

## SIMPLE CONVERSATION AS SPEAKING MATERIAL FOR THE FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS

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### Abstrak

Makalah ini ditujukan untuk membantu guru dalam merancang dan memilih *simple conversation* sebagai materi ajar *speaking* bagi anak kelas 5 SD. Materi ajar *simple conversation* dalam makalah ini dikembangkan dari kompetensi dasar yang tertera dalam kurikulum tingkat satuan pendidikan (KTSP) mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris SD (2006). Menurut KTSP, materi ajar *speaking* bagi anak kelas 5 SD harus sangat sederhana dan kontekstual sebatas lingkungan sekolah. Materi juga disesuaikan dengan tingkat perkembangan kognitif dan sosial/emosional anak. Oleh karena itu *simple conversation* yang diajukan dalam makalah ini dirancang sangat sederhana; dengan bahasa yang jelas, kontekstual dan kultural.

**Kata kunci:** Simple conversation, speaking material, young learners

### A. Introduction

Teaching-learning process of English language concentrates on the four skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. By mastering the four main language skills, students are expected to reach their communicative competence. One of the four skills which plays a significant role in mastering English is speaking.

To speak out, people need to study speaking through some materials of learning. Most teachers tend to use coursebooks as materials during their main experience in teaching. Thus, most of them often associate the term 'language-learning materials' with coursebooks. However, Tomlinson (2009: 2) argues that learning material refers to anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language.

Materials for learning speaking at primary school rather are inappropriate to be used. Those inappropriate materials can be seen from text books and students' worksheet (LKS) used by the teachers. Based on school based curriculum (Kurikulum Satuan Tingkat Pendidikan/KTSP), standard competence in speaking skill that has to be reached by the fifth-grade students is to express

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instruction and information that is very simple and in the context of school. It means that topic of materials used should not be out of the context of school.

However, in the text books and the students' worksheet used, there are some topics of learning materials that are out of the school-context. For example, there is a conversation used to ask and give directions that takes place in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII) where students will never find some places spoken in that conversation in their school environment.

Furthermore, language used in materials is sound Indonesian. It can be seen from one theme in LKS. Students are set in a conversation to express about like and dislike. One student says that she likes "fried banana", while the other student says that he likes "egg-tea". Fried banana and egg tea is so familiar in Indonesian culture, but there is no such of that phrase used in English language to refer to food that made by friying the banana and beverage that made by mixing tea and egg. Most better if that term is changed with bread and milk, since in English culture, children are more familiar to those kind of food and drink. Also, the language used in a conversation is not appropriate with the level of students' intelligence.

So no wonder if, that most fifth-grade students tend to be passive and prefer to play a role as a good listener instead of an active speaker in the speaking class. If there is someone plays a role as speaker that is merely because of the need to accomplish the task and to gain the score. It is not because of their desire to speak.

Thus, english teacher should provide students with the simple, contextual, and cultured-based speaking materials. In providing students with some appropriate speaking materials, teachers need some exposure about types of materials, the characteristic of good materials, and the way how to develop materials.

According to Kilickaya (2004), there are some types of materials. They are: authentic Materials, cultured-based Materials, and content-based Materials. Kilickaya (2004) says that what is common in the definition of authentic material is exposure to real language and its use in its own community. Besides, Kilickaya (2004) notes that according to Stuart and Nocon, cultural content material provides exposure to live language that a foreign language student lack. While, conten-based material is material that contains the language required for school learning and promotes thinking skills, Brewster (2004).

Nash (1999), points out several criteria of good materials. They are, simplicity of language, clarity of language, and logical sequence. He noted that learning materials should be at the level of the learners' intelligence and clear in their language and style.

Tomlinson (2009: 2) says, material development refers to anything which is done by the writers, teachers or learners to provide sources of language input and to exploit those sources in ways which maximise the likelihood of intake. In line with that, Tomlinson (2009: 122) argues that there are some principles in developing materials. They are: engaging content, natural language, and learner development.

Conversation, as Thornbury (2006) said, is the informal, interactive talk between two or more people, which happens in real time, is spontaneous, has a largely interpersonal function, and in which participants share symmetrical rights. Conversation is one of the speaking activity and it is said as the most fundamental form of oral communication. Simple conversations can be used as speaking materials for the fifth grade students, which are still considered as young language learners (YLLs).

YLLs are much different from adults. They have special characteristics and needs that adults do not have. They are very unique. Therefore, teachers of YLLs should consider their special characteristics and needs. In addition, Linse (2005: 2) says that teachers of young learners have to two jobs: to provide care and to provide instruction. In order to provide the best possible instruction, teachers need to adjust educational experiences to meet the developmental stages of the individual child. It is important to give students challenges that they are developmentally ready to meet. Therefore, in order to teach speaking through conversation for the fifth grade students, teachers have to design those conversations in appropriate ways based on the student's cognitive and social/emotional development.

One of the important cognitive theories is Piaget's cognitive developmental theory. According to Piaget in Santrock (1994: 41), children go through four stages of cognitive development: *sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational*.

The fifth-grade students are in the *concrete operational stage*, since the concrete operational stage last from approximately 7 to 11 years of age. In this stage, children can perform operation, and logical reasoning replaces intuitive thought as long as reasoning can be applied to specific or concrete and examples. In other words, the child can know reason logically about concrete events and classify objects into different sets. Thus, teachers should provide them with a specific and concrete examples related to each topic of the the lesson. In teaching speaking, teachers can flip in those specific and concrete examples in a form of a very simple conversation for the fifth grade students.

As Linse (2005) said, students require and deserve professionals who interact with them in appropriate ways not only based on their cognitive development, but also based on their social/emotional development. One of the important socio/emotional theories is Erikson theory. Erikson in Santrock (1994: 39) says people develop in psychosocial stages. He emphasizes developmental change throughout the human life cycle. He argues that there are eight stages of human development, they are: *trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus identity confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair*. Each stage consist of a unique developmental task that confronts individuals with a crisis that must be faced.

Based on Erikson theory, the fifth-grade students are in the forth developmental stage, that is *industry versus inferiority*. This stage is occurring approximately in the middle and late childhood (elementary school year; 6 years- puberty). In this stage, children have initiative, which brings them in contact with

a wealth of new experiences. They are also more enthusiastic about learning. They direct their energy toward mastering knowledge and intellectual skills. The danger in this stage is the development of a sense of inferiority, that is feeling incompetent and unproductive. Erikson believes that teachers have a special responsibility for children's development of industry. Teachers should mildly but firmly coerce children into the adventure of finding out that one can learn to accomplish things which one would never have thought of by oneself.

Based on the explanation above, this article will provide the teachers with simple conversations in a school-based context for speaking materials. It is hoped that these materials can be a solution for the teachers to initiate students to be eager to speak. These simple conversations are designed very short, use a real language, and contextual. It is also designed to expose the English culture to the students.

## B. Discussion

### 1. Standard Competence and Basic Competences of Speaking for Fifth-Grade Students

In choosing speaking materials for fifth-grade students, teacher should consider on the basic competences enlisted in syllabus based on school based curriculum (KTSP). Topics for materials are derived from the basic competences. In choosing the topic, teacher should recognize all of the basic competences as one unity. They should use integratedly. Teachers can not separate one basic competence with the others. Not all of the basic competences can be taken as topic. Topic chosen is based on the context and English culture used widely.

Here are some examples of standard competences and basic competences that should be reached by the fifth-grade students in the first semester.

Standard Competence	Basic Competences
2. Express a very simple instruction and information in the context of school	2. 1. <i>Bercakap-cakap untuk menyertai tindakan secara berterima yang melibatkan tindak tutur: memberi contoh melakukan sesuatu, memberi aba-aba, dan memberi petunjuk.</i>
	2. 2 <i>Bercakap-cakap untuk meminta/memberi jasa/barang secara berterima yang melibatkan tindak tutur meminta bantuan, memberi bantuan, meminta barang, dan memberi barang.</i>

From the table above, we can derived the topics for the conversations as speaking materials. The first basic competence that is, *bercakap-cakap untuk*

*menyertai tindakan secara berterima yang melibatkan tindak tutur: memberi contoh melakukan sesuatu, memberi aba-abab, dan memberi petunjuk*, will not be converted into one topic of conversation. Because, in English culture, there is no specific occasion to give an instruction. Instruction can be delivered and learned in everyday teaching-learning process. In the other words, instruction is included into classroom language, such as: *open your book, sit down please, raise your hand, etc.*

Second basic competence, that is *bercakap-cakap untuk meminta/memberi jasa/barang secara berterima yang melibatkan tindak tutur meminta bantuan, memberi bantuan, meminta barang, dan memberi barang*, can be converted into two topics. They are; a) “In the School Fete” and b) “Celebrating Mother’s Day at School”. Topic a, “In the School Fete” is intended to fulfil the requirement of speech act that is to ask and offer a favor. Topic b, “Celebrating Mother’s Day at School” is intended to fulfil the requirements of speech act that is to ask and give thing.

Those topics are chosen since based on the standard competence, the fifth-grade students must be exposed to their school, not to their classroom anymore, not yet to the environment outside of their school. Also, they have to be exposed to the English culture. School fete and Mother’s Day celebration are quite rare to be celebrated by Indonesian students’ in their school. However, they are celebrated by students’ at school, in English speaking countries. So, by flipping them in topics for speaking materials, teachers can import the culture and the nature of those celebration to their students. In short, by choosing the International events as topics, teachers can bring an exposure of a real life situation into their classroom.

**2. Simple Conversations**

First Semester

Topic 1. “*In The School Fete*”

*Ask and Give a Favor*

Conversations in this topic are used to teach students the way how to ask and give a favor in an event, in this case, a School Fete. School fete is an even that celebrated at school by the students in English speaking countries. This event is chosen since it can import the English culture to students in foreign language classroom. Some activities that are usually held in school fete will be exposed to students through the conversations. Some of common activities held in school fete are decorating the hall, Pot Luck game, and face painting.

The expressions used to ask and offer a favor should be the simple ones. Here are some expressions that can be used to ask and give a favor for the fifth-grade students:

Ask a favor	Give a favor
1. Can you + Verb1?	1. Sure. 2. Allright. 3. Certainty. 4. Of course.

**Here are some examples of simple conversations to ask and give a favor.**

1. Situation: Patricia and Harry are in the school fete. Patricia is decorating the Hall. She asks Harry to help her.
<i>Patricia</i> : Can you tie some balloons, please? <i>Harry</i> : All right
2. Situation: Jean and James are preparing the Pot Luck game in the school fete. Jean asks James to place some coins in the bottom of some pots.
<i>Jean</i> : Can you place some coins in the bottom of some pots? <i>James</i> : Certainty. <i>Jean</i> : Thank you.
3. Situation: Patrick attends the school fete. He is in the art booth. He asks Mrs. Melanie to paint his face.
<i>Patrick</i> : Can I be a tiger? <i>Mrs. Melanie</i> : Sure. <i>Patrick</i> : Thank you
4. Situation: Susan run into Mrs. Barbara in the school fete. Mrs. Barbara is in the food booth. She is baking cookies and cooking barbecue food. Mrs. Barbara asks Susan to help her.
<i>Mrs. Barbara</i> : Hi, Sue! Can you help me to bake some cookies? <i>Susan</i> : Of course. <i>Mrs. Barbara</i> : Thank you.

**Topic 2. Celebrating Mother's Day**

*Ask and give things*

Conversations in this topic are used to teach students the way how to ask and give things. These speech acts will be used when students get someone to pass a thing they need, or when they need to borrow a thing from someone. To make it real, teacher need to set a situation where students can work together to prepare one celebration at school. Mother's Day is a celebration usually celebrated at school. To celebrate the even, students usually make some presents for their mothers, such as love card, a bouquet of flower, a photo frame, etc. By practicing the conversations based on this topic, students can get the exposure of the Mother's Day celebration.

The expressions used to ask and give things should be the simple ones. Here are some expressions that can be used to ask and give things for the fifth-grade students:

Borrowing a thing	Granting a request
1. May I borrow your ....., please? 2. Can I use your....?	1. Sure. 2. Here you are 3. Certainly 4. All right 5. Of course

**Here are some examples of simple conversations to ask and give a thing.**

1. Situation: Hannah wants to color the card. She borrows a color pen from Susan.	
<i>Hannah</i>	: May I borrow this color pen?
<i>Susan</i>	: Sure.

2. Situation: Angelina wants to make a bouquet of flower from a paper. She needs scissors. She borrow scissors from Luna.	
<i>Angelina</i>	: Can I use these scissors?
<i>Luna</i>	: Of course.

3. Situation: Ginny want to make a frame. She needs a cutter. Her friend, Ann, lend her the cutter.	
<i>Ginny</i>	: May I use the cutter?
<i>Luna</i>	: Here you are.

### 3. Simple Conversation as Speaking Materials for the Fifth-Grade Students

The use of simple conversation as speaking material for the fifth-grade students is based on students' cognitive and socio/emotional development. The fifth-grade students are in the concrete operational stage. In this stage, they have already started to think systematically as long as been given a specific and concrete examples. So, simple conversations are appropriate to be used as speaking materials for the fifth-grade students, since these conversations use a simple and concrete language and specific events relate to students's world.

Besides, the simple conversation is also used to meet the students' socio/emotional development. The fifth-grade students are in the industry versus inferiority developmental stage. They have more enthusiasm, initiative and energy to learn new knowledge. In order to teach speaking through conversations for the fifth-grade students, teachers have responsibility to transfer students' enthusiasm, initiative, and energy into appropriate activities. One of the activities that can be used is role play. To make it easy, it is better for teachers to use simple conversations to be acted out. If teacher uses the complicated ones, students are not be eager in speaking, since they have fears to be judged negatively when they speak. Thus, they will have a feeling of incompetent or inferiority.

Based on school based curriculum, fifth-grade students should be introduced to their school. Therefore, all of the topics in conversations are in the

context of school. It means that topics of conversations should be based on what events usually happen at school and celebrated by the fifth-grade students, such as; school fete, school bazar, school music contest, mother's day, the easter, haloween, summer camp, and international day. Those celebrations are not celebrated in Indonesia, but it can be used as a transferring knowledge and culture for the students because one of the goal of teaching English stated in the curriculum is transferring international culture through English and two topics are usually celebrated by children at English speaking country.

Language used in conversation is designed to target relevant aspects (grammar, functions, vocabulary) that is comparable with the level of students' understanding. Language used should be simple and clear. Simplicity of language will lead students to encode the message easily. Clarity of language is measured by the sentence lenght, the use of active verbs, and concrete idea. So, simple conversation that use a simple language and contain not more than three turn-taking is better to be used for the fifth-grade students.

Conversations are also designed to be used as a tool for teacher to engage students in developing speaking subskills in particularly and gaining their communicative competence more freely and enjoyable. Materials that are designed to stimulate conversational interaction can take the form of: question to discuss, situations; role cards and flow diagrams, and text to read and respond to. Thus, in teaching speaking through simple conversation to the fifth-grade students, teachers can do the following activities:

**a. Provide an appropriate video and ask some questions related to the topic given.**

Video can interact students' motivation. Teachres can ask some questions that form the basis of a discussion and share many of the features of casual conversation. Both video and the questions can be used as a tool to stimulate students' background knowledge. So, it will be used in the pre-teaching phase as a bridge to build students' schemata.

**b. Present the situations that illustrate the conversation.**

Role cards and flow diagrams will be provided as the setting and the relationship between speakers in a conversation. It can be used in the whilts-teaching phase, alternately.

**c. Provide textscript**

After students read the textscript, they are set the task, that is talking to their classmates the same topic that has been discussed in the textscript before.

### **C. Conclusions and Suggestions**

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that Simple conversation can be used as a speaking material for fifth-grade students. Simpe conversations that used as speaking materials for the fifth-grade students are based on the school based curriculum. Also, the conversations are deigned to meet the level of student's cognitive and sosio/emotional development.

The topics of conversations are derived from the basic competences. They are in the context of school. Besides, topics chosen should bring a piece of real world to the classroom. On the other words, materials should be the cultural ones,



that can import the English culture to the classroom. So, by practicing the conversations, students can understand not only the language but also the culture lays behind it.

Those simple conversations contain some of these following characteristics; simplicity of language, clarity of language, and logical sequence. Besides, those conversations used a simple pattern, that is one speaker starts the conversations and the other one closes the conversation. Each speaker gets twice turn in speaking, maximally.

Through these simple conversations, students are directed to be engaged in the lively interaction during the speaking class. Moreover, through these simple conversations, teachers can initiate students to be eager to speak and break their silent-habit. Also students are directed to talk to each other in order to gain their communicative competence more freely and enjoyable.

It is suggested that the English teacher should use an appropriate materials in teaching speaking in order to reach a better result. Some considerations should be considered in designing the speaking materials, particularly simple conversation. These are some of those considerations: (1) Use a real language, (2) Avoid the long conversation and complicated one, (3) No need to put in some variations, such as direct or indirect utterances, and negative responses, (4) Avoid the Indonesian context.

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