

ABSTRACT

Young children are sensitive to changes and should be accustomed to knowing new things including schooling. Kindergarten functions as the young children mental and physic anticipation before attending the formal schooling.

No need to say that as part of language development, all children learn to define words consciously or not. Those children learn to define words to get the same point of understanding, so they become active members of families, peer groups and societies.

Children's maturity in defining words increases as they grow older. Gradually, definitions become more sophisticated. Based on maturity input theory, I do a research on kindergartners' ability to define words.

One of the factors that influences a child's ability to define words is the age growth. A child's maturity in learning to define words increases with age, which is partly caused by the cognitive development. The older a child is, the more complete word definition he gives. Moreover, vocabulary is so dependent upon experiential background, dialect, culture, and other social variables.

This study attempts to provide a real description about kindergartners language – skill that is their ability to define words along with their intellectual development. Only few adults know that the ability to define words can be a measurement of children's intelligence. As yielded by Stanford Binet that word definition is one item of a verbal intelligence test.

List of the defined words are taken from the one made by Nelson. To make it easier to define and appropriate with Indonesian culture, I choose four out of six categories.

The results of my observation reveal that kindergarten children show an average ability in defining words. At the age of 4 – 5, they seem to be competent in defining general and specific nominals, action words, as well as modifier. It should be borne in mind that it is not only the cognitive ability that influences their answers which reflects their thought, but also some other factors such as the situation of conversation time, the way the mothers ask the questions and the kindergartners' personal belongings and experiences.

The kindergarten children at this age are able to define words in immature way. The analysis results reveal that they give almost complete semantic markers on general and specific nominals. On the contrary to nominals, verb definitions get less semantic markers. Meanwhile the informants' modifier definitions are also immature in that they are not able to define adjective in mature way.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION