

Perception on the Animal Fable ‘Bird of Paradise’ Song

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Abstract

This study focuses on perception towards the animal fable ‘Bird of Paradise’ song. The objectives of the study were to identify and discuss the characters and characterization from the ‘Bird of Paradise’ song. The samples of the study consist of ten volunteered subjects from a school in Malaysia. The subjects aged nine years old. The subjects were exposed to the animal fable Bird of Paradise song. The song was heard fifteen minutes a day in two weeks. After two weeks, the subjects were to identify and discuss on the character and characterization from the lyrics of the song. The discussion was a half an hour for each session. Each session consists of three to four subjects. The transcripts from the discussion were analyzed by using the discourse analysis method. The results of the study revealed that the subjects were able to discuss the two main characters and characterization from the song. The results also revealed that the subjects were able to identify the values from the song. Besides that, the study implicates teachers, students and lyricists in considering the animal fables as one of the materials in the classroom. It is hoped that further study will focus on other means of materials in the language classroom.

Keywords: animal fable, perception, character, characterization

1. Introduction

Learning in the classroom will be more interesting if teachers include materials that manage to attract students’ attention. Thus, materials selected should be viable for different ages and differentiation will be best considered (Peacock, 1997). Differentiations in materials are also important to enhance learning among all the students (Rahim, 2013a; 2013b; Rahim, 2012; Peacock, 1997). Besides having different materials for each topic, teachers will have to inculcate all aspects of grammar and skills in order to fulfill the needs of the syllabus. Although, preparing materials have been the routine for teachers at schools, they also need something new in order for the students to look forward to the next lesson. On the other hand, the materials should consider the students learning style like audio, video, kinaesthetic, tactile, individual and group (Rahim & Harun, 2007). This way, each student will be monitored according to the styles. Hence, teachers will play an important role in preparing the materials for all level of students.

1.1 Material Selection

According to Normaliza Abd Rahim (2013a), digital materials are considered as the main attraction for students. This might due to the fact that digital materials are the latest in the modern technology. The materials that involved the use of the computers have shown that the learning environment changed from the normal teacher-talk to autonomous learning and to add the students using the computer for learning (Rahim, 2013b; Peacock, 1997). Besides preparing computer software among researchers in order to enhance the learning environment, researchers were interested to adapt and adopt the existing materials or design and create new ones. Lately, teachers or lecturers would prefer to design their own digital materials since they know their students more than the others (Rahim, 2013b; Peacock, 1997). Moreover, the materials will be used among all the students in the school. This way, the students will be happy and content with the materials since the teachers know about their learning style from their early years of schooling. There are five steps in considering designing materials that involved the use of computer (Rahim, 2012). Firstly, the teacher will list out the students’ learning styles. Secondly, questionnaire will be distributed in order to find out the students preference on digital (example; quizzes, games etc). Thirdly, observations from the teachers during the lessons will help to identify the students level of participation. Fourthly, students will help in creating and writing the storyboard for the materials and lastly, the students will amend the software before publishing it into a program (Rahim, 2012). The five steps in

designing the materials will help in identifying the quality of the materials since the students will know which aspect of skills that need to be focused (Rahim, 2013a; 2013b; Rahim, 2012).

1.2 Songs for Learning

Songs have been widely used as teaching materials in the classroom. No matter in boarding, private or normal schools. With the existence of popular, country, rap, folk and the latest songs that involve with techno have somehow manage to attract the attention of listeners from all ages. The quality of the songs have been the main attraction for the listeners (Eken, 1996; Coromina, 1993). Moreover, the songs were written to sent valuable messages to the listeners (Eken, 1996; Coromina, 1993). Either, the messages were written for someone or for an incident. Thus, the songs were being heard for different purposes as in dramas, movies, commercial and the most popular songs heard were for leisure and relaxation. There were no motives or whatsoever for writing the song since most writers write the songs for self-satisfaction. Thus, the characteristics of choosing song as a material in the classroom are as follows; 1) suitable lyrics, 2) relevant vocabulary, 3) interesting melody, 4) action song, 5) repetition (Rahim, 2013a). The characteristics of choosing a song as stated above show that the song will be able to arouse students interest towards the lesson and also to motivate students to look forward to a new learning environment (Rahim, 2012; Coromina, 1993). The students will feel more relax and when they sing they also will enjoy the moment with their friends in the classroom (Eken, 1996).

Studies pertaining to songs among learners were done among researchers in all over the world. Roszainora Setia et al (2012) study, focuses on English songs as means of aiding students' proficiency development. The objectives of the study were to determine the effectiveness of using songs in teaching English language to primary school students and to investigate to what extent songs can contribute to the development of students' language proficiency. On the other hand, the study was designed to find out whether using songs can be an effective way in creating positive attitude and motivation in language learners. The instrument of the study focuses on the use of questionnaire and the data were analyzed by using the SPSS software. Roszainora Setia et al (2012) confirmed the results of the study in using songs not only help the understanding, it also stimulates and increases the students' interest to learn, enjoy and engage in the learning process. In addition, Roszainora Setia et al (2012) revealed that the song managed to accelerate students' confidence, learning ability and skill. Moreover, the activities involving the songs are highly motivated and memorable. Songs will create a more relaxed and conducive learning environment to the students and as a result the students are more excited to learn English (Setia et al., 2012; Orlava, 2003). Moreover, the use of songs serves the purpose of teaching language effectively and efficiently (Setia et al., 2012). Songs should be carefully selected to suit the students' abilities and the lyrics should be clear and the vocabulary in the songs should be appropriate to the students' proficiency levels (Setia et al., 2012; Orlava, 2003; Eken, 1996).

Music is a proven teaching tool which fosters language retention and production in young learners (Medina, 1993). Thus, using music in the classroom will help students succeed as EFL students (Jalongo & Bromley, 1984). A study by Coromina (2010) in Roszainora Setia et al, (2012), defends that a good song can prompt interesting discussion in class. The study revealed that when students enjoy learning English through songs, they will indirectly make the effort to learn the lyrics of the songs they are listening to. A study by Murphy (1992) states that the majority of English language teachers all over the world use or have used songs for teaching purposes. Niland (2012) agrees with Murphy (1992) and claims that songs may be exploited as effectively as any other text. In addition, songs can be a source of language for presenting and practicing grammar and syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the skills of listening, reading, speaking, writing and translation. In her study, Niland (2012) claims that songs will create a better environment and students will learn new songs and become part of young children's existing musical cultures. The study combines creative work and field research, employing a mixed methods design to follow the "lives" of original songs created by the researcher, and shared with three-to five-year-old children in a childcare center in Sydney, Australia. The methodology was derived from practice-led research in the arts, ethnography and portraiture. Three key concepts underpin this research, linking the creative and fieldwork phases: relationships, reflection, and reciprocity and all three are facilitated by music. These concepts are the tools employed to explore the development of a set of six songs, metaphorically represented as a human life cycle. The results of Niland's (2012) study show that communication and interaction are at the heart of young children's relationships with songs.

Due to monotonous learning environment nowadays, students tend to opt for other means of learning. Students would prefer to learn on their own by using the computer at home and as a results, learning at school is not something to look forward to. Based on the studies on songs stated above, this study has two objectives; to identify and discuss the characters and characterization from the 'Bird of Paradise' song. The song was chosen

based on Malaysian culture where the bird can be found in most states in Malaysia. This way, students will be able to recognize the famous birds in the country.

2. Methodology

The samples of study consist of ten volunteered subjects from a class in Malaysia. The subjects were from a primary school in Selangor. The subjects were nine year old male and female. The subjects were given a song entitled, Bird of Paradise (BOP) to be heard for fifteen minutes a day for two weeks. After two weeks, the subjects were divided into groups of threes and fours for discussion on their perceptions on the characters and characterization from the story. The discussion took place for half an hour for each session. There were 4 sessions. The discussions were videotaped and the transcripts were analyzed by using the discourse analysis method.

According to Stubbs (1983) discourse refers to language in use, as a process which is socially situated. However, the constructive and dynamic role of either spoken or written discourse in structuring areas of knowledge of the social and institutional practices which are associated with them will also be taken into consideration. In the sense, discourse is a means of talking and writing about acting upon worlds, a means which both constructs and is constructed by a set of social practices within these worlds. Brown & Yule (1983) add that the “the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent from the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs.” Thus, Candlin (1997) postulates that both talking and writing reproduce and construct afresh particular social discursive practices, constraining or encouraged by more macro movements in the overarching social formation. Hence, Stubbs (1983) adds that the schools of discourse analysis are contrasted between language representing reality that language is a mirror that reflects reality but does not play a functional role and re-presenting reality which is the use of language or present or share an aspect of reality. In addition, constructing reality which is language is one of the primary means, if not the primary means, by which we construct and create a social reality.

The lyrics of the BOP song were translated from the original language (Bahasa Malaysia) to the English language for the purpose of the study. The translated version of the lyrics might not rhyme due to the translation. Thus the meaning of each word was the same. The song lyrics are as below;

Bird of Paradise

Paradise,

A bird with beautiful feathers,

Perch and fly,

High at its tree branches

Paradise lays eggs not that much,

Only one,

After giving birth it flies away

Spa Spa Sparrow Spa Spa Sparrow,

Sparrow Sparrow Sparrow take care of my child sparrow

Sparrow incubated the egg until it hatched,

Mother paradise hasn't returned to the nest,

Carelessly flying from here to everywhere in the sky,

Forgotten about the nest and chick,

Always maintaining its feathers

Spa Spa Sparrow Spa Spa Sparrow,

Sparrow Sparrow Sparrow, take care of my child sparrow

Paradise always with its beauty, high sense of self,

The child itself not be taken care

Spa Spa Sparrow Spa Spa Sparrow

Sparrow Sparrow Sparrow take care of my child sparrow

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Character and characterization in the animal fable BOP

		Character	Characterization
S1	BOP	Selfish bird that focuses on its beauty	Ignores its chick and flew away
	Sparrow	A noble bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick
S2	BOP	Beautiful bird that always grooms itself	Left its chick
	Sparrow	A wise bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick like its own
S3	BOP	Beautiful and colorful bird that focuses on itself	Does not want its chick
	Sparrow	A noble bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick
S4	BOP	A self-centered bird	Left its baby
	Sparrow	A responsible bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick like its own
S5	BOP	Loves to groom itself	Ignores its chick
	Sparrow	A noble bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick
S6	BOP	Realizes that it is beautiful	Does not want its chick
	Sparrow	A responsible bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick like its own
S7	BOP	Always happy with itself	Forgotten about its chick
	Sparrow	A responsible bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick like its own
S8	BOP	A self-centered bird	Forgotten about its chick
	Sparrow	A responsible bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick
S9	BOP	A self-centered bird	Forgotten about its chick
	Sparrow	A noble bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick
S10	BOP	Loves itself	Forgotten about its chick
	Sparrow	A responsible bird	Takes care of the paradise bird chick like its own

Table 1 above shows the character and characterization in the animal fable BOP. All the ten subjects managed to give their perception based on their understanding about the character and characterization in BOP. All the subjects confirmed that there were two main characters in the songs. The characters were the BOP and the sparrow.

As for the BOP character and characterization, S1 stated that the BOP was a selfish bird that focused on itself and after it gave birth, it flew away ignoring its chick. It can be seen that S1 stated that the BOP has a bad character especially when it ignored its chick. Moreover, S1 stated that the BOP was selfish in terms of grooming itself more than feeding its chick. This showed that S1 knew about being good in character and otherwise. Thus, S1 added that the sparrow was being a good and noble bird and took care of BOP chick. The views by S1 were the same as the views by S3, S5 and S9. This can be seen from the lyrics of the song that the sparrow was like the mother instead of the BOP for the chick. The sparrow had shown its love towards the chick. S1 agreed that the sparrow character and characterization had shown the natural quality of a mother for its chick. This can be seen when S1 was happy to tell the stories about the sparrow instead of the BOP. S1 stated that the sparrow's character should be a good example to the BOP. Hence, S1 mentioned that the sparrow's good attitude should be followed by students in the classroom. Thus, the BOP character should be avoided in order to live in harmony.

Hence, S2 stated that the BOP was a beautiful bird that grooms itself. S2 was amazed when she saw the picture of the BOP and confirmed that the bird was really a beauty. Thus, S2 proclaimed that although the BOP has its beauty, it has a bad attitude in terms of leaving its chick in the nest. S2 has shown her disappointment when a beautiful bird would leave its chick and ignored them completely. S2 added that beauty does not signify good attitude in a person. On the other hand, S2 claimed that the sparrow was a better bird than the BOP. She added that the sparrow was a wise bird. Although, the sparrow was alone flying in the sky, when it sees birds chirping in the nest, it quickly flew to the nest. The sparrow seemed to be sympathized and gave some foods to them in order for them to survive and will not die of hunger. As a matter of fact, the sparrow has treated the BOP chick like its own by feeding and be with the chick most of the time. S2 confirmed that being a nice person is a good virtue and the song has made her reflect her own self where helping other is an important thing to do.

On the other hand, S3 stated that the BOP has a bad attitude when it only focused on itself and when it has its chick, it does not want them. S3 was disappointed and claimed that no mothers in the world would ignore its chick. S3 added that the BOP was beautiful and colorful and it was seen flying with its beautiful wings and stopped at branches in order to groom itself again. The BOP was also seen looking at the chick but it flew away happily ignoring the chirpings from the nest. Apparently, S3 mentioned that the sparrow was in the song and its character was being a noble bird. S3 was shocked in the beginning when she heard the song. She said that she did not expect that the sparrow was helping the chick. S3 agreed the sparrow character will help the other children in the classroom realized that being a noble person to everyone will help a better learning environment. S3 added that by helping each other in the classroom will therefore create a happy and energetic environment.

Subsequently, S4 has also commented about the two main characters in the song. S4 stated that the BOP was a self-centred bird and its character was not a good example to the children at school. He added that the BOP character has shown that it only focused on itself and would be happy if other animals praise its beauty. S4 has the same opinion with the rest of the other subjects when he added that the BOP left its chick in the nest. He added that the chick might die due to hunger or cold or even being eaten by other birds like the eagle and hawk. S4 seemed to have a very good imagination when he mentioned about other animals in the scenario. This showed that S4 knew about other animals and which animals were being predators. Other than that, S4 added that the sparrow has been a responsible bird. The sparrow seemed to be sympathized with the chick and decided to care for them like its own. According to S4, the sparrow's character was unpredictable since most birds will not care for other birds but it seemed that the sparrow was different. The sparrow was happy to feed the chick and stayed with it and make sure that the chick will not be the prey of other animals and birds. S4 perception of predators and preys were amazing especially from a nine year old. This showed that S4 has been reading a lot of storybooks or visited the zoo in order to know about the birds.

S5 perception on the BOP and sparrow seemed to be similar to the other subjects. S5 stated that the BOP loves to groom itself but instead of caring its chick, it ignores them completely. S5 was unhappy when she listened to the song. She expected that all mothers no matter human or animals will care for its babies or chick. Thus, S5 stated that the BOP was too busy grooming itself until he has no time left to find food for its chick. Furthermore, S5 added that the BOP knew that the sparrow which was flying around was happy to look after its chick. Moreover, she added that the BOP chick would be well taken care by the sparrow instead of itself. Other than that, S5 confirmed that since the sparrow was happy to care for the BOP chick, it was obvious that the sparrow was a noble bird. To add, S5 stated that due to the sparrow's honesty and care, it was claimed that the sparrow was the most suitable bird that would care for the BOP chick and therefore, the chick will be in good care. The sparrow seemed to be content with caring the BOP chick and it never complained nor unhappy with its decision. As a matter of fact, it was happy feeding and care for the chick.

On the other hand, S6 has given her perception on the main characters. It seemed that S6 stated that the BOP always knew that it is a beautiful bird and therefore with its beauty, it was not supposed to be seen with its chick. This can be seen when S6 confirmed and stated that the BOP does not want its chick and this might be due to the fact that the BOP wanted its freedom and not to be burdened with the chores as a mother in feeding its chick. This statement has surprised the other subjects since he was seen angry with the BOP attitude towards its chick. Hence, S6 added that she was really happy to have the sparrow character to save the BOP chick. She said that the sparrow was a responsible bird. The sparrow seemed to be looking at the chick and disappointed when the BOP flew away. S6 confirmed that the sparrow was quick in taking action towards the chick by feeding the chick with food. The sparrow took care of the chick like its own. According to the lyrics, S6 commented that the sparrow was seen flying here and there in order to feed the chick. She added that being a responsible person will ensure a good personality in a person. She would want to learn to be more responsible in the future like the sparrow.

S7 seemed to be having a slightly different perception on the main characters. He stated that the BOP was always seen happy with itself. It was seen busy grooming its feathers and flying away happily. S7 added that due to its grooming activities, it totally forgotten about its chick. S7 disagreed when the BOP was happy when leaving its chick. He mentioned that a mother should care for its chick no matter what the consequences were. Due to that, S7 was seen disappointed with the BOP attitude in being focusing on itself rather than focusing on its chick. Other than that, S7 confirmed that the sparrow character has helped the situation at ease where the chick were saved and not starved to death. Like the other subjects above, S7 also agreed whereby the sparrow has decided to care for the BOP chick like its own. The sparrow was seen busy finding foods for the chick and feeding them. Besides that, the sparrow would not leave the nest too long in order to avoid any other birds disturbing or decided to eat them. Hence, the sparrow has shown its positive side by obviously showed its responsibility towards the chick. The BOP should be thankful to the sparrow for helping and feeding the chick.

S7 also added that in a real life situation, the sparrow has the best attitude in being responsible and should be followed by others.

S8 has the same perception with S4 and S9 on the BOP character where the bird was too self-centred. S8 stated that the BOP was seen ignoring its chick and seemed to be forgotten about the chick. S8 claimed that the BOP knew that its beauty has made all the other animals looked at it so therefore, the BOP was happy with it. The BOP would be ugly if it was seen with its chick and it decided to ignore the chick completely. S8 added that the BOP was not afraid if the chick would be in danger because it knew that the sparrow would help. According to S8, the conclusion by the BOP on having the confidence that the sparrow would help should not be followed by the subjects in the classroom. This might due to the fact that anything might happen in a second and ended up the chick died due to hunger or being eaten by other birds or animals. S8 claimed that the sparrow was a responsible bird and would not ignore the chick. Therefore, the sparrow was seen helping the chick the minute the BOP flew away. According to S8, the sparrow seemed to know that the BOP would leave the chick so it wanted to care for them. The sparrow has been a responsible bird and would not mind helping feeding the chick and care for them.

As stated earlier, S9 has the same perception with S4 and S8 on the BOP character in terms of the BOP being a self-centred bird. S9 has given her views immediately since she was unhappy with the BOP. For S9, the BOP was not a good example as being a mother who ignored and totally forgotten about its chick. S9 added that the BOP should be punished due to its bad character leaving its chick on their own. Thus, S9 added that the sparrow has been the saviour for the chick and also for the BOP. Although the BOP was not seen talking to the sparrow but the sparrow voluntarily helped in caring the chick like its own. S9 stated that the sparrow was a noble bird. The sparrow was seen confident in handling and feeding the chick. S9 added that the sparrow's attitude has made her realized that an animal has a mother's instinct as well and this would not stop the sparrow being responsible and helpful towards other types of birds. S9 relate the songs with the situation in the classroom where children should be helpful with each other no matter who they are. This way, all the children would have a better learning environment and enjoy their learning years. The views by S9 have amazed the other subjects and they agreed with her.

Lastly, S10 stated that the BOP loves itself so much that it totally forgotten about its chick. S10 mentioned that the BOP was seen grooming itself and ignored the chirping from the chick. The chick were chirping due to hunger and surprisingly the BOP flew away. Therefore, the BOP was labelled as a self-centred bird that only focused on itself and not bothered about others including its chick. Thus, S10 was happy to mention that the sparrow was a responsible bird. This view was the same as S4, S6, S7 and S8 where the sparrow helped the chick by feeding and attending them. This showed that the sparrow was very responsible although it knew that the chick were not from the sparrow species. Other than that, S10 claimed that the chick should be taken care by the sparrow since the sparrow was more loving as compared to the BOP. Also, S10 added that the sparrow has shown good example in having positive and good attitude towards other animals. This has shown that in real life, a person should have the same attitude as the sparrow. S10 agreed with the other subjects about the good virtues by the sparrow should be an example for students in the classroom. This way, the students in the classroom will enjoy the learning process more.

Based on the discussion by all the subjects (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9 and S10) as above, it can be seen that the subjects were keen in giving their perception pertaining to the character and characterization from the BOP song. The lyrics of the songs has given full impact on the whole story and can be understood by all the subjects. This showed that the lyrics of the song are important in order for the subjects to understand the storyline. Also, the lyrics of the song will identify the characters of the stories. Although, there were also other characters as in the chick of the BOP but the chick were not focused. The BOP and sparrow were the main characters that spark the plot of the story. Although the BOP was seen as the bad character in the song but the existence of the sparrow had made the story more to the likings of the subjects. The innocent chicks were saved by the sparrow and this had made the story more interesting where a different species of bird took care of another different species.

4. Conclusion

The discussion above showed that all the ten subjects were able to give their perception based on the song heard. The results also revealed that the song lyrics were understandable and this showed the intelligibility and interpretability by the subjects. Also, the results revealed that the song lyrics played an important role to ensure the comprehensibility of the song. Although there were only ten subjects volunteered for the study, the results revealed that by listening to the song over and over again would make the subjects understand the storyline. Besides, by having songs in the classroom, the subjects would show more interest in learning. Other than that,

song is another way to give the student the chance to express their perceptions. The results of the study were parallel to the results of the study by Roszainora Setia et al, (2012) where songs will make students open up to views, opinions and arouse their interest towards learning. This study also has the same results as Jalongo & Bromley (1984) in terms of developing linguistic competence through songs.

This study implicates teachers, students and lyricists to consider the types of song suitable for learning. Besides that the lyrics would therefore play an important role in delivering what needs to be taught in the classroom. The main character and characterization should also be considered to ensure that each character has its values and moral lesson for the students. Although some characters were played as being negative but usually these types of characters will show what should or should not be done in their everyday lives. It is hoped that future study will focus on other types of materials to enhance language learning environment.

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