ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISATION OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES AT SPECIAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BENGKULU

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Abstract. Children with intellectual disabilities are often identified as having limitations in learning languages, however, the variation in the ability to learn English by the children is undeniable. The English language acquirement of the children can be influenced by various factors including educational opportunities which have been regulated in national law. In Indonesia, the national law about Education System No.20/2003 article 5 chapters 1, stated that every citizen has rights to obtain proper education. It means that all citizens have the rights to equal education without exception including children with disabilities, one of whom is children with intellectual disabilities. Intellectual disability is also called congenital cognitive developmental disorder (existing from birth) or cognitive problem that is suffered since childhood. Intellectual disability is also described as several conditions or diagnoses that are different from general characteristics that show disruption in the ability to learn and live in communities. Moreover, in Indonesia, most of children with intellectual disabilities are studying formal education in special schools. In the present time the curriculum in the special school prepares English unit of study that is designed and adapted to the level of abilities and the needs of their students. This research was conducted at a special school, SMPLB Dharma Wanita in Bengkulu Province. The finding showed that there were five levels of acquisition of semantic aspects of students with intellectual disabilities, namely very good, good, sufficient, low and very low. From the fifteen students with intellectual disabilities participants who were observed the average acquisition of their semantic aspects were Low. In addition, the researchers also found that so far the students had learned with learning techniques and textbooks that have been adjusted to the level of their intelligence.

Keywords: Semantic Aspects, Foreign Language Acquisition, Intellectual Disability

INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition is people's abilities to learn and master a language. Meanwhile, the language uses means how a language is being used. The mechanism of the acquisition of this language began in childhood; there is a process to occur to develop language skills in people's mind. Every person' mind that grows normally will learn the first language and this process occurs until their age 5 years old. The topic of language acquisition and its subtleties is part of the psycholinguistics, which is a study of psychology language that reviews the mental processes that occur in language use and acquisition (Field, 2003 in Aditya).

The language that had been obtained for the first time is referred to as first language or mother tongue. This first language acquisition occurs, if peoples who have never learned any language begin to learn languages for the first time. The people who only speak language is called monolingual, whereas if speak two languages through a bilingual process simultaneously or in sequence, they are called bilingual and if more than two languages, they are called multilingual. After someone acquires his first language then learns another language with formal and informal processes, the process is called the acquisition of Foreign Languages. (Jack, J. Platt & H. Platt; 2009). According to Kendel (1984) normally peoples have stages in obtaining language, namely holophrastic (12-18 months), two word stages (18-24 months), telegraphic stages (2-2.5 years), later stages (2.5 year - 5 years). If these stages do not occur in peoples, it can be said that the individual has a communication disorder called communication disorder.

Communication disorder is a disorder in using language, speech and communication processes. There are several communication disorders that have been classified in psycholinguistics. Communication disorder is suffered by people who experience brain injury, autism, speech impairment and intellectual disabilities. In this study, researcher focuses on the English language acquisition of students with intellectual disabilities. An intellectual

disability is a condition of physical and mental retardation caused by an abnormal arrangement of the building chromosomes in the people body (Kosasih, 2012). Every study about Second Language Acquisition (SLA) mainly aims to investigate, measure and find out the extent to which level of the object of study's linguistic competencies.

In the book entitle Second Language Acquisition (2008), Selinker and Gass argued that someone is said to have mastered or has acquired a language if the person can use his language skills in speaking or conversation. Then, Krashen (in Ellis, 1994), stated that the way to get language skills is differentiated into two processes namely acquisition and learning, language acquisition refers to spontaneous processes referring to unconscious processes resulting from the use of natural language, where learning focuses on meaning and rules while language learning "acquires" language through a conscious learning process.

People can be said have mastered a language if they could use language's rule in their uses of language (competence) then can apply it in speaking and writing (performance) so that they can interact with others who use the same languages. The process of obtaining competence and performance of a language could follow the process of acquiring and/or learning process. According to Gass and Selinker (2008: 1) second language acquisition (SLA) is the science of acquiring a language after mastering the first language or acquiring languages other than mother tongue. So all languages learned by people after mastering the mother tongue are called second languages (L2) even though they are the third language, fourth and soon or foreign languages. Examples of second, third and soon languages are the use of English in the Philippines and India while what is meant by a foreign language is a language learned by individuals in a social community, the language is not used as the main language in community life or in other formal institutions, and is usually learned only in the classroom. For example, English in Indonesia and in Japan. (Ellis, 1994: 12)

Additionally, in acquiring a language to mastering a language people need to have ability in several aspect including phonology, syntax, semantics of a language learned. Semantic aspect is a branch of linguistics about everything related to the meaning of lingual units, including words, phrases and sentences. Semantic aspect is a set of rules of meaning that is used to determine whether the input received by someone fulfills the semantic rules of the language. (Dardjowidjojo, 2012).

In some researches about the process of acquiring a second or foreign language, some linguist in the world have found some hypotheses that can be used in examining the extent to which the level of language acquisition of learners which are namely the similarity hypothesis between L1 and L2, contrastive hypothesis, krashen hypothesis (the difference between language learning with language acquisition), natural sequence hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis, affective hypothesis, talent hypothesis, affective filter hypothesis, first language hypothesis, first language hypothesis, individual variation hypothesis , inter-language hypothesis, and Pijinisasi Hypothesis. (Chaer, 2009). Meanwhile, according to Chomsky's (1965), linguistics is divided into two major groups namely competence and performance. Competence refers to a person's basic knowledge of the system, events or facts. In addition, competence is able to be observed as the ability in doing something. Moreover, language competency is a basic knowledge of the language system, including rules, vocabulary, all traits and how to use them. While performance is a real and observable manifestation or realization of the competence. Performance is actual production (speaking and writing) or understanding (listening and reading) of linguistic events. (Brown, 2007: 38-39).

Furthermore, as it is mentioned in the Norwegian Association for the Developmentally Disabled. (2005), Intellectual disability that is also called an intellectual development disorder, is described as a congenital cognitive disorder that has been existed since was born

of the children. In addition, the condition of Intellectual disability is diagnosed as different from general characteristics that show disruption in learning and living in a community. It is estimated that around 1% of the population of children in the world with intellectual disabilities, the majority of them are suffering from mild and moderate level. People with intellectual disabilities are classified based on their intelligence level. The first level is Mild, they are able to listen and speak, but have some difficulties in understanding certain concepts and have limitations in expressive language. In general, they are socially able to adjust well when they grow up in an inclusive society. Besides that the people at this level are able to live independently after completing their school. Secondly is moderate level, at this level, people can speak, communicate and actively participate in class activities. Through learning about several daily life activities, or independent life skills, and social skills, they will be able to develop better. The third is severe level, people with Severe level understand simple communication through gestures and expressions, limited ability to express themselves through spoken language. In fact, they have great difficulties in living independently but certain levels of independence can be achieved. The last level is profound level, in this level their communicative skills are very limited. Communication is done through non-verbal voices and requires care and attention throughout his life.

Moreover, the National Education System Law No.20/2003 article 5 chapter 1 states that "every citizen has equal right to obtain quality education". Based on the mandate of this law, people with disabilities including those people with intellectual disabilities, must get proper education relevant to their needs. In addition, the school curriculums also have to be designed and adjusted to the level of abilities and needs of the students, including in designing the language teaching units. Indeed, teaching languages for people with disabilities is important because language acquisition allows the process of social interaction in conveying thoughts, ideas, concepts and feelings is also expected to improve their standard of living.

Therefore, this study will explore the semantic acquisition of students with intellectual disabilities. More specifically this study aims to find out and measure the extent to which semantic aspects of English has been taught to students with intellectual disabilities. The participants of this research are the students of a special school in Bengkulu Province's, SMPLB Dharma Wanita. It is expected that the benefit of this study is to get a complete picture of the level of acquisition of the semantic aspects of the students with intellectual disabilities. In addition, there are no any previous researches on foreign language acquisition with the object of students with intellectual disabilities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design and took place in a special school in Bengkulu Province, SMPLB Dharma Wanita. The participants of this research are students with intellectual disabilities who are studying at the school. This research observes the acquisition of the semantic aspects of the English language of the students. In this study the data sources are from the observation towards the participants response, the data collected in forms of English vocabulary (according to the syllabus that has been delivered to the students during their study) . In conducting this research; a team of researcher was working to assist every student with intellectual disability participant while the students participate for the research. Indeed, the data from the observations is recorded by the research team. The scale of the data is collected and classified using Likert Scale as Very good, good, satisfactory, low and very low that in this report namely the level of acquisition. Moreover, the validity of the research is checked using triangulation of sources and using documents (checklist forms) as data collection techniques. Meanwhile, the data collected then to be

analyzed in 4(four) stages of analysis that are: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, compound analysis and finally the cultural theme analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the theory of language acquisition, there are three linguistic components that are very important for language learners to be able to master a language. They are phonology, syntax and semantics. In this study the author only focused on describing aspects of the semantic acquisition of students with intellectual disabilities. In this study researcher limiting only 75 vocabularies to be observed. The 75 vocabulary will described the basic knowledge of the students in observing, listening, seeing and asking questions based on their curiosity about themselves, God's creatures, activities, and objects that they find at home in school, and playgrounds. .

Based on the curriculum or children with special needs such as students with intellectual disabilities, there are some topics that are prepared for the students including cardinal numbers, vehicles, part of body, color, fruits and family. There were 15 participants who were participating to be observed. 10 words for topic 'color', 12 words for topic 'fruits' and 8 words with topic 'vehicle', 25 words for topic 'number', 16 words for topic 'parts of the body', 4 words for topic 'family'. The results of the observation can be seen in graph 4.1 below.

Graph: 1. The Semantics Acquisition for each observed topic
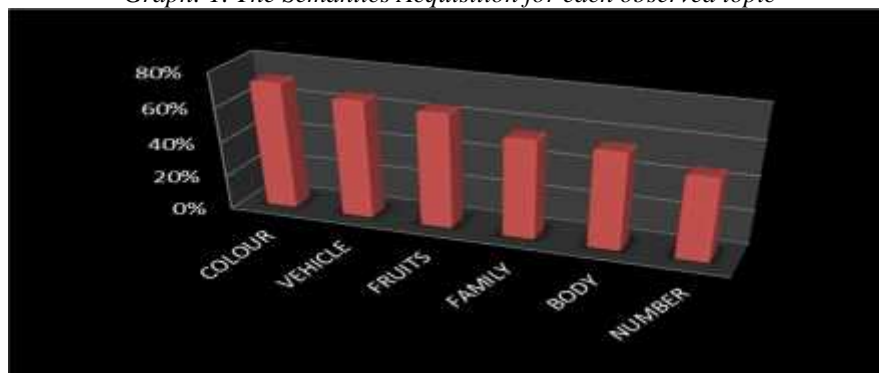
From the graph, it could be seen that from highest to the lowest percentage of the topics that could be mastered by 15 participants in a row are color, vehicle, fruits, family, parts of body and number. Meanwhile, based on the words acquisition in specific, using the Likert scale, the level of acquisition is leveled into 5 levels which are very good, good, satisfactory, low and very low. The very good level are for the words two, one, ship, rambutan, orange, seven, five, pink, papaya, orange, mango, durians, black, six. Secondly, for the group good are including words three, ten, one hundred, nine, motorcycle, helicopter, and blue. The group satisfactory is including the words four, five Hundred, bicycle, avocado, one thousand. The fourth group is for the group low is words yellow, watermelon, red, green, car and eight. The last is the group of very low are words banana, white, grape, gig, air plane, nineteen, pineapple, pedicab, jackfruit, dragon fruit, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, gray, brown, twelve, thirty, fifty, eleven, twenty at the level of acquisition very low.

From 75 words observed there were 15 words showed the level of acquisition was Very Good, 12 words with the level of Good acquisition. The twenty seven words mostly have the same order of morphemes in Indonesian, such as the words orange (fruits), rambutans, mango, papaya, durians, orange (color). The word orange is already very familiar to indonesian users, because most indonesian users say orange by borrowing it from English

word. Likewise with the words rambutans mango, papaya, the fourth durians are local fruits in indonesia and do not grow in native English-speaking countries. So English borrows the original Indonesian vocabulary to refer to these fruits even with a slight change in spelling. Besides that, in the semantic it is could be called as reference. Hurford, Brendan and Smith (2007) stated "Reference deals with the relationship between language and the world", meaning referent is the relationship between language and real objects in the surrounding environment. So that during the observation process, the author shows a picture of each picture of orange (fruits), rambutans, mango, papaya, durians, orange (color), helicopter, motorcycles, pink, then the images that participants see directly refer to the first language of the participant which is Indonesian language.

To refer to five hypotheses that was introduced by linguists about the acquisition of the second language or foreign languages there are several hypotheses for the acquisition of language that were found in this research, those are the hypothesis of the similarities between L1 and L2, the constructive hypothesis and the Krashen Hypothesis. Similarity Hypothesis is a hypothesis which states that there is similarity in the process of acquiring language between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2). This hypothesis states that elements of language are obtained in the order of the predicted order (Chaer, 2009). The similarity lies in the order in which the morphemes are obtained.

Then, the second hypothesis that was found is the Contrastive Hypothesis. This hypothesis states that the difficulty or ease of obtaining an L2 language is influenced by the difference or similarity between L2 and L1. (Fries & Lado, in Chaer: 2009). In this study the difficulty of obtaining the semantic aspects were found from the words brown, gray, dragon fruits, jackfruits, pedi cab, pineapple, gig, air plane, grape, white, banana, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, twelve, thirty, fifty, eleven, and twenty. The overall vocabulary of the level of acquisition is in the Very Low category or only 0% to 45%. It is Seen from the morpheme sequence and the pronunciation of the vocabulary above have a very different level of difference from the Indonesian language. The third hypothesis is the Krashen hypothesis, this hypothesis divides second / foreign language acquisition into nine hypotheses. In this study the authors only found four of them, namely: affective hypothesis, talent hypothesis, affective filter hypothesis, and the first language hypothesis. The affective hypothesis states that people with open and warm personalities will be easy to master a second or foreign language compared to people with closed personality. This hypothesis is proven to be true, because at the time of observation the people with intellectual disabilities whose levels of acquisition were very good and good seemed more relaxed and open. On the other hand, those who are closed or embarrassed with shyness have low and very low levels of semantic acquisition.

Furthermore, the Krashen hypothesis that was identified in this study is the talent hypothesis. This hypothesis applies to language learners who master a second or foreign language through a formal learning process. All participants of this research are obtaining the English language from formal schools, although the level of acquisition of the semantic aspects are found varies. The last of the Krashen Hypothesis found was the first language hypothesis; this hypothesis tends to be similar to the similarity hypothesis and the contrastive hypothesis which is the level of language acquisition that is influenced by the first language. In this study, it is clear words with the level of acquisition is very good are words with the composition of the morpheme and pronunciation are very similar to the first language of the participants.

Words with level of acquisition at Very Good and Good Level is words whose arrangement of morphemes is the same as words in Indonesian or familiar vocabulary heard or spoken by Indonesian citizens such as cardinal number: one, two, three, four, five, seven,

Meanwhile vocabulary with a low and very low level of acquisition is an unfamiliar vocabulary used in Indonesian with a fairly high spelling difficulty

In this study the average level of intelligence of the student participants are Mild Mental Retardation (IQ 52-68). The results showed that 1 participant had a very good level of acquisition, 5 participants had a good level of acquisition, 2 student participants at the level of acquisition at the level of satisfactory, 1 student participant at Low level and 6 student participants at the level of acquisition is very low.

Moreover, as the student participants for this research were labeled with numbers 1 to 15 (one to fifteen), the student participants who has achieve a very good level of acquisition was number 8, while 5 participants at a Good level were participants number 2,3,5,7,11. Next, participants 4 and 12 at the level of acquisition are satisfactory, participant 1 at the level of Low acquisition and participants 6,9,10,13,14,15 at the level of acquisition Very Low. Moreover, according to Ingall, using ITPA (Illnois Test of Psycholinguistics Abilities) reveals that in general, the language skills of people with intellectual disabilities is the same as most of other people but the speed of obtaining language is much lower than typical learners and the majority of language acquisition processes for people with intellectual disabilities stop at puberty. In this study, it can be seen that the learning topic depicted in the syllabus is almost the same as the general school syllabus, but in the teaching and learning process according to the teacher of the school who was interviewed for this research, every word delivered must be presented using pictures or props to attract them and keep their concentration focused and interested with the material presented. In addition, to ensuring the vocabulary on a topic is mastering my the students, it is required more than 6 hours of meetings and must be repeated frequently whenever there is opportunities either inside or outside the class. From the finding of this study, the componential analysis of the semantic acquisition of people with intellectual disabilities at the SMPLB Dharma Wanita SMPLB, Bengkulu as follows:

Table 1: Componential analysis

Semantic Acquisition				
	Based on Words		Based on Participants	
Total	75 words		15 students	
Criteria				
*Very good	15 words	20%	1 student	7%
*Good	12 words	16%	5 students	33%
*Satisfactory	14 words	19%	2 students	13%
*Low	13 words	17%	3 students	20%
*Very low	21 words	28%	4 students	27%
The Average of Acquisition	**54 %**		**55%**	

As it is shown in the table above, it can be concluded that the level of acquisition of the students are in all five levels, which is the level of acquisition of Very Good, Good, satisfactory, Low and Very Low. From fifteen participants observed 7% were classified Very Good, Good 33%, satisfactory 13%, Low 20% and Very Low 27%.

CONCLUSION

Semantic aspect is a branch of linguistics that discuss about everything related to the meaning of lingual units, including words, phrases and sentences. Semantic aspect is a set of rules of meaning used to determine whether the input received by someone fulfills the semantic rules of the language. Based on this, in this study the acquisition of semantic aspects of English in people with intellectual disabilities at SMPLB Dharma Wanita, Kota Bengkulu

which aims to determine and measure the extent to which semantic English acquisition has been taught shows that their average level of acquisition is at the level of Low. However, these results prove that people with intellectual disabilities can obtain or learn foreign languages like other learners. In addition, the hypotheses of second/foreign language acquisition that found in typical learners are also found in people with disabilities. The hypotheses that were found in this research are the Similarities between L1 and L2, the Constructive Hypothesis and the Krashen Hypothesis. Based on the findings, there are some suggestions to support the process of acquiring English for people with intellectual disabilities, namely:

    a) Improving the appearance of English textbooks for the special schools, such as by providing full color books to increase the interest and concentration of the students with intellectual disabilities.

    b) The use of English vocabulary in daily conversation during school activities at special schools to improve the students' memories and absorption of semantic English acquisitions.

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