

DIFFICULTIES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PRODUCTIVE SKILL

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Abstract: *This paper aims at describing students' difficulties in spoken utterances. To achieve the objective, the research site is some schools in Yogyakarta Special Province, both public and private schools. The reason to choose is first, the schools provide English from the very beginning level, that is the first grade of elementary school, second, the teachers are from English educational background and third, the schools get A for the accreditation. Observation and interview techniques are employed to collect data.*

The results reveal that English teachers tend to teach form and vocabularies. As a result, a complete text in a form of dialogue or a descriptive text is still difficult to reach. The students perform uncontextual and uncomplete text. The text is not a monologue or dialogue, a short functional text, or a descriptive text as suggested by the curriculum. Most utterances are in a form of words, phrases and sentences; the text produced is sentence copying from textbooks or from teachers. The teaching learning process then is divided into three steps of teaching, namely pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching. Of the three steps of teaching, English teachers tend to be teachers centered teaching and the focus is still on vocabularies and English rules. They teach about the language. They speak more in Bahasa Indonesia starting from pre-teaching up to post teaching. The tasks given are on vocabulary and forms. As the result of teachers' teaching then it affects on students' performance. The students are in doubt even do not know how to communicate or perform a simple dialogue among friends in English. It contrasts to the aim of English learning for children, that is performative level. They actually should be trained more on formulaic expressions rather than on rules. In brief, to be an English teacher for elementary level needs to have good ability in English classroom instructions, be a grammar sensitive teacher and be a creative teacher in conducting teaching learning process.

Keywords: *Assessment, Elementary school students, Performative, Productive Skill.*

Today English is taught not only in the level of junior high school but also of elementary school as a local content. The inclusion of English as a local content at elementary schools is aimed at facilitating students of elementary schools to

early learn English. This is based on the critical theory hypothesis which claims that age plays an important role in acquiring second language as children in the age of 6 – 12 can learn and acquire the target language naturally and effortlessly (Ellis, 2003:484). This implies that younger learners of the target language perform better results than older learners on the grounds that the brains of the young learners retain plasticity.

With regard to the critical theory hypothesis, English teachers of elementary schools should be careful in carrying out the process of English teaching and learning. In other words, they have to be familiar with current theoretical and practical issues of English teaching for young learners. This means that English teachers should provide students of elementary schools with functional and contextual portraits of use of English manifested in four language skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. Added to this, the micro-language skills (grammar/structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the like) should be embedded in the four language skills. In short, English teachers of elementary schools have to focus on functions rather than on forms.

Curriculum applied now called KTSP – School based Curriculum – emphasizes on performative level for elementary students meaning in such level the productive skills are both of spoken and written production. Spoken is emphasized rather than written. The earlier is focused on language accompanying action, meaning learners use English to accompany actions, participate in classroom and school interactions and recognize simple written English (Agustien:2006). While the later, learners need to write written message to be decoded into speech in order to ascertain its meaning and those skills that allow a spoken message to be encoded in writing, according to the conventions of letter formation, spelling and punctuation.

However, such situation is hard to accept for teachers since their mindset is more on forms. As a result students think that English is a subject with full of rules that need to be memorized. English is hard to be used in such communicative functions especially in spoken utterances. In other words, English is needed when they are doing English tests in a form of writing and all questions are about forms and vocabularies.

In relation to the above issue, this paper is dealing with difficulties faced by elementary students in productive skills, and it is focused on spoken production which is in line with the curriculum used nowadays.

There are some theories related to children learning a foreign language. First is Jean Piaget (1955). Piaget shares actually more on how children learning. Piaget says that child as active learner (Cameron:2001). Children learn best by manipulating objects in the environment; they learn by doing. Children need to experiment because they actually are in concrete operational stage of cognitive development. They need to be active rather than passive. They should be provided by ‘hands-on’ activities in which language is supported by action, such as action games, making paper animals and soon.

The second theory is Lev Vygotsky (1962). Vygotsky mentions children do not only need to learn through hands-on activities, but also they need to learn

in such situation in society. ZPD postulates that children learn in social context. Children need experiences where they are interacting with and learning from others, both adults and other children. Social contexts are needed by young learners to develop their language learning. Everybody surrounds them will be such inputs for them in fostering knowledge including language learning.

Lindfors (1987) cited in Huddelson (1994) clarifies that language acquisition involves the cognitive work of creative construction of the rules of the language. The implication is children need opportunities to use and to experiment with the new language, moving from known to new, from concrete to abstract, such as showing a toy bus and later talking about *a bus* using only words. Mistakes are natural. Language acquisition takes place through social interaction, through having to use the language with others in authentic communication settings. Without practicing, they of course cannot gain their language development.

The last is Bruner with the idea of scaffolding and routines (Cameron:2001). Bruner states that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based upon their current/past knowledge. The teacher should try and encourage students to discover principles by themselves. The teacher scaffolds, meaning talk that supports a child in carrying out an activity.

In conclusion, children in learning a language are active learners who develop their intelligence by themselves. After having enough input, then the time for them to have a try in social context. Adults and peers here are helpers for children to become social creatures. Teachers are creators, facilitators and motivators of students in developing and practising their language learning.

KTSP (School-based Curriculum)

Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan or KTSP for short was firstly launched in academic year 2006/2007 and socialized to teachers in most junior and senior high schools level. It is a kind of operational curriculum which is designed and implemented on each level of education and it should develop each area of the school. Therefore, to enrich the aims of national education, the development of KTSP refers to educational national standard which consists of content standard, process, graduates competency, teachers, facilities, operational, fee, and assessment (UU RI No 20/2003 and *Peraturan Pemerintah – PERMEN* No 19/2005).

The government regulation PP No19, 2005 states language education should develop language competence which special emphasis on reading and writing according to the literacy level set up for every level of education. Competence standard (Standar isi) 2006 states the ultimate goal of English language is to participate in discourse or to communicate ideas, feelings, etc in spoken and written English accurately, fluently and in acceptable manners. In brief, it is explicitly stated that communication happens in text, spoken and

written. Thus communicating is creating a text, and this involves more than simply creating grammatical sentences.

As Wells (1991) cited in Hammond et al. says there are four levels of literacy, each of which represents a different view of literacy. The levels are:

1. **Performative level** (SD – elementary)
2. Functional level (SMP – junior high school)
3. Informational level (SMA – senior high school)
4. Epistemic level (University students)

Wells also defines the emphasis of performative level is on the code as code. Becoming literate, according to this perspective, is simply a matter of acquiring those skills that allow a written message to be decoded into speech in order to ascertain its meaning and those skills that allow a spoken message to be encoded in writing, according to the conventions of letter formation, spelling and punctuation. At the performative level it is tacitly assumed that written messages differ from spoken messages only in the medium employed for communication.

Based on the above definition, performative level is focused on language accompanying action, meaning learners use English to accompany actions, participate in classroom and school interactions and recognize simple written English (Agustien:2006). It has been clearly stated in curriculum that the focus of English teaching and learning is:

Pendidikan bahasa Inggris di SD/MI dimaksudkan untuk mengembangkan kemampuan berbahasa yang digunakan untuk menyertai tindakan atau *language accompanying action*. Bahasa Inggris digunakan untuk interaksi dan bersifat “*here and now*”. Topik pembicaraannya berkisar pada hal-hal yang ada dalam konteks situasi. Untuk mencapai kompetensi ini, peserta didik perlu dipajankan dan dibiasakan dengan berbagai ragam pasangan bersanding (*adjacency pairs*) yang merupakan dasar menuju kemampuan berinteraksi yang lebih kompleks.

The following is the example of SK (Competency Standard) and KD (Basic Competence) for the fourth grade, 2nd semester,

Standar Kompetensi	Kompetensi Dasar
<p>Mendengarkan</p> <p>5. Memahami instruksi sangat sederhana dengan tindakan dalam konteks kelas</p>	<p>5.1 Merespon dengan melakukan tindakan sesuai dengan instruksi secara berterima dalam konteks kelas dan dalam berbagai permainan</p> <p>5.2 Merespon instruksi sangat sederhana secara verbal</p>

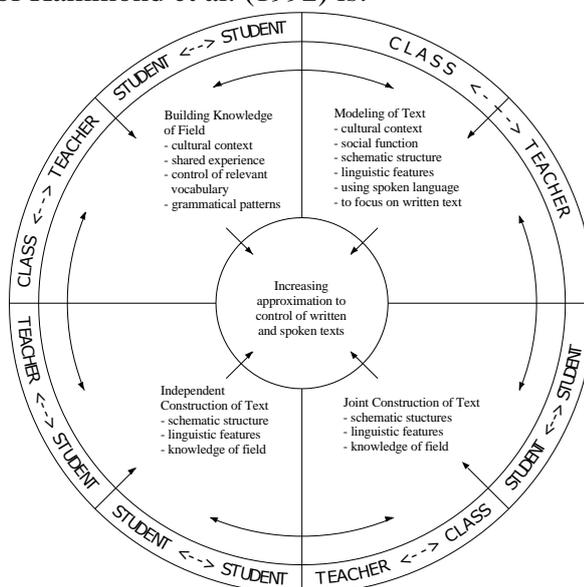
Standar Kompetensi	Kompetensi Dasar
<p>Berbicara</p> <p>6. Mengungkapkan instruksi dan informasi sangat sederhana dalam konteks kelas</p>	<p>6.1 Menirukan ujaran dalam ungkapan sangat sederhana secara berterima</p> <p>6.2 Bercakap-cakap untuk menyertai tindakan secara berterima yang melibatkan tindak tutur: memberi contoh melakukan sesuatu dan memberi aba-aba</p> <p>6.3 Bercakap-cakap untuk meminta/memberi jasa/barang secara berterima yang melibatkan tindak tutur: meminta bantuan, meminta barang, memberi barang</p> <p>6.4 Bercakap-cakap untuk meminta/memberi informasi secara berterima yang melibatkan tindak tutur: meminta ijin, memberi ijin, menyetujui, tidak menyetujui, menyangkal, dan meminta kejelasan</p> <p>6.5 Mengungkapkan kesantunan secara berterima yang melibatkan ungkapan: <i>thank you, sorry, please, dan excuse me</i></p>
<p>Membaca</p> <p>7. Memahami tulisan bahasa Inggris sangat sederhana dalam konteks kelas</p>	<p>7.1 Membaca nyaring dengan ucapan yang tepat dan berterima yang melibatkan: kata, frasa, dan kalimat sangat sederhana</p> <p>7.2 Memahami kalimat dan pesan tertulis sangat sederhana</p>
<p>Menulis</p> <p>8. Mengeja dan menyalin tulisan bahasa Inggris sangat sederhana dalam konteks kelas</p>	<p>8.1 Mengeja ujaran bahasa Inggris sangat sederhana secara tepat dan berterima dengan tanda baca yang benar yang melibatkan: kata, frasa, dan kalimat sangat sederhana</p> <p>8.2 Menyalin tulisan bahasa Inggris sangat sederhana secara tepat dan berterima seperti ucapan selamat dan pesan tertulis</p>

KTSP adopts competency based curriculum. CBC adopts Hammond's model of teaching (Agustien:2005). The model suggests that the teaching and learning process should reflect the natural language acquisition process where the

development of oracy takes place prior to that of literacy. Each needs to be addressed in different cycle. The following table shows activities and objectives:

Stage	Activities	Objectives
1	Building knowledge of field	Building ideas for communication
2	Modelling of text	Identifying language forms and functions as vehicles for expressing ideas
3	Joint construction of text	Experience with language in group
4	Independent construction of text	Opportunities to personalize the expression

A complete model of Hammond et al. (1992) is:



Concerning with the techniques that will be applied of course depend on the teachers themselves. It could be for example drilling, grammar exercise and any techniques that work in the teacher's environment. In brief, it moves towards language use/communication.

Children Characteristics

Children as language learners are active, having a short attention span and like to play games. Willis (2001) adds children are also having good memories and they are good at imitating. Furthermore, Slattery and Willis (2001) share about children as learners. They are:

- developing quickly as individuals
- learn in a variety of ways, for example, by watching, by listening, by imitating, by doing things

- are not able to understand grammatical rules and explanations about language
- try to make sense of situations by making use of non-verbal clues
- talk in their mother tongue about what they understand and do-this helps them learn
- can generally imitate the sounds they hear quite accurately and copy the way adults speak
- are naturally curious
- love to play and use their imagination
- are comfortable with routines and enjoy repetition
- have quite a short attention span and so need variety.

By knowing those characteristics, teachers for young learners should provide themselves a highly skill of teaching and learning English for young learners. They should know what and how the best strategy in conducting English for young learners. Children are not miniature of adults. They are developing both physically and mentally.

Teachers Characteristics

Teachers are the most important persons in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers for young learners are selected people. They should provide themselves with some of criteria (Chodidjah:2004), such as:

- sufficient English proficiency
- theoretical and practical knowledge on psychological development of children
- theoretical and practical knowledge on psychological development of children's learning
- the knowledge on characteristics of young learners (primary school children)
- practical knowledge on how to select and develop materials including the teaching media
- knowledge on teaching methodology
- Looking at the above criteria, young learners need well-prepared teachers. Teachers with their abilities should be able to manage themselves and classroom itself. They are the keys of teaching and learning process. They should be good managers. In managing classroom, teachers should be able to create secure atmosphere.

Teachers for young learners are those who provide themselves by some criteria, such as having sense of humour, open-minded, adaptable and patient. Teachers' attitude should be taken into account. They should respect pupils, be realistic and like all pupils equally. Children learn a foreign language and other subjects need to know that their teachers like them. The ability of teachers such as sing, mime, act, draw should be improved as well as their spoken utterances. Teachers for

young learners (beginners) should be excellent in spoken language. This implies that the priority is to let children hear as much spoken language as possible. Let students acquire the language by themselves. The input should be comprehensible. It must be supported by for example gestures, facial expression, mime or any media. Teachers should be creative not only in creating activities but they need also be fluent in scaffolding physically and verbally. In preparing the lesson, they need to be a sensitive grammar teacher. A grammar sensitive teacher will see the language patterns that occur in tasks, stories, songs, rhymes and classroom talk, and will have a range of techniques to bring these patterns to the children's notice, and to organise meaningful practice. To do this well requires considerable knowledge and teaching skills (Cameron:2001).

Teachers help young learners in different types of support (Moon:2000), such as :

1. language.

This refers to all the things the teachers do through speech or gesture in carrying out learning activities:

- using language at children's level, e.g. choosing words and structures they will be able to understand
- adjusting one's language to help children understand, e.g. repeating, rephrasing, extending what a child says
- adjusting one's speed and volume; using pausing to give children time to think
- using gestures, actions, e.g. spreading your arms wide to show that something is big, a nod of the head for 'yes', facial expressions, making noises, e.g. noise of a bus 'brm, brm', to help understanding.

2. Techniques/Resources

This refers to all techniques and resources the teachers use to help pupils to do the activities:

- moving from known to new, from concrete to abstract
- focusing on things, actions, events which children can see
- using practical 'hands-on' activities
- giving children a clear and understandable purpose for doing activities
- revising vocabulary or language needed for activities
- providing language prompts or models to help pupils carry out the activity
- giving clear feedback on pupils' responses and on learning activities
- using visual support to help pupils understand a story or dialogue
- providing a clear situation or context for language activities, which is familiar to children, e.g. a story, a visit to a park
- providing opportunities to learn through a variety of senses, e.g. hearing, seeing, touching, feeling, smelling and moving
- demonstrating and modeling for children how to do an activity
- creating activities which are interesting to children, e.g. games, drama, making things and personalizing activities so they relate to children's own experiences.

Teachers need to support children in language learning. Language which is used in classroom discourse will be the input for students. Thus, it should be easily comprehended. Various techniques and resources should be gained because they can help students in learning the language. Various tasks will be also needed by students to have both acquisition and learning in teaching and learning process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To gain the objective, the researcher invited 4 English teachers of elementary schools and 120 students in Sleman regency to participate in this study. To collect the data from respondents, classroom observation and interviews were conducted. The collected data were then classified, coded, and analyzed according to the problems formulated.

FINDINGS

In reference to the above issue, this paper deals with the students' difficulties in productive skills. It aims at describing the students' difficulties at Elementary schools viewed from three angels, namely pre-teaching, whilst-teaching and post-teaching. Of the three angles, whilst-teaching becomes the most important angel as it presents the main activity of teaching and learning sequence. To get a more comprehensive data, interview and observation are employed.

DISCUSSIONS

In interpreting the data, I tried to focus on what the teachers performed in the teaching and learning process. It was seen by analyzing tape scripts. In brief, what the teachers performed is in line with their planning which is written down in RPP (*Rencana Pembelajaran*). The three angels and activity could be seen in the following table:

No	Stage	Teachers' Activities
1	Pre-teaching	Greeting, checking presence list
2	While teaching	Giving vocabularies and explaining forms
3	Post-teaching	Giving task and having summary

Teachers performed three angles of teaching rather than having Hammond's model in the process of teaching and learning. In general, the first stage done by teachers is to greet students and to check students' attendance. They asked also the homework of the previous topic. The following is teacher's classroom language of SD Katolik Kalasan:

G: *Selamat pagi semuanya*

S: selamat pagi

G: apakah ada PR?

S: ga ada

G: oh ya kemarin ada yang mau bertanya tentang ulangan itu nilainya ada 25.

Ada lagi yang mau ditanyakan? sudah? Terakhir catatannya mengenai apa?

The extract of teacher of SDN Babarsari is:

G: good morning students

S: good morning mam

G: how are you today?

S: I'm fine thank you and you?

G: I'm fine too thank you. Where do you school?

S: I am school in Babarsari

After checking the students' homework, then teachers present the topic by introducing vocabularies first, then coming to grammatical structures and pronunciation. The extract is:

S: a mosque masjid, a cinema bioskop, a book store toko buku, a restaurant rumah makan, a museum museum, a shop toko, a hotel hotel, a swimming pool kolam renang

G: Anak-anak kalo biasanya kita buat kalimat itu ada 3 macam, kalimat apa aja?

G+S: positive, negative, interrogative

G: shall atau will itu artinya sama yaitu akan, sesuatu yang akan dilakukan. Kalo akan dilakukan itu sudah dilakukan atau belum?

The extracts shows that teachers tried to explain the material by using bahasa Indonesia as the medium for communication. When the teachers sometimes speak in English, it is followed by Indonesian. As a result, students are not used to listen to English classroom language. The effects then students find difficulties when they listen to English utterances. It contrasts to what actually should be created or performed in the teaching and learning process in children classes. Teachers need to create English atmosphere by having more exposure in English. Media are then used by teachers to support teachers' classroom language. By having media, teachers create both learning and acquisition.

The emphasis of teaching is that more on teaching vocabularies, topic based and the utterances are mostly uncontextual. The students never get a complete text in context of classroom and school discourse. Speaking skill here is in a form of language accompanying action. However, it is difficult to reach. It probably triggers by the teachers misunderstanding that elementary level needs a simple language and teaching English to children is straightforward. The written production is still difficult to reach. It is mostly in a form of words and phrases. A descriptive text stated in the curriculum (SD) is given less attention even none. Students' utterances both in spoken and written are in a form of word, phrase or sentence which are not contextual. The tasks or activities which are done by students are from textbooks or teachers. The following is teacher's instruction of SDN Babarsari:

G: *ini dialog ya. Anak-anak tulis dialog ini, nanti kita bisa mengertikan bersama-sama. Ini antara Nina dan mother posisinya dia, in the zoo, berarti mereka ada dimana?*

Written utterances produced by students are:

Shall you go to swim tomorrow?

Yes, I shall.

Shall he go to the party next week?

Yes, he shall.

The written utterances produced by students of SD Katolik Kalasan are:

He gets up at five o'clock.

He doesn't get up at five o'clock.

Does she get up at five o'clock?

They go to the cinema every week.

They do not go to the cinema every week.

Do they go to the cinema every week?

Mother cooks fried rice every morning.

Mother does not cook fried rice every morning.

Does mother cook fried rice every morning?

The assessment of teachers are more on paper-based test with the focus on uncontextual vocabulary and grammatical patterns of English language. It contrast to what Cameron's ideas in which grammar does have a place in young learner classrooms, but the teacher of young learners can probably best help to develop children's grammar in the foreign language, not by teaching grammar directly, but by being sensitive to opportunities for grammar learning that arise in the classroom. Teachers should be a grammar sensitive teacher that are able to see the language patterns that occur in tasks, stories, songs, rhymes and classroom talk, and will have a range of techniques to bring these patterns to the students' notice and to organize meaningful practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The results show that English teachers of elementary schools still focus on language form (grammar and uncontextual vocabulary items) instead of language function. The mode of English teaching and learning process tends to be teacher-centered not learner-centered. They find difficulties in activating students to be actively involved in the process of English language teaching and learning as students have insufficient knowledge and skills of English.

Teachers need to fully understand what the aim of the curriculum for elementary level. The inclusion of English as a local content at elementary schools is aimed at facilitating students of elementary schools to early learn English. Spoken utterances will be dominant rather than written one. Performative level is focused on language accompanying action, meaning learners use English to

accompany actions, participate in classroom and school interactions and recognize simple written English.

English teachers of elementary schools should be careful in carrying out the process of English teaching and learning. In other words, they have to be familiar with current theoretical and practical issues of English teaching for young learners. This means that English teachers should provide students of elementary schools with functional and contextual portraits of use of English manifested in four language skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. Added to this, the micro-language skills (grammar/structure, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the like) should be embedded in the four language skills. In short, English teachers of elementary schools have to focus on functions rather than on forms.

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