

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In recent years, English has been taught in elementary schools. Many schools apply various techniques in teaching English to young learners. Unfortunately, these varieties of teaching English to young learners are not followed by appropriate assessment techniques (Georgiou and Pavlou, 2003 as cited in Masitoh, 2008). A research conducted by Rea-Dickins and Rixon (1999), entitled *Assessment of Young Learners: Reasons and Means* showed that a great majority of elementary English teachers in the world used paper and pencil tests as a major tool of assessment.

Many teachers still use traditional paper tests which are more appropriate for older learners (Pinter, 2006). In fact, assessing young learners is different from assessing older learner due to their different characteristics. Most children are notoriously poor test-takers: perhaps because they are sometimes confused by being asked questions that they think the teacher have already known the answers (Katz, 1998). Shepard (1994) stated that the younger the child being evaluated, assessed, or tested, the more errors are made (Shepard, 1994 as cited in Katz, 1998).

Young learners are difficult subject to assess accurately because of their activity level and distractibility, shorter attention span, and inconsistent performance in unfamiliar environment (McCauley, 2004). They have limited attention span, unless activities are extremely engaging (Harmer, 2004: 38).

Young learners do not have the same ability as older children to regulate their behaviour. Their emotions change from one state to another within a matter of seconds. Consequently, assessment of young learners requires sensitivity to the child's background, and knowledge of testing limitations and procedures with young children (McCauley, 2004).

Teachers should consider everything such as age, content of language learning, method of teaching, aims, and learning theories before assessing young learners (Cameron, 2001: 214). According to Cameron (2001: 218-221), there are five principles in assessing children's language learning. The first principle is 'assessment should be seen from a learning-centred perspective'. The second principle is 'assessment should support learning and teaching'. The third principle is 'assessment is more than testing'. The fourth is 'assessment should be congruent with learning', and the last principle is 'children and parents should understand assessment issues'.

Having some information about those issues, this research is intended to discover, describe, and compile in-depth information about assessment techniques used by English teachers in three elementary schools in Bandung to assess students' progress in learning English, and to reveal the teachers' reasons in choosing those techniques.

1.2 Research Questions

There are two research questions addressed in this research:

1. What kinds of assessment techniques are used by English teachers in elementary schools?
2. Why do teachers choose those assessment techniques?

1.3 Aims of The Research

This research is aimed:

1. To discover assessment techniques used by English teachers in elementary schools.
2. To reveal teachers' reasons in choosing those techniques.

1.4 Limitation of the Research

This research focuses on identifying assessment techniques used by English elementary teachers to assess young learners in three selected elementary schools in Bandung. The research concerns with assessment techniques, and reasons for choosing those assessment techniques.

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research is expected to provide a portrait of the assessment techniques for young learners implemented in elementary schools and the reasons beyond those assessment techniques. Practically, it is expected to contribute professional source in teaching profession in Indonesia particularly, and to add

more references in general. Hopefully, some assessment techniques revealed from this research become alternative assessments in assessing young learners. Therefore, it gives a significant contribution to English teachers in elementary schools in assessing young learners.

1.6 Research Methodology

1.6.1 Research Design

This research focuses on presenting an in-depth description of assessment techniques implemented by English teachers in elementary classrooms and the reasons beyond those assessment techniques. For that reason, the research used qualitative research for it worked with the description of the assessment techniques implemented by the teachers in elementary schools.

Bogdan and Taylor (1975: 13) state that qualitative methodologies refer to research procedures which produce descriptive data: People's own written or spoken word and observable behaviour. In line with this idea, Goubil-Gambrell (1992) argues that the greatest strength of qualitative research is its in-depth depiction of subjects in an actual setting. The researcher determines and reports the way things are. It is supported by Basrowi and Suwandi (2008: 28) who claim that in a descriptive method, the result of the research will be data citations which functions to give description for the data presentation.

1.6.2 Site and Respondents

The respondents of the research are English elementary teachers from three-selected schools in Bandung with different school qualification from *Badan Akreditasi Nasional* (National Accreditation Associations). The first school, Elementary School X, is the school with the highest score of accreditation. While the second school, Elementary School Y, is the average school, and the third school, Elementary School Z, is the school with the lowest score among those three school from *Badan Akreditasi Nasional* (National Accreditation Associations). There are three respondents employed under this research. Since this is a descriptive method and describes the phenomena happened to the respondents, the respondents were chosen purposively according to several considerations: (a) intensively involved in the field, (b) involved in whole activities around the field, (c) have willingness and enough time as the subject of the research to give information needed. (Basrowi and Suwandi, 2008: 18).

1.6.3 Data Collection Techniques

Since the research used descriptive method, it required certain appropriate instruments for collecting the data. There were two kinds of instruments used: classroom observations, and interviews. To expose the assessment techniques used by the teachers in an English classroom, this research requires systematic classroom observation where the researcher became a non-participant observer and made observation notes during the teaching learning activities. In addition, personal interview was conducted with each teacher in order to complete the data

collected from the observation and to collect other necessary and more in-depth information. The English teachers were interviewed about several question related to the assessment techniques they employed in their classrooms and their reasons for choosing the assessment techniques.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative method was used to identify the assessment techniques implemented by English teachers in elementary schools and to reveal teachers' reasons for choosing the assessment techniques. The data were obtained from classroom observations and interviews.

This research applied the Interactive Model by Miles and Huberman (1984) (Sugiyono, 2007; Basrowi and Suwandi, 2008). There were three steps of analyzing the data: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing.

First, summary and notes from the classroom observation were composed and the inappropriate information is reduced. The second step was classifying answers from interviews. Then, the data were analyzed so that they could provide clear, complete and in depth description about the assessment techniques implemented in elementary schools. Later, there were conclusions drawn on the description of assessment techniques implemented by English teachers in elementary schools and the reasons for choosing the techniques.

1.8 Clarification of the Terms

1. Assessment

According to Pinter (2006: 131), assessment refers to the process of data analysis that teachers use to get evidence about their learners' performance and progress in learning. Assessment means the process of gathering information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences in learning English. (University of Oregon, Teaching Effectiveness Program). Assessment in this research refers to collecting information and making judgements about learners' knowledge of English.

2. Techniques

Technique is a method used in dealing with something (available in <http://www.answers.com/topic/technique>). In this research, technique is any of a variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used for administering the assessment in the classroom.

3. English teacher

English teacher in this research refers to the one who teaches English in elementary school.

4. Elementary school

Elementary schools in this research refer to the elementary schools which put English as one of the subjects in their curriculum.

5. Young learners

Young learners in this research refer to those who are in the grade six of elementary school.

1.9 Organization of the Paper

This research is divided into five parts. The first part of the research is Introductions that consists of burning issue, research questions, aims of the research, significance of the research, and clarification of terms.

The second part of this research is Theoretical Foundation. In this chapter, the researcher delivered the theories used to analyze the data gathered.

The third part of this research is Research Methodology, which is divided into research design, sites and respondents, data collection techniques, and data analysis. The fourth part of this research is the Findings and Discussions and the last one is the Conclusions and Suggestions.