

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Language is so basic to our existence that life without words is difficult to envision. It stands at the center of human affairs, from the most prosaic to the most profound. And language is very complex (Wetherby, 2000: 30). It has sound systems that allow the production of words and sentences. There are about hundred thousands of terms and constructions for relating the words, numerous distinct words, vocabularies of some 50.000 to 100.000 terms for adults. A language has not only a structure what linguists try to capture with their rules but also a function to which that structure is put.

Language is fundamentally an instrument of communication. People talk as a way of conveying ideas to others – of getting them to grasp new facts, answer questions, register promises, and so forth. It is the medium through which the manners, morals and mythology of society are passed on to the next generation. Indeed, it is a basic ingredient in virtually every social situation. The thread that runs through all these activities is communication, where people try to put their ideas over to others. As the main vehicle of human communication, language is indispensable (Wetherby, 2000: 30).

One reason why human being are superior to other creatures in the world is their ability to communicate. They communicate by using language to express

their feelings and opinions. Therefore, language is a determining factor for survival. Without language, there is no life in the world. How one can speak is really amazing if it is searched thoroughly. Chomsky (in Papalia and Old, 1990 : 75) defines children in a normal life from two until six years will acquire language with structure and vocabulary. This is possible because since their birth, they have been equipped with such a device called Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The theory says that human has language devices in their mind seems acceptable up to the present. It is the mean by which the child learns input from parents and babysitters. The LAD lets the children analyze the language they hear and extract the rules of grammar that allow them to create new words to help them to verbalize their intention. Even since an infant, a baby starts to use a language. Through his crying, the baby is trying to communicate his unhappiness, hunger, and so on.

Language is also defined as a complex symbolic communication system, for which symbol-referent relations cannot be inferred through observations, but have to be learned step by step. Children may use first words before they have any explicit symbolic understanding. Only when a word is generalized beyond the initial learning environment, it may be granted symbol use and understanding (Namy and Waxman 2005).

Next to the verbal domain, the process of symbol development can also be examined in the nonverbal domain. Symbolic play requires the ability to symbolize, and awareness of the relation between the present play object or action and its absent referent in daily life (Jarrold and Baddeley: 1997). Symbolic play

has been linked to language development in typical children and young children with language disorder syndrome (e.g., Lewis, Boucher, Lupton and Watson: 2000; McCune 1995; Toth, Dowson, Munson, Estes and Abbott: 2006).

Other symbolic abilities, such as understanding of pictures, have not been studied in relation to language abilities yet. Stephenson and Linfoot (1996) argued that the use of pictures as symbols has clear parallels to the use of words as symbols. Therefore, the research about the language development of children should be conducted regularly.

The development of language skills is one of the most important achievements of early childhood. Language acquisition leads to new opportunities in other developmental areas, such as cognitive, social, and emotional development and is a corner stone for successful outcomes later in life (Schlichting, Blume and Stahr: 1995). Bates (1979) indicated two critical transitions in early childhood which precede language development: (1) development of communicative intentionality, and (2) symbol formation. The first transition is the onset of communicative intentionality, when children become aware that their signals influence behavior of others. In typical development, intentionality emerges when children start to use proto-imperative and proto-declarative behaviors, i.e., to obtain a desired object/event or to share attention/interest between persons on a common focus, by the end of their first year of life (9–13 months) (Baron-Cohen 1989; Bates 1979; Camaioni 1997). The second transition concerns the emergence of symbol understanding and use. According to Bates (1979) symbol formation requires an understanding of the

relationship between a sign and its referent. The sign can replace that referent in a variety of situations, even if the referent is not currently present. During the first years of life children gradually learn to understand and use symbols, which is reflected in the development of conventional gestures, words, and symbolic play (Wetherby et al. 1998).

Although language ability usually develops spontaneously, it does not progress typically for a substantial number of children. Children with certain language disorder syndrome show impairments in language development (Tager-Flusberg, Rogers, Cooper, Landa and Lord: 2005; Eigstie, De Marchena, Schuh, and Kelley: 2011). The development of functional language serves an important prognostic function (Mawhood et al.2000). Thus, gaining a better understanding of language impairments in language disorder syndrome is important for development and improvement of interventions.

People also believe that the competence of language acquisition is not only determined by the way people can communicate with other people, but also by the way the message is carried out and suitable with the context or situation. The competence of language is successfully achieved when people can communicate with well articulation, grammatically correct and socially appropriate utterance which make sense. Those are called as the dimensions of language which consist of form, content and use. The problem appears when a child does not fulfill these dimensions of language. No matter a child can speak well, if the message can not be meant anything, he/she has a disturbance in his/her comprehension. No matter a child can comprehend the message, if the way he/she

convey the message is not understandable, he/she has a disturbance in production and so on. Those problems are called as Disruption of language (Lahey, 1988).

The disruption deals with the form, content and use of the language. Disruption of form includes the disrupted building blocks of language such as disrupted articulation, disrupted phonemes, disrupted morphemes and disrupted syntax in language. For example: /aya/ instead of saying /saya/, /tupak//aca/ instead of saying /buka//puasa/ etc. Disruption of content is defined as the disrupted meaning or semantic in language. For example: when an adult asks a child "How old are you?" The child answers "I am fine" instead of "I am 10 years old". Disruption of use is defined as the disrupted functions (goal, intent, purpose) in language. For example: when a child does not understand the speaker-listener role, he/she tends to interrupt in people's discussion and suddenly changes the topic of discussion. The disruption of language may also occur in the interaction of form, content and use which causes contradictive between what a child says and the reality. For example: a child says that he/she is hungry, but in fact, he/she just had his/her meal. The last is the disruption which is caused by the separation of form, content, and use that consists of echolalia and perseveration. Echolalia is repeating what people say as the response. For example: when an adult asks a child "Kamu makan apa?" the child answers "Kamu makan apa?" instead of "Saya makan roti". While perseveration is keeping repeating the first answer although the child is given different questions. For example: "Kamu makan apa?" the child answers "Makan roti". Then the adult asks again "Roti apa?" the child

answers “*Makan roti*”. The child just answers the first question correctly, while he/she keeps repeating the same answers for other different questions.

Being aware or not, normal children fulfill these language dimensions in communicating, but not the abnormal ones. If a child is lack of one of these language dimensions, it means that he/she suffers language disorder syndrome. But people still do not understand the context of disruption that the children have, especially parents and adults. People also still do not understand in what context the language dimensions are disrupted in each interaction and how are they separated in communication which can cause language disorder. People especially parents and adults need to know if the language produced by children with language disorder is disrupted in one type of language dimensions, because it will make them aware that their children have a particular weakness in language which make them uneasy to produce and comprehend the language.

In (SLB)E Karya Ujung, most of the students of Autism class produce echolalia language. Echolalia language is the language produced by the children by repeating the words after the adult utter something to them, for example adult said: “ini balon”, the child repeated “balon”, when the adult said “ini rumah”, the child repeated “rumah”. Another example of disruption is when the child in that SLB called everybody he saw “mamak”. It showed that the child did not know the meaning of “mamak” and what “mamak” refers to. However, the parents and teachers really knew that the children suffer language disorder, but they did not know that language disorder itself consists of some disruptions in accordance to the disturbance they make in producing and comprehending the language.

Another reason why parents and adults should care about the language development of their children is because those children need to be struggled as human beings who deserve to have normal life like others. Although they cannot speak properly, but they deserve to communicate by using their own ways. Therefore, it is significant that those children need more attention and understanding from their parents and adults especially in comprehending their language and the way they interact among each other.

From the explanation above, the researcher would like to conduct the research about the disruption in children with language disorder in SLB in Medan, in order to find out how the language is disrupted in children who have language impairments.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

In relation to the background that has been elaborated previously, the problems of this study are formulated as follow.

1. What disruption was made by children with language disorder?
2. Why did the disruption take place among children with language disorder?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Based on the problems of the study, the objectives are as follow.

1. To find out the disruption which was made by children with language disorder.

2. To find out the factors why disruption took place among children with language disorder.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

In this study, the researcher deals only with the disruption of language dimensions in children with language disorder (Lahey, 1988). And the children who were observed were the children with language disorder in the second grade of Elementary school in SLB in Medan.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

A study which was conducted for academic purpose has a great importance for the development of knowledge. The findings of this research certainly provided valuable inputs that can enrich the study on the development of language acquisition. It is hoped that the findings have valuable contributions to the theoretical and practical aspects.

- a. Theoretically, the findings can be made as guidelines for adults especially parents who are interested in the process of introducing new words to young children. It will be also very useful for references in assisting of facilitating the children in the process of acquiring new words. And for other language researchers who are interested in conducting a more in-depth study on language acquisition, by comparing the result of this research, they can enrich the knowledge on language acquisition and know how much knowledge of language which can be acquired and produced by

the language-disordered children especially the disruption which occur in the language. This also can provide a basis for further research on the different stages of the children's word acquisition.

- b. Practically, the findings can make the parents more active and creative in introducing language to the children with language disorder, and can make parents understand the disruption which is made by their children in producing and comprehending the language. If supposed, parents use babysitters' help in taking care their children, these persons will be more aware of introducing a new language so that the children can produce sentences naturally whatever they want to speak and comprehending the children's language although they have disruption in producing language. And it is also better for adults to make a conversation to the children very often no matter the disruption that the children make.