

# **CHAPTER I**

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### **1.1 Background of The Study**

Children courses have developed rapidly in the last few years. Abundant new-established children courses offered children classes from toddler until teenagers. Among the existing children courses, “Pooh” Language Center, one of the oldest ones, has been established for more than 30 years. At first, it only offered English courses. Along with the increasing public-demand for foreign languages, the program is continuously developed to meet new improvements. Nowadays, it offers not only English but also Mandarin, Japanese, and French classes. To be more specific, the English course in this Language Course offers children classes, teenager classes, adult classes and conversation classes. In children classes, there are twelve levels, namely: 1A-1B, 2A-2B, 3A-3B, 4A-4B, 5A-5B, and 6A-6B. While in teenager classes, there are eight developed levels: 1A-1B, 2A-2B, 3A-3B, and 4A-4B. Meanwhile, adult classes range levels from elementary to advanced, as in conversation classes, four levels are offered, namely from conversation 1 up to conversation 4.

From all the English Classes, the children classes are the first established ones. They are offered for young learners in their third grade to the sixth grade of elementary school. In addition, teenager classes are offered for juveniles in their first year to third year of junior high school. Meanwhile, students in the high school and undergraduate students are offered the adult classes. Last, the conversation classes play the role as the options for those who have already been working and want to practice their speaking ability.

Like other English courses, in order to enter each class, students have to undergo a placement test. The result of the placement test will determine the level to which a student shall enter. Among all classes, the writer is deeply interested particularly in the children classes. She believes that children classes are the fundamental and significantly important classes for the process of learning a language, since what the children learn at these levels undoubtedly become a further determination for their skills in the upcoming future.

A test is obviously crucial in any language teaching programs. It determines students' achievements of the target language. Through this thesis, the writer brings the notion of developing the placement test for the children class. A placement test is a test which is used to reveal the knowledge or skill that students have so that they can be grouped in the same levels (Brown, 1996). A placement test is, again, a very important aspect in a language program since it determines the level to which students will be grouped in. Moreover, a placement test for children classes can be completely different from the ones for other three levels, the teenager, adult or conversation classes. The children placement test should represent the children's characteristics as well. The placement test for children should be fun, colorful, involving play and enjoyment. It could be in the form of activities as solving puzzles, drawing, and picture identification.

The Cambridge ESOL test has inspired the writer to create a similar placement test for "Pooh" Language Center. The established placement test has been synchronized to the content of the textbook; however, it does not represent the placement test should be applied for children. Based on the writer's experience during her working in "Pooh" Language Center, the children placement is merely a test, which includes grammar and translating items.

Starting from level 1A up to 3B, the test consists of only two parts; the first part is five answering questions, while the other part is five questions in translating the sentences into English. For the level 4A up to 5B, the test consists of three parts: the five answering questions, two questions of translating sentences into English and three questions of translating sentences into Indonesian. Next, the part for level 6A consists of two parts, five answering questions and five questions of translating sentences into Indonesian. Last, level 6B consists of two parts: five questions in unscrambling the sentences, and five answering questions. Unluckily, the placement test does not consist any pictures at all; it is merely the type of answering and translating questions.

Thus, she is challenged to develop a brand new, improved placement test that also contains the representation of children's characteristics. The writer has already got the permission from the Head of the Program to develop the placement test for the children classes. Therefore, the writer proposes a study on the developing placement test for children language class at "Pooh" Language Center in Surabaya.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The writer is interested in developing a placement test for children language class at "Pooh" Language Center Surabaya. She tries to answer the following question: "How is a placement test for children class developed to represent the children's characteristics in learning language?"

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study is to develop a novel, improved placement test for children class at “Pooh” Language Centre in order to represent the children’s characteristics.

### **1.4 Significance of the study**

By conducting this research, the writer hopes that the result will be useful for “Pooh” Language Center in the form of an applicable, satisfying placement test. She also hopes that this study will contribute further information to other language centers in developing a suitable placement test that meets children’s characteristics.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The scope of this study is about how to develop a placement test for children language class at “Pooh” Language Center in Surabaya. This study is limited specifically only to the development of a placement test. Although the results might be applied to the classification of levels, this study does not intend to go on further. It is important to emphasize that this study merely describes the children’s learning characteristics needed in the placement test.

There are some limitations to this study:

1. The instrument given to the experts did not undergo a pilot stage.
2. There were twelve items in the questionnaires where the experts were asked to tick to the appropriate Yes/No column and giving their comments to the space provided.

3. There were ten respondents that were considered as the experts. They were all the teachers who taught at the children class at “Pooh” Language Center.

## **1.6 Assumption**

This study was conducted under the following assumptions:

1. From the face validity, it is assumed that the current placement test for children classes at “Pooh” Language Center has not represented the children’s characteristics.
2. It is assumed that the current and developed placement test has a high content validity because the items are taken from the textbooks used.
3. It is assumed that my colleagues were serious in answering the questionnaire given.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This study is based upon five underlying theories. In order to give an overview, the writer is going to discuss the theoretical framework briefly.

### **1.7.1 Language Testing**

A test has become a very important and crucial aspect in a language center. It is used to measure the learners’ mastery of the target language. The result of the language test may have different functions to the language center. The first task in designing a test is to determine the aimed purpose of the test. Defining the purpose of the test will determine the right kind of test to use, and keep the center staying in focus on the specific objective of the test.

### **1.7.2 Placement Test**

Hughes (1989) states that placement tests are intended to provide information that will guide the placing of students at the stage of teaching program most appropriate to their abilities. Brown (2004) also adds that a placement test usually includes samplings of the materials to be covered in the various courses in a curriculum.

### **1.7.3 How Children Learn a Foreign Language**

Holden (1980) writes “children cannot concentrate on one thing for a long period”; moreover, it is common that young children learn better through fun activities. While Brumfit (1991) states that the fun activities here means all activities that involve play and enjoyment; singing, clapping hands, chanting rhymes, solving puzzles, drawing, coloring, model-making, and games.

### **1.7.4 Cambridge Young Learners English Test**

The Cambridge ESOL inspires the writer to develop a similar test for children classes at “Pooh” Language Center. It tries to give children a positive experience of testing for the future language learning and provides language assessment in its high quality. It is specifically designed to offer a comprehensive approach for the English testing of the primary learners between the ages of 7 and 12.

### **1.7.5 Language Test Development**

The test development is the entire process of both creating and using a test. It begins with its initial concept and design. According to Bachman and Palmer

(1997), a placement test-development should be organized conceptually into three stages: design, implementation, and administration. In doing this research, the writer will use the design, implementation, and administration. Moreover, in developing a test, a good planning aids in creating a sound test as well as in building a strong argument for the content validity of the test (Brown, 1996).

## **1.8 Definition of key terms**

In order to help the readers to understand what is being discussed in this study, the writer will give some definition of key terms as the followings:

1.8.1 Placement Test: a test used to reveal the knowledge of the students so that they can be grouped in the same levels.

1.8.2 Children Classes: English classes that are offered for children where the materials and teaching method, suited children's needs and learning.

1.8.3 Language Center: the building that is used for the process of teaching and learning.

1.8.4 Children's Characteristics: young children learn better through fun activities that involve fun and excitement; such as solving puzzles and drawing (Brumfit, 1991).

1.8.5. "Pooh" Language Center: a language center that was established in 1974 and located at the South of Surabaya.



## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

This thesis is divided into five consecutive chapters as follows: the first chapter is the introduction, consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, definition of key terms and the organization of the study. Next, the second chapter talks about the review of related literature further described in the review of both the underlying theories and the related studies. Furthermore, the third chapter unveils the research methodology, which also covers the information about the research design, data collection, and research instrument. Afterwards, the fourth chapter presents the discussion of the research's findings, and, lastly, the fifth chapter concludes the result of the research and gives several suggestions for the language center and further development of language placement materials.