

IMPROVING PHONETICS AWARENESS OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS TO ERADICATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOSSILIZATION AMONG KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

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Abstract

Children's language development is largely determined by the surrounding environment. This is often associated with the opinion of experts who say that children at an early age have a 'golden period' to absorb and imitate what they hear. The abilities of absorbing and imitating need to be understood thoroughly both by parents at home and educators who deal directly with young children so that phonological fossilization does not occur. One way to reduce phonological fossilization is to increase teacher awareness about phonology because not all teachers who teach in kindergartens are graduates of English Education courses. In this community service program, the teacher is first given a pre-test to measure initial abilities. Furthermore, teachers were given knowledge and exercises related to phonology with several teaching techniques. At the end of the meeting, the teachers were given a post-test and the post test results showed a significant improvement of their phonetics awareness..

Keywords: phonological awareness; fossilization; children.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language skills, which include communication skills, develop very rapidly in children at an early age. This is often associated with the opinion of experts who say that children at an early age have a 'golden period' to absorb and imitate what they hear. The ability to absorb and imitate this needs to be understood thoroughly by parents at home, especially by educators who deal directly with children at an early age. In the world of kindergarten education, language skills become one of the abilities developed through learning activities. Language skills that are developed are often not only the mother language, in this context Indonesian, but often also English is one of the languages introduced. Qualified resources, especially when introducing English to kindergarten students must of course always support the development of language skills. Little mistakes made by teachers in kindergarten when developing the intelligence of students, especially introducing English can result in conditions that are often known in the science of language development as fossilization.

Al-Irsyad Kindergarten, which is located on Jl. Pekojan No. 10 Empang Bogor, is one of the A accredited kindergartens that continues to grow. The number of teachers actively involved in teaching at the Kindergarten level is as many as seven people. One of

the activities carried out in this kindergarten is to learn English vocabulary. However, the resources of this kindergarten do not yet fully support one of the English learning activities. None of the kindergarten teachers are graduates of educational studies programs or have an English education background. This has an impact on the process of introducing vocabulary in English which is done by using two languages, namely Indonesian and English. However, the use of Indonesian in this activity is more dominant. As explained above, this situation has the potential to make fossilization of English in kindergarten students, especially in the type of phonological fossilization. This is because the use of Indonesian in the introduction of vocabulary in English both in terms of giving instructions or others is one of the factors that can lead to fossilization.

Fossilization is a condition that occurs during the process of mastering a foreign language, which is a condition that does not allow a foreign language learner, the focus in this discussion is English, to the level of 'native-like'. Fossilization can occur at any age. However, this condition most often occurs in learners who begin the learning process when they are adults (Oyama:1976, Shumin [1]). Wei [2] also emphasizes that fossilization (1) can occur at each different language level, and (2) can occur at each stage of

foreign language learning. From this information, it can be concluded that at the time of the process of learning English, fossilization is a condition that will inevitably occur.

Furthermore, Wei [2] explains that fossilization in English learning consists of phonological fossilization, morphological fossilization, syntactic fossilization, semantic fossilization and pragmatic fossilization. Of the five types of fossilization, the type of fossilization that is often found and also the focus of this community service activity is phonological fossilization, a condition where frequent phonological errors occur that result in errors in the pronunciation and production of words from the language studied (Wei [2]). Scarella and Oxford [3] cited by Shumin [1] also emphasize that phonological fossilization can have an impact on one's limited ability to be able to speak words in languages that are studied fluently. Although the learner can speak words and sentences fluently, but there are still other parts such as intonation, emphasis and other elements related to the phonology of the language that cannot be mastered perfectly. This condition often results in misunderstandings in the communication process.

In addition to the learning factors of English that begin in adulthood, other factors that can make fossilization occur are the influence of mother tongue (Thanasoulas [4]), and the lack of use of target languages in the learning process (Elliot [5]; Rosyid: [6]).

Activity Purpose: The aim of the program is to eradicate fossilization among students of kindergarten which might be caused by the unawareness of the teachers on phonological aspects of English language. It is expected that when the teachers are aware of phonological aspects of English language then the students will not undergo phonological fossilization.

II. METHODS

Location and Time

The program was conducted from April to May 2019. It was located at TK Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah on Jl. Pekojan No. 10, Empang Bogor.

Method

First of all the program was initiated by giving a pre-test on phonological awareness to the teachers. In the next meeting, the team presented some materials related to phonological awareness and what danger might be caused by English language fossilization when children encounter it. The first material is about the concept of phonology. Basic concepts such as speech organs, word production, and fossilizations are introduced. Next, the teachers are asked to list nouns which are used frequently when they are teaching their students. Those words are then translated into English and practiced together. The practice of pronouncing the

words is in accordance with one of the Audio Lingual Method techniques which is drilling.

The Procedures

The procedures of the activity cover the followings: a) a test aimed at diagnosing the teachers' basic ability; b) materials presentation entitled, "the difference between sounds and letters; c) material presentation entitled oral practice on vowel sounds and the example of words; d) material presentation and oral practice on diphthong sounds and the example of words; e) material presentation and oral practice on consonant sounds and the example of words; f) material presentation and demo on how to teach and introduce English words easily; g) the post test.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results gained from the program are: From the stage of the socialization of community service activities at Al-Irsyad Kindergarten, the team found a high level of interest that Kindergarten teachers had to continue to develop their teaching abilities. This has become a great opportunity for the next program of community service.

Pre-test results show that the ability of Al-Irsyad Kindergarten teachers to read very simple English words and sentences is still very low. In general, the mistake made was in terms of producing the words eleven, elephant, purple, banana, eight, three, rectangle, and other words contained in the pre-test problem. Specifically, the mistake made is in the pronunciation of English phoneme sounds such as the sound / f / in the word elephant, / v / in the word eleven, / θ / in the word three, / æ / in the rectangle and the sound / ɜ: / in the word purple. This error is based on ignorance of how to read and produce words and sounds, and the habit of reading these words in the wrong way. These two reasons form the main foundation of how important it is to provide training on English phonetic sounds.

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After providing training for several meetings, a significant improvement was found in the ability of Al-Irsyad Kindergarten teachers to produce English sounds consisting of consonants, vowels and diphthongs.

The improvement of the ability of the teachers in Al-Irsyad Kindergarten in producing English sounds and reading English words was seen from their performance during the post-test. The deficiencies found during the pre-test as explained in point 2, are no longer found. For example, teachers no longer produce the sound / θ / in word three like the sound / t / in the word tree. This can directly avoid changing the meaning of words caused by mistakes producing English sounds.

In addition to increasing the ability to produce sounds in English, the training also increased the awareness of Al-Irsyad Kindergarten teachers about the importance of improving English language skills as a way to eradicate fossilization of English in kindergarten students.

The following is the results of pre-test and post-test of the teachers:

Table 1. The list of the teachers' scores

No	Name	Pre test	Post Test
1	DS	54	78
2	RN	66	81
3	ESR	70	85
4	EK	51	75
5	EP	62	85
6	EL	67	77
7	EKU	67	80

The increase can be easily seen from the following graph:

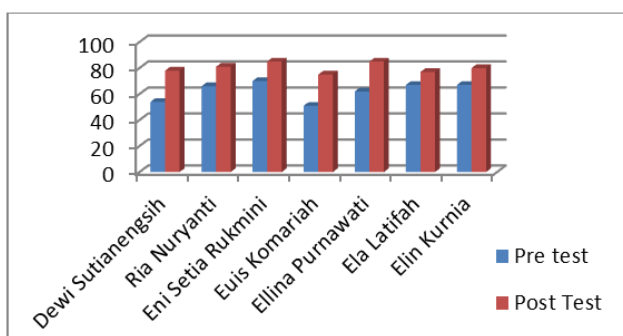


Figure 1. The graphic of Pre-Test-Post Test



Figure 2. The Opening of the activities



Figure 3. The Pre Test Situation



Figure 4. The Material Presentation

IV. CONCLUSION

Community Service is one of the *Tridharma* of Higher Education that must be done by lecturers. The main focus of Community Service is to develop science and provide benefits to people's lives. In this regard, the team has conducted community service with the main objective of providing English Phonetic Sounds training to Al-Irsyad Kindergarten teachers as a way to eradicate fossilization of English among TK students. The choice of this topic is based on the importance of providing appropriate English learning

to kindergarten students who are in the golden age stage. A correct learning of English will have a very positive impact on the development of the child's foreign language.

This community service activity was carried out at Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah Kindergarten located on Jl. Pekojan This activity was carried out for 2 months, from April to May 2019. After giving 4 sessions of English Phonetic Sounds training, the ability of Al-Irsyad Kindergarten teachers in producing English sounds and reading words commonly introduced to kindergarten students developed rapidly. Kindergarten teachers no longer make mistakes in producing English sounds that are similar to Indonesian sounds. Besides that, during the process of reading English words, kindergarten teachers are also able to read these words with acceptable pronunciation; can be understood and does not change the meaning. Positive results from this community service activity are expected to be one way to eradicate fossilization in English among kindergarten students which is the main objective of this community service.

Suggestion

From the results of the PkM activities carried out, the team wanted to provide input, including:

This PkM activity is an activity that can still be continued, especially the provision of trainings related to the learning process in the classroom, such as training on classroom language, training on making media, as well as training on techniques for teaching English to children.

This community service activity must always get support, both in terms of funding and others. This is because activities like this are needed by teachers at schools. The positive impact of this activity is not only felt by partners, but also felt by the implementing institutions. This activity can be one of the promotional events and collaboration with partners in terms of educational development.

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