

# EYL TEACHER'S STRATEGIES IN CONDUCTING SPEAKING ASSESSMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe (1) what is the strategies that teacher's use in assessing young learners' speaking skill (2) To know the problems faced by teacher in assessing young learners' speaking skill. Assessing speaking skills for young learners is one of the difficult tasks in language learning because young learners' have higher activity levels and easily distracted by others. English teachers need to be competent in applying strategies in conduct speaking assessment for young learners'. The research was conducted at SD GenBi School Medan. This research used descriptive qualitative method. The subject of this research was English teacher of SD GenBi School Medan. The data were obtained through observation, and interview. The data were analyzed by qualitative data analysis technique which consists of three events, namely ; data reduction, data presentation, and make a conclusion of data. The findings showed that the teacher use various strategies when conducting the speaking assessments, namely; *Picture Talks, Story-telling, Oral Presentations, Answering Open-questions, Mini-dialogues and role-plays, and Word Repetition Tasks*. But in its, the teacher faced some problems. The problem was time limitation. Furthermore, speaking assessments strategies is very difficult to address to young learners' whereas teachers must look at young learners' ability to focus individually. And it took a lot of time.

**Keywords:** *Young Learners', Assessments, Assessments Strategies, Speaking Skill.*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of The Study**

All of the skills in English, such as listening, writing, reading and speaking, are taught in different ways. In speaking, teachers should be aware of and comprehend about young learners behaviour and characteristics of young learners in teaching-learning process. Linse (2005) said that speaking is a important skill that anyone learn other language or a foreign language and should develop. For young learners it is critical to develop their speaking skills in part of language development. Linse also stated that it is preferable for teachers to teach students speaking skills first, rather than other skills, because it serves as a foundation for developing other language skills. Similarly, Brown (2001) said that speaking skills assist students in communicating their ideas and opinions. It is expected that if young learner have mastered the skill of speaking, it will be easier for them to master other skills. As a result, it is obvious that speaking, among other skills, plays a critical role. Young learners are students in primary school who are between the ages of 6 and 12. This is the initial step in learning the fundamentals of the subject. Young learners can take an active role in making sense of their surroundings at this time. They are also capable of copy what the teachers say or do as quickly as possible.

Many strategies have been discovered by researchers to improve the way they teach speaking. These strategies are thought to help students improve their public speaking skills. Studies such as those conducted by Brown (2001), Linse (2005), Geoffrey (2006), and Szpotowicz (2012) reveal a variety of interesting strategies for teaching speaking to young learners. The other issue, however, is related to the assessment performed by EYL teachers. As we know, as an essential component of teaching and learning, Assessments must includes Performance-based assessments, students self-assessment, portfolios. Teachers can also assess and measure how far the planned study's purpose has been achieved or applied. It can also track the development of young learners in their learning.

Speaking is one of the four essential skills in language learning. The speaking activity allows people to communicate with others, which is difficult for young learners. Fauziati (2010) states that “ the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language is mastering the art of speaking, and success is measured in terms of ability to communicate in the target language”. McCauley (2004) states that conducting an assessment for young learners is a difficult task due to their high activity levels and ability to be easily distracted by others. Young learners also have a shorter attention span, are suspicious of strangers, and perform inconsistently in unfamiliar environment. Similarly, Grieve (1992) states that assessing young learners is more difficult than assessing adult learners because young learners have a volatile temperament that may impair their cognitive ability. Furthermore, Katz (1997) asserts that teachers must be extremely sensitive when deciding on the best assessment strategies. It is because young learners have distinct characteristics. Likewise Ovalles and Mata (2011) advises teachers to conduct an informal assessment of speaking ability because organizing oral testing can be difficult for teachers.

It shows that the result of preliminary data which conducted by the researcher’s doing interview with one of English teachers at SDN 124399 Pematangsiantar on preliminary observation, the most of teachers concentrated solely on teaching speaking strategies. It will be difficult to assess young learners who are prone to making mistakes. As we know that speaking activity is not easy for young learners it is since young learners have distinct characteristics. In addition speaking assessment for young learners should be meticulously planned and carried out.

Based on these issues, the researcher decide to investigating teachers’ strategies in conducting speaking assessments for young learners. This study wants to explore more about how speaking assessment conducted for young learners, the speaking assessment strategies that used by teachers in assessing young learners’ speaking ability and the problem faced by teacher in conducting the speaking assessment strategies for young learners.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **A. Theoretical of Framework**

In supporting the idea of this study, the research presented some theories that helped the researcher. Theories are very important because they are used as the basic foundation in conducting the analysis of this research.

#### **1. Young learners**

Young learners are students aged five to twelve, and there is a special period for language learning during childhood. English for Young Learners (EYL) is a method of teaching English to children aged 5 to 12 years old, or those in elementary school. EYL students are taught to teach lessons using age-appropriate learning strategies in elementary school. The lessons should be fun, easy to as well as their physical understand and the teacher must have presented in interesting way to make fun learning in classroom. According to Piaget (1980), direct involvement with objects and the environment around them develops children's thinking. Of course, young learners differ from old learners. They are one-of-a-kind ; they have smart brain that is fresh, fast, and clean. Most of them are attractive.

Young learners have a variety of skills and characteristic that aid in their learning of a foreign language. The support given by Susan Halliwell (1992:3) she is point out several characteristics of young learners that she believes are extremely beneficial to language learning. She asserts that children :

- (1) Are already adept at interpreting meaning without having to comprehend individual words
- (2) Can use limited language in creatively
- (3) Learning directly
- (4) Find and create fun in what young learners do
- (5) Have a fantastic imagination
- (6) Take a great pleasure in taking risks

#### **2. Assessment**

Assessing the achievement of young learners is one of the most difficult tasks, and assessment may be required in certain situations and conditions,

as well as depending on how the scope is defined. Assessment is necessary in education because we, as teachers, must provide a result or an appropriate score as a measurement of the learning process that has occurred. It is the collection and interpretation that used to help teachers make better decisions to improve students learning. However, David Miller (2009:26) states it is systematic process that is important in education. And it starts with the identification of learning objectives and the assessment of how far those objectives have been met. Assessment in the classroom is much more specific and focused.

Annamaria Pinter (2006 :131) assessment refers to the process of data analysis that teachers use to obtain evidence about learning performance and progress in English. Assessment is done to provide proof of learning to head teachers, school officials, and hand parents, but it is also the right of students to know how they are doing. Assessment should be an essential part of the language learning process, not only because it provides feedback to both the teacher and young learners about the learning progress and achievements, but also because it allows teachers to monitor the learning process of young learners and set new goals for the future. Assessment can also motivate young learners by demonstrating what they have done at a certain level and how far they have progressed toward a specific goal.

#### *1) Purpose of Assessments*

Teachers when carry out the assessment to young learners throughout the learning process for several different purposes. With assessment, teachers can track their effectiveness as well as the success of particular methods and approaches. Assessments serve six purposes there are : Knowledge of results, support and encouragement, motivation, diagnosis, selection, measurement and comparison.

#### *2) Kinds of Assessments*

As we all know, assessment assists EYL teachers in identifying young learners with special needs or in determining who requires special help and support. Therefore the type of assessment that can used in assessing young learners skill. The type of assessment used by teachers is determined

by the purposes for which they use assessment. Wragg (2001:27) classifies assessment into five categories, which are as follows: Formal/informal, continuous/final, coursework/examination, individual/group

### **3. Speaking for Young Learners**

The principles of teaching English speaking to beginners differ from those of teaching speaking to intermediate or advanced learners. There are three principles for teaching English speaking to beginning learners, according to Bailey (2005:36-40), those who provide something for students to talk about, create opportunities for students to interact through group or pair work, and manipulate physical arrangements to promote the speaking practice. Teaching speaking, particularly English, to young learners differs from teaching speaking to adults or adolescents. Because of their unspoken statement that a foreign language is just another way for them to express themselves, but there are limitations due to their lack of actual language. Children can freely express emotions and communicate intentions in their mother tongue language. So, they anticipate being able to do the same in English

#### *1) Speaking Assessments for Young Learners*

Speaking is the most important of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and people who know a language are known as speakers of that language (Ur,1996). This has demonstrated that knowing a language is not as important as knowing how to use it. Likewise, Speaking instruction focuses on how students can improve their oral production. According Annamaria Pinter (2006:56) when teaching young learners to speak, it is a good idea to focus on simple but purposeful and meaningful pattern drilling and personalized dialogue building to prepare them to be able to talk about themselves and the world around them and begin interacting with their classmates and others. Pinter also underlines the need of employing various speaking tasks with younger learners versus older learners, because youngsters do not need to be able to articulate whole sentences or inquiries at a younger age. They are first exposed to English by listening, then

they are bombarded with information, and only later do young learners want and can participate in exchanges with the teacher and each other.

#### **4. Speaking Assessment Strategies for Young Learners**

Speaking skills are frequently regarded as the most crucial part of an EYL course; nevertheless, due to the difficulty in testing oral abilities, teachers frequently utilize insufficient oral assessments or do not measure speaking skills at all.

Mckay (2006) describes several types of speaking assessments for young learners.

##### 1) News Telling

News telling entails young students telling other students about their recent activities. It can be done as a whole class, in small groups, or pairs. This strategy assesses a young learner's ability to communicate information to an audience in sufficient detail and in an appropriate sequence. The ability of the audience's young learners to critically listen for detail and generate questions can be assessed. Teachers can focus on the abilities of selected young learners by inviting them to share the news with the entire class; alternatively, teachers can observe performance as they move around different groups.

##### 2) Storytelling

The ability of young learners to tell a story can be assessed using illustrations cut away and laminated into a book. It is best to show the entire sequence of pictures first, then ask for the story, because young learners tend to treat each picture as a separate unit, losing the sense of the connected story in their storytelling (Carpenter, Fujii and Kataoka, 1995). Young learners may be familiar with the story, having heard it in story reading sessions, and thus are likely to be familiar with the vocabulary and language required. If the story sequence is unfamiliar, they may require assistance in practicing the vocabulary first.

### 3) Picture Talks

Young learners can be asked to describe a picture. They should be given one or two minutes to look at the image before describing it. Teachers will show a series of pictures to learners here. Those pictures work as a stimulus for young learners to make story or description.

Young learners sort and look for patterns in a categorization task. Young learners' descriptive language, comparison language, abstract explanations, academic-speak, and content can all be assessed using categorization activities.

### 5) Oral Presentations

Oral presentations are another type of extended speaking task. Young learners may be speaking spontaneously about their own experiences, or they may be delivering a report on a project that has taken several weeks to complete. The task will be made easier if young students can hold and show objects, pictures, or other items. It will also make the task easier if an adult is available to help them when they need it.

Depending on their age and level of skill, young learners may be required to do the following in a speaking-only situation: debate two sides of an issue, narrate an important event, tell someone how to do something, or describe a person or a place.

### 7) Mini-dialogue and Role Plays

Mini-dialogues and role play is also one of the most popular speaking assessment strategies. It gives students an opportunity to be someone else. It also can make students have more time in practicing their lines, two children are frequently asked to deliver the mini-dialogue in front of the class.

### 8) Word Repetition Tasks

Even though there is time when this strategy was underestimated in assessing speaking skill, yet in recent years, Brown (2004) discovers that overemphasis on fluency can sometimes result in a decrease in speech



accuracy. Repeating words task is useful to know young learners pronunciation development. In conducting this strategy, teachers should give young learners a brief written stimulus which they have to read aloud.

The following list is criteria that must be met when conducting an assessment task or procedure to assess the speaking ability of young learners :

- (1) For young language learners, assessment tasks must be motivating and encouraging.
- (2) There must be an element that necessitates communication, which implies that children must be involved and engaged in the task.
- (3) Speaking assessment tasks must include support for learners, such as visual aids. As a result, the task's context is emphasized and the cognitive demands are reduced. This type of assistance also makes young learners less worried about producing the target language and draws them in more.
- (4) The vocabulary used in the speaking assessment should be appropriate for young learners, taking into account both their linguistic level and cognitive characteristics.
- (5) Avoid using written text to assess speaking abilities, especially with young learners whose literacy skills are not as developed as those of learners in the upper years of primary school. When assessing oral language, it is unfair to ask young learners to read a text and then react to certain questions because this type of activity needs reading as well, and thus does not just test oral language. The task selected must be suitable for young students. Concrete speaking assessment tasks may include : Participating in information gap activities; Retelling story episodes using pictures; Describing a picture; Participating in role-plays; and Answering open-questions; Going to present a project to the class; Describing partner and objects; Can place items in the correct order; Recognizing differences between two pictures.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted by using descriptive qualitative approach. It is because this research design will be relevant to nature because it can be used to investigate the quality of a relationship, activity, situation, or material. It is also because, in this study, the researcher collects data, analyze it, and then draw conclusions. This study will describe and will be investigate EYL teachers' strategies in conducting speaking assessments. The researcher uses two instruments, namely observation, interview, to see the types of EYL teacher's strategies in conducting speaking assessments. This research was conducted at SD Genbi School Medan. And the research subject is English teacher who are teaching EYL in grade 4<sup>th</sup> in that school.

The data of this study was collected by using two strategies. They were observation, interview. Firstly the data is conducted by use contribution observations which means the researcher presented at the view of action but will no act together or participate. When the researcher do the observation in.the class, the researcher just did the observation without doing any teaching. The researcher will use an observation checklist, which will help an observer identify skill gaps and problem areas to improve teaching strategies, classroom settings, and student learning development.

The data collection used interviews result will be used to collect in depth real condition from participants experience. The teachers will be asked open-ended questions so that they can express their views on assessments for young learners. The interview will makes recording and will be transcribed. The interview will include questions about the purpose of speaking assessments, factors to consider when conducting speaking assessments, aspects to be assessed, and the speaking assessments used by teachers when teaching young learners.

#### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Research Findings

In doing teaching learning for young learners there are some strategies that teacher used in conducting speaking assessments in the classroom, it was discovered that teacher implements speaking assessment strategies in learning. Here, the strategies that teacher used in conducting speaking assessments :

| No | Speaking Assessment Strategies | Meeting 1 | Meeting 2 | Meeting 3 |
|----|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1  | News Telling                   |           |           |           |
| 2  | Story Telling                  | √         |           | √         |
| 3  | Picture Talks                  | √         |           |           |
| 4  | Categorization Tasks           |           |           |           |
| 5  | Oral Presentation              | √         |           |           |
| 6  | Other Speaking                 | √         | √         | √         |
| 7  | Mini-dialogue and Role play    | √         |           |           |
| 8  | Word Repetition Tasks          | √         | √         | √         |

To make young learners more communicative in speaking English, teachers must increase their ability by adding new vocabulary. Young learners can expand on previously learned vocabulary in this section. By using speaking assessment strategies, teachers can assess young learners' speaking skills based on what they will assess, allowing them to focus more on the material provided. To make young learners more communicative in speaking English, teachers must increase their ability by adding new vocabulary. Young learners can expand on previously learned language in this section. By using speaking assessment strategies, teachers can assess young learners' speaking skills based on what they will assess, allowing them to focus more on the material provided.

The students were asked to speak in front of the class about their performance. And the teacher joins in on their performance to assist young

learners in correcting their pronunciation. And, based on observations, some young learners are still embarrassed, and some of them make mistakes, which the teacher immediately corrects and feedbacks because they have worked hard and dared to try.

### **1) Story Telling**

This strategy is uncommon to use in assessing young learners speaking ability since it is considered too difficult for their ages. The teacher concentrated on the vocabulary of the young learners in this class. The teacher began the assessment by telling a short story to the young learners. She asked students to pay attention so that young learners could pronounce each vocabulary. The teacher also uses other speaking assessment strategies, such as word repetition tasks, to assess students' speaking abilities.

### **2) Picture Talks**

This strategy can encourage students to improve their English skills. Using this strategy, the teacher creates appropriate pictures that allow the young learners to speak. Teachers should also provide detailed instructions to young learners. Following that, the teacher explained the material about "simple present tense" and then asked the young learners what happened in the pictures shown by the teacher.

### **3) Oral Presentations**

This strategy is similar to picture talks; the difference is that young learners deliver a project report in this strategy. The task will be easier if young learners can hold and show objects or pictures.

### **4) Other Speaking – Answering an open question**

This strategy must focus on young learners' age and level of proficiency. In this strategy, teachers respond to open-ended questions; most teachers use this strategy because it is simple to implement. Teachers will pose some questions, and young learners will respond verbally. This strategy allows teachers to assess young learners' pronunciation, fluency, task completion, and comprehension.

### **5) Mini-dialogue and Roleplay**

The most common strategy used by teachers in conducting speaking assessments is mini-dialogue, also known as role play. This strategy applies to all levels of young learners. Furthermore, before asking students to role-play with a mini-dialogue in front of the class, teachers provide a "word repetition task" to help young learners pronounce the dialogue.

### **6) Word Repetition Task**

This strategy is the most commonly used by teachers to assess young learners' speaking abilities. The teacher instructs the young learners' to repeat some stimulus that the teacher provides. However, because the teacher used to ask young learners to read together.

However, the teacher encounters some difficulties in doing so. Specifically, it is the complexity of assessing young learners who are still embarrassed to expose themselves. Teachers must focus on the individual; teachers also agree that assessment takes time.

## **B. Discussion**

Teaching English to children differs from teaching English to adults. Researchers have discovered many strategies to improve the way they teach speaking. These strategies are thought to help young learners improve their speaking abilities. However, this section focuses on the assessment of young learners by teachers. As we all know, an assessor is an essential part of the teaching and learning process.

According to McKay (2006), assessing young learners is a difficult task due to their high activity levels and their vulnerability to distraction from others. Because young learners have features that indicate a short attention span. And young learners must still learn through experience. As a result, the assessment activities should be familiar to them, and teachers should develop an exam based on the subject students have previously mastered. In addition, examinations for young learners should focus on their language and vocabulary growth. Teachers can design interactive assessments such as a game, song, or tale. When

administering the speaking assessment, the teacher expects the young learners to be more fluent in English. The speaking assessments were focused on daily activities since it would be meaningful learning for the young learners, however before young learners can be fluent in speaking English, they must acquire more vocabulary because vocabulary is the basic basis in learning English. When young students mastered the vocabulary, further language abilities would follow.

When conducting a speaking assessment to young learners, the instructor may use a performance-based assessment, which may include a behavior assessment and communicative abilities. Teachers assess young learners' speaking abilities through role-playing, mini-dialogue, and story-telling.

One of the main issues that the teacher encountered during the speaking assessment was a lack of lesson time. Although the teacher attempts to manage their time carefully, managing many young learners has proven to be a difficult task. It is shown that the teacher were not able to fully utilize their time to score all of young learners using individual performance assessment. Because of this only half of young learners that can be assess while the rest should wait for another meeting. During the interview, the teacher also mentioned that because this speaking assessment for young learners is rather challenging to address, young learners are still hesitant to expose themselves in front of the class. Furthermore, it took a long time to focus on speaking skills individually, although the lesson is only 2 hours per week.

## **V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **A. Conclusion**

After analyzing the data, the conclusion can be drawn as the following:

In conducting the speaking assessment to young learners teacher doing a performance-based assessment whereas it can be behaviour assessment and consist communication ability. The researchers concluded that the teachers implemented different strategies in assessing speaking skills for young learners. They were Picture Talks, Story-telling, Oral Presentations, Answering Open-questions, Mini-dialogues and role-plays, and Word Repetition Tasks. Those

strategies were proposed by McKay (2006). In general, teachers have performed and claimed that those strategies were able to measure young learners' speaking ability and increase their confidence in speaking English without harming young learners' characteristics. In deciding the aspects to be assessed, teachers have had their own criteria since the place they worked believed that teachers know best what young learners need for the future. Thus, in conducting the speaking assessment strategies, teachers faced any difficulties for young learners.

Teachers cannot consider the speaking assessment strategies to run efficiently and optimally because there are a few problems that teachers still struggle with: Young learners are still hesitant to expose themselves in front of the class. Furthermore, time limitation. Speaking assessment strategies is very difficult to address to young learners' whereas teachers must look at young learners' ability to focus individually. And it took a lot of time.

### **B. Suggestions**

After conducting this research, the researcher recommends several suggestions as follows:

1. For English Teachers, many things need to be explored in young learners' teaching and learning process. The teacher should improve their overall knowledge and ability to teach students by reading relevant books. Speaking assessment strategies is very difficult to address to young learners'. In this case, the teacher should use various strategies in speaking assessment for young learners' so that teachers can find more suitable strategies that can improve young learners' potential.

2. For Other Researchers, because of the limited nature of this research, further in-depth and better research are needed to fully cover the young learners' teacher's strategies in conducting a speaking assessment

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