

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a brief description about the basic rationales raised by the researcher before conducting the research. The contents are also related to the researcher's preliminary perspectives before doing this study. It focuses on English teaching to young learners in Indonesia especially in non-formal institution which are explained into 1) background, 2) research problems, 3) purpose of the research, 4) research questions, 5) significance of the research, and 6) definitions of key terms. The researcher's perspectives are also supported concisely by some propositions from the previous studies. Those considerations were then compiled together into one research question to guide the steps in carrying out this study.

1.2. Background

Early childhood is a great period which certainly contains the influences for children's intellectual development in the future (UNICEF Early Childhood Development, 2001). Cases about children development have been raised widely. One of the topics that become the considerable interest is about education for the very young children. As one of the developing countries, Indonesia has tried to cover all of the needs of childhood public education but it has not covered the number of children in early education years. The number of learning centers for the very young learners available is still limited for the number of very young children in Indonesia (only 53% from 28 million children in Indonesia – based on Direktorat Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini in 2009).

Formal institutions for the very young children education in Indonesia are known as Kindergarten and Raudhatul Athfal (Islamic Kindergarten). Considering the needs of education which is not only restricted to formal institution, non-formal education (NFE) offers the alternative. The main feature of community-based non-formal education is that the community in the area where the NFE is built is developed into the sources and the target of education (Kamil, 2009).

Some studies which employed lesson study in their processes have been applied in some formal institutions (Susilo, 2007; Emilia, 2008; Sudiana, 2009; Yudiani, 2009). In general, the result of those studies showed that lesson study could be an effective way to improve teachers' professionalism. However, the researcher had not found the paper which discuss about lesson study applied in non formal institution as the alternative education for the citizen. This is the basic reason why this study was conducted to the teachers of non formal early childhood education.

Further about non formal institution, Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat (PKBM) or Community Learning Centre is the place where the NFE is run and organized. It is an education institution which provides more opportunities to develop the learning models that the community needs through the community empowering as the basis (UNESCO, 1998; Sihombing, 1999 in Kamil, 2009). One of the education areas developed by NFE under the umbrella of Depdiknas (National Education Department) is Early Childhood Education (ECE) which is particularly organized by Direktorat Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini. This study then tried to focus on the non-formal early childhood education (ECE).

The targets of education or the students in ECE are the preschool children aged 3-6 years old. Since the children have different culture with adults (Corsaro, 1985

in Musthafa 2010), the approach that needs to be explored more by the very young learner teachers is the ability in understanding the children's behaviors. Some experts have released their propositions to describe the characters of very young learners (VYL) in common. In general, VYL are such active learners: processing new experiences, asking questions, trying things out, experimenting, practicing over and over until they master new skills (Donaldson, 1978; Tizard and Hughes, 1984; Montessori, 1983 in McIlvain, 2001). Those considerations then become more challenging when the teachers are required to teach English to the children.

Some previous studies focusing on the teachers of early childhood education in teaching English to young learners have been conducted in the formal education centers (Nurlaelawati, 2009; Olpa, 2009). Automatically, the findings & discussions only show the phenomena found in formal childhood education centers. Since the similar studies conducted in non formal ECE have not been discovered yet, getting closer to a center of non formal ECE and its teachers could be useful for further academic research.

Teacher is one of the important elements for early childhood education, but based on the data from the Directorate of Early Childhood Education in 2012, not all teachers of non formal ECE have basic education related to early childhood education. Ideally, they must have at least a bachelor degree, but there are only 16 % of them. The rest even did not go to a college or never learn about early childhood education formally; they only attended some trainings and explore their experiences to develop themselves to be the servants of this nation's educational development.

Considering that non-formal education is empowered by a community of inhabitants, non formal ECE becomes an alternative for the children from

economically disadvantaged family in Indonesia, although that institution is open for everyone. Thus this study is expected to be practically important to maximize the provided resources both human and non-human in non formal ECE centers focusing on the teachers' role in teaching English to the very young learners. Furthermore, to make this study more useful, relative effectiveness is compared since it is better than only comparing which methodology work best (St. Pierre & Rossi, 2006). In this study, the teachers were directly involved as the subjects to discuss the limitations or obstacles about the effectiveness in their process of teaching especially English teaching and to give feedback or advice for the development. This kind of research mostly applied the qualitative case study which is focus on the holistic description of a particular case (Merriam, 1988 in Nunan, 1992). The neo-ethnographic study is the type chosen since the investigation of a single case was implemented thoroughly by a participant observer (Stenhouse, 1983).

Nowadays era grows more challenging since English has become an international language, almost all elementary schools in Indonesia offer English as one of the subjects; even it is taught to the 1st graders in some schools. According to the aforementioned reasons, introducing English to very young learners is considered important. Definitely the teachers should know about how to teach English to very young learners appropriately because it will affect the children's further language development of English as a foreign language. Besides, introduction to English also offers the children's readiness to face their next stage of education.

To introduce English in non formal ECE, the teachers have to adjust it with the curriculum based on the regulation of National Education Ministry no 58/2009.

Models of Indonesian curriculum development in general contains 4 competences, they are personality competence, professional competence, pedagogic competence, and social competence. Those competences are basically adapted from the administrative curriculum model proposed by Saylor, Alexander, and Lewis (1981 in Hernawan & Susilana, 2011). This study then focuses on the pedagogical competence. In teaching English o very young learners in non formal ECE, English in this center was integrated with the main subjects as additional knowledge, not as an independent subject taught to the very young learners.

1.3. Research Problems

To date, research on teaching English in community-based non formal education (NFE) in Indonesia is very limited. Most of the research about English teaching has been conducted in formal education institutes. Non formal ECE as one of the programs of NFE in Indonesia is the focus of this research. Although English is put as a foreign language in Indonesia, the current situation has forced the children to be more familiar with English. Thus, the readiness of children to English is important as the initial process to engage children with the future needs of English. The human resources, infrastructures and facilities as the essential factors of the institution are also important. Since the non formal ECE center for this study is an institution formed by community and for community, the quality of those important factors might be more limited compared with the formal institution. This research tries to maximize the functions of those limitations. Lesson study was then chosen as the guidance for the development. The focus was the teachers who sincerely desired to serve better education in non formal ECE especially in introducing English to young learners.

1.4. Purpose of the Research

In general this study has a purpose to document the implementation of lesson study in a non-formal early childhood education center. The main purpose is:

1. To find out the value of lesson study in the process of improving teachers' pedagogic competence in teaching English to young learners.

1.5. Research Questions

This study was conducted to seek answers to a main question about teaching English to very young learners in a non formal education center:

1. Can lesson study help the teachers improve their pedagogic competence in teaching English to young learners?

The answers were then elaborated into three parts which are distinguished based on:

- a. the practical problems faced by the teachers in teaching English to very young learners;
- b. the efforts to improve teachers' quality in teaching English to very young learners after the collaboration among the related parties; and
- c. the improvements made by the teachers in teaching English to very young learners.

1.6. Significance of the Research

By conducting this study, the results found are expected to be the new inputs for the development of Education in Indonesia, particularly for Non-formal Education. This study also hopefully can give contribution of knowledge especially for the teachers of young learners about the common problems found in teaching English to very young learners and how to overcome those problems. Moreover, this study is expected to give more information and new point of view for the parents and the community in general that early childhood education which is conducted by non-formal ECE is able to give the equal or even better service as the formal ECE.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

- Lesson Study : a professional training for the educators which is developed collaboratively and continually based on the companionship and mutual learning to improve the quality of learning community (Hendayana, 2006; Alwasilah, 2011).
- Non-formal Early Childhood Education [Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD)] : non-formal education which provides education for very young children (focused on children age 0-6 years old) in order to prepare their readiness for studying in the higher level of education. It empowers all the potentials owned by the environment surrounding the institution (Kamil, 2009).
- Teachers' Pedagogic Competence: teachers' competence to plan, apply, and evaluate the process of educating, nurturing, and caring the very young learners (Regulation of Indonesian National Education Ministry no.58/2009).
- Very Young Learners: children aged 3-5 as first language learners and as learners of English (McIlvain, 2001).