

THEMATIC APPROACH IN THE LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF BINTANG SEMESTA KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui analisis dari penerapan dan hambatan yang dihadapi oleh guru kelas Taman Kanak-Kanak dalam tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan dan penilaian pembelajaran tematik di TK Bintang Semesta Depok. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari 12 guru kelas dan kepala sekolah sebagai informan kunci. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah observasi, wawancara, angket dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan langkah-langkah reduksi data, display data, dan penarikan simpulan. Teknik pemeriksaan keabsahan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode triangulasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tahap perencanaan pembelajaran masih bervariasi. Semua guru belum maksimal dalam pembelajaran menggunakan model tematik. Pada tahap pelaksanaan, kegiatan pembelajaran di Taman Kanak-Kanak sebagian besar sudah menggunakan model pembelajaran tematik, namun terlihat dalam penyampaian materi masih terpisah-pisah. Namun demikian, ada pula yang sudah menggunakan model pembelajaran tematik secara lengkap. Pada tahap penilaian, para guru belum menggunakan model penilaian tematik. Penilaian hasil belajar yang dilaksanakan oleh semua guru adalah bentuk tes tertulis yang masih dilaksanakan secara terpisah, sesuai dengan pelajaran yang diajarkan, tidak digabungkan dengan mata pelajaran lain yang berada dalam satu tema. Pada penilaian proses, menggunakan penilaian sikap dan pemahaman, dan hampir semua guru melaksanakannya. Hambatan yang ditemui guru adalah kurangnya sosialisasi mengenai pembelajaran tematik.

Kata kunci: implementasi, pembelajaran tematik, Taman Kanak-Kanak

ABSTRACT

The research aims at analyzing the implementation and the obstacles faced by teachers in the stage of planning, implementing, and evaluating of thematic learning at Kindergarten of Bintang Semesta Depok. This research is a qualitative descriptive research. The research subject is 12 teachers and principal as key informants. The data is collected through observation, interview, questionnaire and documentation. The data is analyzed through some steps, namely: data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The technique of data validity employs triangulation method. The results show that in the stage of planning, thematic approach application is still varied where all teachers are not yet maximal to use it. In the implementation stage, learning activity mostly has used thematic learning model, but learning materials are still given separately. However, some other teachers have conducted thematic learning model completely. In the evaluation stage, thematic evaluation is not yet considered. The learning result evaluation is in the form of written test separately, based on the materials taught, not combined with other lessons of one theme. The evaluation uses the evaluation of attitude and comprehension, and almost teachers follow the way. The obstacle faced by teachers is that they do not have sufficient socialization towards thematic learning.

Keywords: implementation, thematic learning, Kindergarten

INTRODUCTION

In the early stages of learning a foreign language, vocabulary is one of the

important aspects of learning language which needs to be given a deeper attention by teachers to achieve the goal of

vocabulary learning. In this case, teachers should facilitate students by such interactive activities to get their interest to learn vocabulary. By learning vocabulary appropriately, students would increase language use in relation to the knowledge of the world and vice versa. Vocabulary serves as a significant subject for students to comprehend as they must know when and how they use the vocabulary properly suited to the context of its concept, form, and meaning. In other words, vocabulary plays important role in enhancing students' knowledge to put something across to others particularly in a teaching-learning circumstance.

Vocabulary mastery in the teaching-learning process really depends on teachers' proficiency in using the appropriate teaching method and technique to convey the message of vocabulary learning. Unfortunately, most of the teachers in primary schools still use conventional method where the students are asked to memorize the series of new vocabularies very often which causes the boredom to the students. That is the reason for many teachers to equip themselves with a good preparation in order to motivate the students through interactive, interesting and enjoyable classroom. A language teacher ideally always apply the most appropriate method as he/she knows that he/she plays important role in teaching-learning process. The method by which students are taught must have some effects on their motivation and confidence. It means that choosing the appropriate method and activities with a focus on student's motivation would create a better learning process as the students will motivate themselves to learn more. In doing so, the teachers should be more creative to provide teaching materials as well as teaching aids that are considered significant needed by the students.

The process of teaching and learning vocabulary for primary student needs special attention in providing such learning materials since their interest relies on physical activities. In this case, teachers should analyze the students' needs to avoid harmful backwash as they might have at the end of the learning process, particularly in

learning vocabulary. Since primary students put their interest of learning mostly on physical activities, thematic multimodal text assignments might be considered as the solution to overcome the students' needs in learning vocabulary, particularly English vocabulary. By assessing these thematic multimodal texts, students are expected to be more active, creative, and interactive as multimodal texts employs such playful and enjoyable activities in relation to the physical movement, such as comic strips, story-telling, and so forth. In other words, thematic multimodal text is designed to be as innovative learning device to overcome the students' needs in learning vocabulary.

The present research basically aims at examining thematic approach in the language acquisition of young learners' level. By means of using thematic instruction in the learning materials, the learners will also be more focus on language structures and new vocabularies given in the story as the goal of learning vocabulary could be achieved easily. By the interesting thematic instruction, the students will feel to get involved actively will be more communicative and interactive in experiencing every activity of learning.

In the early of stages of acquiring language, vocabulary serves as the prior knowledge in comprehending the language. It is significant for learners, particularly young learners to know the concept of vocabulary properly to the context of its meaning in their daily life. In doing so, teachers should integrate the process of language acquisition with the learning instruction materials thematically as it gives an ease for young learners to comprehend the vocabulary. Acquiring a second language is a long process to go through, therefore teachers are encouraged to focus more on teaching communicative abilities (Brown, 2007). This is supported by Hanmer (2010:6) who affirmed that "The need for the teachers to motivate students through enjoyable and interesting classes; and quite to a few wanted their teachers to be well-prepared and to be teachers they could confidence in". In short, a well-prepared teacher may be able to help students develop their

knowledge and skill in a higher learning achievement.

As the educational challenge comes higher, there must be an innovative learning media (particularly in learning vocabulary) to combine all aspects of educational curriculum thematically known as thematic instruction. The instruction of new literacies are not confined to communication through the reading and writing using only printed texts. Rather, literacy now includes the use of multimedia and multimodal texts – visual, audio, and technological – to produce all types of products (Grabill, 2005). Multimodal aspects of texts challenge the concept of language (Kress, 2000). Visual literacy and communication modes have an impact on educational settings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Multimodal texts is believed to be beneficial to acquire the language process easily.

Thematic approach is the way of teaching and learning where many areas of the curriculum are connected together and integrated within a theme thematic approach to instruction is a powerful tool for integrating the curriculum and eliminating isolated and reductionist nature of teaching it allows learning to be more natural than the fragmented nature of the school activities. Here the students are actively involved and they learn more skills through thematic learning cognitive skills such as reading, thinking, memorizing and writing are put in the context of a real life situation under the broad aim to allow for creative exploration. Thematic instruction is based on the idea that people acquire knowledge, best when learned in the context of a coherent whole and when they can connect what they are learning to the real world.

In the language process, there are two processes involved, that is productive process and receptive process (Chaer, 2009). In line with the second language acquisition of kindergarten students (group B), their language acquisition process remains in introductory level. That process is included as the receptive language process. Moreover, Chaer (2009) affirms that receptive process is started by recognition stage towards the intended spoken speech.

It can be said that in the childhood age education, young learners will be able to achieve their best competence in speaking if they have a good recognition of all utterances they get. Chomsky in Subyacto and Nababan (1992) states that every child is born with the complete device to acquire the language which is known as Language Acquisition Device (LAD). In conclusion, by this device, children are assumed to have a skill to do with their language. Children can use their innateness in receiving knowledge of language simultaneously. Moreover, Schutz (2006:12) defines language acquisition as “The product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language”. In other words, language acquisition is a process where someone can utter the language or a process of children in acquiring their first language, commonly acquired in the informal situations of talk. In the other hand, Sigel and Cocking (2000) stated that language acquisition is a process which is used by children to adjust the set of hypothesis with parents’ talk until they can select the proper and simple grammar of that language. In accordance to the above propositions, language acquisition refers to as the language comprehension that is acquired by children naturally in the time of they learn their first language (mother tongue) or even second language. Language acquisition has a continuum process, integrated set of learning, from a simpler vocabulary to the complicated ones. This may be affirmed that acquiring a language needs several phases of language recognition, concerning to its relation to the form, context as well as the concept of language usage that are properly used in the speech stretch situation.

METHOD

In order to gain some information or valid data in this research, then the data collection is carried out. The objective and relevant data to the research problems is a successful indicator of a research. The data collection conducts two stages as follows:

1. Observation

Observation is a method of collecting the information by investigating or

- supervising directly to the ongoing process of learning English vocabulary thematically.
2. Interview
Collecting the data and information by interviewing directly to the related parties at the research object to get the process review of learning English (i.e., educators and students).
 3. Literature Review
The data and information are collected by reviewing references which is considered to be a benchmark of this research problem discussion. In this stage, literature review starts off with the analysis of the former relevant research such as relevant journals with the system development from manual system to computerized system. In addition, it also reviews several books related to the application design. The list of books, journals, and websites as the references is remarked in the references section.
 4. Questionnaire
Questioner was given for teacher to know the attitude about the thematic approach. In order to test the validity of the questioner, it was tested by product moment correlation. the correlation result from each item with total score was compared to r_{table} with $\alpha = 0,05$, $n = 24$, and degree of freedom = $n - 2$, is 0,404. If r_{ij} or $r_{count} \geq r_{table}$, the statement is valid, in the other hand r_{ij} or $r_{count} < r_{table}$, the statement is not valid.

This present research basically aims at examining the thematic approach in the student's language acquisition at Bintang Semesta Kindergarten. By this point of view, the researchers carry out a case study research of which the researchers gathered information of thematic approach on-site through interviews and observations. These were conducted on-site and compared with the previously established related literature. Thematic approach employed in this research is aimed to answer the students' need of learning English vocabulary that must be connected to the thematic instruction of the curriculum.

Thematic approach is an approach in the teaching and learning process where many areas of the curriculum are connected together and integrated thematically to create a natural circumstance of learning. By learning such materials in a thematic instruction, the students can be actively involved and they can explore more skills through thematic learning cognitive skills such as reading, thinking, memorizing and writing. Esu (2010) pointed out some stages in selecting a theme as follows:

1. Choosing a theme (teachers links the theme to the student's everyday life).
2. Designing the integrated curriculum (teachers organize learning goals of the curriculum both process skills and content knowledge around the theme).
3. Designing the instruction (teachers handle the schedule of class activities).
4. Encouraging presentation and celebration (teachers manage students' presentation of their assignments, works, projects individually or in groups).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings have been pointing out that thematic approach used at Kindergarten of Bintang Semesta tends to be varied as teachers have various background of knowledge. Furthermore, teachers tend to not have a sufficient knowledge of the implementation of thematic approach in the classroom contexts. This may be seen that some of them still do not combine thematical learning device with other learning subjects in one unified theme. The various thematic approach implementation results can be seen from the following tables, the validity test result before conducting clinical supervision and the validity test result after conducting clinical supervision.

Based on the result of the research, the materials that were used by teachers as the guideline when doing the classroom activity, they used theme. In order to decide the theme, they used which are related to students' life. This finding support of Trianto's opinion (2011: 168) that choosing theme is started from the close environment, it is familiar to students and it is suitable for their age, intention, need and ability.

1. The Planning Stage

In the stage of learning plan, thematic approach application is still varied. In this case, all teachers tend to be not yet maximal to use thematic approach in the teaching-learning process. Learning plan of teaching thematic approach should be considered as important way to bridge student's vocabulary comprehension used in their daily life, particularly the ones which are used in the classroom circumstance. In this stage, researchers have gone through some steps to collect the data, such as observation, interview, the distribution of questionnaire and documentation.

Observation stage is aimed at analyzing the learning process at Kindergarten that comprises of observation about the theme, subject identity, standard of competence, basic competence, indicator, learning objective, learning materials, learning device and media, as well as learning strategy. Also, the researchers conduct an interview with informants (teachers and principal) to obtain information about the implementation of thematic approach, concerning to the thematical instruction as its learning model. Moreover, questionnaire is distributed to teachers and principal as the informants of the implementation of thematic approach used in the classroom context. This process aims at analyzing the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing the thematic approach in their vocabulary teaching. Once, the questionnaire is distributed and filled out, then the data obtained from questionnaire is documented and analyzed to get a more perusal analysis of thematic approach implemented at Kindergarten of Bintang Semesta.

2. The Implementation Stage

In the implementation of thematic learning, the learning activity at Kindergarten mostly has used thematic learning model, but the learning materials are still given separately. However, some other teachers have

conducted thematic learning model completely. This stage leads the discussions of the thematic approach implemented in the learning vocabulary. The discussions focus on the student's issues as the object of thematic approach implementation as it may give students an experience directly. Other issues are about the division among different subjects, the learning concept from various subjects. This process should be flexible as the learning result should be proper to meet students' need. Therefore, the teaching-learning process should employ the principle of learning by playing.

3. The Evaluation Stage

In the evaluation stage, thematic evaluation is not yet considered as a tool for the thematic evaluation. This evaluation process comprises of two primary discussions of the process evaluation as well as the result evaluation. The process evaluation deals with the evaluation of teachers' observation, performance, attitude, and portfolios. Meanwhile, the result evaluation talks about the test conducted to measure the comprehension of using thematic approach. The learning result evaluation conducted by all teachers is in the form of written test separately, that is suited to the materials taught, not combined with other lessons in one unified theme. The evaluation process uses the evaluation of attitude and comprehension, and almost all teachers follow the way.

Depdiknas (2006: 14) defines the assessment in thematic learning is an attempt to obtain various information on a regular, continuous, and comprehensive about the process and product of the growth and development that students have achieved through learning activities.

Objects in the assessment of thematic learning include an assessment of the student's learning outcomes and results. Assessment of the learning process is an effort to

provide value to the learning activities undertaken by teachers and learners. Process assessment includes assessment of observations, performance appraisals and portfolio assessment and attitude assessment. While the assessment of learning outcomes is the process of scoring the results of learning achieved by learners, using certain criteria (Trianto, 2011: 260).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the implementation of thematic approach at Kindergarten is still varied that is caused by some obstacles faced by teachers as they do not have sufficient information about thematic approach applied in the classroom context. With respect to the planning stage, findings show that all teachers are not yet maximal to employ thematic approach in the teaching-learning process. With respect to the implementation stage, there are some teachers still use thematic approach separately, while the others have used it completely. With respect to the evaluation stage, the evaluation test is still given in the form of written test, that is based on student's attitude and comprehension.

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