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INTEGRATION OF ART IN ENGLISH TEACHING THROUGH STORYBOOKS TO READERS

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ABSTRACT

This abstract provides an overview of the integration of art in English teaching through storybooks to readers in an ESL classroom. It encompasses the definition of storybooks, their purpose in teaching English, the issues associated with their use, the implementation strategies for incorporating storybooks into English instruction, and the significance of storybooks for both teachers and readers. The integration of art in English teaching through storybooks offers a valuable approach to engage readers in ESL classrooms. While there may be challenges in using storybooks, implementing appropriate strategies can address these issues. By leveraging the power of storybooks, teachers can enhance language learning outcomes and create a positive and inspiring learning environment for their readers.

Keywords: Integration of Art, English, Teaching, Storybooks

INTRODUCTION

The use of art in teaching English, as we all know, has been used since the early ages and due to that fact it has become a norm in today's society. The use of illustrations to explain the meaning of words has been used for years even as early as the dark ages when reading is only taught to the rich and noble. Nowadays, we can see that story books can be retrieved in hardcopy and even soft copy through online platforms. The teaching of English through art is a method that can be used by teachers to enhance their teaching skills and can aid them in igniting sparks of interest in their readers. It is also beneficial for readers too due to the fact that they will enjoy the lesson and learn new things at the same time. According to Beauchat, Blamey and Walpole (2009), the professional development tool featured can help facilitate the literacy success of their readers through shared storybook reading. Hence, there are various benefits of storybooks especially in promoting the learning of English language.

What Are Storybooks?

A storybook is a book that tells a narrative or story, typically targeted towards children. It is a form of literature that combines text and illustrations to engage young readers and captivate their imagination. Storybooks can come in various formats, including hardcover, paperback, board books, or digital which are also known as e-books. Storybooks are designed to entertain, educate, and inspire readers. They often feature engaging plots, memorable characters, and vivid illustrations that complement the text. The illustrations play a crucial role in helping young readers visualise the story and connect with the

narrative on a deeper level. Based on what Fang (1996) mentioned, art work in picture books is most often concerned with storytelling. Hence, all the pictures, colours and illustrations in storybooks work more to give comprehension, more than what meets the eye. Storybooks cover a wide range of genres and themes, including fairy tales, fables, adventures, fantasy, science fiction and historical. They can be standalone stories or part of a series, allowing readers to follow the adventures of their favourite characters across multiple books. According to Amanambu, Ekechukwu, Onuora, Ejimonye, Ikeazota, Oforika and Ololo (2021), stories play a vital role in the growth and development of children. Therefore, the different genres and themes provide the opportunities to the readers to explore and experience different situations through the books.

Apart from being a source of entertainment, storybooks also promote literacy development and language skills in readers. They introduce readers to vocabulary, sentence structures, and storytelling conventions. Additionally, storybooks can convey valuable lessons, teach moral values, and stimulate imagination and creativity. Based on Putri, Harto and Moecharam (2017), teachers should be more aware of the ideology presented in fiction especially in children's storybooks because it can help teachers be conscious of how it can help to build character development in readers. Storybooks are often read aloud by parents or teachers to readers who have not yet learned to read independently. The shared reading experience helps foster a love for books, language, and storytelling. As mentioned by Mart (2012), stories are motivating for young learners, and stories can create a happy and enjoyable learning environment. Readers read for fun and will learn along the way too. As young readers grow older, they may begin to read storybooks on their own, further enhancing their reading comprehension and language abilities. Moreover, storybooks are books that tell narratives through a combination of text and illustrations, primarily aimed at readers who are still young to promote multiculturalism. According to Al-Jarf (2015), multicultural literature refers to literature about people from diverse linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. Through reading, readers are exposed to new cultures and traditions outside of their own. Storybook also aims to entertain, educate, and inspire young readers while promoting literacy skills and imagination. That is why the use of storybooks are popular amongst teachers teaching English, especially young readers.

Purpose of Storybooks in Teaching English

Storybooks are widely used in teaching English as a second or foreign language due to their numerous benefits in language acquisition and development. Here are some ways in which storybooks are used in English language teaching. First, storybooks help to increase vocabulary development. Storybooks expose readers to a variety of words and phrases in context. They introduce new vocabulary and reinforce familiar words. Teachers can use storybooks to teach and reinforce vocabulary through activities such as identifying new words, matching words to pictures, or creating word banks. Secondly, storybooks increase reading comprehension because it provide opportunities for readers to practise reading comprehension skills. Teachers can engage readers in pre-reading activities to activate their prior knowledge, guide them through the story, and post-reading activities to check their understanding. Comprehension questions, discussions, and retelling activities can be used to assess comprehension and encourage critical thinking. In addition to this, it aids in the understanding of language structures and grammar as well. It offers examples of language structures and grammar usage within meaningful contexts. Teachers can use stories to introduce or reinforce grammar concepts, sentence structures, verb tenses, and more. Readers can identify target language structures in the text and practice using them in speaking or writing activities. Furthermore, the use of storybooks also aids in the increasing of writing skills. Storybooks can inspire learners to develop their writing skills. After reading a story, learners can engage in activities such as writing summaries, retelling the story from a different character's perspective, or creating their own stories using the vocabulary and language structures learned. Storybooks capture reader's attention and foster a love for reading in English through the colourful and interesting illustrations. They provide an enjoyable and interactive learning experience. Readers are more likely to engage with the language when they are immersed in an engaging story. Teachers can use storybooks as a tool to create a positive and motivating learning environment. Therefore, it is important to choose age-appropriate materials, consider the reader's language proficiency level, and align the activities with the specific language learning objectives. As mentioned by Liu (2021), teachers can choose age-appropriate reading for their students. Therefore, teachers should choose wisely so that

they are able to slowly introduce new words to readers but not entirely so the readers can still understand what they are learning. Crucial step for teachers to improve their teaching skills.

Issues of Storybooks

There are some issues that should be focused in order to resolve it when it comes to the use of storybooks and where it lacks. One being the language complexity where some storybooks may contain language that is too complex for readers at certain proficiency levels to comprehend. Teachers should carefully select storybooks that align with their reader's language abilities to ensure comprehension and engagement. Adapting or simplifying the language in the story or providing additional support materials can help address this issue. Some of the illustrations used in the storybooks also may not be able to clarify the meaning of the whole context which is possible. Furthermore, the issue that some storybooks face is the lack of cultural relevance. Storybooks often reflect the culture and context in which they were created. It is essential to consider the cultural relevance of the stories and characters portrayed, as readers from different backgrounds may have different cultural references or sensitivities. Teachers should choose stories that are inclusive, diverse, and resonate with their reader's experiences to foster a sense of connection and understanding. The illustration might help in introducing the readers to new cultures and norms but sometimes it can be inaccurate due to little or no research being done prior. More importantly as mentioned by Gonen and Guler (2011), story books, which are among the first types of books that children come across, act as messengers from the outside world. Moreover, the lack of interactivity also aids to the issues on the use of storybooks in English teaching. Storybooks often provide a one-way communication experience, where readers passively receive the information. To promote active engagement, teachers can incorporate interactive activities before, during, and after reading the story. These activities can include discussions, role-plays, creative projects, or group work, allowing learners to interact with the story and actively use the language.

Implementation of Storybooks in Teaching English

There are various ways to implement storybooks especially in English teaching and it can be highly beneficial for the readers as well as the teacher. First and foremost, the selection of appropriate storybooks is crucial. Choose storybooks that are age-appropriate, engaging, and align with the language proficiency level of the readers. Consider their interests, cultural backgrounds, and language abilities. Look for books with colourful illustrations, clear text, and a compelling storyline. The more interesting the storybooks look, the easier for readers to understand and be present in the lesson. Next in the list we have interactive reading. This is where the reader-teacher relationship is formed closer. To read a story aloud to the readers, using expressive reading techniques to engage their attention and enhance comprehension. Pause at key moments to ask questions, encourage predictions, or discuss the illustrations. Encourage active participation by having readers repeat sentences, chime in with repeated phrases, or act out scenes. On occasions, the teacher shows the illustrations to the readers so that they can see what is being read to them as well. This will stimulate the readers' imagination. That is why illustrations play a crucial role in storybooks.



Figure 1: Teacher reading to the readers

Furthermore, implementation of storybooks in teaching English aids to vocabulary expansion. Storybooks provide opportunities to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary. Identify key words or phrases from the story and explore their meaning, pronunciation, and usage. Engage readers in vocabulary activities such as word matching, creating word maps, or using the words in sentences. More so when there are pictures and drawings in the storybooks, it will help readers to memorise the new vocabulary learnt because they can picture the new vocabulary and match it with the pictures or drawings.

Examples of Storybooks

There are various types of famous storybooks made for readers so that they can learn new words and expand their vocabulary. For instance, we have the very famous writer Dr. Seuss who has come up with a lot of storybooks with stories that rhyme. Some of his famous writings are *The Cat in the Hat* and *The Lorax*.

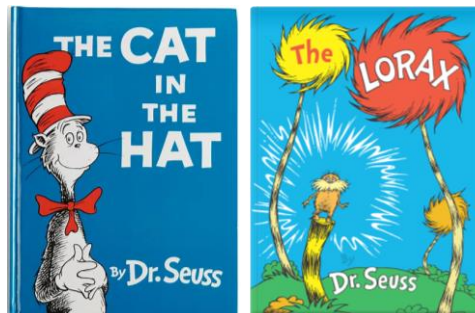


Figure 2: The Cat in the Hat and The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

Apart from that, there are local writers who have been actively writing storybooks and aiding the increase in numbers of storybooks specially made for Malaysian readers because of its cultural understanding and representation. Writers like Margeret H. L. Lim who wrote *Payah* and the sequel *Four Eyes*, as well as Raman Krishnan who wrote *The Legendary Princesses of Malaysia* and *Jainal Amanging*.

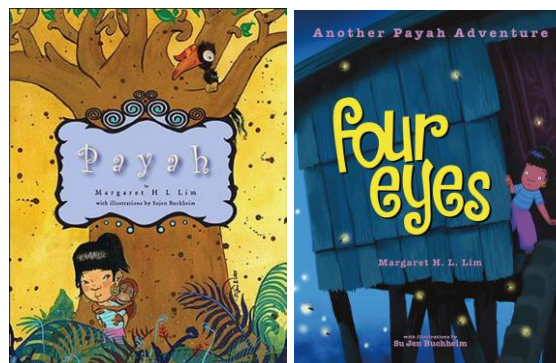


Figure 3: Payah and Four Eye by Margeret Lim

The local writers have given a chance for Malaysian readers to relate to the stories that they are reading and they can learn new customs and traditions of other ethnicities that Malaysia is known for. By this act, local and non-local readers are more aware and knowledgeable about the beauty of Malaysia.

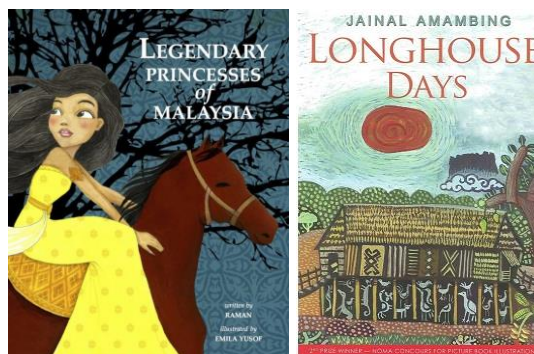


Figure 4: Legendary Princesses of Malaysia by Raman Krishnan and Longhouse Days by Jainal Amambing

SIGNIFICANCE OF STORYBOOKS

Teachers

Storybooks bring benefits and advantages to all walks of life and can aid all types of work but mostly for those who are in the teaching. Instruction language is especially in need of storybooks as a teaching material because it eases the process of teaching for teachers. There are a few significance of storybooks for teachers. First and foremost, storybooks provide teachers with a rich resource for language instruction. According to Spencer, Goldstein and Kaminski (2012), vocabulary instruction is a critical component of early language and literacy programs. Storybooks offer a wide range of vocabulary, sentence structures, and language patterns that can be used to teach and reinforce language skills. When using storybooks as a teaching material, it can make language learning more contextualised, engaging, and memorable. Thus, it can help the process of teaching new things to readers much easier. Other than that, storybooks are able to capture readers' interest and engage them in the learning process. In other words, storybooks are a form of attention grabber. The use of visual illustrations, interesting characters, and compelling narratives helps create an enjoyable and interactive learning experience. Engaged readers are more motivated, focused, and receptive to learning English. In addition, storybooks benefit teachers because it encourages multimodal learning. Storybooks combine text and visuals, allowing teachers to incorporate various modes of learning. By using visual cues, gestures, and expressions from the illustrations, teachers can enhance readers' comprehension, vocabulary development, and overall language acquisition. As mentioned by Sanacore (2006), narrative text supports young readers in developing fluency and interest in reading, but children also deserve opportunities to become immersed in expository, or nonfiction, materials. Meaning storybooks provide opportunities for readers to learn through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic means. These are the few reasons as to why storybook implementation benefits teachers in teaching language. Moreover, the significance of storybooks to teachers is it improves literacy development. According to Dickinson, Griffith, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2012), reading comprehension is critical for long-term academic success and is dependent on language abilities that emerge early in life. Hence, the teaching of language by using storybooks plays a vital role in promoting literacy skills amongst readers in all levels of proficiencies. Through reading and discussing stories, teachers can support readers' reading fluency, comprehension, and critical thinking abilities. This will make the readers more engaged hence will strengthen the reader-teacher bond as well as build trust. Storybooks also contribute to the development of writing skills as readers learn to analyse and articulate their thoughts about the stories. This will make readers more critical in their thinking.

Readers

As much as the storybooks give so much significance to the teacher, it also benefits the readers. The readers are the main point person as to why the storybook is even created; to teach in a more fun way. The significance of storybooks to readers is that it aids in vocabulary expansion. Readers can explore new words and are introduced to a wide range of vocabulary. readers encounter words within

meaningful contexts, making it easier for them to understand and remember new vocabulary. Exposure to diverse vocabulary through storybooks enhances readers' language repertoire and overall communication skills. Based on what Justice, Meier and Walpole (2005) mentioned, vocabulary development is viewed as a gradual process whereby early representations are increasingly refined with time and exposure. Therefore, it is beneficial for readers to read more storybooks. Furthermore, readers also can enhance their reading comprehension through reading storybooks. As readers engage with stories, they learn to infer meaning, identify main ideas, make predictions, and connect the text to their prior knowledge. Through discussions and activities related to the story, readers enhance their ability to comprehend and analyse written texts. As mentioned by Mulei, Kebaya and Ndivo (2023), literacy is a foundation for all further learning. Hence, it is crucial for readers to master literacy and what better way to do it by reading books that increase their knowledge. In addition to reading comprehension, storybooks are significant to readers because it promotes a space for imagination and creativity. According to Moedt (2020), incorporating reading comprehension into kindergarten literacy programmes effectively improves reader's academic success, through techniques such as direct instruction and play based learning. In this context, storybooks ignite readers' imagination and foster creativity. Through the characters, settings, and plotlines, readers can explore different worlds, ideas, and perspectives. Storybooks encourage readers to think critically, make connections, and develop their own interpretations of the stories. Furthermore, the significance of storybooks to readers is that storybooks nurture emotional development. Readers who read are more likely to be emotionally available and can understand other people without even having to say even a word. Storybooks often address emotions, social situations, and moral values. They provide a safe space for readers to explore and understand their own emotions and the emotions of others. Readers can relate to characters in the story, develop empathy, and learn valuable life lessons, thereby promoting emotional intelligence. As mentioned by Doyle and Bramwell (2006), the familiarity of a known story offers children a safe place to practise new skills, such as retelling a story or trying out a new vocabulary word. The readers are already used to the story so they are more prone to be interested in the lesson.

CONCLUSION

Integrating art in English teaching through storybooks provides an engaging approach for ESL classrooms. Storybooks, with their combination of written text and visual imagery, serve multiple purposes, including facilitating language acquisition, developing vocabulary and comprehension skills, promoting cultural awareness, and fostering a love for literature. While there may be challenges such as limited availability of suitable storybooks, linguistic complexity, and potential mismatches with reader interests, implementing effective strategies can address these issues. Teachers can select age-appropriate and culturally relevant storybooks, pre-teach vocabulary, use interactive reading techniques, incorporate related art activities, and encourage reader participation. Storybooks hold significance for both teachers and readers. They offer valuable resources for teaching language skills and promoting cultural understanding. Additionally, storybooks inspire creativity, foster empathy, and enhance social-emotional development. By integrating art and language, readers engage in enjoyable language learning experiences that develop critical thinking, creativity, and linguistic abilities. In conclusion, integrating art through storybooks enriches ESL classrooms, captivating readers' interest, enhancing language acquisition, and cultivating a strong foundation for their academic and personal growth.

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