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## CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY AS A METHOD OF GORONTALO LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** Constructive play is a playing activity for preschool-aged children, in which it enables them to make things from different kinds of compounds, e.g., puzzles, play dough, clay, mud, and beads. From the compounds, one can create objects in various shape and form, such as furniture, household goods, and food. Constructive play allows children to figure out how to create different shapes by themselves, whether by their creativity or by imitating a real object. Moreover, when creating things by relying on their creativity, children can construct their knowledge and further extend their experience. Furthermore, the constructive play is also applicable as a method of Gorontalo language teaching for early learners. By the method, children will not only learn to pronounce or to communicate with Gorontalo language, but they also get to materialize the words into actions, thus constructing the language pattern in their long-term memory. As a result, the method is highly recommended for early childhood teachers to enhance the students' ability in Gorontalo language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Constructive play, early learners, Gorontalo language teaching.

### INTRODUCTION

Developmental psychologists agree that a person's early childhood period (also referred as 'golden age') is the most significant stage of human brain development. Developing a child's basic concepts of life is critical in this period, extendable through optimal education nurture also with a supply of nutritious food as stimuli to the brain.

One cannot deny that language proficiency is also crucial to be stimulated during early childhood age. As a part of the local environment, it is considered significant to teach preschool-aged children their local language to preserve and maintain local cultural values, both formal and informal way. Formally, preschool-aged children can learn their local language in early childhood education program, while surrounding environment acts as an informal language habituation vessel.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Methods of Early Childhood Education

The methods used in early childhood education are adjusted to children's development features. The Decree of Minister of Education and Culture number 137 on 2013 defines that early childhood education is an effort of nurturing children

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during their first six years by providing education in assisting the children's physical and mental growth in order for them to have adequate preparation to enroll for further education (State Department of Education and Culture, 2015).

Hurlock (1980) divides early childhood period into two stages; infant stages (0-2 years old) and childhood stage (2-6 years old). By that, this study delineates age group of 4 – 6 years old as the determined early childhood period. Moreover, Hurlock (1980, p.112-113) introduces term 'speech development' to refer to language development of early childhood. Hurlock then mentions three development processes of language proficiency in a child's early period:

- (a) Pronunciation of words: Early children are difficult to pronounce certain sounds, e.g., consonants/z/,w/,/dd/,/s/, and/g/and combined phonemes/st/,/sr/,/dr/, and/fl/. By help from audiovisual media, they can practice pronouncing right sounds as their brain capacity grows.
- (b) Vocabulary enhancement: During the period, there is a significant progress of children's vocabulary enhancement as they learn new words and new meanings of already learned words. The words learned are mostly basic vocabulary of daily use, such as 'good' and 'bad'; 'give' and 'get,' and words for a specific use, like numbers and colors.
- (c) Sentence construction: Children of two and three years old are most commonly able to construct simple but incomplete sentences of three or four words. In the age of three years old and above, they can construct a sentence of six to eight words.

By Hurlock's consideration, it is argued that preschool-aged children are capable enough to learn a language. The Decree of Minister of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia number 137, chapter IV, article 10 on 2013 describes scope of early childhood language development, i.e., (a) ability of understanding receptive expressions (involving stories, commands, and rules) and enjoy and appreciate a reading; (b) ability of expressing language, dealing with capability of asking and answering questions, expressing verbal communications, re-telling information, learning pragmatic expressions and capability of expressing feeling, ideas, and desire in written form; and (c) literacy skills, involving ability to understand the concept of relationship between sound and form of a letter, to imitate letter forms, and to understand words in a story.

Language teaching for early childhood education is conducted by considering development features of preschool-aged children development. Developmental and educational psychologist concur that one important characteristic of preschool-aged children is that they like to play. By that, it is recommended to involve playing session when conducting language teaching for preschool-aged children, involving three approaches; 'playing while learning,' 'learning while playing,' and 'learning in playing.' The Decree of Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of

Indonesia number 137, Chapter V, Article 13 on 2013 also highlights that early childhood education is carried out by interactive play session, ergo, resulting in a fun, inspiring, and student-centered contextual learning. Hence, it is expected that students be free to express their initiative, independence, and creativity that suit their talent, interest, and their physical and psychological development.

Furthermore, Hurlock (1980, p.122) breaks down preschool-aged children's playing pattern, namely: playing with toys, dramatization, constructive play, games, reading books, and engaging in audiovisual media. Highlighting on constructive playing, children create real-life objects from various compounds, e.g., solid blocks, sand, mud, clay, beads, paint, and crayon. Hence, it is concluded that constructive play is applicable as a reference method of language teaching for preschool-aged children.

### **Gorontalo Language Teaching for Preschool-aged Children by Constructive Play**

Constructive play is a playing activity in which children create objects from different kinds of compounds, e.g., puzzles, play dough, clay, mud, and beads. From the compounds, there is a vast possibility of creatable objects, such as furniture, household goods, and food. Constructive play allows children to create different shapes by their own or by imitating a real object. In addition, when creating things by relying on their creativity, children can construct their knowledge and further extend their experience. Therefore, it is related to constructivist learning theory which believes that an individual need to construct and develop their knowledge. With that in mind, teachers need to design a learning model in which the students construct information by their own from interactive learning, not receiving it from teachers. (State Department of Education Affairs, 2003)

Through the method of constructive play, students will actively interact with their surroundings during the learning process. Piaget (in Gredler, 1994) once argues that there are four variables of one's cognitive development, i.e., physical environment, maturity, social influence, and self-management, by Piaget the variables are referred to as equilibration. Moreover, by applying constructive play as a method in the learning process, students can develop their imagination, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, it enables students to enhance their psychomotor skills as well as adaptation and character development. Serok and Blum (in Rusmana, 2009) affirm that playing is a social activity that involves certain processes, for instance: learning and obeying rules, problem-solving activity, self-discipline and emotional control, and taking roles of leader and follower. All the processes are essential components in socialization.

There are numerous applicable themes of Gorontalo language teaching by constructive play method, i.e., (a) subjects about buildings, (b) subjects about

furniture and household goods, (c) subjects about fruits, and (d) subjects about space objects. The following is an example lesson plan of Gorontalo language teaching using constructive play:

***Sample 1***

Theme	: My environment
Development Scope	: Language proficiency
Indicators	: Student can mention and pronounce the word 'home' in Gorontalo language.
Method	: Constructive play
Learning Activities	: (a) Students take attention to the teacher's guidance of the activity. (b) Students watch how teacher demonstrates the activity. (c) Students mention and pronounce the word 'home' in Gorontalo language. (d) Students materialize the word mentioned into an object from compounds available.
Tools and material	: Puzzle Home-shaped object from plastic as reference.
Assessment	: Evaluation

***Sample 2***

Theme	: My environment
Development Scope	: Language proficiency
Indicators	: Student can mention and pronounce name of fruits in Gorontalo language.
Method	: Constructive play
Learning Activities	: (a) Students take attention to the teacher's guidance of the activity. (b) Students watch how teacher demonstrates the activity. (c) Students mention and pronounce name of fruits in Gorontalo language. (d) Students materialise the words mentioned into objects from play dough.
Tools and material	: Play dough Real fruits or artificial plastic model as reference.
Assessment	: Evaluation

Constructive play in language teaching enables students to practice ‘learning by doing’ and at the same time shapes a pattern of memory in their language proficiency. Hence, it results in a more in-depth comprehension of the material taught, since the students are doing activities related to the learning material. Also, Silberman (2006, p.9) once states that students are more easily to forget information brought by the teacher in the classroom. In order for a student to possess deeper comprehension, it is needed for them to engage in learning process actively. Consequently, the constructive play is the right method to conduct to preschool-aged children.

## CONCLUSION

Constructive play is a playing activity for preschool-aged children, in which they create objects from different kinds of compounds, e.g., puzzles, play dough, clay, mud, and beads. From the compounds, they can create objects in various shape and form, such as furniture, household goods, and food. By constructive play, children are allowed to find out by their way to create different shapes, whether by their creativity or by imitating a real object. When children create objects by relying on their creativity, they are able to construct their knowledge and further extend their comprehension.

Constructive play is an appropriate method to conduct in Gorontalo language learning for early learners, for it enables students not only to learn to pronounce and mention the words taught, but they are also able to create objects from the material discussed. In consequence, it creates a deeper conception in their long-term memory, since they are doing activities related to the lesson. Ultimately, the constructive play is highly recommended for early childhood education teachers to apply in the teaching of Gorontalo language.

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