

Chinese Learning as a Second Language for Kindergarten Students

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Abstract. This research was conducted at Makassar International School (MIS) Kindergarten in Makassar City by observing Chinese learning activities using a descriptive-analytical approach. To obtain valid data, researchers used several data collection techniques such as interviews, analysis of Daily Learning Implementation Plan documents made by the teacher, and class observations when giving Chinese content to Early Childhood Learners. The final results of this study revealed that the provision of Chinese content for MIS Kindergarten students was carried out by inserting Chinese utterances or vocabulary into the learning process and the process of interaction at school associated with the theme of learning every day. This supports the theory of language acquisition put forward by Chomsky said that the acquisition of a second language (L2/Second Language) should be carried out as a first language (L1/First Language) is obtained, namely in the most scientific way possible by using simple utterances in accordance with the context of everyday life.

Keywords: Chinese Learning, early childhood, Second Language Acquisition

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INTRODUCTION

Mustafa (2007) stated that children who master foreign languages have advantages in terms of flexible intellectual, academic, language and social skills. In addition, children will have readiness to enter a social context with various languages and cultures. So that when they grow up, children will become qualified and accomplished human resources.

Many education experts then believe that mastery of foreign languages, especially Mandarin is a must because to this day it cannot be denied that Mandarin is still a global language that allows us to interact with human beings in all corners of the world and can support one's career advancement. Crystal (2003) stated that Mandarin acts as a global or world language because Mandarin is studied and used as a means of communication in various countries both as a first language, a second language, and as a foreign language. As a foreign language, Mandarin has now begun to be introduced and inserted into learning at the Early Childhood Education level. This is based on the thought of Hemmerly who believes that learning a foreign language or a second language will be better if it starts earlier.

Because of that, Rahmawati (2016) strongly agreed that learning should start at an early age in Indonesia. She cites several opinions which are in line with them, namely Mustafa (2007).

Besides, in line with Hemmerly's thinking, Ur (1996) also had the same view which stated that children who learn foreign languages are better than adults, foreign language learning in schools should be started as early as possible and must be packaged in an attractive form in order to arouse children's learning interest. Furthermore, Cole (2001) also has a point of view the same view which states that Early Childhood language skills go beyond what people imagine mature. Young Children can understand a hundred words before they are able to speak fluently.

Based on the assumptions of the experts above, the researchers believe that learning Chinese for Early Childhood is very important. However, this learning must be adjusted, especially in terms of selecting methods, approaches, strategies, and learning media for Early Childhood. Therefore, Early Childhood Education or Kindergarten teachers hold a very vital role in introducing Chinese in the learning process and in daily interactions at school. Teachers also have to know the function of language for Early Childhood. Because for Early Childhood, language has a function as a tool to develop intellectual intelligence and other basic abilities. Finally, based on the problems and assumptions of several experts above, the researcher believes that it is necessary to conduct a study that observes the urgency of learning Chinese as a foreign language for early age learners. This study was conducted at Makassar International School Kindergarten, Makassar City.

Theoretical review

Fierce debate about whether or not it is important to provide foreign language content for early childhood is still going on. Reasons for the importance of teaching foreign languages to early childhood as follows: 1) early childhood at their age is in a very good stage of linguistic development and forms the basis for further linguistic development; 2) learning a foreign language at an early age is a good start

because the sooner you start, the more time you will learn; 3) Early Childhood who start learning Foreign Languages at the Early Childhood Education or Pre-School level will have much longer opportunities to learn a second language and have much better knowledge of foreign languages in secondary schools; 4) learning a foreign language at an early age will stimulate the child's ability to use his mother tongue much better.

Basically, the success of learning a foreign language is determined by at least three main factors, namely: 1) qualified teachers who have good competence in teaching foreign languages; 2) resources and facilities that support the learning process, and 3) a good curriculum that outlines clear objectives for learning a foreign language. Next, a teacher must know the characteristics of children's language learning that are different from adults. According to [Harmer \(2001\)](#), the characteristics of children in learning language are: 1) children will respond quickly to meanings even though they do not understand all the words as a whole; 2) children tend to learn from their surroundings; and 3) children have limited time for concentration.

In other words, language learning for children must be well prepared and as interesting as possible, so that children do not feel bored quickly, even have difficulty in capturing learning, and benefit from these activities. Almost similar to Harmer, [O'grady \(2003\)](#) also outlines five basic characteristics of children in learning language, namely: 1) children start their language lessons with a listening process. When listening to children begin to recognize aspects of language, learn language functions and understand context and meaning; 2) children can learn language quickly; 3) children learn a language from its function, not its form; 4) children do not need to be reminded when they make mistakes in language, because they are aware of it and can correct it themselves; 5) the child imitates the language of the people around him. Then a good example is needed in speaking.

If we look at the characteristics of children in learning language, then Early Childhood is in the preoperational stage. Therefore, in learning a language they need the right learning techniques and media such as pictures, illustrations, audio-visuals as well as physical activities such as playing (games) which are carried out naturally. [Aisyah et al \(2008\)](#) suggested that learning activities for Early Childhood must combine concrete learning activities with play activities that are oriented towards child development. In general, the introduction to learning Chinese can be in the form of songs, chants, and rhymes. Linse in [Charlotte A.H \(2014\)](#) said that singing activities can improve language development and physical motor development, especially if these activities are integrated with music and movement (dance). Singing activities can facilitate children with different learning such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

In addition, one language learning approach that can be used is the scaffolding theory proposed by Bruner. Almost the same as Vygotsky's theory, this scaffolding theory also emphasizes the learning process of Early Childhood at the point of how it interacts with adults. Bruner, as quoted from his study, stated that adults who use scaffolding in guiding Early Childhood learning language will provide intensive assistance to these Early Childhood Children. Scaffolding can assist these

Early Childhood Children in achieving predetermined learning competencies through well-prepared conversation examples so that they can lead students to a higher level of learning achievement.

Furthermore, Bruner also describes several indicators of effective foreign language learning activities using scaffolding as follows: 1) Trying to present interesting things in the subject matter by using appropriate media and learning resources; 2) detailing assignments and lesson instructions into more detailed stages; 3) focusing on important parts of the tasks and instructions that have been given; 4) always trying to control children's anxiety when facing learning difficulties; 5) provide examples and alternative ways of completing tasks.

In short, based on the three theories or approaches above, the pattern of learning a foreign language for early childhood can be summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Learning Theory/Approach for Early Childhood

No	Theoretical basis	Criteria for Learning Foreign Languages for Early Childhood
1	Piaget's cognitive development	Interesting, Active, Pleasant
2	Vygotsky's social interactions	intensive interaction between teachers and students
3	Scaffolding Bruner	Provide mentoring support during the learning process

METHODOLOGY

In carrying out this research, researchers used the method descriptive-analysis. Nawawi (2012) explained that the descriptive-analytical method can be defined as a problem-solving procedure that is investigated by describing or describing the current state of the subject/object of research based on the facts found which are then analyzed as they are. In this study, researchers observed the process of giving Chinese content at Makassar International Kindergarten Makassar City then analyzes the Daily Learning Implementation Plan made by the teacher to see the suitability of the Chinese content with the child's language development and the technical implementation of the Chinese content delivery. The results of class observations and Daily Learning Implementation Plan documents that have been prepared by the teacher will become a reference for researchers to design and develop effective methods, approaches, and strategies for learning Chinese for Early Childhood at Makassar International School Kindergarten Makassar City.

The instruments used in data collection are sheets of observation which development is based on the cognitive development theory proposed by Piaget, Vygotsky's social interaction theory and Bruner's scaffolding theory. From the three basic theories (grounded theory), the data collection instrument was developed based on the following table:

Table2: Theory of developing approaches and strategies for learning Chinese

No	Theoretical basis	Learning Aspects	Indicator
1	Piaget's cognitive development	Interesting	Presenting material themes that are contextual and familiar to children.
		Active	Attending learning activities that accommodates physical-motor movements.
		Pleasant	Present learning activities through playing, singing, and telling stories
2	Vygotsky's social interactions	intensive interaction between teachers and students	Children are active and enthusiastic in responding to all forms of interaction and teacher speech
			Involve students in creating visuals and reality
3	Scaffolding Bruner	Provide mentoring support during the learning process	Using the mother tongue (L1) in learning interactions
			Present learning activities with visuals, reality, and movement
			Bringing in other teaching assist/guest teachers (parents, students, English teachers)
			Dividing assignments and lesson instructions into small steps.
			Focus on the important parts of the task in small steps
			Provide assistance when students have difficulty doing assignments, provide examples first, including providing alternative ways for students to complete assignments

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the results of observation, it was found that the material for learning activities in class was prepared based on a thematic approach with themes and sub-themes of discussion that had been adapted to the needs of students and their background knowledge. These themes include: 1) means of communication with sub-themes of print and reading, 2) water, air and fire; 3) my country with the sub-themes of name, policy, symbol and flag; 4) my country with the sub-theme of islands and heroes; 5) my country with the sub-theme of customs; and 6) my country with the sub-theme of the form of the state and its government. From each meeting in class, the teacher is guided by the Daily Learning Implementation Plan that they have made at the beginning of the school year. The components of the Daily Learning Implementation Plan consist of 1) semester/week; 2) day/date; 3) theme/sub-theme; 4) groups; 5) basic competence; 6) learning objectives; 7)

learning activities; 8) tools and materials; 9) experience base when playing for each child; 10) morning journal; 11) row; and 12) transition.

The following is a description of the process of learning activities in K1 class at the role play center: Before entering the children line up in front of the class and then they read the vows, sing, and the teacher checks their nails one by one. After entering, they do their morning journal, namely ablution and Duha prayer in congregation and pray. The lesson has the theme of communication tools with print and reading sub-themes. The teacher starts the lesson by asking students about the communication tools they often encounter. Occasionally the teacher also inserts questions using Chinese such as "这是什么 Zhe shi shenme?" (Teacher holding a newspaper), while showing a newspaper the teacher asks students to follow it by saying together "这是报纸 Zhe shi baozhi". Then, the teacher again asked "在你们的家里·你们有报纸吗 Zai nimen de jiali, nimen you baozhi ma?" One student answered "有 you" which indicated that there were a small number of students who were quite familiar with Chinese. Finally, the teacher and students say "我喜欢看报纸 Wo xihuan kan baozhi" many times.

The motor activity carried out is the teacher crumples the newspaper into a ball and then proceeds to throw the ball into the basket. When the teacher crumples the newspaper to make a ball the teacher also inserts Chinese words such as "挤 ji", "这是球 zhe shi qiu", "我喜欢打球 wo xihuan da qiu", "慢慢来 man man lai". Furthermore, when the teacher asked the child to throw the ball into the basket he also said instructions in Chinese such as "投球 tou qiu", "放进篮子里 fang jin lanzi li", "好 hao" "很好 hen hao" and "非常好 feichang hao."

The learning activity is continued by coloring a postman and the teacher also inserts Chinese sayings and vocabulary in giving instructions such as "请注意 qing zhuyi", "这是邮递员 zhe shi youdi yuan", "信书 xin shu", and "请给图片上色 qing gei tupian shang se". At the end of the lesson, the teacher closed the lesson by conducting an evaluation by inserting simple Chinese sentences and asking each student whether they were happy with today's lesson.

From the results of the learning observations above, the learning strategies applied by the teacher are in accordance with the learning principles believed by behaviorists. Because each learning activity is adapted to the character, needs, and cognitive development of the child as proposed by Jean Piaget. This is in accordance with Piaget's opinion which states that learning activities for children under 7 years old must be carried out in an active and fun way.

Chinese language learning activities carried out at the Makassar International School Kindergarten in Makassar City have gone well according to the needs, character, and cognitive development of Early Childhood. In addition, based on data obtained from observation sheets whose instruments were developed from Piaget's theory of child cognitive development, Vygotsky's social interaction theory, and Bruner's scaffolding theory, it shows that out of 12 indicators there are 8

indicators which are at a high level of tendency. Even indicators number 1 and 6 achieve maximum scores which can be concluded that learning activities at the Makassar International School Kindergarten in Makassar City are already able to present learning themes and sub-themes that are contextual and familiar with students' lives which enable them to master the material more quickly and easily. The following will present research findings data:

Table 3: Research Findings Data

No	Learning Aspects	Indicator	N	F	%	tendency
1	Interesting	Presenting material themes that are contextual and familiar to children.	25	25	100	High
2	Active	Attending learning activities that accommodates physical-motor movements.	25	22	88	High
3	Pleasant	Present learning activities through playing, singing, and telling stories.	25	24	96	High
4	Intensive interaction between teachers and students	Children are active and enthusiastic in responding to all forms of interaction and teacher speech.	25	18	72	Low
		Involve students in creating visuals and reality	26	16	64	Low
6	Provide mentoring support during the learning process	Using the mother tongue (L1) in learning interactions	25	25	100	High
		Present learning activities with visuals, reality, and movement.	25	23	92	High
		Bringing in other teaching assist/guest teachers (parents, students, English teachers)	25	0	0	Low
		Dividing assignments and lesson instructions into small steps.	25	13	52	Low
		Focus on the important	25	20	80	High

parts of the task in small steps.				
Provide assistance when students have difficulty doing assignments and provide examples	25	22	88	High
Provide alternative ways for students to complete assignments	25	12	72	Low

Another aspect that supports the success of Chinese Language Learning at the Makassar International School Kindergarten in Makassar City is the teacher's ability to create a fun learning atmosphere by presenting learning activities that are interesting, creative, meaningful, and in accordance with the needs and cognitive development of children. The provision of Chinese language content is inserted into learning activities through games, singing, telling stories, and role playing where these activities also accommodate the affective and motor development of early childhood. In addition, to support the success of learning Chinese, the teacher also prepares learning media both visual and realistic. Although in practice the teacher does not involve students in making the media.

However, in the application of scaffolding theory, many things are not yet done by the teacher. This is indicated by the teacher's lack of optimal description of tasks in detail and lesson instructions into more detailed stages. In addition, teachers are also not skilled in conveying Chinese subject matter into simpler operations. Therefore, it is a good idea for Makassar International School Kindergarten in Makassar City to recruit teachers with a background in Chinese Language Education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that Chinese language learning content is introduced to Makassar International School Kindergarten students in Makassar City by inserting various forms of speech and vocabulary that are related to the themes and sub-themes of lessons at school. In its implementation, learning Chinese is integrated with fun activities such as playing, singing, role playing, simple small instructions, and other physical activities. Furthermore, even though none of the teachers had an educational background from the Chinese Language Education Study Program, the teachers were quite creative in inserting Chinese learning content by utilizing instructional media whose materials were easy to find in everyday life. Like newspaper which is then made into a ball which is then thrown into the basket using simple instructions in Chinese.

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