficient opportunities for reading, (4) engagement in conversation and language play (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Thus, parents who have a higher level of literacy will have better quantity and quality of books at home and will create the interaction between themselves and their children (Leichter, 1984). According to Lancy et al (1989), parents who are good readers will read books multiple times and assist their children to engage more active in the storybook reading activity. Meanwhile, parents who are poor readers will apply uncreative procedures during storybook reading activity.

According to Snow and Tabors (1996) as cited in (Saracho, 2006b), there are four intergenerational literacy transfers: (1)

simple and direct transfer, (2) participation in literacy practice, (3) enjoyment and engagement, (4) linguistic and cognitive. Reading a storybook includes as the simple transfer. Here are some considerations to encourage family in developing their children's literacy (Ortiz, 1997), included: (a) allow families to select reading materials for their reading activity with the children, (b) do the informal simple activities such as reading together with children, (c) make children feel comfortable with the reading activity, and (d) respond to children's questions during the reading activity. Thus, family becomes important resources in developing the children's literacy development in different settings and context (Saracho, 1999).

The Genre of the Children's Literature Books

Children's literature has an important effect on children's intellectual and emotional development. Children's literature provides awareness towards education, socialization, and communicative goals (Landt, 2006; Saracho & Spodek, 2010). There are three standards in choosing the children's literature books (Boutte, 2008). The first requirement is that the children's literature books should include the early childhood education content and skills. The second requirement is that the children's literature books should contain imagination, fantasy, and humor. The third requirement is that the children's literature books should

contain characters, moral values, and life lesson. Thus, the literature books, whether fiction or non-fiction may help the children to encounter the children’s emotional relationship (Kiefer 2004). Presently, the field of children’s literature covers numerous genres including ABC and counting books, nursery rhymes and poetry collections, picture storybooks, novels, and non-fiction.

Norton and Norton (2007) provided the following genres of the children’s literature: (1) traditional literature, (2) modern fantasy, (3) contemporary realistic fiction, (4) information books, and (5) poetry. Fables, myths, legends, folktales, fairy tales, hero tales and other story are included as the traditional literature. Meanwhile, the modern fantasy is a genre that requires the imagination. This type of literature has stories with place, people, creatures and events that could not be existed like an animal talking. Contemporary realistic fiction is a genre where the story reflects the people who live in contemporary world. Thus, the characters may be exaggerated and the plots may be preposterous. This kind of literature shows the reality that the story could have happened but it is mostly impossible. The next genre is information books. Information books may be consisted from some subjects, such as: history, animals, plants, geography, etc.). The last genre is poetry. Poetry provides enjoyment but make children aware about themselves.

Table 1. Selection criteria for narrative and information books (Saracho, 2018)

Narrative Books	Information Books
Have believable characters but should not be stereotyped.	Be accurate and readable.
Be straightforward to help children to understand the story.	Have simple formats with attractive illustration.
Use characters’ language, conversations, and ideas that reflect the situation.	Present information that represents scientific knowledge.
Be visually stimulating and aesthetically pleasing to motivate the children to interact with the books.	Be visually stimulating and aesthetically pleasing to motivate the children to interact with the books.
Encourage the children to read by themselves several times.	Encourage the children to read by themselves several times.
Interesting for both male and female children.	Interesting for both male and female children.
Reflect their home environment and daily lives.	Reflect their home environment and daily lives.
Have a story structure, problem, solving, and solution.	Be familiar to the children.
Focus on understanding the main characters.	Use realistic illustration or photographs.
Uses readers’ knowledge to guide their comprehension of the story.	Provide accurate information about a non-fiction topic.
Have fictional and traditional narrative structure.	Rely on expository text structure.

METHOD

This research was exploring parents' perceptions of their young children's English literacy acquisition. In this research, the researcher used qualitative research narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a way of doing research that focused on the stories about self-lives. These stories are about the experiences of live; the meaning that was made from the events we live or imagine in our future lives (Barkhuizen, 2014).

The researcher used questionnaire and interview to collect the data. The researcher collected the information from 81 participants of the questionnaire and then made an in-depth interview from three participants from the questionnaire. The researchers used interview for the oral narrative data by using conducting semi-structured interview. The analysis of interview used transcription, coding and analysis. Transcription is essential to deal with findings. Selective coding is for analysis to emphasize the relationship between the participant's experiences. The analysis explored in detail the stories in term of its content containing who, where, and when which elaborated into the context of its story and Story (Barkhuizen, 2014).

This paper showed two participants who join the interview. Mr. N and Mrs. L shared their stories regarding with their perceptions of their young children's English literacy acquisition. Mr. N is a father of a three years old son. Mr. N is 32

years old. Mr. N works as Japanese-Indonesia-English Interpreter. Mrs. L is a mother of five years old daughter. Mrs. L is 30 years old. Mrs. L is an English student of the Graduate Program at one of university in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

For the findings, the researchers chose a short story which relates to the research purpose. The story expressed about the parents' perceptions of their young children's English literacy acquisition. The stories were from the result of the parents' interview. To support the data, the researcher also used questionnaire. Based on the questionnaire given to 81 participants:

1. 91,4% of the parents did a storybook reading in Bahasa / Indonesia Language.
2. 60,5% of the parents did a storybook reading in English Language.
3. 82,7% of Bahasa / Indonesia Language storybook reading activities was led by Mother.
4. 74,1% of English Language storybook reading activities was led by Mother.
5. 45,7% of parents shared that they began the storybook reading activity together when the children reach 3-6 years old.
6. 63% of parents enjoy the storybook reading activity.

7. 82,7% of parents go to the library or book-store with their children.
8. 33,3% of parents uses mix-language (English-Bahasa) to communicate with the children.
9. 64,2% of parents uses offline books for the storybook reading activity.
10. 9,9% of parents uses English questions to ask the children during storybook reading activity.
11. 69,1% of parents uses nursery rhymes in English as another activity of storybook reading to support their children early English acquisition.

Short story 1: Parents' perceptions of their young children's English literacy acquisition

Participant 1: Mr. N

"Related to the reading activity at home, I personally think that children need to know the reading activity in their early ages, since they started to speak. I guess, their golden ages will help them to memorize the words better. I believe that children will find difficulties when they didn't have habit to read since in their early ages. I believe that in their golden ages, they will have high curiosity in learning something new, especially English as our foreign language. But, parents as their first tutor need to create the happy and comfortable circumstances at home, so the children will have a happy time in receiving new English literacy at home."

"I think parents take a very big role in developing the children's early English literacy, because children have interaction every day and every time with the parents. Thus, they will follow what their parents' act yet speak. As English nowadays become

Indonesian people's need in the future, I think it's really good to prepare the English acquisition for the early children, so they will have a good preparation in the future needs."

"To create a good circumstance during storybook reading, I let my child to have free imagination about the story. I sometimes did at home and outside home reading with my child. When outside home, I use playground as the media to make the story become more interesting. To avoid the boredom of the storybook activity, I give another related English activity such as playing nursery rhymes together, or watching English cartoon movie."

"For the materials that I use to do a storybook reading activity, I prefer to use offline book or printed book. I think printed book is a really good media for learning for the children, though online book or application is more interesting because it includes voice, song, and moving-image, but I will still choose printed books. I consider my child's eye-health if we use mobile application. I think the radiation is not good for my son. Thus, I prefer to take my son to the book store and let him choose what books that he wants, and we go home with full of enjoyment. I think this is the most unforgettable moments."

Who

Participant (Mr. N) is the main figure of this story. The participant tried to figure out his perceptions towards his roles and awareness of his early age son (three years old). Mr N has high interest in developing his child's early English acquisition. He thinks that learn English from the very beginning of the stage will give many benefits. One of the benefits is for the children's future needs. The other thing

that is important based on Mr N perception in implementing the English storybook reading activity is because of the children's golden ages. Three years old is still in the golden age when the child will have a much easier in receiving the new knowledge or new vocabularies.

Where

Participant (Mr. N) uses two places in implementing English storybook reading activity. Although mostly he did the activity at home, but sometimes he also did it at outside home, for example in the children's playground where there are many toys and other equipment that can be used as the tools to support the activity. He believes that the tools will help the children to learn English in a fun and interesting way. He believes that children will create a very meaningful imagination when the parents themselves create happy and comfortable circumstances in the English storybook reading activity.

When

Participant (Mr. N) mostly implemented the English storybook reading activity every day, especially before his child is sleep. He usually uses printed books or offline books to support the activity. He knows that the online books offer many modes that gain children's interest, such as voice, sound, moving image, videos, etc. however, he still uses the offline books because he takes care of his child's eye-health. He believes that the use of gadget is not good for the early children. Besides,

he has habit to take his child to the offline book-store to buy new books which is mostly chosen by his little children by himself.

Short story 1: Parents' perceptions of their young children's English literacy acquisition

Participant 2: Mrs. L

"I personally think that children need to know the reading activity start from three years old, for both Bahasa and English. Children at age three to five years old which is at their golden ages will get easier way in acquiring the new vocabularies, especially in English. I think pictures inside the book will also help the children to memorize the new vocabularies better."

"For the books that I used, sometimes I use English storybook reading, but sometimes I also use my Bible to do a storybook reading activity. I think my children will have knowledge about the story inside of the Bible and gain new vocabularies at the same time. Thus, I think parents take a big role in introducing English. Especially when the parents have habit to talk in English with the children, it can be a really good habit for them. I think parents need to give exposure, so the children will happily actively learn English in their early ages"

"I think it is an important thing to do a read together between parents and children. I think children will get bored easily when they read by themselves. But when they read with the parents, they become more excited."

"I prefer use offline books for the storybook materials. I think offline books or printed books are much more exciting rather than online books. We can point and touch the object of the

story in offline books. Moreover, I dislike the online books because of its radiation which is dangerous for my child's eye-health. And I also prefer offline or printed books because I usually take my child to the book-store to find an interesting new book."

"To support my children's early English acquisition, I'm not only use storybook reading. I also implement cartoon movie, give guessing games, play nursery rhymes, and even create my own song as long as it relates to English words."

Who

Participant (Mr. N) is the main figure of this story. The participant tried to figure out her perceptions towards her roles and awareness of her early age daughter (five years old). She shared her experience in storybook reading activity. She starts the activity when her daughter is at three years old, because she thinks that introducing new language in the golden ages era will make the learning become easier and it is really important things to do by the parents. She also thinks that implementing storybook reading with pictures inside the book will gain more interest for the children in learning in their early ages.

Where

Practically, Mrs. L implements the activity at home. Mostly use Bible for the materials. She uses the story inside the Bible to do a storybook reading activity. She usually did the activity together with the children. She thinks that children will get bored easily when they don't have

reading assistant. Thus, parents need to be their children's reading assistant. but, to prevent the children's boredom on reading activity, she also implements another literacies activity at home, such as watching English cartoon movie, give guessing games, play nursery rhymes, and even create her own song as long as it relates to English words.

When

She practically did the storybook reading activity at any time. She chose offline or printed books because she thinks that the printed books are much more exciting rather than the online books. She explains that by using printed books they can point and touch the object of the story which is good in supporting the activity. Moreover, she dislikes the online books due to the radiation of the gadget. She doesn't want to ruin her child's eye-health because of the radiation of the online books.

Discussion

According to the theory above, there are elements which support young children's literacy development: (1) the availability of reading materials and technologies such as televisions and computers, (2) observation of adult reading, (3) parents reading to children regularly and providing them enough space and sufficient opportunities for reading, (4) engagement in conversation and language play (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). This theory simply shows that parents and materials are important things

to support the acquisition of young children's literacy development. Especially, there were interaction and engagement in the activity. If there is good interaction and engagement between parents and children during the activity, the result is good.

Moreover, Saracho also adds that according to Snow and Tabors (1996) as cited in (Saracho, 2006a), there are four intergenerational literacy transfers: (1) simple and direct transfer, (2) participation in literacy practice, (3) enjoyment and engagement, (4) linguistic and cognitive. This means that one of the important points in the storybook reading activity is about the enjoyment and engagement of parents and children. Thus, the role of the parents in assisting their children during storybook reading activity is important. Storybook reading offers simple and direct transfer for the children because parents use an interesting picture book which will help the children to learn easily.

CONCLUSION

In practice, there is also genre of books that parents may use in implementing the storybook reading. Narrative books and information books are the examples of reading materials that the parents can use during storybook reading (Saracho, 2018). Children usually like these kinds of books because it contains pictures and colorful background. Parents can use this kind of books because it usually also contains moral values which

is good to teach the children about life-learning.

In this study the researcher tries to show the parents' perception towards their young children's early English needs using narrative inquiry. Although there are some weaknesses in this research, the researcher still hopes that this study may give many benefits, especially for the future researcher who conducted the research in the same field.

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