

Difficulties Encountered by English Teachers in Using Storytelling to Teach Young Learners

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Abstract: Teachers of English utilize storytelling as a common strategy while teaching second languages, especially to young learners. However, because young learners have various features when it comes to second language proficiency, English teachers will find it challenging to use storytelling in learning. The purpose of this study was to identify the difficulties faced by English teachers while teaching through these methods and to know teacher's suggestions for resolving the issue. The qualitative research technique was utilized in conjunction with the phenomenological design. The three English teachers were selected as participants, who were teaching to five grade students of Elementary School Tohia Gunungsitoli. Self-developed semi-structured interviews were carried out, and the data were transcribed into codes and themes. This study found that teachers found it difficult to find the study's findings reflect the views of educators on issues that arise from both students and teachers. Due to their distinct language learning features, students or young learners are typically the primary reason creating difficulties in this kind of learning, whereas teachers only indirectly contribute to learning barriers.

Keywords: Teachers' difficulties, English teachers, Storytelling

INTRODUCTION

It's crucial to introduce English at young learners. Cameron (Anggraini, 2018) argues that beginning to study a foreign language at a young age enhances several aspects of language abilities, such as listening comprehension and pronunciation. While Johnstone in (Copland, 2014) termed the broad introduction of languages in primary schools as 'perhaps the world's largest policy change in education,' English was the most widely adopted language. It may be stated that teaching English subjects to young learners is critical for them to grasp a variety of English abilities.

English is the first foreign language we teach children in the early stages of their education (Prayatni, 2019). According to Ellis in Gregson (2018), "L2 learners are likely to manifest correct target language forms on some occasions but deviant forms on other occasions" (p.293). Furthermore, according to Prihatin (Faridah, 2021), teaching English for

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young learners (TEYL) is a problem for students in terms of academic development, motivation, and disciplinary concerns. Meanwhile, in-service teachers face challenges due to a lack of knowledge about TEYL methodologies and procedures, as well as a lack of professional development opportunities.

According to Philips in Hartina et al. (2019), young learners are youngsters between the first year of formal school (five or six years old) and the age of eleven or twelve. While Imaniah and Nargis (2017) believe that English for young learners at the primary level (aged three to twelve) are cognitively equipped to acquire language skills in ways that lend themselves to an integrated skills and content-based, experiential approach. It may be inferred that English for young learners refers to English language instruction provided to novices or the younger generation.

According to Prihatin in Ariani et al. (2022), educating young learners is fundamentally different and more difficult than teaching adult learners. While adults are far more self-sufficient, sophisticated, and informed, children are simply kids who like playing, having fun, and want additional care. Teaching through questions and demonstrations can only impact children's intellectual growth when they are ready (Yuvaraj in Nufus, 2018). According to Elis in Oktavia (2020), young learners are classified into three categories: Very Young Learners, Young Learners, and Late Young Learners. Students aged 3-6 years are classified as very young students. Furthermore, teaching English to young learners, especially during a pandemic, is a significant difficulty for many teachers and schools serving young learners.

In Indonesia, elementary schools currently provide English as a local subject beginning in the first grade, aged six to seven (Supriyanti in Khulel, 2021). It has become a new trend for schools to offer English instruction before fourth grade. However, this tendency is not matched by schools' earnestness and preparedness to arrange English subjects.

Story telling is one of the teaching methods that can be used by English teachers to teach English Young Learners (EYL). Storytelling is an action that transfers knowledge from one generation to the next and from one person to another (Satriani, 2019, p.1). Meanwhile, Mokhtar et al. (2010) define storytelling as the transmission of events in words, pictures, and sounds, typically by improvisation or embellishment Shepard. In comprehensive research on storytelling, Soleimani and Akbari in Elvia (2018) discovered that there are several reasons for telling tales to young learners since it incorporates all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, all in a relevant context. Students learn about the structure of sentences and the symbolic meaning of language when listening to, reading, or telling a tale. They also discover new things.

Next, Fernandez in Solichah and Suminar (2018, p.2) stated that storytelling is a language-based activity that promotes knowledge of the Theory of Mind in early infancy. According to Miller in Ramadhani et al. (2023, p.2), storytelling is the use of narrative methods such as plot, character, and setting to convey a message or topic to an audience. The purpose of storytelling is typically to organize information quickly, resulting in ongoing engagement, enjoyment, and commitment from each representation (Matamit et al., 2020).

From the theories above can be conclude that storytelling is a method used by teachers to transfer information in the form of material to students and can increase students' knowledge.

The application of storytelling seems to be widely used by teachers in young learner classes. However, several elementary schools in Gunungsitoli experience obstacles or difficulties in implementing this method. This also happened at the elementary school of Tohia. Several English teachers at this school experienced this difficulty, so that students were unable to achieve the learning objectives of the storytelling material. Therefore, the role of the English teacher is very important to implement this method in learning process.

The role of teachers in developing students into people with good character is very much needed, especially in using varied methods in creating a learning atmosphere so that it is not boring to attract students' interest (Yestiani and Zahwa, 2020, p.6). Meanwhile, according to Gage in Malik et al. (2020) Teaching is a form of interpersonal influence aimed at changing the behavior potential of another person." It is indisputable that instructors play a crucial role in language instruction, particularly when working with young learners. Since young learners rely heavily on their teachers' direction, these roles are much more important while educating them. It is thought that teachers may face several challenges due to unique variables when it comes to the storytelling lesson in the classroom of young learners.

This small-scale study looks into the difficulties that teachers frequently face while teaching storytelling to young students. In particular, the difficulties arising from the three primary subjects of teachers, students, and materials. Hence, the two following research questions emerged in the light of the research problem: (1) what are the difficulties that teachers face in using storytelling to teach young learners? (2) What are the teachers' suggestions for resolving such issues? The findings of this study will be useful considering the difficulties teachers experience in using this teaching method. In particular, English teachers here would benefit greatly from knowing the difficulties of using the storytelling method when teaching young learners in the classroom. This is also intended so that the research answers can provide useful suggestions for English teachers in teaching Storytelling in the future.

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative research to describe the Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in Using Storytelling to Teach Young Learners systematically in a form of an explanation of words supported by sheet interview. In conducting this study, the teachers to teach students, especially young learners. However, the application of this method has been widely used, including at the Tohia Gunungsitoli elementary school.

Next, interviews were used to collect data on Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in Using Storytelling to Teach Young Learners. Interviews were chosen because the researcher analyzed data in the form of questions, and the researcher had carried out several steps. First, give systematic question to English teachers in Tohia Elementary School. Second, the teacher answers the questions given. Third, the researcher recorded the answers from the interview results on the interview sheet. After collecting the data, the researcher shows the results of the interview and concludes it.

RESULT

The results of this study were obtained to address the objectives as follows.

- 1) Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in Using Storytelling to Teach Young Learners, researcher used interview sheets as a tool to collect data. The following is the interview result.

(a) First Resource Person

First, *what difficulties do students experience when learning storytelling material?*

Answer: There are quite a lot of difficulties that I often experience when teaching storytelling, one of which is the difficulty in making students understand the material being taught. Sometimes only a few students understand the material in class, not all.

Second, *what factors caused these difficulties to occur?* Answer: The things that can cause difficulties can occur, namely because many students do not have additional knowledge about English vocabulary, so this makes them quickly bored with the material being taught. Factors that can cause students to be less active in learning are students' interest in learning. Students' interest in learning is also one of the reasons why students are not active in learning. Students like this need more motivation so that these children are able to become active again and can follow lessons.

Third, *what is the student's reaction when they cannot understand the material being presented?* Answer: Children do not understand the lesson or already understand the lesson when the teaching and learning process takes place, it will be seen from whether they listen and pay attention to the lesson delivered by the Smart Teacher. If a Smart Teacher finds students who have empty eyes or seem to be thinking about something, it can mean that they are not concentrating.

Fourth, *do students like English subjects?* Answer: From the class I entered, there were students who liked it and some who didn't.

Fifth, *do students like the storytelling method?* Answer: Every student is different, some like it, some don't. However, most of the students in my class prefer the game method to storytelling. Because in general young learners like them still want the gaming world to suit their current age.

(b) Second Resource Person

First, *what difficulties do students experience when learning storytelling material?*

Answer: The difficulties they experience are difficulty understanding the material, difficulty translating vocabulary, difficulty connecting or figuring out the message of the story, difficulty distinguishing grammatical tenses.

Second, *what factors caused these difficulties to occur?* Answer: The contributing factors are that students do not bring English dictionaries every time they enter the classroom, some students do not care about English subjects because they are lazy to take part in English learning.

Third, *what is the student's reaction when they cannot understand the material presented?*

Answer: An example of a student who doesn't understand is always making mistakes when answering questions. Without realizing it, students can cause anxiety and fear that they will be appointed to answer questions. It is not uncommon for students to feel

excessively anxious and afraid in understanding the lesson material. As a good teacher, Smart Teachers must be sensitive to this and try to pay more attention to students like this. Attention from Smart Teachers will be able to foster a sense of strength in students. The hope is that students will no longer feel anxious and afraid when carrying out learning activities with Smart Teachers and will dare to ask questions or express their opinions during learning.

Fourth, *do students like English subjects?* Answer: If it's a matter of whether they like it or not, it's definitely there, most of the students in my class like English lessons, but there's not enough storytelling material.

Fifth, *do students like the storytelling method?* Answer: As I answered, students are very lacking in this storytelling material because most of this material or method makes them limited because it has to be translated into their mother tongue first before they can follow it.

(c) Third Resource Person

First, *what difficulties do students experience when learning storytelling material?* Answer: Difficulty in grasping the meaning of the story, difficulty in concluding, difficulty in practice.

Second, *what factors caused these difficulties to occur?* Answer: Students don't know much English vocabulary, school facilities are inadequate, such as projectors and other supporting equipment, which means that we English teachers are limited in conveying storytelling material to students.

Third, *what is the student's reaction when they cannot understand the material being presented?* Answer: In the class I teach, there are lots of reactions from students who are unable to follow the lesson, one of which is being silent, just looking around, unable to answer questions from the teacher and so on. Things that can cause students not to understand are learning disorders. Learning disorders can originate from within the student himself or from outside such as the classroom atmosphere. Students who understand the lessons are usually able to overcome learning disturbances that may occur in the school environment and are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. These students will be more challenged and have an interest in the lesson if the material they are studying can be understood and mastered well. On the other hand, if students have difficulty understanding the lesson material, they will appear passive. Students just sit and watch their friends. Not infrequently, when they are pointed at, they just shake their heads or remain silent and lower their heads.

Fourth, *do students like English subjects?* Answer: Yes, they like it and there are also some who don't.

Fifth, *do students like the storytelling method?* Answer: This storytelling method is very challenging for young learners like them. So that some people like it and some don't like the challenge.

2) What are the teachers' suggestions for resolving such issues?

(a) First Source Person

First, *How do teachers/strategies overcome students' difficulties in learning?* Answer: The way to overcome students' difficulties in learning is to understand the characteristics of the students. Students' learning characteristics are different, a teacher must know each student one by one first to see what learning style is suitable for that student. There are visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles, with this knowledge the teacher can choose how to deliver material that is adapted. But can you teach students one by one? Of course not, learning in Indonesia is still classically based in general, but can use learning variations or can combine visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

Second, *What is a suitable solution to the problem of teaching difficulties using the Storytelling method for prospective teachers in the future?* Answer: The solution I can give to prospective teachers in the future is very short, namely that teaching young learners is very tiring, but a smart teacher will never feel that way when he has "patience". With the patience of a teacher, that is where the learning process is not too difficult so that we ourselves do not feel that the actual learning process to educate children at an early age like them is difficult.

(b) Second Resource Person

First, *How do teachers/strategies overcome students' difficulties in learning?* Answer: There are many ways that teachers can overcome this problem. One of them is giving varied tasks to the child. Because a monotonous learning style will quickly make students bored, especially if the study time is too long. Learning activities that exceed students' study time will result in students being given more assignments with practice questions or other types of assignments with writing output. In today's technological era, children are more interested in things related to technological developments, at least if they play on social media, or just watch videos on the YouTube platform, they will get bored more quickly and not focus on learning. Assignments can be adjusted to suit existing technology. If students are given math practice assignments, it would be more varied if students were given fewer math questions, but were required to make videos explaining the solutions to these questions which would later be uploaded on social media or YouTube. Children will try to answer the questions correctly because they will be published. Apart from increasing creativity, this kind of assignment also develops self-confidence and courage to perform.

Second, *What is a suitable solution to the problem of teaching difficulties using the Storytelling method for prospective teachers in the future?* Answer: The solution is to choose another storytelling style, make the student comfortable with the lesson you are conveying. Usually there are teachers who like to tell stories using story books and there are also teachers who choose to use puppets. There are also storytellers who like to use musical accompaniment when telling stories. So, a wise teacher can choose this storytelling style and match it to what children like.

(c) Third Resource Person

First, *How do teachers/strategies overcome students' difficulties in learning?* Answer: One way to do this is to communicate with the student's parents. Ask the students' parents to work together with you to control their children's learning at home. Parents are the closest people to children. They know more about their children. In this way, teachers can communicate about children's slowness in digesting lesson material. Apart from that, teachers can ask what the child's behavior is like at home, how the parents treat the child and how they are supported in learning at home. By knowing this, teachers can provide direction to parents. Giving directions to parents is not an easy thing if the child is in a family that is less harmonious or with a permissive parenting style (the child is left as he pleases). But this method is quite helpful, parents will pay more attention to their child's development.

Second, *What is a suitable solution to the problem of teaching difficulties using the Storytelling method for prospective teachers in the future?* Answer: The solution is to imitate sounds and use body gestures. The story in a fairy tale usually involves many characters. The teacher can imitate the different voices of each character. Then after that ask students to follow along too. For example, changing the sound of a clucking chicken to the sound of a hungry monkey. So, with trivial things like this, students can learn better and the material or learning objectives can be achieved.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data analysis on the Difficulties Encountered by Teachers in Using Storytelling to Teach Young Learners interview sheet. There are many answers that are the same and there are also some answers that are different. From the results of the three interviews, it is clear what difficulties the English teachers at Tohia Gunungsitoli Elementary School experienced using the Storytelling method.

Apart from that, researchers found English teachers' difficulties in the storytelling method. In the first question, it can be concluded that the teacher's difficulties are influenced by the students' difficulties understanding the material, capturing the meaning or message of the storytelling story. The second question can also conclude that the factor causing the student's difficulties is because the student lacks English vocabulary, because English lessons are only accepted during English tutoring at school. The third question was about student reactions. From the three sources' answers, it can be concluded that on average students or young learners who do not understand the material will create a commotion in the classroom. Like annoying friends, not being able to answer the teacher's questions about the material that has been taught. The fourth question was about who likes English as a subject. From the results of the interview, it can be stated that some students have different characters so that there are those who like this subject and there are also those who don't. The fifth question is about those who like the method, which is the same as that there are those who like the storytelling method and those who do not.

Then, the second point is about the teacher's suggestions for overcoming this problem. From the three sources, we already know that the solution that can be taken to overcome the problem of student learning difficulties is by understanding student learning characteristics,

creating more varied assignments, and communicating this with the students' parents. It can be concluded that students' learning difficulties can be overcome by making students comfortable with learning. Next, to summarize the answer to the last question, namely that the teacher must be able to be patient with students learning, because young students like that cannot yet be forced to study hard. So, the teacher must be able to adapt. Then the teacher must also change the storytelling style so that students don't get bored, such as by changing the voice when telling different characters in the story and also by imitating body movements so that students understand and are interested.

Therefore, the results of this study are similar to previous research conducted by Van Doan and Quyen (2022). Previous studies have found that to present some interesting ideas about storytelling practices. In general, it can be observed that the difficulties mentioned in the interview sheet of their ideas were deepened with appropriate explanations. It seems that students are also considered to be the main cause of certain difficulties in learning, apart from the teacher himself and the material.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to find out the difficulties encountered by teachers in using storytelling to teach young learners. The study's findings reflect the views of educators on issues that arise from both students and teachers. Due to their distinct language learning features, students or young learners are typically the primary reason creating difficulties in this kind of learning, whereas teachers only indirectly contribute to learning barriers. These results can be applied to lessen future challenges in raising teacher performance.

The teacher's recommendations for solving this issue are the subject of the second point. Based on the information provided by the three sources, we already know that the best way to deal with the issue of pupils having learning challenges is to recognize the unique learning characteristics of each student, make more diversified assignments, and let the parents know about it.

The tiny sample size of this study is one of its weaknesses since it is insufficient to draw broad conclusions regarding various teaching and learning environments. It is also advised that more study be done in order to examine the difficulties encountered by teachers in using storytelling to teach young learners.

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