

BILINGUALISM AT PRESCHOOL SUPPORTS FURTHER EDUCATION

(A case study of A Preschool in Bandung Indonesia)

by

Effy Mulyasari

INDONESIA UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

E-mail: effy@upi.edu, effy_mulyasari@yahoo.com

Abstract

Children have undeniable capacity to be creative with language, and they certainly do not wait until to hear a particular sentence before using it. Finegan et.al (1992:15) supports it is accurate that all languages are about equally challenging to acquire as a mother tongue. In this preschool the children enjoy learning the English language because it is in the context of instruction objectives and they acquire it subconsciously. Therefore bilingualism is already started at preschool time. They used both Indonesian and English in their daily life. Even though it is very rare for some children, but most of them love to use them. And they did not feel confuse in using it. They also did not feel bother by using both of the languages at preschool. By mastering English, children will be more ready to face their future.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mastering English language has become a prominent need to face the future competition. English has been using all over the world in all aspect of life. For example as an official language, in business communities, in international academic, etc. By mastering English, hopefully anybody can solve any problem later on. It seems that English has started as a global language. Because of one of this features, it has been recognized every country as mentioned by Crystal (2002: 2), that it can be used as a medium of communication in such domains as government, the media, the law court, political expediency, commercial, cultural and technological contact or the educational systems.

THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

The function of language is to express the thought. Clark and Clark (1977: 3) agree that language stands at the center of human affairs, from the most prosaic to the most profound. It is used for bargaining praise in traditional market, gossiping with friends, negotiating politics, explaining religious beliefs, etc. These activities of communication show the people who try to put their ideas over others. So language is an indispensable thing as the main tool of human communication.

Communication with language is carried out through two basics human activities: speaking and listening (ibid: 3). Although speaking and listening are so commonplace they are

normally taken for granted, they are actually very complex activities. Where should the study of speaking and listening begin? For over two thousand years, philosophers, orators, and linguists have answered: 'With the study of language, its structure and function'.

To understand speaking and listening, we must understand the relation between language structure and the process of speaking and listening. In speaking or comprehending a language, people implicitly conform to a system that relates sounds to meaning. Many linguists, and one of them is Chomsky argues that a grammar is a system of rules (ibid: 5). Grammatical rules, in effects, summarize regularities in the behavior of people speaking as a language.

They (ibid: 6) also mentioned that nearly all people have a 'capacity' for a particular language. But in 'applying' this capacity in speaking or listening, they also require time to think and sometimes make mistakes. In speaking, they sometime make slip of the tongue. In listening they sometime misunderstand. It led Chomsky to distinguish between *linguistic competence*-one's capacity to use a language and *linguistic performance*-the actual application of this competence in speaking or listening (see also Stern, 1983; Lyon, 1985). When scholars noticed this complexity and creativity in language, how the children are able to master these two skills so rapidly in little effort?

II. STUDY

FIRST CHILD'S LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

All normal children acquire the language that they hear spoken around them without special instruction. They start talking at roughly the same age and they go through the same stages of language-development. But it is impossible to say of any child exactly when he has started to talk. Furthermore, their progress is, on the whole, unaffected by differences of social and cultural background.

Lateralization for language is not the only kind of specialization of function that human beings with respect to one hemisphere of the brain rather than only another; and lateralization in general is commonly held to be an evolutionary precondition of man's development of superior intelligent. The fact that language-acquisition is the same time is lateralization does and is normally complete by the time that process of lateralization comes to end. From the fact also that it becomes progressively more difficult to acquire language after the age at this lateralization is complete, means after critical age. (Lyons, 1986)

First language

Generally all language has the same properties. According to Yule (1996) that there are six features to describe human language: displacement, arbitrariness, productivity, cultural transmission, discreteness and duality. Such properties are based treated as ways of describing human language, but not as a means of distinguishing it from others system of communication.

Innate Language

A child acquires a language by some step in general. We can see from the explanation of Language Milestone as follows:

- 6 Months : Cooing changes to distinct babbling by introduction of consonants.
- 1 Year : Beginning of language understanding: One-word utterances.
- 12 – 18 Mos : Uses single words from a repertory of 30 – 50 words (simple nouns, adjectives and action words), but cannot yet join words in phrases.
- 18 – 24 Mos : Uses two words (telegraphic) phrases from a vocabulary of 50 to several hundreds words; understand basic syntax.
- 2 – 3 Years : New words everyday; three or more words in many combination; many grammatical errors and idiosyncratic expressions; good understanding of language.
- 3 Years : Full sentences, few errors; vocabulary of around 1,000 words.
- 4 Years : Close to adult speech competence.

American linguist Chomsky theorizes that children are born with genetically preprogrammed ways to learn language. During the critical period, children learn to use language just as they learn to walk. Their skills evolve naturally, following innate pattern in the brain. We can find evidence for this by observing children around the world. In any language and culture, babies begin to babble at 6 months. At the end of the first year, they say their first word. At the end of their second year, they begin to use two-words combination, and by the time they are 4 or 5 years old they have begin mastering basic grammar. It is also supported by Finegan (1992: 19).

Complicated Mental Process

Generally, we do not realize how complicated the process to understand that used everyday. It seems that is already provided. So no wonder, if learning a language is the same as leaning about the human themselves. It is complicated, but has an important part in human life. Unbelievable things, children are very easy in mastering a language that has a very complicated process. (Dardjowidjojo interviewed by Hendrawati, 2001)

Noam Chomsky, a linguist from America says that a child is not born like a blank slate or *tabula rasa* (traditional Latin Terms, Lyons: 1986), but it has completed by Language Acquisition Device (LAD) said by Dardjowidjojo (ibid: 2001), Indonesian linguist.

Dudink (1997) mentions LAD is universal device, which is brought by children since they were born. In other words, she is provided with some specific knowledge about language. What she needs just to improve the language competence by giving the

stimulus to activate the LAD, because this is the one that makes a child to acquire any language.

CHILDREN'S BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

When the baby is born the volume of the brain is only 25% of adult brain, so it takes some time to develop the structure of the brain to have all part of the functions work. The volume will be 50% at 18 months, 80% at 5 years and 100% at 12 years old. Actually the children development of intellectual growth 50% from adult capacity in the first four years of their life or critical age, so they acquire anything with a little censor or even without censor. They input, store and recall or output all the information based on the stimulation given by purpose or not. And the other 50% grow after that. (Times, 1991)

How is the language work in the Brain? The part of the brain that is responsible fro the ability to understand and use language is most often found in the left hemisphere. Two main regions seem to be responsible for most language-related tasks; Broca's area and Wernicke's area. Broca's area is responsible for the muscular actions needed to create speech. Wernicke's area is more involved in our understanding of speech. This area is located in the left temporal lobe, close to the auditory part of the cerebral cortex. Damage here produces Wernike's aphasia, which causes inability to understand speech. People with Wernike's aphasia can speak grammatically but their sentences often do not make sense (Dudink, 1997), so human brain is very complex.

MEANING IN THE CHILD'S LANGUAGE

In acquiring language, children must learn the meaning of words. Although they learn very early, it was taken for granted that they had at least some meaning for the words they used (Clark & Clark, 2000: 285). They explain more that very young children often seems to understand much more than they can say, and they respond appropriately to many words before they even begin to talk. Thus, children use what they have already known with contextual cues to for producing and interpreting the words in other situations. This process can take years to complete.

It is obvious that languages differ from each other, but always within limits. They differ in their sounds, surface structure, grammatical categories and vocabularies. In vocabulary for example, languages tend to multiply words that are useful for the culture, although such proliferation can happen even within subcultures using the same language. But language in it turns affect thought too. A well-developed vocabulary may well aid in learning the concepts the vocabulary covers. Language also affects how people reconstruct pictures, solve problems, and keep track of things in memory. Thought, therefore, both affects language and vice versa (ibid: 557-558)

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND BILINGUALISM

Second language or foreign language is usually weaker than the first language, mother tongue or native speaker. According to Stern (1983:12-15) that a second language is any language acquires later than native language. 'Second Language' indicates a lower

level of actual or believed proficiency. Bilingualism does not mean that any and every individual in one country is 'bilingual' or is proficient in both languages. Bilingualism could be a simultaneously first-language acquisition in two languages, eg: Indonesian and English; and for short referred to as 'early childhood bilingualism.' Being bilingual is usually understood to mean that two languages are available to the bilingual on a part; it implies a high level of proficiency in two languages.

Acquiring language is an amazing process in every child; there is no biological basis-not in the lips or the brain-for preferring one particular language over another. Supporting by Finegan et.al (1992:15) which say it is accurate to say that all language are about equally challenging to acquire as a mother tongue. The general observations in child language acquisition are as follows: (a) the ability on acquire a language is a fundamental human trait; (b) by about the age of six, the children have acquired most of what they need to know about their language to speak it fluently (c) linguists and psychologists are convinced that language is not acquired by imitation-certainly not solely and probably not principally by imitation-although exposure to a language is an essential ingredient in the process of acquiring it.

Children have undeniable capacity to be creative with language, and they certainly do not wait until to hear a particular sentence before using it. It has been estimated that by the time a child arrives at school perhaps 80 percent of the structures of the language and more than 90 percent of the sound systems have been mastered (ibid:16). So, actually there is no really difference in acquiring the first and the second language that bilingualism is demanded as a desirable objective, eg: job specification, it has to be stated precisely what kind of proficiency in each of the languages it to be regarded as appropriate in order to meet the specification. So all the second language leads to the bilingualism in broad sense in this term.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

CONDITION OF LEARNING AND LEARNING PROCESS

Learning Characteristics

Learning process is determined by learner characteristics, the social context, and by the conditions of learning. The two main conditions to be considered are language learning either inside the target language environment or a way from it, and that means mostly in the classroom. (Stern, 1983:391)

Based on the school facts is that the school has fulfilled this by three aspects. They accept the students around three years up to five years old for the preschool program. They provide program that covers social, emotional, cognitive includes: language development, reading readiness, writing readiness, mathematics readiness, creative science or social studies and physical education in peers or solitary. They also do outing program that is a program that out of the school but still related to the theme at school program. Through the use of bilingual program they provide opportunities for Indonesian and expatriate children to build friendship

and begin understand other culture as well. They have five expatriate students among 23 students. Teacher and students ratio is also very helpful in reaching the teaching and learning objectives. So, small numbers is best, for example 1:6 or 1:7 but 1:10 is still appropriate if the students are toilet trained.

Learning Condition

Krashen (cited by Stern, 1983) introduces two conditions of learning: *language acquisition* and *language learning*. Within the target language environment there are the opportunities for constant and varied language use, situation in which the learner must cope day-by-day with the new language as a living means of communication offering opportunities for absorbing or 'acquiring' the language. In the classroom, as a rule, the second language is treated more deliberately, and therefore it is the place for learning. So, whether the target language is used at all activities, the students depend partly on the special social context and respond to it. Thus, learning may take place in the target language setting and acquisition in the classroom. The school goal is to help children become more independent, self-confident, and enthusiastic learners. Musthafa (2001:4) support this idea, he says in helping achieving the objective of teaching leaning process, constructivism instruction is very appropriate to reach the student's goals, because students (a) can be responsible for the learning process itself, (b) develop to be independent-thinker, (c) improve the understanding of essential and vital concepts for self-development, (d) self-independent to create questions and get the answers for those important things.

School program is the most interesting one related to the parent's expectations and children needs' besides the school facilities, school services, school time, and teachers or human resources. The parents are interested in bilingual school program, and then ethics, numbers and letters introduction, computer, sport and discipline.

Entering this preschool some parents did specific preparation for their children, but some did not. Since the children in this preschool, some of the family used both Indonesian and English in their daily life, even though it is very rare for some other children. But most of them love to use both of the languages, and they did not feel confuse in using it. They also did not feel bothered by using both of the languages at school. The English language of the children improves from previous time, moreover some of them improve a lot later on. It also helps improving their self-confidence. Most of the children are willing to involve in all school activities in English.

Parents Background and Facility

Parents' backgrounds have also influenced the children acquisition in learning English. Some of them graduated from post graduate school, most of them graduated form graduate school and rarely from high school. But however, all of them realize that English has become an important language to master in order to prepare the children in the future. For example, in getting a good higher education, mastering the information and technology, getting a job, having broad relationship, and most of all preparing the tough competition in the future. Most of the parents have a good capability even some very fluent in English, and very little do not know about English.

My finding in this school that Indonesian was not only the first language taught to the children, but some parents also introduced English and Chinese as the first language. It seemed that they had adequate information that learning other languages, as a second language is important. But most of all they had introduced English as a second language, or Chinese or even French. Some of the parents introduced foreign language since the baby was born, but most of them introduce it since preschool. They provided some medias in acquiring the second language, among others: by book, cassettes, VCD/Video Program, or computer. They really cared about the language learning outcomes, so they did not hesitate to allocate some budgets for their needs'; but of course for some parents, school fee still needs to be taken into one of the consideration. Without any doubt, they will continue to join English courses as soon as they pass from this preschool.

In calculating the cost of teaching a second language, actually there are some factors to be taken into account includes: (a) the cost of training and supply of language teacher, (b) the cost of the supervisors and non-professional aids (native assistants, language laboratory, technicians, etc.), (c) the cost of material, (d) the time for class instruction, (e) the size of language class, and (f) the space and installation needed (the cost of special language classroom and its equipment), (Stern, 1983:427). So, actually so many things have to be considered for the budget.

Teacher License

One of the important aspects is the teacher herself who will guide and get in touch with the children in doing the activities. It is a reality, that most EFL teacher do not hold teaching diploma (Suyanto at Sadtono, 1997:170-171). And one of the institutions that might responsible to overcome this problem is The English department of Teacher Education or Teacher Training program. They can provide pre-service training or in service training. Pre-service training program is a regular program to train the students to be a teacher of English, otherwise in-service training programs should be offered some special program which relevant to the urgent need of the teachers. A short course concerning teaching methods and some language skills might be very beneficial for them. Qualified teacher is one of the most important requirements to achieve the instructional objectives, at least two qualifications are needed from the teacher: (1) a qualification in English, as a model of for the students and (2) a teaching qualification, which has enough knowledge of ELT (Sinaga at Sadtono, 1997:178).

So as to a teacher of young learners, one should possess the ability to stimulate interest, to plant various activities, to create friendly environment and encourage children to have a positive feeling toward language. Children learning a foreign language need to know this language is interesting and their teacher like them (ibid:171). From the questionnaires, some information emerged that actually the teachers did not have had previous teaching experience for about one up to two years. In addition to that, one of their backgrounds did not support this job. Anyway by loving children and mastering good English, it seems that anybody could learn to be a good teacher by always improving herself through reading, joining training, practicing at school, autodidact, even going abroad.



School Outdoor Environment



School Indoor Environment

School Program

In order to make a program, this school has its own program which some of them related to the local content curriculum. It makes the program monthly; based on themes, student's need and edutainment. The school facilities also provide different activities for library, playroom, playground, audio room, craft room, and computer room. The program is always up to date, because if there is any new good thing, the school always tries to improve the program. For the time being, they prepare two centers for each meeting, and the children have to join both of them but they are free to choose which one is the former and which one is the latter. As mentioned above the children need to be independent.

Home and school relationship is held by monthly meeting, informing the students' development. Most of parents always come to find the result of their children improvement. The school also makes children's progress report daily and quarterly. Some of parents also as volunteers in helping the school, and they felt by helping the school they understood more about the school program.

IV. CONCLUSION

As mentioned above that acquiring language is an amazing process in every child, there is no biological basis – not in the lips or the brain – for preferring one particular language over another. Supporting by Finegan et.al (1992:15) who says it is accurate that all languages are about equally challenging to acquire as a mother tongue. The general observations in child language acquisition are as follows: (a) the ability to acquire a language is a fundamental human trait; (b) by about the age of six, children have acquired most of what they need to know about their language to speak it fluently; (c) linguists and psychologist are convinced that language is not acquire by imitation-certainly not solely and probably not principally by imitation-although exposure to a language is an essential ingredient in the process of acquiring it.

Children have undeniable capacity to be creative with language, and they certainly do not wait until to hear a particular sentence before using it. It has been estimated that by the time a child arrives at school perhaps 80 percents of the structure of the language and more than 90 percent of the sounds system have been mastered (ibid:16).

From the result of the discussion, it seems that bilingualism is already started. Even since the children in this preschool, they used both Indonesian and English in their daily life, even though it is very rare for some children. But most of them love to use them. And they did not feel confuse in using it. They also did not feel bothered by using both of the language at school. The English language of the children improves from previously; even some of them improve a lot. It is also help improving their self confidence. Most of the children are willing to involve in all school activities in English. The children enjoy learning the English language because it is in the context of instruction objectives and they acquire it subconsciously.

In introducing a new language, a teacher gives the instruction using the target language. As in constructivism learning that children need to get involved in activities while learning the language by playing, and very often the teacher introduces the language by using it (Musthafa, 2001). Qualified teacher is one of the most important requirements to achieve the instructional objectives. Budget as one of important aspects is not really a matter for parents as long as the instructional objectives are achieved. Home and school relationship is very important in controlling the children development.

Teaching and learning process will be influenced by strategies, techniques and mental operation that which is chosen by the teacher. It also influenced not only by the “Learner characteristics”, but also by “Learning condition” that covers: Exposure, Objective, Content, Procedures, Material and Evaluation. Learner characteristics and learning conditions are also influenced by social contexts. So they are almost interrelated. These procedures, then, all will influence the learning outcomes. (Stern, 1983:338)

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