

Indonesian Children Poetry as The Learning Medium of English Subject in Elementary School

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Abstract

Learning will be effective when it is conducted with fun. In line with this, by using Indonesian children poetry as the medium of learning, English learning can be done in a fun way. Moreover, Indonesian children poetry is a poetry written intentionally for children, that is those whose ages range from 2 up to 12 years old. With this underlying idea, this paper was written with the aim of describing English learning with the medium of Indonesian children poetry. The result shows that English learning is possible to be done by using Indonesian children poetry as the medium.

Key Words: *poetry of Indonesian children, learning English*

A. Introduction

Teeuw (2014: 20) mentions that in Indonesian, the word *sastra* (literature) is derived from Sanskrit language that is from the root of *sas-* and the suffix *-tra*. The root word of *sas-* is a verb which means 'to direct', 'to teach', 'to give directions', or 'instruction'. In short, the *sas-* root word means 'teaching', while the *-tra* ending means 'tool' or 'means'. Therefore, literature is a 'tool for teaching'.

Based on the above description, it can be said that all literary works are tools for teaching. As poetry is one of the branch of literary work, so poetry is also a means of teaching as well as short stories, novels, and drama script.

Knowing that literary works can be a means of teaching, so it is possible to utilize them, particularly Indonesian children poetry to teach English subject in Elementary School (SD). For this reason, this short paper will discuss how the learning of English in elementary school can be done by using Indonesian children poetry medium.

B. Indonesian Children Poetry

In his book entitled *Sastra Anak Pengantar Pemahaman Dunia Anak* (Children Literature: An Introduction to Understanding the World of Children), Nurgiyantoro (2005) mentions that children literature covers realism, formulas fiction, fantasy, traditional literature, poetry, nonfiction, and several other genres. According to this theory, it is known that children poetry belongs to children literature. So, what is children poetry?

1. The Essence of Poetry

Children's poetry is essentially the same as common poetry, but it is deliberately written for the consumption especially by children. Sudjiman (1986) mentions that poetry is a literary variety whose language is bound by rhythm, dimension, rhyme, and arrangement of lines and stanzas. Moreover, the notions of rhythm, dimension, rhyme, array, and stanza are explained further by Eddy (1991) in his book *Kamus Istilah Sastra Indonesia* (The Dictionary of Indonesian Literature).

According to Eddy (1991: 100) rhythm is sound strains that sound when poetry is read. In poetry, rhythm is a hallmark and an essential element. Therefore, prose written in a language full of rhythm is called lyrical prose.

Matra dimension is also called *metrum*, the rhythmic pattern contained in poetry. *Matra* is mainly found in classical poetry. In addition, in modern Indonesian poetry, it is realized by the form of hard and gentle, high and low, fast and loud, fast running controversy.

Eddy (1991: 179) defines rhyme as the sound equation contained in poetry. This sound equation can occur either in the same line or between lines. Also, it can occur at the beginning of the line as well as at the end of the line. In addition, it is commonly known as the term of sound equation.

Array is the lines in the poetry. The unity of lines in poetry indicates the unity of ideas, commonly called stanza. On the other hand, in the field prose, stanza is called as paragraph, while the array is the paragraph-forming sentences.

Matthew Arnold (in Winarni, 2014: 8) sees poetry from the side of beauty contained in it. According to him, poetry is "the most beautiful, impressive, and effective way to sing something".

Based on these opinions, it is concluded that poetry is a series of words in the stanza which in its manifestation, pays attention to aspects of rhyme and rhythm by using beautiful language. The language of poetry is not the typical one yet it has different use of language.

2. The Characteristics of Children Poetry

According to Nadeak (1985) the appropriateness of Indonesian children poetry as a learning medium of elementary school students are (1) the content is in accordance with children's experience according to age and stage of child development, (2) has appeal for children, (3) has the outward beauty of language, for example, contains good rhyme, and (4) provides suitable vocabularies corresponding to the world of the child.

Sutawijaya, et al (1992) mentions that any poetries used for a learning medium of elementary school children must meet two features, namely legibility and suitability. First, the poetries used must qualify for legibility. That is, the language used can be understood by children such as in terms of word choices. Second, the message contained in poetries can be understood as being transparent.

With regard to the characteristics of conformity, the selected poetries should be poetries appropriate to their age group. In line with this, primary school children generally like issues related to everyday life when at home or at school and adventure.

3. The Genres of Children Poetry

Huck, *et al* (1987: 406-412) distinguishes poetry into three genres, namely ballad, narrative poetry, and concrete poetry. He argues that ballad is a poetry written with the aim to be singable. This poetry genre seems to not monopolize children poetry rather than adult poetry because in Indonesian modern poetry written by adult poet, the ballad poetries can be found a lot such as what is written by Rendra entitled "*Balada Terbunuhnya Atmo Karpo*" (The Ballad of the Assassinated Atmo Karpo).

Mitchell (2003: 147) defines narrative poetry as a poetry which contains a story. It can be in form of lyrical poetry, sonnet or poem. Accordingly, Huck *et al* (1987: 407) also describes this genre as a storytelling poetry. Since it contains a story, it obviously has characters, setting, plot, and complication the same as short story.

Lyrical poetry is a poetry illustrating the mood, soul, feelings, and mind of the poet. Mitchell (2003: 148) calls this poetry a poetry that evokes certain emotions, feelings, or moods. In the lyrical poetry, the mood, soul, feelings, and mind of the poet are expressed in such a way by intensive and expressive means by means of the language of choice.

4. Indonesian Children Poetry

In short, Indonesian children poetry can be defined as any children poetries written in Indonesian. According to its writer, this poetry can be categorized into three. First, the Indonesian children poetry written by children poets. Second, the Indonesian children poetry written by young poets. Third, the Indonesian children poetry written by adult poets.

Based on preliminary research, the researcher found several poetries written by children poets. They are “*Gunung Kok Bangun Tidur*” (What Makes a Mountain Wakes Up from its sleep?), “*Ayah*” (Father), “*Narkoba*” (Drugs), “*Mengenang Pak Harto*” (Remembering Mr. Harto), “*Ayah Bundaku*” (My Father and Mother), “*Ayahku Tidak Merokok*” (My Father Does not Smoke), “*Matahari*” (Sun), “*Almari*” (Cupboard), “*Bonekaku*” (My Dolls), “*Tegal Siwalan*”, “*Terima Kasih Guru*” (Thank You, Teacher) “*Bulan Sakit*” (The Sick Moon), “*Sumpah Pemuda*” (Youth Pledge), “*Hari Ulang Tahunku*” (My Birthday), and “*Guruku*” (My Teacher), Abdurrahman Faiz's “*Aku ini Puisi Cinta*” (I am the Love Poetry) (2005), and Neva Zahrani's “*Andai Aku Jadi Presiden*” (If I were a President) (2016). In Faiz' “*Aku in Puisi Cinta*”, it can be found a poetry entitled “*Kepada Guru*” (For my Teachers) as what is displayed in the following.

KEPADA GURU

Aku selalu bermimpi
(I always dream)
matahari telah melahirkan para guru
(that the sun has given birth to teachers)
dan guru melahirkan banyak matahari
(and teachers have given a lot of the suns)
hingga matahari tak lagi sendiri
(until it is never getting alone)
Matahari tak pernah sendiri, guru
(The sun is never alone, teacher)
ia selalu ada bersamamu
(it is always with you)
hangatkan cinta yang tumbuh
(warming every growing love)
dan meyinari cakrawala kecilku
(and shines my small world)
Selalu
(always)

(November 2002)

In addition, an example of Indonesian children poetry written by young poet is in the poetry compilation written by Fitri Nganthi Wani (2009) entitled "*Selepas Bapakku Hilang*" (After My Father has Gone). In this compilation, Wani wrote a poetry entitled "*Impian Masa Kecilku*" (My Childhood Dreams) as follows.

IMPIAN MASA KECILKU
(MY CHILDHOOD DREAMS)
(bila hujan turun)
(When the rain falls down)

Bila hujan turun
(When the rain falls down)
Aku ingin membangun gedung tuk berlindung
(I want to build a building to take cover)
Aku ingin daerah yang sering banjir
(I want to be in an area which often gets flooded)
Kubangun gedung tuk berlindung
(I will build a building for them to take cover)
Aku ingin mereka gembira
(I want to make them happy)
Dari hujan yang membawa bencana
(From the rain which brings disaster)

Bila hujan turun
(When the rain falls down)
Aku selalu berdoa pada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa
(I always pray to the Almighty God)
Agar menghentikan bencana
(To stop any disasters)
Apakah Tuhan marah?
(is the Almighty God angry?)
Karena banyak orang serakah
(because of many greedy people)
Karena banyak orang menjarah tanah
(as well as those who loot the land)
Banyak orang menjadi miskin kehilangan tanah
(And cause a lot of people become poor and lose their land)

Bila hujan turun
(When the rain falls down)
Aku ingin Tuhan menyadarkan orang-orang tak
(I want the God to awaken the inhuman people)
berperikemanusiaan
Orang-orang yang selalu ingin menang
(As well as those who always want to win)

Bia hujan turun
(When the rain falls down)
Aku ingin Tuhan mengabulkan doaku
(I want the God to grant my prays)

22 December 2000

Suyono *et al* (2008) mentions that some poets such as Ali Hasjmy, Ahmadun Yosi Herfanda, Amir Hamzah, Asrul Sani, Chairil Anwar, Diah Hadaning, Eka Budianta, Emha Ainun Nadjib, Hamid Jabbar, Mustofa Bisri, Korrie Layun Rampan, Mansur Samin, Rendra, Sitor Situmorang, Soni Farid Maulana, Subagio Sastrowardoyo, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, and Taufik Ismail also write Indonesian children poetries besides adult poetries. For example, Taufik Ismail wrote the following Indonesian children poetry.

**DENGAN PUISI, AKU
(WITH THIS POETRY, I)**

Dengan puisi aku bernyanyi
(With this poetry I sing)
Sampai senja umurku nanti
(Until I grow old later on)
Dengan puisi aku bercinta
(With this poetry I make love)
Berbatas cakrawala
(Within the boundary of the horizon)
Dengan puisi aku mengenang
(With this poetry I remember)
Keabadian Yang Akan Datang
(The upcoming eternity)
Dengan puisi aku menangis
(With this poetry I cry for)
Jarum waktu bila kejam mengiris
(Needle time when cruel slicing)
Dengan puisi aku mengutuk
(With this poetry I curse)
Nafas zaman yang busuk
(The rotten breath of the age)
Dengan puisi aku berdoa
(With this poetry I pray)
Perkenankanlah kiranya
(please permit it)

The term children in this paper is based on the theory of children development that is a phase of one's age. As what is quoted in Nurgiyantoro (2005: 11-12) Peaget says that a child is one whose age is between 2 up to 12 years old. In this phase, a child has already known education, namely Kindergarten (TK), Elementary School (SD), and Early Junior High School (SMP).

Rousseau in Crain (2008: 17-19) schemes the stage development of human being into four, namely (1) baby period (age of 0 – 2 years old), (2) child period (age 2 of – 12 years old), (3) end of child period (age of 12-15 years old), and (4) adult period (age of 15-over). In this child period, children have already owned some kind of ratio bounded directly with their sense and movement. In this case, the ratio owned by children is still extreme and attached with concrete matters.

C. English Learning in the Fifth Grade of Elementary School

English taught to fifth grade of Elementary School covers four aspects of skill, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Alternatively, based on the textbook used in Elementary School (SD)/ Islamic Elementary School (MI), it is found that English is taught thematic covering six themes: (1) toys and games, (2) clothes, (3) transportation, (4) occupation, (5) part of house, and (6) weather and season.

For example, in the first theme, students are invited to learn English vocabularies related to several toys such as doll, chess, kite, robot, and any other toys. Also, they are involved to learn expressions which are commonly used in conversation such as "what does he want to play? And what do you want to play?"

1. Listening

In listening, teacher mentions some toys and after that students are asked to repeat or imitate them. The toys mentioned are such as watergun, chess, toyplane, robot, sword, marbles, doll, and kite. Meanwhile, in games topic, teacher mentions some games and students are asked to imitate or repeat them; For example, playstation, gunny sack race, hoscotch, play kite, hide and seek, tug of war, scrabble, and skateboard.

2. Speaking

In speaking, students are asked to pronounce loudly the following sentences.

1. Lend me your robot.
2. I want to play hopscotch.
3. Lend me your water gun.
4. Lend me your doll.
5. Let's play playstation!
6. Let's play snake and ladder!
7. Do you like to play monopoly?
8. Let's play video game!
9. I want to play walking on stilts.
10. They want to play hide and seek.

Also, students are asked to practice dialogues in English with scripts available.

3. Reading

In reading, students are asked to read four kinds of text. In first text, they are asked to learn dialogues. In second text, they are ordered to read thoroughly the story in the text. In third and fourth texts, students are asked to answer questions with specific instructions.

For example, in the first text, students are asked to learn a dialogue as follows.

Iqbal : "Are they playing hopscotch?"
 Agung : "No, they are not."
 Iqbal : "What are they playing?"
 Agung : "They are playing marbles."
 Iqbal : "What do you want to play?"
 Agung : "I want to play skateboard"
 Iqbal : "Let's play it."
 Agung : "O.K."

4. Writing

In writing, teacher provides two texts. In first text, students are asked to fill the missing letter provided below pictures. To do this, teacher can use this example of instruction: S ss, T ypl n, T g f w r, M rbl s, Sw rd, Pl yst t n.

For second text, students are asked to arrange words into correct sentences. The followings are the examples:

1. likes – I – playing – kite
Answer: I
2. You – want –play –What – to – do
Answer:
3. like – play – Do – marbles – you – to –?
Answer:
4. play – wall – tung of war – We
Answer:
5. play – want – They – to – marbles
Answer:

With regards the above descriptions, it is known that English learning in SD is given directly that starting from materials until instructions are done rigidly. The directness in this occasion is defined as the use of English directly. Therefore, the researcher assumes that the previously mentioned ways of teaching are not quite appropriate because it is not appropriate with children development as well as not fun.

As the solution, English learning in SD can be conducted with the medium of Indonesian children poetry. This medium can be applied in writing skill, for example. In this skill learning, teacher gives a project model (Dananjaya, 2010: 154-158), that is students are asked to write the translation of short poetry by Indonesian children poets.

5. English Learning (Writing) with the Medium of Indonesian Children Poetry

The use of Indonesian children poetry as the medium of English learning is aimed at creating a joyful feeling for students during the teaching and learning process. As a result, the learning is done with hope that students can grow up their aesthetics feeling. For more, the example of poetry which can be possibly used as a medium in English learning is as follows.

A poetry by Abdurrahman Faiz entitled "*Jalan Bunda*" (Mother's Way):

**JALAN BUNDA
(MOTHER'S WAY)**

Bunda
(Mother)
engkau yang menuntunku
(you are the one who guides me)
ke jalan kupu-kupu
(to the path of the butterfly)

(September 2003)

The learning instructions that can be done based on the above poetry are as follows:

1. Teacher shows an example of Indonesian children poetry.
2. Students are asked to translate the poetry.
3. Students are asked to read their poetry translation results.

After that, teacher can give reflections toward students' works with the following instructions:

1. Compare the original poetry with the translated one.
2. Ask students to show their works to their parents.
3. Analyze whether the learning objectives have been achieved or not.

Actually the English learning by using Indonesian children poetry as the medium is not only limited to the teaching writing. It also can be applied in teaching Listening, Speaking, and Writing with particular boundaries. However, the example provided in this paper, teaching writing using Indonesian children poetry is intended to grow awareness in students mind that translation skill is an important for them.

D. Conclusions and Acknowledgement

Based on the above descriptions, it can be concluded that the English learning of the fifth grade students of Elementary School can be conducted by utilizing Indonesian children poetry as the medium, particularly for teaching writing. The teaching writing can be done by writing the translation of the provided Indonesian children poetry in Indonesia. With such effort, it is hoped that students will enjoy and not be boring during the teaching and learning process.

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