

FAMILIARISATION AND CONFIDENCE: FACTORS AFFECTING YOUNG LEARNERS' SPEAKING TEST PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Acquiring second language for young learners is a challenging task for them especially when it comes to speaking competence. Speaking may be the hardest competence that young learners have to master as it involves many aspects of language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency at the same time. Young learners find difficulty in expressing their thought and idea in spoken language as they have to combine what is in their mind with the target language and then express it orally. These young learners finds difficulties in expressing their ideas in the target language because they have limited knowledge in vocabulary and grammar while speaking is the key skill in primary school foreign language curricula as the learners develop their social-awareness and become competent speakers of the target language (Toledo & Hoit, 2016). For this reason, some school holds English Proficiency test which include speaking as one of the test. Young learners or primary school students need to practice speaking more as it is the medium through which language is encountered, understood, practiced and learnt, (Cameron, 2001). This study aims to find out what are the factors affecting young learners' performance in speaking test and to find out what problems encountered by young learners in speaking test. This study was done in a private school in West Surabaya, Indonesia and the subjects were 87 students from second grade to sixth grade. The research instruments are questionnaire and interview. This study was expected to help students with their difficulties and improve their speaking skill.

Keywords: *speaking test, speaking skill, young learners, difficulties*

INTRODUCTION

The goal of learning foreign language is being able to speak the language (Pishgadam and Shams, 2013). For some reasons speaking the foreign language is not an easy thing to deal with especially for young learners with their limited vocabulary, grammar and other linguistic elements. Speaking competence, in fact is the most difficult aspect of language learning (Brown and Yule, 1983) as the learners have to combine their ideas with the topical knowledge together with the linguistic elements of the foreign language. Compared to other skills such as listening, reading and writing, speaking is the most important skill because someone is considered master a foreign language when he/she speaks the language. (Ur, 1996).

For young learners being able to speak fluently with specific topics given can be very challenging. Their limited vocabulary and grammar is the main constrain for them to express their ideas in oral language. Furthermore, the fluency and accuracy in using the target language may not precisely correct.

Young learners' linguistics knowledge may contribute the biggest role developing their speaking skill, however, there are non-linguistics aspect which also contribute their speaking skill, they are cognitive, social and physical characteristics. They are also moving from self-awareness to social awareness (McKay, 2006). From those non-linguistic factors, cognitive, specifically intelligence plays a great role in developing the speaking skill. Different types of intelligence, verbal and narratives intelligence are related to speaking skill and one's intelligence and linguistic knowledge will lead to better speaking performance. (Fahim and Pishghadam, 2007).

To build a good speaking performance, young learners should be provided with plenty of opportunities in using the target language in different context, not only in vocabulary and grammar. This will help their fluency and communicative competence as the communicative language teaching aims to achieve communicative competence rather than linguistic accuracy. (Harmer, 2001).

Young learners are expected to respond, interact and speak their ideas or opinion in the speaking test. They are asked to use their linguistic knowledge and non-linguistic aspect at the same time to communicate their ideas. The use of visual media such as pictures, maps, diagrams, and other types of visual materials can be used in the speaking test and they can help the young learners to comprehend the topics (Ugiljon, Anakhon and Gulnoza, 2018) which can also help them to interact, respond the questions and construct their sentences easily.

Language activities which involve reception, production and interaction will help the young learners to develop their communicative competence (Toledo & Hoit, 2016). Interaction happens when two individuals participate in speaking and exchange production and reception on specific context situated in social practice and being purposeful and goal oriented (CEFR, 2009).

This study was done in a private school in West Surabaya, Indonesia and involve 87 students aged 7-12 years old (2nd graders to 6th graders). The school has been conducting this Young Learners English Test since 2014 and the result for speaking test has been good, however some students stated that the speaking test has made them nervous and because of that they could not perform their best in the speaking test. Therefore, this study is done to find out:

1. What factors affecting young learners's performance in speaking test?
2. What problems encountered by young learners in speaking test?

The result of this research is expected to help the young learners to prepare well for the speaking test and to minimise the problem that they may encounter while having the speaking test.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Speaking Skill

Speaking is the process of developing and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non verbal language in different contexts (Chaney, 1993). Speaking is the most important, yet the most difficult skill to acquire compared to other skills as speaking skill involve many linguistic aspect such grammar and

vocabulary. Many young learners have difficulties in expressing their ideas in the target language because they have limited knowledge in vocabulary and grammar while speaking is the key skill in primary school foreign language curricula as the learners develop their social-awareness and become competent speakers of the target language (Toledo & Hoit, 2016).

So far, speaking skill taught in school has been undervalued by the teacher who teach speaking skill just as repetition of drills or memorisation of conversation or dialogues. Students are not taught how to express their ideas or opinion in English, they just asked to memorise the dialogue and asked them to repeat the sentences. Teaching speaking is more than than repeton and memorisation. Speaking is the productive oral skill which involve the process of listening and giving respond (Nunan, 2003). By speaking, someone can deliver the message about the certain topic to other speaker.

For young learners, speaking is the medium through which language is encountered, understood, practised and learnt, (Cameron, 2001) therefore oral language learning involves words and interaction which means when the learners say the words in sentences, they also make an interaction with other speaker in the target language. The language they use has also to be communicative, meaning that its follows the social and cultural rules in that way the other speaker will understand the message he/she delivered

Communicative Competence

To be able to speak the target language learned, language learners need linguistic competence such as vocabulary and syntax but it is not only that, language learners also need communicative competence such as sociolinguistic and conversational skill (Nunan, 1999). With communicative competence, language learners have plenty opportunities to use the language in different context rather than just grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, the language learners need communicative competence which help them know how to say, what to whom and when say the sentences because communicative competence includes sociolinguistic and conversational skill. Language learners need communicative competence to participate in and learn from their classroom experience (Johnson, 1995).

There are four elements in communicative competence; grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. Grammatical competence includes language rules such as vocabulary, formation of words or sentences, and pronunciation. Sociolinguistic competence addresses the appropriateness in terms of both the meaning and form, which can vary with the status of participants, objectives of the communication and norms of the communication. Discourse competence includes an understanding of how spoken texts are organized and is related to the cohesion and coherence of utterances. Strategic Competence is compensatory in nature, drawn on when the developing language system of the second/foreign language learner is deficient in some regard. It refers to mastery of both verbal and nonverbal communication strategies (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Speaking Test for Young Learners

The speaking test used in the school where the data collected is the Cambridge ESOL Young Learners English test. The test has four skills to be

assessed; reading, listening, writing and speaking. This research only focuses on the speaking test which only takes 5 to 10 minutes of duration. Cambridge ESOL tests reflected a view of speaking ability which involve multiple competencies such as lexico-grammatical knowledge, phonological control and pragmatic awareness, to which has been added a more cognitive component which sees speaking ability as involving both a knowledge and a processing factor (Taylor, 2003). In addition, spoken language production is seen as situated social practice which involves reciprocal interaction with others, as being purposeful and goal-oriented within specific context.

The level of Cambridge ESOL YLE test has three grades; starter, mover and flyers. Starter level is for the 1st and 2nd grader, but in this private school starter level is for 2nd graders because the 1st graders are considered not having enough knowledge to be assessed. Mover level is for 3rd and 4th graders, while flyer level is for 5th and 6th graders.

Each level has five different speaking tests which are adjusted to their competencies. For starter level there are five parts of speaking test; 1) The examiner asks the child to point to objects on the scene picture, 2) The examiner asks the candidate to point to three object cards and gives instructions to place them in different locations on the scene.

Picture, 3) The examiner asks the candidate some questions about the scene picture, 4) The examiner asks the candidate questions about three of the object cards, 5) The examiner asks the candidate some personal questions on topics such as age, family, school and friends.

For the mover level, there are four parts of speaking test; 1) The examiner starts the test by demonstrating what is required and by showing the candidate two pictures which look similar, but have some differences. The examiner then asks the candidate to describe four differences, 2) The examiner shows the candidate a sequence of four pictures which show a story. The examiner tells the candidate the name of the story and describes the first picture in the story. He/she then asks the candidate to describe the other three pictures, 3) The examiner shows the candidate four sets of four pictures where one picture in each set is the 'odd one out'. The candidate has to identify which picture is the odd one out in the remaining three sets and say why, 4) The examiner asks the candidate some personal questions on topics such as school, weekends, friends and hobbies.

There are 4 parts of speaking test for flyer, they are 1) The examiner starts the test by demonstrating what is required and showing the candidate two pictures which are similar but have some differences. The examiner reads statements about the examiner's picture. The candidate must look at the candidate's picture, identify six differences and say how the picture is different, 2) The examiner asks the candidate questions about a person, place or object, based on a set of question cues. The candidate responds, using a set of information cues. The candidate then asks the examiner questions based on a set of different question cues, 3) The examiner shows the candidate a sequence of five pictures which show a story. The examiner tells the candidate the name of the story and describes the first picture in the story. He/she then asks the candidate to describe the other four pictures, 4) The examiner asks the candidate some personal questions on topics such as school, holidays, birthdays, family and hobbies.

Assessing Young Learners

Effective language assessment is the one that is able to provide chances to young learners to use their language abilities to demonstrate what they can do in appropriate level and also adjusted with curriculum goals, childrens' cognitive developmental, emotional and psychological stages (Cameron, 2001). To suit young learners' reality best, assessment should concentrate on the development of language use so that children can have the opportunity to use the language for real purposes and in real or realistic situations (McKay, 2006).

Assessment is needed to help teachers making decision to measure students' linguistic abilities and their achievement (Shaaban, 2014). However, some assessment sometimes cannot represent students' linguistic abilities due to the stress or anxiety that the young learners face while having the assessment (Smith, 1996). Others may see that young learners are poor test taker for the more errors they made in the test and it may also have the greater risk of assigning false labels to them (Katz, 1997). Therefore, young learners need to be evaluated in an anxiety-reduced and stress-free environment to get best result of assessment.

Factors Affecting YLs' Speaking Performance

There are some factors affecting young learners speaking performance. The first factor is performance condition, which involve time pressure, planning, the quality of performance and the amount of support (Nation and Newton, 2009). The second factor is affective variables which connected to motivation, self-confidence and anxiety (Krashen, 1982). The third factor is listening ability as one cannot improve his/her speaking ability if he/she cannot improve the listening ability (Doff, 1998). It can be concluded that students are not able to reply if they cannot comprehend what is told. That is to say, speaking is very closely related to listening (Leong and Ahmadi, 2017). The fourth factor is topical knowledge. It is defined as the knowledge structures in longterm memory. That is, topical knowledge is the speakers' knowledge of related topical information (Bachman and Palmer, 1996). The fifth factor is feedback during speaking activities. Teacher should not directly correct the students' mistake, they can give them clue or prompt that can lead to better answer. If the teacher directly give the correct answer, it will spoil the flow of the dialogue and the aim of speaking task (Harmer, 1991).

Problems Encountered in Speaking Test

The first problem that young learners may encounter during the speaking test is the gap between learners' knowledge and the required performance on the exam (Pishgadam and Shams, 2013). The speaking test has some required performance that the students need to fulfill and if they cannot reach the certain target then they may not get the highest mark. Sometimes in the speaking test there are some difficulties experienced by the students regarding to the examiner, it can be the examiner's utterances are too fast or the examiner's accent is too difficult to understand which influence the students' speaking performance. The language that students produce during the speaking test may not grammatically correct, but communicatively acceptable. In this situation, the students still cannot reach the highest mark because of this grammar mistakes. This is quite contrary to the fact that language is best learned when the learners' attention is focused on

understanding, saying and doing something with language, and not when their attention is focused explicitly on linguistic features (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). The gap between the examiner and the students during the test also influence students' speaking performance. This means, the examiner cannot build a motivating environment for the students considering the students are the young learners who are easily affected by the stranger who test them. In this situation, the examiner should give encouragement in the form of body language, gesture or even saying motivating words like 'good', 'very good', 'excellent' and so on to build students' confidence. This encouragement will build students confidence and they are triggered to speak more during the test, furthermore this encouragement will help the students to communicate well (Brown, 2001).

The second problem is inhibition. Young learners are afraid of making mistakes and fearful of criticism (Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) especially during the test. They are afraid of not getting a highest mark or simply they are afraid that the sentences they produced are all wrong and then they choose to be silent. The fear of making mistake makes these students become less competent in speaking (Koichi Sato, 2003) because they will choose to say few words and tend not to make good sentences.

The third problem is that young learners do not know what to say probably because their person who test them had selected a topic that is not appropriate for them or they do not have enough information about it and they have little opinions about what to say, which vocabulary to apply, or how to use grammar accurately (Baker & Westrup, 2003). There are some factors that cause difficulties in speaking test, and some are found in the students themselves. They cannot keep the conversation going because they may lack of vocabulary to get their meaning across, inadequate strategic competence and communicative competence (Rababa'h, 2005)

Previous Studies

Some previous studies have been reviewed and inspired this research. Nguyen and Tran (2015) carried out a study about factors affecting students' speaking performance in Vietnam and the result indicated that students in Vietnam face many problem when having speaking test and there many factors that affecting speaking performance. Leong and Ahmadi (2017) investigated an analysis of factors influencing learners' English speaking skill and the result indicated that learners with a low self-esteem, higher anxiety, and low motivation have serious difficulties in speaking skill in spite of having acceptable linguistic skills. The paper showed that students who have higher motivation and lower anxiety can speak easily and effectively

METHOD

Participants of Study

Participant of study are 87 students of Bright Kiddie Primary School students with the composition 16 students of 2nd grade, 23 students of 3rd grade, 18 students of 4th grade, 17 students of 5th grade and 13 students of 6th grade.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study is questionnaire and interview. Researcher also use interview besides questionnaire because 2nd grade students and some 3rd grade students had difficulties in filling the questionnaires. Besides that by having interview, students of all grades were easier and more comfortable in answering the questions. The researcher cannot use observation as research instrument because during the speaking test, unauthorized person cannot enter the speaking test room and it is forbidden to record the conversation during speaking test.

Data Collecting Procedure

The questionnaire was made in Bahasa Indonesia to help the participant (students) answering the questions. All the participants were given questionnaire but for the 2nd grade and 3rd grade students, the researcher accompanied them in answering the questions because some students did not understand with the questions. The data collecting took four days to complete.

Data Analysis Procedure

The quantitative data derived from questionnaire were analysed using Excel program and the qualitative data were derived from interview.

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

Factors affecting YLs's performance in speaking test

The data obtained from the questionnaire shows that time for preparation affects the students performance the most with percentage 72.4%, followed by topical knowledge with 59.8% and confidence 57.5%, and then followed by pressure to perform well (31%), listening ability (23%), anxiety (19.5%) and motivation to speak (17.2%).

The most affecting factor is preparation in taking the Cambridge ESOL YLE test. From the interview, it was found that the students had prepared well by taking extra class which materials were about the Cambridge ESOL YLE test. The students also stated that the school provided tryouts for the tests which include reading, listening, writing and speaking test. The school provides extra classes and tryout because it believes that speaking is the medium through which language is encountered, understood, practiced and learnt (Cameron, 2001). So, the more the students get practiced, the more they will be fluent because speaking is more than repetition and memorization. Speaking is the productive oral skill which involve the process of listening and giving respond (Nunan, 2003). Giving the students practice which similar to the test format also brings the students' confidence out as they are being more prepared and they can predict what will they have in the test. This familiarization with the test format of Cambridge ESOL YLE test has surely given a lot of benefit for the students.

The topical knowledge has the second position in factors affecting young learners' performance in speaking test. Topical knowledge is the speakers' knowledge of related topical information (Bachman and Palmer, 1996). If the topic of speaking test is the topic that the students are not familiar to, it brings a problem for the students, but the speaking topic is regarding the curriculum that

has been in the syllabus learnt. The result of questionnaire and interview showed that it affected the students performance but it did not become problem for them because the students have practiced the materials in the preparation class and the topic they learnt in the preparation class is similar with the ones they had in the speaking test.

Confidence also becomes important factors in students' speaking performance as motivation is the courage that moves the students ability to perform well in speaking. Motivation is the inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves people to a particular action (Brown, 1994). The confidence of young learners to perform well in the speaking test does not come by itself but it can be built with more practice and the familiarization of the test format. Once the young learners feel they can cope with the difficulties they face, it brings to their confidence and it motivates them to perform better as motivation can be a compelling stimulation in a person that initiates and evaluates the processes of the cognitive and motor mechanisms whereby chosen desires are implemented and acted out (Dorney, 1990). The data obtained from questionnaire and interview showed that confidence is the result of students' well preparation in facing the test and the familiarization of the topic they have learnt in the preparation class.

Problems encountered by YLs in speaking test

Although the test results indicates that the students have no serious problem with speaking skill, but there are still some problems encountered during the speaking test. The speed of interlocutor's speech in the test become the main problem for the young learners (46%), followed by afraid of making mistake (23%), and the gap between knowledge and performance (20%), and then limited vocabulary (10%) and shyness (10%), and the last is the students do not understand the topic in the listening test (7%).

The data obtained from interview showed that sometimes the interlocutor speaks a bit faster and the students could not understand what the interlocutor said. But when the interlocutor repeat the questions twice with slower speed, they understood the sentences. But this only experienced by few students.

Students' afraid of making mistake becomes the second problem that they encountered in the speaking test. Usually the students are afraid in making mistake in grammar and word choosing or vocabulary. Young learners are afraid of making mistakes and fearful of criticism (Leong and Ahmadi, 2017) especially during the test. They are afraid of not getting a highest mark or simply they are afraid that the sentences they produced are all wrong and then they choose to be silent. The fear of making mistake makes these students become less competent in speaking (Koichi Sato, 2003) because they will choose to say few words and tend not to make good sentences.

The gap between students' knowledge and performance also becomes important problem that faced by the students in the speaking test. Sometimes in the test, students do not know what to say because they have limited knowledge about the topic being asked. With some prompts given by the interlocutor, the students could produce few sentences.

Limited vocabulary and shyness also become problems for the young learners. Young learners do not know what to say probably because the person who tests them had selected a topic that is not appropriate for them or they do

have enough information about it and they have little opinions about what to say, which vocabulary to apply, or how to use grammar accurately (Baker & Westrup, 2003). There are some factors that cause difficulties in speaking test, and some are found in the students themselves. They cannot keep the conversation going because they may lack of vocabulary to get their meaning across, inadequate strategic competence and communicative competence (Rababa'h, 2005). Limited vocabulary problem usually faced by the low grader such as 2nd and 3rd graders. While shyness becomes everyone's problem when they have to speak with strangers, but with good confidence, this problem is overcome.

When being interviewed, some students said that they did not understand the topic, but when they are shown the picture (some test are using pictures), they knew and able to produce the sentences.

CONCLUSION

Young learners' performance in speaking test is affected by several factors such as preparation in facing the test (72.4%), followed by topical knowledge (59.8%) and confidence (57.5%), and then followed by pressure to perform well (31%), listening ability (23%), anxiety (19.5%) and motivation to speak (17.2%). Some factors above can improve young learners' performance in speaking test if they are prepared well such as preparation, topical knowledge, confidence and motivation to speak. However, anxiety always comes up but it can be minimized by improving young learners confidence.

Problems encountered by young learners when they have speaking test are the speed of interlocutor's speech in the test become the main problem for the young learners (46%), followed by afraid of making mistake (23%), and the gap between knowledge and performance (20%), and then limited vocabulary (10%) and shyness (10%), and the last is they do not understand the topic (7%). The problem can be minimized with a lot of practice and familiarization to the speaking test. It is proved that students who are familiar with the Cambridge ESOL YLE speaking test format, they can minimize the problems.

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