

Engaging Emergent Readers with Texts Using Shared Reading: Indonesia's Case

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Abstract. This article elaborates shared reading as a reading strategy that replicates home reading experiences. The Indonesian reading lessons were dull and students were get bored. The Indonesian teachers seek for reading strategies that can develop students' reading interest. The shared reading strategy was investigated because it successfully increased students reading interest. The Indonesian teachers are new to shared reading, so the article includes information about how to create homemade shared reading big books to facilitate teachers' teaching and to use enlarged texts as the teacher provides experiences with books. The focus are on meaning and enjoyment of the story, and then shifts to how prints works, and conventions which enhances the story meaning. The importance of being able to see print in enlarged texts that allow the teacher to extend the reading aloud experience to include viewing print in big books were examined. Data were collected via observation and teachers' performance, and then data were categorized and interpreted based on the research questions. The result of the study showed that students engaged to the text using shared reading. A few teachers were revealed facing challenges, and the data showed they needed more training on how to use shared reading.

Keywords: Reading Strategy, Shared Reading, Enlarged Texts, Emergent Readers

1. Identifying the Problems

A number of studies reported the down turn of students' achievement in learning bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language). First, Department of National Education described that the result of national examination for bahasa Indonesian decreased (Tempo,2013). Second, the primary school students lost interest to learn bahasa Indonesia. Lantari (2012) elaborated that the students learning interest highly were caused by poor teachers' strategies in language teaching. Third, Indonesian young learners favor of learning English much than bahasa Indonesia (Cornelia, 2003; Rumidjan, 2009). To overcome the problem, the new 2013 bahasa Indonesia Curriculum demands teachers to teach students with authentic language abilities and highly developing on learning processes to enhance students' interest in learning bahasa Indonesia.

Meanwhile, language teaching using shared reading with enlarge texts have been implemented by many countries. The implementation of shared reading shows very good result in engaging young learners to prints, expressing their ideas confidently, knowing the language convention, sharing ideas with peers, showing their reading interest, etc. It is proved that the success of reading at emergent stage can support children further study, and also can enhance participation in social life.

Shared reading initiated by Holdaway (1979). Shared reading emulates, and develops from bedtime story lap at home. The children sit in a group "share" the story reading by adult using enlarged text (Parkes, 2000). Shared reading can help children from engaging with texts from emergent stage to adult reader (McGill Franzen, 2006). Shared reading will stimulates children each other, learn social skills, and talk about print in varied forms (Honchell & Schulz, 2012).

However, the Indonesian primary school teachers still teach bahasa Indonesia by traditional way. It tends to separate texts from the contexts. Mulyono (2008), Tarigan (2003) criticized that the Indonesian classes are dull, and the teachers use the same language teaching strategies from time to time. The Indonesian's students lost their engagement and enthusiasm to the reading texts.

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The Indonesian teachers are new to shared reading with enlarged texts in form of a big book. However, there is no such qualified book for using shared reading in the Indonesian bookstores. We investigated the creation of homemade big book and how to use it to enhance students' engagement to the texts.

2. Surveying of Related Literature

There are three stages of shared reading. Holdaway (1979) describes the three stages of shared reading as: discovery (a new listening experience), exploration (re-reading with increased unison participation), and independent (re-reading and expressive activity surrounding the story). Shared reading does not operate in a vacuum. It is a part of classroom literacy framework (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). For young children, this frame work includes interactive reading aloud, interactive writing, and shared writing.

The significant feature of shared reading is the book itself. Parkes (2000) describes that the children can see the book and they can comment about it. The teacher uses enlarged texts in the form of big book, charts, or posters. When selecting text for shared reading the teacher needs to consider: interest of the children; varied kinds of reading material the children will enjoy; physical characteristics of text: size and spacing of print, clarity of illustrations, lay out; story line and familiarity with experience; language that provides entry points for participation.

Dorothy (2004) and Snow (2006) explore the use of shared reading. It is basically conducted as a whole-group, small-group, or one-on-one activity, shared reading involves students reading from an enlarged text in unison with the teacher. After students hear the text several times, have them join in whenever they are comfortable. Students join in the reading of the text and read aloud everything they can. They may even use the pointer to lead the group. As they become acquainted with the text, have students read all predictable or familiar text without the support of your voice. When finished with a story, invite students to discuss what they learned, liked, and disliked, and any general thoughts they had.

Meanwhile, Hill (2012), and Salim (2011) describe shared reading as a playful or structured approach to learning to read. In either case, students have the opportunity to: actively participate in reading, learn to predict how a story will progress, understand that illustrations can help construct meaning, increase and develop new vocabulary, discover and implement reading strategies, recognize letters and sounds in the context of the words of the story, understand concepts of the printed word, use structural and visual cues to aid them in the reading process, and sequence story events.

Shared reading is not free from criticism. Cunningham (2003), David (2004), and Morrow (2009) criticized shared book materials which are not closed with children' local cultures. There are lots of big book texts do not consider social condition of the children, and this certainly will create problem to children to understand the texts. Big book's texts need to be adjusted to help children understand the story.

In Indonesia, reading teaching is always implemented by the same way. The teachers present a sentence and break the sentence into words, syllables, phonemes. Then, the teachers rearrange the phonemes, syllables, words, and become a sentence. The students learn to read not in language context. Consequently, they get bored to learn bahasa Indonesia. Cornelia (2003, and Rumidjan (2009) emphasized that Indonesian students' psychological and sociological development need to be put into account in order to make them enthusiasm in learning bahasa Indonesia which is the national language for all formal communication among the Indonesian.

The Indonesian Government currently announces the 2013 Curriculum implementation to enhance the bahasa Indonesia teaching. The curriculum highly applies the use of thematic approach, demands the authentic learning processes, and develops students' character. This study has a highly significance to support the bahasa Indonesia reading strategy in the new 2013 Curriculum. As mentioned above, many countries had harvested the benefit of the shared reading strategy to enhance students' engagement to texts.

At the following section will be discussed how the experiments of the study was undergone in using shared reading for increasing the Indonesian students' engagement to texts.

3. Conducting of the Study

We used classroom action research. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) described classroom action as a self-enquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve the rationality and educational practices. Cross (1987) emphasized classroom action research as a geared to self-improvement and were a bridge the gap between research and practice. Thus, there were a lot of experiments in classroom action research until reaching the learning achievements target.

The aim of the study was to investigate the use of shared reading to enhance students' engagement to texts. To gain the data we collaborated with early years teachers. We considered that the early years students were very crucial stage to make them successful moving from emergent readers to adult readers. We translated the *Brown Bear-Brown Bear, what do you see?* big book by Bill Martin into bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language), also we created our own big book which was based on our curriculum and cultures. The title is "*Ahmad's clock*".

After the homemade big book was created, then we created the manual book, discussed with the teachers how to use the big book for shared reading. We transcribed and categorized the data based on our focuses. We repetitively discussed the data to fix teachers' performances. We made a triangulation to validate the data in order to gain the research objectivity.

We generated from the aim of the study that the Indonesian teachers were able to create a homemade big book for their reading teaching, and they could use the book which stimulated children engaging to reading texts. Further elaboration of the findings will be discussed in the following section.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study focused on how to use enlarged texts for shared reading to engage emergent reader with texts. We discovered there findings: the Indonesian teachers were able in creating homemade big book; managing students' engagement to the texts, and teachers' perspectives on shared reading. We will discuss the findings at the following sections.

4.1. Creating Homemade Big Book

The Indonesian teachers are new to shared reading in enlarged text in a big book format. To support the shared reading, we created our homemade big books. The big book usually has special qualities such as repetitive texts, rhyming, colorful, etc. We analyzed the curriculum contents with teachers. Then, we asked children to participate in creating the big book. Big book are oversized books that teachers can use when teaching young children. Because of the size of the book, it's easy for all students to see the pictures and get involved in the learning process. Big books help to create a shared reading experience and foster a love of reading. When we created our own classroom big book, students became even more involved in the process, and they appeared to be more connected.

A teacher expressed her happiness to participate in the study. "I am happy to participate in this study. I gained much knowledge on how to create homemade big book. Now I can create my own big book using the materials I have. My colleagues and the students are very enthusiasm at these activities. It's really ... really useful". It is obvious that the teacher appreciated the study and she gained practical knowledge to create homemade big book. She claimed that the process of creating homemade big book raised the teachers enthusiasm and students participation.

This study is also produced a big book manual for using big book. We conducted intensive discussion with the teachers to create the big book manual. The book contains procedures how to teach shared reading with big book at the stages: before reading, after repeated reading, and individual reading. It also contains how to arrange classroom for whole-small-whole students sitting arrangement when big book is read by the teachers.

4.2. Managing Students' Engagement to the Texts

Students appeared to show engagement to texts. A teacher explained that students always commented to big book features and showed their amazing feeling when they saw the big book. A student commented: "Wow, the book is so big and it is colorful. I wonder what the book all about is?" When the teachers read the big book the *Brown Bear, what do you see?* By Bill Martin, We translated the book into bahasa Indonesia. Here are the conversation between the teacher and a student:

T: Today we are going to read along this book. The title of the book is "Brown Bear Brown Bear What do you see?" as she pointed to title. What do you think the story is all about?

S1: It's about a bear ...the color is brown.

S2: Yeah from the color, I see a brown bear. He is looking at us.

T: How do you know that the bear is looking for you?

S1: Because his neck and eyes are directing to us ...

T: Great ... Well done. You are right.

The conversation showed that the teacher and students were engaged in the big book talking. The students identified the feature of the book and began playing off with the illustration and the prints. When the book was read, the students were seen very enthusiasm hearing the teachers' demonstration in reading book, the students took in unison reading, they made role play, and did the performance as like adult readers. The students' engagement is a key to learning success. The significance of engagement in the form of students' participation was highly emphasized by Holdaway (1988), Hill (2012), and Salim (2011).

In another big book reading which we created and accommodated the Indonesian curriculum, we discovered the same evidence. The book is about "*Ahmad's Daily Activities*". The story line is about Ahmad daily activities. The book was colorful and there was a clock needle which could children play on to show the time. The teachers and the children can chant big book's lyric together: "Click ...click...click... Ahmad clock is clicking ..." Then, the teacher moved clock's needle and asking: "what was Ahmad doing?". All students came forward to answer and want to move the needle. The class was noisy but it was filling up by students' activities. The students were really engaged and enjoyed shared reading using big book.

4.3. Teachers' Perspective on Shared Reading

There is strong evidence in this study that teachers initially faced challenges *managing time* within the group setting. In the following response a teacher stresses the time-consuming nature of the tasks set both for the individual and for the whole class activities. She considers that the teachers need to make the individual tasks more achievable and to ensure the directions given by the teachers before such tasks begin be more explicitly stated. In the shared reading using big book reading, teachers were expected to complete two activities within the reading hour. Teachers were later breaking this down to one activity to ensure the activity was able to be completed, and if the group finished early to go on with some quiet reading. A teacher explained:

I think a lot of these challenges in the big book reading are to do with time. It is very difficult for the whole group of children you know to find that time if you set two activities. Two activities are very time-consuming so we need to be a little bit smart by setting just one activity and make sure that the children know what they will do before you finish the whole class session. I think some people do better than others and you'll find that wherever you go. If they finish early they should go on with quiet reading.

A few teachers experienced *emotional problems* in implementing shared reading with big book. This is consistent with other teachers in the study. The problems specifically relate to the demands placed on inexperienced teachers as they try to cover the key features of the official program. Almost all the new teachers felt frustrated, sick, burdened and disorganized. A teacher commented:

At first, I felt sick trying to follow the shared reading framework. I feel that everything must be filled in. I lacked of time, and the framework required such a high level of management.

5. Final Thought

Reading teaching by shared reading using big book is quite a new reading strategy for the Indonesian teachers. We had less resources because there were no such qualified big book in our bookstore. We collaboratively created our homemade classroom big book with teachers and children. The children participated in writing and designing big book. They became even more involved in the process. They were more connected. Teachers and children enjoyed creating homemade big book and they used the big book material in varied forms.

Children were engaged when reading big book. Big books are oversized books that teachers can use when teaching young children. Because of the size of the book, it's easy for all students to see the pictures and get involved in the learning process. Big books help to create a shared reading experience and foster a love of reading. Children elaborated texts through each opportunity. The group setting could stimulate children to share talking, to learn social and to engage prints in. Big book could gradually move children from emergent readers to adult readers. Teachers faced a few problem when implementing shared reading with big book. The problems were time management, and emotional problem. It is recommended that the teachers should have regular trainings and give them more chances to teach in shared reading.

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