

# INTEGRATING LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE USAGE IN KINDERGARTEN

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## Abstract

*Language development in Kindergarten has a purpose to develop language skill to reach the expected development level that accordance with children age, including development communication skill verbally, vocabulary, ability in using language, and develop personal satisfaction in esthetic appreciation toward language. Language skill integration through literature has a purpose to coordinate activities so children can develop language ability completely through various activity using literature/book. Children's literature is a kind of text that contains story and event arranged into beautiful language. Usage of book or literature in kindergarten gives chance to children to speak about life and develop language skill through literature interaction experience. In children language development in kindergarten, literature can be used as basis to stimulate listening ability, speaking, reading, writing and to develop positive attitude toward next language. To support activity of language development based on literature in kindergarten, some efforts are needed: (1) Create rich-writing environment, (2) Read a story to teach meaningful word and sound (3) storytelling (4) recount, (5) role playing based on story from book, (6) express story in form of picture/writing, and (7) introduce literature and writing to children. Integrating language skill is done through (1) connect children with book/literature text, (2) connect experience and oral language/speech with words in literature text, (3) use text to develop early literature*

**Keywords:** *integrating, language skill, children's literature*

With rapid development of technology and information, wish and hope of parents so that their children "didn't outdated" and able to follow information flow also increase. In parents circle, generally they wish their children could read and write in early age soon. This condition impact on parents' wish and motivation to teach their children read and write with their own methods both done in home or put their children in institute or private tutoring service to learn reading and writing. Whereas, helping service to give children language development stimulation ideally is done by competent person and professional.

Children language ability truthfully appeared before children enter kindergarten. Children language development is begun when children interact with their environment,

especially when children begin to communicate with parents. Children learn language as a unity and integral part from context where that language is used. When interact with their environment, children listen and observe how expression or speech is used. From what that they hear and observe, children build schemata that later used to use language universally. In time, when children grow and encounter more complex language usage, they will complete schemata that they already had before. In next development level, children will use those schemata when they learn language, both in form of oral language (listening and speaking) or written language (reading and writing).

Children language development in kindergarten institute is done planned and has to consider children development level. Certainly, it is needed flexibility insight and teacher competence to develop children language skill with good planning, material selection and learning source appropriately. Children's literature is literature form that especially arranged according to children characteristic. Because of that fact, children's literature can be used as container and medium to develop language skill correspond with children world. With children's literature usage, can be developed various activity to develop listening, speaking, early reading, and early writing skill integrally in kindergarten. Related to that matter, in this article is discussed about thought of children's language skill development integrative through children's literature usage as a basis of learning to develop language.

### **Children Development Level**

The usage of children's literature as a basis of language development is possible as long as notice children readiness level in reception as well as do creative activity relate with children's literature. As for that readiness level very relate with cognitive development level and language development level.

Language readiness level relate with children's cognitive development. In their cognitive development process, it is needed parent help when their children be in zone of proximal development, it is distance between something that can be solved by themselves and something that can be solved with parents/teacher help in solving the problem (Berk, 1995:5).

In Piaget point of view, cognitive development grows earlier than language development, thought is reflected through language. In another side, Vigotsky concluded that language and thought evolve as one unity process. From that two points of view can be concluded that development of thought and language start from experience and it support each other and relate closely. Child learn to accept information through language and its usage, contrarily to use language is needed ability to organize thought (Ellis, 1989).

Child cognitive development according to Piaget insight includes four phases (1) motorist sensory, (2) preoperational, (3) concrete operational, (4) operational. Children in kindergarten age (5 – 6 years old) are on preoperational phase (3 – 7 years old) already able to think certain objects, its manipulation possibility, choose and arrange object concretely, and form perception till resulting new information. While, in their language development children in 5 – 6 years old already mastered basic sentence and complex, seen from correct sentence usage, pronoun, verb, long sentence with average of 6 – 8 words, vocabulary around 2.500 words, understand about 6.000 words, and respond up to 25.000 words (Woolfolk, 2009:42).

Children language development includes development skills of listening, speaking, early reading, and early writing. Although each skill called individually, but in its development process all of that skills progress through integrative process. Each aspect contributes each other toward another aspect development. Speaking development gives big contribution toward child's writing development (Dyson, in Bromsley, 1992). Likewise, listening development relates with speaking skill. Listening and speaking are two ways communication activity that is direct and face to face (Brooks, in Tarigan 1986). Listening skill also relate with reading and writing skill. In Piaget concept, children did writing activity before they read (in Dhieni N.,2007).

### **Language Learning in Kindergarten Children**

Language development happens since children begin maturing and interacting with their social environment. In accordance with their development, children learn language from their closest environment through natural process without learning program. Language learning is a continuous process, interactive, and has purpose

(Laughlin & Martin, 1987). Children begin learning to speak by imitating speech and observing interaction that are done by language user around them. Furthermore, children learning language are more than imitate what is said by another people but they construct their own self language that is used accordance with their own need and motivation. Therefore, children learn about conversation through direct immersion into a language environment which provides speech examples, which motivate to do conversation and interaction with other peoples.

Kindergarten children that come from literate family environment get many experiences through various reading facilities as well as tale before sleep that are provided by parent. But, for less fortunate children, they don't get such facilities. That's why when children enter kindergarten, teacher need to provide facility like reading books that can be basic for developing pre reading writing skill and developing positive attitude toward language learning. Literature as basis children's language development includes affective dimension, cognitive and skill.

Language development on children cannot be separated from learning context naturally and holistically as children's learning characteristic. Because of that fact, literature skill development also has to be meaningful, concrete, and involves children actively, holistically, with functional experience usage that cover listening, speaking, reading and writing activity (Morrow, 2003:3).

Moreover, language skill development on children must be done by considered development level and assumptions about language learning that is compatible with children age. Assumptions related to language learning will implicate toward learning and language development that is done in a planned and in a structured. Some experts state assumption about language learning on children (Burns, 1986) as follows: (1) children begin to learn and to write since their early life without formal education; (2) social interaction with family member and feedback that received is important thing for their literature development; (3) Showing children various writing for various purpose can improve children's literature; (4) society culture where children grow has very big influence to literature growth; (5) children understanding about language is integrate and meaningful, not separated; (6) children construct their language individually accordance with their understanding and purpose in language usage; (7) expectation

influence how children learn, high expectation often point children to learn more diligent; (8) reading and writing evolve at same time and relate each other; (9) children learn language by use it in meaningful ways; (10) language learning is a continuous process, begin from birth and happen a whole life.

Some of those assumptions presumably need to be made as reference when teacher will develop children's language in kindergarten. Before enter formal school and given lesson that more structured, children in early age already began to learn language in family environment. But, language learning that happens still intuitively, it means that children use language according to need but without metalinguistic awareness, without ability to think about language and its usage for certain purpose.

For teacher, need to be realized that children develop understanding about concept of word or sentence gradually through various experience. Because of that fact, teacher needs to provide various experiences to children to facilitate learning process that can develop all aspect of language skill. Language experience can be created by using children's literature as learning medium; it can be in a form of children story, poem, song lyric, rhyme and so on. However, literature usage as a basis to develop language skill in kindergarten must remain guided on applicable curriculum. In kindergarten's 2004 curriculum, language development achievement level include: (1) differentiate and imitate certain sound; (2) listening and story retelling in ordinal; (3) draw a picture and tell content of picture with several graffiti/note that already in form of letter/word; (4) tell about picture that provided or make by own self in sequence and in clear language; (5) read a book and tell the book content by point several words that they know; (6) connect and mention simple writing with symbol that represents it; (7) sort and tell content of picture series; (8) do 3 – 5 commands in chronological order correctly; (9) differentiate words that have same initial syllable (Depdiknas, 2009: 29-31).

### **Children's Literature**

Children's literature is an imaginative writing, both that is written by children or adult. Children's literature covers: folklore, fantasy story, fiction, poem, biography, science book (Stewig, 1980) that is delivered through story (Moore et al, 1986:18).

Children's literature is kind of literature that reflect children feeling and experience through children's eyes (Norton, D.E., in Tarigan, 1993). Children's literature in this writing refers to reading that contain children story that suitable with children age, such as children short story, folklore, fiction story, poem, or song lyric.

Language development based on literature in kindergarten did not teach knowledge about literature to children but use literature to stimulate and develop children's language skill. Language development ability can be done by use literature as basis learning. Children's literature text that write in form of book story, big book, magazine, picture book and etcetera can become medium to immerse children in language. However, need to be noted that literature usage in developing activity in kindergarten considers benefit of literature for children. As mention that through literature children get happiness, personal development, understanding about other peoples and surrounding, development of language skill, and development of knowledge (Ellis, 1989).

Children's literature has a potential to develop children's language ability, which is called education value in literature (Huck, 1987) and literature contribution (Ellis, 1989). Aside from its benefit for education aspect, children's literature usage as a basis development in kindergarten based on consideration that children like story. Manson's research result mentions that children like more narration story than non-narration book (in Cox, 1993).

Children's literature is good medium to help children understand family environment, society, and world (Santora, 2013). Furthermore, it is stated that book has benefit for children, such as trigger their imagination, develop vocabulary, and get better understanding about theirs and others. Literature also has a function as mirror that reflects theirs and also can become a window for children to explore world around them.

To support development from every aspects, literature that is used as medium of development in integrative, good literature need to be chosen and fulfill compatibility criteria with children development level. Several things that need to become consideration such as: storyline, characterization, theme, story background, illustration, and other considerations, such as values that contained in story, language that use is easy

to understand by children, can improve understanding toward society diversity, and so on (Santora, 2013).

### **Integrating Language Skill through Children's Literature**

Literature usage as basis in developing language skill in integrated can be done in various ways. Here are some strategies that are offered such as.

#### *1. Create Rich Writing Environment*

Supported environment language development need to be created by provided books or writings that design to grow interest and skill of early literature. Therefore, need efforts such as (1) provide various books that are attractive and content, (2) put good books at places that easy to reach by children.

Books that are provided have to be suitable with children development level. Research result about children interest in reading (Mason, in Cox, 1993) stated that children like more narrative story than non-narrative books. They also like story books that narrate story whether those are tense plot, action, and humor. Books that contain children's literature can be in form of comic in various kinds, for example fable, fantasy story, folklore, children adventure story, humor story, children poem collection, song lyric, children magazine, children short story, and so on.

Books arrangement can be created as comfort and pleasant reading corner for children. Books arrangement must easy to reach by children and give freedom to children to choose book that they like.

#### *2. Read Story To Teach Meaningful Word And Sound*

Story book is very good to develop pre reading. When teacher read to children a book, poem, or song, or reread a story, that activity can be used as a way to introduce meaningful words to develop vocabulary, teach sound, understanding, and reading strategy. Story books can be used to show relationship between oral language and words that written. By point words in book page when read it, children can understand that letters which arrange and ordered on that page contain significance story.

From this activity, teacher can ask to children about first word, last word, or certain words in a page after finish reading book for first time to get meaning of story. This is intended to understand meaning and get reading pleasure when a book is read

for a first time. To support this activity, book need to be duplicated so that each child gets one book that they can point words in their own book when teacher reading it. In this activity, it is better avoid using book to teach letter sound or words identification before children really know about the story, understand it, and like it.

Reading story activity or story telling can help children develop ability of pre reading and speaking. Research result shows that through story telling activity, reading ability in children can be improved (Meha, 2015), develop speaking ability in children 5 – 6 years old (Alfin, 2015).

### *3. Storytelling*

Storytelling activity can help children develop oral language ability also stimulate reading interest. By listening storytelling, children listen usage of beautiful language, rich language pattern, also develop listening ability and understanding.

Nowadays, storytelling techniques already change from just tell story. Many storytellers use costume, doll, make up, sound effect, and music equipment strengthen story. But, in children language development, teacher needs to create story atmosphere and equipment. Kaiser's research result (in Finn, 1993) shows that children more involve verbally and physically in story that is told without equipment than story that is told by using equipment.

### *4. Recount*

Through story that is read and told, children learn to listen and to observe story that is being read/told. Furthermore, through story speaking skill also can be trained by means of activity that is developed after storytelling, for example by playing drama activity or recounting a story that was read.

### *5. Play a Role Based on Story from a Book*

Play a role activity can be done after a story was read out to children. This activity gives chance to children to develop speaking skill. Through playing role game, children imitate the dialog from characters in the story that was read. This activity is good way to practice doing oral communication with another according to story that was heard.

### *6. Expressing Story In Form Of Picture/Writing*

Pre writing activity in kindergarten children can be done by emerged writing readiness, including give chance to children to hold pencil, make scratch, draw, color a picture, form a letter, or pretending to write. Drawing activity or expressing story relates to story in form of picture is one of strategy to develop pre writing skill. This activity, beside develop motor skill, imagination, children will also develop ability to arrange and organize symbols that able to symbolize idea or thought accordance with plot.

#### *7. Introducing Children with Literature and Writing*

Literature is very good to use for developing language and literature skill, developing values, building a fundamental knowledge, helping children to understand story form and giving children chance to think and to discuss story (Taylor & Strickland, in Burns, 1986).

Connecting children with book is equally important with connecting children with writings that they see in their previous environment. In fact, book is a toll that can be used by teacher to make connections. By using various books, teacher can help children to find book that interesting for them. By read book every day, children will story warehouse or books that they know and they like. It is better, if teacher also show to children who are the author as well as book illustrators. This will help children recognize book author and develop love toward book.

### **Conclusion**

Language skill development for early age children is an effort to give corner stone that very determine for the successful children language development on the next phase. To give best helping service for children, kindergarten teacher must take foothold that view language as whole integrity, including oral language and written, whether receptive as well as expressive. Listening skill, speaking, reading and writing are skills that relate and complete each other. Hence, in its development those four language skills have to be done integrally.

Literature usage as a medium to develop language integrally is good strategy considering children's literature has benefit aside from developing language aspect, also carry moral massage and value, as well as developing imagination. Literature usage in developing language skill integrally can be done by reading story technique and

storytelling, giving children chance to recount the story that was read, giving children chance to express story that was read in form of picture/scratch, and play a role/drama that correspond with plot that was read, as well as introduce children with various literature form. Through those activities it is expected that listening skill, speaking, pre reading, and pre writing can evolve naturally, also emerge enjoyment toward literature.

Kindergarten teachers not only emphasize oral language development, but also they have to build foundation for successful children learning in oral language. They should help children not only for being competent in term of oral language usage and preparation to master written language but also make children like to participate in language activity through literature.

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