Training Effective Communication in Early Childhood Teachers

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This article involves training (as a form of community service) in an effort to develop early childhood teacher skills. An interesting learning process is needed at an early age, because a child's attention span is still limited. Systematic efforts need to be made to achieve this. They include strategies, learning methods and other efforts involving the effective communication strategies of teachers. Knowledge and skills are needed in the form of training. This training makes improvements through the involvement of professional institutions, including universities. The methods used in the training are lectures, discussions and simulations. The results obtained increase teachers' understanding of the learning strategies, especially the importance of effective communication skills for early childhood learning. Teachers also have a better understanding of how to apply effective communication strategies in developing the abilities of young children.

Keywords: *learning strategies, effective communication, early childhood teacher.*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a lifelong process of developing human potential. One phase of education takes place in early childhood. The affirmation of early childhood education is contained in the National Education System's Law Number 20 of 2003, Part Seven. It endeavours to provide guidance to children from birth to age 6 years. This is done to help growth as well as physical and spiritual development so that children are ready to complete further education. In addition, in Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection (Article 9 Paragraph 1), it is explained that children have the right to obtain education and teaching in the context of personal development along with a level of intelligence according to their interests and talents. The general concept of the National Education System Law is elaborated in government policies in the early childhood education curriculum (Nurhafizah & Moh.Kosnin, 2017). The National Education Policy was also developed with the 2013 curriculum.

Besides government policy, experts also try to develop many forms of intelligence. Developing forms of intelligence in learning requires teachers to possess good communication skills. This is so that learning objectives are achieved and the abilities and potential of students develop optimally (Bakker, van Bommel, Kerstholt, & Giebels, 2018). It is hoped that good communication skills possessed by teachers will enable them to also develop the communication skills of their students optimally, according to the characteristics of their development. This includes children who are educated in early childhood (Abodunrin, Oni, Dosunmu, & Isaac-Phillips, 2014).

During this time, in developing the ability to communicate, listening and speaking aspects are often overlooked (Florence Ma, 2012). All of these skills should be used in an integrated manner in children's everyday communication. The development of a whole aspect of communication begins with strengthening the sensory motors associated with the auditory and speech organs. If the two organs are strong, it is hoped that higher potential will make it easier for children to develop their communication skills (Gan, 2013).

However, based on observations made in some areas of early childhood education in the Batang Anai Sub-District, Padang Pariaman, West Sumatra, there are still many teachers who do not have an understanding of this. The ability to communicate effectively (for example, during storytelling activities), shows that teachers are absorbed in their stories and that children are also engrossed in their activities. Some children even walk around, become busy talking to their friends or do other activities. Children look bored and are reluctant to pay attention to their teacher. In addition, there are still many teachers who have not been able to choose the appropriate learning strategies and methods. This is so even though the right strategies and methods of learning are very important in developing early childhood abilities. These teachers are still in a concrete preoperational period, according to Piaget's cognitive theory.

These findings are likely because up to now, the abilities of early childhood teachers in effective communication skills are rarely developed (for example, in the form of training). Not all teachers have a qualified education background. Hence, everything is pure sharing from senior teachers to junior teachers. The conditions of educational institutions in early childhood education, as explained

above, do not need to be maintained. Therefore, revamping the learning process for early childhood education institutions must be done immediately. Systematic efforts are needed to overcome this through strategies, learning methods and other efforts that develop effective communication skills (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016). To make these improvements, the involvement of professional institutions, including universities, is needed.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Learning strategies
Learning strategies can be interpreted as selected activities, namely those that can provide facilities or assistance to students in achieving certain learning goals. Learning strategies are convey learning methods in a particular learning environment (Hengki, Jabu, & Salija, 2017; Purdie & Oliver, 1999; Stracke, 2016). Given that each learning objective and method differs from others, the types of learning activities that must be practiced by students have different requirements. A learning strategy is a way that is selected and used by a teacher to deliver learning material. As a result, the teacher can facilitate students to receive and understand learning materials. Eventually, learning objectives at the end of learning activities can be acheived (Alderman, 2013).

The difference between strategy, method and technique
The terms strategy, method, or technique are often used interchangeably, although basically the terms have differences (Lee, 2016). Learning techniques are often equated with learning methods. Techniques are roads, tools, or media used by teachers to direct learners' activities towards goals. Learning methods are defined as ways that teachers use, which perform their functions as tools in achieving learning goals (Karabulut-Ilgu, Jaramillo Cherrez, & Jahren, 2018; KIM et al., 2019). Learning methods are more procedural. They contain certain stages while the technique is implemented. Learning strategies contain broader meanings of methods and techniques. Methods/procedures and learning techniques are part of a learning strategy.

Learning strategies are ways that will be used by instructors to choose learning activities to be used during the learning process (Broadbent & Poon, 2015; Curtis & Carter, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2013). This selection is carried out by considering the situation, conditions, learning resources, needs and characteristics of students in order to achieve certain learning goals. The relationship between strategies, objectives and learning methods can be described as a unitary system that starts from the determination of learning objectives, selection of learning strategies and goal formulation. This is then implemented into various relevant methods during the learning process (KIM et al., 2019; Muelas & Navarro, 2015; Tewolde, Glosson, Messick, & Alloway, 2016). Teaching and learning strategies are a number of steps that are engineered in such a way by the teacher to achieve certain teaching goals (Akers & Jennings, 2015; Harasim, 2017).

Effective communication
Effective communication is the exchange of information, ideas and feelings from one party to another party. It results in a change of attitude so that a good relationship is established between the message giver and the recipient of the message (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017; Derakhshan, Tahery, & Mirarab,

2015; Fallah, 2014; Mahdi, 2014). In general, communication is carried out verbally so that it can be understood by both parties. If there is no verbal language that can be understood by both, communication can still be done using body movements such as smiling, shaking one's head and shrugging one's shoulders. These movements show certain attitudes. This is called nonverbal communication.

Measurement of the effectiveness of a communication process can be determined based on the achievement of the goal of the sender of the message (DeVito & DeVito, 2007). There are 4 factors that can build accuracy in communication. These are communication skills, behaviour, knowledge level and socio-cultural position. Effective verbal communication (1) takes place reciprocally; (2) the meaning of the message is conveyed concisely and clearly; (3) the language used is easy to understand; (3) the delivery is easily accepted; (4) is sincerely conveyed; (5) has clear objectives; (6) notes the prevailing norms; and (7) is accompanied by humour and other elements of fun. Effective nonverbal communication includes (1) physical appearances that convince the other person; (2) body language and gestures; (3) facial expressions; and (4) touching.

Types of communication include (1) intrapersonal (communication with oneself); (2) interpersonal (communication carried out between 2 people); (3) small group (communication carried out by more than two members, where group members have a balanced portion of communication); (4) public (communication carried out in groups too large for all members to be able to share ideas); (5) mass communication (communication consisting of several messages that are transmitted in large numbers to several people at the same time. This is distributed through various methods: electronic, print, television, radio, magazines and others. There is no personal contact between the sender and the recipient of the message); (6) interactive communication (there is a stimulus and response) (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988; Miller, 2005).

The purpose of effective communication is to provide convenience in understanding the message conveyed from the giver of information to recipient of information. This is so that the language used by the giver of information is more clear and complete, and so that it can be understood well by the recipient of information, or communicant (Gudykunst et al., 1988). Consequently, the delivery of information and feedback can be balanced so that it does not occur monotonically. In addition, effective communication can train the use of nonverbal languages properly.

The function of effective communication is to establish relationships and mutual understanding with other people. Communication has several very important functions, including (1) an Information function; (2) a function of expression; (3) a control function; (4) social functions; and (5) economic functions (Greenaway, Wright, Willingham, Reynolds, & Haslam, 2015; Oetzel, 2017). In communication, there are always obstacles that can disrupt the smooth running of the communication process (Butchibabu, Sparano-Huiban, Sonenberg, & Shah, 2016). Consequently, the information and ideas delivered cannot be accepted and clearly understood by the recipient of the message or receiver. According to Ron Ludlow & Fergus Panton, there are obstacles that cause ineffective communication, namely, the difference in the influence of social status possessed by every human

being. For example, employees with lower social status must submit to and obey whatever orders they are given by their superiors. An employee may be afraid or unable to express their aspirations or opinions. Semantic factors concern the language used by communicators as a tool for channelling thoughts and feelings to the communicant (Aries Suprapto, 2018; Furrie, 2019). For the sake of smooth communication, a communicator must pay attention to semantic disorder. Errors in pronunciation or errors in writing can lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. These, in turn, can cause miscommunication regarding the pronunciation of language and misinterpretation. For example: the pronunciation of demonstrations as democracy, soybeans become donkeys and other mistakes.

The importance of communication is no longer up for debate among experts. Everyone has agreed that communication is very important for survival, relationships, work and the success of a person (Astuti, Nurhafizah, & Yulsyofriend, 2019; Miller, 2005). Without communication, life will die. Due to of the importance of communication, almost 99 percent of humans undergo their activities using communication. Likewise, in the learning process, communication will determine the success of a teacher in teaching. In the teaching-learning process, communication is not only important but it is the way to have a good influence. This is true not only in the effectiveness of teaching and the ability of students to understand but also when it comes to affecting attitudes, behaviours, mentalities and the way future students' children will think.

Communication in the teaching process

In the process that takes place, communication usually becomes problematic. This is because of differences that occur in interpreting messages (Derakhshan et al., 2015; DeVito & DeVito, 2007; Jackson, 1987). This process then affects the effectiveness of communication. In general, effective communication is able to convey ideas and ideas or meanings so that the same value is understood by the giver and the recipient of the message. Effective communication is very important for the teaching and learning process because of the existence of students with diverse cultures, family backgrounds, differences in perspectives and vulnerable self-stability. They will determine the success of the communication itself. The success of communication in the teaching and learning process is not only determined by a teacher but is also the condition of a child's mental readiness in the teaching-learning communication process. Success is also being supported by environmental conditioning and management of the school itself (Oetzel, 2017).

METHOD

Problems in PAUD institutions in Batang Anai Subdistrict, Padang Pariaman Regency exist because of the lack of teachers' abilities and competencies in effective communication. The demands for quality education are getting heavier. This reality requires teachers/civil servants to have the skills that can realise the quality of education. These include the learning skills involved in communicating with young children, especially by telling stories using finger puppets.

To solve the problem stated above, and at the request of partners (namely IGTK/Himpaudi Batang Anai Subdistrict, Padang Pariaman), the best alternative activity was chosen. This involved giving an

opportunity to a maximum of 40% of representatives from PAUD institutions in Batang Anai sub-district, Padang Pariaman through the IGTK Service/Himpaudi). It then involved giving counselling and enrichment of materials related to effective communication. Furthermore, the results of counselling were realised in the form of training, guidance and practice involved in learning strategies and communication.

The method of implementing this training was in the form of material given at the PAUD District of Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman: (1) Extension activities were provided by resource persons in order to provide participants with insight related to early childhood education. They included 'the urgency of effective communication skills in early childhood education'. (2) Extension activities were provided by resource persons in order to equip participants with insight related to methods and strategies for teaching early childhood with various approaches. (3) Practice activities involved participants doing vocal training and practicing communicating with children according to their age. (4) One learning unit (RKH) was made. It applied the principles of effective communication. (5) Effective communication with children was demonstrated in front of other participants and practiced by telling stories. During the practice process, participants were guided in groups and individually by the instructors.

In implementing this activity several methods were used: (1) For the provision of information, a lecture method was used where the resource persons presented a paper. After that, a question and answer session was conducted. (2) The level of mastery of the material used in the demonstration/demonstration method was found out. This was done through the practice of effective communication activities for the AUD. (3) The storytelling method used media. This was expected to be utilised in teaching activities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of effective communication strategy training for early childhood teachers in Batang Anai District, Padang Pariaman included the opening of the event by the Head of Batang Anai Sub-district. The event was also attended by training participants consisting of 30 teachers/representatives from various kindergartens and PAUD in Batang Anai sub-district. The material presented concerned learning strategies, effective communication, vocal practice and simulating communication activities in group learning.

Training takes place smoothly. During the initial stage, activities motivate teachers to write simple things and write about what is happening around them, especially regarding the learning events they experience and face. So that the training is not rigid and tense, the presentation of material is accompanied by questions and answers. During the training, the participants were enthusiastic. This is because, in the question and answer session, the committee provided door prises for participants who answered correctly. Based on observations at the time of training, no significant obstacles were found. The results of this service increase the insight of the teachers, especially regarding learning strategies and effective communication. There is the achievement of output targets in the form of scientific publications in journals and supporting textbooks.

There are several important components that determine the success of communication in the teaching and learning process. First, the teacher is a communicant and a source that conveys certain information to students. Second, the sender encodes information that will be conveyed as symbols or signals. Third, messages in all forms can usually be felt or understood by one or more of the recipient's senses. Fourth, a channel is a way of transmitting messages (for example, paper for letters and air for words that are spoken). Fifth, students are recipients (receivers), i.e. people who interpret the message. If the message is not delivered to the recipient, then communication will not occur (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017; Pillay et al., 2015). Code interpretation (decoding) is the process by which the recipient interprets the message and translates it into meaningful information. The more precise the recipient's interpretation of the message intended, the more effective communication will be (Oetzel, 2017). Feedback is a reversal of the communication process where the sender's communication reaction is stated.

The simple process above is not simple in practice. This is because interference in the massage and channel sometimes causes distortions. The causes of this are very diverse and subjective. For example, a student may not like the way a teacher smiles, and this might have an impact on all communication that occurs between the teacher and the student. It then becomes bland and is distorted everywhere.

There are many teachers doing the same activity all the time, namely teaching in front of the class. Among many teachers, maybe there are only a few who are classified as pleasant teachers in the eyes of students. These idolised teachers always make the students want to be taught by them (Alderman, 2013). The strength of a teacher is greatly influenced by effective communication practiced in the classroom. In this case, students are comfortable with every word and story the teacher develops. It is like they are captivated by the strains of beautiful, exciting melodies (Admiraal et al., 2017). Whatever lesson is conveyed by the teacher, the students have the convenience to catch it. This communication is able to create the same meaning and sense among teachers and students in the situation (Aries Suprapto, 2018).

The main problems of communication cannot be solved with science and logic. These abilities are the results of the mental creations and communication skills of teachers that have been forged over years. According to an American Management Association expert, there are 10 basic things to know if you want to communicate well: (1) Explain your concepts/ideas before communicating. (2) Understand the real purpose of the communication. (3) Consider the environment, time and atmosphere. (4) Understand what is happening inter partes. (5) Be aware of the tone and content of the news. (6) Communicate in a way that is helpful and valuable to the recipient. (7) Follow up communication. (8) Communicate for the future as well. (9) Keep actions consistent with the word. (10) Be a good listener. If a teacher is able to fulfil these 10 basic things, the communication developed in their classes will certainly have an impact on both the teaching and the students.

The hardest thing about communicating according to the 10 basic things above is the ability to build relationships with students, follow up communication, have consistency and be a good listener. In

some basic cases, the teacher needs to understand the concept of self with the 'Window Jauhari' or SWOT technique. This is in addition to the understanding of an adequate behavioural psychology approach. If the success of communication has been established in a class, it may not necessarily be practiced in different classes. The teacher needs again the ability to build relationships with students. This is because of differences in behaviour and character in each student. Teachers are required to have the ability to practice basic psychology involving human behaviour (Arthur & Carr, 2013).

Communication becomes very important because events transfer knowledge from a teacher to their students. Events form good behaviour and morals. The learning of all events, every day, occur only through communication developed by the teacher with students. Communication will be the window of the teacher's soul to be able to understand and control the learning behaviour of students (Jackson, 1987). By mastering the right communication, the teacher has the opportunity to better master and control the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

CONCLUSION
Teaching and learning strategies need to be designed and applied by a teacher when going to and when implementing learning. In a good learning strategy, maximum learning outcomes will be produced. Students can learn comfortably if the teacher teaches with empathy, presents a hearted strategy, conveys the importance of material for the future life og students and also understands the forms of subject matter delivered. With this understanding, the teacher can determine a suitable strategy that is in accordance with the material form. This may be in the form of concepts and facts. It is hoped that further training will be carried out to improve the effective communication skills of the teachers.

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