

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyze the conversational skills of an autistic teenager. The sample of this study was a 16 year old male autistic boy; and was referred to a Y in this study. He was verbal and had completed primary school education and at the time of the study he was attending a special education program. He speaks English and Malay, able to read and write in both languages fairly and has high cognitive ability. He is considered relatively intelligent by his teachers and his therapists. This study engaged three theories as its framework. They were Grice's Theory (1975), Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson model or SSJ model (1974) and Lucas Pragmatic Analysis or LPA (1980). Grice's theory delineates four maxims of conversation which are quantity, quality, relation and manner. According to Grice, these maxims must be observed if one wants to achieve a meaningful conversation. SSJ model on the other hand, explains the actions that take place in a conversation namely turn-taking, repetition, adjacency pair, latching, overlapping, topic movement, topic maintenance, closing and opening. This theory focuses on analyzing things that people do when they are in a conversation. Finally, LPA describes the pragmatic skills of children with language disorders such as children with ADD (attention deficit disorder), ASD (autistic syndrome disorder), schizophrenic, and Down-syndrome. It assesses the features that are missing in the speech of these group of children. The combination of these theories provides this study a more comprehensive analysis of the speech of the subject. These theories provide perspectives on conversational skills that range from that of normal people to conversational skills of people with language disorder. The methodology adopted for this study was single subject case study. The data was collected by recording Y's conversations in different contexts namely at his home, at the therapist's center and at

school. Some of the conversations were recorded using video-recorder and some were recorded by using audio-recorder. There 14 were recordings conducted over the period of four years. The recordings were done in between a few months gaps; and the purpose of allowing these gaps is to observe if there is any development in Y's conversational skills during the non-recording periods. Indeed, this study found that there was no variation in Y's conversational skills during the lapses. A pilot study was conducted before embarking on this research. The subject of the pilot study was an autistic teenager with similar language and cognitive capabilities as Y's. The findings of the pilot study showed similar presentation as the actual research. This research found that the subject of this study displayed stereotyped speech patterns over the period of four years and it is very likely that his conversational skills will remain at this level in future if no further intervention program is taken to help him. He produced brief utterances and carried out the same speech behaviours when he was talking to different people. He did not observe proximity and did not discriminate his topics irrespective of who he was talking to. He seemed to be stucked to the same topic (thematization) and repeated himself many times to obtain response from his hearer. In terms of adherence to Grice's theory, he generally observed the maxims. He performed the speech actions mentioned by SSJ model but differently from the way normal people do. Some speech behaviours such as closing, opening and repairing did not present in Y's daily conversation and therefore, were not covered in this study. The absence of these elements indicated that Y had some problems with conversational skills. This finding was supported with an assessment called Lucas Pragmatic Analysis (LPA). Y's language ability was evaluated with LPA and the result of this assessment showed that Y had pragmatic disorder. The outcomes from this study may be generalized to other autistic teenagers who have similar linguistic ability and social background as Y's. This study has provided an insight and understanding of the needs of verbal and high

functioning autistic teenagers particularly in the communication skills. They need to be given more opportunities to express themselves effectively and they need intensive language remediation programs. The outcomes of this study also indicated the importance of improving the pragmatic skills of autistic teenagers because many of them possess reasonable linguistic skills but they have problem using the language appropriately. Finally, this study concluded that the subject's conversational skills were inadequate to help him express his intent effectively and that he required language improvement program to help him express himself better in order for him to be acceptable in society.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan menganalisa kemahiran berbual seorang remaja autisme. Sampel kajian ini ialah seorang remaja lelaki berusia 16 tahun; dan dirujuk sebagai Y. Beliau boleh bertutur dan telah menamatkan pengajian sekolah rendah kebangsaan. Ketika kajian ini dijalankan, beliau sedang bersekolah dalam program pendidikan khas. Y boleh bertutur dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan Bahasa Malaysia dengan fasih. Sampel ini dianggap pintar oleh guru-guru sekolah dan terapis kerana kemahiran kognitifnya yang tinggi dalam membaca dan menulis. Kajian ini mengguna tiga teori sebagai kerangkanya iaitu Teori Grice; model Sacks, Schegloff dan Jefferson atau model SSJ dan Analisis Pragmatik Lucas atau APL. Teori Grice menerangkan empat maksim perbualan iaitu maksim kuantiti, maksim kualiti, maksim relevan dan maksim perlakuan. Keempat maksim ini harus dipatuhi untuk mencapai perbualan yang bermakna. Model SSJ pula menekankan tingkahlaku yang biasa dipaparkan dalam perbualan seperti mengulang, mengambil giliran, pertindanan, pergerakan topik, memberi perhatian pada topik, menutup dan memulakan perbualan. Akhir sekali, teori APL pula digunakan untuk menganalisa kemahiran pragmatik dalam perbualan individu yang bermasalah pertuturan seperti penghidap *ADD (attention deficit disorder)*, penghidap sindrom autisme (PSD), pesakit *schizophrenic*, dan sindrom Down. Kesemua individu ini mengalami pelbagai bentuk masalah dalam penggunaan bahasa. APL mengkaji bagaimana mereka menggunakan bahasa dan apakah ciri-ciri perbualan yang tidak terdapat dalam diri mereka. Gabungan ketiga teori ini melengkapi kajian ini kerana ia merangkumi kemahiran perbualan individu normal dan tidak normal. Metodologi yang diguna untuk kajian ini ialah kajian kes satu subjek. Data untuk kajian ini diperolehi dari rakaman perbualan subjek dalam pelbagai konteks

seperti di rumah, di pusat terapi, di sekolah dan di rumah rakan sebaya. Rakaman ini dilakukan mengguna rakaman video dan rakaman kaset. Terdapat 14 jumlah rakaman sepanjang tempoh empat tahun. Langkah ini diambil untuk memerhati samada terdapat perkembangan bahasa dan variasi gaya perbualan sepanjang tempoh kajian. Rakaman ini dibuat berselang waktu iaitu selang empat hingga ke enam bulan di antara waktu rakaman. Dapatan kajian mendapati tidak ada perubahan dalam bentuk perbualan subjek. Seterusnya, kajian ini mendapati subjek mempamerkan gaya perbualan yang sama sepanjang tempoh penyelidikan ini dan besar kemungkinan ia akan kekal demikian di masa hadapan sekiranya tiada langkah intervensi diambil. Y masih menghasilkan ujaran-ujaran ringkas dan melakukan tabiat yang sama ketika berbual seperti tidak memberi perhatian kepada proksimiti dan berulang-ulang. Topik perbualan subjek tidak berubah mengikut pendengarnya dan beliau seolah-olah terperangkap dalam tema yang sama. Dapatan berkaitan dengan Teori Grice mendapati subjek mematuhi maksim perbualan secara keseluruhannya. Beliau juga melakukan gaya perbualan yang disebut oleh model SSJ walaupun berbeza dari individu normal. Ciri-ciri perbualan seperti menutup perbualan, membuka perbualan dan membaiki ujaran tidak dikaji oleh kajian ini kerana ciri ini tidak wujud dalam perbualan seharian subjek. Namun, ketidakwujudan elemen ini melambangkan kepincangan dalam kemahiran subjek mengguna bahasa. Penilaian ini dibuat menggunakan APL dan secara umumnya, analisis mendapati subjek ini menghadapi masalah kecelaruan pragmatik. Dapatan dari kajian ini mungkin boleh diaplikasikan kepada remaja autistik yang lain yang memiliki persamaan kemahiran linguistik dan latarbelakang sosial dengan Y. Penyelidikan ini telah meluaskan pandangan dan kefahaman terhadap keperluan remaja autistik yang verbal dan berkemampuan kognitif tinggi terutamanya dalam aspek kemahiran berkomunikasi. Golongan ini memerlukan banyak peluang meluahkan perasaan mereka dengan cara yang betul melalui program-program pemulihan bahasa.

Selain dari itu, hasil kajian ini menekankan kepentingan memperbaiki kemahiran pragmatik berbual di kalangan remaja autistik kerana kebanyakan mereka telah memiliki pengetahuan linguistik yang memadai. Mereka hanya memerlukan bimbingan dalam bidang pragmatik sahaja. Akhir sekali, kajian ini merumuskan bahawa kemahiran berbual subjek ini tidak mencukupi untuk beliau menyampaikan mesej dengan berkesan dan bahawa beliau memerlukan program pemulihan bahasa yang intensif untuk memperbaiki kemahiran berkomunikasi supaya beliau boleh menyesuaikan dirinya dalam masyarakat di masa hadapan.