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I-RoLE 2023

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE EDUCATION 2023

**EMBRACING CHANGE:
EMANCIPATING THE LANDSCAPE
OF RESEARCH IN LINGUISTIC,
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

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HOPS THE DWARF

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ABSTRACT:

It has been observed that the advent of mobile phones and the internet has led to a decrease in the importance of reading books, especially among children. This is supported by Mullan (2020), who states that the excessive use of technology and addictive behaviour is disrupting the practice of reading books, as individuals are spending an excessive amount of time browsing the internet or aimlessly scrolling through social media. Despite this, the fantasy genre remains popular among readers and has the potential to attract more readers. In Malaysia, there is a limited availability of English fantasy eBooks for children and youngsters to access online, which is why the creator of this project came up with the idea to compose this eBook titled “Hops the Dwarf”. In this context, the project aims to promote an example of how a fantasy eBook by a young Malaysian writer can entertain young Malaysians as well as promote English reading material. This storybook also includes eye-catching colourful illustrations which aims to enhance the reading experience, particularly for young children and teenagers. To attain the objectives of this project, an online survey was administered in preparing and completing the eBook. The online survey was completed by 22 respondents and the findings affected the pricing, design, and layout of “Hops the Dwarf”. Additionally, it is hoped that this eBook will supplement existing English-language reading material in the fantasy genre, as well as improving reading proficiency among young Malaysians.

Keywords: eBook, fantasy, ESL readers

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Balcazar (2019), illustrations shown alongside text offer invaluable tools to help children build understanding, fluency, vocabulary, and other foundational literacy skills as that the imagery in a picture book brings the pages to life, serving as a visual roadmap for the story. This assertion lend support to why authors incorporate illustrations into their eBooks, as they can attract a wider range of readers, particularly those who prefer visual learning or who might find plain text to be less interesting.

In view of this, it has also been observed that young Malaysians do not possess interest to read English reading materials (Khairuddin, 2013). Therefore, it has been decided that a novel-like eBook that looks like a novel but contains illustrations would offer a great way to make reading more engaging and enjoyable for Malaysian readers. Hinaai (2021) posits that illustrations can arouse children's interest in books and increase their love of books because pictures let children meet with their loved characters. In addition, pictures in books make the reading process more enjoyable than reading words: illustrations make the text vivid. Furthermore, illustrations can also help to make complex concepts or ideas more accessible, making this eBook more user-friendly and enjoyable for readers of all levels as an illustrated



book can capture a person's attention. Since reading a book online is more useful in this day and age, an eBook is a fantastic way to get more people to be more interested in reading, especially the younger ones. This is a fantasy genre eBook that tells a story about a young dwarf who tries to save his town, which is a perfect genre to include illustrations containing imaginary characters and events. The illustrations were chosen to allow the readers to envision the characters and settings in the story. The illustrations also help to clarify the text and improve the reader's understanding which serve as an advantage when young readers plan to enhance their reading ability and vocabulary (Ferreira, 2020).

1.1 Project Objectives

There are 3 objectives for this project:

1. Increase reading interest among youngsters.
2. Invite more readers into the fantasy genre.
3. Provide engaging storytelling with cartoon illustrations.

1.2 Entrepreneurial Opportunities

The entrepreneurial opportunity presented by this project lies in the sales generated from the purchase of the eBook. The primary method of sales will be through a dedicated website that was made where customers can purchase the eBook and receive it in PDF format. Ferarra (2020) states that if you are looking for a universal format, the PDF is the most practical option as there are various devices that are capable of opening and viewing PDF files, making this format an ideal method for customers to purchase the eBook. With just a single click, customers can instantly download the PDF format of the eBook, providing a convenient and accessible method of obtaining the product. In addition, another reason for selling the eBook through a dedicated website is to cater to customers who are not familiar with purchasing eBooks through third-party marketplaces such as Kindle or Google Play Store. By offering the product through a standalone website, the purchasing of the product can be accessible to a wider audience.

The eBook will sell for RM9.99 due to several reasons. The primary consideration was the target audience of children, teenagers, and young adults, who may not have a high budget for purchasing books. By setting the price at RM9.99, the eBook becomes accessible and affordable for this demographic. Additionally, the price point is competitive with other eBooks in the market and is intended to increase the book's accessibility and appeal to a wider audience. The eBook "Hops the Dwarf" is aimed at children and teenagers and is priced affordably, with the majority of eBooks in the market being sold within the range of RM10 to RM100. Furthermore, selling an eBook can be a great entrepreneurial opportunity as it is a relatively low-cost and low-risk way to enter the market. With the website, it is easy to upload the eBook, set a price, and reach the general audience.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Online Research and Survey

The methods that are used for this project are online research and survey. Through online research, the creator was able to gather information on how to create an eBook from scratch and the tools required to publish the illustrations in the eBook. Additionally, a Google Form was administered through various applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Discord to gather data about preferences when it comes to books, including their favourite genre and whether they prefer books with illustrations.

2.2 Completion of the eBook

Based on the findings from the online survey, the creator decided the suitable illustrations to be included in the book. The illustrations in the eBook were created using an AI tool that produces original images based on the creator's imagination. Through this process, the creator was able to produce all the illustrations in the eBook within the time allotted for the project. Figure 1 shows the cover of the eBook.



Figure 1. Cover of the eBook

2.3 Completion of the Website

The dedicated website for the eBook was successfully completed with the aid of the website builder, Wix. The simple settings and user-friendly guidance enabled the creator to establish a website for users to purchase the eBook with ease as seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Designated Website to Purchase the eBook

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

22 (4 male and 18 female) respondents between the age of 10 – 19 answered seven short questions in the online survey. When asked whether they have read an eBook before, majority of them (81.8%) indicated that they have read an eBook prior to the survey. 40.9 percent of the respondents stated that they prefer to read the fantasy genre, compared to thriller (18.2%), mystery (9.1%) and horror (9.1%). This suggests that fantasy is a more popular genre as opposed to other aforementioned genres. Majority of the respondents (90.9%) also stated that they enjoyed when fantasy stories included fictional, mythical beings and creatures. 95.5 percent of the respondents responded that they prefer a story that includes illustrations. This is another supporting evidence why books or eBooks containing illustrations are more popular among the

readers as mentioned by past studies (Hinaai, 2021; Khairuddin, 2103). The last question in the survey asked the respondents' opinion regarding the appropriate price for the eBook. Half of the respondents (50%) indicated that they would be more willing to pay for an eBook that costs around the range of RM10-RM20.

Based on the findings above, the creator of the eBook believe that the information obtained from the online survey would serve as a practical foundation in preparing and achieving the objectives as set forth in the beginning of the project. The genre selection, characters, inclusion of illustrations, and the pricing of the planned eBook, were all based on the findings from the online survey.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, based on the findings from the online survey, positive responses towards the project indicated a high possibility of this eBook to increase young Malaysians' interest in reading the book. There could be an issue if the story is not as exciting as people expect, but by offering this eBook as an option for children to read the story out there, it is at least giving them another option to read a work produced by another young Malaysian. This project also has increased the creator's knowledge of creative writing and in terms of how the creator managed the project. The creator was also able to hone skills when it came to creating the website. The website that was created to promote the book, was a culmination of the foundational web development skills acquired over the course of five-semester diploma program, which enabled the creator to successfully complete this eBook in an attempt to promote an English reading materials young Malaysians .

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