CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Theoretical Description

1. Teaching English to Children

a. Children’s characteristics

Children are all unique. Their characteristics are different from adults. That is why they have their own way in learning something. Harmer (2001:38) states that young children, especially those up to the age of nine or ten, learn differently from older children, adolescents, and adults in the following ways:

1) They respond to the meaning even if they do not understand individual words

2) They often learn indirectly rather than directly – that is they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught

3) Their understanding comes just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and, crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with

4) They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and curiosity shout the world around them

5) They have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher

6) They are keen to talk about themselves, and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom
7) They have a limited attention span unless activities are extremely engaging they can easily get bored, losing interest after ten minutes or so.

In line with Hammer, Brown (2001:88) said that unlike adults’ attention span, that of children can be shortened when they are involved in activities that they find boring, useless and complicated. In this case, teachers must provide interesting activities to facilitate the learning process.

Children development must be taken into account by even the language teachers, because one child may have ability that others do not have. By being aware of what children can and cannot do developmentally, teachers are better able to provide appropriate learning experiences for the learners.

Scott and Ytreberg (1990: 1) divide children into two groups: 5-7 years old and 8-10 years old. The third grade students who are about eight or nine years old belong to the second group. They are relatively mature with an adult side and a childish side. Here is the list of their characteristics proposed by Scott and Ytreberg (1990: 3-4).

1) Their basic concepts are formed. They have very decided views of the world.
2) They can tell the difference between fact and fiction.
3) They ask questions all the time.
4) They rely on the spoken word as well as the physical world to convey and understand meaning.
5) They are able to make some decisions about their own learning.
6) They have definite views about what they like and do not like doing.
7) They have a developed sense of fairness about what happens in the classroom and begin to question the teacher’s decisions.

8) They are able to work with others and learn from others. These are important to be taken into account by the teachers in case they want to provide appropriate materials and activities for the children in a certain class.

b. Principles in teaching English to children

Effective teaching of young learners promotes innate language acquisition mechanisms by providing children opportunities to use language as a tool for creating and sharing meanings and by scaffolding experiences to help children function “at the growing edge” (Berk & Winsler 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996). Based on children’s characteristics and development, McCloskey (2002) suggests seven principles in teaching English to children as follows:

1) Offer learners enjoyable, active roles in the learning experience

Young learners are meaning-seekers who learn best by doing and who prefer a safe, but still challenging learning environment. Young children learn differently and need different learning environments. For young children, active involvement in the construction of concepts is essential. Teachers must provide input in appropriate ways and offer many opportunities for children to use language purposefully as language develops.
2) Help students develop and practice language through collaboration.

Children are social learners. While ensuring that students have access to vocabulary and structures they need—and rich exposure to many kinds of literature is a very effective way to model high quality, academic language—and then supporting their language as needed, teachers provide opportunities for learners to communicate with them and with one another.

3) Use multi-dimensional, thematically organized activities.

Provide thematically organized activities and incorporate multiple dimensions of learning and learning styles appropriate to younger learners (Enright & McCloskey, 1988). Thematic organization offers teachers opportunities to cycle and recycle related language and concepts so that they can support children as they develop the complex connections that lead to learning. Teachers need to incorporate many kinds of child-development appropriate activities into children’s exploration of themes.

4) Provide comprehensible input with scaffolding

Provide rich yet comprehensible input with supportive scaffolding from teacher, context, and peers to help learners work at the ZPD or “the growing edge” – providing tasks and concepts those children can accomplish or acquire with just a little instruction and support. When children can perform these tasks independently, the growing edge changes or expands, and teachers then support learners with slightly more difficult tasks and concepts. Since teachers must continually focus on providing input and requests for output that children will need to perform at the next
level, they must use careful observation and classroom-based assessment to know their children’s capabilities well.

5) Integrate language with content

Teaching language for age-appropriate academic content has several advantages: Students learning two languages at school in a bilingual setting curriculum can be integrated across languages, so that the children in L2 (second-language) classrooms encounter the same concepts that they do in L1 (first language) classrooms but with new labels, both reinforcing the content-area learning and facilitating the new language learning because it is based on what children already know. In a L2 setting, teaching language through content means that students’ academic learning is not delayed while they learn language. Rather, they have the opportunity to learn language in age-appropriate, stage appropriate activities that will prepare them for grade-level academic content.

6) Validate and integrate home language and culture.

Continued development of children’s home language will only support development of a new language. Another misunderstanding of how language develops that is common outside linguistic and language educational circle are that a first language can hinder or interfere with a second. Rather, students with good academic learning in their first language are clearly at an advantage when they begin to learn additional languages. When a child “breaks the code” or “joins the literacy club” and understands the basic concepts of reading in one language, this does not
need to be re-learned in the target language. Rather, students now need to learn only new words, new sounds, and new written codes – no small task, but a much easier one than learning to read in a new language when a child doesn’t have literacy concepts. As language educators, teachers can help young learners use their knowledge and learning experiences of their home language to expand their learning in a second language. Acquiring a new language should clearly be an additive process and should never necessitate losing one’s mother tongue.

7) Provide clear goals and feedback on performance

Children want to do right. They need to know when they’ve achieved a goal and when they still have more to learn. We must establish clear language and content goals for learners and provide learners with feedback on their progress toward those goals. We can also, in developmentally appropriate ways, encourage learners to begin to evaluate their own progress toward accomplishing goals to help them become independent self-motivated learners.

The most important point in McCloskey’s principle is that children need fun atmosphere to be able to learn. With the help of the teachers and the will of the children, they will be able to reach the goal of the learning.

Brown (2001: 87-90) also proposes some principles that can be applied in teaching children. The principles are related to children’s intellectual development, attention span, sensory input and authentic meaningful language.
1) Intellectual development

Techniques and activities used in English teaching should fit the children’s intellectual development. In learning a new language, children depend on the world around them as they are centred on the here and now and on the functional purpose of language (Brown, 2001: 88). It means that presenting abstract notions will not work well for children.

2) Attention span

According to Brown (2001: 88), short attention span occurs when children have to deal with materials that are boring, useless and too difficult to them. To keep the children’s attention, activities should be designed to capture their immediate interest.

3) Sensory input

The designed activities for children should cover the visual and auditory modes. Since children need to have all five senses stimulated, physical activities like role plays, TPR, projects and games should be included. Those kinds of activities and sensory aids help children practice meaningful language and internalize the language (Brown, 2001: 89).

4) Affective factors

According to Brown (2001: 89) children still have many inhibitions in learning English even though they are often innovative in language form. It can make them reluctant to use the language in communication.
5) Authentic, meaningful language

Brown (2011: 90) states that children are focused on the real purpose of the language for the here and now, so they are less willing to deal with language that is not useful. Storylines, real-life conversation familiar situation and characters will create a context in which language can be used to improve children’s attention.

In order to gain children’s attention, teachers need to design activities that can cover what they need, interaction. By giving language and the context to use it, teachers can also show children the real English in daily life.

2. Teaching Speaking to Children

a. Listening to support speaking

Before the children can say words, there must be a time when they hear the words said by someone else. Children copy the pronunciation and intonation then they can say the words aloud. Children’s listening skills become the basic of their speaking skills. Through listening to a language, they learn the way to speak it. After children have been exposed to English through listening, they soon want and are able to participate in interactions with the teacher and each other (Pinter 2006:56). It can be seen that teaching listening and speaking cannot be separated as children get their language input in their listening activities then they can produce language in their speaking. Pinter (2006:62) also says that the development of listening can be
the basis of initial speaking practice. There should be many opportunities in
the class to combine listening and speaking through meaningful activities.
Brown and Yule in Nunan, (1999: 237) also says when children start learning
English, they need to be given language before they can produce it. It means
that before being able to speak, they should start with listening first. Prior
experience as a listener helps speakers to improve their performance as a
speaker.

The theories strengthen the idea that listening is very essential for
learning speaking especially for children. Teachers must pay attention to the
teaching of listening as well as teaching speaking. Children should get as
much language exposure as possible before they finally produce their own
speech.

b. Principles for designing speaking techniques

According to Paul (2003: 76), children can listen to English at home,
read English at home, and even write English at home, but few of them have
much opportunity to speak English at home. If teachers want children to learn
English, each of them must have many opportunities to speak during the
lesson. They need practice, practice and practice. To put children in effective
speaking learning process, where they can practice effectively, there should
be a good design of speaking techniques. Stern in Brown (2000: 50) gives
some arguments to recommend a foreign language teaching principles based
on the first language acquisition. The points are presented below.
1) When we learn foreign language, there should be a lot of practice. The children need to repeat things again and again as what they do in the first language.

2) Language learning is a matter of imitation. A teacher must be a mimic so that children can imitate the teacher well.

3) Foreign language learning is started by practicing the separated sounds, then words, then sentences. That is the natural order that is right for language learning.

4) The right order in presenting language skills is like what happens in children language development. Listening precedes speaking skill.

5) The natural order of first and second language learning is listening, speaking, reading and writing.

6) It is not necessary to use translation in foreign language learning. When a child learns the first language, he can do it well without translation. He should be able to learn a foreign language in the same way.

7) The use of grammatical conceptualization is not required in teaching foreign language. A small child simply uses language and he does not learn grammar explicitly.

The arguments above show that first language and second language learning have a relationship in the process and condition. The comparison of processes and condition between first language and second language learning indicates that there are certain principles which teachers need to be aware of (Brewster and Ellis, 2004: 39-40). Teachers can also make use of the
principles in the language teaching whenever possible. The principles are summarized below.

1) Children are excellent observers who can understand their first language from body language, intonation, gesture, facial expression, the social context and the language itself. To help the learners make use of this skill, teachers can provide visual support and ensure that language is contextualized.

2) In learning their first language children often repeat words and phrases and the repetition stops when they feel that they have learned the words. It is important for teachers to include repetition with variety but they should pay attention on the children’s reaction to know the time to stop.

3) Children have used their hypothesis-testing skills in acquiring the first language. Teachers can provide inductive exercises in the second language but the language should be contextualized and motivating.

4) Children are good in guessing and predicting. Teachers can help the learners to these skills for learning to learn.

5) Children like to talk, even when they do not know much language. Learners should be encouraged to do the same thing in learning second language. Teachers should give a lot of opportunities for meaningful communication activities.

6) Providing support and providing a challenge in language learning should be balanced. Over-guided language work makes it too easy but too difficult work can make the learners demotivated.
7) Children tend to be good risk-takers in learning the first language. The willingness to try should be encouraged. Teachers should avoid giving too much constant correction and creating overly strict atmosphere.

Based on the principles above fun atmosphere must be created in order to help children learning. Children must also be given a lot of opportunities to practice speaking English. Visual support is also important in the teaching of English to children. Those aspects must be taken into account before the speaking technique and activities are designed.

3. Teaching Media

a. Definition

Teaching media or teaching aids are tools or equipments which support the teaching and learning activities of teachers and students. It helps teachers to deliver materials in the class. It also helps children to build concepts about something learned. It can also motivate the students to learn in many ways. It is important to use the media to create fun atmosphere in the class. There are three kinds of teaching media; audio, visual, and audio-visual media.

b. Kinds of media

1) Audio media

Audio media refer to media which deliver messages in an audible form. In this case, the messages are delivered through sounds. Audio media that are commonly used in English teaching are audiotapes, cassettes, CDs, etc.
2) Visual media

Visual media in language teaching are simply defined as media that can be seen during the process of teaching and learning. Wright (1976:194) also says that a visual aid is anything which can be seen while the language is spoken. Types of commonly used visual media are pictures, flashcards, flannel boards, and so on.

3) Audio-visual media

Audio-visual media combine the two kinds of media. It basically cannot only be seen but also heard. Films and video recordings are examples of audio-visual media.

c. Kinds of visual media

There are examples of visual media:

1) Drawings

This media can construct and support the topic which is being taught. The teacher can prepare it at home and apply it easily in the class to achieve the goals of the teaching and learning process.

2) Pictures

This media can show the real objects or the events of outside the class. A still picture is a record or a copy of a real object or event which may be longer or smaller than the real object or events, for examples: photographs, bulletin board materials, brochures, etc.
3) Realia

Realia means real things, objects such as coins, tools, plants, animals, or collection of artefacts that teachers can bring into the classroom to illustrate the meaning of the teaching material to be clear, meaningful and memorable.

4) Chart or poster

A chart is a drawing which shows information in the form of a diagram, a map of the sea, or the sky, etc. A poster is a large printed picture or notice in a public place, often used to advertise something.

5) Flannel Boards

A flannel board is a flat surface such as thick cardboard, an artist’s canvas, and so on that has been covered with flannel, felt, or other fabric with a nap.

d. The advantages of using flannel boards in teaching children

Flannel boards permit numerous and varied arrangements of visual materials, the use of either chart or small pieces of material, and the use of various colours, which may be used for specific purposes. Its materials can also be packed and transported easily and used in other occasions. This kind of media is appealing, because the audience is fascinated in watching the steps in the presentation. It is effective because it permits two techniques for delivering a message, words of mouth-sound and symbols or pictures-sight.

The children have great interests when coloured cut-outs stay on the board without the use of any glue, tacks or staples to hold these symbols and
pictures. The teacher can just stick the illustration on the board where it stays as if by magic. The use of flannel boards improve effectiveness and make the students remember more of the details. Comments on the pictures and symbols on the board can be added too. It is a good way to improve interest and make the concept easy to catch.

Flannel boards are a great way to give young children concrete learning experiences. It can be used for many different activities, and they are easy to make at a reasonable cost. A flannel board is very flexible to be combined with activities using games, pictures, songs, and stories. The children will willingly participate in the learning process because they think it is fun. They cannot only see but also touch and play with the media provided. There are many activities that can be done by using this media to promote speaking and to provide interaction among the children.

e. The disadvantages of using flannel boards in teaching children

Beside the advantages, flannel boards also have some disadvantages. The first one is that the board has a big size. It is okay if the teacher hangs it permanently in the wall, but if the teacher must hung it on before the class then take it off after that, that will be tiring. The second one is that the cut-outs need extra care. It needs to be carried in special ways and kept in a special container so that no harm will happen to it.

B. Conceptual Framework

Since children are different from adults, teachers should pay attention to their characteristics in teaching them speaking as well as other skills.
Children in their third year in elementary school are included to the children described by Harmer (2001), young children who are up to the age of nine or ten learn differently from older children, adolescents, and adults. They are more mature and unique since they have children side and adults side.

In designing speaking activities, teachers must provide the opportunities for them to grow their own understanding on the language. The activities must include guided and non-guided ones. It is like providing tasks and concepts step by step. When children can perform these tasks independently, teachers can support learners with slightly more difficult tasks and concepts. This method is also called “scaffolding”.

Teaching speaking to children cannot be separated from teaching listening as listening is the basic for speaking. Before they are asked to produce the language, they must be taught the way to use the language appropriately through listening. From listening they get the language exposure to be learned and finally be produced.

The class must be held in a fun atmosphere so that the children will not get bored easily. Basically, children love songs, pictures, stories, and games. It gives the teachers opportunities to use those things to design activities for children. Due to their needs of the media, teachers must find a media which can be used to help children learning together with the activities designed.

Flannel boards seem to be very flexible for this case. Teachers can use songs, pictures, stories, and games with this media. Children can not only see
but also touch and play with the media provided. There are many activities can be done by using this media to promote speaking and to provide interaction among the children. They are also easy to make at a reasonable cost. Flannel board based activities are expected to promote speaking at the third grade of students of SD Kanisius Bonoharjo.

To promote speaking through flannel board based activities for the third grade students of SD Kanisius Bonoharjo, the researcher considered the theories in the theoretical review. They are the children’s characteristics, principles in teaching English to children, listening to support speaking, principles for designing speaking techniques, and the theories about flannel board based activities.