An Analysis on The Atambua Students’ Multicultural Background and Their English Oral Proficiency

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ABSTRACT

Multilingualism is the ability of someone to operate more than one language for communication. Atambua people are multilingual since they have more than one language background, and it makes them difficult in speaking English. This study aims to Analyze the English Oral Proficiency (EOP) of the Atambua students with multilingual background.

It is a descriptive qualitative research involving multilingual Atambua students who also speak English. 10 participants were chosen from 200 participants in total through questionnaire developed by the researcher to know their multilingual background. EOP in form of monologue was employed to the students to know their level using scoring rubric by Brown (2001). Then, analysis was done to see the relation of their level of EOP with their number of language use and age of their English acquisition or learning.

The result of this study showed that 2 students with 3 languages use have 3,0 and 3+ levels, (able to participate effectively in formal and informal situation, as well as the professional topics). 5 students with 4 languages use have various level, ranging 1+ (able to satisfy limited social demands) to the 3+ level. 1 student with 5 languages was in level 1+, and 2 students mastering 6 languages were in level 1+ and level 2 (able to satisfy routine social demands). 2 students learned English before 10 years-old, and their EOP level was 3+. 8 other students learned English in their 11 up to 14 years-old. Interesting phenomenon found that only 1 out of 8 students with 3 languages use get the highest level (3) even she learns English over golden age. It indicates that the result of the research is in line with the previous theory stated that multilingual person will face difficult in learning English, Bialystok(2001).

Keywords:
Multilingualism, Acquisition, Learning, Proficiency

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1. Research Background

English is an International Language that is used almost in all countries, it leads all people around the world should learn English to join communication with the others. Most of Indonesian students face difficulties in Learning English. Differences in word, pronunciation, and vocabulary of English and local languages may cause the difficulties. In addition, the four English major skills that are very important to fully master English well can also be a problem; however, it depends on EFL learners different strategies to fully master those skills in an effective way [1]. The data taken from BPS shows that there are 1211 language that exist in Indonesia. One of the areas which have high level of diverse languages is Atambua. This multilingual condition makes Atambua students have difficulties in learning English Speaking.

In the comparison between native and foreign language learners, there are elements used to help understanding a language. If language learners understand the elements, it will be easy for them to understand a language, however it will be difficult if they do not understand it (Lado, 1975). It can be seen on the field that Atambua people can speak more than one language. As it is explained before that every language will be different from one to another. Atambua students have already learnt and acquired many languages before they start to learn English. From the fact that Atambua students have learnt another language, it can be said that their brain has already been full of local language rules and rules of Bahasa Indonesia, so English language will be really difficult for them to learn.

In fact, students in Atambua always use local language to communicate with their family and their community in their social environment. Then, children in Atambua start to learn Bahasa Indonesia when they enter elementary school. Teacher uses Bahasa Indonesia as to give instruction in teaching and learning process. Students use Bahasa Indonesia for communication only in classroom context. However, when students are outside of their classroom, students use their local language to speak each other. Students in Atambua start to learn English when they are at grade six of elementary school. Based on researcher’s field experience, English language learning is given through vocabulary learning. The students never use English for communication since the teacher also does not know how to speak and pronounce English well. This can be a problem because the purpose of learning language is to make us be able to speak the language. [2] explains that “acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language-natural. Communication - in which speaker are concerned not with the form of their utterances but the messages they are conveying and understanding”. Yet, the situation of students in Atambua in learning English challenge them because English is never used to communicate. Moreover, as we know that Atambua students have learnt more than one language, this research wants to discuss and find out how multilingual background relates to English Oral Proficiency when Atambua students learn English.

In addition to language acquisition theory, it is believed that in a process of learning language, L1 can be a factor influencing L2 acquisition [3]. This theory is called the contrastive
analysis. Moreover, [4] explains that childhood is the best age or the golden age to learn second language. In this research, we know that Atambua students have some exposure of another language when they are on their golden age. This can be a factor whether this thing will influence their English Oral Proficiency or not. If yes, it means that having some different spoken languages can be factors that makes Atambua hard to learn English. In contrast, having less spoken languages will ease them on learning English since their brain capacity to learn new languages is still not filled fully.

2. Methods

This research will employ descriptive research. (Creswell 2009:4, adopted from Creswell: 2007) Qualitative research is for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social human problem. This research includes several processes which are emerging questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants’ setting, analyzing data conducted from particular to general themes, and making interpretation of the meaning of the data. This study will use qualitative method to explore and understand the meaning a group of students from Atambua who are currently studying in Malang with their problems in speaking English. As qualitative method includes several processes, they are: emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis that conducting from general to particular themes and the researcher also making interpretation of the meaning of the data.

In this research, researcher needs 3 kinds of data. The first data is data about the number of languages spoken by the respondents, this is data about multilingualism of the respondents. The second data is data about the age of the respondents acquiring or learning the language. The third data is data about the English Oral Proficiency of the Participants. The first and the second data are taken from Atambua students studying in Malang. The third data is gained by conducting an English Oral Proficiency test for the participants who fulfill the indicators. The result of this Test is the participants score. Then the score will be analyzed by the researcher to find the level of participants English Oral Proficiency based on Oral Proficiency Scoring suggested by [5].

The research is conducted through some steps that are 1. Researcher chooses the topic of Research. The Topic is “Multilingual background of Atambua Students to English Oral Proficiency, 2. Researcher finds the respondent who will join this research, 3. Developing Instrument, 4. Distributed Questionnaire (see appendix 1), 5. Selecting Research Participants, 6. Conducting English Oral Proficiency test to the research participants, 7. Assessing The Result Of English Oral Proficiency Test, 8. Analyzing Data based on the research participants English Oral Proficiency Score and the number of language they speak as well as their age of acquisition or learning English.

Researcher will use speaking test in the form of speech. Basically, the participants have difficulty in speaking English, so if the researcher asks them to talk about topic provided by the researcher it will be more challenging for them. However, the topic is chosen by the participant.
There are actually two types of test that are suitable for use in this study. Speaking test in the form of a monologue, in dialogue form. Researcher prefers monologue because students will be better prepared for the test because it will be easier for the students, without having to think about the cohesiveness of the team mates.

When the participants deliver their speeches, researcher would assess them by using oral proficiency scoring rubrics by [5]. The scoring rubric is in (see appendix 2). Brown (2001) argued that oral proficiency scoring categories consist of five main parts: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. All the data collected from the speaking test from the research questions with the following steps: The first, the researcher will have two research partners to be the raters of the participants oral proficiency. They are two 8th semester students of English Language Education Program. Then, the researcher and raters will listen to the recorded audio of the speaking test and assess it using the musing scoring rubric, then oral proficiency test score is gained. From the test results, the researcher categorizes the participants’ speaking proficiency based on the oral proficiency scoring categories proposed by Brown (2001, pp 406-407). The result of the assessment will be analyzed by calculating the average point of the participant from three raters. Next, from the scoring, the researchers will analyze the participants multilingualism seen from the number of languages spoken and the age they acquire or learn the language compared to their English oral proficiency data. In order to do so, the researcher will use SLA theories about golden age and also contrastive analysis. Finally, the researcher makes a conclusion to answer the research problem “how the oral proficiency of the Atambua students with their multilingual background”.

3. Results

3.1 The Result of Questionnaire on Respondent Multilingual Background

Questionnaire to collect data about multilingualism of the Atambua students who continue their education in Malang as well as the age they acquire the language was given to 200 respondents. There are 65 students (21%) who are able to use 3 languages to communicate. The next, the data showed that around 60 students (20%) are able to communicate using four different languages. Around 40 students (11,33%) can speak using five different languages including local languages. Around 25 students (8,33%) can master six different languages to communicate each other in their society. The last is, around 10 students (3,33%) can speak seven different languages. The information about students’ language acquisition are showed in this table.
Atambua students mastering local language by acquiring process, all of them acquire local language before golden age (0-10 years old). They just starting to acquiring Bahasa Indonesia when they entered to elementary school at 6 years old. And commonly all of them are late to leaning English language.

3.2 Result From English Oral Proficiency Test

| NO | Language Spoken | Age of Acquisition / learning |
|----|----------------|-------------------------------|
|    |                | 0-5  | 6-12 | 13-17 | 18-Now |
| 1  | Tetun Portu    | 60   | 44   | 9     | 4      |
| 2  | Tetun Terik    | 66   | 47   | 16    | -      |
| 3  | Kemak          | 44   | 33   | 1     | 2      |
| 4  | Marac/Bunak    | 30   | 13   | -     | -      |
| 5  | Dawan          | 61   | 2    | -     | -      |
| 6  | Bahasa Indonesia | -    | 200  | -     | -      |
| 7  | Bahasa Inggris | 3    | 7    | -     |        |

10 students who join this English Oral Proficiency Test, get various score. Participant 5 gets higher score with point 3.8. And then followed by students 8 and 2 with point 3.0. Next is students 7 with point 2.9. Then participant 1 with point 2.6, and the next is participants 3 with point 2.5, and then participants 9 with point 1.7, followed by participant 10 with point 1.6. Next is participants 4 with point 1.4 and the last is participants 4 with point 1.3. From the average score we can see that the lowest score is 1.3, and the highest score is 3.8.
4. Discussion

| Participant with 6 different language spoken |
|---------------------------------------------|
| Temuan Perlu | Temuan Perlu | Temuan Perlu | Temuan Perlu | Temuan Perlu | Temuan Perlu |
| 4-year-old | 4-year-old | 4-year-old | 4-year-old | 4-year-old | 4-year-old |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

The 3 tables above showed that students 2 and 5 are able to speak 3 different languages. And that table above shows the score of each student per aspects. First is Grammar, student 2 gets 2,6 and student 5 gets 3,6, so the higher point is obtained by student 5.

Total higher score is on vocabulary and comprehension, with point 3,6, an then pronunciation with score 3,5, next is fluency with score 3,3, and the last is grammar with point 3,1. Then it can be concluded that the English Oral Proficiency of students who master 3 languages belongs to 3+ Category, which means students Often able to use the language to satisfy professional needs in a wide of range of sophisticated and demanding task (Brown, 2001).

Student 1,3,7 and 8 are able to speak 4 different languages, two local languages and 1 is Bahasa Indonesia, and the other is English. Before student started to learn English, they already acquire 3 different local language, Bahasa Indonesia before they learn English. The score for grammar aspect is, student 1 gets 3, student 2 and 7 get 2,6, and student 8 gets 3,3 it means that the highest score is 3,3, which is obtained by student 8. Then, the score for
Vocabulary aspect are, 3 for student 1 and student 3, and 3,3 for student 7 and student 8. Almost all of them get the same score, but the highest is on students 7 and 8. Next, score for comprehension aspect, student 1 gets 2,3, student 3 gets 2, student 7 gets 3,6 and the student 8 gets 3. The highest score is on comprehension of student 7, and the lowest is also in comprehension of student 2. For the fluency the student 1,3 and 8 get the same score 2,6 and student 7 get lower score than other 2,3. The next aspect is pronunciation, students 1 and 3 get same score 2,3 and the higher score are student 7 and 8 who get the same score,3.

The total higher score is on vocabulary aspect with point 3,1. Then grammar with point 2,8, next is comprehension with 2,7, and the next is pronunciation 2,6 and the lower point is on fluency 2,5. Then, it can be concluded that the English Oral Proficiency of students who master 4 languages belongs to 2+ category, which means they are able to satisfy most work requirements with language usage that is often, but not always, acceptable and effective (Brown, 2001).

Students 4 and 6 are able to speak 5 different language. 3 languages are local language and 1 is Bahasa Indonesia, and other is English. That table above showed the English speaking proficiency test for those students. For grammar, student 4 and student 6 get the same point, 1,6. For the vocabulary, student 4 gets 2,3 and student 6 gets 2. Then, for comprehension, both of student 4 and 6 get the same score, 1. For fluency, student 4 gets 1 and student 6 gets 1,3. The last is pronunciation, the student 4 gets 1 and student 6 gets 1,3.

The total higher score is grammar with point 1,6, then, vocabulary 2,1. Fluency and pronunciation 1,1, and the last is comprehension with point 1. Then, it can be concluded that the English Oral Proficiency of students who master 5 language belongs to 1+ which means they can initiate and maintain predictable face-to-face conversation and satisfy limited social demands (Brown, 2001).

Student 9 and 10 who master 6 different languages, 4 languages are local languages and 1 is Bahasa Indonesia, and the last 1 is English. That table above show the score of English speaking proficiency score of participant 9 and 10. The first is Grammar. Participants 9 and 10 get same score, and for the second is vocabulary, both of the student 9 and 10 still get same score, 1,6. For the next is comprehension, students still get the same score, 1,3. Move to fourth one, Fluency, the student 9 gets 1, and the student 10 gets 1,3, then for the last aspect, pronunciation, the student 9 gets 1,3 and the student 10 gets 1,4.

The higher score is grammar with score 2, follow ed by vocabulary with score with score 1,6, then comprehension with score with score 1,3 and pronunciation with score 1 and the last is fluency with score 1,1. Then, it can be concluded that the English Oral Proficiency of students who master 6 languages belong to 1+ category, which mean students can initiate and maintain predictable face-to-face conversation and satisfy limited social demands (Brown, 2001).

Those students above have really varied score. The student who can speak 3 languages has different score with the student who master 4 languages, 5 languages, and 6 languages. From all of the participant, researcher can find that for Grammar, the higher score is obtained by student who master 3 languages, with average value, 3,1. The next high score after this is, is students with 4 different spoken languages, with average value 2,8. Then, students with 6 different spoken language with the average value 2, and the last is student with 5 different spoken language, with average value 1,6. From those students score above, identified that the higher score for grammar aspect is get by student with 3 different spoken language.
Vocabulary is one aspect of Language speaking proficiency test that had been held. Students also get varied score. The higher score get by students with 3 different spoken language with average point 3.6, and then followed by the students who can speak 4 different languages, with average point 3.1, and then students who master 5 different languages with average point 2.1 and the last is get by students who can speak 6 different language, with average point 1.6. Still students with 3 different language spoken who get the best score.

For the next aspect is comprehension, the best score was obtained by students who spoke 3 different language, with average point 3.6. Then followed by the students with 4 different spoken language, with average point 2.7. And next, students who can speak 6 different language with score, 1.3. The last students who speak 5 different language, with point 1. The higher score is students who spoke 3 different language.

Fluency is also one aspect in English speaking proficiency test. For this aspect, the higher score is gained by students who able to speak 3 different language with average point 3.3, and then students with 5 different spoken languages, with average point 2.5. Followed by students who master 5 and 6 different language, with point 1.1.

The last aspect is Pronunciation. Still, the best score is gained by student who masters 3 different languages with average point is 3. Then, the students who can speak 4 different languages, with average point 2.6. Next is students who master 5 different languages with average point 1.1, and the last is students with 6 different spoken languages with point 1. From all of the score, the best of the best score for all the aspect, Grammar, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Fluency and Pronunciation get by the students with 3 different spoken language.

Lastly, from the score gained from each student, we know that their English Oral proficiency is varied to one another. This may be caused by their multilingualism. It proves that L1 influences L2. In this case, it can be seen that students mastering less language can gain higher English score which means the less spoken language they master, the more they can master English since their brain capacity or plasticity of learning language is not filled with another language. It is also supported by their age acquisition while they are on their golden age in which this age is assumed that their L2 acquisition is faster. However, if they are given exposure with different languages at once, their brain capacity will be filled with knowledge of different languages like Atambua students experience. Then, when it comes to speaking, having lots of spoken language will also affect on English speaking specifically the accent. Different accent of previously mastered spoken language can influence on how to pronounce English words.

5. Conclusion

The subject of this study were the students from Atambua who continue their study in some university in Malang. In this research, the researcher wants to know about how the oral proficiency of the Atambua students with multilingual background. The researcher conducted this research and developed the oral proficiency test based on Brown (2001) by using scoring rubric of oral proficiency test for 10 students as the participants of the research. The conclusion is Atambua students have some difficulties in speaking English because of some factors. Their speaking proficiency is based on how many spoken languages they master, and when they acquire or learn that language. The students who master small number of spoken languages get better score rather than they who master much languages. Some factors leading Atambua
students who have difficulties in learning English are multilingual community that makes multilingual, their age of learning English after passing the golden age, their lateness to start learning English, and the big differences on the characteristics between the English and their local languages. Another factor can give some influences in learning English. For instance, researcher finds one student learning English at 13 years old, she learns English after she passes his golden age, but she gets the good score rather than other students learning English at the same age with her. It may be caused by her ability to learn English still develops after her golden age has passed, and she is still given exposure of English.

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