

Digital Audio Technology for Parenting: Use of Podcasts for Telling Stories to Children

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates why parent use podcasts to provide storytelling for their children. A podcast is a form of audio-based technology that can be used to introduce fairy tales to children. Storytelling with technology involves children, parents, and the source of technology. In Indonesia, a fairy tale podcast content is available on a music streaming platform, Spotify. This podcast presents a different atmosphere in storytelling because children can recognize fairy tales via a new medium. This research focuses on the three Cs, namely, content, context, and child, to guide parents in choosing electronic media, especially storytelling activities in the form of digital audio podcast. The present study utilizes a constructivist paradigm in which the reason and role of parents in interpreting podcast technology as a medium for children's learning that is focused on storytelling activities are emphasized. Data were collected by interviewing three mothers who have used podcasts for storytelling. Results show that parents who choose podcasts for storytelling use them as an alternative for telling fairy tales to children if the parents cannot tell stories directly and feel that they are not creative enough to build a story.

Keywords: *podcast, parenting, three Cs.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Listening to fairy tales via mediums of audio is not a new form of entertainment. One of these audio platforms for fairy tales is one type of mass media—radio. In the early 2000s in Indonesia, a fairy tale was broadcast by an announcer named Putri Suhendro every morning on the radio. This fairy tale was delivered through the Indonesian language, and many listened unexpectedly, especially parents and children. In radio, story segments are not only in the form of fairy tales that are produced. Around the 1980s, radio plays, for example, *Saur Sepuh*, which became a legendary radio drama in Indonesia in

which fictional stories about the Majapahit government and inspiring loyal listeners for years have been presented, were broadcast (Muhibar, 2017). Tales on the radio, besides being entertaining, are aimed to preserve regional languages and serve as a medium for education. An example is the fairy tale of Mang Jaya, spoken in Sundanese on Radio Rasilima FM, which aimed to preserve the Sundanese language and provide some good advices (Rachman, Murni, Jaya, & Jaya, 2017).

The production of stories on the radio such as radio dramas and fairy tales has existed for many years and has been

proven to provide a pleasant impression for audio listeners from the 1980s to the 2000s. As the years passed and technology continued to change, rapidly becoming more sophisticated, digital audio began to emerge as a form of storytelling through audio media. Today, one of the ways of storytelling is through podcasts.

The term *podcast* is an amalgamation of the word *broadcasting* with Apple company's MP3 player, that is, the *iPod* (Meng, 2005). Podcasts are used for education on the platform of digital audio for dynamic and interactive learning and contribute to the diversity of learning material (Rajic, 2013). Podcasts are also used for the educational needs of medical personnel and for other health purposes (Hurst, 2019). Additionally, they are aimed to provide knowledge concerning social and environmental issues (Kinkaid, Brain, & Senanayake, 2019).

A podcast is a form of digital media that can provide a different experience for the public in consuming media content. Podcasts can also be heard anywhere throughout Indonesia because they are on the mobile phones that are now always carried by Indonesian people. According to research conducted by the Daily Social in 2018 of the Indonesian people, around 52% listened to podcasts through Spotify application (Daily Social, 2018). Spotify also noted an increase in podcast listeners by 50% in the first quarter of 2019 (Tim CNN Indonesia, 2019).

In this regard, a lot of people are learning information or telling the stories presented in the podcast. If the medium that served to convey fairy tales or stories to children in the past is radio, today, podcasts serve as a technology for

delivering information in the form of digital audio that can also be used to provide fairy tales to children. Examples include the Dongeng Anak Masa Kini podcast channel or the Dongeng Sore contained available on Spotify.

The use of technology for children is applied by parents to tell stories (Cruz & Snider, 2009). Conveying stories through technology, especially media technology, can have an impact on both children and parents. Media technology can provide opportunities for children in the process of forming meaning based on the story, and parents do not need to be experts in storytelling because media technology can help their children in the learning process (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Moreover, using media technology to tell stories can be a tool to sharpen children's literacy abilities (Farmer, 2006). Inevitably, media technology can be used as well by parents to entertain their children, such as television, which can be considered as an "electronic babysitter" (Beyens & Eggermont, 2014).

Storytelling using media technology can take many forms. For example, bedtime stories bring together a set of bed linens and an iPad so that the augmented reality hidden in the patterns on the bed linen can be seen (Kuusk, Langereis, & Tomico, 2013). In America, storytelling with technology can also be done interactively with Storytelling Agent Generation Environment, which allows children to interact with stories by listening and speaking, and there are rabbit dolls to facilitate the emotional connection of stories for children (Bers & Cassell, 1999). Additionally, media technology is available to tell stories digitally using an educational program called Scratch, which

offers a visual display that allows children to build stories with videos, pictures, games, stories, and animations and has an impact on children's learning process (Vinayakumar, Soman, & Menon, 2018). In previous studies, media technology used for storytelling to children has been based on visual tools and interactions. The present study will explore the use of podcasts as a medium for storytelling in the perspective of digital audio.

The use of podcasts to convey fairy tales is based on the decision of parents to choose media technology for children. When parents choose media technology for their children, especially for the learning process, three factors can be used as a reference for parents. According to Guernsey, there are "three Cs" that are considered by parents: *content*, *context*, and *child* (Guernsey, 2013). *Content* described a variety of content in the media and can be selected and adjusted by parents who have a unique understanding of the abilities of their children. *Context* can be the right time or atmosphere in which the parents introduce media technology to children and should result in enjoyable interactions for the children. *Child* defines the children's perspective, that is, understanding the child's level of development so that media content can be chosen to suit the child's developmental needs. Storytelling activities also become a necessity for children's growth and development as well as memory building. Parents tend to consistently regulate their children's use of media ever since the children were very young (Livingstone, Mascheroni, Dreier, Chaudron, & Lagae, 2015). Thus, when choosing a podcast medium to convey fairy tales to children,

these three factors become a consideration for parents.

Presenting fairy tales through podcasts can be an alternative approach to storytelling that has not been implemented by many parents. Therefore, the present study conducted interviews with only three mothers who have used podcasts to tell fairy tales because, to date, not many parents have used this approach. This research will discuss the factors of the three Cs for these three mothers in choosing media for their children and the reasons why they chose to use podcasts for storytelling.

2. METHODS

The present study uses qualitative methods as a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning. Empirically, what is meant is that this type of inquiry is based on the world of experience (Ospina, 2004). The present study examines how parents are choosing media for their children and the reason why they may use podcasts for storytelling. The constructivism paradigm is used for this research because it studies various realities built by many individuals; in the present study, the mothers and the implications of the construction are manifested in the life of parenting and the process of interaction with others, that is, the children (Patton, 2002). Data were collected with in-depth interviews with three mothers who used the podcast to tell fairy tales to their children. The mothers' ages ranged from 26 to 33 years, and the children aged 1–5 years.

3. RESULTS

Interviews were conducted with three mothers who used podcasts to convey fairy tales to their children. The results of the

interview emphasized the discussion of research question: Why were podcasts chosen as the media technology used by

mothers to convey fairy tales to their children? Participant data are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Participants data

Name	Age (years)	Occupation	Child's name and age
MU	32	Employee	SA, 4.5 years old
BA	33	Civil servant	A, 5 years old
SP	26	Employee	SJW 3 years old

4. DISCUSSION

Based on the interview results, the use of a podcast as the technology chosen by the mother was not without reason. Before using podcasts, all three mothers had a choice of media technology for their children to consume, and all of them had their respective reasons for choosing media technology for children. The interviews showed that they considered variations and content in the media for children. Given the need for children not to be left behind from a rapidly advancing technology in the outside world, podcasts are suitable for consumption for children. One parent said

"for me the content and the appropriation. Appropriate for watched by children or the language is too complicated to be understood by small children. The rest he chose himself."
(SP)

Although there are certain rules that are applied by the informant in the selection of media technology for children, the child is free to choose the media that the child wants to consume; as stated by the other two informants, the selection of media technology is based on "the need for variation" (MU) and "so that [the child is] not technology-illiterate" (BA). Despite this freedom in the rules set by the mother, because although the child is free to consume media that he/she likes, the

informant still has the power to determine whether the chosen media of the child is appropriate.

Regarding the three Cs, the three informants adjusted to the interests of their respective children. All three mothers had similar answers when asked about what content is right for their child, that is, "according to their age and interests" and "according to the material being studied at school." As one informant said, his child was learning about animals at school, so the informant also facilitated the child to be able to learn more about animals. Particularly, because the child was interested in dinosaurs, they were often engaged in stories about dinosaurs, such as about dinosaur extinction (MU). Other informants said that the right content for children is determined according to their age, whether it is entertaining, whether there are lessons to be learned, and whether the content teaches religion, such as the stories of Nussa and Rara or Upin Ipin (BA). According to another informant, the right content is that which contains nursery rhymes for children. Because Indonesia rarely has current nursery rhymes available for children, English songs are played more often, such as "Wheels on the Bus" or videos about a toy or playground reviews (SP).

In terms of time, the three informants said that children may consume media during their free time, such as “between the time before going to sleep” or “between the time after school before leaving for pray[er]” and “between the times when getting ready to go to school.” According to the informant, the use of media such as television or podcasts serves as a bedtime friend for the child. The informant acknowledged that she sleeps first in a separate room with the child, so that the time around bedtime becomes the informant’s choice of time to give the child the chance to use media, such as watching Disney Junior while interacting briefly with the child. The mother used this approach because after a day of work, she has limited time for her children (MU). Meanwhile, another informant said that watching television or playing online games is very appropriate for children to consume media when between in school and at home or before leaving for the praying schedule, because after going home, the scheduled activity is to do homework or to study, and then, the next scheduled activity is to sleep (BA). The third informant said that their children were usually allowed to watch television in the morning when they were getting ready for school and during breakfast; then, if they wanted to watch something only limited on home television so that when they were out for a walk or sharing family time, the child would not be upset for wanting to watch a favorite show or ask for the parent’s cell phone (SP).

In choosing media, parents also looked at the development of their child so that the program was suitable for consumption. As one informant said, shows and media content given to children are based on the

material learned at school and on the child’s interests and ability to absorb the use of electronic and digital media (MU). The other informants said that the media must be a facility for children that allows them to share stories with friends and do hobbies such as playing games (BA). Another informant added that the choice of media was in response to seeing the child’s reactions, such as their high enthusiasm toward the appearance of native animals in the real world by proving the child with shows such as National Geographic to demonstrate, for example, how fish move (SP).

4.1. Podcast

Podcasts become a media initially consumed by mothers themselves by listening to a variety of topics that were discussed. Podcasts also become new media for the three mothers. The first informant noted that a podcast may be recently recommended by a friend (MU). The second informant learned about a new podcast over the course of a year (BA). The third informant recognized a new podcast from earlier this year (SP). Listening to podcasts is not yet a routine for the three mothers because they only used this source when they need to increase their knowledge concerning their occupation (SP). When asked about the podcast for storytelling, the three informants interpreted it as an “alternative.”

"The alternative is for me, because just for a distraction. You don't have to just use a podcast; you can go to TV or radio or YouTube. I'm really happy because I don't need to look for story material for children." (BA)

Podcasts are a helpful alternative for the three informants. According to one

informant, the podcast was only an alternative when he wanted to hear a favorite topic and to help the informant when he wanted to tell a story to a child (MU). Meanwhile, another informant said that podcasts are only one alternative for listening to topics that are in line with the needs of the field of work such as technology and start-up topics (SP).

When the informant was asked about the use of podcasts for storytelling, the first informant said that there were conditions in which parents could not tell stories directly to their children because parents had to do something for themselves, although the informant thought that there would be different interpretations when telling stories directly compared with when using podcasts (MU). The second informant said that the existence of a fairy tale in the podcast helps children to not feel bored because they were using a new medium to listen to stories and because the story itself become material for children to use when interacting with their friends (BA). The third informant said that fairy tale content that can be heard on podcasts helps parents to not have to make up fairy tales, which is important because they may feel that they are not creative enough to imagine building an interesting fairy tale (SP). Additionally, considering its usefulness, the parents attempted to use podcasts for storytelling in their place because they do not have the time to tell stories to children. There are podcasts that substitute to help and give children the traditional Indonesian tales. The informant revealed that her child wanted to know traditional Indonesian tales such as Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, and the tale was on the podcast (MU), which was helpful.

However, according to other informants, listening to podcasts becomes a dependency for children because they become unenthusiastic when the time for study arrives before hearing stories in the podcast (BA). Additionally, the school principal of one of the informants' children also suggested giving storytelling media to children to stimulate them in terms of imagination because the parent felt unable to compose stories, so choosing the podcasts made sense.

"I think that's a good idea. The problem is that the headmaster of SJW said we should try storytelling before going to sleep and I just knew there was a fable podcast so I thought why not just listen to it together." (SP).

When listening to fairy tales through podcasts, parents can listen with the child or leave the child to listen alone. The first informant said that when the child listened to the podcast, the informant did other things such as bathing or cleaning up because he had just returned from the work (MU). The second informant said that when the child was listening to a podcast, the parent listened with the child to answer any questions that arose regarding the story being told (BA). The third informant also listened with the children to fairy tales on the podcasts to develop the children's interest in storytelling activities by following and imitating the voices of characters that emerged from fairy tales (SP).

The first time they hear the podcast, there are several actions that the informant takes to make the child want to listen to the podcast. The first informant said because the child could not be silent and did not want to obey if told to sit still; the informant only set the podcast and then let

the child listen while playing a favorite toy (MU). The second informant said that desire of children to hear fairy tales in podcasts naturally occurs because they are love fairy tales and are used to hearing fairy tales (BA). The third informant said cell phone was not shown to the child when listening to the podcasts because it was difficult to explain to the child that the sound coming out of the podcast had no visual like a video and the child was accustomed to watching visual information, so playing the podcast was better when not showing the phone (SP).

Also, apart from the podcast as an alternative to conveying fairy tales, the three informants expressed positive opinions on the use of digital audio medium used to convey tales. Digital audio medium is good to be used to assist mothers in conveying fairy tales because it just uses gadgets and audio streaming applications, and the children can know the traditional Indonesian tale although the informant has forgotten the story (MU). However, according to the first informant, with this way, the child's bond with the mother will loosen because the child does not hear the mother's voice directly when storytelling. The second informant said stories conveyed through digital audio will stimulate the imagination of children because they feel the story being heard is considered real (BA). The third informant said telling a fairy tale using digital audio was a positive because it provided a stimulus to the child to imagine and that the bond between the child and the mother felt closer because there was always story material discussed before going to sleep (SP).

Although children are introduced to information and stories through

technology such as television or other gadgets, parents should not create distance from children who are surrounded by media technology. With the presence of media technology around the child, parents such as the three informants, who are working mothers, always take advantage of existing gaps to interact directly with the children, by encouraging the child to talk openly even though the child may have a small vocabulary, such as telling about activities at school, or when listening to stories on a podcast together with their child by answering questions that arise, accompanying learning activities, and spending maximum time with the child on weekends.

"I like to provoke him to tell a story, even if sometimes he doesn't want to answer." (MU)

Provoking and implementing strategies for children to tell stories will train them to enrich their vocabulary. In the present study, the age range of the three informants' children falls into the category of preoperational stages, which are marked by increased language skills. As stated by one informant:

"Later he will tell, with his language with a little vocabulary, but he can tell a story." (SP)

Using podcasts to hear stories with various words for children in the age range of 2–5 years, stimulates children to develop a collection of vocabulary owned by the children by repeating the words they hear.

4.2. Fairy tale

Telling stories is very important as a parental activity to engage with children. Based on the interviews, fairy tales provide a good impact on the development

of mindset, character, and imagination of children. Additionally, fairy tale provides examples of good lessons, such as when there are bad deeds and there are responses, the child will be able to imagine it from a fairy tale previously heard.

"It can be to form a mindset. From the fairy tale we introduce good things, if the SA is asked if you are bad with people, what would that person feel? He doesn't know but he can imagine it from a fairy tale." (MU)

Meanwhile, according to the second informant, fairy tales for children can contribute to the formation of children's character (BA). Because this mother's child imitates the good lessons heard in a fairy tale, such as when a friend is being bullied by a friend at school, then child immediately reports the bullying to the school teacher.

Also, fairy tales delivered through digital audio can provide a stimulus to the imagination of children and create closer ties to the parents. Because the story is conveyed through audio without any visual elements, this approach will "force" the child to mentally build a visual world so that the child's imagination will form.

"The influence is positive because it stimulates him to imagine and bonding with his mother becomes closer. Because if I was tired and I didn't know there was a podcast, we would have spent the night without storytelling." (SP)

So, in this manner, storytelling is an important activity for parents to do with children. Whatever media is used by parents to convey fairy tales as a form of affection, storytelling time can be the best time for a child's growth and development and it can be used to the fullest degree.

5. CONCLUSION

This research focuses on the reasons for mothers to use podcasts to tell fairy tales to their children because typically fairy tales are conveyed by reading books, by making up stories, or by telling stories based on previous stories. The reason why fairy tales are conveyed is that fairy tales provide a good impact on the development of the child's mindset, character, and imagination. Considering content for children can be seen from the perspective of the need to match the children's interest and is based on the child's age and ability to capture the meaning. Consuming stories that are in the media, not done continuously and without rules, because in the interim period it would be better to keep maintaining the schedule of the main activities for children, such as school or tutoring.

This storytelling podcast is still very new because not many people have used it or even tried to use it. Fairy tale podcasts are here to help mothers in presenting an alternative media for storytelling as a form of caring for children. The time constraints of a working mother who only has full time on weekends makes using podcasts for storytelling an appropriate decision. The use of podcasts to convey fairy tales is considered to be a viable alternative to helping parents in conditions when parents are busy, to be a variation in the media that children typically use, and to give parents creative ideas for stories without having to create or write them. Although the presence of a podcast is a reliable alternative for mothers, parents need a policy in deciding what media source to use for their children. Although the podcast is one of the media options that facilitates a mother's activities, the child's

direct interaction with parents can still be maintained. Hence, children are not constantly connected to electronic devices' also by parents implementing these strategies, and the children begin to emerge with a desire to tell stories.

The present study has many limitations because of the small sample size. Also, the medium of the podcast is still emerging in Indonesia. To date, not many parents use

podcasts for storytelling and may even not know how to make their children want to hear a story on a podcast. A future study focuses on comparing children whose parents told stories directly versus those whose parents did so indirectly via podcasts in terms of the language, cognitive, and socioemotional development of the children.

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