

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background and burning issues related to the topic, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, research methodology, clarification of prominent terms related to the study and organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background

In recent years, it is difficult to ignore the importance of teaching English to young learners in elementary school levels. It can be seen from much research which showed that learning English in the elementary schools has wide-ranging benefits for young learners, especially in the area of cultures, Second Language Acquisition and academic (Stewart, 2005; see also Moon, 2000). In terms of culture, learning English at early level of age may help young learners to develop cultural awareness and understanding of English so that they can engage in communication and cooperation within English contexts (Abolghasem, 2010; Chastain, 1976 cited in Deneme *et al.*, 2011).

Besides, from a Second Language Acquisition perspective, young learners are better equipped to develop English language acquisition (Birdsong, 1999 cited in Nihat, 2010) and gain some lower order skills such as pronunciation and comprehension (Singleton, 1995 cited in Nihat, 2010). In addition, young learners

who take English lessons in elementary school have more aptitude and interest towards learning English than the young learners who do not receive any English (Katsuyama *et al.*, 2008 cited in Nihat, 2010).

In accordance with academic world, learning a foreign language leads to increase cognitive skills. This means young learners who study English are more creative and better problem solvers than students who do not study English (Landry, 1974; Marcos, 2001; Weatherford, 1986 cited in Stewart, 2005). Secondly, learning a foreign language can potentially improve young learners' achievement in other academic areas. In other words, young learners who study English tend to develop new perspectives and depth of understanding about the vocabulary and structure of their first language (Cumming-Potvin, Renshaw, & van Kraayenoord, 2003 cited in Stewart, 2005).

However, many English teachers in Indonesia do not possess adequate competency to bring their students to meet the benefits (Listia and Kamal, 2008; Damayanti *et al.*, 2013). It is because the teachers do not have enough understanding of young learners' foreign language pedagogy and do not have enough proficiency level of English (Damayanti *et al.*, 2013). This condition affects the techniques employed while they are teaching. Instead of using games, songs, stories, or other friendly techniques, such teachers prefer following all textbook instructions (textbook-based teaching) and teaching grammar to their pupils explicitly (Broughton *et al.*, 2003). This is potentially unsuitable for the second language acquisition development of the children since they are still in an

intellectual stage of what Piaget (1972) called “concrete operations” (Brown, 2000:88). In this stage, children commonly put their focus more on things that can possibly be seen, smelled, heard, touched and tasted, such as trees, cats and other concrete objects.

Besides, the incompetent teachers may provide students with inappropriate learning materials. Many of them tend to design disorder materials, which mean there is no relation between the new material and the previous material or between the first activity and the next one. This probably wastes both teachers’ and students’ energy as well as time.

In addition, the materials presented sometimes are not meaningful and contextual. This occurs because teachers do not take young learner characteristics into account. The teachers may simply put their focus more on assessing written skills while most young learners have limited reading and writing skills (Pinter, 2006). Whereas, speaking aspects take a great portion in the process of language learning at that time (Halliwell, 1992; Harmer, 2001). Consequently, the children potentially experience confusion and boredom. Later they probably will stop learning English at all, or, at least, they simply learn English as knowledge not as a tool for communication (Broughton *et al*, 2003).

Teaching and learning innovations in English, therefore, are required to maximize each effort in improving students’ English proficiency level, in this sense, speaking strategies. The first thing that can be done is identifying the target learners. In elementary school level, the learners are children with the age ranging

from five to twelve years old. In those ages, children are in the condition called concrete thinking and having something as a purpose (Cameron, 2001). In other words, children learn to comprehend their environment as a whole, not separated like most adults do (Brown, 2000). It is because many children commonly cannot synthesize their neighborhood into certain categories (Brown, 2000). Hence, children require contextual and meaningful learning environment.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an approach which encompasses contextual and meaningful learning. To begin, contextual learning is a learning which puts real-life situation as a basis of teaching and learning process. Secondly, meaningful learning is a learning which leads them to find meaning and later on the meaning will give them reasons to learn (Johnson, 2001). In other words, both teachers and pupils are taken into real-life situation, real problems and real solution in such a way that the pupils cannot see barriers between what they learn in the class and what they find outside class. Besides, contextual and meaningful learning lead the pupils to be active as well as constructive learners. It means that the pupils independently develop certain skill that can assist them in the future.

In order to provide students with a contextual and meaningful learning, some teachers in a private elementary school in Bandung started to employ Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach. They expect as what Bell (2010) claims regarding the positive effects of PBL implementation that may enhance students' motivation and leads them to think in a critical way. In addition, Thomas (2000) mentions that PBL practically enacts learning relevant to real world, offers many

chances to go deeper into a number of concepts and considers authenticity as the most important aspect.

Based on the explanation above, this research is intended to discover, describe, and compile in-depth information about the implementation of Project-Based learning (PBL) approach as a means to enhance students' speaking strategies in elementary school level. In doing so, the researcher is going to conduct a case study in a private elementary school in Bandung. Hopefully, by applying Project-Based Learning approach, students are going to master speaking strategies in such a way that it enables them not only to develop other supporting skills exclusively but also positive learning attitudes.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the explanation above, this research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How is teacher-student interaction realized during the implementation of Project-Based Learning approach in a young learner classroom?
2. What kinds of speaking strategies do students employ in the classroom?

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

In line with the background and the research questions, the aims of this research are to find out:



1. How teachers-student interaction is realized during the implementation of Project-Based Learning approach in a young learner classroom
2. Kinds of speaking strategies which students employ in the classroom

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This research is expected to provide portrait of the practice of teaching speaking to young learners through Project-Based Learning approach which mainly focus on two particular things, namely the kinds of speaking strategies which student apply and the teacher-student interaction occurred in elementary schools. In addition, this research is expected to give a significant contribution to development of teaching profession in Indonesia and generally to add more references.

This research can reveal some facts about which speaking strategies that students exert to maintain the conversation so that teachers can predict which language aspects that require more focus. Besides, this research can also depict the language learning situation through the analysis of teacher-student interaction so that the teachers can see the pattern and implement PBL approach in their classroom appropriately.

By considering the two benefits, this research is expected to give a significant contribution to English teachers in elementary schools when they implement Project-Based Learning to young learners.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This research focused on identifying speaking strategies used by elementary school students in handling a conversation as a presenter and drawing the teacher-student interaction pattern during the implementation of PBL approach in a private elementary school in northern Bandung. The participants of this research were a teacher and 30 students from fifth grade.

### **1.6 Reasons for Choosing the Topic**

There are several reasons the researcher chooses the topic for this research. To begin, it has been increasingly difficult to ignore the importance of teaching speaking to young learners in an appropriate manner. At this time, many teachers put their focus more on writing ability realized in students' scores. Consequently, students' indicator whether they are successful is just shown by the scores. In many cases, the scores potentially provide a wrong judgment about overall students' English proficiency level since they just examine one aspect of language, namely writing ability. Children at elementary school level, however, are developing oral communication skills. It can be noticed when children learn a language, they do not only absorb something as source of information or

knowledge, but also utilize the language as a means to communicate with others (Brown, 2000).

Secondly, there has been a large amount of literature about teaching English to young learners. Hence, this is a good opportunity for the researcher to conduct a research related to young learners since there are many supporting sources.

Finally, the researcher becomes interested in teaching English to young learners, in this sense teaching speaking, after taking pre-service training in a private junior high school in northern Bandung. At that time, the researcher saw that many junior high school students did not possess sufficient oral communication skills but adequate content knowledge in English subject. According to the researcher's observation, it happened because of unfriendly learning experience. Since that day, this situation motivated the researcher to conduct this research.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Research Design**

The main purpose of this research was to present an in depth description of speaking strategies that students utilize during the implementation of Project-Based Learning approach. In addition, another purpose of this research was to find out how teacher-student interaction realized in a young learner classroom using activities conducted in the form of



Project-Based Learning framework. By considering the two purposes, a case study research was conducted in this research.

Case study had been chosen for several reasons. To begin, a case study is one of the five traditions in a qualitative research which mainly focuses on a specified case in an event which encompasses an individual, a group of people, or a real life portrait (Creswell, 1998; Gerring, 2007). Moreover, it, like other qualitative research, concerns with meaning, process, and quality (Alwasilah, 2008) not like any quantitative research which primarily concerns with quantity and result (Yin, 2003). Besides, the setting of a case study is natural in the sense of a contemporary phenomenon within some real life contexts (Yin, 2003; Alwasilah, 2008).

Then, the aim of a case study is description, findings and understanding (Alwasilah, 2008) as well as generalizing (Yin, 2003). Finally, the investigator engaged in a case study (1) has little control over events; (2) cannot manipulate behavior; (3) spends more time on drawing the context or setting of the case; (4) can utilize many sources of information in collecting the data to present an in depth as well as detailed description about the responses toward an event (Creswell, 1998).

### **1.7.2 Site and Respondents**

The research was conducted in a well-known private elementary school in northern Bandung. The place was chosen for two reasons, firstly

because the school was in the way of using PBL approach as a major teaching method and secondly because the principal allowed the researcher to conduct a research in the form of PBL approach from September to October 2012. The participants of this research consisted of an in-service English teacher and 30 fifth grade students.

### 1.7.3 Data Collection

According to Creswell (1998), a case study data collection can be gathered through the following ways:

1. **Structured observation.** This technique is undertaken in order to put more attention to particular behaviors and specific information (Richards, 2003:150).
2. **Document analysis.** All data in the form of syllabus, lesson plan, students' work, homework, summative tests, and progress tests will be collected from the English teacher.
3. **Interview.** A personal interview is undertaken for the English teacher in order to complete the data collected from observation and to collect other necessary and in-depth information (Alwasilah, 2008).

### 1.7.4 Research Procedure

This research passed through several systematic steps. First, the researcher conducted an interview to the English teacher to gain some

information related to teacher's understanding toward the concept of PBL. Second, the researcher gathered data in the form of journals, documents, and observation. Finally, the data collected organized in such a way that the researcher had an easy access to the data. Meanwhile, the data from observation was transcribed into texts.

#### 1.7.5 Data Analysis

The data organized and transcribed was analyzed using a qualitative method. According to Creswell (1998) and Lodico *et al.* (2006), data analysis in qualitative research is inductive processes. Therefore, the data analysis in this research passed through some steps, namely:

1. **Data analysis.** This step comprised a preliminary analysis intended to review and explore the data and a major analysis intended to code the data into categories.
2. **Data Reduction.** After coding the data into categories, a number of unsupported data were removed so that the researcher was able to build themes and tested hypotheses as well.
3. **Data display.** The data were displayed in the form of figures and diagrams as well as tables.
4. **Conclusion drawing.** The researcher made an interpretation toward the data in such a manner that the researcher was able to obtain an in-depth description about the practice of teaching speaking to young

learners generally and speaking strategies as well as teacher-student interaction patterns particularly (Creswell, 1998; Lodico *et al.*, 2006).

## **1.8 Clarification of the Terms**

### **1. Project-Based Learning (PBL)**

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an innovative approach to learning that teaches a multitude of strategies critical for success in the twenty-first century. It means that students drive their own learning through inquiry, as well as work collaboratively to research and create projects that reflect their knowledge. From gleaming new, viable technology skills, to becoming proficient communicators and advanced problem solvers, students benefit from this approach to instruction (Bell, 2010).

### **2. Speaking Strategies**

Speaking Strategies here are the ability to use a foreign language to maintain a conversation such as asking for clarification, asking someone to repeat something, using fillers, using conversation maintenance cues etc. (Brown, 2000: 276).

### **3. Teacher-Student Interaction**

Teacher-student interaction refers to all activities undertaken by both teachers and students in a classroom during language learning process (Flanders, 1970).

### **4. Elementary School Students**

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**TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION IN A PROJECT-BASED LEARNING CLASSROOM  
(A Case Study in A Private Elementary School in Bandung)**

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Elementary school students are students who enter the first level of formal education in Indonesia. Students are expected to finish this level in six years, starting from first grade to sixth grade. For those who graduate from this level, he or she can continue their education to the next level, namely junior high schools (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012).

## **1.9 Organization of the Paper**

This research paper organized into five chapters as follows:

### **Chapter I Introduction**

This chapter provides the background and burning issues related to the topic, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, research methodology which consists of research design, data resource, data collection, and data analysis, clarification of prominent terms related to the study and organization of the paper.

### **Chapter II Theoretical Foundation**

This chapter consists of related theories that relevant to the research. The theories are taken from other experts and writers along with related literature that the researcher utilizes in investigating the research problems. Thus, this chapter also explains theory of teaching speaking, young learners, and Project-Based Learning approach.

### **Chapter III Methodology**



This chapter presents the methodology applied in conducting this research. It consists of research design, data collection, research procedures, and data analysis.

## **Chapter IV Findings and Discussion**

This chapter reports the findings and discussion of the research generated by interpreting and analyzing the collected data. It provides the interpretation of data collection, data presentation, the explanation of data analysis and the result of data analysis.

## **Chapter V Conclusions and Suggestions**

This chapter presents the conclusion of the research result and recommendations for teaching practices as well as future research.

### **1.10 Concluding Remark**

This chapter describes the background and burning issues related to the topic, research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, research methodology, clarification of prominent terms related to the study and organization of the paper.