CHARACTERISTICS OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS’ PERFORMANCE ON MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS

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ABSTRAK
Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan karakteristik siswa yang dapat mempengaruhi kesadaran linguistik. Penelitian ini mengenai kesadaran morfologis siswa taman kanak-kanak usia 5-6 tahun di Bandung. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kuantitatif dengan instrumen pengumpulan data kuesioner dan wawancara yang diberikan kepada orang tua 12 siswa TK dengan skor tinggi dan rendah dalam unjuk kerja morfologis. Hasil analisis menemukan bahwa para siswa dengan skor tinggi memiliki ciri berasal dari keluarga dengan status sosial ekonomi (pendidikan, pekerjaan, dan pendapatan) yang lebih baik dan lebih dominan menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia dalam komunikasi sehari-hari.

Kata kunci: kesadaran morfologis, karakteristik siswa, faktor sosial.

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristic of high-performing and low-performing students based on the morphological awareness test. This research is about the morphological awareness of 5-6-year-old kindergarten students in Bandung. The method used is the descriptive quantitative method, using questionnaires and interview as the data collection instruments. The instruments were given to the parents of 12 kindergarten children who showed high-performance and low-performance. The results showed that the characteristics of high-performing students is that they were from higher SES families (better education, job, and income), and they use Bahasa Indonesia dominantly.

Keywords: student, performance, morphological, kindergarten.

Introduction
This study is a follow up study by Karunia (2018) focused on 5-6-year-old kindergarten students’ morphological awareness of formal and informal varieties of Bahasa Indonesia. It was discovered that the children have demonstrated morphological awareness to a certain degree. The results also revealed that the children are more aware of the informal varieties of Bahasa Indonesia than the formal variety.

Linguistic awareness refers to the ability to reflect language aspects in the
main activities of linguistics, such as speaking, writing, reading or listening (Petrovska, (2011). Lyster (2001) broadly defines linguistic awareness as awareness of all levels of language (orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics). They include tasks such as deconstructing the components of language into smaller units, for example from sentences into words, from words into sounds; the ability to detect morphemes, syllables, and phonemes in a word; and the ability to assess the correctness of syntax or grammar.

Carlisle (2010) referred morphological awareness as the awareness of the structure of language on word level that includes skills to detect and change the structure of words, presented in word pairs, sentence frame, or word analogy. Furthermore, Apel and Diehm (2014), Ramirez, et al., (2014) defined morphological awareness as a conscious ability to reflect or identify and manipulate morphemes. According to Kuo and Anderson (2006), morphological awareness includes the knowledge to link sounds and meaning in a language and the knowledge of word formation rules guiding the combination of morphemes.

Morphological awareness involves changing language sounds into semantic information hence it is important in the ability to comprehend texts. In sum, morphological awareness is children’s conscious ability in identifying and producing morphemes as the smallest meaningful unit of language that is influential to their skills of comprehension in the future.

In Karunia’s study (2018), five-to-six-year-old kindergarten students’ morphological awareness was assessed by using a morphological awareness task. The tasks were given to 42 students in two kindergartens in Bandung.

This raises a question of characteristics that the high-performing students and low-performing students have that differentiates them. Therefore, the objective of the present study is to describe the characteristics of high-performing students and low-performing students in Karunia’s (2018) morphological awareness tasks.

The definition of students’ performance is how well a student can fulfill the role of student in their study. Students’ performance can be affected by several social factors or characteristics. A number of characteristics that are commonly studied are literacy environment or culture at home, socioeconomic status (SES), the parents’ role in the early literacy stages, linguistic
background, and the quality of interaction between adults and children. Different environment may give different sociocultural effect to language development that differentiates the ways and depth of children’s language development (Hoff, 2006).

One of the important characteristics in the development of high-performing students is home environment that generally includes home activities and the parents’ involvement. For children, home is the first place to have an exposure of language and other skills (Scribner, 2013). It was discovered that parents of high-performing students included their children in activities that enrich their experience and language development even before the children began to study at schools (Thornberg, 2013). As an example, the parents read bedtime stories to their children. The children’s language proficiency was higher when they started studying at school. They were better in recognizing words, reading certain sentences, and writing several letters.

It was also found that high-performing students used more of their time to read than other students (Thornberg, 2013). They did not spend much time watching television and using the internet. Tse et al., (2017) found that activities of the children in the early childhood such as reading books, storytelling, and singing are strong predictors in accelerating children’s reading skills. Consequently, these studies support the claim that home environment builds the characteristics of high-performing students in terms of language development and literacy.

Other characteristics related to students’ performance is the socioeconomic status (SES) (Sirin, 2005). It was stated that SES usually consists of many aspects such as educational level, type of occupation, and income (Hoff, 2006). In addition, it was discovered that children from a family that has an income of less than half of the poverty line did not perform well in various standard tests (Quagliata, 2008). They were only able to score between six and 13 points lower than other children. In Rowe’s (2008) study, parents with different SES have different beliefs in the way they communicate with their children in daily life. Parents that have higher education usually talk more to their children and produce longer utterances and broader vocabulary. Additionally, they produce less utterance that directs their children’s behavior. This attitude will later help the students in improving their performance in producing broader vocabulary in the early age.
The children’s linguistic background also has an important effect on their language development. A child can be exposed to certain languages used in certain environments, and the exposure may be balanced or one of them dominates the other. Oller and Eilers (2002) discovered that bilingual children tend to have smaller vocabulary than monolingual children. Furthermore, Hoff (2006) believed that the opportunity to communicate and the model of language is needed by children to develop their language skills in any language.

A number of variables that can affect language development were described by Hoff (2006), namely ethnicity, age of caregiver, order of birth, experience in daycare, the environment and interaction at school, peers and television. Certain ethnics tend to have certain culture in interaction in the family. The age of the caregiver, child birth order, experience in daycare, and peers affect the children’s opportunity in having communication. Meanwhile, television has a role, although it is not important, as one of the language inputs children have.

**Method**

The purpose of this study is to describe the SES (which consists of parents’ education level, occupation, and income), linguistic background, and home literacy environment of high-performing and low-performing students in Karunia’s (2018) study. These aspects were selected because they were considered significant for language development.

This study uses descriptive quantitative method. It involves numbers that can be measured systematically (Blackstone, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Perumal, 2014). Descriptive approach is also aimed to identify the relation between attributes and variables on the phenomenon in question without manipulating the samples (Nurdiansyah, 2016).

The subjects of this study were the parents of 12 kindergarten children aged five to six years old who were students in two kindergartens in Bandung. Six of the students were high-performers and the other six were low-performers based on the scores in Karunia’s (2018) morphological awareness tasks.

The instrument for data collection was questionnaire and interview. The instruments were adapted from Mazka (2014). The items in the instruments were about socioeconomic background, family background, linguistic background, and
home literacy environment. The data were analyzed and interpreted.

**Results and Discussion**

The first characteristic of the high and low-performing student is the SES, which consists of income, education, and occupation. The findings are presented in the following figures. Figure 1 shows the income of the high-performing students.

**Figure 1.** Parents’ Income of High-Performing Students

The figure shows that the parents of high performing students varied. One student only had a single parent (mother), thus the family did not have income from a father. The fathers of two students had an income of less than Rp. 1.500.000, the fathers of two other students had an income of Rp. 2.500.000-3.500.000, and the father of one student had an income of more than Rp. 5.500.000. Half of the mothers (three persons) did not have income; the mothers of two students have an income of Rp. 2.500.000-3.500.000, and the mother of one student have an income of Rp. 3.500.000-4.500.000.

**Figure 2.** Parents’ Income of Low-Performing Students

Figure 2 illustrates that the parents of the low-performing students had a more varied income. The father of one student did not have income, the fathers of two students had an income less than Rp. 1.500.000, the father of one student had an income of Rp. 2.500.000-3.500.000, the father of one student had an income of Rp. 3.500.000-4.500.000, and the father of one student had an income of more than Rp. 5.500.000. For the mothers, interestingly, the mothers of four students did not have income, and the other two mothers have an income of Rp. 1.500.000-2.500.000 and Rp. 2.500.000-3.500.000.

In conclusion, in the low-performing students group, the number of parents without income is larger than the high-performers. Moreover, the mothers of the high-performers seem to have relatively
higher income than the mothers of the low-performers.

The next SES variable is education level. The finding is presented in Figure 3. The figure shows that most of the fathers of the high-performers had Senior HS (high school) education. One of the fathers only had Elementary education, and one father had bachelor’s degree. For the mothers, two of them had Junior HS education, two had Senior HS education, one had diploma education, and one had bachelor education.

![Figure 3. Parents’ Education of High-Performing Students](image)

In general, most of the parents of both the high- and low-performers had Senior HS education. However, among the parents of the low-performers, no one had education higher education than Junior HS.

![Figure 4. Parents’ Education of Low-Performing Students](image)

Figure 4 illustrates that most of the parents of the low-performers had Senior HS education. Two thirds of the fathers had Senior HS education, and the rest had Junior HS education. Five of the mothers had Senior HS education and one had only elementary education.

![Figure 5. Parents’ Occupation of High-Performing Students](image)

Figure 5 shows that, among the parents of the high-performers, most of the parents worked as private employees. All
of the fathers have a job. Three fathers worked as private employees, and one each worked as an entrepreneur and a government employee. Then two of the mothers were private employees, one was a government employee, and the rest of them were unemployed or stayed at home. Interestingly no one worked as labor or farmers.

From data in figures 5 and 6, in can be concluded that the most people on each group was private employee. Additionally, the number of unemployed mothers were larger than the number of unemployed mother in the high-performer groups.

The next characteristic is linguistic background. The aspects investigated were the language used by the students, their parents, other family members, and other people around them, and also reading ability. The following figure presents the language used by the students and everyone else.

In Figure 7, it is seen that the high-performers consist of monolinguals (speaking only Bahasa Indonesia or only Local Language) and bilinguals (speaking Bahasa Indonesia and Local Language).
Local language in this study is Sundanese and other languages such as Javanese. In the findings (not visible in the figure), one of the mothers was a trilingual (Bahasa Indonesia, Suncanese, and Javanese). In the figure, it seems that the number of students that were surrounded by monolingual Sundanese was relatively low.

From the data, it was discovered that all of the students speak Bahasa Indonesia. Four of them were monolinguals and two were bilinguals. Among the fathers, there were more monolingual Sundanese speakers (three) than the monolingual Bahasa Indonesia (one) speakers and the bilinguals (one). Among the mothers, the numbers were equal (two each). Among the other family members, there were only monolingual Bahasa Indonesia speakers (two) and bilinguals (four). In the neighborhood, students were only surrounded by monolingual Bahasa Indonesia speakers (four) and bilinguals (two).

Figure 8 presents the findings of language uses of the low-performing students. From Figure 8, it can be seen that among the students, there were two monolingual Sundanese speakers, two bilingual speakers, and there was no monolingual Bahasa Indonesia speakers. Similarly, the numbers were the same. About other family members, there were three students with family members of Sundanese speaker, two were speakers, and one was a bilingual speaker. Lastly, among the other people, one student was surrounded by monolingual Bahasa Indonesia speakers, one was surrounded by monolingual Sundanese speakers, and two students were surrounded by bilinguals.

![Figure 8. Languages Used by the Low-Performing Students and their Family](image_url)

The next SES variable in this study is the reading ability (Figure 9). Based on the data, in terms of reading ability, most of the students were slow readers, meaning that they were starting to be able to read and they still needed guidance to understand how to combine letters and how to read them. For the high-performers,
one was able to read and five were slow readers. For the low-performers, one cannot read and five were slow readers.

The last characteristic is home literacy environment. It refers to children’s’ activity at home related to literacy and the quantity of activities that are directed to the students. The findings are explained in the following.

Figure 10 shows activities that the students do at home. These activities include reading or being read a story, singing, play educative video games, and play educative games. The number of students that do reading or being read in the high-performing-group are equal to the low-performing group. For singing and watching videos, high-performers seem to have the upper hand. However, for playing educative video games, the low-performing students did more of it than students with the high performing students.

The last aspect investigated is the quantity of child directed language activities at home. The findings are presented in the following figure. In Figure 11, it can be seen that among the high-performers, one of the parents often does language activities directed to the child, two of them sometimes do that, and three of them never do that. While among the low-performers, five students sometimes do it, and one student seemed to never do it. Thus, it can be concluded that there were no low-performers who did it often.
Parent education is a variable that had the most striking differences. In the group of high-performing students, there were several parents who have education up to the tertiary education level of diploma and bachelor's degree. While in the group of low-performing students, the highest level of education is senior high school. In addition, the level education of the mothers is a concern because the mother, who is the dominant childcare provider, is one of the influential people in children's language development (Hoff, 2006). In the group of high-performing students, the lowest level of mother's education was junior high school and the highest was bachelor. On the other hand, for the low-performing students, the lowest education level of the mother was primary school and the highest is senior high school.

For occupation and income variables, it seemed that parents of the high-performing students had relatively better jobs and income than the parents of the low-performing students. This can be seen from the number of parents who were unemployed and did not have income in the group of low-performing students. This is in line with another report that children from low SES family may not perform well in tests (Quagliata, 2008).

Hoff (2006) states that parents, especially mothers, who have a higher SSE have a tendency to communicate with children using more diverse and complex languages so that children get richer language input than children from lower SSE families. It can be concluded that the SSE level of parents, especially mothers, can be a factor that influences children's language development.

Furthermore, based on findings from linguistic backgrounds, it appears that in the high-performing students, monolingual Bahasa Indonesia speakers and bilinguals were more dominant than monolingual Sundanese speakers. While in the group of low-performing students, Sundanese and bilingual speakers were more dominant than Sundanese speakers. According to Hoff (2006), multilingual conditions in children have an influence on children's
language development. Monolingual children tend to have better abilities in that language than bi/multilingual children. This is because they only learn one language, while bilingual speakers learn two languages at once so that they seem slower or than the monolingual speakers of the language at the beginning of the development of their language skills. In other words, being monolingual Bahasa Indonesia speaker and bilingual speaker might have affected the performance.

Then in terms of reading ability, most high-performing students were slow readers and one student was already able to read. While most students with low performance scores were slow readers and one student could not read. In other words, the reading ability of high-performing students and low-performing students tended to be the same. There needs to be a deeper examination of the extent of the ability to read, or at least to recognize letters, so that it can affect their morphological awareness.

The next discussion turned to findings about the student's home literacy environment. In activities related to literacy conducted at home, it was seen that high-performing students and low-performing students carried out the same activities and the number of participants in each activity was not much different. Then regarding the quantity of language activities directed at children, it appears that only one participant with a high performance often did direct language activities, and many participants rarely got it. In other words, home literacy activities do not appear to have an influence on morphological awareness. In addition, in this study, the intensity of activities is not stated specifically, for example using hourly units, so that it is only a general description and cannot fully explain students' ability in morphological performance.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be taken in this study. First, SES can be a major factor in determining the course of the students’ language development. Second, awareness of a language may also be influenced by multilingual conditions, and even varieties in a language. Third, the intensity of literacy activities that it could affect linguistic awareness needs to be explored deeper.

References

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