Storytelling to teach literacy: The implementation in an EFL classroom

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Storytelling can become a part of literacy practice. It improves children listening skills, increases language appreciation, and more thoughtful organization in their writing. On the point of that, this research aims to find out stages in implementing storytelling in teaching literacy. The research employed a qualitative case study research design. This method was used to investigate the phenomenon which is seen from the participants' point of view. In line with that definition, this research was conducted to explore how storytelling can develop the literacy ability of second-grade students of junior high school. The data were collected through classroom observations and students' writing products. The findings obtained that the teaching program which was conducted in seven units was successful to develop students' literacy ability. Mainly, they showed some improvement in reading comprehension and interest. Besides, they showed their development in writing especially schematic structure, grammar roles, and graphic features.

1. Introduction

Storytelling is an old practice of telling stories, that has been the primary sources of entertainment and literary instruction (Al-Mansour, 2011; Miller & Pennycuff, 2008). It is used to deliver the information or social interaction for example person to person or one generation to the next generation (Alterio & McDrury, 2003; Dickinson et al., 2012). This technique is simple and practical because stories are everywhere and every human has stories (Wajnryb, 2003). Inconsequence, it can be utilized easily with or without technology. Storytelling has been used as a teaching tool which was found in several areas such as teacher education, higher education, early childhood education, and nursing education. Clearly, the use of teaching tools is a legitimate part of a reading development program and can benefit in the form of fluency (Abdolmanafi-Rokni & Qarajeh, 2014), comprehension (Lailiyah et al., 2019), and increased vocabulary (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013).

Storytelling tradition is hard to be found in Indonesia (Hana, 2011). Nowadays, children grow and develop in the middle of lustering various media, such as play station, comic, internet, television, and DVD. The important of story towards citizen development has been approved in England around 25 years (1925-1950). That is shown by the grow development in that country.

Storytelling can become a part of literacy practice. It improves children listening skills (Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007), increased language meaningful learning (Wasik & Bond, 2001), and more thoughtful organization in their own writing (Sarýca & Usluel, 2016; Yamac & Ulusoy, 2016). Literacy practice has some characteristics in developing language and brain, critical thinking (Pantaleo, 2017), and value or moral (Febrianti, 2019; Taylor, 2000). Studies mentioned that early and regular exposure to stories helps young learners have a rich literary experience and promote the development of oral language (for example Isbell et al., 2004; Marzuki et al., 2016; Mokhtar et al., 2011). Thus, it is necessary for the teachers to consciously create a language-rich environment in which children actively participate in classroom dialogue (Lennox, 2013; Massey, 2013).

Storytelling technique has been implemented by many practitioners in the teaching circumstances (Wright, 2008). In addition, Wright (2008) elaborates clearly some pedagogical activities of using storytelling in the teaching practice. The activities are categorized into three, namely before, during and after reading the story with some considerations that underlined the activities to be performed in the classroom. The variety of activities, pace, organization, and voice, which are used in this study, are important to be applied in the classroom to increase students' concentration and attention (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

Before reading the story, amount of preparation is needed to be conducted before acting out in front of classroom. There are possible purposes in using activities before the story, such as getting the children's attention, focusing their minds on the content, arousing their predictive skills, and giving them a task to fulfill (Wright, 2008). In preparing the storytelling, teacher has to measure what benefits and challenges that will be obtained by the students. It can be explored through some guided questions, such as what do the children need before the teacher tells the story, while the teacher telling it, and after teacher have told it (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002; Wright, 2008). Those are aimed at helping teacher decide the best activity for the students.

After preparing the storytelling, storyteller has to find appropriate story to be used, for instance a traditional story, a story book, or a personal life story (Wright, 2008). The next concern is related to the prediction what the story might be about. This activity focuses on preparing students with the possible meanings and language. The prediction of the meaning of the story in the beginning of the activity helps students increase their understanding on the gist of the story when they listen or read it (Wright, 2008).

In this section, Wright (2008) outlines that there are several activities which can be used as the guidance in helping students predict the gist of the story. The activities include showing the front cover of the book, having students predict topics from the available pictures, discussing students' prior knowledge, and giving a story summary. Besides these activities, jumbled pictures, some questions, mime, and pictures can be utilized to make students get or predict the meaning of the story (Wright, 2008). Beside the above activities, mother tongue also can be utilized in making students to easily get meaning of the story.

In the process of telling stories to the students, the teacher needs to check students understanding toward the story (Wright, 2008). Checking students' understanding is important for the students (especially, low-proficiency students) to know whether they still focus on the story or not. In conducting this stage, the teacher can divide the story into stages. Then, he or she can stop in a certain part to check students' understanding at the end of each page. In this sense, teacher knows students' comprehension through their confirmation of the teacher's statement (Wright, 2008) or through some exercises that are given to the students at the end of the session. Checking students' understanding can be done through miming, displaying pictures, telling it wrongly, whistling story, labelling a picture, and jump up word card (Wright, 2008).

During the activities, the teacher or the storyteller can also choose and introduce some new keywords and simplify the language of the story (Wright, 2008). These activities are purposeful to help students understand the meaning of the story. In introducing a new word, the teacher is suggested to draw picture, use objects or realia and mime, and create a context. Picture is important because many objects, qualities, and action can be illustrated by pictures. The characteristics of appropriate picture in gaining students' attention to the story is that the picture must be obviously big and clear enough to be seen and recognized from the back of the class. Furthermore, teacher can pick the essential words out which are unfamiliar for the students in choosing the new keywords (Wright, 2008).

While teacher tells or reads the story to the students, it is useful if she or he firstly creates context of the story. Creating a context while introducing a new word is beneficial because some words are best understood in context (Wright, 2008). In comprehending the meaning of the story, the teacher can engage students to respond what they have heard through some activities, such as reflect the story, imagine a picture of the story (students can use their five senses), use musical instruments with creating simple sound to express characters, actions, and feelings, and ask them to note down some words or phrases they like (Wright, 2008). In addition, teachers can ask students' feeling while they are listening to the story.

The process after reading the story can be traced to writing phase. The process of writing is divided into four main elements, namely planning, drafting, editing (reflecting and revising), and final version. The steps of writing in this study are similar to writing steps in genre-based approach. It is because some writing phases have similarity.

The process of storytelling implementation has not accomplished yet until teacher read the story to the students. However, there are some activities that should be taken into account after preparing and conducting the storytelling activities. Wright (2008) elaborates four points after conducting storytelling activities, namely checking understanding through adapted traditional exercises, checking understanding through non-verbal activities, checking understanding through retelling, analysing and evaluating, and helping students to reflect, imagine and create.

First, there are some adapted traditional exercises that can be used to check students' comprehension toward the story. The known traditional exercises are true or false questions and jumbled sentences (Wright, 2008). Wright (2008) adds that written or oral comprehension questions can be utilized as the activities in showing students' understanding of the story. Second, besides verbal or

written task in checking students' understanding of the story, storyteller is also able to use non-verbal exercises, such as acting out, drawing, and colouring (Wright, 2008).

The third point is checking students' understanding through retelling. In these activities students do not only need to remember but also put their ideas in sequence and in English (Wright, 2008). In retelling the story, students can be guided by some questions to include every detail. Moreover, jumbled pictures of a series of pictures also can be used as the activities for retelling the stories. Another activity, teacher can involve students to move from picture to picture then telling the story based on the pictures.

The last point is related to help students reflect, imagine, and create a story. These are some activities that can be done by the students. First, students can decribe three key moments from the story through choosing and writing down three sentences. Second, students can be required to draw and to describe the character of the story. Third is making the ordinary special. Teacher can help students to add detail to the characters, places, and objects in the story (physical appearance, feelings, and ideas). In implementing this activity, teacher can facilitate students through 'word stars' or 'mind maps' (Wright, 2008).

Students with a limited vocabulary are not able to create a mind map without some guidances from teacher, for instance guidance vocabularies and methaporical use of adjectives. Fourth, students can retell the story with some changes or using their own imagination of roles, geographical, historical, and plot. Fifth, in creating a story teacher is able to provide open ending story to the students and let the students continue the story using their invention of the story (Wright, 2008).

Planning is the first step before starting to write or type, writers try and decide they are going to say. For some writers this may involve making detailed notes. When planning, writers think about three main issues, namely purpose, audience, and content structure. The second step is drafting. This step can be categorized into first version of a piece of writing. As the writing process proceeds into editing, a number of drafts may be produced on the way to the final version. The third step is editing or reflecting and revising. This step is used to read thorough drafts looking of where it works and where it does not.

Reflecting and revising are often helped by other readers (or editors) who comment and make suggestions. Another reader's reaction to a piece of writing will help the author to make appropriate revision. The last phase is final version. In this stage, the writer has to produce a new writing which is different with the original plan and the first draft.

Based on the previous evidences, this study is conducted to support what is becoming the problem currently in Indonesia for example regarding to UNESCO, index of reading interest in Indonesia only achieved 0.001. It means that each 1000 citizens only one who has interest in reading. Furthermore, Indonesia still shows low level of literacy and stands on 57th of 65th countries in the world based on students' literacy level. Based on the above description, although there is research that emerges storytelling in teaching literacy, but there is still lack of similar investigation of storytelling research in teaching literacy in Indonesia. Thus, this research focuses on teaching literacy through storytelling to the eighth-grade students of junior high school West Bandung. This research aims at finding out the way teachers develop students' interest in learning both reading and writing through storytelling, and investigating benefits and challenges of the activities.

2.   Method

2.1. Participants

The participants of this research consisted of six eight-grader junior high school students. They were selected as the representative of a group which is appropriate with one of case study characteristics (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Then, to obtain additional data, all the participants were interviewed. They were divided into three categories: high, medium, and low-level students based on their performance in previous reading lesson and diagnostic writing. All participants were all Sundanese, who are having Sundanese as their mother tongue. And Indonesian is their second language. English and Arabic are thus their foreign language. One of the reasons of choosing eighth grader was that they are close with storytelling.

2.2. Instruments

This research used multiple techniques to collect data. There were two instruments used such as observation and students' writing product.

a.   Observation

Observation as the first data collection was used to collect information about students' external behavior in a naturalistic setting or qualitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this case, the data were gained in the form of field notes (handwritten brief notes), which include explanations of what researcher observed as well as her reflections. These fieldnotes were used to record students' behaviors and to evaluate some as they occur.

The observation of this research was conducted 10 times. It was applied in considering students' learning comprehension. The type of observation is participant observation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), wherein the researcher take part as the participant or teacher who implements the storytelling and asks another English teacher to observe the activities. Each observation lasts for 80 minutes. The observer was facilitated with observation form and video tape.

The purpose of the observation in this research is to know how does storytelling implemented in developing students' literacy ability, how the students' behavior is, and how the interactions that happened during the teaching program.

b.   Students' writing product

Document analysis of students' works is one of the instruments that was used to gather the data in order to answer the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This technique is constituted as the ways to elicit the data by analyzing the written document.

Regarding to the objective of this study, this research focused on literacy which involved reading and writing. On the point of that, this research included two types of documents, namely answers of students' reading comprehension questions and students' narrative texts. Students' narrative texts were collected from low, middle and high-level students. This research took two people of each cate-

gorization. They were selected based on diagnosis writing that has been held on preliminary session. Whereas in obtaining students' reading results, students answered a series of questions that provided after they read the story.

3.   Results and discussion

Incorporating to the implementation of storytelling technique, this research only conducted three phases of storytelling as suggested by Wright (2008), they were activities before reading the story, activities during reading the story, and activities after reading the story. All of the stages were conducted in ten meetings, exclude piloting sections that were done before the implementation of this research. Those activities were implemented in the different sections.

All steps of implementation of storytelling in teaching literacy, such as reading and writing, did not conducted in one phase. They were divided into seven phases which included pre reading, whilst reading, post reading, and steps of writing. The variation of activities was applied in this study due to increasing students' concentration and attention in learning literacy (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

All texts given to the students were chosen based on students' interest in the preliminary questionnaire. Familiar text was chosen as reading assessment or materials because it gives teachers a clear idea of how children are able to read without the support of a familiar text (McKay, 2009).

The teaching program was implemented by the researcher as a participant observer who also played a role as the teacher of this teaching program. The data of all classroom observation were classified based on lesson plans. There are seven stages which reading and writing was conducted in different sections.

Unit 1

In this unit, the story given was about The Gingerbread Man. The selection of the story was based on students' prior knowledge in the preliminary stage. Then, the text aimed at students familiar with the text and students' interest with it. That objective was to make students easily comprehend the meaning of the text. The activity was implemented to give the appropriate story that want to be used (Wright, 2008). The main focus of the lesson was building students' awareness of reading preference. Practically, this unit used story book as a medium in implementing storytelling. Story book is applied as visual tool to support storytelling activities in teaching and learning process (Sprenger, 2010).

At the end of the lesson in this phase, students were given some exercises to know their reading comprehension toward the story. In line with Burns et al. (1996), teacher has to applied several reading assessments to know students' reading result after conducting reading section. As the evaluation in the first phase, this study used reading comprehension questions. It was taken since the instrument has been standardized by an institution. The instrument of the evaluation consisted of three kinds of tests, such as fill the blank space, sentence arrangement, and matching.

Based on the data, the result of students' test showed that most students comprehend the test. First, from the result of fill the blank space section, students put different verbs based on provided pictures because there is no selection of verbs. It can be seen that most of them can match the pictures with the story they have heard. Based on the data, three students showed that they still find difficulty in deciding whether it is across the river or swim.

The second part is sentence arrangement. The data showed that in the first meeting, they still hard to put some words into correct order. However, in assessing their reading comprehension between first and second section, they were able to comprehend the story. The last part in the first meeting, matching type of questions makes them easily comprehend the story. It can be seen through students reading comprehension results. They are able to answer properly eighty percent of a hundred.

Unit 2

In the second unit, students were given a story entitled "The Owl Babies". This story is categorized as fable. It was chosen because students' interest with very short folktales with animals as the main characters often summed up in a single line at the end (Pinter, 2017; Taylor, 2000) In the observation sheet was found that the story is appropriate to students' ages and understanding. Besides that, the story was chosen based on result of students' questionnaire. Most of them are preferred to be taught by using picture. On the point of that, the story was selected based on the quality of the book (Wright, 2008). This is a big book which has proper quality seen from font size and sharpness of pictures inside the book. In addition, big book helped students to see the pictures clearly.

At the end of second unit, students were asked to think the moral value of the story. One student said that the moral value of the story is "we have to be honor to our mother." The other said that "we must love our family like sarah, percy and bill." Fable is proper example of fictitious story that teach moral lesson (Sherman, 2015).

Instruments used in this phase to measure students' reading comprehension development were taken from story delivered to the students. The instrument of the evaluation was cloze procedure. This test was chosen as test instrument in this research because it can support students' understanding of grammar, spelling, and sentence construction (Hancock & Leaver, 2006) besides checking students' reading comprehension. In line with the data, the result presented that through ten questions given to the students, students showed their development. In the first section, their vocabulary was developed that first meeting. All students were able to put some proper words into the provided boxes. Furthermore, in the second section, they knew what they should do, because it was the second time for them to meet that type of questions. Since they interested to the story, they were easily finding the correct partner of the blank sentences.

Moreover, the observation data showed that students enjoyed the story start from the beginning until the end of the story. It was because the teacher used interesting media and explained the story expressively. By showing and telling the story expressively, they seemed more motivated to know the content of the story.

Unit 3

The story was chosen based on students' preferences from questionnaire results. They preferred to read legends and fairy tales. In this phase, the story chosen was "Little Red Riding Hood". The story was suitable for students' age. In the preliminary stage, it was found that little red riding hood is one of stories preferred by the students. This story was chosen because it has a clear structure, with a special type of beginning, middle, and end (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). Moreover, the content of story gave a meaningful message for students.

The media is not as big as big book. Hence, the feasibility of looking at the book is limited. Nevertheless, the colourful book helped students to understand the story enthusiastically. The following is the outline of storytelling activities in the third unit.

Instruments used in this phase to measure students' reading comprehension development were taken from story adapted from Oxford. There were three sections consists of cloze test and matching tasks (Burns et al., 1996). Those activities are purposeful to help students understand the meaning of the story. Cloze test was used to support students in comprehending grammar, spelling, and sentence construction (Hancock & Leaver, 2006).

Based on the data, the result of students' test showed that most students comprehend the test. It is because they had conducted the activities three times. Most of them were able to answer the questions in the questions sheet.

Unit 4

In the fourth unit, students were given a story entitled "Rapunzel". This story is categorized as fairy tale because the story is a combination of a human godmother (Sherman, 2008). The story was chosen based on result of students' questionnaire. Most of them preferred to fairy-tale, especially girls.

Instruments used in this phase to measure students' reading comprehension improvement were taken from story delivered to the students. This phase chose matching as question type in checking students' comprehension toward the story. There are ten questions which students have to write the words and find the name of somebody in the story. Several pictures guided students in finding the answers.

Incorporating with the data, the result presented that most students were able to answer the questions. In the process of answering the questions, teacher ranked the students to give them motivation.

At the end of the session, students were asked about the moral value of the story. It was conducted because in knowing students' level of literacy, teacher does not only focus on the story, but also to the specific lesson that involved in the story, such as moral lessons or messages.

Unit 5

The story is categorized as local legend, because it involves local or identifiable setting, historical moment (Sherman, 2015). Moreover, it is specific to a particular region or neighbourhood. The text was chosen due to students' interest based on result of questionnaire. Most of students preferred to read legend or folklore. It was supported by students' impression toward their interest in Indonesian folklore. Some of them mentioned examples of local story, namely *Sangkuriang* and Toba Lake. Most of them had high interest in reading Indonesian folklore.

Besides that, the story was applied in this research to develop students' imaginative storytelling. Hana (2011) adds that local legends which are read to students will develop their knowledge about culture, value, and surrounding tradition.

At the end, the representatives of each group were asked to tell the storytelling using puppet in front of the classroom. This activity was aimed at checking students' reading comprehension toward the story and building their self-confidence in doing presentation public area.

The instrument of the evaluation consisted of ten questions of cloze test. In this test, students were asked to fill missing words in sentences (Hancock and Leaver, 2006). Then, students checked that the sentence makes sense with the added words. Cloze test was applied in this research to support students' understanding of grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and sentence construction.

Based on the data, the result of students' test showed that most students comprehend the test. It can be seen through result of students' test, two students have nine correct answers out of ten, two students have eight correct answers out of ten, one student was able to have seven correct answers, and only one student who have four correct answers. The result indicates that most of them comprehend the plot of the story.

Besides developing students' reading comprehension, this activity (fill-in exercises) also can bridge students to the writing production. Since this can be used to focus on specific language items and build students' vocabulary enrichment (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). This type exercise is a good starting point for discussion in the pre-writing stage of free writing. Consequently, this type of test was implemented in unit five as bridging to modelling construction from reading to writing section.

Unit 6

The sixth unit practiced modelling stage in writing, which are used to bridge students' attention and focus from reading to writing. Modelling phase in this research is suggested that there are some skills as model for the students.

In this research, the teacher provided a narrative text of Lake Toba which closes to the students. It aims that the use of story that they had learned before can build up students' confidence (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). Due to the limitation of media or technology in the location, teacher used big papers to visualize some slides about elements of narrative text and the expressions that used in narrative text.

Modelling purposes to introduce the students with text in focus. The students can read it, reconstruct it, and build up their understandings of the purpose and overall structure of the genre.

Based on the above statement, Emilia (2011) mentions that the activities in modelling stage includes familiarizing students with the function and social context of the text in focus, presenting the schematic structure of the text, and presenting a model text (one or two other texts in the same genre, presenting an overview of grammatical features of a discussion genre).

In the implementation, students were asked to identify social function and linguistic features from Lake Toba story. Then, teacher asked them how many 'events' there are in the story and perhaps write them on the board. Several questions were also delivered orally to the students. During conducting the activities, students stayed working in group. This group activity (organizing and copying) can be a good introduction to structured writing (Scott &Ytreberg, 1990).

Unit 7

Before doing writing practice freely, students need to be guided by teachers in language and the concentration of language itself (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). In the free activities of writing, it allows students to express their ideas in their level (Scott &Ytreberg, 1990).

The writing section was divided into four meetings, including creating students' own mind map, elaborating their mind map into a story in Indonesian language, translating students' story in English and trying to check their writing individually (first draft), and producing their final text.

In this phase, this study focused on students' writing result. The analysis of students' writing was divided into two, namely students' first draft and their final text. Those texts were analyzed by using a writing rubric taken from Rose (2007 in Emilia, 2011).

Incorporating with learning objective that students are able to write a simple narrative text using appropriate linguistic features and generic structure, most students showed their development in writing.

Firstly, modelling was still implemented in this section. Teacher showed again the story of Lake Toba. Students were instructed to find the characters, setting, and plot based on the data that they have got. It was aimed at making students close to narrative text. Besides that, it also made students understand text structure, especially narrative text.

Based on students' writing results analyzed using the rubric, it was found that in the first writing section students felt difficult in sharing their ideas. Most of them got stuck in producing some words to arrange a text. Three students were also difficult in using past tense, punctuation, and conjunction.

Secondly, after students know how to write narrative text, they were asked to write mind map of a story in Indonesian language. They were instructed to write a mind map of narrative story. Based on their English proficiency, students should be guided step by step in comprehending the instruction and producing their own text. After that, students translated their story in English. Then, teacher tried to check their writing individually and give feedback of students' text.

The students comprehend the material, when the teacher used storytelling technique in teaching writing. It can be seen when the material about organization of narrative text were delivered, they were understanding and can implement properly in the text. When reviewing the materials, the stu-dents also responded correctly. It was also shown in the first meeting. The students were able to make a story of narrative text.

The last, students produced their final text. Incorporating to students' writing results analyzed using the rubric, it was found that students showed their progress in terms of grammatical, ideas, and punctuation. From the assessment sheets, the students showed a good progress in their writing. The progress of their writing has been assessed from the first to the end of their writing product.

Based on Rose (2007 cited by Emilia, 2011), grammatical aspects are considered to assess students' ability in writing. Moreover, in this research the students increased their writing ability and they can construct a neat recount text, namely the grammatical improvement from students in the writing class.

At the end of the session, students should gather around teacher to have a good time to share what they had been writing lately. Nevertheless, the activity suggested by her cannot be implemented in this study because of the time allotment of this research. Consequently, at the end of the teaching program, teacher can only check students' text by herself and give feedback to them without checking together with the students.

4.   Conclusion

The data obtained that there are some restrictions, the incorporation of storytelling to the teaching program had assisted students to increase their reading comprehension ability and to de-velop their writing skill. There provided some stages which can be implemented in teaching storytelling. The stages were divided into three parts, such as activities before reading the story, activities during the story, and activities after the story. It can be concluded that the result of the research confirmed possibility of the teaching program which incorporates storytelling in supporting junior high school students to have good awareness in literacy, both reading and writing. It showed that storytelling can be applied in EFL junior high school in Indonesia, especially in suburban area, because there are still limited facilities which can support students learning process. Furthermore, the use of media and teacher as an actor is able to help students develop their literacy ability, which is highly required in facing globalization era. Regarding to the finding and discussion of the research, it can be suggested that storytelling close to the English language teaching in ESL/EFL classroom. Next researcher is suggested to apply storytelling using other frameworks besides Wright (2008). It was aimed to find new process in implementing storytelling. This research was limited with the duration of teaching process. In investigating literacy, especially reading and writing, teacher should provide more times to truly explore students' literacy ability and their preference in story.

5.   References

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