

“THE USE OF COMMUNICATIVE ARABIC LANGUAGE BY PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AT AN ISLAMIC KINDERGARTEN: AN EARLY EXPLORATION”

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the language functions used by children in an Islamic oriented preschool. The aim is to gather information on the use of language functions when children communicate with their teacher and among themselves in the classroom. The language that is used by the children and the teacher is Malay as this is the language used by the teacher in teaching Islamic subjects. However, indirectly, the information obtained reveals the language functions that will be used by children when they communicate using the Arabic language. Hence a module on the use of the Arabic language for communication can be produced for pre-schoolers (Zucher et al., 2010). The subjects in this study comprise a teacher and fifteen pupils in a preschool. Eight lessons conducted by the teacher were observed. The lessons were audi-recorded and later transcribed. The data were analysed using criteria used by Saville-Troike and also by Halliday. The criteria used by these two linguists are almost similar except for a few more language functions which Halliday proposed. The findings of this study provide information necessary for the production.

Keywords:

communicative Arabic language, Islamic kindergarten, language function

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INTRODUCTION:

Communication in any language is important in society as a means of communication. Communication skills ranging from low level to early childhood. The basis of communication is very important to guide children to build communication skills. Construction of communication for children includes skills to understand and to pronounce thoughts, feelings and information (Aladdin, 2012). Communication comprehension starts from the level of birth and continues in life when children listen to, view and interpret information from others (Gooden & Kearns, 2013). According to Bloom (1988), the construction of communications is guided by the relevance of what it relates to what is important, the discrepancy that it seeks to ensure equality or consistency, and further elaboration it learns more complex skills. Pinker (1999) argues that communication becomes more complicated as children's age increases specially in linguistic field. The concept of linguistic security of the Arabic language is one of the most dangerous concepts that fall under the strategic linguistic planning of the Arabic language (Mussa, 2020; Garcia-Rubio et al., 2019; Number, 2019).

Improving communication skills by children can

often be enhanced when children interact with family members and teachers. These people can stimulate the delivery of quality communication among children. Appropriate stimulation helps to develop all aspects of child development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

For children in the classroom, teachers and friends assist in building communication skills. Classroom is a social context where various interactions occur (Rosyidi, 2014). The language used in this interaction. Hence the language becomes a social construct where the meaning is conveyed through a context-based discourse between speakers (Ambrosio et al., 2015). Discourses in the classroom become important intermediaries among teachers and pupils.

Teachers need to use language that is easy and appropriate according to the age of children. Children need to be guided in a courteous language when speaking to teachers. Children also need to know how to use language while interacting with other friends or children in the classroom. The interaction between children is aimed at promoting good relationships. Therefore, we want to create a new environment outside the classroom so that students' talents will open. Psychoanalysts find literature a fertile place for planting viable overtones of the writer and a platform for releasing his passions and wishes (Rakhees & Janoory, 2020).

At the kindergarten level, children have mastered the skills of speaking in their native language or first language (WIDA, 2014). The first language in the context of this study is Malay. This language is derived from home and influenced by family. The second language is usually obtained in the classroom and taught by the teacher (Daud & Abdul Pisal, 2014). This study focuses on the acquisition of a second language, it is Arabic, by children in kindergarten classes (Ambridge & Lieven, 2011).

Second language acquisition is a process through which individuals learn foreign languages other than their native language (Musa, 2020). Vocabulary knowledge is an important source of second language acquisition and it is also important in language development (Abd. Ghani et al., 2011). Vocabulary is influenced by the purpose of communication and the title of the chat. Communication is simplified by vocabulary.

In the context of pre-school or Islamic kindergarten, the second language acquisition, it is Arabic, gives a challenge to both teachers and children (Wikipedia, 2018). Arabic is very different from Malay in terms of oral and written. This study focuses on oral skills in Arabic, especially when interacting (Che Haron, 2013).

A study on acquiring a second language by children received remarkable attention in the 1970s during the acquisition of a second language in children emerged as an inquiry field. Interest in this area re-emerged as there were educational researchers wishing to understand the difference between language differences and language disorders (Paradis, 2008). The interest in acquiring language of the reincarnated language focuses on oral language as this skill is important for assessments and interventions and other matters concerning the learning of the second language of children (Paradis).

To read Quranic verses the children need to know Arabic letters that are similar to the jawi text. The ability to recognize letters can help children read Arabic texts to speak. Pre-school children, especially Malay children, have difficulties in excelling these letters. They can not pronounce the Arabic letters (Yusri, MohdRahimi & Shah, 2020). The difficulty is in equating letters with sounds or pronunciation. Lettering of letters is important for performing interactions.

For Muslims who are Muslim, Arabic is the key to understanding the Quran and al-Hadith and other Islamic sources. This information is presented in detail in the description of preschool curriculum in Malaysia. The focus of this curriculum is *Introduction to the basic Quranic language and short suras of Juzu'Amma* (NCLRC, 2009), as well as in the Preschool National Standard Curriculum—*Recognise the hijaiyah letters, memorizing short suras, and learning easy Arabic* (p. 63). Arabic is not identified for the purpose of communicating between speakers. Part of communication can be with writing. Thinking skills inculcated in writing essay has compounding impact on students' achievement (Jamian, 2016).

The basic knowledge and skills in Islamic religion are Arabic including the language used

in the Quran. To increase knowledge and skills in Arabic Islamic education need to be improved. Skills in weak language are easily achieved during early childhood stages (Al Muhsin & Mustafa, 2020).

This is the main objective of this study to provide a module for teaching pre-school children to master Arabic speaking skills (Musilehat, 2010). The method used is to study the spoken activities contained in the Malay and English language books in the market for preschoolers and process them into Arabic using the same theory (Chomsky, 1965).

Awareness of Arabic language modules was expressed by Md Isa et al (2017) in a conference paper. Therefore, the proposal to produce this module is not an idealistic idea. In fact it is a practical and realistic thing. The purpose of this study is to achieve a stimulating decision with the following objectives and questions as follows. In order to meet the needs of this study, since the children studied have not mastered Arabic, the function of the language studied is derived from speech in Malay. These functions will illustrate the functions that children will use when interacting in classes in Islamic Kindergarten. The function of this communication language will be applied in Arabic.

METHODS

The study is qualitative in terms of identifying the need for Arabic language communication among kindergarten children. This design is suitable for use as this study focuses on identifying and defining language functions in the speech of children in the classroom. The study involved a sample of pupils and teachers of Islamic kindergarten. Methods of observing oral activity among pupils are conducted.

A total of 15 Malay students from Kindergarten,

Islamic-based, Ipoh, Perak, were used to obtain the results of the study. These children are boys and girls involved in the study. Their stages are about 6 years old. They are in a group guarded by a teacher. All of these students came from the surrounding area of Ipoh. Teachers involved teach Islamic Religious in this kindergarten. The medium of instruction used by teachers during the Islamic religious class is Malay. Speech spoken by teachers and children is also in Malay.

Once the data has been collected, careful checks are made to select the phrases that can be categorized. The data were analyzed qualitatively, according to communicative functions (Kataw, 2016). All expressions are generated in the analysis using the Halliday and Saville-Troike categories. The Halliday category is chosen because he has explained the categories used based on his research on a child. Therefore, the categories used are suitable for this study. While the categories disclosed by Saville-Troike were used to refer to the concept of the speech community used by Saville-Troike (1989). A class of teachers and pupils is identified as a community of speeches. These community members share the same work space for several hours a day. Its members also use the same language rules and norms (Hymes, 1972).

Data analysis using Saville-Troike (1989) commutative language functions as directive functions, expressive functions, metalinguistic functions, physiological functions, poetic functions and referential functions. Saville-Troike describes these functions as follows.

- The directive function is like asking or pointing, for example "Ms. Gu, please write my name."
- Expressive functions are used to convey feelings or emotions, for example, "I think I know". Jacobson (1964) labeled the function as an emotive function.
- Fatigue function (phatic) leads to unity and agreement in a group. This function

symbolizes the child's membership in a community. For example, when a student says, "I'm afraid of darkness," the other disciples say, "ooh" and "Yes". They all show the same feelings.

- Poetic function is intended to generate entertainment in the use of language. This function is used in conjunction with other functions such as reference function. Jacobson (1964) describes it as the use of creative and esthetic (aesthetic)
- The reference function (referential) is the main way speakers communicate the factual information to the listener (Nik Yusof, Mahamod & Ab. Ghani, 2008). The focus of this function is to provide correct or incorrect information. For example:
Teacher: Today is Tuesday to?
Student: No. Today is Wednesday.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section describes the findings obtained from the data that has been analysed. Identified language functions are described and included with examples. Analysed speech can be categorized into two types of it being a teacher's (G) speech and a child's (KK) speech. Data is presented based on the idea of Saville-Troike (1989) which include commutative language functions as directive functions, expressive functions, metalinguistic functions, physiological functions, poetic functions and referential functions.

Referral function

Most of these questions work as a directive. Teachers instruct children and children to respond to the instructions. Saville-Troike (1989, p. 14) describes the direction of the instruction as a request or demand. The command function is a common function in the field of education. Hymes (1968, p.117) attribute it to the (imperatives) command. Orders appear in the form of questions

but the purpose is to control the conduct of others. Examples of questions from teachers in this study are as follows.

- Who else does not come?
- Whose hijab is this?
- Whose songkok left here?
- Do you want to be reward?

Each of these questions creates a response from a child. They act as if it were their duty. There are times when instructions are used to check the child's work. Teachers often check whether children can spend their work or teachers checking their child's ability to do something. Teachers ensure that all children complete their work. The examples in this study are as follows.

- Who is not ready yet?
- Have you done homework?
- Cannot write?

Instructions are also pronounced by the teacher in command sentence. For example: (G - Teacher; KK - Child)

- (1) G: Turn around and all front view.
KK: (Children dizzying and looking forward)
- (2) G: Ms.Gu writes the front kat and Miss Gu you came to what letter
the Miss Gu wrote.

Children also use the command function. They use referral functions when interacting with each other. They seem to give orders to other children and other children to respond accordingly. An example of this study is as follows.

- (1) KK1: Aina, wash your mouth.
KK2: Wash it.
- (2) KK: Do not sit on the table.

This command function is the same as the control function used by Halliday. This function ignores children affecting the behavior of others.

Function of expression

According to Saville-Troike (1989, p. 12) the expression function conveys feelings or emotions. At times, teachers use a simple method of scolding children. How to use the question for this purpose is to soften anger so that children do not feel afraid. There is an example in this study. This question arises when a teacher finds a child sleepy. This question is a reprimand. Example in the following.

- (1) G: Sleep at what time yesterday?
KK1: Nine.
KK2: Ms.Gu, Faith sleeps at ten more. We sleep fast.
- (2) G: Who is sleepy today?
KK1: I'm not sleepy.
G: Who is sleepy today?
KK1: Adlli, Adam.
G: Adli, Adam.
Adli: Eh ..no, no, no
Adam: No, no, no

Children also express singular feelings to listeners comprising teachers and other children. This expression function is more important to speakers than listeners. Children give feeling when they feel sick or surprised. These feelings arise when children are busy doing the work given by the teacher. They were touched by one another and also strongly denied other children.

Examples from this study are 'Adoiiii'. 'It hurts', 'Oops'.

They also know how to express their feelings in winning the following.

- (1) KK: One empty.
- (2) KK: Two same.

Halliday describes this function as a personal (personal) function. Children use this language function to express their own opinions, attitudes, and identity.

Phatic Functions

The fatigue function, according to the explanation of Saville-Troike (1989, p. 14) shows empathy and unity in the speakers community. Teachers show empathy and unity when they are aware of the welfare of children. In this study, teachers are advising whether the child is healthy or not. Examples are as follows.

- G: Good morning sister all
 KK: Good morning teacher
 G: All healthy today?
 KK: Alhamdulillah, fine teacher.
 G: Something unhealthy to?
 KK: No

Phatic function arises when children interact. This function forms an affinity with others. Hence this function is an interaction function presented by Halliday.

Children use this function to create relationships with each other. They point to their relationship with other children. Examples are as follows. Children play with animal statues given by teachers.

- KK1: That I have. My wick rhino has.
 KK2: Rhino axis is associated with an elephant group.
 KK1: No rhinoceros.
 KK2. Neither new animals.

In children's class shows a sense of unity among them. They are considerate of each other. The traceable example is as follows.

- KK1: You want me to go?
 KK2: No, I have my own north.

Sometimes they interact while sharing information. They tell friends what they want. Examples are as follows.

- KK3: I have a ruler.
 KK4: I have an eraser.

Reference function

Teacher questions are often welcomed by children with answers. The answers given are closely related to the questions being asked. This language function is referred to as reference (referential) by Saville-Troike. Saville-Troike defines references as true or false proposition content (1989, p. 14). Reference is the primary way speakers speak information to listeners. References include student answers to teachers. The examples in this study are as follows.

- (1) G: Who else does not come?
 K: Emmmm ... Nisa
 (2) G: Who is this hijab?
 KK: Do not know.
 (3) G: What day?
 KK: Today is Friday.

Reference function is also intended to provide information. Children talk with each other as well as with teachers not just based on topics developed by teachers but they also produce their own information. This function arises when they interact with teachers as found in this study. A child offers information even when not invited.

- CK: What is the name of our father?
 KK: Miss Gu, I have a harness.

When children do the activities given in the classroom, they chat while doing work. A child tells his friend something like this in this study.

- KK: Tomorrow we want to come.
 Tomorrow we will come to our home.

According to Halliday's theory this function is a function of information or informative function.

Instrumental Functions

Instrumental functions are used by children to get things done. According to Halliday (1975) children use this function to fulfill their wishes. Examples of this study include the following.

(1) KK: Are north, Miss Gu? (Ask for a color pencil from Master)

(2) KK1: I want purple.
KK2: I want pink color.

This function does not occur frequently. This function is limited to the type of activity in the class. This activity requires children to ask something from the teacher.

Heuristic function

Children sometimes use questions to explore their surroundings. In this study children play in the classroom and there are questions formed from the activities of this game. Examples are as follows.

KK: Who wants to cook?

This question is not meant to be cooked but game activity only.

Imaginative Functions

This function occurs when a child is playing. They are imaginative as they play. An example is when a child rubs his teeth and a child takes water in a container and acts like watering a flower.

KK; I want to blossom the flower.

The language functions that have been identified in this study show evidence of the application of the theory presented by Saville-Troike and also by Halliday. When communicating with children using these functions. The data obtained provide information about the form of language used by the child. This information is useful for those who plan language aspects that need to be taught to preschoolers.

Discussion

The last section has expanded the language functions used by children in accordance with

Saville-Troike theory and Halliday's theory. Findings have shown that children's speech is often triggered by questions asked by teachers. Teachers use questions to give directions, get information, and to review student work.

Questions from teachers triggers discouragement from children. These questions can guide children to speak while learning (Kilic, 2015). Children usually talk to them, but the topics they talk about do not contribute to their studies. Teacher questions can provide a framework for their conversations in the classroom. In their conversations, children are actually using different language functions. These functions arise based on the specific titles spoken in the class.

Children also use language functions when they chat with each other. Their conversation did not begin with the question. They show some initiatives in generating speeches. There are similarities in some language functions that are presented by Saville-Troike and by Halliday. In this study all language functions that have been presented by Saville-Troike are used except for the function of poems that are not detected. There is also a language function used by Halliday to explain the communication performed by children but not in the theory of Saville-Troike. Both of these theories contribute to the analysis of language functions used by children. Both of these theories can further explain the use of the language communication functions of children.

Communication Language Functions

The equations contained in the language function presented by Saville-Troike and presented by Halliday are references / conveying information, instructions / controls, expressions / personal and phatic / interactional. Other functions of the language that arise can be explained by Halliday's theory that it is instrumental, heuristic, and imaginative functions.

The functions of this language arise based on the actions of the teacher, the title of the chat, and the activities performed in the classroom. Although there are various language functions in children, the sample of these language functions is not widely available. This is due to several factors.

The first interaction sample collected was small. Therefore the sample of the function of the language used is also limited. This study is an exploration only. The data obtained are adequate and according to the purpose of this study.

Secondly, the headline that teachers talk about such as taking attendance, restricts conversations about other things. The same question is repeated and the child's response is limited to naming.

Third, the time for a lesson is too much for it to be 30 minutes. Lessons are not held for 30 minutes because discipline in the classroom needs to be completed first.

Fourthly, the titles that are being offered by the children themselves are also limited. The verses used are very short, and things are very limited.

However, this study shows important and interesting results. The findings of this study can be used to produce a module to teach the communication language function for other languages, and not only Malay.

Reference / Information Function

The first question of this study focuses on the communicative language function used by children in preschool. The findings have revealed some of the language functions that Savile-Troike and Halliday have used. The language function commonly used by children is a reference. Saville-Troike considers the reference as real or fake content information. This reference, in general, is a child's response to questions raised by teachers. The importance of the role of a teacher can be seen as a guide to the language function used by children.

This reference function is a commonly used function as the child always answers questions asked by the teacher. These questions are often short and require short answers. Since these pupils are comprised of preschoolers, this form of form is appropriate in this context.

The functions of the language used by the children arise depending on the subject or topic discussed or talked about by the teacher with children or children alike. What is often asked by teachers is the presence of children in the classroom. Questions asked are summarized and repetitive. Such a question allows children to quickly express the phrase and the words used by the teacher. The repeat of the question is the exercises for the hearing skills and the children's speech. This can be summarized to the behaviorist theory that suggest that the repeat of the treatment is a lesson. Teacher guidance in meaningful context, such as taking a child's presence allows the child to check who is present and who is absent and to give an answer. They interact with teachers. Vygotsky's social interaction theory describes this as a learning.

Function of Expression / Personal

At times a child expresses individual feelings to listeners comprising teachers and other children. They pronounce feelings when they feel sick or surprised. Examples from this study are 'Adoiiii'. 'It hurts', 'Oops'. Words that have the meanings used are 'sick' The other is just a sound that embarks on the pain and shock.

Fatigue / Interactional Functions

The fatk function demonstrates a sense of unity among children and between children and teachers. They pointed to one another with considerable feelings. The traceable example is as follows.

KK1: You want me to go?

KK2: No, I have my own north.

Sometimes they interact while sharing information. They tell friends what they want. Examples are as follows.

KK3: I have a ruler.

KK4: I have an eraser.

Instructions / Control Functions

While interacting with children also uses the command function. This happens when a child feels he should reprimand other children so that the reprimand is obeyed. This feeling may occur when a child feels it is older or more knowledgeable or even more pronounced than other children.

KK1: Aina, wash your mouth.

KK2: Wash it.

Instrumental Functions

Instrumental functions are used by children to get things done. According to Halliday (1975) children use this function to fulfill their wishes. Examples of this study include the following.

(1) KK: Are north, Miss Gu? (Ask for a color pencil from Master)

(2) KK1: I want purple.

KK2: I want pink color.

This function does not occur frequently. There is only one sample.

Heuristic Functions

Children sometimes use questions to explore their surroundings. In this study children play in the classroom and there are questions formed from the activities of this game. Examples are as follows.

KK: Who wants to cook?

This question is not meant to be cooked but game activity only.

Imaginative Functions

This function occurs when a child is playing. They are imaginative as they play. An example is when a child rubs his teeth and a child takes water in a container and acts like watering a flower.

KK: I want to blossom the flower.

All functions that have been identified by Saville-Troike are used except for poetic functions. The time spent and the small amount of lessons applied do not show this functionality. The possibility of this function is in singing lessons, music or nasyiq.

Language functions that have been set by Halliday (instrumental, control, interactional, individual, heuristic, imaginative and informative) functions can be detected. There are functions that overlap with the function provided by Saville-Troike and this shows similarities in deciphering the language the child uses while communicating.

Poetic Functions

The function of the poetic language as the Saville-Troikeuses, is not available in this study. Probably the condition in the class does not allow. This function will arise during a lesson on singing or poetry.

Forms of modules

The second question focuses on Arabic language modules that need to be developed for children in preschool. From the results of this study on language functions used by children, the form of modules can be constructed according to the functions of the language that are commonly used children.

In the formation of language function modules in Arabic, important words need to be identified first. Children need to be taught words related to the topics to be taught before the language function can be used. This means that the word is

taught separately with the relevant language function.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown the results of the discourse in the classroom between teacher and child and between children and other children. The results of this study have implications on teaching and learning in preschools especially in Arabic. In the field of teaching and learning, teachers need to know how to enable children to use language communication functions. Teachers can guide children to achieve the purpose of the lesson. Knowledge of these language functions is important for the parties who issue the teaching materials. Appropriate pursuit materials can be produced based on the needs of children to master Arabic. On the curriculum side, this knowledge can help them plan and organize teaching materials according to the needs of children.

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