

TurnitinLiteratureSavesMother Earth

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Literature Saves Mother Earth: A Sharing of Experience in Using Literature to Teach the Children of Cawang and Jatinegara Communities to Help Save the World

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Abstract

We are all well aware of the current environmental crisis we are in. The whole world is doing its best effort to minimize the impact of the damage that has been done. Environmental issues are not issues exclusive to the fields of science and technology. These environmental problems are also concerns of Literature. One way of contributing through Literature is through using story-telling to raise awareness to children about the importance of saving Mother Earth. Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Kristen Indonesia (FS-UKI) has various programs of “Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat” which center on educating children living around the university. One activity is teaching English to children with the technique of story-telling. Through story-telling and the inclusion of literature in the form of folktales, the children can learn many aspects of life, including how they can participate in keeping Mother Earth safe. The paper shares the experience of contributing to the betterment of environment through teaching children using story telling with literary contents. This project of “Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat” is a collaboration of FS-UKI and Komunitas Gumul Juang, a non-profit organization specializing in helping out children in urban areas. The children will be introduced to famous Indonesian folktales, such as Bawang Merah, Bawang Putih, which have been adapted to fit the children’s current situation. Environmental contents are added in the storytelling. This project is hoped to be an example of how we can use literature in making the world a better place.

Keywords: *story telling, environment*

Introduction

The world is now in danger of environmental damages caused by human: pollution, global warming, ³overpopulation, natural resource depletion, waste disposal, climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, water pollution, urban sprawl, public health issues, just to mention a few of the biggest threats. The world is now in a critical situation - a condition which everyone should be aware of so that one can take action and participate in saving Mother Earth. Everyone is responsible for the damage, and everyone should participate to remedy the situation.

Since efforts to save the Earth should be done by everyone living on the planet, there should exist a continuous and well-planned effort to raise the awareness of all of the population. Both adults and children should know the threats the Earth is facing and work together in saving Mother Earth.

Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, (FS-UKI) realizes its potential and beneficial position in this environmental issues. In Fakultas Sastra, the students have started a save-the-earth campaign by saying “no” to using plastics, especially using straws and plastic cups. This is one example of how students want to contribute. Another effort is by raising awareness of children around Cawang (the neighborhood near campus) about environmental issues, introducing them to the danger of, for example, littering and polluting the environment. To make this campaign interesting, the students use the method of storytelling to talk about environmental and invite these children to participate in saving the Earth. This paper is a showcase of how we can use literature to save Mother Earth. The article talks about one program of *Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat* or *PkM* in FS-UKI which is conducted together with *Komunitas Gumul Juang* (KGJ) and *Kelurahan Cawang* in saving the environment. Through the program, it is hoped that the children in the areas of Cawang and Jatinegara can participate in making their neighborhood a clean and healthy space to live. This project is an example that all elements of the society can contribute and participate in saving Mother Earth. In addition, this paper will give an explanation of what storytelling is and what the project is and how it is done. The paper also discusses the challenges and the results of this effort to save the world through literature.

On Storytelling

Lugmayr, ⁶inen, and Suhonen (2017) in their article titled “Serious storytelling - a first definition and review” state that in the tradition of human culture, storytelling has been in existence for a long time. People have been telling stories since the beginning of human existence. Stories are told for different purposes, among others to entertain, to pass on knowledge from one generation to the next, to keep the cultural values intact and also to “warn others of dangers.”

Hamilton and Weiss (2005) calls storytelling as “an ancient tool with enduring power.” They assert that as “the oldest form of education” storytelling has been used as the tool to pass down beliefs, traditions and history from one generation to another. Humans exist in narrative or stories. Through stories, humans keep their knowledge and information in the brain. Caine and Caine as quoted in Hamilton and Weiss (2005) state that “stories help us to organize and remember information and tie content together.” It is further explained that “stories go straight to the heart.” Stories help develop positive environment which in turn leads to positive attitude from the children.

Another term used in the process of storytelling is *storying*, which is defined as "the process of constructing stories in the mind." *Storying* is considered as "one of the most fundamental ways of making meaning," which "pervades all aspects of learning, regardless of age". New ideas are easily absorbed and understood when presented in stories (Hamilton and Weiss, 2005).

On Environment

The world is now facing a great danger, which is caused by humans themselves: environmental threats. Environmental issues are the harmful effects of human activity on the environment. The threats come in different forms, such as climate change, water pollution, air pollution, resource depletion, and many more. These environmental threats are the results of the activities done by the human population. Humans commit environmental sins day to day. The human population exploits the Earth continuously without realizing the danger it brings to humanity.

One world figure that is calling the world's attention to the danger the Earth is currently facing is Pope Francis. He says destroying the environment is a sin and that "humans are turning planet into 'wasteland full of debris, desolation and filth.'" He further asserts that "[a]ny harm done to the environment, therefore is harm done to humanity." The Pope is calling for "urgent action on climate change" (McKenna, 2018). The Pope starts an environmental movement through his provocative encyclical on the environment, *Laudato si'*. The Pope states that "[w]e must not be indifferent or resigned to the loss of biodiversity and the destruction of ecosystems, often caused by our irresponsible and selfish behavior." He further says "[b]ecause of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence ... We have no such right." (Goldenberg and Kirchgaessner, 2019)

The Pope calls for a change of lifestyle of the inhabitants of the Earth. He states "[t]he resolve to live differently should affect our various contributions to shaping the culture and society in which we live." The Pope encourages everyone to contribute and participate in what he calls as "ecological conversion." He urges for everyone to contribute and to participate in various efforts of saving Mother Earth. Everyone can contribute and participate. The Pope states "[w]e should not think that our efforts - even our small gestures - don't matter," he said. "Virtue, including ecological virtue, can be infectious." (Goldenberg and Kirchgaessner, 2019)

Children are members of the inhabitants of the Earth that should also play an important role in saving Mother Earth because in the future, the world is theirs. Involving children in efforts to save the Earth is a must. The realization that Mother Earth is in danger now and that actions to save it are called for must be instilled in the children. One way of making this happen is through the use of Literature - the use of storytelling to inform them of the danger and how they can help save Mother Earth.

Dongeng Bagi Dunia: Storytelling to Save Mother Earth

On September 2019, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta (FS-UKI) in collaboration with Komunitas Gumul Juang (KGJ) worked together and formed a group of student storytellers called Dongeng Bagi Dunia. Dongeng Bagi Dunia is also the name of a project aimed at helping children around UKI and in Jakarta through the act of storytelling. Dongeng Bagi Dunia is one project of the many social programs held by FS-UKI and KGJ, such as *Bimbingan Belajar (Bimbel) Gratis*, or free lessons, visits to museums and house of worship around Jakarta and many other activities.

Dongeng Bagi Dunia uses storytelling to teach children in a fun and interesting way. *Dongeng* or storytelling is a great way of touching the hearts of the children and of teaching them effectively. One issue that Dongeng Bagi Dunia wishes to touch first is the environmental issue. The first project done is telling stories to children in Cawang and Jatinegara areas - stories with messages of saving Mother Earth. The stories picked are folktales (literature) for the reason of preserving the culture of Indonesia and introducing to the children the earliest form of literature of Indonesia.

Preparation: Training and Internal Meeting

On September 7, 2019, the student storytellers were given a one-day training on storytelling. Around 40 students from Fakultas Sastra UKI joined the storyteller training led by an expert in storytelling, Ratih Sumiratingratri. In the beginning, the students practiced how to mirror, mimic, and impersonate. They also learned about voice exploration techniques which has 4 points such as adjustment of speed, using different styles (arrogant, obedient, etc.), using different accents, and impersonation and voice making. At the end, all the students practiced how to be a storyteller.

The training was then followed by another preparation, which is an internal meeting. In the meeting, the students discussed about the environmental issues they wished to impart to the children through storytelling. They also talked about the current condition of Mother Earth. At the end of the discussion, the team made a list of the simple actions that children can do to save Mother Earth. The messages were to be inserted in the stories used.

Storytelling: Asal Usul Danau (The Origin of Lake Toba)

The story that will be discussed in this paper as a sample of the project done bagi Dongeng Bagi Dunia is the story of the origin of Toba Lake.

The student storyteller improvised the story and added the message to educate children to save Mother Earth by taking certain simple actions. The messages inserted were:

1. Do not litter.

This message was inserted when the Father of Samosir goes sailing at the river. The father only gets garbage during the many attempts in fishing. It took a very long time to finally get a fish. The children were told that if people litter at the river, the fish will eat the garbage and all the food will impact to humans.

2. Save Energy

In the story, there was an addition to the story. In the story, Samosir fell asleep after having lunch. While he was sleeping, the lamp was still on. His father came in and woke him up and told him to save energy and turned off the lamp.

3. Do not use plastics; use lunch boxes instead

There is additional scenario when Samosir ate lunch, his father told him to use lunch box to prevent Samosir from using plastic for a single use. The story emphasizes the importance of not using plastics and of using lunch boxes is good for Mother Earth.

Dongeng Bagi Dunia: Cawang Community

Dongeng Bagi Dunia delivered the story The Origin of Lake Toba to children in Cawang Ceria Community on September 16, 2019 to around 25 children. The project went on as follows:

The students attracted the attention of the children by playing music and singing through the speaker. The group used one Mobil Baca (or Mobile Library) to encourage the children to come and read books after the story telling. Then, the students warmed up and tried to attract the children by singing together. The students prepared properties such as: the background of the river, the fish, the bail, and the garbage. They also prepared simple costume to represent their own characters in the story. The result was the children were very excited to see and listen to the story. They were also attracted by the properties that the students used.

After the storytelling ended, the children were able to mention kinds of simple actions for protecting Earth from the story. The children were able to learn how simple actions matter to save the Earth. The place was also a good place because it is the attractive place where kids and mothers spend their afternoon by playing and chat around so that the message of protecting Earth can be delivered not only to the children but also to the adults.

After delivering the story, the student storytellers held an evaluation activity. From the discussion, they learned that there were still some challenges. At the end of the storytelling, the student storytellers recalled what the children could learn about the story. It seemed that most of the children were not really interested on the environmental issue. They understood that the act of littering is a bad thing however after the activity ended, they did not really care about their own garbage. This means that there should be more stories with messages about environment delivered to these children.

Dongeng Bagi Dunia: Jatinegara Community

The project of storytelling was then continued to Jatinegara. It is one area that had just suffered from fire. The fire destroyed the area immensely. Many children lost their houses and other belongings. So, Dongeng Bagi Dunia went to the area to entertain the children and to educate as well. The session took place on October 2, 2019 with 45 children participating. The session began with the students preparing properties for the stories, such as the background of the river, the fish, the bail, and the garbage, mic, and the gifts for children. They also prepared simple costume to represent their own characters in the story.

The children were very excited to see and listen to the story. They were also attracted by the properties that the students used. After the storytelling ended, the children were able to mention kinds of simple actions for protecting Earth from the story.

The children were able to learn how simple actions matter to save the Earth. There were many children attended this activity and they were active children. The children had many ideas to save the earth. They understood about saving energy and save water. After the activities, they did not litter and they were responsible with their garbage. However, there were some challenges. The students were not able to spend more time with the children because the location is in mosque. When a call for prayer began in the afternoon, they had to end the activity. Furthermore, because the children were very active, sometimes it is a little bit hard for students to take care of their excitement.

Conclusions and Future Plans

Storytelling is a one approach to reach to the children, to make them aware of the dangerous actions that destroy the Earth. They can be invited to contribute and participate in saving the world, starting from their own environment. Storytelling is interesting and fun for children. FS-UKI students become more creative in making the folklore more interesting by adding the "environment" touch. They are invited to find ways to attract the children and make them become more responsible citizens.

For now, the student storytellers still use Bahasa Indonesia. Perhaps, later on, they can start using English in delivering the stories. The benefits are 1. Student storytellers practice English 2. The children study English 3. Both sides learn about Indonesian folktales and its virtues and ideals 4. Both student storytellers and the children realize they can contribute and participate in saving Mother Earth (agents of change and transformation).

Repeating what was cited earlier, one should remember that "We should not think that our efforts - even our small gestures - don't matter. Virtue, including ecological virtue, can be infectious."

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