

STORY AND SONG IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS: HOW POWERFUL?

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Abstract: To children especially, song and story bring a lot of joys and happiness. How far children can understand the meaning of vocabularies contained in a song and a story will depend mainly on the pattern of cohesiveness of both text genres and this is the main concern of this study. One story and one song were chosen—they were judgmentally selected regarding that: 1) they were favored by 3 English teachers in elementary schools to be taught in their class; 2) they were listed in the textbooks used by those three teachers. 30 children aged 10 were chosen as the participants of this study. The discourse patterns of cohesion (reference, lexical relations, conjunctive relations, and conversational structure) served as a tool of analysis and were applied to both song and story in order to figure out the semantic unity of both texts. This research revealed that: 1) presuming references were found more in story meanwhile presenting references were recognized more in song; 2) classification and composition were found more in story and contrast feature was found in song; 3) conjunctive reticulum for the story shows more for internal relations while song shows the opposite; 4) the choice of speech function and type of exchange structure are displayed more clearly in story than in song. These results lead to a conclusion that in understanding vocabularies contained in both texts; children show conceptual and metalinguistic knowledge more in understanding the story and expose their interest, joyful and happiness while learning song.

Keywords: *reference, lexical relations, conjunctive relations, conversational structure, semantic unity, conceptual, metalinguistic.*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is considered as the most prominent subject to teach to children who learn language. They understand the meaning first and later on are able to apply it in the context of usage in turn. By this mastery, children extend their understanding on the concept of discourse: all linguistics patterns exist beyond the words, clauses and sentences (Gerrot and Wignel, 1994; Paltridge, 2000). At the same time, they begin to enter larger units of language, one of them is conversations. In brief, the mastery of vocabulary enables children to begin a very important phase in their life: perform communication. Having considered the fact, the teaching of vocabulary will consequently be as important as it is.

Teaching vocabularies, especially to children are urgently performed by joyful learning activities since they learn fruitfully

in low tense atmosphere (Lie, 2002; Gusrayani, 2006). By low tense atmosphere, they are required to acquire and learn useful amounts of vocabularies, retain them in a long period of time, understand the context of usage and finally of course, use it appropriately in the context. Song and story are two among many tools believed by Indonesian teachers as to serve this purpose. They found encouraging results when giving song and stories to children to facilitate their learning (in first, second or foreign language). Class is enlivened with students' participation: raising hands, answering questions, contextualizing words and other similar phenomena (Melani, 2007). It is explained by several factors: in teaching vocabularies through song and story, the number of occurrences of new words is abundant; the number of times the word was pictured; the helpfulness of cues to meaning

in text (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 1999). When teacher explanations of new words were added to the process, gains in vocabulary doubled.

Assuming song and story as have been providing a perfect environment and setting for children to learn a new language should not be made in a rush. Should it be considered the content of those tools; whether they have given an appropriate attendance of what is relevant and understandable for children to adopt. In learning English, Indonesian children should work quite hard since English is not their first or even second language. They should be provided with an appropriate learning context and atmosphere in order to enable them to adopt the strategy of acquiring as in their acquisition to the first language. The story and song themselves should be analyzed in term of their meanings, cohesion and coherence in order to serve the needs. This is the first step following other analysis—how the story and song serve Indonesian context at their best. Disbanding the song and story to grasp the meaning and coherence would be the first concern of this study. Cohesion analysis (lexical cohesion, reference, conjunction, and conversational structure) would be applied to both song and story as the tools of analysis. Following it, the implementation of both texts to children—how they acquire them successfully in term of meaning especially for several main vocabularies—will also be described here. In later analysis, it will be unveiled which one among song and story serve the cohesive relationship at best and compare the result to the real implication in children mastery of the song and the story.

A text is referred so if it has a property of a text; what Eggins (1994) has confirmed us as 'a dimension of the paragraph'. A paragraph, as Eggins (1994) further stated must hang itself together contextually and internally or coherently and cohesively. Contextually, a paragraph must have a 'series of clauses relate to the context' (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). The contextual properties can be recognized by specifying the field, mode and tenor for the entire collection of the

clauses; this is a situational coherence. We can also recognize whether the text contextually related or not by identifying its generic structure, i.e. whether it is identifiable as a genre. This is a generic coherence. If the text has a situational and generic coherence, this text is provable in one dimension of a paragraph. Internally, the text has to fulfill the main pattern of cohesion as Martin (1992) in Paltridge (2000) showed us they are: reference, lexical cohesion, conjunction, substitution, and ellipsis. Eggins (1994) also argued that different types of cohesion in text include: lexical cohesion, reference, conjunction and conversational structure. These concepts I will elaborate principally throughout the study.

The cohesive resource of reference refers to how the writer/speaker introduces participants and then keeps track of them once they are in the text (Eggins, 1994). It means that once a text introduces participants involved in it (people, places and things that get talked about in the text), the writer must signal to the reader where is their position later on in the text. The signal must be in the form of 'identity' of the participants, whether they are already known or not; i.e. participants in the text may be either presented to us (introduced as "new" to the text) or presumed (encoded in such a way that we need to retrieve their identity from somewhere). Only presuming participants create cohesion in a text (Eggins, 1994). Look at this example:

I have a unique niece who lived in Australia.

If we find this sentence initiating a paragraph, it will presumably raise a question: who is she? We are not expected to know anything about this participant, she, who is being introduced to us. Therefore, this sentence contains a presenting reference. Now, look at another example:

I have a unique niece who lived in Australia. Her name is Vian. She has a long and black hair.

The second example here gives us a clear clue of who is she. It is presumed that we know, or can establish, who that she refers to.

The second example shows us the **presuming reference**. Only presuming participants create cohesion in a text since ties of dependency are constructed between the presuming item and what it refers to (its referent). Eggins (1994) identified the commonest presuming reference items, those are:

- i) the definite article : the
I had to deliver it to the clinic.
- ii) Demonstrative pronouns: that, these, those,
This was in Geneva.
- iii) Pronouns: he, she, it, they, etc
Here they give you tea and bikkies

The identity of presuming reference can be retrievable from the general context of culture (homophoric) or from the immediate context of situation (exophoric). When the writer uses a presuming reference item, the reader needs to retrieve the identity of that item in order to follow the text (Eggins, 1994). If presuming referents are not retrievable, the interaction will run into problem. The identity of presuming reference item may be retrievable from a number of different contexts: from the general context of culture, the immediate context of situation, from elsewhere within the text itself. When we identify a referent item retrieved from within the text, it is called endophoric reference. The main patterns of cohesion examined in the area of reference are anaphoric, cataphoric, esphoric, and homophoric reference. Anaphoric happens when the referent has appeared at an earlier point in the text. Cataphoric happens when the referent has not yet appeared, but will be provided subsequently. Esphoric happens when the referent occurs in the phrase immediately following the presuming referent item (within the same nominal group/noun phrase, not in a separate clause. Homophoric reference refers to items the identity of which can be retrieved by reference to cultural knowledge in general rather than the specific context of the text.

Lexical relations refer to how lexical items are used by the writer relationally. The relationship occurs between lexical items in a text and, in particular, among content words. The cohesive resource of lexical relations

refers to how the writer/speaker uses lexical items (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and event sequences (chains of clauses and sentences) to relate to text consistently to its area of focus (Eggins, 1994).

The main kinds of lexical relations are taxonomic and expectancy relations. Taxonomic explains repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy and collocation. Repetition refers to words that are repeated in the text, as well as words that have changed to reflect tense or number. Synonymy refers to the relationship between words that are similar in meaning. Hyponymy refers to classes of lexical items where the relationship is one of 'general specific' or 'a type of'. Meronymy refers to lexical items which are in a whole-part relation. Collocation describes associations between words that tend to co-occur. Meanwhile expectancy relations explain how each word expects another word following it; and this is approved by many minds.

The cohesive pattern of conjunction refers to how the writer creates and expresses logical relationships between the parts of a text. It refers to words such as 'and', 'but', 'however', 'finally', 'then', etc. Martin (1992) in Paltridge (2000) categorizes conjunctions as additive (and, or, etc), comparative (whereas, but, etc), temporal (while, when, after, etc), and consequential conjunctions include items such as 'so that', 'because', 'since' etc. While Halliday (1985) recognize three main types of conjunctive relations, those are: elaboration (in other words, that is, I mean etc.), extension (and, also, but, yet, etc), and enhancement (whereupon, then, etc). This type has been considered appropriate and applied in this study.

Conversational structure

Conversational structures describe how the interactants negotiate the exchange of meanings in dialogue. It involves two components (Eggins, 1994): speech functions and exchange structures. Speech function or can be regarded as speech act refers to an utterance and the total situation in which the utterance is issued (Thomas, 1995). The basic

initiating speech functions are offer, command, statement, and question. Responding speech functions can be in the form of accepting, declining, complying, acknowledging, answering etc. Meanwhile exchange structure is the sequence of those speech functions and constitutes jointly negotiated exchanges.

Children learning a foreign language

There are many unique phenomena for children as they learn a foreign language. It is so different comparing to adults as children: a) are often more enthusiastic and lively, b) want to please the teacher rather than their peer group, c) will have a go at an activity even when they don't quite understand why or how, do not have the same access as older learners to meta language than adults (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 1999). Realizing these characteristics of learning, teachers should be made aware of bringing teaching materials to the classroom since the notably characteristics can be challenging or even impeding. It should also be put into consideration some remarkable theories of children's characteristics from some experts Piaget's concern for example, was on the child as an active learner and sense maker (in Cameron, 2001).

The child is seen as continually interacting with the world around her/his solving problems that are presented by the environment. Through taking action to solve problems learning significantly occurs. Children also deal with concrete thinking and concrete objects at their initial stage of life. The implication of learning suggests that children are active learners and thinkers and thus seek out intentions and purposes in what they see other people's actions and language. Children are active 'sense makers', but their sense-making is limited to their experience. This is the key for them to respond to all classroom activities including if s teacher involves them in story telling or singing. The teacher should think of classroom activities as creating and offering opportunities to learners for learning. Meanwhile Vygotsky (in Cameron, 2001) concerns more or less differently to Piaget in

the sense that he relates a child with his social life instead of merely concerning on child's individual cognitive development. Associating with this theory, language provides the child with a new tool, opens up new opportunities for doing things and for organizing information through the use of words as symbols (Clark and Clark, 1977; Ellis, 1994).

Here Vygotsky further emphasizes that children learning to do things and learning to think are both assisted by interacting with an adult. Another Vygotsky's theory which is quite helpful to this study beside the concept of ZPD (zone of proximal development) and internalization is the concept of how children learn words and meanings. From the earliest lesson, children are encouraged to think of the new language as a set of words. Brunner (in Cameron, 2001) proposed the concept of scaffolding and routines in setting the tasks and activities for children learning a new language. Doing routine introduction to the new language gives an opportunity to scaffold the new language to a child's mind. Routines then can provide opportunities for meaningful language development and will later on open up many possibilities for developing language skills. All these theories will shed light on this study in the basis of how story and song would be effectively serve the children's learning a new language since these theories reflect the naturalness of song and story in exposing context and vocabularies within.

Richards and Nation (1990) in Cameron (2001) describes the type of understanding/knowledge about a word. There are: receptive (understanding when it is spoken/written), memory (recalling it when needed), conceptual (using it with the correct meaning), phonological (hearing the word and pronouncing acceptably), grammatical (using it in a grammatically accurate way; knowing grammatical connections with other words), collocational (knowing which other words can be used with it), orthographic (spelling it correctly), pragmatic (using it in the right situation), connotational (knowing its positive and negative associations; knowing its

associations with related words) and metalinguistic knowledge (knowing explicitly about the word, i.e. grammatical properties). Students' understanding on the vocabularies drawn from song and story will be categorized into these types.

METHOD

The research is aimed at unveiling the meanings which is scrutinized in the form of cohesion of two texts: *Oly, The Fat Caterpillar* (story) and *Angels, Watching Over Me* (song) in order to figure out the most understandable text to be exercised to children for the sake of their mastery of vocabulary. The title of both texts were chosen in consideration that they are most preferably applied by 3 English teachers in 2 elementary schools (SD Salman Al-Farisi and SD Darul Hikam) in their classrooms as learning materials. Having selected the title, analysis of reference, lexical relations, conjunction and conversational structures were applied to both song and story in order to find out the cohesion pattern of and therefore reflect the messages carried by both texts. The analysis was initiated by summing up clauses contained in both texts. This is conducted due to the sake of comparing percentage of reference, lexical relations and conjunctions in both song and

story which have been quantitatively analyzed, whereas the conversational structure is depicted. The results are, then, sliced by the knife of qualitative analysis to find out theoretically which one seems to provide richer contexts derived from the cohesiveness built internally by both texts. Vocabularies contain in text with richer contexts are assumed to be meaningful to be exercised to students. The result of analysis is then confirmed to 30 children at the 5th grade of SD Salman Al-Farisi as the material to teaching and learning. The participants were chosen due to the fact that they have enough background in English. All phenomena involved were related to theories of children learning a new language.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of cohesiveness in song and story

The first tool applied to both text and song is analysis of reference. It clearly shows that story has presuming reference which is the main hint of cohesiveness of a text; meanwhile song provides presenting reference mostly throughout the clauses. There is indeed one presuming phenomenon found in the song; nevertheless this reference must be drawn externally, from the general context of culture (homophoric) instead of internally within the text (endophoric).

Table 1. *Cohesiveness in song and story*

| | SONG | % | STORY | % |
|------------------|---|--------|--|--------|
| Reference | 9 clauses | | 62 clauses | |
| Presenting | Angels watching over me (6 times repeated) My child (once) | 11.29% | - | 0 |
| Presuming | God and angels (homophoric) | 1.62% | Anaphoric: She (9 times repeated) I and me (2 times) You (2 times) I (8 times repeated) You (2 times repeated) Oly and pronoun (3 times) Ibel and pronoun (3 times) They (once) Cataphoric: These and wings (2 times) Thank you, God (once) It is me, Oly (once) Esphoric: Oly meets Ibel, the dragonfly. I am Oly, the fat caterpillar. Now, I am Oly, the butterfly. | 61.29% |

As has been stated earlier, only presuming participants create cohesion in text, since ties of dependency are constructed between the presuming item and what it refers to. Among these two texts, story contains presuming reference in a larger

amount than song. From this first item, we can temporarily conclude that story builds cohesiveness in a tighter manner than song. The second analysis was about its lexical relations. Look again at the following table 2.

Table 2: Lexical relations between song and story

| Lexical Relations | Song | Story |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Taxonomic | <p><i>Classification:</i> (1) class-sub class Lord and Angels (2) antonym Night and Day (3) repetition All night All day Angels Watching over me <i>Composition: co-meronymy</i> God: Sun, angels</p> | <p><i>Classification:</i> (1) synonymy Good-kind (2) co-hyponymy The fat caterpillar-the butterfly (refers to the same referent, Oly) Colorful-beautiful (3) repetition Fat (3 times) Sleeps (3 times) Eats (3 times) Wings (2 times) Thank you (2 times) Play together (2 times) <i>Composition</i> (1) meronymy Caterpillar=green, long, has a lot of hair, has a lot of legs, eats fruits, eats leaves</p> |
| Expectancy relations | - | <p>Make friend Wakes up Fly around Play together</p> |

It is shown from the table that the quantity of taxonomic and expectancy relations of lexical relations in both song and story differ a great deal. Expectancy relations were not even found in song. It indicates low cohesiveness in song compared to the story. Only two types of conjunction found in the story, that is, enhancement type (then) and extension type (and); and none was found in song. The song is minus conjunctions. The story contains many short sentences which is indeed understandable without conjunction. Last, the analysis of conversational structure. Speech functions and exchange structure can only be found in story. There is one speech function in song that is statement; nevertheless it is not accompanied by sequences of the other speech function which can also constitute jointly negotiated exchanges. Meanwhile in the story, we can find many exchange structures in dialogs for example. One of them can be seen as at the table 3.

From this exchange structure, we can be sure who makes what kinds of moves, who play which roles in the exchanges of a text. This provides a good context for students especially children in recognizing new vocabularies. Those conclusions were drawn theoretically. Nevertheless, having them (song and story) all taught, children show a great response to story. They show their knowledge on several words which were magnificently constructed. They show not only receptive knowledge (understand it when it is spoken/written), memory (recall it when needed) but also pragmatic knowledge (use it in the right situation). For example, from all context provided by the story, one child without being told of the meaning previously, talked about his own experience of feeling ashamed (like Oly), then she pronounce the word 'ashamed' quite convincingly.

Table 3: *The negotiation of meaning exchanges in dialogue*

| Exchanges | | Speech function |
|-----------|--|--------------------|
| Oly: | Hello, my name is Oly | Statement |
| | I am green caterpillar | Statement |
| | What is your name? | Question |
| Ibel: | I am Ibel | Answer |
| | I am dragonfly | Statement |
| | Go away | Command of refusal |
| | You are fat | Statement |
| | You are not my friend | Refusal |
| Oly: | Ibel, I am a good animal. | Statement |
| | I am kind | Acknowledge |
| | Let's play together. | Offer |
| Ibel | : Goodbye Fat Oly... Fat Oly... Fat Oly. | Decline |
| | Ibel flies and prays | Statement |
| | Oh God, help me... | Request |
| | I need a friend | Statement |

They can even re-create the words in their own language (bahasa Indonesia) or put them in a correct grammar (metalinguistic knowledge). As what Brunner had suggested, story, along with its repetitions (in relational process and same rheme for example) provide good scaffolding for children. Meanwhile song proves to be quite lack in providing them benefit environment for learning vocabularies. They only sang, and laughed, banged their hands, bended their knees and any other physical responses. They liked the song, but remembered almost nothing the words it is introduced. This phenomenon explains contexts boundary a lot; story provides children with many contextual boundaries which ease them to remember the vocabularies significantly while song does not work in a similar way. It does not scaffold the child enough.

CONCLUSION

From above analysis we can conclude that song provides greater opportunities for children learning in a joyful situation since song can enliven the situation and the children responded it sufficiently. However, having song as a material to teaching vocabularies should be considered twice. We have to select song with more cohesiveness built in it. The implication to teaching and learning is that; if teacher's intention is to build vocabulary mastery on children, they can consider story better than song. If the purpose is only to make the class relieved,

unstressed, and enlivened, teacher can choose song. Even though the result may considerably depend on the song and the story chosen, this finding can establish awareness among teacher that every teaching act has to have purposes; and teacher has to decide them at the beginning.

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