

Plurilingual Competence Intervened by Online Games for a Child Living in Multilingual Environment

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Abstract : This research aims to analyse the plurilingual competence of English as a foreign language intervened by online games. It is a case study to a child living in multilingual environment. Plurilingualism that is the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual language learner becomes something researchable for a child who is studying more than one language and culture in a multilingual environment. Online games that have become popular recently give some effects specially relating to the language used by the child. Metalinguistics, a study focusing on the relationship between language factors and non-language factors in society is the theory used to analyse the data. There are some tools used in this research: (1) phonology, (2) syntax, (3) semantics, (4) sociolinguistics. The data are analysed and described qualitatively. Some results obtained are (1) the language background and repertoire of the child are variegated in terms of languages known and degree of competence and (2) the metalinguistics awareness in the child's first language leads to better results when learning English, especially in the specific context observed, that is on the language used in playing online games. The child has his own competency on the spelling and he has known the meaning of some words he spells for English words used when playing the online games.

Keywords : plurilingual competence, metalinguistics awareness, online games, multilingual environment

1. Introduction

Plurilingual competence is a need for someone living in a multilingual environment. Some various language have emerged in the daily activity. Multilingual and multicultural societies and communities have always been integral to the world landscape [1]. Plurilingualism rejects monolingual and monocultural orientations in communication, and acknowledges flexibility in language use. Plurilingualism is the ability of a person who has competence in more than one language to switch between multiple languages depending on the situation for ease of communication. Plurilinguals practice multiple languages and are able to switch between them when necessary without too much difficulty. Although plurilingualism is derived from multilingualism (also referred to as bilingualism), there is a difference between the two. Multilingualism is connected to situations wherein multiple languages exist side-by-side in a society but are utilized separately in essence. It is the coexisting knowledge of separate languages. Plurilingualism is the interconnected knowledge of

multiple languages. In general, plurilinguals have had contact with languages not native to them through educational institutions, however the education system plays only a small role in the linguistic competence of these individuals

Technology innovation gives deep impact to the culture change in a society. People must have big effort to be able to adopt this condition. They must have a competency to become plurilinguals as said, “these individuals (plurilinguals) can use their languages flexibly, switching from one language to another and mixing languages [2]. A competence that requires flexible language use and is of particular importance in contexts where social mobility and linguistic, cultural and identity plurality intersect is plurilingual and pluricultural competence (henceforth PPC) [3]. PPC has become vital tool concerning with the language use in a multilingual community. The concept of PPC was first introduced in French— *compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle*— in the early 90s [4] and strengthened as a result of further studies [5] that would inform the conceptualisation of plurilingualism presented in the Common European Framework of References for languages (CEFR) [6]. Drawing from sociolinguistic perspectives of contextual language use [7], language mixing and switching [8][9], multi-competence [10][11], and hybridity of identities [12], PPC has been conceptualised as one single construct, with language and culture being interrelated [13].

Online games that are parts of technology innovation are kinds of game with particular community. They are divided into several genres, namely: action, adventure, action-adventure, RPG, simulation, strategy, sports, and idle gaming. The eight genres in online games have their own characteristics. Some games use live conversations among players. Some others don't use any verbal communication. The languages used are various, one of which is English. When the players do live conversation, they need agreement about the words used. Simplification occurs in some ways they speak up, especially for the children with English as their second language. Omitting the final consonant, reducing consonant clusters, omitting unstressed syllables are some reasons why they do it since they haven't got any representation of the correct sounds yet then it results for producing the incorrect in spelling the words. The lack of English language learning such as how to make phonological contrast and other phonological rules support them to make some errors in producing his English speech.

This issue happens to a 7-years-old child who lives in a multilingual community. He was in born in Bandung, West Java and speak some languages in his daily activity, such as Indonesian, Sundanese, and a little bit English. Some English words comprehended are intervened by the online games such as. Minecraft, Mobile Legend, Growtopia, and Roblox. Metalinguistics, a study focusing on the relationship between language factors and non-language factors in society, is the theory used to analyse the data.

Metalinguistics as the study of the relation between languages and the other cultural systems they refer to. The metalinguistic function, even though it keeps referring to the code, diversifies its object as a consequence of the confrontation between the general reference model and the sociocultural diversity in linguistic usage. At the same time other factors which are not strictly related to linguistics but which influence the perspective on metalinguistic function need to be noted – factors related to the sociocultural background of the interlocutors as well as the setting of the communicative situation [14].

Linguistic intuition unconsciously underlies all linguistic performance such as constraining phonological performances of newly-encountered words or those involving grammatical acceptability surely imply metalinguistic abilities. The child's metalinguistic awareness is seen as a construct that is being constantly (renegotiated with the (linguistic) environment. We do not examine metalinguistic awareness only as a psychological, inner characteristic of the individual, nor only as a characteristic constructed in social interaction. Instead, we emphasize the close interrelationship of the two and maintain that the two aspects cannot be separated [15].

As a result the study of metalinguistic awareness focuses on the intimate relation between a speaker and the language used, to more complex communicative settings. It will answer the purpose of this study that is to find how plurilingual competence intervened by online games is comprehended by a child who is living in multilingual environment.

2. Method

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The method used in this study is a qualitative method. According to Cresswell, a qualitative method is an approach or a research to explore and understand a central phenomenon [16]. To understand this central phenomenon, the study did qualitative observation, qualitative interview, qualitative documents, and qualitative audio and visual materials. The speaking of the participant was recorded during his playing on his online games, then it's transcribed phonemically. The data are analysed by using metalinguistics tool to get the participant awareness on his English language. Some metalinguistics tools used are phonology, syntax, semantics, and sociolinguistics. The focus of this research is to see the language background and repertoire of the child that are variegated in terms of languages known and degree of competence and to see the metalinguistics awareness in the child's first language leads to better results when learning English, especially in the specific context observed, that is on the language used in playing online games.

3. Results and Discussion

The child has his own competency on the spelling and he has known the meaning of some words he spells for English words used when playing the online games. When he's playing a kind of online games, for example, Minecraft, he will use some English words used on that game. The words perhaps have some particular meanings and are only used on that game. Some words used are in the following table:

Table 1. Data

No.	Spoken words	Phonemic transcription	Awareness test (translated into Indonesian)
1	diamond	/daimən/	berlian
2	iron	/airən/	besi; gunanya untuk membuat pedang
3	teleport	/telepɔrt/	pindah tempat
4	pickaxe	/pɪkæk/	alat untuk menambang
5	kill	/kɪl/	membunuh
6	flint	/flɪnt/	Alat untuk membuat api
7	infinity	/ɪnfɪnɪti/	jika diambil masih sisa banyak (abadi)
8	respon	/respɔn/	muncul disitu
9	block	/blɔk/	kotak-kotak
10	mining	/maɪnɪŋ/	nambang
11	furnace	/fɜrneɪs/	alat untuk masak
12	fire	/fa(y)ə/	api
13	please	/plɪs/	tolong
14	guys	/gais/	teman
15	smp	/æs æm pi:/	(Survival Multi Players)
16	buy	/bʊi/	membeli
17	Gold to bug	/gɔd tu bʌk/	emas yang hancur (terbuang)
18	random	/rænd əm/	acak
19	Up date	/ʌp det/	menambah hal baru
20	<i>I like egg</i>	/ai laik eig/	aku suka telur

The above table is the data found when the child's playing the online games. Some words are spelled correctly and some others aren't. The word *buy* is spelled /bʊi/ following how it's written as in Indonesian language. It shows how the language background and repertoire of the child are variegated in terms of languages known and degree of competence. Living in multilingual environment has emerged the interconnected knowledge of multiple language. Indonesian language as his mother tongue has dominantly influenced his spelling competency. Education system may not be paid too much attention since the child prefers having the understanding to the spelling.

The metalinguistics awareness in the child's first language leads to better results when learning English, especially in the specific context observed, that is on the language used in playing online games. The child has his own competency on the spelling and he has known the meaning of some words he spells for English words used when playing the online games.

Mental storehouse of information about English words and morphemes relating with the words used in playing the games is the lexicon owned by the child. The meaning of entries in the mental lexicon be they morphemes, words, phrases, clauses, and so on - is conventional. The speakers of a language implicitly agree on their meaning and children acquiring the language must simply learn those meanings outright. However, we are not free as individuals to change the meaning of words at will; if we did, we would be unable to communicate each other. All the speakers of a language share a basic vocabulary- the sounds and meanings of morphemes and words [17].

There are some theories found in learning word meaning such as are reference, sense, lexical relations, semantic features, semantic features and grammar, argument structure, thematic roles. Based on the found, the child has already used reference to express some words as in the word *block*.

Reference is something about meaning beyond reference that must be present. The word *block* refers to something that has the form as a plaid. That is the way how the child named it. The word *block* has link between the word block and a thing with a plaid form as a block.

Other theory relating with word meaning is sense. An element of meaning separate from reference and more enduring is called sense. The word *infinity* in Minecraft game is meant something will never end. The word infinity means a very good thing that the child must have since the things will have a long life. This word has a particular meaning in the context of a game.

The word *guys* that reflects plural noun from the word *guy* is used to call the child's friend. The semantic features and grammar is already comprehended in the case of word meaning. It reflects the knowledge about what words mean

Based on some analysis above, it can be concluded that the child has already had competency both in spelling and understanding the meaning of the English words in the context of online games.

4. Conclusion

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence (PPC) have emerged in many multilingual communities. People with various ages have mastered them in many ways. One of way done is intervened by playing online games. A child on his age, has already had his own competency on the spelling and the understanding about the English words used in context of playing online games. This research shows how online games could give positive impact for a child in developing his competency on language, particularly English as his second language.

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