CHAPTER II
GENERAL DESCRIPTION
OF THE OBJECT OF THE STUDY

II.A. LEVELS OF READING TO BE ATTAINED

Learning to read is too complicated a task to take into one bite. To make it seem less complicated, Taylor and Taylor, in their book *Psychology of Reading* (1983) devide it into four levels which they state as no more than convenient signpost planted along a continuum.

II.A.1. LEVEL 1: LETTER AND WORD RECOGNITION

Level 1 is divided into a lower and a higher Level 1. The Lower Level 1 skill, that of matching a visual pattern directly to an object, is not all that staggering. Even chimpanzees attain this level of reading. For example, Sarah (the name of a chimpanzee) learned about 130 words, colored shapes that stood for objects (Premack in Taylor and Taylor 1983: 354). A human infant should be able to attain this level of reading before the tenth month, certainly before he learns to talk. One of Sarah's trainers taught four of the chimp's plastic words

19

to her own daughter at 10 months, before the child was talking.

Congenitally deaf preschoolers have been taught to recognize many words and simple phrases in Sweden and in Japan (taylor and Taylor 1983: 354). Children of deaf parents try to sign their first words as early as six months, several months before normal children make their first spoken words. Apparently, language is delayed not so much by its cognitive difficulty as by the fine muscular control needed to operate the articulators of speech. Reading at this level may actually be easier than talking.

At higher Level 1, to read a word is to match the visual pattern with a sound pattern already known to refer to something in the world. The sound pattern is first-order abstraction, and the visual pattern for this sound pattern is a second-order abstraction. Matching a visual pattern of a word to its sound pattern, and learning to match the same visual pattern to a concept, represent the two paralel sides of reading.

II.A.2. LEVEL 2: SENTENCE READING

Sarah the chimpanzee could read and compose sentences. For example, she once wrote the command *Give*

apple Gussie, and the apple was promptly given to other chimp. The mistake was never repeated--one trial learning! She was also able to read slightly more complex but still concrete sentences such as *Sarah take banana if-then Mary no give chocolate* . Sarah, who dearly loved chocolate, would not take the banana. In principle, a child needs to learn only one or two words to read simple sentences such as *Baca!*(Ind., means *Read*) and *Ibu Ani*(Ind., means *Mrs Ani*).

II.A.3.LEVEL 3: STORY READING

At Level 3, a child reads stories with plots. If stories are written sufficiently simply and yet interestingly, even a 2:6 year-old could be enticed to read. For this story level of reading, Taylor and Taylor (1983) give one example of simple method of teaching reading. A child would be taught, first, to arrange three to six pictures in a sequence that follows a plot; next, to apply a one word caption that describes each picture sequence ("No," "Yes," "Don't!"); then to predict, by saying aloud the one-word caption, what would come next in a sequence. This level can come before or after the sentence level, but it is probably not accesible to chimpanzees.

II.A.4. LEVEL 4: READING FOR ITS OWN SAKE

At Level 4, and perhaps at Level 3, we must say goodbye to chimps and concentrate on children. A child reads for its own sake--that is, because she enjoys reading and wants to find out what will happen next in a story. Or, she wants to find out events that are happening in faraway places and that happened long ago. When a child has learned to read, she reads to learn. A child is not an accomplished reader unless she attains this level.

II.B. VERBAL TASKS ON READING

Verbal tasks, proposed by Taylor and Taylor (1983), are a set of tasks designed to predict American prekindergaten children's performance in reading. These tasks do correlate well with child' later reading achievement, due to of their variables which have positive correlation with reading. Samuels (Gibson and Levin 1985: 286) has elaborated a conventional view that paired associate learning is the basic process involved in early acquisition of reading skill. As he put it:

In the beginning stages of learning to read, there are several types of skills which the child called upon to master which, in essence, are paired associate learning tasks. For example, the child may be required to learn letter names, letter sounds, grapheme cluster sounds and oral responses for whole words. In each of these tasks, the child is given a printed verbal stimulus to which he

must learn to associate a verbal response.

When the cue and the appropriate response are hooked up, we can say that the learner is able to read or recognize the word.

Therefore, verbal tasks on reading are considered an appropriate hook to know whether child is able to reach higher task, i.e. word recognition task. As has been stated in the definition of key terms above, Taylor and Taylor's verbal tasks cover four child's skills--naming letters, visual-auditory paired associates, reversals, and categories. The first three tasks are cognitive tasks which assess child's cognitive capacity that takes place in the active child's mind. The last task is perceptual task which assesses child's skill on semantic judgement--that is, his ability in identifying category of observable objects. All in all, these four tasks contain four complete aspects of semantic information needed in reading (reading words), and thought process (perceptual and cognitive skills). Implicitly, Taylor and Taylor (1983) state that the tasks are important since besides revealing child's linguistic maturity, they can also be the basic consideration for higher task (e.g., visual word recognition).

In this study, I use Taylor and Taylor's verbal tasks for the reason of unavailability of related reference in Indonesian as well as the validity of the

tasks in predicting reading achievement. However, since I want to find out the precise reading ability, under this heading I add visual word recognition task.

Visual word recognition involves not only word and letter units but also units in between the two, such as common letters, letter clusters and syllables. Word recognition for early reader is characterized by word naming (reading a word aloud). It is because word naming still demands a precision of response not needed in normal reading. Besides, it also demands a phonetic coding, which may or may not be used in normal reading. However, word naming is one close step to normal reading since words presented to the child are words that the child knows the meanings (Taylor and Taylor 1990: 177). Therefore, the isolated visual words presented to the subjects of this study are also those which the children use in speech (e.g.,*topi, babi, roti, sepeda, boneka*= Ind., mean *hat, pig, bread, bicycle, doll*)

Due to the fact that Taylor and Taylor provide only the guidelines of verbal tasks, the tasks in this study are patterned after Morrow and Smith's (1990) detailed description of American reading readiness tests.

In devising the tasks, first of all, I made list of task characteristics, and then I sorted out the characteristics into areas that seemed to capture the essence of the tasks. These characteristics fell into

three broad categories: skills assessed, presentation factors, and response characteristics. Then, each of the three categories was subdivided to capture the aspects of the tasks. The subcategories of these three broad categories are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Complete List of Task Categories, Subcategories, and Areas

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I. Skills Assessed
     A.Sound and Symbol Concepts
        1.Visual-Auditory Paired Associates
        2. Naming Letters
           a. Naming Uppercase Letters
           b. Matching Letters (Matching Uppercase to
              Lowercase Letters)
        3. Reversal
     B.Semantic Concept
     C.Literacy: Word Recognition

II. Presentation
     A.Mode
        1. Auditory
        2. Visual
     B.Unit of Presentation
        1. Graphemic
        2. Word

III. Response
     A.Level of Processing
        1. Identification
        2. Matching
     B.Unit of Presentation
        1. Letter
        2. Word
     C.Child Response Activity
        1. Point
        2. Oral
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II.B.1 SKILL ASSESSED

In this category each subtask is classified

according to the skill that is being assessed. The skills in this research fall into three major areas: symbol and sound concepts, semantic concept, and literacy.

In my scheme, symbol and sound concepts included specific skills of visual-auditory paired associates, naming letters, and reversal. Basically, the three tasks assess child's knowledge of letter names. Visual-auditory paired associates task is assessed by asking the child to identify printed lowercase letters with stimulus letters read by the examiner. This task comprises 12 items. Naming letter task is divided into two subtasks--naming uppercase letters and matching uppercase to lowercase letters. Each of the subtask comprises 15 items and 5 items.

The second major area that is assessed in this research is the child's ability to categorize a class of objects. The task comprised eight items.

The third area in this major skill category assesses child's ability to read simple words. Items of this type look at the child's ability to recognize open-syllable-final of bisyllabic and trisyllabic simple content words without affixation. Mainly because I could not find an appropriate major skill slot in which to place it, I put word recognition as the third type of task in this category as Literacy. Items of this type comprises 24

items.

II.B.2. PRESENTATION

In this category, I look at the ways the items are presented to the child. Two subcategories of the presentation of the items are considered: mode and unit. In the *mode* of presentation, each item is classified in terms of primary mode of presentation. The modes of presentation used in the assessement in this research are auditory and visual. An item that is presented using an *auditory* mode is one in which the child is to respond to something the examiner said. For example; "*Mawar, melati, dan anggrek adalah nama?* (Ina., means rose, jasmine, and orchid are names of...). Items that are presented using a *visual* mode required that the child respond to something that is printed on the task sheet--that is in letter and word. The *unit* of presentation refers to the type of stimulus that the child is asked to respond to---grapheme and word . See Figure 1 for examples of these various levels of unit of presentation.

II.B.3. RESPONSE

This category of children's responses has three subcategories: Level of processing, Unit of response or stimulus type, and Child response mode. The *level of*

processing requires the child to respond correctly to an item that ranges from identification to matching. *An identification* item is one that requires the child to name the letter. *A matching* item is one that asks the child to match an auditory with visual stimulus.

Unit of response (or stimulus type) looks at the stimulus that the child is to use to indicate the correct answer to the item. The unit of response are letter and word.

The child *response mode* is simply a categorization of what the child has to do to respond to the item. The response modes are oral and pointing responses. See Figure 1 for examples of levels of unit of presentation and unit of response.

Figure 1. Units of Presentation and Units of Response

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│ Presentation: Graphemic          Response: Graphemic         │
│                                                              │
│      B │ o   c h   b                                         │
│                                                              │
│ What the child hears : Cari huruf yang  sama dengan yang     │
│                        ada dikotak (Find the letter that     │
│                        has  the same name  as the letter     │
│                        box)                                  │
│                                                              │
│ Presentation: Written Word           Response: Word          │
│                                                              │
│    b u k u (Ind.,means book)                                 │
│                                                              │
│                                                              │
│ What the child hears : Bacalah (Ind., means Read!)           │
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II.C. DIALECT, SECOND LANGUAGE, AND READING

Indonesia is one of many countries where languages used in reading and speaking can differ. At higher level of learning to read (at primary school level), children who speak vernaculars must learn standard Indonesian along with reading. In fact, reading is the main vehicle through which standard Indonesian is learned. From Sociolinguistic point of view, this happens because Indonesian sosiety is a diglossic community in which several language varieties live side by side.

Malang is a semi-urban area where a regional dialect (Javanese) is apparently still widely used in daily verbal communication, while Indonesian is acknowledged as second language. As a vernacular, Javanese differ from Indonesian both in phonology (e.g., *meja-mejo; gula-gulo; setrika-setliko* = Ind.,-Jav., mean *table; sugar; iron*) and vocabulary (e.g., *belajar-sinau; pergi-lunga; ayam-pitik* = Ind.,-Jav., mean *study; leave; chicken*). Thus, it is reasonable if some preschool children who are learning to read experience a mismatch between home-language and language in reading. A mismatch *per se* is not a handicap in learning to read. As has been stated in the theoretical framework that beginning reading can really help children expand their vocabulary as well as to acquire second language.

In my observation a mismatch occurs primarily on

phonology. For example, phoneme /e/ in the word *sepeda* [   ] is sounded out as / / so that the word is pronounced as [   ]. Or, when being asked to read a Javanese word *saka* [   ], a child undergoes a confusion that makes him pronounce the word as [   ]. Thus, the regional dialect (Javanese) interferes reading. Indonesian has a more regular ortography-letter pattern. It maps to sound by way of single letter representing single phoneme. That is why, learning to read Indonesian words is considered easier than to read Javanese words. Inevitably, along with learning to read, children also train the phonology of Indonesian which accelerates their speech development.

CHAPTER III
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA