Do Teachers of Lecturers need to write Children Literature?

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Abstract—Appropriate texts for children may contribute to support their self-development in many aspects. Text selection should consider cultural values, for children do not grow up in an empty culture environment. Children’s literature are mostly the creation of men of letters. Thus, do teachers or lecturers need to participate in creating more works for children? Based on the problem, this study aims at developing a model of children’s literature that is adjusted to their development stages. The research belongs to descriptive qualitative research, employing Brady’s theory on children developmental stages and Corry Layun Rampan’s writing techniques for children’s literature. It also uses literature review and creative process. The results are a work of children’s literature entitled “Rambut Keriting Surti.” The work can be further used as a reading model for elementary school students, at the age group of 10-12 years old. The story was written by considering the children’s development stages, particularly emotional, intellectual, and personal development.

Keywords—children’s literature; children development; story model.

I. INTRODUCTION

Children literature is always an interesting subject, especially those that are related to the reading materials. Children literature influences the growth and character development of the children. Edwards (2004) proposes that appropriate literary text contributes to develop children’s characters. Thus, the process of selecting the text should consider cultural factor because children grow and learn in a cultural vacuum. Culture, in this context, includes customs, verbal and non-verbal behavior, and others as demonstrated by the family members or the environment.

Riris K. Toha Sarumpaet (2003) explains that children literature, which includes children stories, means literary work that are written for children, that talks about children and the influential factors around them, and that can be enjoyed only by children with the help and assistance of the adults. In line with the idea, Nurgiyantoro (2005) suggests that children literature is a work that represents the emotion and experience of the children through the children’s point of view.

Children literature may cover poems, prose, play, that are created through imagination using the language as the media. It reflects the imaginary world, yet containing aesthetic values (Resmini, 2006). Recent works for children can easily found in the bookstores. Nowadays parents are eager to buy books for their children. However, can the text quench their thirst, or are suitable with their developmental stage? Do a teacher or a lecturer need to write children’s literature? The two questions need to be answer.

Teachers hold the responsibility of selecting reading materials for the children at school. Parents are responsible for selecting the text for children at home. As teaching materials, classroom teachers focus more on the materials included in the text. Reading materials in the library are treated as reinforcement. Most often, parents buy books for their children without reading them first. Most of them believe that as long as the books are for children, they are good for them. What matters is only the children’s happiness when receiving the books. Parents do not bother themselves to learn about the book or to know whether the books are suitable for their children’s development.

Several researchers have discussed the problem related to children’s literature. Among them are Sugihastuti, Burhan Nurgiantoro, and Rina Ratih. Sugihastuti (2015) emphasizes children’s literature in the form of television programs. She states that the imports that showed from other countries spread in many TV stations and present cultural complexity that, to some extent, are not suitable with our national culture. Indeed, the psychological content deviates the children’s psychological normality. Therefore, children’s literature comes as a help in this case. The problem has challenged parents to be wiser in taking care of their children at home, especially when they are watching television. Sugihastuti (2015) also discusses the significance of children’s literature by analyzing the character education values in the collection of short stories entitled Lebah Lebay di Taman Larangan which was written by Rina Ratih.

Burhan Nurgiantoro (2005) concerns with the children’s developmental stages and the selection of children’s literature. He states that one of the helps for the children is by providing relatable reading materials which are appropriate for their developmental stages. Appropriate selection will have positive impact to their developmental stages. One of the impacts is the increasing awareness of the children to read, for they gain more knowledge, experience, and entertainment. It is expected that the impact will help them to be better adult.

Rina Ratih (2016) studied the creative process of writing children’s stories, fable, and folkelores, as well as the difficulties found by beginner writers. According to her, writing is the maturity process of the writer’s imagination,
emotion, and intellect. Writing children stories, fables, or folkelore, are the commitment and love of individuals to children’s literature. In doing so, these writers take several steps. First is the mastery of writing techniques, writing mechanics, dictions, and so on. Second is the willingness to read other writers’ works to find references. And the third is the ongoing practice of writing.

To compare, Sugihastuti and Nurgiyantori concludes that providing appropriate reading materials for children are significant for their developmental stages. Parents are also responsible for selecting the reading materials at home. Meanwhile, RIna discussed the creative process of writing. They have studied about the children’s literature, but none has discussed the significance of teachers or lecturers to write children’s literature. Therefore, do teachers or lecturers need to do so? This study aims at resulting children’s literature model which have been adjusted to the children’s developmental stages. The study uses Brady theory on children’s developmental stages and Corry Layun Lampean’s theory on children’s story writing. The research employs library research and creative process. It is expected that the research will contribute to the enrichment of reading materials to be used in the teaching of literature for Elementary School.

II. METHODS

There are four grounds of testing children’s developmental stages, as proposed by Brady (in Saxby and Winch, 1991). First is children’s interest in reading materials. Second is the understanding of children’s development, both general and particular. Third is the understanding of children’s developmental stages that helps to select the reading materials. Fourth is the understanding of selecting reading materials that have are adjusted to the children’s developmental stages.

Each stage has different characteristics. The stages include intellectual, moral, emotional and personal, language, and story concept development (Brady, 1991; Huck et al, 1987). The different characteristic of each stage does not mean that they are against each other. Instead, they simultaneously help to develop the children’s maturity process. There will be logical consequence of the difference combined with the relevant reading text as well as the various stages.

Children of elementary school, ranged from 7 to 11 years old, are in the operational stage (the concrete operational, 7-11 years old). In this stage, children can understand the logics in steady way. Children’s characteristic at this period are (1) the ability to classify object according to its general nature; (2) the ability to arrange things in the correct order, such as by alphabet, numeric, and size; (3) the ability to improve the imagination of the past and future; and (4) the ability to think argumentatively and to solve simple problems. In the last stage, they tend to get ideas like adults, but they have not been able to think about abstract ideas. Their thinking is limited to concrete situation.

Books that are relevant and will have possible implications to the children’s developmental stage are those having the following characteristics. First, they are narrative or explanatory text written from the simplest to the most complex logical sequence. Second, they present simple stories, either by the plot, the way the plot is presented, or by the number of characters. Third, they provide various illustrations, sometimes simple diagram or model. Fourth, they are narrative text presenting the narrator telling the stories, or stories that make the children project themselves to particular time and place. They are books for children who can be engaged in the characters’ thought or in solving the problem faced by the protagonist characters or in predicting the plot of the stories.

Writing fiction is an individual’s creative process. Writing children stories means creating a world for children through the author’s imagination. Fiction consists of intrinsic elements: theme, characters, plots, setting, title, point of view, style, and tone. In her writing entitled “Dasar-dasar Penulisan Cerita Anak,” Rampan (2003) explains that children stories are simple yet complex ones. The characteristic is marked by standardized discourse, highly qualified, but simple and communicative. Besides, the shift from adult’s way of thinking to the thinking, soul, and characteristics of the children will be more interesting. In other words, children stories should talk about their world with all the aspects that influence them.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the proposed problems, “Does teachers or lecturers need to create children’s literature?”, the problem is “yes”. It is because teachers are physically close to children. They understand the children’s various characteristics. Therefore, they need appropriate reading materials for the children in the classroom. Meanwhile, lecturers have the opportunities to conduct a research. They can find appropriate references for the children. Teachers and lecturers may find problems as well as the solutions. Among them is to write fiction for children.

Children needs books that are in accordance with their developmental stages. Children grows along with the development of their intellect, moral, emotion and personality, language, and story concept. The process continues until they fully function as a person or until they can fully actualize themselves. To achieve that, they need to obtain their basic needs, such as the awareness to love and to be loved, the need to understand and to be understood, the need to be recognized as a member of a group, the feeling of being safe and secure, and the freedom to grow and develop.

Children at grade 4 to 6 of elementary school – ranged from 10 to 12 years old – can see abstract relationship among
objects. They develop their intellect yet they feel inferior. Further, they can see problems in an appropriate point of view. In terms of social relation, they have strong interest in social activity, improve their interest in groups, seek intimacy among group members, adopt the models presented by others rather than their parents, and show their interest in specific activity. In addition, they tend to seek approval and want to impress others, show their ability and willingness to see from other people’s point of view, look for values, show different characteristics, develop their feeling of justice and care for others, and develop their understanding and acceptance for rules based on gender.

In addition, children at this period can think “scientifically,” using theory and arguments as well as testing certain hypothesis. Children can also solve the problem based on their logics. Therefore, the model stories should present daily problem solving materials for the children. They lead children to find and discover cause-and-effect relationship, as well as the implication of the characters.

As for the content, the story needs to present characters at elementary school level, who are facing their particular problems and are trying to solve them according to their way of thinking. Minor characters can be added to help the main characters in solving the problems. What is meant by problems are those that are commonly faced by elementary school children. Author needs to provide interesting and simple title and plot. The setting should be familiar with the children, such as home or school. The language should be adjusted to that of the children. In addition, writers need to master the techniques in writing fiction. The following is the sample of children stories for elementary school children, aged 10-12 years old.

**Rambut Keriting Surti**

*Karya Rina Ratih*

Surti menyisir rambutnya berkali-kali di depan cermin. Setiap pagi, wajahnya cemberut penuh dengan kekecewaan.


“Lihat bu, ini rambut nggak mau lurus. Sebel deh!” kata Surti lagi.

“Sudah, nanti terlambat!” ibu menarik tangan Surti menuju meja makan.

Di meja makan, ibu masih melihat Surti sarapan dengan setengah hati. Bahkan, sarapannya pun tidak dihabiskan.


“Bu…” Tanya Surti sambil menatap ibunya.

“Ya,” Ibu membalas menatap Surti penuh kasih sayang.

“Kenapa sih rambut Surti keriting begini padahal rambut ibu lurus?” Tanya Surti polos. Ibu tersenyum dan menatap Surti.

“Karena rambut ayahmu keriting!” jawab ibu sambil tersenyum.


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Selesai pelajaran olah raga, Surti beristirahat. Ia bergerombol dengan teman-temannya di bawah pohon pinggir lapangan.
“Cape sekali ya, badanku keringatan semua!” kata Sisi mengeluh.
“Ya, hari ini lebih gerah dari biasanya!” balas Tuti.
“Rambutku tambah lepek aja nih!” Sisi kembali berkomentar sambil mengibaskan rambutnya yang tipis kemerah.
“Enaknya diikat saja! Atau pendek sekalii! Indah menimpali.
“Ya, rambut kita basah jadi lepek gini kecuali rambut Surii ha ha!” Sisi kembali berkomentar sambil mengibaskan rambutnya yang tipis kemerahan.
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“Ya, rambut kita basah jadi lepek gini kecuali rambut Surii ha ha!” Sisi kembali berkomentar sambil mengibaskan rambutnya yang tipis kemerahan.
“Ya persis iklan shampoo!” celetuk Arum menambah geram hati Surii.
“Mana ada iklan sampo rambutnya keriting!” ucap Sisi sambil tertawa dan menyinggung mereka semua.
“Kenapa sih, kamu seneng banget ngurusin rambutku!” Surii naik pitam juga. Ia berdiri menatap Sisi yang sudah pergi. Semua teman Surii yang ada di sana tahu kalau Surii marah kepada Sisi yang selalu usil.
“Sudah, nggak usah dimasukkan hatii!” kata Faizah sambil mengajak Surii ke ruang ganti baju.
Serti memang mudah marah dan jengkel tiap kali teman-teman menyinggung rambutnya. Apalagi Sisi, anak orang kaya yang selalu tidak peduli pada perasaan orang lain.
“Ya persis iklan shampoo!” celetuk Arum menambah geram hati Surii.
“Mana ada iklan shampoo rambutnya keriting!” ucap Sisi sambil tertawa dan menyinggung mereka semua.
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“Tumben Sur, kamu nggak marah sama Sisi!” kata Faizah berbisik. Surti memandang sahabatnya, Faizah.

“Biarin saja!” jawab Surti singkat.

“Biasanya kamu marah?” Tanya Faizah lagi.

“Nanti juga cape sendiri!” Jawab Surti lagi singkat.

“Wow kamu sekarang percaya diri setelah dipotong ya?” Faizah penasaran. Surti mengangguk sambil tersenyum kecil.


“Kenapa, Sur?” Tanya Faizah penasaran.


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The short story, entitled “Rambut Keriting Surti” tells us about the main character, Surti. She has a problem with her hair. She is always upset before going to school every day. At school, her friends tease her because of her curly hair. This problem is common for Indonesian kids. Other characters are a wise mother, a best friend named Faizah, and Surti’s school friends. The mother, an adult female, becomes the character who has many experiences in life. She tries to convince Surti that her curly hair is the blessings from Allah. She is a wise character that helps Surti to think with her reasonings.

The setting takes place at school, where various events happen to test the emotion of the main character, Surti. Through the problems, a child goes through a process and develops self-actualization. By the help of mother and Faizah, Surti, who was previously inferior and emotional transforms into a fully confidence one. This is the process of understanding and of the ability to seek the values of life. A child’s awareness arises when the characters realizes the causes of her curly hair. That is a process of acceptance and awareness that every human is different. Other awareness also comes up when the character cannot hold her emotions, leading her to a “weak” position. And at the end, she develop scientific and logical skills in finding the best solution for the problems she has.

IV. CONCLUSION

Teachers or lecturers need to write children’s stories that help to assist the children along their growth. This is significant, for teachers are close to children, while lecturers, serving as researchers, concern with literature and know much about references relevant to children’s developmental stages. The skills of writing fiction for children can be learned as long as these people are willing and are able to manage their time. The process will result in the abundant reading materials for children, written by either men of letters or teachers and lecturers.

Children story entitled “Rambut Keriting Surti” was written after learning Brady’s children’s developmental stages. It is about a girl who was inferior at first and isolate herself from the community for she was less confident in the social activities. However, she finally shows her ability in seeking the values, the awareness of differences among individuals, understanding and acceptance of the rules that are based on gender. At this stage, a child is able to think about the abstract ideas, think scientifically and theoretically. She also can deliver her arguments and test the hypothesis emphasizing on the thinking skills. Children at this period can also solve the problem logically by engaging relevant matters.
The story is not the best one, but at least the writer, who is also a lecturer, has tried to create a model for children’s stories that are relevant to their developmental stages, particularly the intellectual, emotional, and personal developments.

References


