

COMMUNICATIVE ACTS OF DEAFBLIND CHILD IN *THE MIRACLE WORKER* MOVIE

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Abstrak

Kajian ini ditujukan untuk menjelaskan tindak komunikasi dari anak buta-tuli. Tindak komunikasi adalah perilaku inisiatif yang dapat diterka oleh lawan bicara, seperti menunjuk seseorang, membawa atau meminta sesuatu sebagai permohonan ke seseorang, dan lain sebagainya (Bjerkman, 1997). Dalam hal ini, hasil bahasa seorang buta-tuli ditampilkan dalam bentuk bahasa perilaku. Tujuan dari kajian ini adalah: untuk mengelompokkan jenis-jenis tindak komunikasi yang digunakan oleh anak buta-tuli untuk mengungkapkan perasaannya dalam film *The Miracle Worker*. Disini, Helen Keller menjadi buta-tuli dikarenakan sakit yang dialaminya ketika berusia 19 bulan, dimana pada usia tersebut anak cenderung berkomunikasi melalui ekspresi (Yule, 2010). Pengelompokan ini menggunakan kategori dari Deasy dan Lyddy (2009); untuk mengelompokkan jenis-jenis fungsi tindak komunikasi yang muncul pada perilaku anak buta-tuli dalam film *The Miracle Worker*. Ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pengelompokan Nichols et al; kemudian yang terakhir, untuk memahami penerimaan tindak komunikasi anak buta-tuli bagi orang lain di sekitarnya dalam film *The Miracle Worker*. Deskriptif kualitatif adalah pendekatan yang dilakukan untuk melakukan penelitian ini. Semua data diambil dari perilaku Helen Keller. Tapi, kajian ini hanya memfokuskan pada tindak komunikasinya. Subjek dari kajian ini adalah tindakan komunikasi Helen Keller, anak buta-tuli dalam film *The Miracle Worker* sebagai data utama. Selain itu, sumber data kajian ini adalah Helen Keller sebagai tokoh utama dalam film *The Miracle Worker*. Film ini menceritakan tentang kehidupan Helen Keller, anak buta-tuli yang berusia 7 tahun. Film ini diadopsi dari kisah nyatanya. Akhirnya, hasil dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada jenis-jenis tindak komunikasi yang ditemukan dalam film ini. Jenis-jenis tindak komunikasi tersebut adalah *touch clues, iconic or miming gestures, deictic gestures, bodily perceived gestures, objects of reference type 1, adaptive signs, and objects of reference type 2*. Kemudian, jenis-jenis fungsi tindak komunikasi yang ditemukan dalam film ini adalah *directives, markings, statements, questions and requests, and undecided*. Selanjutnya, diketahui bahwa hampir semua tindak komunikasi Helen Keller, anak buta-tuli, dapat diterima oleh orang-orang disekitarnya dalam film *The Miracle Worker*. Tapi disini, ditemukan sebuah tindak komunikasi yang tidak dapat diterima dengan baik oleh orang-orang disekitarnya. Hal ini terjadi ketika Helen Keller menyentuh mulut Percy, salah satu pembantu keluarga Helen Keller. Ketidakterimaannya terjadi karena objek referensi yang digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi keberadaan seseorang tersebut tidak biasa (mulut Percy). Meskipun buta-tuli, namun naluri berbahasa yang dilakukan Helen Keller menunjukkan bahwa dia melakukan bentuk komunikasi yang sama dengan orang lain di sekitarnya.

Kata kunci: pencapaian, tindak komunikasi, fungsi-fungsi tindak komunikasi, dan penerimaan

Abstract

This paper is to reveal the communicative acts of deafblind child. Communicative act is a gumption which can be guessed by the interlocutor, like pointing someone, taking or asking the thing as a request to someone, etc (Bjerkman, 1997). Here, the language outcome of deafblind individual is actualized into the language act. The aim of this paper is: to categorize the kinds of communicative acts which are used by deafblind child to express her feeling in *The Miracle Worker* movie. In this case, Helen Keller becomes deafblind because she gets a disease when she was 19 months old, where the child actually tends to communicate through such expression (Yule, 2010). This paper uses the category from Deasy and Lyddy (2009); to classify the kinds of communicative act functions which appear in deafblind child's acts in *The*

Miracle Worker movie. It uses the category from Nichols et al; then the last, to understand the acceptability of deafblind child communicative act to other people around her in *The Miracle Worker* movie. Descriptive qualitative was the approach to work on this study. All of the data were taken from the acts of Helen Keller. But, it focuses only on the communicative acts. The subject in this study is the acts of Helen Keller, the deafblind child in *The Miracle Worker* movie. It is also known as its data. Besides, the source of data was Helen Keller as the main character in *The Miracle Worker* movie. This movie tells about the life of Helen Keller, 7-years old deafblind child. It is adopted by the true story of her. Finally, the result of this paper shows that there are kinds of communicative acts which are found in this movie. They are touch clues, iconic or miming gestures, deictic gestures, bodily perceived gestures, objects of reference type 1, adaptive signs, and objects of reference type 2. Then, the communicative act functions which are found in the movie are directives, markings, statements, questions and requests, and undecided. After that, it is known that almost all of Helen Keller, the deafblind child's communicative acts can be accepted by the people around her in *The Miracle Worker* movie. But here, there is a communicative act found that can not be accepted well by the people. It is when Helen Keller touched Percy's mouth. The unacceptability happens because of the object of reference used to indicate someone's existence is unusual (Percy's mouth). Although deafblindness, but the language instinct which is done by Helen Keller shows that she does the same communication form with other people around her.

Key words: acquisition, communicative acts, communicative act functions and acceptability.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are given some senses to support their existence as social creature. These can them orient, adapt, and learn the environment around them well. Besides, they need to communicate in order to express their thought, feeling, and emotion. Then language is a tool of it. In this case, the most important senses are visual and hearing. Both of these senses are very important in every child's language acquisition. Humans get their language input from sound. In which, these sounds are continued into the brain to produce. In communication, deafblind child is not as same as when another child communicates. S/he uses the communicative acts like gesture. In order to observe the acquisition of deafblind child, those communicative acts are coded using some categories by Deasy and Lyddy (2009: p.18).

- **Communicative Act**

Bjerkman (1997) explains that a social or a communicative act is a gumption which can be guessed by the interlocutor. It must be visible for our counterpart. Communicative act is another way to influence people to do something or like we expect. For example, pointing someone, taking/ asking the thing as a request to someone, etc.

In this case, Deasy and Lyddy (2009: p.18) categorizes kinds of communicative act in the following:

- **Touch clues**

It is done by touching a thing or someone as reference. Touch clues are the way to inform what is happening to the deafblind child (Abhiyan). By touching, it is hoped that the deafblind child will recognize the activity, people, thing, or place. It is done by touching the

deafblind child in particular way (in specific place on his/her body) many times. So that, s/he understands what each touching stands for/ means, like when adult touches shoulder which means "sit down".

- **Iconic or miming gestures**

It is a not a part of sign system. It is a gesture which describes or is reflection of motor activity.

- **Deictic gestures**

It is a pointing gesture. When child wants something, but she does not have any sign for the thing that she wants, she usually points it. For example, when she wants ice cream, she will point refrigerator that stands for ice cream. This act is very useful to introduce new words to the deafblind child.

- **Modulator gestures**

This gesture is used to say agreement/ disagreement and indicate any doubt by nodding or headshaking. It is usually used to respond the verbal or spoken questions. It is regarded as the easier gesture, because it just needs less cognitive activity.

- **Bodily perceived gestures**

It is a natural gesture which is usually related to the experienced done on the body. It is motivated and appears reenactment of body experience (Robbins, 1983). It is imitative gesture, because it is done routinely. It comes from the individual's own movement.

- **Object of reference type 1**

It is a real object that represents person, activity or another object. In this case, the thing that is used is the

real object. For example, a glass can be used as a reference to the activity of drinking.

- **Adaptive signs**

It is not the part of sign system. It is a quality. It has been invented because of repetition acts in the past. This sign is only known by family member or people that work around the deafblind child. This sign can be different from one another. But, it is not unique sign. It reflects to the activity s/he represents.

- **Formal sign language**

Commonly, people with the deprivation in vision, hearing or both of them use this sign. One of the examples of this sign is ASL or deafblind manual. It involves particular hand shapes and body movements to express the feeling or to deliver the message.

- **Objects of reference type 2**

It uses part of an object or its miniature version of an object. For example, when the deafblind child wants to eat, she does not need to touch or take the real plate to inform people around him/her, she can use the miniature of the doll's plate.

- **Objects of reference type 3**

It is different from object of reference type 1 and type 2. In this case, the deafblind child uses cut-out drawings or photographs. The cut-out of drawings or photographs' miniature and its part also can be used as objects of reference type 3. At the first, we can use the drawing and cut-out of photograph that has the same color and size as the real object. Then, for the continuous object, we can use the object that has more abstract shape.

- **Arbitrary tactile symbols**

It is a tactile representation. Usually, it is made from fabric or textured paper. It can be used to represent the abstract activity like the day or month. This type of symbol is used as part of calendar system, in which it has a function like a schedule activities.

- **Formal written language**

The example of formal written language is alphabet, Braille, and moon. Alphabet is common in our daily life. Besides, Braille is a system which is done by touching the reading and writing in which there are many dots which can stand for the alphabet letters. On the other hand, moon code was invented by Dr William Moon in 1845. The reading is based on the standard Roman

alphabet. It is usually directed for the blind or half blind individual.

This study uses 2 research questions. They are in what kinds of communicative acts and their functions which deafblind child uses to express her feeling and how the acceptability of deafblind child's communicative acts to other people around her. The purpose of this study is to categorize the kinds of communicative acts and their functions which are used by deafblind child to express her feeling and to understand the acceptability of deafblind child communicative act to other people around her. All of the research questions are about in *The Miracle Worker* movie.

METHOD

The research type used in this study is descriptive qualitative. In this case, a qualitative research only deals with the words in written and spoken data. The study is more focus in observing communicative acts of Helen Keller, the deafblind child, in *The Miracle Worker* movie.

The data of this study is acts of Helen Keller, the deafblind child in *The Miracle Worker* movie. She is also as the subject of the study. Furthermore, the source of data is Helen Keller as the main character in *The Miracle Worker* movie. This movie is used as the primary data. It is an adaptation movie which is based on Helen Keller's real life. In this movie, Helen Keller is told as the girl around 7 years old.

The key instrument of this study is the researcher. There are also some tools which are needed to support this research. They are soft file video of *The Miracle Worker* movie and earphone.

In the process of collecting the data, the observation is the technique to collect the data. According to Wray (1998:186), the observation is not enough to be done once, but ongoing. The collected data are based on the *The Miracle Worker* movie. The observation is to note the communicative acts of Helen Keller, the deafblind child. In this case, the observation sheet is used to note and transcribe it.

After collecting the data, it comes to the process to analyze the data in this study. The theory which is used for the data analysis technique is from Miles and Huberman (1992:20). They said that in analyzing the data, it needs three steps. They are data reduction, data display, and the last is conclusion drawing and verification.




DISCUSSION







Helen Keller does some communicative act like have been explained above. They are touch clues, iconic or miming gestures, deictic gestures, bodily perceived

gestures, objects of reference type 1, adaptive signs, and objects of reference type 2, in which, most of the signs uses touch sense as the media. It is only deictic gesture which does not use it. It happens because the deictic gesture uses pointing to identify something. In this case, Helen Keller touched all of the objects by using her hand. The objects touched include the whole object's part and only the part of the object. It happened when Helen Keller touched someone body's part like hand, eyes, mouth, face, and cheek. Then, it also happened when she touched thing's part like Anne's dress, doll's eyes, and the button. After that, it appeared when she touched the whole objects both person and thing like, Anne Sullivan food on the table, and the doll.







Table 1 shows the result of kinds of communicative act that are produced by Helen Keller. Each column reports the picture, communicative act type, and note. The note informs the description, object and purpose of the act. Description reveals the interpretation of Helen Keller's act, while she is communicating with others. The second is the object that shows the area of object touched. The last is purpose, that shows the intended meaning of her act.



Table 1: result of communicative act used by deafblind child in *The Miracle Worker* movie.

No	Picture	Commu- nitive acts	Note
1	 4.1 (Scene 10:37)	Touch Clues	Description: Helen Keller touched her own cheek. Object: part (cheek) Purpose: asking mother's existence
2	 4.2 (Scene 37:33)		Description: Helen Keller's mother touched Helen Keller Object: part (mother's hand) Purpose: showing mother's existence
3	 4.3 (Scene 05:30)		Description: Helen Keller's aunt let her touch the doll Object: whole (doll) Purpose: marking the presence of the doll

4	 4.4 (Scene 16:39)		Description: Helen Keller touched the doll, the doll's eyes and her own eyes. She touched the doll's mouth and then, her own mouth. She touched the doll's chest and then her body Object: part (doll) Purpose: referring the doll as her.
5	 4.5 (Scene 07:20)		Description: Helen Keller gave the button to the doll's eyes Object: whole (button) Purpose: referring the doll's eyes with the button
6	 4.6 (Scene 06:19)	Iconic or Miming Gestures	Description: Helen Keller hit the floor by her hand and her face was furrowed Object: face (mime) Purpose: showing the angry mime and disagreement
7	 4.7 (Scene 82:15)		Description: Helen Keller was happy. Object: face (mime) Purpose: showing the happy mime
8	 4.8 (Scene 83:09)	Deictic Gestures	Description: Helen Keller pointed Anne Sullivan, her teacher Object: whole (pointing) Purpose: marking the existence of Anne Sullivan
9	 4.9 (Scene 03:35)	Bodily	Description: Helen Keller bit her own finger, and shook her body to the left and right Object: whole

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		Perceived Gestures	(body) Purpose: showing the anger and disagreement
10	 4.10 (Scene 32:20)		Description: Helen Keller hit the table with her hand Object: part (body) Purpose: showing the anger and disagreement
11	 4.11 (Scene 14:51)		Description: Helen Keller touched the Anne Sullivan's suit case Object: whole (suitcase) Purpose: asking someone opening the suitcase
12	 4.12 (Scene 28:27)	Objects of Reference Type 1	Description: Helen Keller touched the food on her family's plate on the table Object: whole (food) Purpose: recognizing food's presence
13	 4.13 (Scene 15:16)		Description: Helen Keller touched the body and face of Anne Sullivan Object: whole (body) Purpose: acquainting with Anne Sullivan
14	 4.14 (Scene 51:41)	Adaptive Signs	Description: Helen Keller gives her hand to be hand spelled by Anne Sullivan, her teacher Object: part (hand) Purpose: asking to be taught hand spelling
15			Description: Helen Keller touched the mouth of Percy

	4.15 (Scene 03:23)		Object: part (mouth) Purpose: unclear reason
16	 4.16 (Scene 48:17)	Objects of Reference Type 2	Description: Helen Keller touched Anne Sullivan's hand Object: part (hand) Purpose: feeling Anne Sullivan's existence
17	 4.17 (Scene 31:28)		Description: Helen Keller touched the dress of Anne Sullivan Object: part (dress) Purpose: feeling Anne Sullivan's existence

Those acts that are shown in table 1 depicts that Keller, the deafblind child did some communicative acts as the way she communicated in *The Miracle Worker* movie. All of these communicative acts are naturally produced (acquired) by Helen Keller. It does need a learning process to do these. It is because these kinds of types are gotten before her teacher teaches her words (language).

On the other hand, the rest of kinds of communicative acts do not appear here. It is because they belong to the learning level. For example, modulator gestures, in which it is a gesture which is used to confirm, negate, or indicate doubt (eg. nod) (Deasy and Lyddy, 2009). The deafblind child does not know that nodding indicates for agreement and shaking indicates for disagreement, because she cannot see it. That is why it needs time to teach her this kind of communicative act. Then, formal sign language, arbitrary tactile symbols, and formal written language are forms of system. A system needs to be introduced/ taught in order to be done. That is why these kinds of communicative acts also do not appear in this movie because they do not belong to acquiring process but learning process. Then, the object of reference type 3 is not used by Helen Keller because it needs introduction (imitating) to recognize that this drawing or photograph refers to someone/ something.

In this case, the kinds of communicative acts which appear in this movie are not as many as the kinds of communicative acts which appear from Amy, the deafblind child in the previous study. In the previous study, the communicative acts which are discussed are

both her naturally communicative acts (acquiring by herself) and her learning communicative acts (after taught). But more communicative acts found and discussed are from her learning process, like sign systems. On the other hand, in this study, the communicative acts found and discussed are only from the acquisition process (before learning process).

As it is known, Helen Keller is a deafblind child. In which she cannot see and hear. Exactly, she undergoes the congenital deafblindness. It is because she was deafblind soon after she was born. She becomes deafblind because she got a disease when she was 19 months old. In the acquisition schedule, she is in the two-word stage. At that time, she must have been able to say some words like *cat bad* or *mommy eat*. But, Yule said that in this stage, the child actually tends to communicate through such expression (Yule, 2010). Besides, the vocabulary still moves between fifty words (ibid). That is why when she got deafblindness in her 19 months old, she cannot continue to acquire the spoken language (continue to telegraphic stage) like other people. Moreover, the words are still limited. It can make her forget easily because of no input again from hearing and vision. But, the development process which still happens in her brain makes the acquisition process (language acquisition) still undergoes through her way. It happens because she tends to use expression in the last stage, so that she acquires it into some acts. It appears in the movie. Here, she seems creating many gestures (acts) in order to communicate.

Helen Keller did some acts to express her emotion/ her wants, to feel the existence of everything/ everyone around her, or just to introduce a new one/ thing. It is clearly drawn from some pictures above. For example, in Picture 4.6 when Helen Keller's mime turned to be angry suddenly because she did not find the doll's eyes and mouth like hers on the doll's face. This example shows the way she showed her emotion. Then, in the Picture 4.5 when she touched her aunt's button on her aunt's dress as an indication of the doll's eye. After that, she usually touched someone/ something's part to feel the existence of or acquainted with it. According to Pinker, a new language is created by the children as they apply it (Pinker in (Andrew Grayson and friends 2004)). It happened to Helen Keller. In this case, although she cannot produce words verbally because of her deprivation, but, the way she communicates through communicative acts shows that she has the language.

Helen Keller produces gesture as an alternate of spoken language in almost whole scenes in the movie. Only a word (spoken language) which is tried to be pronounced by her in the last scene, but it does not belong to this discussion. It is because this last word

pronounced is a result from the learning process. So that it is not naturally acquisition by her. Pinker argues that there is 'an identified seat [for language] in the brain and perhaps even special set of genes that wire it into place' (Pinker 1994, p. 45). This theory works on the deafblind child, in this case is Helen Keller. It makes Helen Keller has language instinct like other people; even though the language which is used as a tool of communication can be only recognized by her. Chomsky describes it as *Language Acquisition Device* (LAD). In which, it has a function to activate the language, although the language is different. It is said different because the language forms gestures (acts). It happens like in the above results found. They are non verbal communication, not verbal communication in Helen Keller's communication.

Helen Keller can acquire the language by creating it anew, although she cannot see and hear (being poverty of the input'). For example when she touched the cheek of herself, it indicates that she wanted her mother. This kind of act is never taught by people around her. It is naturally made/ created by her. She maybe has a reason why she touched the cheek to call her mother. Perhaps it is because the mother's behavior in the past to the child. Every mother loves to kiss her child on her cheek. That is why she touched cheek as a clue to her mother. Pinker explained that when children produce the words (in this case is acts) that they do not know or hear before, it shows that they are not studying it or repeating it, but creating a new (Pinker 1994). It is like what Chomsky said about 'poverty of the input' (Chomsky 1957). This theory works on the deafblind child. As it is known that as deafblind child, Helen Keller automatically cannot see and hear. In fact, vision and hearing are the most important tools to acquire and explore the language or gesture (act) from the environment. That is why although Helen Keller looked isolated from language input in the movie. She still has language. It is proven by the way she produces some acts in order to communicate. Besides, this act has special meaning/ purpose for her. The meaning of the act which she produces is maybe different from the purpose of someone does the same act. In the same words, for another person, it is just a gesture that it can have no meaning. But for Helen Keller, it has a purpose to catch the people's attention around her.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals the communicative acts of deafblind child in *The Miracle Worker* movie. In this case, the deafblind child is Helen Keller. Although deafblind child cannot hear and see (seems isolated from the environment), but she has the language. It happens because of the language instinct that she has, enables her to create her own language (by using communicative acts

and can understand by herself). In fact, the language is maybe different from the language which is acquired by people around her. Here, the language for deafblind child is communicative acts. She acts something to communicate. It happens because of her deprivation in hearing and visual makes her like mute too and only capable acquire and communicate through the acts. Then, she uses the communicative acts as a way to express her emotion, wants, to feel the existence of everything/ everyone around her, or just to introduce a new one/ thing.

Based on the result above, Helen Keller, the deafblind child does some kinds of communicative acts which are categorized by Deassy and Lyddy (2009) in *The Miracle Worker* movie to express her feeling. They are touch clues, iconic or miming gestures, deictic gestures, bodily perceived gestures, objects of reference type 1, adaptive signs and objects of reference type 2. In this case touch clues are the most kinds of communicative act found. In this movie Helen used touch clues by touching her own part of body, the doll, the doll's eyes, the doll's mouth, and button. Then, the iconic and miming gestures which appeared here are the expression of angriness and happiness. After that, the deictic gesture appeared when Helen pointed Anne Sullivan, Helen Keller's teacher, in the last scene. Bodily perceived gestures happen when she moved her body uncontrolled that most of them showing rejection or disagreement. The object of reference type 1 appeared when she touched the suitcase, the food and Anne Sullivan. The adaptive sign looked when she gave her hand to be spelled by Anne Sullivan. It is adapted from Anne Sullivan behavior which always spells some letters to her hand. The last is objects of reference type 2. This kind of communicative act showed when she touched Percy's mouth, Anne Sullivan's hand and Anne Sullivan's dress.

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