

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

According to Vygotsky (as cited in Hanum & Pangastuti, 2017), language is closely related to cognitive development because it is a tool that functions as an actual mechanism for thinking. Since human is reflecting God in the existence of an intellectual being (Berkhof, 2013), human is equipped with intelligence and ability to understand and use language. Genesis 1 says that God created man in his own image and likeness. Christians believe in Triune God who has three persons in one nature. Among his Trinitarian, God has relations and does communicate using language (Poythress, 2009). Thus, humans also use language that is given as a gift from God in which God reveals and reflects Himself.

Basically, there are two types of language, spoken language and written language. It can be expressed and symbolized through sounds and letters in readings or writings. Considered as the basic language skills, reading and writing must be introduced since kindergarten level and begins with recognizing letters and sounds, which is called Phonics (Teele, 2004). She continues defining Phonics as one of several specific skills that build individuals to become fluent readers, especially in early grades. *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Republik Indonesia No.58 Tahun 2009* about the standard for early childhood education, stated that language development for students at age 5 - ≤6 years are: able to recognize rhyming sounds, recognize symbols for pre-reading and writing, segment initial sounds of recognizable words, understand the relation of sounds and the shape of letters, and read and write names. It implies that students in Year 1 (5-7 years) are expected to have Phonics skills.

Relying on all those standards in the previous paragraph, it can be concluded that Phonics might be called as the entry skill for reading that young learners should master in early grades. However, this ideal condition is contrary to what happened in the class that researcher taught. The class is categorized as a medium-high level class in English subject (MH Class) means almost all students are active speakers of English. But most of the students admitted that they considered the English lesson too hard for them. It was proven from several phonics practices and test results (See Appendix A-1) that half of the class did not pass the minimum passing criterion set by the school which is 75. The target words were given per topic and have been learned in 2-4 meetings. But they still struggled to write the target word although the lesson was repeated many times and they got explored to the target words also in many times. They misspelled the words over and over again, even some students left the worksheet blank (See Appendix A-2). They struggled to encode the spoken words and identify the sounds in words. Researcher found that most of the students confused the letter shape of several sounds although they easily pronounced when speaking.

God created every man differently and uniquely as he or she is given different skill and competence. The same also with phonics skills which is given to every kid, but with a different portion. In other words, not all students can comprehend a skill in the same way on the same day. This is the thing that educators need to understand. One of the roles of Christian teachers is to facilitate the students in the teaching and learning process with an engaging and motivational atmosphere to learn (Van Brummelen, 2006). Christian teachers should consider this as a chance to maximize the ability God has put in each and every kid. One of the ways is by

choosing the right method to teach, so students can use the gained skills in language to do God's good works in the world. Even in fulfilling the predominant purpose of language which takes place as a vehicle in personal communication and communion between God and human beings (Poythress, 2009). Language is given precisely to human beings so they may know that communication represents exceed human grasp. Thus, language is not only capable of expressing knowledge of God, but is divine as we can never plumb to the bottom the depths of divine communication (Poythress, 2009).

Lesson plans (See Appendix A-3), discussion between the researcher and mentor (See Appendix A-4), and reflective journal (See Appendix A-5), imply that all students had no problem in understanding the meaning of the English words and its uses, or in producing and pronouncing the sounds. They even can use the word correctly in speaking since the school uses English as the main language and most of the students also use English as a daily language at home. The only problem is they did not know to relate the form of spoken and written. From all of these indications, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the main problem among the students is the lack of Phonics skills. Having Phonics skills is such a gateway for students to be fluent readers that open the key for them to use any communication tools. Students can know God's word and all the Truth written in the Bible, the only tool from God to communicate with human. They even can do the Great Commission by being able to communicate well. If students have no Phonics skills, they would face difficulties in their future reading and writing experience, even be limited in getting or sharing information especially about God's Words.

Teaching in the first eight years of a child's life is known as the golden age according to Piaget, which typically provides the foundation for all future learning (Pelton, 2010). Medwell et al. (2005) have the same notion that primary English is about empowering children with a range of skills, knowledge, and attitudes for schooling and life. It implies the importance of Phonics skills for preschoolers to be mastered as the foundation for their future learning tools.

In learning Phonics, not only students who must put much effort, but educators also should do more attempts in teaching. Given a gift to teach implies a responsibility as a Christian teacher to solve problems in the classroom as a tool to serve God. Christian teachers should help students to achieve what they are expected to and at the same time to display the attributes that God has given them in all dimensions of life as God enables human to do so, even in their finite and imperfect ways (Graham, 2009).

The researcher considered game as the most effective method to be used in improving this Phonics problem for first graders. Since children love to play, learning can be turned into a fun activity for them by using game as the tool. Game is the best tool for children to learn since it is always helpful for young learners who always seek a challenge, entertainment, and engagement (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006). Specifically, researcher chose Bingo game with some modifications to be implemented in the class. It best fits the word level problem for children. Starting with the preparation of bingo card, it requires students to practice spelling the words, then has the students to pay full attention in listening to teacher's presentation about the target words both written and spoken, then they focus to match the mentioned words with the words in the card. The steps provide what the

children need the most in learning, such as drilling and practicing presented in a challenging yet engaging activity. The researcher believes that the steps of Bingo game support the content of Phonics material and at the same time encourage young learners to learn enthusiastically. They unconsciously practice to read and write numerous words then gradually understand the Phonics system. They effortlessly gain the skills in Phonics during the learning activity that is considered challenging for them. Therefore, researcher conducted this research entitled: *“The Implementation of Bingo Game to Improve Grade I Students’ Phonics Skills at a Private Christian School in Tangerang”*.

1.2 Research Questions

This research seeks to address the following questions:

1. Does the implementation of Bingo game improve Grade I Students’ Phonics skills at a private Christian school in Tangerang?
2. How does the implementation of Bingo game improve Grade I Students’ Phonics skills at a private Christian school in Tangerang?

1.3 Research Purposes

The purposes of this research are:

1. To know whether the implementation of Bingo game improves Grade I Students’ Phonics skills at a private Christian school in Tangerang.
2. To know how the implementation of Bingo game improves Grade I Students’ Phonics skills at a private Christian school in Tangerang.

1.4 Explanation of Terms

To avoid misinterpreting of the definition related to the title of this research, it is necessary to explain the following terms.

1.4.1. Phonics Skills

In this research, the definition of Phonics is specified into the relationship between letters and sounds. In learning Phonics, students are required some skills in recognizing the letter-sound relationship. There are four skills that become the indicators to measure students' achievement in learning Phonics. The four skills used in this research are adjusted with schools' demand and based on some reviewed literatures. Here are the four indicators:

1. Writing simple 2-5 letter words in correct spelling.
2. Recognizing the shape of letter and its sound.
3. Segmenting a given spoken words.
4. Recognizing rhyming words.

1.4.2. Bingo

Bingo is a name of word and alphabet game that can be modified with the subject learned. For this research, researcher modified a little bit of the procedures of the game adjusting with the material and class' condition or situation. Here are the steps of Bingo game:

1. Teacher distributes a grid board for each student
2. Teacher instructs students to write all the words given by teacher covering all boxes randomly.
3. Teacher calls out the target words one by one.

4. Teacher instructs students to match the mentioned words with the written word on their board by giving a mark on the appropriate square.
5. Teacher repeats step 3-4 until a student calls out 'bingo!' which means (s)he has marked 4 squares in a row (horizontally, vertically, or diagonally).

