

# The Effectiveness of Learning Instruction in Improving Teacher's Competency in Teaching Gorontalo Language for Early Childhood and the Early Childhood's Skills in Using the Language

Wenny Hulukati  
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

Maryam Rahim  
Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

**Abstract:-** Low motivation in using Gorontalo language for daily communication has been a major concern among the society, especially in children and adolescent in urban areas. Instructional media for early childhood has been designed as a solution to the aforementioned problem. This present study is intended to examine the effectiveness of learning instruction in improving teacher's competency in teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood and in developing the skills of early childhood in using the language. The problems of this study revolve around the question whether or not the learning instruction for teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood can improve (1) the competency of teachers of early childhood in teaching Gorontalo language for children, and (2) the language skills of children in communicating using Gorontalo language. This experimental research involved 20 teachers of early childhood and 20 children in Gorontalo. The data were from a teacher's competency test and ability test of children. These data were analyzed using a t-test.

The calculation results show that the value of  $t_{count}$  is 6.7366 with the list of t-distribution on a significant level of 5% with  $t_{0.975}(19) = 2.0930$ . This result indicates that  $t_{count} > t_{table}$ . In other words, there is an influence of learning instruction in on teacher's competency in teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood. This finding also implies that the effectiveness of the developed learning instruction in enhancing the teachers' competency has been examined. The calculation result also shows that the value of  $t_{count}$  is 72.5904 with the list of t-distribution on the significant level 5% with  $t_{0.975}(19) = 2.1314$ , meaning that  $t_{count} > t_{table}$ . This finding implies that the effectiveness of the learning instruction in improving the skills of children in using Gorontalo language has been confirmed. Therefore, this study recommends that the developed learning instruction for teaching Gorontalo language is applicable to teach early childhood in Gorontalo.

**Keywords:-** Learning Instruction, Gorontalo Language, Early Childhood

## I. INTRODUCTION

Low motivation in using Gorontalo language for daily communication has been a major concern among the society, especially in children and adolescent in urban areas. Implementing an inappropriate solution will, therefore, cause language death. This idea has been proposed by Baruadi (2014, 14); he discovered a condition in which a native speaker of Gorontalo language show less respect towards their traditional language. Instructional media for early childhood has been designed as a solution to the aforementioned problem. The components of the media involve a program of Gorontalo language learning, teacher's handbook, teaching material, and evaluation guideline. The effectiveness of the developed instructional media is examined in this present study. This present study is aimed at responding to the question, i.e., whether or not the learning instruction for teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood can improve (1) the competency of teachers of early childhood in teaching Gorontalo language for children, and (2) the language skills of children in communicating using Gorontalo language? Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of the developed learning instruction (1) in improving teacher's competency in teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood and (2) in developing the skills of early childhood in using the language.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Traditional Language Learning as a Local Content Subject for Early Childhood

The curriculum of the local content subject is considered as one of the solutions to preserve local wisdom through formal education; this includes a traditional language. The objective of developing local content curriculum is based on the national interests, i.e., preserving and developing the distinctive culture of a region and changing the values and attitudes of the society on environment to a positive direction (Team for the Development of Basic and Professional Subject of Curriculum and Learning, 2011: 41; Sagala, 2014:242).

The development of local language by implementing local content subject, in addition to language preservation efforts, has played a significant role to familiarize children or students with their local language. Such an effort is crucial as nowadays, people, including students and youth, are reluctant to use their local language in communication. To worsen, some of them barely understand the meaning of the language.

Children as a part of society are also responsible for preserving their local language. This idea brings the urgency to integrate local language learning in a school curriculum in the form of the local content subject. This curriculum also applies to the level of early childhood education. The developed curriculum must be implemented and sustained based on the correct principles of learning to meet the expected results. In reality, the implementation aforementioned curriculum, however, is yet effective and it is not organized according to the program. This fact causes the outcome of the implementation is not measurable.

Curriculum implementation can be defined as the actualization of a written curriculum in the form of the learning process. Mulyasa (2002, 94) further adds that curriculum implementation is the operationalization of potential (written) curriculum into learning activities. Saylor (1983:227) points out that “*Instructions is thus the implementation of the curriculum plan, usually, but not necessarily, involving teaching in the sense of student, teacher interaction in an educational setting.*” The implementation of curriculum is significantly determined by several factors, namely (1) characteristics of curriculum, involving the scope of the curriculum’s new ideas and its clarity for its users; (2) the characteristics of curriculum’s users, and; (3) implementation strategy, i.e., a strategy used during the application of the curriculum-this involves the preparation of the instrument of curriculum and instructional media.

Instructional media refers to a unit of learning components. Within the unit are the teacher’s instruction, instructional media, and evaluation guideline. Sagala (2014, 162) points out that instructional media or teaching material is a systematically, organized, and constant learning material encompassing some factual and conceptual components. The learning material has a systematic structure and order. It provides the objective of learning, motivates the students to learn, anticipates the students’ learning difficulties, provides the gist of the lesson, and provides exercises of the lesson. The material is basically learner-oriented. Learning material is commonly used for individual learning, considering its systematic and complete nature. Other than fun, understandable, and of highly effective quality, the aspects previously mentioned also serve as the requirement of a good instructional media (Degeng and Miarso, 1993; Percival and Ellington, 1988; Danim, 2008).

### *B. Development of Early Childhood*

Early childhood education is a basic education that is central to the development of human resources as children play a major role in the future of a family and a nation. A number of studies have reported that early childhood is crucial for children’s education. Children in this period can retain their memory easily, which is further stored in their long-term memory. Thereby, inappropriate education leads to a prolonged, negative effect on the children. It is also difficult to educate children with such past experiences. Early childhood education is an educational service for children aiming at directing the development of behavior, knowledge, and skills needed by young learners to adapt to their environment and enhance their growth and development. From the above discussion, it is assumed that providing education to children earlier, involving practicing good habits and motivating children to appreciate the use of their local language, such as Gorontalo language. This effort is considered effective to preserve the use of local language for daily communication around teenagers.

According to the theory of child development, every child is gifted with numerous skills. This potential of the children, however, remains hidden. That being said, providing appropriate education based on the children’s development is essential. This is done by enriching children’s play environment. A parent should provide a medium for their children to actualize themselves-a medium for expressing self-ideas, creativity, and for discovering the hidden talents of the children.

From the pedagogic point of view, early childhood development represents the basis or the foundation for the further growth and development of children. Some experts believe that an individual with good childhood experience will be more successful than others with a different background in the past. Therefore, creating a conducive situation during childhood stimulation and providing education that suits the needs and interests of children are essential to achieve optimum growth and development (Rahim et al., 2017).

The early childhood development involves a number of aspects which differ from one another and are also intertwined. The following sections discuss these aspects according to the idea of some experts in development.

#### ➤ *Motor Development*

The development of child movement is called motor development. Hurlock (1980) delineates this process as the development of the control of physical movement through coordinated processes in the central nerve, nerve, and muscles. There are two types of motor development, namely fine motor and gross motor. The gross motor skills refer to several movements which involve the coordination of large muscles coordination; some of the examples of this

movement comprise walking, jumping, running, throwing, and climbing. Fine motor skills are some movements which involve the use of small muscles. The examples of these skills include drawing, using scissors, and folding papers. Furthermore, fine motor skills refer to the skills or the movement of fingers and wrists in sync. Both gross motor and fine motor skills are equally important.

#### ➤ *Cognitive Development*

Gunarsa (as cited in Dewi, 2005: 11) argues that cognitive development encompasses several aspects of intellectual structure used to identify a particular object. This idea signifies that the term cognitive is the mental function involving perception, thought, symbol, reasoning, and problem-solving. Piaget, a psychologist, classifies four stages of the cognitive development, namely sensorimotor (age 0-24 months), preoperational (age 2-7 year), concrete (age 7-11 year), and formal (age 11 year and above). According to this theory, the development of early childhood is in the preoperational stage. During this period, the process of mastering a systematic language, imitating, and thinking has begun. All these processes show that children are capable of engaging in symbolic play. Preoperational thinking is characterized by the capability of imitating, anticipating, performing egocentric behavior and concentrating on one dimension.

#### ➤ *Language Development*

Language is a symbolic system and an order of words used to communicate with other people. Language by nature is limitless, general, and has its rules. Fakhruddin (2010, 109) opines that all children born gifted with the potential of language intelligence. The stages of language development of a child are prelinguistic and linguistic. Since age 0 - 1 year, from the first cry of a baby, the prelinguistic phase has started to develop in children. This process continues until the children start to babble. The linguistic stage begins in age 1 to 5 year when children say the first word. This process lasts up to the point when the children are able to speak fluently (Dewi, 2005: 15). The stage of linguistic is further divided into three phases, i.e., holophrastic (one-word) stage, two-word stage, and telegraphic stage.

#### ➤ *Socio-emotional Development*

Social development in the context of this present study refers to the acquisition of behavior based on social demand. This process can be seen in the way a child socialize with people. Hurlock (1980) asserts that social development is learning to adapt with the norm of a particular group and customary habits, to cooperate, to interact and to associate with people nearby. Furthermore, socio-emotional development can be described as a process to connect with others, to get used to be polite and discipline in everyday life, and to be able to show emotional reactions properly.

#### ➤ *Moral Development*

The word “moral” is derived from “mores” which means habitual procedures and customs. Moral behavior refers to behaviors relevant to a certain code of conduct of a social group. On the other hand, immoral behavior refers to demeanors that do not fit to the society. Such misbehaviors are not caused by ignoring the ideology of a society. In fact, the cause is disagreeing the social standard or poor awareness of adjusting oneself to society. The main cause of immoral behaviors is not violating the standard of a social group intentionally; rather, it is because of the ignorance to a standard of the group. Children behavior is seen as moral behavior rather than immoral.

By taking into account the aspects of early childhood development, particularly the cognitive and language development, it goes without saying that the early childhood period is potential for a child to learn languages. A child can easily learn various symbols, including language symbols, in which the result of the learning is retained for a long time until the child proceeds to the next stage of development. Therefore, teaching Gorontalo language to young learners is ideal. This idea becomes more reasonable if it correlates with the status of early childhood education as a foundation of a child’s education. Early childhood education (henceforth will be called as PAUD) in the context of this research is a formal educational institution for children similar to the kindergarten or *Raudhatul Aftal* and other equivalent education.

#### *C. Competency of Early Childhood Teacher*

Burke (2005: 18) claims that “*are the areas of knowledge, ability and skill that increase an individual’s effectiveness with the world.*” According to this claim, competency encompasses knowledge, skills and abilities that enhance individuals’ effectiveness in their work. Another definition of competency is proposed by Collin Morgan. Morgan regards the term competency as a *possession of the skills and knowledge to perform the service*. In other words, competency involves the skills and knowledge of a person to carry out his or her jobs. Competency is also a specification of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of an individual which is applied to their careers based on the performance of the person. Mastery of a particular field of study is also regarded as competency.

Goleman simply defines competency as skills, authorities, power, or abilities (Goleman, 1999: 353). In Indonesia Dictionary, competency means abilities or skills. An educator is urged to possess a set of to fulfill their duties. The standard competency of an educator has been constituted in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 16 of 2007 considering the Standard Competency. According to the regulation, there are four main components of the development of the competency of an educator. The components for teachers or educators of early childhood consist of: (1) Pedagogical competency, involving the

comprehension of students' characteristics (physical aspects, moral, social, cultural, emotional, and intellectual); understanding theories of learning and principles of educative learning; developing curriculum based on field of study; conducting educative learning development program; utilizing information and communication technology in learning; facilitating the development of students' potential as the effort of students' actualization; communicating effectively, emphatically, and politely to the students; evaluating and assessing students' learning; making the use of the evaluation results, and; reflecting on self-performance to boost the learning quality. (2) Personality competency, which encompasses the behavior of adhering the norms of religion, law, social, and national culture of Indonesia; presenting oneself as an honest, noble individual and as a role to students, presenting oneself as an individual with qualities, e.g., stable, mature, wise and authoritative; showing work ethic and high responsibility as an educator; self-confidence, and; upholding the professional code of ethics of the educator. (3) Social competency, which involves be inclusive; act objectively and not discriminating people based on their gender; communicate effectively, empathically, and politely with fellow educators, staffs, parents and the community; adapt in the workplace within the territory of the Republic of Indonesia that has socio-cultural diversity; communicates with professional communities and other professions in spoken, written or other forms of communication. (4) Professional competency, which includes master the material, structure, concepts, and scientific mindset that supports the subjects taught; master the standards of competency and basic of subjects/fields of study; develop creative learning materials; develop professionalism on an ongoing basis by taking reflective actions, and; utilizing information and communication technology in communication and self-development.

From the above , it is obvious that early childhood teachers must possess pedagogical and professional to facilitate the potential of their students and to actualize self-competency. This idea implies that the competency for developing children's language is also necessary.

#### *D. Characteristics of the Developed Learning Instruction*

The quality of the learning instruction used by the teacher(s) and students in learning determines the quality of the learning process and students' outcomes. Quality learning instruction is not only characterized by its content or language in discussing a lesson, but also by the technique of composing and designing the instruction. This research examines the effectiveness of several components of the developed learning instructions; each component is described as follows:

##### ➤ *Learning Program*

Learning program functions as the guideline for teachers in teaching Gorontalo language.

##### ➤ *Teacher Guideline*

A clear guideline helps a teacher in teaching and contributes to the learning outcome of the students. The guideline contains general instruction, learning objectives, learning material, methods, and media used in teaching Gorontalo language for children.

##### ➤ *Instructional Media*

The instructional media for Gorontalo local language is designed for young learners or early childhood. Considering the characteristics of early childhood development, the media is in the form of a picture book. Such a book is very interesting for children.

The characteristics of the developed media are (1) compatible with the expected competency after the children accomplishing the lesson; (2) compatible with the ability of early childhood; (3) interesting; (4) motivating, and; (5) able to help the students in learning.

##### ➤ *Evaluation Instruction*

The evaluation instruction contains a set of guidelines of the evaluation process and instruments to assess students' skills in using Gorontalo language after completing the lesson; the learning process is based on the teacher's guideline.

The development takes into account the characteristics of early childhood development, specifically cognitive and language development, and the principles of education technology.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This experimental research involved 20 teachers of early childhood and 20 children in Gorontalo. The data were from a teacher's competency test and ability test of children. These data were analyzed using a t-test. The tests for both teachers and students have different assessment indicators. The test for the teachers measure (1) competency of teachers of early childhood in teaching Gorontalo language for children; (2) comprehension of teachers of early childhood regarding the learning objectives of teaching Gorontalo language; (3) comprehension of teachers regarding the instructional media of Gorontalo language; (4) comprehension of teachers regarding the Gorontalo language learning methods for early childhood; (5) comprehension of teachers regarding the learning media of Gorontalo language learning for early childhood, and; (6) comprehension of teachers regarding the evaluation of learning outcome of students in Gorontalo language subject. The components of assessment of children involve (1) the pronunciation of words and sentences, and (2) engaging in a simple conversation.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The calculation results show that the value of  $t_{count}$  gets 10.02 6.7366 with the list of t-distribution on the significant level 5% gets  $t_{0.975} (19) = 2.0930$ . This result indicates that  $t_{count} > t_{table}$ . In other words, there is an influence of learning instruction on teacher's competency in teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood. This finding also implies that the effectiveness of the developed learning instruction in enhancing the teachers' competency has been examined.

The data analysis results show that the value of  $t_{count}$  reaches 72.5904 with the list of t-distribution on the significant level 5% gets  $t_{0.975} (19) = 2.1314$ . This result indicates that  $t_{count} > t_{table}$ . Such findings signify the influence of learning instruction on early childhood skills of Gorontalo language. In other words, the effectiveness of the developed learning instruction in improving the language skills of the children has been confirmed.

##### ❖ Discussion

The success of curriculum implementation is determined by teachers'. Dimiyati and Mudjiono (2009, 263) argue that teachers play a central role in the implementation of curriculum, involving the designing and the actualization process. Furthermore, the of teachers contribute to the success of the learning and students' learning outcome. These ideas suggest the necessity to improve teachers' systematically and continuously. Rogers (2004:58) further adds that the success of teacher of early childhood lies in three main qualities and attitudes, namely: (1) providing quality learning development to humanize children; (2) designing meaningful learning and accepting children's feeling and personality, including the fact that children are trustworthy to actualize a fun and engaging learning situation; (3) developing empathy to children, this is to raise students' sensitivity in understanding others.

Catron and Allen (1999-59) point out that the role of teachers of early childhood is mentoring or facilitating learning rather than merely transferring knowledge to the students. This is because the process of transferring knowledge requires students' engagement in learning. In this situation, the focus is on the perspective of teachers. Therefore, a teacher is urged to understand the way the students think; to develop and appreciate the students' experience; to comprehend the problem-solving of the students; to design lesson that fits the level of children cognitive development to help the students think and develop their knowledge; to apply various learning methods that enable the students to actively construct their knowledge.

Teachers or educators are central to the process of students' learning. The critical perspective can also determine the effectiveness and quality of care and education for children. Teachers are among the major roles in educating

and nurturing students. Catron and Allen (1999: 59) mention several traits unique to a good educator in teaching children, namely warmth, sensitivity, adaptability, honesty, sincerity, humble, comforting character, accepting individual differences, promoting development without overprotecting students, healthy and strong body, living rigidity, compassionate, accepting self, emotionally stable, confident, able to sustain achievement, and able to learn from experience. In regards to the development of the language of early childhood, it goes without saying that teachers are responsible for maximizing the potential of children's language skills as all children are born gifted with these skills (Fakhrudin, 2010:109).

To achieve the professional competency of teachers of early childhood in teaching Gorontalo language, this study has designed a learning instruction of Gorontalo language subject for early childhood based on the target competency. The instruction consists of (a) Book 1, i.e., learning program of Gorontalo local language, this book is designed based on the development of learning in early childhood level. The components involve standard competency, basic competency, themes, sub-themes, activities, methods, media and evaluation; (b) Book 2, i.e., instruction for teachers, comprising a description regarding learning activities based on the themes and sub-themes. This also provides the information regarding the themes, sub-themes, standard competency, competency, material, methods, media, and evaluation; (c) Book 3, i.e., teaching material consisting of the learning material based on the themes and sub-themes stated in the learning program. Every material is provided with pictures to help teachers and students in understanding every vocabulary based on the themes and sub-themes; (d) Book 4, i.e., evaluation instruction. This explains the methods in evaluating the students' abilities in using Gorontalo language. The guideline also contains the description of themes, sub-themes, standard competency, indicators, evaluation procedures, and answer keys.

The guideline is important, especially if the activities are performed by different people with different perception and abilities. A detailed and clear guideline eases its users. This also provides the same reference in the treatment of the activities to attain shared goals. However, it does not mean that the guideline limits the creativity of its users in teaching or learning Gorontalo language.

The characteristics of learning instruction or guideline in teaching or learning Gorontalo language for early childhood are as follows.

(a) Referring to the principles of education technology to help teachers in teaching. Degeng and Miarso (1993) argue that the use of technology is of great help in actualizing learning process. This characteristic enables the teacher to apply the developed guideline in teaching or learning Gorontalo language for early childhood.

- (b) Using simple, short, precise, and practical language to help teachers apply and understand the content of the instruction. Using longer sentences only hinder the readers from finding the main idea which also causes misunderstanding.
- (c) Providing pictures that best describe the vocabulary of Gorontalo language to help the children understand the meaning of the words. A Chinese proverb says that picture worth ten thousand words. A picture can realistically show the ideas being transferred. Furthermore, a person does need long explanations to understand a picture. A picture also helps students to retain their memory for a long time. This is based on the idea by Kemp (1985) that picture helps the students to store what they have learned in their long term memory. The picture used in the instructional media for teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood involves original documentation, such as photos of a situation and a real object. These pictures are also simple in terms of its composition. According to Nursalim (2010), there are several requirements regarding the originality and simplicity of pictures' composition used in learning or teaching activities.
- (d) Containing a cover with interesting colors and letters. This is to draw the readers' interest to read the book.

Developed learning instruction takes into consideration the principles of language development in early childhood. Konishi et al. (2014) mention six principles of language development:

*principle 1: children learn what they hear most; principle 2: children learn words for things and events that interest them; principle 3: interactive and responsive rather than passive contexts promote language learning; principle 4: children learn words best in meaningful contexts; principle 5: children need to hear diverse examples of words and language structures, and; principle 6: vocabulary and grammatical development are reciprocal processes* (DOI:10.1080/87565641.2014.931961).

The effectiveness of the previously mentioned characteristics improve the competency of teachers of early childhood in teaching their students has been confirmed. In other words, this research finds that the learning instruction of Gorontalo language subject is recommended to be applied by teachers of early childhood as a guideline to teach Gorontalo language to children.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the effectiveness of the developed learning instruction in (1) improving teacher's competency in teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood and (2) in developing the skills of early childhood in using the language has been confirmed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This present study recommends that developed learning instruction is applicable to be used in teaching Gorontalo language for children. This idea is based on the effectiveness of the developed learning instruction in improving teacher's competency in teaching Gorontalo language for early childhood and in developing the skills of early childhood in using the language.

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