A Story Book for Child's Development and Growth

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Abstract. This paper illustrates that a storybook for children has a specific characteristic to be used as a medium to gain information on children's growth and development. This claim was revealed from research conducted to describe a storybook for children which contains information to prevent malnutrition, which has remained high in recent years in Indonesia. The study involved 11 informants from various backgrounds relevant to the book's development. Their opinions become the data of this research. The data was gained from an in-depth interview and a focus group discussion. To get supportive information, the researchers used an audio recording technic during the discussion, complete with written responses over a questionnaire. The initial results indicated that a book for children aged three to five should have specific criteria from the cover, the character, and the setting. This research is an ongoing project. Thus, the following steps will be book authoring, review, and field testing.

Keywords: Children's book · story · child's development and growth

1 Introduction

Storybooks believe as an effective medium to have positive impacts on children. The book creates storytelling sessions for preschool children that bond parents and children's relationships [1]. However, less than 50% of parents in Semarang city who has book-reading sessions with their children [2]. The research also suggests that more books should be related to a child's development and growth, as social media inform most parents.

Storytelling is defined by Anne Pellowski (1978) as an art or craft in the form of verse or prose, which is then performed. At the same time, the stories can be formed as a picture or other conditions [3]. American National Storytelling Network (NSN) defines storytelling as interactive art that may trigger the listener's imagination [4]. Therefore, storytelling can be telling or listening to a story directly or using specific media. National Geographic defines storytelling as speaking or writing a story to entertain, inform, or educate people [5]. Thus both the storyteller and the listener may learn something from the story, which can be formed in various media, including books.

In the context of preschool children as story listeners, the impact on their cognition is essential. Children have Language Acquisition Devices in their brains, making them

absorb many words. Moreover, Piaget (1954) believes that linguistic stimulation around children leads to language acquisition and cognition development [6]. For adults, storytelling activities benefit the listener to influence their habits. Thus, storytelling has a critical role in daily life [7].

One of the sources of storytelling is a book. Storybook reading habit has many benefits [8]. Not only for parent-child bonding but also for improving child cognition from new things learnt from the story. Each level of age has specific characteristics. For preschool children, a colourful storybook is the best choice. Rothlein & Meinbach (1991) categorise storybooks with pictures as suitable for children, especially when they cannot read yet [9]. The storybook should be simple and communicative, and the picture should be qualified [10].

In terms of child development and growth, it is related to the child's physical and mental development. When the brain develops, the capacity of brain function will also evolve to learn, remember, and think [11]. Learning process through experience for a particular time into maturity [11]. Child intelligence develops to 50% in the first four years and increases to 80% at eight—finally, 100% when a child turns 18. Therefore 0–8 often mention as the golden age [12].

Based on those rationales, this research aims to depict the qualities of a storybook which suits children aged three to five.

2 Method

This research applied a descriptive qualitative approach which involved 11 informants in a focus group discussion (FGD). The informants are storytellers, researchers, parents, preschool teachers, a child psychologist, a librarian, and a storybook author. Before FGD, there was a Zoom in-depth interview with a children-book author related to steps to make a children's book. Following the interview, a questionnaire related to the category storybook for children is set as secondary data of the FGD. A children's storybook writer gave feedback on the questionnaire. The list of questions is the format, illustration, intrinsic factors, plot, language style, message of the story, and other responses. Apart from FGD, the technique to support the data is from recording during the discussion and written responses to a questionnaire. The result of the debate becomes the data of this research, which is then analysed based on the research question. The next step will be the book development and setting time to create a storybook for preschool children.

3 Findings and Discussion

Storybook for preschool children has specific criteria based on the targeted audience. In the case of children aged three to five, the factors to consider are the format, illustration, intrinsic factors, plot, language style, and the story's message.

Format of the book preferably in the form of both hard file and soft file. However, two informants prefer the form of a hard file as the children can touch the book, starting from the attractive and colourful cover until the end of the pages. This preference is based on today's trend that people use smartphones to access information and entertainment.

"Buat buku yang ada panduan untuk orang tua membacanya dilengkapi dengan CD lebih baik" (If5)

[make a book with guidance for parents to read, complete with CD will be better]

Hardfile dan softfile. Di buku ada barcode, sehingga anak bisa melihat (Inf4)

[hardfile and softfile. In the book, there is a barcode so that children can see]

From the excerpts, the book can be in both formats, plus some additional information related to the book in the form of a CD or barcode. During the discussion, both informants clarified that it could be a conventional or digital book as long as parents as the reader get guidelines related to how to read (high or low pitch) or new vocabulary or specific information related to a child's development and growth.

Regarding the illustration of the storybook, informants agree that the visual must be simple, colourful, and related to their daily life, and the cover should be attractive. Most of all, they stressed colourful covers and attractive illustrations inside the book.

"…buku visualnya menonjol 80 %. Satu halaman satu teks naratif, dan bukan dialog" (If1)

[The book should be 80% outstanding visually. One page, one narrative text and not dialogue]

From the excerpt, Informant 1 stressed the illustration process, which should be around 80% picture and 20% narrative text. She also added that the text should be outside of dialogue. Similar to her statement, another source believes the font should be significant.

"..font 20 – 24 ptd tergantung dimensi yang tergantung pada audiensinya…" (If3)

[font 20-24 depends on dimension and audience]

While Informant three gave further description as the following quote:

"Visual sederhana, menarik seperti visual harimau yang tidak menyeramkan. Warna yang menarik, bentuk yang mudah dipahami/tidak ambigu, tokohnya berhadap - hadapan di ruang sejajar, seperti yang besar fisiknya besar yang kecil fisik kecil" (If 2)

[simple visualisation, interesting as in a cute tiger. Attractive colour, the shape is easy to understand/not ambiguous, the characters face to face in one frame, like something in big or small physical appearance]

The excerpt means that children only look into the size of something as long as the figure represents its identity. For instance, an ant may be drawn as big as a cat proportionally.

The next consideration is the intrinsic factor of the book. A storybook should relate to a child's environment and peers. The following excerpt describes the detail:

"Karakter di dalam harus ke real/nyata, cara pembawaannya dibawakan secara tersirat, karakter antusias. Cinta pada ortu, misal tidak harus menjadi ranking 1, anak yang harus dynamic, solidarity, kejujuran, rasa saling membantu, kepercayaan diri" (If3)

[Character in the text must be honest, the way to tell the story should be an implicit, enthusiastic character. Love to parents, for instance, a. child does not have to be the first rank; the child has to be dynamic, solidarity, honest, helpful feeling, and confident]

The main character is inspiring, has a good attitude and can solve their challenge. The character must be realistic, enthusiastic, and indirectly related to values such as loving parents, competition, solidarity, helping others and confidence. Another informant adds information that the character can be something imaginative for children, viz. Animal, fruits, even furniture. At the end of the story, children, the book's audience, can conclude the story and eventually learn new things from the story.

The next consideration of the storybook is related to the story's plot. The plot must be simple and has a happy ending. Two informants (If3 and If5) believe three to five storybooks should be distinct. They think that the book shall not have any violence of any kind. However, after a discussion, all agreed that the conflict was in the form of nonviolence. It is self-conflict, as in somebody getting sick due to a wrong action before the sickness.

"..tokoh mau ngapain, tantangannya apa, karena harus ada konflik, lalu bagaimana tokoh mengatasi masalah...gambarkan perjuangan tokoh, perlu bantuan orang dewasa nggak. Lalu bagaimana endingnya...misi dan ending harus selaras" (If1)

[character will do what, what the challenge will be like, how the main character deals with the problem… describe the struggling process, whether the adult is involved or not. Then how is the ending? It must match the mission]

The excerpt shows that a good story should have a conflict. Start from something normal until there is a climax signed with the condition that makes the character have to solve the problem. The main character's struggle is needed so children can learn from the message. The other informant adds another opinion on child development and growth.

"Sesuai dengan tumbuh kembang anak, kemandirian sosial mampu mencuci tangan sendiri, memakai sepatu sendiri, perlu dikenalkan anggota tubuh mana yang tidak boleh disentuh oleh orang lain, ada adab antusias dan patuh" (If8)

[Based on the child's development and growth, social independency is needed as the ability to wash hands independently, wearing own shoes, which part of the child's parts of body others cannot touch, manner enthusiasm, and obey]

From the quote, Informant 8 gave additional perspective concerning the health and care of preschool children. She proposes good habits, which can be thought of since preschool age as in keeping independent in daily activities or manners when meeting

people outside the family. While informant 10 provides a more detailed plot as the following quote.

> *Bermula dari awalan yang ringan kemudian tengah cerita yang menunjukkan tema cerita menuju klimaks (konflik besar cerita), kemudian menuju resolusi pesan moral untuk anak (If10)*
>
> [start from soft opening, in the middle, there is a story which shows the theme which leads to the climax (significant conflict of the story), then leads to the resolution of moral message for children.]

Based on the quotes, a good storybook should describe the typical life of the character until, one day, a challenge needs to be resolved. However, during the discussion, it was agreed that for preschool children, the moral message does not have or even tends not to be explicit at the end of the story.

In the language of child story books, simple narrative text is the best choice. Moreover, the language should be easy to understand. The proportion is only around 20%, and there is sound variation. The following excerpts support this quality.

> *"Harus simple, sederhana, tidak ambigu, ekspresi dalam karakter yang mudah dipahami, ada irama" (If3)*
>
> [must be simple, not ambiguous, expressive character which understandable and there is rhythm]
>
> *"Kalimat yang tepat. Perubahan suara, mimic wajah." (fI5)*
>
> [correct sentence. Voice changing, face mimic]

Both opinions focus on the importance of sound variation and mimic during the story-reading session. Therefore, the book must have a Guidance Page for parents/adults to read the book interestingly. There is also some information related to specific terms or new vocabulary on the page, which can be discussed with the child.

The last consideration is the message of the storybook. Informants agree that the book should have a positive note, for instance, how to keep things in order and be responsible, imaginative, honest, creative and curious. However, the message should be stated in a language other than words. Please check the following excerpts.

> *"Ketika resolusi, anak seolah-olah terlibat dalam cerita tersebut untuk mendapatkan pesan moral."(If10)*
>
> [when resolution, a child is getting involved in the story to get the moral message]
>
> *"Muatan karakterter harus bermoral, ada baiknya menambah kosakata baru atau glossary sehingga orangtua dapat menjawab pertanyaan yang mungkin ditanyakan oleh anak-anak." (If11)*
>
> [the character must have values, and it is better if the book also adds new vocabulary or glossary so that parents can answer questions that their children may ask]

Both statements agreed that when one reads all pages until the end of the book, the child will feel engaged with the story. And it would be an excellent idea if the authors could give a glossary to anticipate the children's questions.

From the finding, it is clear that a storybook for children must have its criteria. This statement aligns with Guldenoglu's (2020) claim that children's book criteria for preschool and primary school age are different [10]. Even though the gap year of those school levels is not comprehensive, the book remains different. The language and story are also more straightforward, with an implicit message from the narrative text of the book. Storybooks for children aged three to five focus more on colourful pictures, then are completed with 20% narrative text.

This research is an ongoing project. Thus, further steps are still needed, as suggested by Informant 1, a well-known children's book writer in Indonesia.

> "Langkah berikutnya, buat kerangka, lalu konsultasikan terkait literasi tumbuh kembang anak, lalu review, dituliskan, review lagi, dan testing. Artinya minta orang tua untuk membacakan ke anak, dan diberi panduan pertanyaan misalnya 10 quesioner dan lihat hasilnya" (If 1)
>
> [Next steps, outline, consult the child development and growth expert, review, write down, re-review, and test. It means asking parents to read to their children, give ten questions and see the result]

The following action will be drafting the storybook by outlining the data. Next, there will be a second FGD which allows informants to review the draft of the book. After that, consult the expert on the child's development and growth. The next step is book writing with another review from relevant experts. Finally, the research team will conduct field testing. In this part, the draft of the book should be read by parents, and at the end, ten questions can be asked to the children related to the story.

This study aims to depict criteria for a storybook related to a child's development and growth. The method used may not be sufficient to answer the research question. Therefore, for further research, the storybook's duration may be asked, or there should be more theme books related to a child's development and growth.

4   Closing

From the FDG, it is clear that a storybook for preschool needed as a book of its kind still needs to be explored. The book is expected to be conventional, but the digital form is preferable as today's parents are familiar with smartphones. The book should also be colourful and exciting for preschool children. The book's topic should relate to a child's daily life as fruits, animals, family, etc. The plot is simple but has a learning point in terms of independency, social care, and related to good character. Guidance for parents to read is also needed in their books.

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