Folktales 'Wendit' as the material staging the local folktale of Malang in effort to accomplish an international collaboration

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the mandate of Curriculum 2013 which implements integrated thematic learning, English becomes locally-tailored school subject in Indonesian primary schools. In addition, English is taught based on the materials taken...
from commercial student worksheet sold on the market. Although there are some good books, the learning is still carried out perfunctorily, following the pattern compiled in the student worksheet. Such sort of learning tends to prioritize cognitive aspects only because of the limitations of tools and materials even though the learning must activate all aspects including affective and psychomotor. Previous study conducted by Setyaningrum and Sabilah (2015) found that most schools in a famous international tourist destination in East Java – Batu – agreed to conduct EYL program despite the lack of teaching resources and English language educated teachers.

Some other studies reported that EYL becomes interesting phenomenon in Indonesian primary education. Zein (2017) argued that teachers, parents, and administrators have essential roles in providing the young learners English education because of the facts that there are some problems related to the absence of official curriculum guidelines as well as lack of English teachers’ quality, learning resources and facilities (Sulistiyo et al., 2020). In today’s multilingual circumstances, Zein (2019) urged that children should be facilitated with English instruction to prepare their readiness to involve in world globalization competitiveness in the future. While parents from some other parts of the world are more aggressive in providing their children experience in using English by enrolling the children to reputable schools which include English as additional language from earlier language (Wallin & Cheevakumjorn, 2020), determination in providing Indonesian children experience of using English contextually and involve in intercultural communication should be started from childhood (Zein, 2017; 2019).

The aforementioned evidence had motivated some schools to conduct the EYL program by providing English exposure from teachers and students from different countries. SD Mojorejo 1 Kota Batu, for instance, has initiated Global Project Program (GO PRO). GO PRO mainly aims at creating competent graduates in four English skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing with the global knowledge. One of the most pivotal aspects of GO PRO is live video conference. In carrying this out, this school has made a mutual engagement with primary schools from English speaking countries, such as the USA and Australia as well as non-English speaking countries like India, Italy, Turkey and Spain. One of materials for GO PRO was students’ performance; English translated Indonesian children classical songs and famous Roro Jongrang drama (Abidasari & Setyaningrum, 2020). In the same way, TK ABA 18 Dau also started an international collaboration by preparing the students and teachers to sing bilingual songs and make choreography for the students to learn English language while singing and dancing, in accordance with suggestion from Shin (2014). The students’ songs and dances were videotaped and sent to Birla High School in India for the collaboration (Fizniyani, 2020; Widyawati, 2020).

To date, the kind of international collaboration has attracted an Islamic primary school, SD Asisihay Kota Malang, to initiate the collaboration by presenting local wisdom of the city, Malang. This idea was executed by selecting local folktales among children in Malang area – Wendit – a history of water spring in Malang. It was selected because the story told how people should struggle and work together to find the water spring. Linked to the situation nowadays, this story teaches people to conserve water, use it responsibly, and continue to get and save the most qualified water as stated in Sustainable Development Goals No. 6 (https://sdgs.un.org/goals). It is not only designed to educate Indonesian students, but also all students worldwide, about the urgency of saving clean water for global consumption. Moreover, with this strong motivation, the aim of integrating literary works in TEYL (Johnstone, 2019; Shin, 2006) is providing the students with opportunity to use an additional language in context as well as introducing new insight about culture, history, and other related issues in particular country.

Similar to previous cases, this international collaboration also needs support from the personnel from English Language Education Department – Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Univesitas Muhammadiyah Malang. Due to the time of COVID-19 outbreak in 2021, the school proposed a partnership with the institution in order to realize the school international collaboration to be conducted virtually. Supported by professional personnel in TEYL and technology, the university facilitated teacher’s and students’ training that exhibits the local wisdom based on selected folktales to perform for virtual international collaboration. The students were expected to learn foreign language while valuing their own and other nationality’s cultures.

As the international collaboration is beneficial to enhance the teachers’ and students’ English skills, modest time of learning EYL in Indonesia should be supplemented with further language exposure. The efforts made SD Asisiyah Kota Malang and other aforementioned schools have been in line with Johnstone (2019) who suggested a learning collaboration with other students from other countries who engage in EYL program by video conferencing. Additionally, the Tale of Wendit which was taken from Little Sunshine Bilingual Book (Setyaningrum et al., 2018) was scripted into a drama to perform virtually to students in Dajeong Primary School in Korea. Using drama, the primary school students get enjoyment in using English while learning Indonesian culture embedded in the drama script. Copland et al (2019) mentioned that it is challenging for young children to focus on using second language (L2) only in particular when children (and teachers) all speak a different language and when the emphasis is on learning by play rather than formal learning.

To promote Korean culture, the Dajeong Primary School students also performed The Rabbit and Turtle – one of classical Korean stories to show Indonesian students about friendship in Korean culture. As Korean students are taught English using English under Teaching English in English (TEE) program (Jee & Li, 2021), the Korean students’ English quality was better. It was reported that Korean students’ English has motivated the Indonesian students to learn the language
harder. Definitely, this program has reached its goal in providing exposure for Indonesian and Korean students to learn English as well as build their intercultural awareness sensitivity, to prepare themselves engage in global communication.

METHOD

Based on the proposed program for this community service, the following stages explain the methods of the program realization.

Preparing the script and casts

The script was prepared by the community service team by converting the story of Wendit written in the Little Sunshine Bilingual Book to a dialogue script for a drama performance (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The script of The Tale of Wendit

The wise man went meditating in the woods of Mount Widodaren to ask God for giving them the direction where the water springs flowed to.

Divine Voice. O my obedient servant, the water springs of Widodaren flows to Malang in the South.

VO: The wise man went meditating in the woods of Mount Widodaren to ask God for giving them the direction where the water springs flowed to.

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With regard to the casts set up in the script, the casts were auditioned. The audition process involved teachers in its implementation. The students were selected by teachers and community service team according to several criteria, namely: intonation. Pronunciation and character personification. In total, 7 students from grade 4 to 6 were selected in as the main casts.

Equipping the teachers with ample resources of teaching English with the touch of localities through drama performance

An initial workshop to equip the teachers of English at SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang was conducted by explaining steps to do to involve the students in performing the Tale of Wendit (Figure 2). During the workshops the teachers were involved in activities such as: (1) Reading and understanding the folk tale Wendit; (2) Reading and understanding the script of the drama The Tale of Wendit; and (3) Practicing how to assist the students in performing the drama.
Rehearsing and Assisting students to read the folktale and drama script in English version

Reading English language correctly with accurate pronunciation is essential in drama performance. The community service team and the teachers assisted the students in rehearsals remotely due to inability to meet in person to avoid the spread of COVID-19. The rehearsals were carried out during 28 meetings (Figure 3). Sometimes all students, teachers and community service team were online from their homes and sometimes they were held hybrid if some students came to school for personal training on pronunciation.

In general, the rehearsal activities fell into two main facets, namely (1) reading the drama script and (2) feedbacks and drilling on students’ pronunciation.

It took twice to three times for reading the drama script for the students to understand the content of the drama. It aimed at preparing the students to involve their feeling in playing the drama (Figure 4).
Meanwhile, the activities of drilling and giving feedbacks on students’ pronunciation practice were conducted twice after the students finished reading and practicing their lines.

The activities of drilling and providing feedbacks on students’ pronunciation was targeted to improve their pronunciation skills in not only their drama performance but also their speaking skill generally.

**Virtual Performance “The Tale of Wendit”**

Students’ played videos as learning materials for coming cohorts of the SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang as well as for International Collaboration Project with Dajeong Elementary School South Korea. The activities were carried out by (1) Virtual drama tapping, (2) Launching virtual drama The Tale of Wendit: the launching of virtual drama performance, were watched by all students and teachers of SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang, parents, and community service team, and (3) Virtual drama performance to Dajeong Primary School South Korea: attended by all drama performers, school principle, teachers, community service team and students and teacher from Dajeong remotely, the performance was appreciated by Sejong Office of Education’s officer, South Korea. All Korean students were also happy to see the performance and hoped to have the other collaboration in the future (Figure 5).
All of the casts and teachers gathered to join the final preparation and video tapping process. The tapping of the virtual video was carried out using Zoom meeting connected to YouTube for editing. After the video performance was taken, the editing process was conducted with the support of a professional IT team. The editing process took place for two weeks. On Monday, November 8 2021, the video was launched for the first time (Figure 6).

![Figure 6. First Launching of virtual drama performance](image1)

It was played at the school hall and watched by all students and teachers of SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang, parents, and community service team. Then, the next virtual drama performance was launched before the international community, that is Dajeong Primary School, Korea. It was conducted on November 22, 2021 (Figure 7). In addition, SD Aisyiyah was not the only performers in this event. Students of Dajeong Primary School Korea also performed their traditional drama entitled 'The Rabbit and The Turtle' (Figure 8).

![Figure 7. Launching of virtual drama performance before the Korean audiences](image2)
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are four important findings regarding the community service carried out at SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang. First of all, it is feasible for primary schools to project activities in order to provide young learners with TEYL meaningfully during the COVID 19 pandemic. Secondly, limited time and space for learning could be manipulated by initiating activities remotely. Thirdly, if there is limited or no exposure that the students can get during a 60-90 minutes English class per-week, the teacher could initiate a collaboration with students and teachers abroad. It can be conducted remotely by using accessible platform. Finally, teachers of EYL should not underestimate their students’ capability in learning and acquiring English. They are potential learners who need to get guidance how to involve in particular activity in their English learning. They just need time to know it, understand its process and then practice how to use the language contextually.

COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational activities in general because of students’ and teachers’ inability of to get together at school to avoid the spread of virus. They had to be quarantined at home and involved in remote learning. In the beginning of pandemic, all were panic because they had to shift learning from face-to-face to online. It happened because they were not ready to implement online learning (Rasmitadila et al., 2020) which required access to internet connection, technological knowledge as well as ability in selecting the most appropriate activities, particularly for young learners. In fact, all were settled and acceptable after a year of pandemic. Teachers, as the key personnel for teaching and learning process, adjusted their teaching with the current condition. By improving their competence in utilizing technology (Budianto & Arifani, 2021; Tafazoli, 2021), they initiated some meaningful activities. One of them was incorporating literature for teaching young learners. In this community service, the teachers had evidenced their willingness to upgrade their knowledge about digital teaching literacy, and then teaching their students to play drama virtually. SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang had been successful in implementing TEYL remotely by equipping the teachers with knowledge of utilizing digital platform and creating some learning media to support it. They also committed to collaborate with researchers and academics from university.

In addition, there were three reported efforts made by the teachers of EYL to manipulate the current condition. The comprised activities such as improving the internet bandwidth, selecting drama medium for English learning, and providing the students with story board and script. The Tale of Wendit was selected as the story to be played. The story was transferred into a story board to clarify the drama performers’ roles before each of the performer was assigned to read the script and practice to pronounce it correctly. Moreover, as the reading times and rehearsals were carefully scheduled remotely to avoid the students’ learning boredom and challenges so that they should spend four times rehearsal to qualify their pronunciation. It proved that young learners could memorize words and use them properly if they practiced to say them frequently.

Regarding time limitation of learning English due to the status of English as a locally-tailored school subject (Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018; Sulistiyo et al., 2020), involving the students in an international video conferencing with students from overseas was a brilliant idea. Then, SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang initiated an international collaboration with Dajeong primary school from South Korea. This collaboration had implication for an agreement to conduct virtual drama performance to motivate the students used English for a medium of communication and introduced local stories through drama. Therefore, the students got additional time for learning English because of rehearsal times and another valuable,
yet exciting time to meet their friends from different country. Johnstone (2019) suggested this kind of activity to compromise the time limitation for young learners to learn English.

COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning, and EYL students learning loss or learning success emerged chronologically and they all depend on how schools encourage teachers to be creative in managing the learning. They were also expected to scaffold the students’ English learning by valuing the students first language to learn the second language by translanguaging or trans-semiotizing (Liu, 2020; Williams, 2020). They were advantageous for students to showcase their learning agency (Chen, et. al., 2021). Each student could perform every role in the drama because of the examples provided by the teachers as well as multisemiotic resources that had been used during the rehearsal and performance. Therefore, international collaboration conducted through virtual drama performance evidenced the students’ concrete potential to use English in sophisticated context if they were educated properly.

CONCLUSION

Shifting face-to-face to remote learning requires the teachers of EYL to be creative in making the young learners enjoy learning within limited time and space. Collaborating with the academics from university is a wise decision to make to compromise the situation because of possibility of discussion and consultation related to TEYL challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts to scaffold the students learning during the pandemic which provide experience to communicate in English properly had been made. Students enjoyed the process of training themselves to perform the virtual drama because of chronological steps in practicing to use English contextually. However, challenges emerged because of the students’ limited knowledge and practices in pronunciation that affected longer time to rehearse. In fact, the courage of involving the SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang students in an international collaboration with Dajeong primary school of South Korea by performing The Tale of Wendit virtual drama is inspiring. It had promoted both the EYL teachers’ and students’ agency in teaching and learning English despite their limitation of gaining maximum teaching and learning outcomes due to the pandemic. The strategy to mediate the young learners English learning during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced by SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang should be appreciated and adapted by other primary schools. According to survey conducted by Sejong City Office of Education, Dajeong Primary School was satisfied collaborating with SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang and the students were able to achieve their deeper learning about Indonesia and its culture. Through a Certificate of Appreciation presented by the director of Sejong City Office of Education, Kim, Sung Mi expressed special thanks to the cooperation and hard work of SD Aisyiyah Kota Malang during the international collaboration.

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