

Motivating Students of Young Learners through Story Telling in English Class

By
Atik Rokhayani
Muria Kudus University

Abstract: Bringing an enjoyable English classroom is a hard work for teachers to do especially for young learners. It is believed that children have their own way in learning. The characteristics of children are varying from one child to others, so teachers have to manage and organize the class well. Teaching and learning process of young learners should be conditioned based on their needs and interests. An ideal way of teaching plays a significant role in developing students' skills. Teachers tend to use such condition into an English class. Therefore, they need to be equipped with knowledge and skills since it is a challenge for them to create an effective and efficient class. There are many activities that can be applied by teachers, such as story telling, songs, games etc. One kind of fun activity in the class is using story telling. Story telling can be used to enhance students in learning English and also develop their English. Many people agree that many children like story. In this paper, I want to explore the use of story telling in the English class to motivate students' skills.

Key words: *story telling, teaching English, young learners*

Atik Rokhayani is a lecturer at English Education Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty, Muria Kudus University. She got her master degree on English Education from Semarang State University. She is reachable by email at atiec_ca3m@yahoo.com

Introduction

As an international language, English is used in every aspect of life. We use English in education, economics, politics, social etc. In education field in Indonesia, English is one of the subjects in school. English is taught from Elementary School, Junior High School, Senior High School and University. Some schools use English in Kindergarten or even play group. As a foreign language, Indonesian people consider that learning English is difficult since it is not used in daily language. So, learning English is not an easy thing especially for young learners.

Discussing about Teaching English for Young Learners is interesting because of many reasons. One of them is the children's characteristics. It is very different when we teach to adults or teenagers. Motivating young learners to learn English through stories at an early age provide them the opportunity to stimulate their enthusiasm and enhance their awareness of the use of English. Stories are unquestionably a significance part of children's literacy development. Children love stories, and storytelling was regarded as a learning tradition. It plays a very important role in children's language learning.

Children as Young Learners

Young learners are different from adults in their way to learn a foreign language. They have their own characteristics, which are different from adults. The characteristics cover their ways of thinking, their attitude, their aptitude, et cetera. They also prevail to the children's ways of learning language. This, of course, influences the ways of teaching them. To give the best quality of teaching English to the children, the teachers should know and understand them.

In this paper, discussing about young learners mean that children between five and ten or eleven years old (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990). Others define that young learners are those under 14 years old. Moreover, young learners are the children who study at Elementary level. In transmitting the language, children cannot decide for themselves what to learn. Most people argue the adult world and the child's world are not the same. Children do not always understand what adults are talking about and adults do not always understand what children are talking about. The difference is that adults usually find out something by asking questions but children don't always ask. They either pretend to understand or they understand in their own terms and do what they think you want them to do.

The characteristics of young learners:

- a. They can talk about what they are doing
- b. They can tell about what they have done or heard
- c. They can plan activities
- d. They are enthusiastic and positive about learning
- e. They love to play and learn best when they are enjoying themselves
- f. They can use logical reasoning
- g. They can use their vivid imagination
- h. They can use a wide range of intonation patterns in their mother tongue
- i. They have a very short attention and concentration span
- j. Their basic concepts are formed. They have very decided views of the world
- k. They can tell the difference between fact and fiction

Teaching English for Young Learners (TEYL)

TEYL has become important in recent years. One reason for this has been the introduction of primary English as a Foreign Language in many countries like in Indonesia but it is also a world-wide phenomenon. The children have their own characteristics, which are different from adults. The characteristics cover their ways of thinking, their attitude, their aptitude, et cetera. They also prevail to the children's ways of learning language. This, of course, influences the ways of teaching them. To give the best quality of teaching English to the children, the teachers should know and understand them. Learning a language, young learners respond to the language, depending on what it does or what they can do with it rather than treating it as an intellectual game or abstract system. It can be understood that the children need activities that are more concrete rather than abstract and to be involved in those activities in order that they can learn the language well.

Teaching English to young learners is both a difficult and enjoyable experience. It is difficult for teachers, because they always have to find new and interesting methods and approaches in order to stir the learners' interest, but in the same time it is enjoyable because teachers are given the chance of becoming child again, of seeing the world through a child's eyes, when working with children. As far as young learners are concerned they, mostly, find these lessons enjoyable, as they are active parts in the process. They use the language in order to communicate ideas, to play games, and later on to tell stories. Learning a foreign language does not mean only to be able to speak, but also to speak it correctly.

In the process of teaching and learning, teachers should use appropriate media and technique based on the students' ability. The role of instruction in teaching English especially for young learners is also emphasized by Harmer (2007), who argues that instruction is vital in foreign language classrooms because it can provide comprehensible input for the learner at the right level.

Why Story Telling?

People in all times and places have told stories. In the oral tradition, storytelling includes the teller and the audience. The story teller creates the experience, while the audience perceives the message and creates personal mental images from the words heard and the gestures seen. Most of the children love stories, and storytelling was regarded as a learning tradition. It plays a very important role in children's language learning. With meaningful contexts, natural repetition, lovely characters and interesting plots, stories can be used to develop children's language skills, such as listening, imagination and predicting.

There are many reasons for using storytelling in language teaching. Wright (2004) states that stories which rely so much on words, offer major and consonant source of language experience for children. Moreover, stories can motivate children, stimulate children's imagination and arouse children's interests, etc.

1. Stories provide meaningful contexts.

Language is used to communicate. When we use storytelling, we are not only using language in the text but also the whole context which brings out the meaning. In stories, children learn the language in a meaningful way. In the teaching and learning process, when the teachers are telling the stories while the students are listening, they focus on meaning first. Some teachers might present the new language by repeating saying them several times, and they require students to listen carefully. They think that the more the teacher repeats the new language, the better the children will remember it. In this way, children learn some single words or some sentences. Some children complain that it is hard for them to remember the words or sentences. Children will soon forget them because the new language is not presented in a context. They might probably remember the words in a particular story.

2. Stories can provide natural repetition.

When the students read the stories, they tend to pay attention to the key words or new language can be naturally repeated in stories. Children have another instinct in language learning—picking up chunks.

3. Children's listening skill can be developed.

The use of storytelling in TEYL is also enhancing students' listening skill. While children listen to stories, they try to guess the meaning of the new words and to grasp the main idea. Thus storytelling develops children's listening skill—seeking details. Some teachers require children to listen carefully when they begin to say the new sentences or words. While listening, children just concentrate on the pronunciation of the words or sentences, but not the meaning of it or the meaning of a context.

From the reasons presented above, storytelling can be used as one of the techniques in TEYL. We found in storytelling the characteristic needed to improve and motivate students of young learners because in the storytelling, most of the children love, some of teachers love too and it doesn't require a lot of preparation.

How to Choose Stories?

There are many kinds of stories, such as fables, parables, myths and legends. Teachers should choose stories which relevant to their students. In Indonesia, we can find many stories, such as Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih, Tangkuban Perahu, Timun Mas, etc. When we use stories in our teaching, the stories will be for our children, we should consider more about children, their interests, their experience and their language level, etc. It is important to choose a story that suits children's language level. Besides this, we can choose stories according to their topics, characters and plots.

In choosing stories, we as teachers should pay attention to topics linking to children's interests or experience to arouse their interests. Children concern more about what they have experienced or what they are interested in. Also, we need to consider children's age. Characters of stories also play important role in a successful teaching and learning process. Students of young learners like animal, cartoon and fiction. In addition, choosing stories that have simple and interesting plot or a surprising ending will be helpful so that children can remember them and enjoy them, and that the language in the stories will be more memorable.

On the other hand, stories can be used to introduce children to new language, improve students' skills especially practice listening skill and to revise learned language/vocabulary. Storytelling can also be used to stimulate children's imagination, to expose children to varied language, to extend/enrich children's language and to access children.

Teaching English for Young Learners through Story Telling

In teaching and learning process to young learners, storytelling is an effective way to motivate students in learning English since children love stories. During the teachers tell the story, students of young learners:

- a. are always eager to listen to stories
- b. know stories work
- c. want to understand what is happening
- d. can enjoy hearing stories in English when they start English lessons
- e. enjoy looking at story books by themselves

The following are some recommended storytelling techniques from Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2004):

- a. If students are unfamiliar with storytelling, begin with short session which do not demand too much from them and over extend their concentration span
- b. Read slowly and clearly. Give the students time to relate what they hear to what they see in the pictures, to think, ask questions, make comment. However, do vary the pace when the story speeds up
- c. Make comments about the illustrations and point to them to focus the students' attention

- d. Encourage students to take part in the storytelling by repeating key vocabulary items and phrases. Teachers can invite students to do this by pausing and looking at them with a questioning expression and by putting the hand to the ear to indicate that we are waiting for them to join in. then repeat what they have said to confirm that they have predicted correctly, and if appropriate, expand by putting the word into a full phrase or sentence
- e. Use gestures, mime, facial gestures to help convey the meaning
- f. Vary the pace, volume and your voice
- g. Pause where appropriate to add dramatic effect or to give children time to relate what they hear to what they see, and to assimilate details to the illustration
- h. Disguise your voice for the different characters as much as you can to signal when different characters are speaking and help convey meaning
- i. Ask questions to involve children
- j. Do not be afraid to repeat, expand and formulate. This increases opportunities of exposure to the language and gives children a second chance to work out the meaning and have it confirmed

The Examples of Stories

SNOW WHITE

Once upon a time there lived a little girl named Snow White. She lived with her Aunt and Uncle because her parents were dead.

One day, She heard her uncle and aunt talking about living Snow White in the castle because they both wanted to go to America and they didn't have enough money to take Snow White.

Snow White didn't want her uncle and aunt to do this so She decided it would be best if She ran away. The next morning She ran away from home when her aunt and uncle were having breakfast. She ran away into the woods.

She was very tired and hungry.

Then She saw this little cottage. She knocked but no one answered so She went inside and fell a sleep.

Meanwhile, the seven dwarfs were coming home from work. They went inside. There they found Snow White sleeping. Then Snow White woke up. She saw the dwarfs. The dwarfs said, "what is your name? Snow White said , My name is Snow White".

Doc said, "If you wish, you may live here with us,". Snow White said , oh could I? Thank you.

Then Snow White told the dwarfs the whole story and Snow White and the seven dwarfs lived happily ever after.

TIMUN MAS

Long time ago, there was a farmer couple. They were staying in a village near a forest. They lived happily. Unfortunately, they hadn't had any children yet.

Every day they prayed to God for a child. One day a giant passed their home. He heard what they were praying. Then the giant gave them a cucumber seed.

"Plant this seed, then you'll get a daughter," said the giant. "Thank you, Giant," said the couple. "But in one condition, in her 17-th birthday, you must give her to me," said the Giant. The couple wanted a child so much that they agreed without thinking first.

Then the couple planted the cucumber seed. Each day they took care the growing plant so carefully. Months later, a golden cucumber grew from the plant. The cucumber was getting heavier and bigger each day. When it was ripe, they picked it. Carefully they cut out the cucumber and how surprised were they when they found a beautiful baby inside. They were so happy. They named the baby Timun Mas, or Golden Cucumber.

Years were passing by and Timun Mas had grown into a beautiful girl. Her parents were very proud of her. But their happiness turned to fear when her 17th birthday came. The giant returned to ask for their promise. He was going to take Timun Mas away.

The farmer tried to be calm. "Just a moment, please. Timun Mas is playing. My wife will call her," he said. Then the farmer came to his daughter. "My child, take this," as he was giving her a little bag to Timun Mas. "This will help you from the giant. Now, run as fast as you can," he ordered. So Timun Mas ran away.

The couple was very sad about her leaving. But they didn't want the giant to eat Timun Mas. Meanwhile, the giant had been waiting for too long. He became impatient. Somehow he knew that the couple had lied to him. So he destroyed their house and ran for Timun Mas.

The giant was chasing Timun Mas and he was getting closer and closer. Timun Mas then took a handful of salt from her little bag. She spread out the salt behind her. Suddenly a wide sea appeared between them. The giant had to swim to reach her.

Timun Mas was still running, but now the giant almost caught her. Then she took some chilly and threw them to the giant. The chilly suddenly grew into some trees and trapped the giant. The trees grew some thorns as sharp as a knife. The giant screamed painfully. At the mean time, Timun Mas could escape again.

But the giant was very strong. Again he almost caught Timun Mas. So Timun Mas took the third magic stuff, the cucumber seeds. She threw the seeds and suddenly they became a wide cucumber field. The giant was very tired and hungry so he ate those fresh cucumbers. He ate too much that he felt sleepy and fell asleep soon.

Timun Mas kept on running as fast as she could. But soon she was very tired herself. To make things worse, the giant had woken up! Timun Mas was so scared. Desperately she then threw her last weapon, terasi (a kind of shrimp pasta). IT did a miracle again. The pasta became a big swamp. The giant fell into it but his hands almost reached Timun Mas. Suddenly the lake pulled him to the bottom. The giant panicked and he couldn't breathe. At last he was drowning.

Timun Mas was very relieved. She was safe now. Then she returned to her parents' house. Her parents were of course very happy to see their daughter safe and sound. "Thanks God. You have saved my daughter," they cried happily. From then on, Timun Mas lived happily with her parents with no fear anymore.

BAWANG MERAH BAWANG PUTIH

The story takes place in a simple village household. The head of this family has two wives, and each wife has their own daughter. Bawang Merah and her mother are jealous of the attention the father gives Bawang Putih and her mother. When the father dies, Bawang Merah and her mother take charge of the household and bully Bawang Putih into servitude. Bawang Putih's mother stands up for her daughter but she soon dies prematurely, in some versions due to sickness and in some versions due to the intentional malice of Bawang Merah's mother.

With her biological mother and father dead, the gentle and obedient Bawang Putih is left alone to be tortured by her cruel stepmother and half-sister. Though Bawang Putih suffers, she is patient. One day, when she is out in the woods, she sees a pond containing a live fish. The fish is able to speak, and tells her that it is her mother who has come back to comfort her. Bawang Putih is overjoyed to be able to speak with her mother again, and secretly visits the pond whenever she can.

One day Bawang Merah sees Bawang Putih sneaking off and secretly follows her to the pond, where she witnesses Bawang Putih talking to the fish. After Bawang Putih leaves, Bawang Merah lures the fish to the surface of the pond and catches it. Bawang Merah and her mother kill the fish, cook it and feed it to Bawang Putih without telling her where it came from. Once Bawang Putih finishes eating, her stepmother and stepsister reveal where they obtained the fish. Bawang Putih is repulsed and filled with remorse over this revelation.

Bawang Putih gathers the fish bones and bury them in a small grave underneath a tree. When she visits the grave the next day, she is surprised to see that a beautiful swing has appeared from one of the tree's branches. When Bawang Putih sits in the swing and sings an old lullaby, it magically swings back and forth.

Bawang Putih continues to visit the magic swing whenever she can. One day, while she is on the magic swing, a Prince who is hunting nearby hears her song. He follows the sound of her voice, but before he approaches her, Bawang Putih realizes that she is not alone, she quickly runs back home.

The Prince and his advisors eventually find the home of Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah. (In some versions this happens immediately after the Prince's first sighting of Bawang Putih, but in other versions it happens after a long search made by the Prince's advisors). Bawang Merah's mother, seeing the opportunity, orders Bawang Putih to stay hidden in the kitchen. The Prince asks about the swing and the girl who sat in it. Bawang Merah's mother says that the girl he heard is her beautiful and talented daughter Bawang Merah. Though the Prince agrees that Bawang Merah is beautiful, he requests that she show him how she sang in the magical swing.

Bawang Merah and mother reluctantly follow the Prince and his advisors back to the magic swing. Bawang Merah sits in the swing and attempts to sing so that it will move, but she cannot. The Prince, now angry, ordered Bawang Merah's mother to tell the truth. Bawang Merah's mother is forced to confess that she has another daughter hidden in her house.

The Prince brings Bawang Putih back to the swing, and as she had done many times before, the magic swing starts moving as soon as she begins singing. The Prince is overjoyed and asks Bawang Putih to marry him. She agrees and they live happily ever after.

Conclusion

In general, students of young learners like stories. Teachers can use storytelling as an appropriate way in enhancing students' skills and interest in English. Storytelling is motivating for them, and stories can create a happy and enjoyable learning environment. Storytelling is the effective way for young learners. It provides an outstanding opportunity for young learners to master the foreign language. In addition, stories can bridge the gap between language study and language use and also to link classroom learning with the world outside.

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