

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Learning language means learning its system. A person who wants to learn a new language will have to learn new sounds, new structures and new vocabulary. Its structures are known as grammar. Grammar deals with possible forms or structures within a language (Thornburry, 1999). Nevertheless, grammar is often misunderstood in the language teaching field. The misconception claims that the structures do not have to be taught, learners will acquire them on their own, or if the structures are taught, the lessons that ensue will be boring (Zhang, 2009). However, a knowledge – implicit or explicit – of grammatical rules is essential for the mastery of a language.

Researches showed students do not automatically pay attention to grammatical features during natural communication; thus, they need the guidance of teachers to help them attend to certain forms (Uysal, 2010). Therefore, grammar instruction seems to have a place in teaching English to young learners in primary classrooms. Grammar is not beyond children's cognitive capacity and grammar definitely has a place in children's learning of language, because it is closely tied into meaning and use of language, and is inter-connected with vocabulary (Cameron, 2001).

Teaching grammar to young learners can enhance the language awareness earlier in which is able to prevent the fossilisation on the later stages of language development or in the future. The fossilisation of L2 proficiency in older learners could result from lack of access to feedback (about pronunciation, grammar or word choice) after a certain point in L2 development (Marinova-Todd, 2003). As long as the meaning of their utterances is understood, their grammar or pronunciation may not be corrected. As a result, the older learners may never become aware of their errors. However, as some have shown (Ioup et al., 1994 in Marinova-Todd, 2003), if the learners are made conscious of the errors, and it is important to them to correct them, they have the potential to achieve native or near-native proficiency in their L2s.

Nevertheless, in learning a language, young learners do not comprehend abstract ideas such as grammar. They do not have a concept of ideas such as parts of speech, discourse or phonology (Bourke, 2006 cited in Thomson, 2010). For older learners, L2 word is new but already knew the concept behind it, whereas for young learners, they have to learn not only the word but also the unknown concept behind it (Johnstone, 2009). It is, therefore, recommended to find familiar topics to children such as family, friend, or school life (Cameron, 2001). Dealing with topics can help the learning process. Young learners can associate words, functions, structures and situations with a particular topic and, moreover, association helps understanding and memory (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990).

Young learners have their own characteristics in which are very different from the older. Thus, teacher should take more concern in teaching them especially language teaching. In learning, young learner involve senses and movement. Some studies showed children outperformed adults in phonology (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978 in Shin, 1999). The learners, aged eight to ten especially, rely on spoken language but can have realised symbols beginning with words (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). However, teacher should not focus only on spoken word but also written and a cooperative learning. A team work can improve their sense of belonging (Scott, 1990). Therefore, intergrated and indirected teaching and leaning such as through songs, stories, and games can be considered suitable in teaching young learners.

It is important to decide carefully what method implemented, processes undergone, and outcomes expected since language-related outcomes are strongly dependent on the particular model of language education adopted (Johnstone, 2009). On the other side, the decision of making English as optional subject made teachers has to find appropriate learning materials by themselves. It is because central goverment does not provided the appropriate learning material any longer. Management and development of optional subject, including the syllabus and learning materials, have to be accomplished by local government without any stated curruculum and guidelines from central government (Government Regulation No.32 and Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No.81A, 2013).

Grammar has been considered can help teaching second language to young learners. However, the characteristics of young learners have come up another needs beside their needs as language learner. In fact, finding the learning materials, which are suitable with young learners and meet their needs, is fairly difficult. As seen in evaluation done of a textbook used in SD Budi Mulia grade four, the book measly covered grammar aspect and measly enjoyment learning like songs. In learning English grammar, certain techniques need to make it interesting and easily understood. Moreover, teachers need help in finding the appropriate learning materials for them.

Concerning the significance of teaching grammar to young learners and teachers' needs in teaching young learners especially grammar, this study will focus on need analysis of the fourth graders on supplementary grammar materials.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, research questions come up in the research were:

- a. How are the existing syllabus and learning materials cover students' needs on supplementary grammar materials?
- b. What are the teacher's perceptions of students' needs on supplementary grammar materials?
- c. What are the students' perceptions of their needs on supplementary grammar materials?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

This study was aimed at conducting a needs analysis in order to find out the fourth graders' needs on supplementary grammar materials.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study was limited in first step of designing supplementary grammar materials which is a need analysis of the fourth graders. The need analysis focused in grammar aspect and learning process which are suitable with the fourth graders' characteristics as young learners. In focusing grammar, it was more limited in simple sentence because it is simple and easy topic for young learners. As well as the simple sentence form is commonly presented in songs, stories, and games.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to produce some advantages and to be useful for:

a. Students

It is expected to give students opportunities of learning grammar in easy and interesting ways. In those ways, it is also hoped students' motivation in learning grammar can be enhanced and students will not get bored easily. This study also designs activities in meaningful ways so that students will not get confused and can get grasp the lesson easily.

b. Teachers

By reading this result, it is hoped that the English teachers can find out the tricks in teaching grammar to young learners in interesting ways in order to enhance motivation of elementary students in learning English grammar.

c. Other Researchers

This study is also provided more information and knowledge about characteristic of young learners and how to design a needs analysis. Other researchers can also elaborate more on the technique of Teaching English For Young Learners especially in the method.