

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

People sometimes have to deal with the problems in their verbal communication in which they are facing a difficult moment to convey what they really want to say. In this case, when people do conversing, they sometimes encounter a moment when they know what the concept of the thing they want to talk about, but they cannot make it into an utterance. It can disturb the process of communication, which makes it less effective and sometimes time consuming. This phenomenon, according to Brown and McNeill (1966), is called tip of the tongue.

Tip of the tongue is a condition where we know what we want to say but it sticks in our mind. The concept we are thinking cannot be formulated into a word. Individuals who experience this condition cannot pronounce those words properly. They only remember some parts of the word such as its syllable or letter. This condition could happen to every language speakers. It could also happen in their vernacular language. Tip of the tongue does occur because the words are rarely used. They know what the word is but there is a block in accessing that target word. Everyone is possible to encounter such phenomenon, from children, youngsters, until adults. Here are two examples of tip of the tongue that most likely to happen in daily conversation by native speakers of Indonesian and native speakers of English.

Example 1:

F1: I was in a book store to buy my brother a comic. When I was at home, he said that the comic he wanted to buy has red color in its cover. I completely forgot the title he told me. The only thing I could remember was that the comic is about a teenager and her school's life. He also slightly told me about the general plot of the story. Another clue I had to look for the comic was the name of some characters. Unfortunately, I could not remember the two critical parts of the comic, that was the title and the author. I was in frustration searching for the comic so that I simultaneously checking for the book in comic section's shelves in hope that I could trigger my memory recess. However, I failed to find it after an hour of search. I then decided to have my lunch near the bookstore. I was enjoying my meal and was not thinking about anything, but surprisingly the title of the comic was popping up into my mind. It is *The Meaning of Life and Other Stuff*.

F2: I know, it must have been so frustrating for you. I am glad that you finally could remember it so that it will not haunt you anymore

Example 1 above shows that the speaker totally forgot the title of the book she wanted to buy. She could only recall her memory about the color of the book's cover, the name of the characters, and also the plot which is sometimes written in the back of the book. In this case, it can be inferred that the speaker was experiencing the state of tip of the tongue (Brown and McNeill 1966) whereas she experienced the moment when she had a greater feeling of knowing but she was unable to retrieve the phonological label.

In addition, such phenomenon could also be experienced by native speakers of Indonesian. Here is the example 2 of a conversation done by Indonesian native speakers:

Example 2:

F1: *Eh apa sih istilah buat orang yang pinter banget? Wan.. wan apa gitu. Aku inget depannya cen... ada huruf k nya juga kok.. hmm.. aduh aku tahu loh kata itu.. kok lupa sih*

F2: *Maksudnya cendekiawan?*

F1: *Nahhh iya itu, cendekiawan*

From the examples above, it can be inferred that the speaker F1 wanted to say the word *cendekiawan* but she only had a clue about the first and last syllables, and the middle letter of the target word, that is *cen*, *wan* and the letter *k*. The speaker in the example above also experienced tip of the tongue phenomenon as the cues she gave displayed the characteristic of tip of the tongue phenomenon. Brown and McNeill (1966) suggested that the partial information she had during tip of the tongue state strongly suggests that she was in the state of partial activation of memory retrieval, even though the target word she intended to say was not directly accessible. That phenomenon might happen because the speaker uses this word seldomly. Therefore, even though she has the knowledge about the concept of this word and has already known the word before, she still encounters the tip of the tongue phenomenon. Furthermore, this knowledge can actually be proven by the accuracy of the recalling process of the word, whether it is a success or the act of the recognition of the word failed (Brown and McNeill 1966).

Brown and McNeill (1966) classified tip of the tongue into positive and negative state. However, there is also occasion in which unresolved tip of the tongue occurs. Positive tip of the tongue is one for which the participants know the target words and their responses can be scored as either accurate or inaccurate. The participants could produce the utterances even though it is not always correct answers. As opposed to

positive tip of the tongue state, a negative tip of the tongue state is one for which the correct answers given to the participants are judged as not the target words and that consequently makes them cannot recall the target word. Unresolved tip of the tongue is an occasion in which the subjects are unable to pronounce any utterance at all. During this tip of the tongue state, the subjects tend to be completely silent.

The accuracy of information they produced when they are in tip of the tongue state can be scored from the explicit guesses they construct during the word retrieval process. The explicit guesses that can be considered as influential to account this phenomenon are initial letter, number of syllables, words with similar sound, and words with similar meaning. In addition, for tip of the tongue occurs as the result of the exasperation feeling of being unable to recall the target word, some people might also produce pauses during this moment.

Tip of the tongue is an intriguing phenomenon that makes academicians, especially psycholinguists, interested in conducting research about it. Above all, the reason is because tip of the tongue is a temporary inability in retrieving words that people certain they know. However, it is still a normal condition that everyone from any age might encounter (Schwartz and Metcalfe 2010). It is considered as a normal phenomenon because when someone feels there is a particular block in accessing target word, there will always be a resolution following that feeling eventually. This block will be opened after minutes of time. It might also take days or weeks to resolve the tip of the tongue. The resolution sometimes occurs as ‘pop-ups’ when the person does not even try to

make scene. It also sometimes appears in cases which the person is unaware of what the thing that leads them to the resolution. It is possible for the person not to have the idea of which word triggers the emergence of that missing word.

Therefore, there are numerous studies which have been conducted worldwide regarding this topic. Yarmey (1973), Goulet and Ska (1994), James and Burke (2000), Gollan and Acenas (2004), and Rahman, Kushartanti, and Anjarningsih (2017) conducted research about tip of the tongue phenomenon related to aging effect. They rather directed their focus on tip of the tongue experienced by adults. In opposite, Elbers (1985) and Masterson, Druks, and Gallienne (2008) drew their attention to the tip of the tongue occurrences in children.

The instruments used to elicit the occurrence of tip of the tongue were various. Elbers (1985) did not use any particular instrument in her study. Instead, she did the research on the daily based conversation between her and her son. Yarmey (1973), Goulet and Ska (1994), Gollan and Acenas (2004), and Masterson, Druks, and Gallienne (2008) used pictures naming task as the instrument. Specifically, Masterson Druks, and Gallienne (2008) compared the recall for object and action picture naming in children. In contrasts, James and Burke (2000) used prime word pronunciation as the stimuli whilst Rahman, Kushartanti, and Anjarningsih (2017) used Indonesian term definitions as the instrument.

Some of the previous studies focused on only one native language (Yarmey 1973, Elbers 1985, Goulet and Ska 1994, James and Burke 2000, Rahman, Kushartanti and

Anjarningsih 2017). Gollan and Acenas (2004), in contrast, also drew their attention to the comparison between monolingual and bilingual adults who speak Spanish-English and Tagalog-English in terms of tip of the tongue condition. Yarmey (1973) was focusing his research on the effect of verbal and imaginal encoding on word retrieving. Elbers (1985) investigated the word-finding problems during the process of lexical search in children. Meanwhile, Goulet and Ska (1994) were interested in testifying the relation between age decline and the accuracy of picture-naming. James and Burke (2000) conducted a research which focused on the effect of phonological priming on the process of word retrieval experienced by young and older adults. Masterson, Druks, and Gallienne (2008) explored the advantage of noun in children's language acquisition. Rahman, Kushartanti, and Anjarningsih (2017) did a research which aimed at explaining the possibility of tip of the tongue and at what form of Indonesian speakers can recall the target word in tip of the tongue condition.

Most of the previous studies above focused on the youngsters and adults (Yarmey 1973, Goulet and Ska 1994, James and Burke 2000, Gollan and Acenas 2004, Rahman, Kushartanti and Anjarningsih 2017). There are also studies which were attempted to explore more about the tip of the tongue experienced by children. However, none of them had conducted studies on tip of the tongue in Bahasa Indonesia experienced by children aged 4-6 years old (in this case, preschoolers) before. Children aged 4-6 years old are chosen as the participants because in this age they are in an active phase of learning about their language (Kuhl 2004). Tassoni stated that in this phase, children

tend to have reached their important mark in language acquisition process and linguistically facile but they still encounter “virtuous” error (2007). The object naming is arguably to be learnt and acquired by children quickly rather than action naming (Masterson, Druks and Gallienne 2008). According to Kozlovskiy et al. (2017), it also appears to be a complex task which entangles numerous interacting affective and cognitive processes. Yet, children appear to easily recognise and remember pictures rather than words and definitions. Therefore, the instrument used in this study is picture naming as it is essential to help activate children’s brain functional systems. This present study is under a research project by Masitha Achmad Syukri as the lecturer of Psycholinguistics in English Department at Universitas Airlangga entitled *Tips of the Tongue Experienced by Indonesian Children in Picture Naming*.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

There is a possibility for an individual at any range of age to have tip of the tongue when she or he is conversing with the others. It seems to be a common thing to find adults having pauses and difficulty to find their intended words to say. Thus, it is interesting to see how tip of the tongue state is experienced by children since it is kind of a rare topic to conduct. Based on the phenomena explained earlier, the writer formulated the research question as follows:

1. What is the state of tip of the tongue experienced by Indonesian preschoolers aged 4-6 years old in Surabaya in picture naming?

2. What is the frequency of the tip of the tongue state occurrences experienced by Indonesian preschoolers aged 4-6 years old in Surabaya in picture naming?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In accordance with the statements of the problem above, the purpose of this study is to identify the state of tip of the tongue experienced by Indonesian preschoolers aged 4-6 years old when they are asked to name pictures presented to them in Bahasa Indonesia. Other than that, this study also attempts to figure out the frequency of tip of the tongue state occurrences experienced by the participants.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is concerned with Psycholinguistic study, thus it might give both theoretical and practical contribution. Tip of the tongue is a speech error which disrupts the process of communication for it causes a pause within. This phenomenon belongs to the area of speech production which belongs to Psycholinguistics. Moreover, tip of the tongue occurrence is also closely related to the lexical access in speech production. Theoretically, this present study is expected to contribute in Psycholinguistics as the evidence that psychological phenomenon occurs in linguistic field, one of which is tip of the tongue (TOT). This study is also expected to expand the knowledge of Psycholinguistics as well as be a reference for further research in accordance with the topic of tip of the tongue since this topic is rarely done. Practically, this study is expected to motivate preschoolers' teachers and parents to expose more the vernacular language to the children, especially about common knowledge, in their early childhood

learning in order to maximise their cognitive growth as this range of age is the critical moment of their development.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Tip of the tongue (TOT) : a common type of speech error whereas a person is facing temporary inaccessibility of retrieving the desired word yet he or she feels the intense feeling of knowing the word which one has knowledge about (Brown and McNeill 1966).

Speech production : a process when individuals produce utterances in order to communicate with others through three stages namely conceptualization, formulation, and articulation (W. J. Levelt 1989).

Memory retrieval : a fundamental process of memory processing in which individuals recall or retrieve the knowledge stored in their brain (Szapiro, et al. 2002).

Lexical storage : the way in which lexical entries are managed to be stored (Booij 1999).

Picture naming : an elementary process in the use of language in which individual name the picture given to them (Glaser 1992).

Preschoolers : children whose age is around 4-6 and is not enough to attend school yet but are no longer babies, thus they join preschool in their early age to get early education (World Health Organisation).