

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the introduction of the study. It contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, aims of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, research methodology, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Early childhood is a stage of tremendous growth in all areas of development where humans learn many things more rapidly. The areas of development in early childhood stage include physical, social-emotional, and cognitive of children (Herr, 2008). Each of these aspects plays an important role in the success of children's learning process. In order to support the development of children in their critical stage, they usually should enroll early children institutions or commonly known as *Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* (PAUD) in Indonesian context.

One of the basic areas of development in early childhood is language development. According to Rahman (2009), the time from two and a half to five years, children's language is more similar to that produced by adults although sometimes the sentences are still grammatically incorrect. Concerning this matter, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia No. 137 of 2014 regarding the National Education Standard of Early Childhood Education has emphasized the significance of language learning in early childhood education. Three essential aspects that children expected to learn in their early childhood education include comprehending receptive language consisting of the ability to understand stories, commands, rules, and value reading materials; expressing languages consisting of the ability to ask and answer questions, communicate orally, retell stories, learn pragmatic language, express feelings, ideas, and desires in the handwriting form; and literacy consisting of the ability to comprehend the relationship between

alphabetic symbols and sounds, copy alphabetic symbols, as well as comprehend words used in stories.

Language development of children is gradual. As asserted by Gracia (n.d., as cited in Krisanjaya, 1998), the process of language acquisition of children is indicated by their abilities in acquiring language units which consist of the structure of sounds (phonology), structure of word (morphology) and structure of sentence (syntax). The implication is that early childhood education learning processes should be oriented to support each stage of their language acquisition because these abilities are strongly related to the next level of language competency, particularly reading ability.

In order to have a good reading skill or literacy development, children also need to have a high level of language awareness because "readers of alphabets must have an awareness of phonemes, readers of syllabaries must have an awareness of syllables, and readers of logographies must have an awareness of morphemes" (Singson, Mahony, & Mann, 2000, p. 191). Later, these skills will lead to the comprehension of text which relates to morpheme awareness as an essential type of awareness in literacy development. According to Carlisle (2010), when children are 2 or 3 years old, they start to experiment how morphemes can be combined. Carlisle then adds that children begin to understand the productive use of morpheme by producing new combinations of morphemes to express meanings for certain words that they have not known.

Being one of the aspects of literacy development, morphological awareness deals with human ability in reflecting upon and manipulating morphemes as well as understanding the application of word formation processes in their languages (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). In other words, morphological awareness can be said as conscious knowledge in using morphemes based on their form and function. Several studies have been conducted to examine the great influence of morphological awareness towards word-level reading, reading comprehension, and spelling development (e.g., Apel, Wilson-Fowler, Brimo, & Perrin, 2012; McCutchen, Green, & Abbott, 2008; Nagy, Berninger, Abbott,

Vaughan, & Vermeulen, 2003; Roman, Kirby, Parrila, Wade-Woolley, & Deacon, 2009). Therefore, for kindergarten children themselves, morphological awareness can be the next predictor of their literacy development, such as their level of reading comprehension and vocabulary.

The characteristics of high-performing and low-performing students are also reported by some researchers. Home environment or culture, socioeconomic status, linguistic background, and the quantity of interaction between adults and children are some of many aspects which shape students' characteristics have been investigated in a number of studies (e.g., Marjanovič-Umek, Fekonja-Peklaj, Sočan, & Tašner, 2015; Saada-Robert, 2004; Scribner, 2013; Webb & Williams, 2017). According to Hoff (2006), social contexts are systems which surround the child, for example, culture, socioeconomic status, and peer groups. Therefore, those aspects are able to produce differences in the course of language development process and learning of a group and an individual.

Examination of language awareness has received little attention, particularly in early childhood age for native speakers of Indonesian language. Furthermore, most of the studies regarding language awareness merely focused on assessing phonological aspects of the morpheme. For example, Winskel and Widjaja (2007) examined the phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and literacy development of children in Grade 1 and successively 1 year later in Grade 2. From the study, they found that the phonological unit which gives a major contribution towards the early acquisition of Indonesian children's reading and spelling development is phoneme. Additionally, when children read long multisyllabic affixed words, syllables are found to give an important contribution. Another study had been conducted by Asyani (2013). She analyzed language awareness of children in an Islamic kindergarten (*Raudhatul Athfal*) and its correlation towards their reading abilities. She found that there is a significant relationship between linguistic awareness and early reading skill by assessing phonological awareness of the children. In line with Asyani, Mazka (2014) also investigated kindergarten children's phonological awareness. It is found that

children performed well on the level of rhythm, words, and syllables task but they faced difficulties in the level of onset-rime and phonemic task.

Compared to phonological awareness, very few studies assess morphological awareness of children. Kurniawan, Solehuddin, and Gunawan (2015) examined morphological and syntactic awareness of kindergarten children in North Bandung. The study found that syntactic awareness level of kindergarten children was higher than their morphological awareness level. Another study regarding children's morphological awareness was conducted by Nurdiansyah (2016). He analyzed morphological awareness of Indonesian kindergarten children aged 5-6 in terms of their ability to identify inflectional morphemes, specifically prefixes in verbs. The result showed that morphological awareness of Indonesian kindergarten children in terms of the ability to identify inflectional morphemes in verbs is not completed. The latest study was conducted by Silviany (2017). By using a pre-test and post-test research design, she investigated morphological awareness of kindergarten children by assessing them in analyzing and manipulating morphemes at affixation level in two classes with different belief regarding their way of teaching reading and writing towards children. In one class, students are implicitly taught language skills through various activities (*non-calistung*) while in other class students are explicitly taught alphabetic symbols (*calistung*). She found that there is no significant increase in children's morphological awareness in two classes. Nonetheless, these three studies only assessed children abilities in identifying and manipulating affixes. None of them deals with other features of Indonesian language such as reduplication, and compound words.

As language awareness assessment in previous studies deals more with phonological awareness, there is a need to conduct more studies in morphological awareness which examine other features in Indonesian context. Therefore, this present study aims to investigate the ability of kindergarten children in identifying and producing reduplication morphemes since reduplication is one of the morphological processes that are commonly used in both spoken and written communication. Specifically, this study attempts to explore the extent of

4

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***MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS OF INDONESIAN KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN AGED 5-6:
A CASE OF REDUPLICATION***

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morphological awareness of kindergarten children in two schools with different approaches in teaching reading and writing to children. The approaches include an implicit language teaching through various classroom activities (*non-calistung*) and an explicit language teaching by encouraging students to know alphabetic symbols as early as possible (*calistung*). Additionally, some characteristics of high-performing and low-performing students on morphological awareness are also explored.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The present study attempts to investigate the morphological awareness of Indonesian children in one kindergarten. The research question of the study is formulated as follows:

1. To what extent do Indonesian kindergarten children aged 5-6 exhibit morphological awareness in terms of identifying and producing reduplication morphemes?
2. To what extent do Indonesian kindergarten children aged 5-6 of *calistung* and *non-calistung* schools exhibit morphological awareness in terms of identifying and producing reduplication morphemes?
3. What are the characteristics of high-performing and low-performing students?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study attempts to examine the morphological awareness of Indonesian children between the ages of 5 and 6 in two kindergartens. Specifically, the study aims to observe children's morphological awareness in two schools that have different belief in terms teaching reading and writing towards their students. The examination focuses on children's ability in identifying and producing reduplication morphemes. The present study also aims to discover characteristics of the high-performing and low-performing students in identifying and producing reduplication morphemes.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This present study has several limitations. First, the term morphological awareness in this research only covers kindergarten children ability in identifying and producing reduplication morphemes. Second, since there are very limited studies concerning morphological awareness in Indonesian context, this study presents a novel content in the instruments even though the designs were inspired by the instruments used in previous studies. Third, the number of the questions is limited because at the age of 4 until 7 or 8, children are considered to easily lose interest and also have a very short attention span (Borgers, De Leeuw, & Hox, 2000). Fourth, the test items only cover formal register of written morphemes as it is used in the learning process in formal institution. Lastly, the sample for this study is only taken from two kindergarten schools in Bandung due to the limited time.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this present study is expected to enrich the literature regarding children's morphological awareness especially in Indonesian context. This study is also hoped to raise researchers' interest in investigating various aspects of morphological awareness in the context of Indonesian language. Practically, this research is expected to give guidelines for kindergarten teachers in designing teaching materials which can improve the language development of children. Moreover, the findings are hoped to give knowledge to parents and teachers in creating appropriate environments which support the course of children's language and literacy development.

1.6 Research Methodology

The subchapters below provide the brief explanation of the methodology used in this present study.

1.6.1 Research Design

The study employs a descriptive quantitative method because the collected data is quantitative information which is presented in numerical data in form of scores on two types of morphological awareness test and also numeric responses of each

assessed students' characteristics taken from parents' questionnaire and interview. Furthermore, verbal description is used as a device to organize data into patterns.

1.6.2 Data Collection

The data of this research is collected from 42 kindergarten children in five classes of two kindergarten schools in North Bandung. The data is collected in form of numerical scores obtained from two different tasks to measure children morphological awareness. Additionally, the questionnaire and interview are used as supplementary data to explain children's results on the two tasks.

1.6.3 Data Analysis

The data is analyzed by using statistical procedures such as mean, percentage, and standard deviation towards the scores which are obtained from the instrument. After that, the results of the statistics are described in detail. Meanwhile, the questionnaire and interview are presented in form of descriptive explanation.

1.7 Clarification of Related Key Terms

To avoid misconceptions and misunderstandings, there are some significant terms have to be clarified as follows:

- 1) Morphology: the mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011).
- 2) Morphological awareness: the ability to consider and manipulate consciously the smallest units of meaning in language (K. Apel, Diehm, & L. Apel, 2013).
- 3) Reduplication: the doubling of a word or the addition of a syllable before the word (Sneddon, Adelaar, Djenar, & Ewing, 2010).
- 4) Language acquisition: the ability of children to pick up their mother tongue so quickly and seemingly so easily (Schovel, 1998).

1.8 Organization of the Paper

This research paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the *Introduction* which discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of research, scope of research, significance of the research, research methodology, clarification of terms, and organization of paper.

Chapter 2 covers the *Literature Review* which discusses related studies and theories as the basis for conducting the research. There are seven main topics explained in this chapter: 1) morphology in general; 2) morphological acquisition and morphological awareness; 3) morphological awareness; 4) reduplication in Indonesian language; 5) teaching reading and writing in early childhood; 6) characteristics of high-performing and low-performing students; and 7) previous studies of morphological awareness in Indonesian context. This chapter also provides concluding remarks with respect to the topics above.

Chapter 3, *Research Methodology*, provides methodology applied for the present study. Research design, data collection, and its procedure, as well as the procedure of the analysis of the data, are thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4, *Findings and Discussion*, reports the results of the study and detailed discussions.

The last one is Chapter 5 which covers the *Conclusions and Suggestions*. This chapter contains the conclusions of the research and recommendations for further studies.

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