

Developing a Model of Discoursal Stories for Children in the Concrete Operational Phase

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Abstract

This study is meant to develop a model of discoursal stories for children suitable with their development or age level as readers. The discoursal stories are developed by considering suitable characteristics of learners as readers, teacher's needs for learning media, and learners' reading interest. To develop the model as learning media for Grade IV, a research and development method with three stages: (1) preliminary study, (2) product formulation and development, and (3) product validation and dissemination were used. There are two types of results in this research: criteria for the model of children's discoursal stories in their concrete operational phase and the development of the discourse model. The model has the theme of friendship, humanity/social issues, and education, with joy and playful tone, joyful, moving /pityful/compassionate and relaxed atmosphere. Learners need to feel happy, moving, and patient, and like human being, inanimate and animate objects as main characters. The diction should be plain and metaphorical. The stories should be presented by considering the book format, fonts, paper color variety, font size, and various pictures. The language should be communicative. The content of the children's poetry should be useful and understandable. The scene technique should be used as the method of presentation with dialogues or description. Learners like human being as the characters, completed with clear setting, linear plots, with friendship as the theme.

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INTRODUCTION

Discoursal stories for children are strategic to be used as resources for knowledge about the reality of both real and imaginative life. This is in line with Nurgiyantoro's ideas (2005: 2-4) that books on children's discoursal stories can have dual functions: (1) to motivate children to learn reading as well as obtain information, (2) to enrich the vocabulary in Indonesian language to improve language skills.

Huck et al. (1987:6) emphasize that children's books are those that have the child's eye at the center. Children's books and literature focus on the children's perspectives. Children have the right to read stories containing information about life experience to develop their imagination.

Discourse should contain meaningful interpretation for listeners or readers, hence communicative in nature. According to Renkema (1993:34-37), communicative discourse should contain cohesion, coherence, acceptability, informativeness, situationality, and intertextuality.

1. Cohesion indicates interpretative relation of text elements including words or sentence in a certain language with other elements in the text. Cohesion is also called form connection. Among cohesive devices are reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical relation.
2. Coherence indicates relation from out of the texts, referring to readers' or listeners' knowledge.
3. Intentionality means that discourse has objectives the speaker or writer wants to achieve in his/her message, for example to deliver information or to debate some opinion.
4. Acceptability means that a series of sentences can be called a discourse when they can be accepted by the readers.
5. Informativeness refers to information contained in the discourse. New information should be presented in the discourse. When the readers know everything in the text, the discourse is not informative, but when they

do not know anything, it is no longer a discourse.

6. Situationality refers to a situation when the discourse is written and about what.
7. Intertextuality refers to a series of sentences in the discourse connected by forms or meaning by other series of sentences.

Children's discoursal stories should be acceptable. It means that children as readers can understand their contents. So, they are deliberately written for children's consumption. Children's literature refers to books that contain information suitable with their interest and world, based on their emotional and intellectual development level, hence satisfying the children's needs (Huck. 1987). Children's literature is useful in that they are produced by considering the children's development (Huck 1987:340).

Based on the abovementioned ideas, children's discoursal stories should be selected to support the successful learning, in addition to other components such as curriculum, teachers, learners, teaching materials, and teaching techniques. The main objective of literature teaching and learning in Primary Schools is to give learners opportunities to enjoy literary works. It means that learners can experience the beauty of literary works. Then, they will begin to develop joy and interest to literary works. This condition implicates that literary discourse for primary school children should be joyful for them so that this will encourage their reading interests.

Literary works as learning materials are useful for school-aged children when they can improve their reading interest and skills. Learning languages through literature materials can raise the children's learning interest twice as compared to learning languages through non literature materials (Saxby, 1991:37).

To develop children's discoursal stories suitable with their development and age level, the criteria for writing the stories should be established by considering communicativeness. By communicativeness, it means that the stories (1) contain logical order from simple to more

complicated issues, (2) present simple narratives, including their theme, delivery procedures, and number of characters, (3) contain a variety of objects and pictures, including diagrams and simple models, (4) contain a narrator that tells the story, or can bring the children to project themselves to other time and places (Nurgiantoro, 2005:9).

After the research was conducted to grade IV learners and Indonesian language teachers of primary schools, it was found that the children's discursal stories for grade IV need to have the following criteria: (1) the theme is about friendship, humanity/social issues, and education; (2) the story has joy, happy, moving/pityful/compassionate and relaxed atmosphere; 3) the main character includes humanbeing, inanimate and animate objects; (4) the diction is plain and metaphorical; (5) the picture is displayed in one page; (6) the narrative presentation method is used; and (7) the story has strong and descriptively-illustrated characters.

METHODS

This study was conducted by using a research and development (R&D) method by following Borg & Gall's (1983) procedures. There are ten steps to develop a product, i.e.: (1) research and information collecting, (2) planning, (3) developing preliminary form of product, (4) preliminary field testing, (5) main product revision, (6) main field testing, (7) operational product revision, (8) operational field testing, (9) final product revision, and (10) dissemination and implementation (Borg & Gall, 1983:775-776).

Gall et al. (2003:569-575) suggest to limit the study into a small scale level, including reducing the research procedures. Therefore, only three steps were employed in this study: (1) preliminary study, (2) product formulation and development, and (3) product validation and dissemination.

The preliminary stage began with problem identification and need analysis to the teachers and learners about children's discursal stories

in primary schools. The objective was to obtain general description about suitability of children's discursal stories in primary schools with the learners' phase. Questionnaires and interviews were used to obtain the need of the teachers and learners of Grade IV, V, and VI primary schools of Magelang regency. Based on these data, analysis and reflection were made.

In the second stage, a draft model was developed. After the draft was developed, the validation was conducted. The product was evaluated by three experts, i.e. Suminto A. Sayuti, a literature professor from Yogyakarta State University, Agus Nuryatin, a literature education expert from Semarang State University, and Yulia, a literature education expert from Magelang Tidar University. The product was assessed to find out its strengths and weaknesses. The validation was conducted in a focus group discussion attended by primary school teachers in Magelang regency, in which the researcher presented the research process until the product was finally developed. Comments and suggestions were used to improve the product of discursal stories for children in their concrete operational phase.

The next stage is product field testing. The testing was conducted by implementing the drafted model of children's discursal stories in the teaching learning process of Indonesian language for Grade IV, V, and VI learners. There were two stages of field testing: small scale and large scale. The small scale testing involved teachers and collaborators, and its results were used to improve the drafted model. The improved model was then tested in a larger scale, involving teachers and learners of Grade IV, V, and VI in Magelang regency. The testing sites variedly consisted of state, private, urban, and rural schools to represent the school population in Magelang regency.

The next stage is model testing, conducted by using an experiment to compare the effectiveness of the children's discursal stories as the dissertation product with those available in the school library in the teaching and learning process of Indonesian language. The subjects consisted of Grade IV, V, and V learners in 10

primary schools, i.e. Keji PS 2, Mertoyudan PS 3, Ngablak PS 1, Kaliangkrik PS, Bandongan PS, Muhammadiyah Jumbleng PS, Ringinputih PS 1, Gunung Pring Maarif PS, Pucungrejo PS 2, and Kajoran PS 1, and the evaluation was conducted by a group of teachers.

The last stage is dissemination of the final product. The final product consisted of children's discursal stories for their concrete operational phase. During the dissemination stage, the final product model was socialized to Grade IV learners or in their concrete operational phase. The dissemination was conducted by publishing the product of discursal stories with ISBN for national distribution. It will also be conducted by defending the final product in the dissertation examination on children's discursal stories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Criteria of Discursal Stories for Children in the Concrete Operational Phase

There are seven aspects of criteria of discursal stories for children: (1) theme, (2) tone, (3) atmosphere, (4) feeling, (5) character, (6) diction, (7) picture display, and (8) presentation method.

Theme

Theme (Greek word: *thithenai*) is the main issue in the story. It contains the message or objectives the author wants to present and determines the direction or goal of a piece of writing. Setting up the theme is meant to determine the main issue to be presented by the author.

Grade IV students of Primary School like such themes as friendship, humanity/social issues, and education. Children's stories usually contain themes suitable to their interests for example family, friendship, mystery, adventure, fantasy, funny stories, fables, epos, and the like. The theme contains the basic idea of literature works, a semantic structure of the text and differences or similarities. It is used to develop the whole story, and therefore becomes the soul throughout the story.

Tone, Atmosphere, Feeling

Tone, atmosphere and feeling are closely related. The tone creates certain atmosphere to the readers. Sad tone created by the author can cause compassionate atmosphere to the readers. Critical tone can cause rebellious atmosphere. Religious tone can cause preoccupied atmosphere, and the like, including causing joy, happiness, pleasure, sadness, or sorrow.

Grade IV learners like more "sad/sorrow", whereas grade V and VI learners prefer joy tone, and happy, moving, pityful and relaxed atmosphere.

Characters

Characters in the story are people presented in the narrative works, or drama, interpreted by the readers to have certain moral quality and tendency like those expressed in the dialogues and actions. In their concrete operational phase (grade IV), children like human being, inanimate and animate objects as the main characters.

Diction

Diction is word choice suitable with what we want to say. It includes which meaning to be used to express some ideas, how the words are properly organized correctly or which figure of speech or styles best used in certain situations. Broadly-based and metaphorical diction are usually suitable for children's discursal stories in the concrete operational phase.

Picture Display

Picture display is related to pictures to support the story. Children like pictures in one page. They prefer easily and clearly displayed pictures. The book format should be adjusted with the children's world to give special visual effects to the readers. The illustration on the cover should reflect the theme of the book.

The pictures should be multicolored to facilitate the children's understanding of the story and to attract their interests. They are also used as a means of delivering the story to be more lively. Therefore, by looking at the pictures, the children will be more encouraged to

train themselves to develop their perception, imagination and language through pictures about the realities they observe. However, pictures covering the whole page will distract the children's perception.

Presentation Methods

The term 'method' is defined as the way a person delivers his or her ideas by using beautiful and harmonious language to create meaning and atmosphere that can touch the readers' intellectual and emotional power. The method an author presents his or her ideas can be seen from his/her scientific and literary discourse. In scientific discourse, the author uses plain and clear language, free from connotative language. On the other hand, in literary discourse, words with strong, reflective, associative, narrative and connotative meaning are heavily used. Additionally, more varied and harmonious sentence structures are used to create beautiful atmosphere more than certain word meaning.

In terms of presentation, children's stories are oriented toward presenting the story by referring to word choice, use of figure of speech, character display technique and setting. The word selection and figure of speech should be adjusted to the children's readiness. This means that concrete and literal words and figure of speech should be used to suit with the children's cognitive development. The setting and character should be presented by using a scene technique completed with dialogues or illustration and a montage technique, i.e. presenting the character based on associative observation. In addition, a reportative, descriptive, narrative, or direct presentation can also be used. For delivering the story, the narrative technique is recommended, but it should be supported with reportative and descriptive technique plus pictorial illustration. The selection of the presentation technique should also be adjusted with the children's readiness, for example, the narrative or demonstrative technique through lively and interesting dialogues and description will facilitate the children's understanding of the

contents of the story. The direct presentation is not suitable because this will not develop the children's imagination. Based on the data obtained during the research, children need the narrative presentation technique.

CONCLUSIONS

The criteria of children's discursal stories the teachers need for teaching and learning consist of seven aspects: (1) theme, (2) tone, (3) atmosphere, (4) feeling, (5) character, (6) diction, (7) picture display, and (8) presentation method. Theme refers to the main issue of the story. Tone, atmosphere, and feeling refer to how the story influences the readers. Character refers to people, animals, or objects presented in the story. Diction refers to word choice. Picture display refers to appearance. Presentation method refers to the way the story is presented. Discourse must contain meaningful interpretation for the listeners or readers. Interpretative discourse must be communicative, and characterized by its cohesion, coherence, acceptability, informativeness, situationality, and intertextuality.

It is suggested that further studies on children's discursal stories used as learning media in primary schools especially by studying the books available but unusable in schools should be conducted. The teachers should carefully and independently select teaching materials for literature by themselves or in groups. The teachers and authors should work together to write children's discursal stories suitable with their readers' characteristics.

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