

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Autism occurs in the brain. Scientists call this phenomenon as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). Children with autism may have a language delay and can have an IQ at any level (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). Furthermore, specific theories regarding to the cause of autism have not been proven yet, but some researchers argue that it starts from a psychoanalytic perspective of the parent-child relationship – psychological causes, to organic – neurological and mutation causes, genetic, and biochemical – illness and other biological causes (Bernstein & Tiegerman-Farber, 2008). In this point, autism is recognized by several aspects such as social interaction barrier, the lack of cognitive capacity and communication skill, and language acquisition delay.

Children with autism are characterized by having social interaction barrier. The social features of the diagnosed autism includes the difficulties in appropriate initiation, maintenance, and termination of the social interactions, of the understanding others' feeling and thought, and of perceiving the impact of one's behavior on others (Gabriels & Hill, 2007). Autistic children seem rarely doing social interaction which limits their language development. In this situation, they cannot catch many words, utterances, expressions, and actions which are shown by their parents, especially their mothers. It is as the result of low cognitive

capacity in learning and supported with their unique behavior. Therefore, Autism is often identically related to the abnormal behavior.

Furthermore, the idea that comes up is that the lack of social interaction, which impacts to the language development of the children with autism, affects to the communication skill. Basically, it is a disorder condition which shows the lack of cognitive capacity and communication skill (Gabriels & Hill, 2007). Based on research on autism, it shows that approximately 50% of the autism population does not develop effective communication ability. In this case, the writer can take a view that the communication is as the core feature which occurs in autism (Gabriels & Hill, 2007).

Autistic children also acquire a language. "Language is not an autonomous system for communication which is embedded in and supplemented by gesture, gaze, stance, facial expression, and voice quality in the full array of options which people can use to communicate (Clark, 2003)." As what Clark explains, the communication problem is the barrier in language acquisition process of the autistic children. Autism is a complex disorder of the central nervous system which is actually the cause of the communication problem occurred in autism. It is believed that one of the major characteristics of the autistic syndrome is an important delay in language acquisition (Foudon, Reboul & Manificat, 2007). Therefore, when the language acquisition is delayed, the language development of autistic children will not be the same as what happens in normal children.

The writer is interested to take a research on autistic children since the writer considers that autism is a unique mental condition of human being.

Physically, autistic children are completely the same with other children but mentally not. It leads the writer to get curious in holding a research on oral language production as the language development in autistic children. The big reason for the writer's interest in this research is the small number of research studying about autism in Indonesia. The evidence of this situation can be seen from the low number of literatures about autism in Indonesia. We can find many scientific books and researches but they do not use Indonesian children and Indonesian language as the subject of research. It means that there are still limited data and evidence which show the language development of Indonesian autistic children.

Furthermore, the research which the writer would like to hold is focusing on the syntactic development in autistic children. In the case of autism, the writer would like to elaborate the theoretical evidence of the cause of autism related to the language development by using syntax as the field of study. Meanwhile, the reason why the writer chooses syntax is that it studies about the component of grammar which determines how words are combined together to form phrases and sentences (Radford, 2004). Looking at the sentence structure of simple, compound, and complex sentence, in syntax field, the writer would like to find out the language development of autistic children. The longer interval between first words and first combinations of sentence production in autistic children might be explained by a slower acquisition of lexicon which leads to syntactic delay (Foudon, Reboul, & Manificat, 2008).

In this research, Indonesian is taken as the language medium of the research of autism used by the research. It means that all the evidence of language verbally produced by autistic child uses Indonesian as the language. Therefore, the writer would like to find the evidence of syntactic delay of Indonesian in autism linked with the sentence structure produced.

As stated earlier, because communication and social skills are interdependent, the characteristics and features of autism regarding social relations contribute to the child's significant difficulty in using verbal language skills to effectively communicate (Special Education Services, 2010). In this case, the level of verbal communication regarding the sentence production in autistic children remains low. Looking at this phenomenon, the autistic children commonly create a very simple sentence with unstructured sentences. The writer has found some phenomena in an autistic child when he was asked by the therapist: *Mau gambar apa, Rama?*, then he answered: *Bis kota, pom bensin*. What the autistic child produced was the form of compound sentence. There should have been "and" to link the two sentences instead of pause. Therefore, in order to prove this phenomenon, the writer would like to see the verbal sentence structure production, simple, compound, and complex sentences, of the Indonesian autistic children as one of language skill and development.

The writer has chosen 'Cakra-Autism Center,' which is the school from children with autism. However, the writer would like to take a 5 (five) year old child in that therapy center as the sample of the research. Bernstein & Tiegerman-Farber (2008) states that autism can be seen by age 3 (three) years old. In this

case, the writer considers that the five-year-old child is suitable to be researched since this child has been medically checked toward the autism symptoms.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

Related to the condition of autistic child which makes this child get barrier in language acquisition and development, the writer blows the critical questions regarding the syntactic field of the phenomenon. It means that the writer would like to take the phenomenon in Indonesian five years old autistic child's language development in syntactic aspect, the sentence structure as what is explained previously, as the analytical evidence of composing Indonesian sentence ability regarding this following statement of the problems: How is the structure of simple, compound, and complex sentence produced by an Indonesian five-year-old autistic child?

1.3. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to find out and describe the sentence structure of compound, and complex sentences, produced by an Indonesian autistic child aged 5 (five) years old. The writer uses limitation in the research by focusing on the speaking activities such as conversation between the participant and the therapist.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give meaningful contribution to psycholinguistics and syntax development focusing on autism in Indonesia as the sophisticated analytical information source which uses Indonesian child as the sample of the research in looking the universal phenomenon, syntactical aspect, the sentence structure in autism. The data contained in this study can be helpful to the students who are concerned linguistics to explore the analysis of the sentence structure verbally produced by the autistic children. Furthermore, it will provide references for other studies related to syntax development in Indonesian autistic children. Also, the writer hopes that this study can give contribution in further research and invention related to autism and its syntax development. At last but not least, this study will be meaningful for the parents and teachers of autistic children in terms of language teaching and therapy in order to improve the level of speaking.

1.6. Definitions of Key Terms

In “Sentence Structure Produced by an Indonesian Five-Year-Old Autistic Child of Cakra-Autism Center Surabaya” there are some important terms used to clarify the meanings and context as followed:

Autism : the most severe developmental disability which involves impairments in social interaction, such as being aware of other people’s feelings and verbal-and-nonverbal communication (American Psychological Association, 2010).

- Sentence Structure** : basic parts of a sentence, the subject, the verb, and (often, but not always) the object, which can be combined and arranged in countless ways. It consists of simple, compound, and complex sentence. (Nordquist, 2011).
- Simple Sentence** : a basic sentence which consists of one clause, complete elements, and general word order of the elements, but does not contain interrogative and negation (Alwi, Dardjowidjojo, Lapoliwa, & Moeliono, 2003).
- Compound Sentence** : having more than one clause so it has at least two predicates as a unit of sentence. Also, it has coordinative relationship among the clauses (Alwi et al, 2003).
- Complex Sentence** : having more than one clause so it has at least two predicates as a unit of sentence (Alwi et al, 2003).

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

