Review

Developing children’s literary resources

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The Malay literary materials and resources for early childhood in Malaysia are still in the infant stage and have not been expanded to include the main references or developed into big book form. The children literature in our market is not published based on educational philosophy and research, but it is produced based on profit. The process of evaluating the quality of children’s literature needs to take into account the interest of the children, their visual ability, messages of the story, and the effect of the story on the children. Hence, a survey was carried out among 941 respondents including university students, preschool teachers and parents which were selected randomly in Malaysia. Learning outcomes identified were the main features which attracted the children to read. Malaysian children were found to be interested in stories with the themes on love, friendship and family, imaginative animals and funny characters, simple plots, colorful illustrations, big size story books with lots of dialog and video presentations (DVD/VCD). The main factors that are considered by parents when buying children’s literature materials are moral values, quality and activities in the stories. They expected CALL activities such as ICT games and exercises to be included to make teaching and learning more effective. Qualitative studies have shown that children were attracted by the stories developed that incorporate the above elements. Teachers also gave positive feedback on the application of the stories as teaching aid in kindergarten.

Key words: Children literary, Malay literature, Malaysia, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), information and communications technology (ICT).

INTRODUCTION

Children’s literature is the building agent in the formation of human emotion, thoughts and languages. According to Savage (2002), human development in early childhood literature can be divided into three forms namely, self and social development, cognitive development and language development. The brain of a child is 80% developed when the child is three years old. According to Misran Rokimin (2001), children literature is a development agent in the development of human emotion, thoughts and languages. Therefore, children below six years of age provide educators, parents and educational agency with the golden opportunity to maximize the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of the children.

In terms of genre, children’s literature is divided into poetry and prose; prose may be divided into fiction and nonfiction. Nonfiction is the work of facts and fiction is the work that is designed to be informal and biographical. Fiction includes stories that are created based on the imagination of the authors whether real experiences and history, or fantasies. In addition, traditional literary prose includes folklore, epics, myths and legends. These are conveyed in the form of prose picture books, as well as in collections (Carol and Carl, 2008).

The children are divided into specific age groups. According to Piaget (1959), children are those between the ages of 1 to 12 years old. Children aged 13 to 15 years are referred to as pre-teenagers. According to this division, children aged below 12 years are at a very important stage and books given to them must be compatible with their mental growth and basic needs. The world and the needs of these children are the key factors which become the fundamentals to the development of children’s literature.

Children literary material in Malaysia

To date, children’s literature is still in its explorative stage,