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Teachers' Strategies in Developing and Measuring Students' Communication Skills

Hery Rosdianti*

*Department of Primary Education, Graduate School Program,
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Email: heryrosdianti.2018@student.uny.ac.id

Wuri Wuryandani**

**Department of Primary Education, Science Education Faculty,
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Email: wuri_wuryandani@uny.ac.id

Heri Retnawati***

***Department of Mathematics, Mathematics and Natural Science Faculty,
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Email: heri_retnawati@uny.ac.id

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Abstract

A good communication skill is one of the capabilities that must be mastered by students to be able to socialize, adapt, and compete with others in the scope of school and social life in the 21st century. The purpose of this type of descriptive qualitative research was about to describe the teachers' strategies in developing and conducting an assessment related to the communication skills of elementary school students in Indonesia. Data were obtained through interviews with 10 elementary school teachers in Yogyakarta Province. Data analysis was performed through applying data analysis steps proposed by Bogdan and Biglen. The results showed that an effective strategy that teachers could use to develop students' communication skills was through discussion and presentation methods. Meanwhile, the assessment of students' communication skills is integrated to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor assessments both in terms of instruments and time of assessment. This was resulted from various limitations originating of the teacher and the availability and completeness of school facilities and infrastructure that supports the implementation of various kinds of assessment.

Keywords: *assessment, communication skills, elementary school students.*

Abstrak

Keterampilan komunikasi yang baik adalah salah satu kemampuan yang harus dikuasai oleh siswa untuk dapat bersosialisasi, beradaptasi dan bersaing dengan orang lain dalam ruang lingkup sekolah maupun kehidupan sosial di abad ke-21. Tujuan dari penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan strategi guru dalam mengembangkan dan melakukan penilaian terkait kemampuan komunikasi peserta didik Sekolah Dasar di Indonesia. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara yang bersumber dari 10 orang guru sekolah dasar di Provinsi Yogyakarta. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menerapkan langkah-langkah analisis data yang dikemukakan oleh Bogdan dan Biglen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi efektif yang dapat digunakan guru untuk mengembangkan kemampuan komunikasi siswa adalah melalui pembelajaran diskusi dan presentasi. Sedangkan penilaian kemampuan komunikasi siswa dilakukan secara terintegrasi dengan penilaian kognitif, afektif dan psikomotor baik dalam hal instrumen maupun waktu penilaian. Hal tersebut disebabkan oleh berbagai keterbatasan yang berasal dari guru dan ketersediaan serta kelengkapan sarana dan prasarana sekolah yang mendukung keterlaksanaan berbagai macam penilaian.

Kata kunci: *penilaian, kemampuan komunikasi, siswa sekolah dasar.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia in the 21st century faces challenges in the development of various sciences and technologies. These developments change multiple aspects of life, including the education system. Based on several changes that occurred, the world of education needs to prepare students since elementary school age to be able and be ready to face various challenges. Alismail & McGuire (2015); Lamb, Maire, & Esther (2017) mention that to deal with the 21st century, students must have good communication skills. Communication is a prerequisite for being able to live together with others (Yildiz & Duy, 2013). Having excellent communication skills can affect the success of a person (Duta, Panisoara, & Panisoara, 2015). The ability to communicate both verbally and non-verbally may affect person's success or failure in achieving the goal, including in terms of work or establishing relationships with others.

Theoretically, communication includes the activity of delivering information using the exchange of ideas, opinions, and messages from one person to another (Iksan et al., 2012; Lunenburg, 2010). Furthermore, Bakic-Tomic, Dvorski, & Kirinic (2015); Mustaffa, Marzuki, & Rahaman (2016) said that communication skill is the ability of a person to show the knowledge possessed as information in certain situations. In the learning instruction, communication activities are the process of translating educative messages in the form of learning that comes from learning resources to be conveyed by students so that the message can be understood by students as a lesson.

Communication is a connecting tool that is needed by each individual in adapting, socializing, and establishing good relationships with others and the environment. The 2013 curriculum has designed thematic-integrative learning where the implementation was not only limited to the acquisition of information. Implementing the 2013 curriculum in learning requires students to be able to observe, ask, reason, try, and communicate. Students' ability to demonstrate or communicate their knowledge are proof that students have been successful in learning. Without communication, the teaching and learning process cannot happen (Duta et al, 2015). Considering the importance of communication, teachers need to pay attention, develop, and know the ability of students to communicate so that learning instruction can be successful.

In general, the communication process consists of four components that are speaker, receiver, communication, and reciprocity (Iksan, Zakaria, Meerah, et al., 2012). Learning that occurs in the classroom is a communicative event. Communication that occurs includes classroom noise, face-to-face interaction between class members as occurs in the discussion process, responding to questions, giving advice, doing assignments, and various other types of activities both verbal and nonverbal (Velentzas & Broni, 2014; Zhanabekova, 2014). Yusof and Halim (2014) mentioned that communication in society is different from the type of communication in the classroom. The main purpose of communication in the classroom is to teach and provide information related to science.

To determine the capability of learners during communication, educators need to make an assessment. One purpose of the assessment is to decide the student position related to the students' achievements, mistakes, difficulties, and the problem they faced in learning (Briggs, Angela, Cynthia, & Swatton, 2008). Through the assessment, teachers obtain information and description stage of the students' communication capabilities, so that the teacher can determine the step and right decision to develop the students' ability to communicate better.

Having good communication skills is not only necessary in the course of learning. Arends (2012) mentions that language and communication are central to every aspect of life, including the learning process in class. Having the ability to communicate means that someone is capable of telling others about what he/she knows both orally and written, and either in the learning process or in everyday life.

Previous research from various countries have examined some aspects related to the communication skills at the elementary school level and the higher education level. For instance, Sundayana, Herman, Dahlan, & Prahmana, (2017); Yaniawati, Indrawan, & Setiawan, (2019), from Indonesia conducted research related to students' mathematical

communication skills. The results of the two studies indicate that students' mathematical communication skills can be improved through the application of learning models such as PBL, discovery learning and discussion. Xie, Ding, Wang, & Liu (2013) also conducted research related to the communication skills of nursing students in China. The results of these studies indicate that to improve communication skills, nursing students need communication skills training (CST). Jin et al., (2019) from Korea also found that communication skills training (CST) can affect the skills, attitudes and confidence level of pharmacy students regarding communication and patient counseling skills. Many other countries have concerned in the communication topic for their research. However, the studies focus more on the students' communication skills in learning mathematics and health or the medical world. The research on communication skills in general are very rarely done.

In essence, communication skills are not only needed in learning mathematics and the world of health. Every activity that is carried out always requires communication, in both directly and indirectly (Lunenburg, 2010). In the learning process, all disciplines require communication to transfer understanding or information about learning. This was also confirmed by Arviani & Fajriyah (2018) who said that communication skills greatly affect the achievement of students in the teaching-learning process. Generally, the success of all aspects of life depends a lot on a good skill of communication. By considering the importance of having great communication skills, researchers intend to conduct research that discusses teachers' strategies in developing and measuring students' abilities are in terms of communication skills. The research aims was about to describe effective strategies that teachers can use to develop and measure students' communication skills. The information obtained is expected to be helpful for teachers and policy makers as input so that they can be more serious in preparing students to have provisions and ready to deal with the 21st-century challenges. One type of ability that must be possessed is good communication skills.

METHODS

The method of this research is descriptive qualitative that aims at describing the teacher's strategy in developing and measuring students' communication skills. The collected data comes from the first source, which are from 10 teachers (4 male teachers and 6 female teachers) of public elementary school in Yogyakarta City, Bantul, Kulon Progo, Sleman and Gunung Kidul of Yogyakarta Province who makes a direct assessment to the students. The samples were done randomly without limiting the age and working period of the respondents. The identity of the participants in this research are not published so that it will not affect their

profession in the future. The research was done in public schools that implement half day schools in cities and districts.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews. To obtain valid data, researchers first triangulated the data. The interview guidelines used in this study include: (1) teachers' knowledge of communication skills, (2) the benefits of communication, (3) the strategies to develop students' communication skills, (4) the implementation of assessment, and (5) the teachers' obstacle in assessing students' communication skills.

The technique of data analysis used was the qualitative data analysis technique proposed by Bogdan & Biklen (2007) through reducing the data, categorizing the data into themes and sub-themes, and making conclusions as a result. Interview data were recorded using audio recording and notes. The notes and recordings are reduced to simpler forms and grouped based on similar themes. The next step is to determine the relationship or linkages contained between themes to gain understanding and conclusions related to the findings of teacher strategies in developing student communication skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the interviews are grouped into five themes and reduced into sub-themes to get a conclusion. The compiled theme in the discussion about the teachers' strategies in measuring students' communication skills were (1) teachers' knowledge of communication skills, (2) the advantages of communication, (3) the strategies to develop students' communication skills, (4) the implementation of assessment and (5) the teachers' obstacle in assessing students' communication skills. The presentation of the findings of each theme are as it follows.

Elementary School Teachers' Knowledge of Communication Skills

Elementary School teachers' understanding of communication skills interviews were obtained from 10 of public elementary school teachers in Yogyakarta Province. The intended communication skills in the interview are the students' communication skills that occur when the learning process takes place.

Table 1. Elementary School Teachers' Knowledge of Communication Skills

No	Subtheme	The Correlation Between Subthemes
1.	The ability to understand the information, transfer knowledge and experience to others	
2.	The ability of confirming a problem, expressing, interrupting, asking questions, interacting, and providing feedback relate to the students' understanding on learning	Communication skills are the ability to understand and provide responses or feedback on the information obtained in both oral and written form.
3.	The ability to receive the information provided and to express the information obtained	
4.	The ability of students in spoken and written languages	

Table 1 shows that 6 elementary school teachers already have sufficient knowledge of communication skills. The teachers could explain the meaning of communication skills well. Meanwhile, the other 4 teachers did not understand the meaning of communication skills. The communications understood by 4 of 10 elementary school teachers are only limited to the communication skills in the form of spoken language. On the other hand, the other six teachers already have an adequate understanding of it. The 6 teachers explained that communication skills are the ability to understand and provide responses or feedback on information obtained in both oral and written form. Based on the results of the interview, it can be concluded that the teachers' ability to understand the communication skills needs to be improved. Considering those facts, communication skills are not only limited to oral abilities but also interaction skills (Wiemann, 1977), interpreting concepts, thoughts, and others in oral, written, or body language (Velentzas & Broni, 2014). To have an understanding of dealing with matters related to the achievement of student learning is important. This was also confirmed by Parveen, Mahmood, Mahmood, & Arif (2011) who said that to be able to effectively teach students, the teacher must have sufficient knowledge about what and who is being taught.

Educational institutions need to prepare students as early as possible to face 21st-century challenges. Communication skills are one of the essential competencies and the key to success in facing 21st-century challenges (Chung, Yoo, Kim, Lee, & Zeidler, 2014; Bolstad et al, 2012). Teachers' task as educators is to compose learning that can develop students' communication skills to the fullest by utilizing several types of strategies and models of learning which have been adapted to the materials, characteristics, and needs of students as well as the times.

The Benefits of Communication

The various teachers' answers regarding the benefits of communication are presented in the following table.

Table 2. The Benefits of Communication

No	Subtheme	The Correlation Between Subtheme
1.	To find out the students' understanding related to the learning	The benefits of communication known by elementary school teachers are to find out the achievement of learning objectives and to be utilized in broader of social relationships
2.	To create an active learning	
3.	For the continuity of social relations in a wider scope	

Based on the results of the interviews, all respondents agreed that communication is one of the critical skills which should be mastered by everyone, especially by the students. There are various benefits of communication in learning which have been stated by teachers such as the embodiment of active learning, a reflection of students' understanding of learning, and supporting factors for dealing with social life. The results of the interview in table 2 conclude that communication skills are important not only in the scope of learning but also in interacting with others in the daily life of social contexts. This is also explained by Velentzas & Broni (2014) which says that communication skills are not only needed in the sphere of learning but also very necessary in the sphere of the social environment. So it can be concluded that communication is an important and absolute thing in our lives. Furthermore, without communication, we will not be able to interact with other people.

The Strategies in Developing Communication Skills

The strategies undertaken by the teacher in developing communication skills of elementary school students are as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3. The Strategies in Developing Communication Skills

No	Subtheme	The Correlation Between Subtheme
1.	The teacher designs learning through discussion and presentation	The strategy used by the teacher in developing communication skills refers to active learning that maximally engages students
2.	The teacher designs learning to the model of role-playing method and PBL	
3.	The teacher builds students' trust, doesn't blame, and gives the same opportunities to all students	
4	The teacher designs individual assignments that require students to be independent in learning	

Table 3 shows the various strategies that have been applied by teachers in developing students' communication skills. The learning strategies used by the teachers lead to learning that actively engages students in learning. Learning strategies adopted by elementary school teachers of Yogyakarta Province to improve student communication skills are through discussions, presentations, role-plays, and other individual assignments that require students to complete assignments independently. Based on the perspective of 8 of 10 teachers, they revealed that learning through discussion and presentation could improve students' ability to communicate effectively. Iksan et al (2012) also proved that discussion and presentation methods could develop students' communication skills. Another conclusion was also found by Oradee (2012) who has proven that communication skills can be developed through participation in communicative activities. Communicative activities in learning can be realized through the application of discussion and presentation. Sugito, Susilowati, Hartono, & Supartono (2017) also emphasized that teachers should focus on the process of communication that would be developed. Widiani, Arcana, & Margunayasa (2014) mention that the approaches and methods that teachers applied in learning is one cause of students' low communication skills. In this context, the teacher is expected to choose a learning strategy that is suitable for developing those skills.

The Process of Assessing Communication Skills

To see the extent of the capabilities of the students in communication can be proven through assessment. The various teacher responses related to the assessment of students' communication skills are presented in the following table.

Table 4. The Assessment Process of Students' Communication Skills

No	Subtheme	The Correlation Between Subtheme
1.	The assessment process is carried out simultaneously with other assessments through the students' daily lives in expressing opinions, presentations, discussions and defending arguments	The process of evaluating students' communication skills is done through observation and student activity in the classroom
2.	The assessment process is done through the daily lives of students in communicating with teachers, friends, and adapting to the environment.	
3.	The assessment process is done by observing the fluency of speaking, IQ and the ability to ask questions during learning takes place.	

Table 4 shows that the assessments made by the teachers regarding communication skills were not carried out in a structured and specific way but integrated with learning that develops communication skills such as in Indonesian language subject, civic education, social studies, and other subjects relate to observation of students' daily communication. To find out the level of student communication skills, educators need to measure these abilities through assessment. The assessment is intended to determine the success of learning objectives that have been implemented or comprehended by students, the appropriateness, and the effectiveness of the use of teaching methods (Nuriyah, 2014).

The assessment of communication skills is not enough to be done in just one period. Van der Vleuten, van den Eertwegh, & Giroldi (2019) asserted that the communication skill assessment requires time and is carried out continuously over a fairly long period. Elementary school teachers in Yogyakarta said that the assessment of students' communication skills is integrated with cognitive, affective, and psychomotor assessments both in terms of time and assessment instruments used. The assessment is not carried out optimally because there are several obstacles experienced by the teacher. This is caused by various limitations both from the teacher and the availability of the school facilities and infrastructures that support the implementation of various kinds of assessment.

The Teachers' Obstacle in Conducting Assessments

Based on the results of the interviews, there are several teachers' obstacles related to the assessment implementation of students' communication skills; they are presented as it follows:

Table 5. Teachers' Obstacles in Conducting Assessments

No	Subtheme	The Correlation Between Sub-theme
1.	Assessment is considered to be too complicated and teachers tend to be technologically illiterate	The obstacle of the teachers in conducting the assessment is caused by various factors such as the lack of understanding and readiness of the teacher both in terms of knowledge, time, and support from the school.
2.	Time available for the learning and the assessment is not enough	
3.	Teachers have lack of training.	
4.	The administration that must be completed by the teacher outside of learning are too much	
5.	Teachers o not understand the related assessment benchmarks.	
6.	There are too many aspects of the assessment.	
7.	There are too many new terms and types of assessment used in the 2013 curriculum	

Table 5 shows some of the obstacles faced by the teachers in the elementary school of Yogyakarta Province. There are some obstacles in making assessments, among them: too complicated assessment, limited learning time and assessment, too much administration that must be done by the teacher, too many aspects are assessed, teachers have lack of understanding related to the assessment and the lack of school support related to facilities and infrastructure that support the implementation of various types of assessments in the 2013 curriculum. Retnawati, Munadi, Arlinwibowo, Wulandari, & Sulistyarningsih (2017) mentioned that many teachers gave negative responses to the implementation of the 2013 curriculum. This was revealed by the teachers in the interviews that had been conducted. All respondents thought that the assessment applied in the curriculum 2013 were too complicated, difficult, and the assessment process carried out in the curriculum often disrupted the teachers' focus on teaching.

Furthermore, these obstacles are also experienced by senior teachers who were unable to innovate and keep up with the times including in the scope of learning, assessment, and technological development. The senior teacher complained about many new terms and found it difficult to determine the types of assessments appropriate to use in every lesson in the 2013 curriculum. Besides, teachers also are used to assess the students by applying the previous curriculum assessment format that is considered easier and simpler. Therefore, teachers need special habituation and guidance related to correct assessment. Assessment is a vital aspect of implementing education (Retnawati, Hadi, & Nugraha, 2016). The assessment process is one of the problems that many teachers complain about. Elementary school teachers in Yogyakarta Province are experiencing difficulties and claim to be unfamiliar with new terms and types of assessment. Therefore, the difficulties or obstacles experienced by the teacher need to be overcome.

Teachers' understanding of curriculum implementation both in the scope of learning and assessment influences the implementation of an education system. Retnawati (2015) also confirmed that various difficulties faced by teachers in conducting assessments are one effect of the lack of teachers' understanding related to this matter. Various changes that occur both in learning activities, assessment, and competency achievements must be understood by the teacher well. Lack of teacher's awareness to develop their competence personally forces the government to facilitate educators with various types of training and seminars. This is in line with the opinions expressed by Retnawati, Hadi, Nugraha (2016), Setiadi (2016); Arif & Sulistianah (2019) who say that the government and schools need to facilitate teachers with

various training, seminars, and others as teachers' efforts to understand the curriculum and improve the quality of learning.

Furthermore, teachers need awareness to develop their competence independently or in groups. Kamiludin & Suryaman (2017) also confirm that individual and collective strategies in the form of a working group can be formed to strengthen teacher understanding related to learning and assessment processes carried out in each education unit. In line with Kamiludin & Suryaman, Retnawati (2015) also mentions that other ways teachers can take to overcome difficulties in learning and assessment can be done by developing teacher professionalism and mentoring senior to junior teachers. In this context, teacher's self-awareness to develop and ask help from teachers who have a better understanding and knowledge is important to be done. Too much administration charged to teachers, especially civil servant teachers also greatly affects the concentration and quality of teachers in preparing the learning. So, the government needs to reduce the administrative burden.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions obtained based on the result of the data analysis conducted are that 1). the teacher's understanding of communication skills is sufficient but needs to be developed because communication skills are not only limited to oral communication only. Communication skills also include the ability to interact, interpret concepts, thoughts, and so on in the form of oral, written, and body language; 2) communication skills are important things that students must have to make it easier to understand learning, support life, and broader social relationships that will be lived in the future; 3) discussion and presentation are type of learning strategies that is suitable for use in developing the communication skills of students. Both are effective learning strategies that can be used to train students' skills to communicate; and 4) communication assessment is not specifically done both related to time and instruments used because of some obstacles and difficulties experienced by the teacher. Therefore, assessment of students' communication skills is integrated to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor assessments. The results of this study are expected to be taken into consideration in the form of input / suggestions and references for schools and policy makers to improve teaching practices, especially in developing student communication skills.

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