

NO COMMON LANGUAGE IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ADULT LEARNERS: IS IT POSSIBLE?

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Abstract

In this paper, we try to share our experience in teaching language lacking of common language at our Bahasa Indonesia to foreign adult learners' class. Most of the learners come from various countries in which English is not the main language, whereas, the teachers are not able to speak or understand their languages. How to overcome this language barrier in language class during the teaching and learning process will be presented and then discussed. We find three main difficulties in transferring the knowledge to the learners: the problems in teaching vocabularies, affixations, and cultural concept. Those problems are acquired not only from the experience done by the teachers during the language teaching and learning process, but also from the observation of the classroom and interview with the learners. Next, we provide the appropriate method of teaching used in resolving the problems in such language class. The alternatives of language teaching approaches and methods by Richards and Rodgers (2001) can then be applied to design the classroom teaching methods. Furthermore, the latest research about affective filter by Dufay and Burt (1977) and Krashen (1982) as well as psycholinguistics theory of Steinberg (1993) are the basic considerations in resolving the problems. The findings show that using Total Physical Response (TPR), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and Audiolingual Method can effectively fix the problems in teaching vocabularies, affixations, and cultural concepts, particularly in the area where no common language is shared.

Keywords: language acquisition, common language, teaching method and strategies

Introduction

Bahasa Indonesia has now attracted many foreigners. Many of them who visit Indonesia finally decide to learn Bahasa Indonesia; not only to admire its cultures, arts, and beautiful landscapes and sceneries. Besides, Indonesian government also offers some scholarship programs for foreigners to learn Bahasa Indonesia. One of them is *Darmasiswa* Program. This one year program gives the opportunity to any foreigners all over the world to learn Bahasa Indonesia. Through this program they cannot only learn Bahasa Indonesia but can also explore Indonesian cultures and get in touch with Indonesians directly. This program is conducted in some universities, both public and private, in Indonesia. Since the participants or learners come from all over the world, the class looks like an international class.

Teaching Bahasa Indonesia to foreign learners in such class becomes a great challenge to the teachers. The teachers have to face different kinds of learners who possess their own cultural backgrounds, characteristics, and of course different languages. English, as an international language, may become a medium to overcome the communication problem. However, not all of the learners are able to speak and even understand English. Some of them are only able to speak their own languages or any non-English languages. For example, a learner from Madagascar is only able to speak native Madagascar language and French. In such situation how should the teachers transfer the knowledge if the medium is absent in teaching and learning process?

The answer of the question above will be presented in this paper. Through this paper, we try to share our experience in transferring Bahasa Indonesia to adult foreign learners (*Darmasiswa* students) in *Bahasa Indonesia untuk Penutur Asing* (BIPA) class. The language barrier becomes our main problem in the teaching and learning process. Further, the problem in teaching vocabularies, affixations, and cultural concepts and how to overcome those problems will be discussed one by one.

B. Brief Review of Related Theories

This chapter presents the related theories underlying the research done by the writers. This will also present the synthesis of the studies, theoretical and conceptual framework to fully understand the research to be done.

1. Adult Learners: Psycholinguistics

Children and adults have different ways of attempting their second language learning. The differences can be seen from the psychological and social environment, as proposed by Steinberg (1993). The psychological factors involved intellectual processing, memory, and motor skills, whereas the social factors considered the natural and classroom situation. The intellectual processing is divided into two: explication and induction. Explication is the process where the second language learning is taught in the learners' native language, while induction let the self-discovery of the language rules and structures. In this case, children do their best by explication and adults are learning by induction. The second psychological important factor is memory. Unfortunately, memory declines through the age. This leads to adults' developing strategies to more practice and exposure as to compensate the weakening memory ability. Moreover, the ability to deal with material such as new vocabulary lists remains affected. The motor skills are related to the production skills, which are controlled by the organs of speech, and similar to memory, the ability to speech is also declining by age.

The social situations are differed into a natural setting, where the situation of second language is practiced in the similar situation of a native language is used, and into a classroom situation that of the artificial situation is created in order to gain second language learning. The two different conditions affected children and adults' social interaction and their adjustments in attaining their second language acquisition. Furthermore, the natural circumstance benefits the children more than adults, due to their ability in the language interactions. This phenomenon of children and adults in second language acquisition can be perceived from the table below:

Table 1.1. Psychological and social factor affecting second-language learning for children and adults (Steinberg: 1993)

	Psychological Factors				Social Factors	
	Intellectual		Memory	Motor Skills	Natural	Classroom
	Inductive	Explicative				
Children under 7	High	Low	High	High	High	Low
7-12	High	Medium	Med/High	Med/High	Medium	Medium
Adults Over 12	Low	High	Low	Low	Low	High

2. Methods of Language Teachings

There are two different era of second language teaching methods, they are: traditional and contemporary (Richards & Rodgers: 2001). The traditional methods are divided into some distinguished teaching methods, like grammar-translation methods, natural method, direct method, and audio-lingual method. Whereas, there are other approaches in contemporary methods: Total Physical Response (TPR), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), natural approach, silent way, and suggestopedia. In this research, we are applying three teaching methods in BIPA classroom, they are: Audio-Lingual Method from the past and TPR and CLT from the present.

According to Richards and Rogers (2001, p. 59) Audio-Lingual is a linguistic, structured based, approach to language teaching which emphasizes on the listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities given in order. The activity is in the form of dialogue and drill. From the dialogues the teacher can correct learners' pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Later grammatical patterns are drilled.

TPR is using only the target language in the classroom, and meaning is derived from actual objects and situations (Steinberg, 1993, p.229). The focus is more on the productions (speaking skills) and reading and writing come afterward. The target material of this method is a sentence. The teacher demonstrates the meaning of vocabularies and the sentences by pointing to the objects and by acting it out. Performing acting, holding a performance, giving a speech, role-playing and playing games are some of the techniques used in TPR.

On the other hand, CLT put the core in the communicative competence of the learners. It is also called as an eclectic method that permits any other techniques to be used, such as vocabulary drilling technique and dialogue practicing as a means of active interaction. According to Finocchiaro and Brumfitin Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.156), there are some major illustrations that can be interpreted in a classroom design, such as: meaning is paramount; using dialogue to center around communicative functions; contextualization is a basic premise; language learning is learning to communicate; drilling may occur, but peripherally; any device that helps the learners is accepted; and that communicative competence is the desired goal. In conclusion,

these three different methods facilitate teachers' strategies in teaching second language acquisition without any common language.

3. Affective Filter

Affective filter is one of ways to acquire second language learning as proposed earlier by Dulay and Burt (1977) and then modified later by Krashen (1982). The three categories of affective filter may influence the success of second language acquisition, they are: motivation; self-confidence; and anxiety. Learners with low affective filters tend to acquire optimal language competence, as it is shown in the figure below:



Figure 1.1. Operation of the affective filter

According to Krashen Richards and Rodgers (2001), there are affective filter hypotheses that have obvious implications in language teaching. They are: (1) presenting as much comprehensible input as possible; (2) whatever helps comprehension is helpful; (3) the focus in the classroom should be on listening and reading; and (4) in order to lower the affective filter, student work should center on meaningful communication rather than on form.

Therefore, we may conclude that affective filter is a psychological filter that stimulates the level proficiency of learners in achieving their second language acquisition. This phenomenon leads to an agreement that mainly teachers' considerations in applying learning approaches and methods must never ignoring the affective filter in order to gain a more optimum second language acquisition.

C. Research Findings and Discussion

During the teaching and learning process in BIPA class, we categorized the problems of acquiring second language learning into three, they are: vocabularies, affixations, and cultural terms as they usually appeared in language concepts. The problems will later be described in details based on the experience of the learners and the teachers along with the ways of solving the problems by applying the teaching methods and considering the psycholinguistics theory of adult learners and the hypotheses of affective filter.

Vocabularies

As I ask the students of BIPA class about the most challenging problems in learning bahasa Indonesia, most of them said that understanding the new vocabularies and applying them in the correct context of situation are the first two things that need to be managed. Many researches show that vocabulary holds the most important factor in students' language competence (Snow, Griffin, & Burns: 2005). To avoid the difficulties, teacher and students were then applying some strategies, such as: referring to other familiar words used in the same context of situation; opening bilingual dictionary; and providing the images, pictures, or illustrations of the new words. Research on vocabulary tells us that there is a strong relation between knowing words and the following text (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan: 2008).

In introducing vocabulary items, the first thing we do is using pictures to illustrate the vocabularies, mentioning them, and asking them to repeat after the teacher in order to check their pronunciation. Besides, the usage of TPR (Total Physical Response) is also applied. Those methods are easy and practical. The learners did not find any difficulties in understanding the language of pictures and gestures. However, those methods only work for certain vocabulary items. As they learned more complex words and tried to make their own sentences the need of understanding word then given by referring to other familiar words used in the same context of situation. This method is beneficial in reading activity. Take a look at this example below:

Dokter : Oh, saya kira tidak begitu serius. Anda bisa membeli obat Procold di apotik.

Anda : Baik Dok. Saya menunggu resep dari dokter untuk membeli obat itu.

Dokter : Tidak perlu. Obat itu bisa dibeli tanpa resep. Minum obat itu empat jam sekali.

(White, 2002, p.69)

Before asking the learners to search for the word resep in dictionary we ask them to guess the meaning by referring to familiar words such as *dokter*, *obat*, *apotik*, *membeli*. Next, the context of situation is also discussed. The dialogue is between a doctor and a patient. By guiding the learners with such question as what does the doctor ask the patient to do? the learners can understand that the doctor asks the patient to buy a medicine at a drugstore/pharmacy. From the patient's response in the second line, we can guide them to focus on (1) the resep is from the doctor, and (2) the patient uses that resep to buy a medicine. The learners

can finally understand what *resep* is from the references of familiar words and discussion of context of situation. We may then introduce another similar word but with different meaning: *resep* for recipe. This induction process of learning is useful for adult learners, because unconsciously, the learners can use this method to comprehend the text in order to get the meaning of the new words.

Drilling technique is one of many ways in CLT to cheat on adults' weakening memorization ability. The learners must then use the word *resep* in constructing their own sentences, mentioning once again during the exercises, both written and oral (motor skills), and also in making a dialogue in pairs related to it. By producing their own dialogues and practicing it, the goal of CLT to communicate the language learning is achieved.

According to Graves (2006), there are some effective strategies related to vocabulary instruction: (1) providing students with information that contains the context as well as the meaning of the word, (2) designing instruction that engages students and allowing sufficient time for word learning, (3) making sure students have multiple exposures to the words with review and practice, and (4) creating a dialogue around the words.

Finally, when checking the students work, the teacher must always consider their personal factors like encouraging their motivation of learning, build-up their self-confidence, and lower their anxiety level by providing them a comfortable environment to learn together and leading them more to self-discovery as the essence of induction process.

Affixation

Bahasa Indonesia is rich with affixation. There are three kinds of affixation; prefix, suffix, and circumfix. A prefix comes before a stem word or base such as *ber-* in *bermain*. A suffix is placed after a base, such as *-an* in *makanan*. Last, circumfix comes before and after the base, such as *ke-an* in *kekutan* (Sneddon, Adelaar, Djenar, Ewing, 2010). Based on its function, affix is divided into two types, derivational affix and inflectional affix. Derivational affix will change the class of a word to another word when it is attached to a base where as inflectional affix will not (Sneddon, Adelaar, Djenar, Ewing, 2010, p.29). Most of affixes found in Bahasa Indonesia are derivational ones which make them seem complicated. Thus, teaching affixes to BIPA learners need much effort.

BIPA teaching is actually emphasized on oral communicative skill. We teach them to be able to communicate using Bahasa Indonesia. Daily conversation in the form of dialogues is used as topic of activities, for example: introducing oneself, buying & selling, inviting. They have used some of affix forms in those topics such as *berumur*, *berasal*, *penjual membeli*. However, the affix forms have not been discussed in those topics. Their understanding of how to use the vocabularies (in daily conversation) is prioritized first.

However, according to Wojowasita (in Nugraha, n.d, p.2) BIPA teaching is aimed to equip the learners with not only oral but also written forms so that they are able to use Bahasa Indonesia both oral and written fluently and comprehend the language uttered by the native Indonesian. Therefore, affixation which becomes a crucial part in Bahasa Indonesia is needed to be given.

Affixation is introduced after the learners have enough vocabulary items and are able to make simple sentences. We try to explain about affixation in Bahasa Indonesia in general first. We begin from inflectional affix by providing some examples, such as the word *berenang*, *berlari*, *berbicara*. We show the affixes in sentences which indicate that the class of the word does not change and the meaning is similar.

Dia sedang renang di danau itu. - Dia sedang berenang di danau itu.

We explain that the previous sentence is informal that should be avoided. After giving them some other examples we ask them to make their own sentences. By giving them a lot of practices it is hoped they will familiar with the usage of affix and can apply it correctly.

Derivational affix is introduced based on the new class of word that is formed. Verb is given first, since it is used in sentences very often, such as verbs with *me-* prefix. There are three things that should be explained: first, the *me-* prefix as verb can be attached to a noun, an adjective, and even a verb; second, that the *me-* prefix form changes based on the initial letter of the stem word. Therefore, the *me-* prefix can be changed into *mem-*, *men-*, *meng-*, *meny-*; third, that some stem words can also have the suffixes *-kan* or *-i*. Next, we give them some examples of verbs as the result of *me-* prefix in a table that also shows the changing of *me-* prefix based on the initial letter of the stem word. For example, the word *lihat* becomes *melihat*; the word *dekat* becomes *mendekat*; the word *beli* becomes *membeli*; the word *ajar* becomes *mengajar*; the word *saksi* becomes *menyaksikan*. After completing the table, the learners are asked to repeat after the teacher in mentioning the words. It is done in order to show them the correct pronunciation of the words. Later, drilling method is used so that the learners familiar with the changing of the initial letter of the stem word whenever it meets with the *me-* prefix. One of ways in drilling method is by using TPR in a guessing game. This attractive fun activity is done to make the learners enjoy the learning process. Besides, the teachers also ask the learners to use the words in sentences, in the form of dialogue and written. The teachers always correct

directly the learners' mistakes in applying the words. Where as for other derivational affix forms, the changing pattern should be memorized since the drilling practice will not be enough.

It is clear that without any common language, the affixation can be explained by using Audiolingual Method which gives much exposure to drilling practice and memorization. The drilling practice by using fun games is done in order to create a relax atmosphere in teaching learning process. The learners then enjoy the activity so that it keeps their affective filter low.

Cultural Concepts

Learning language cannot be separated from the culture in which the language is from since language is a product of culture itself. Therefore, there are some cultural concepts/terms of certain language that cannot be found in another language. Cultural concepts/terms in language teaching and learning may appear in reading materials or in the form of dialogues. In order to give more comprehension of the cultural concept, the reading materials or dialogues are situated in natural situation they experience everyday in where the second language is used. Fortunately for BIPA learners that they can experience and surrounded directly with the natural situation as Steinberg suggests that the ESL context gives more opportunities for second language learner through exposure to natural situation outside the classroom (Steinberg, 1993, p.213). Let's take a look at the example of the concept of *oleh-oleh* that is used in a dialogue below:

- Achi* : "Mau beli *oleh-oleh* apa untuk ayah dan ibumu, Nicky?"
Nicky : "Belum tahu pasti, Achi."
Achi : "Bagaimana kalau kain batik, wayang kulit, atau perhiasan perak?"
Nicky : "Adah, saya jadi bingung."
Achi : "Mari kita pergi ke Pasar Klewer, di sana kamu bisa memilih sesuai keinginanmu."
Nicky : "Baiklah."
 (White, 2002:112)

From the dialogue above, it is found that *oleh-oleh* is something that is going to be given to other people, in this situation is Nicky's parent (*untuk ayah dan ibu*). It also can be in the form of batik cloth (*kain batik*), shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*), silver jewelries (*perhiasan perak*), and many others that is sold in Pasar Klewer or other market places (*Pasar Klewer, bisa memilih sesuai keinginanmu*). The teacher can also add the cultural context that is usually appeared enclosed in the using of the term *oleh-oleh*, such as providing the information that Nicky is an Australian student who stays for some time in Indonesia and is going to go back to her home-country soon. Therefore, it is our culture to provide some souvenirs (*oleh-oleh*) given to the parents and relatives. As mentioned previously that this induction process of learning is useful for adult learners, because unconsciously, the learners can use this method to comprehend the text in order to get the meaning of such cultural concept as *oleh-oleh*.

We also introduce them with our traditional norm/habit such as respecting someone older or stranger by calling them with *Pak, Bu, mbak, or mas*. When we call out their names we do not mention their name only but use *mas* or *mbak*, such as *mas* Vali (from Romania), *mbak* Kanoko (from Japan). Besides, we always remind them with politeness in using pronoun such as calling themselves with *saya* when they speak to someone older or stranger instead of *aku* or *Anda, Saudara, Ibu bu, Bapak Pak* to call someone they talk to instead of *kamu*. By giving them exposure of the direct usage of the cultural concepts/terms they may easily attached to them.

The picture of vocabularies, affixations, and cultural concepts teaching and their principles are described clearly in the table below:

Table 1.1. Students' activity in vocabularies, affixations, and cultural concepts teaching and their principles as seen from psycholinguistic perspective, teaching method, and affective filter

Students' Activity in Vocabulary, Affixation, and Cultural Concept Teaching	Principles Psycholinguistic Perspective	Teaching Method and Approaches	Affective Filter
Students identify the difficult words, affixes, and cultural concepts from a text.	The overall activity is situated in the classroom, many of which	Meaning is vital: Reading can initiate the next activity	The focus of activity is reading
Students find the images, pictures, or illustrations to figure out the meaning in the	activities need induction intellectual	Utter the new words, illustrate, and act out the sentences	Simulating the natural situation to reproduce in the

context. Students recognize the meaning through the context.	processing, started from the practices of short term memorization to the motor skills improvement	Contextualization is the basic premise	classroom Books, pictures, and other visual aids provide a wide range of vocabulary
Students open other sources and do some exercises to enrich the explanation of the words, affixes, and terms other words related to it.		Drilling; any device that helps the learners is accepted	Present much comprehensible input
Students use the words, affixes, and cultural terms and related words/expressions to create their own sentence/dialogue/text.		Language learning is to communicate	Relate classroom activities with the real world and center the dialogue on the meaningful communication

Conclusion

From the research finding and discussion above, it can be concluded that teaching language to adult learners without the presence of common language as its medium is still possible to be conducted. The teachers should find the correct language teaching methods and techniques; understand the psychological factors of the adult learners, and social situations which affect the second language learning. By understanding those elements, the teaching and learning process even without common language can be reached effectively.

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