Questioning the Language: A Review on Its Origin, Linguistics, and the Teaching of Language

Moh. Rofid Fikroni,
UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember
Email: moh_rofid@uinkhas.ac.id

Wildatul Hasanah,
MI Al Falahiyah Pandanarum, Lumajang
Email: wildatulhasanah@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the language origin, linguistics, applied linguistics, the teaching of language ang the testing language. These scopes within the language serve a significant role in the language studies. Employing library research type, the data were collected through some books and article journals related to the topic of interests. Related to the origin of the language, some theories have been proposed that there is an innate capacity or some sort of mental device formed within human's mind which responsible for the production of language. For such matter, the study of language, known as Linguistics, has been vastly developed to discuss and explain how language and its aspects work within the interaction done by humans in daily basis. The complexity of the language itself and its effect within human interaction serves one the most important aspects in the teaching of language and testing of language.

INTRODUCTION

Communicating is considered to be the nature of living things. The urge to communicate with others will always take place in every occasion such as exchanging ideas, thoughts, promises, commands and so on. Smiling is seen as the expression of happiness,

amusement, and pleasure. Crying represents sadness, grief, sorrow and misery. Among such expression, language is seen as a system of our communication before anything.

Even though non-human species are known to have their own ways to communicate and exchange information, but none of them can be compared to the complexity of the language. In very basic ways, they communicate through gestures resembling certain kind of purpose or objective. For instance any non-human species closer to us like chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans are considered to have their own communication system. However, the system itself is very limited that in any way it is comparable to the language used as the communication system.

In relation to this matter, it can be said that language is uniquely human phenomenon. In another words, human beings will be recognized as the only living things to be able to use the language effectively aiming to communicate. It is exclusively stored within human brains which closely related to the human thought. Moreover, language is used as practical tools in initiating conversation with other people, exchanging opinions, sharing ideas, telling jokes, making declarations of love, or praying within religion tradition. However, as uniquely human properties, language is not only function as mean of communication, but also as the marker of certain society involving membership in a social class, ethnic group customs or even nation.

If asked to define what is language, most people specifically laymen would say that it is a means of verbal communication. However, language also has its technical definition as stated by Block and Trager (1942) that a language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates. Therefore, it is a system of arbitrary vocal and/or visual symbols used by people in a given culture and in the same community that enables them to express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Being a means of communication, language also takes part within social context. It means that effective communication requires an understanding and acceptance of the association between a language and the people

who use it. This leads to the statement of language is used by people in a given culture and in the same community. It means that each culture or community has its own language which expresses its members. A particular group of people who share the same culture tend to use the same language for daily communication. For instance, the language used by people who live near a beach would be different from the one used by people who live on the top of a mountain. By knowing the culture or community of a particular language, it would help people from other cultures or communities to understand the use of languages within them better.

Not only arbitrary – the form or words do not have any relation to their meanings, but language is also iconic which means that the form or words convey their meanings based on their visual or sounds. Being arbitrary means a language has culture-specific meaning which can be learned, while being iconic means it has universal meaning which is obvious. Most words in any language are arbitrary because there is no logical connection between form and meaning. This is why language needs to be learned through linguistics – a scientific study of language which can be studied in a theoretical or in a more applied way.

As mentioned, linguistics is the scientific study of language. Primarily, it is intended to understand the nature of language and communication in general. There are three aspects in linguistics: language form, language meaning, and language use. In other words, it deals with word systems, sentence structures, sound systems, and context. Dealing with word systems simply means that knowing its word structures and meanings is required in learning a language. Besides, sentences must adjust to certain rules of language, including rules about meanings. Moreover, learning a language means that speakers know how to produce sounds in that language and they understand which sounds are meaningful and which are not. Eventually, using the language in appropriate ways within particular social context is the aim of learning a language.

Dealing with the search for general properties common to all languages or large groups of languages, linguistics is divided into

micro-linguistics and macro-linguistics. Micro-linguistics which is also called context-free linguistics or theoretical linguistics is concerned in the structure of language. The subfields of micro-linguistics are phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. On the other hand, macro-linguistics which is also called context-bound linguistics is concerned in the study of language in context. The subfields of macro-linguistics are pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and ethnolinguistics.

As the marker of certain society, it is possible for us to identify one's culture by looking at how he/she use the language. According to Whorfian hypothesis, language does affect the culture and it also reflect the culture (Stern, 1983). In this particular case, social background of the language user or the speaker can be easily recognized from how he/she use the language. For instance, rich people or high class people will use sophisticated and formal language to communicate with their fellows. They are highly aware that the expressions or everything he/she says reflects his/her own thought. In other words, 'you are what you say'. Thus, he/she will carefully utilize his own words to show respect, especially when talking to other people who have higher rank within the society. On the other hand, people coming from lower rank will tend to exploit the language as free as possible. Cursing, using bad words within their utterance are their casual language. In some cases, even they seem to be proud of themselves to behave that way.

Moreover, as uniquely human properties of human language, it has some characteristics. According to Yule (2010), there are five different characteristics of human language; displacement (language ability talking about times, places, and any similar topics), arbitrariness (there is no natural correlation between meaning and the signs), productivity (the ability to evolve and improve the language), cultural transmission (the process of transferring language from adult to the children related to the cultural aspect), and duality (double articulation related to the phonetical aspect of language used to communicate with others). These characteristics surely give another complexity to the language itself. Due to this

reason, it is very important to indentify the language and its aspects to have better understanding.

Regarding discussion above, it can be concluded that language, especially human language, is a signature of human as their device to communicate in their society with the support of their physical and genetic features. Richards and Schmidt (2010) define language as any particular system of human communication spoken by either most of a particular country or only a part of the population itself. Furthermore, it can be said that human is gifted in which it is natural for them to use language. They are born to use the language, while it is supported by their speech organs and brain. Also, even a deaf or mute people with the help of their certain brain part function. Although the origin of language may be various, but also does the variety define that language development is infinite. It is not measureable to what extent will the language develop in the future.

The infinity of language attracted experts in the past to study more on it. They came to term of linguistics. According to Todd (1995), linguistics is a scientific study of language. It means that the language is studied systematically without any prejudice. The linguists provide some hypotheses and tests them out with comparison to the evidence. Thus, they come to theories which then take part on the language development.

METHODS

The objective of this study in general is to give a comprehensible insight about the origin of language, especially discussing about how human beings are able to use language as the communication system. Moreover, this study also discuss about linguistics and how it works in the process of studying language. Likewise, this study also aims to give better understanding related to the teaching of language covering some explanation about what considerations to make in teaching the language.

This study employed library type of research which focuses on identifying the origin of language, the concept of linguistics and applied linguistics, the teaching of language, and the language

testing. The data were comprehensively collected through books, journal articles, and any other references related to the topic of interest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Origin of Language

As language is unique, powerful, and has so many characteristics from the above explanation, one of particular question will always emerge related to the origin of the language. Who came up with a term such a language? Where does this term come from? Who use it for the first time? How he/she come up with this term? The origin of language, according to Yule, are divided into the divine source, the natural sound source, the social interaction source, the physical adaptation source, and the genetic source (Yule, 2010).

The divine source of language is varied among the religion. From both Muslims and Christians, language came directly from God to be given to Adam as the first human beings created. In Hindu tradition, language was originated from Sarasvati, the wife of Brahma, the creator of the universe. From this perspective, it seems that there is a divine source providing human beings with language. However, some experiments done over the years revealed contrasting result. A new born babies seems to not be able to use the language on his own without having exposed to the language before.

The next source of the origin of the language is the natural sound source. It is believed that language is originated from the surrounding sound heard by early men and women. Any other sounds produced from particular objects would be imitated to refer to the thing associated with the sound itself. However, from the perspective of this theory, there is a huge gap dealing with some of the element of language we related to the soundless objects.

The next one to be discussed is the social interaction source. This particular source is related to "yo-he-ho" theory which says that language might come from the physical effort of human beings. Some early humans might establish humming sounds in doing particular

activities. This proposal also related to how a group of early humans interact in such a way within the members of the group. Thus, it is quite possible to justify that they came up with certain pattern of communication to indicate particular things.

The origin of the language might also come from humans' physical features as the source of human speech. The shape of mouth covering the teeth and lips, larynx, as well as pharynx which make it possible to produce sounds and later evolved to be a language. This uniquely physical features in only exist within human beings. That is why non-human beings are not be able to produce a complex system of communication such as language.

For the last source of the origin of the language is the genetic source. This proposal seems to indicate that human off spring are born with a distinctive capability for language use. This capability is seen as some kind of innate device which is specifically formed for human beings and it is not related to any specific variety of language. The innateness hypothesis points out that this genetically formed device are possibly a crucial mutation, and it is seen as the source of the language itself.

Linguistics and Applied Linguistics

As language has its own complexity from its characteristics and its origin as it is mentioned previously, some efforts to study the language further has been done progressively. Those efforts are directly related to the scientific study. The study itself is known as linguistics. Linguistics aims to understand how the aspect of language works related to its use within interaction done by individuals. Linguists, people who study language, observe the identified patterns within a language and across languages use. In this case, the primary objective is to understand the nature of Language in general.

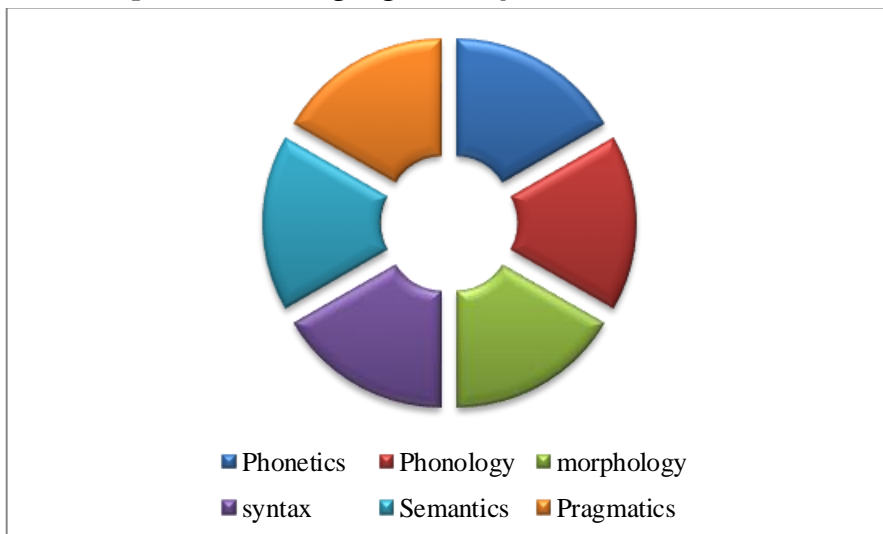Linguistics spans a large number of subfields, each deal with a different part of the language faculty.

Chart 1. Subfield of Linguistics

From the chart above, there are six subfields or branches of linguistics. Each subfield has each own area and it is correlated to each other. The subfields of linguistics cover phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Phonetics is a fundamental branch of Linguistics. Phonetics is a study of language which examines the inventory and structure of the sounds of speech (Dobrovolsky, 2005). Furthermore, he suggests that there are two ways in approaching phonetics; (1) Articulatory Phonetics – deals with some parts of mouth and throat responsible for the production of vowel and consonants; (2) Acoustic Phonetics – deals with the air flow transferred through the speech articulation which covers the speaker's mouth and the hearer's ear.
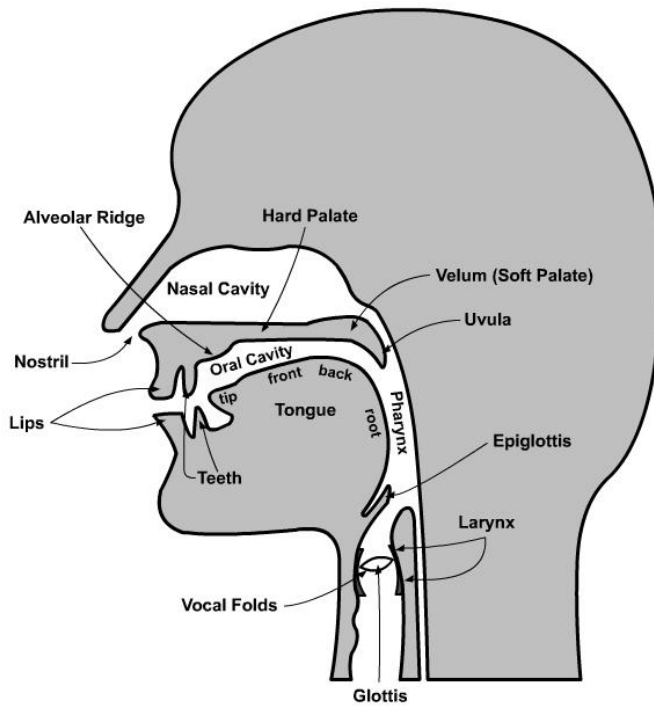
Figure 1. Organs of Speech

Another branch of Linguistics which studies sound system is known as Phonology. It is closely associated with Phonetics. Phonology deals with the way speech sounds behave in particular languages or in languages generally. This is related to the way of individuals use different sounds to transmit different meanings of the words used. These particular sounds can be broken down into string of sound units, which is also known as phoneme, the smallest part of language sound (Higgins and Dobrovolsky, 2005). Phonology is the link between Phonetics and the rest parts of Linguistics. To be able to fully understand the sound of language, one needs to combine phonetics and phonology of language.

The next subfield of linguistics is called morphology. Morphology is subfield of linguistics which studies about words and how they are formed through small meaningful unit called as morpheme. According to Yule (2010), morphemes are more than just letters, it serves as grammatical unit also. Morphology studies how these units of meaning, or words, can be arranged in a language. There are two kinds of morphemes: free morpheme and bound

morpheme. Free morpheme refers to the lexical items which is free from another morpheme. Bound morpheme refers to the morpheme attached to the free morpheme.

A different subfield of linguistics which is also related to words is syntax. Syntax is subfield of linguistics which studies about phrases, clauses, sentences and how they are constructed from words. Furhter, semantics is the study about meaning of sounds, words, phrases, clauses sentences, and even discourse. In semantics, we learn: meaning of words (lexical semantics) and how the meaning of words combined to form the meaning of sentence (compositional semantics). Syntax will be closely related to the grammatical rules within the language. Because of this reason, syntax is also known as the study of the word order. Having appropriate knowledge about syntax will give such a huge advantage to use the language accurately.
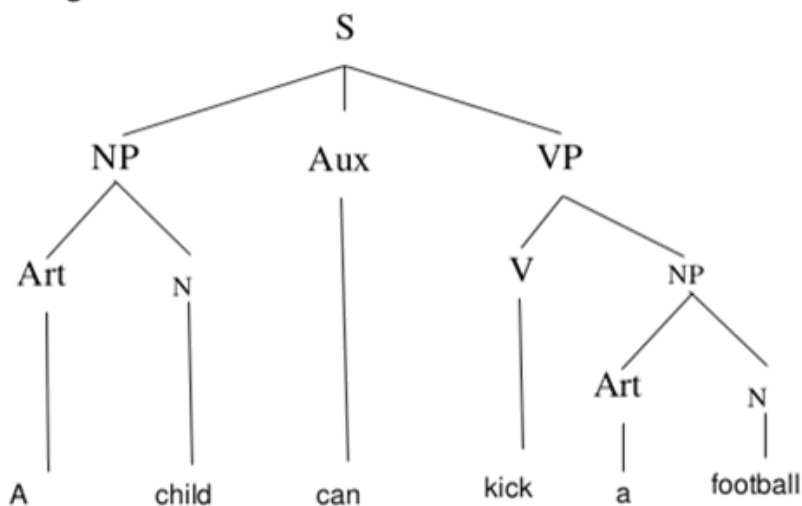

Figure 2. Example of the tree diagram of a sentence

One of the subfields of linguistics which studies the meaning of language is semantics. Semantics is the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions. Meaning as a concept within language is initially more difficult to be defined because a word may have more than one meaning. Not only words can be used with different meanings in different contexts, but the entire aspect of the intended

meaning is directly related to the type of expression we are talking about. Thus, we recognize lexical meaning and context meaning.

While semantics is concerned with the meaning within words, phrases and sentences, another subfield of linguistics, called as pragmatics, focuses on the concrete meaning of communicative context. Pragmatics is concerned with how people use language within a context, in real-life situations. It is also concerned with how factors such as time, place and the social relationship affect the ways in which language is used to perform different functions or context.

As the subfield of linguistics cover all of the aspect of language, linguistics can have applications wherever language becomes a matter of practical concern known as Applied linguistics. Linguistics is focused on language in itself and in findings ways of analyzing language as well as establishing theories that describe language. Meanwhile, Applied Linguistics is much more concerned with the role of language within peoples' lives and problems.

Moreover, Applied Linguistics is the application of the knowledge about the nature of language. It is related to how people use their knowledge to cover some of the insight about the language, how it is learned, and how it is used within the society (Schmitt, 2002). In other words, Applied Linguistics focuses on how we make use of language as the practical tools to crack the setback within every kind of fields in real life situation rather than talk about the language itself. From this particular point of view, analyzing the language is seen as the problem-solving activity where the interaction between the language users becomes the main focal point. Therefore, the focus lies within applied linguistics is to resolve or overcome language-based problems experienced in the real world context whether they are learners, teachers, supervisors, academics, lawyers, service providers, those who need social services, test takers, policy developers, dictionary makers, translators, or a whole range of business clients (Grabe,2002).

Strictly speaking, unlike linguistics, the domain of applied linguistics is not a single field or subfield, but can range from every field where language is seen as the center of attention. The following

are the domains of Applied Linguistics; (1) language teaching. In this particular matter, it should be noted that it is different from Foreign Language Teaching (FLT). Applied Linguistics, from language teaching perspective, is synoptic (viewing the whole range of concepts and practicalities in language teaching), systematic, and principled (based in theories); (2) language policy and planning. Since Applied Linguistics has considered to be the source of illumination of the complex social, political, economic, linguistic, and cultural tension, language planning as well as national polices should be based on the state educational system; (3) speech-communication research. As the rapid development of technology, Applied Linguistics is needed a sophisticated linguistic awareness. Some projects like machine translation and bandwidth-compression research were rapidly growing; (4) specialized occupational languages. Within this particular issue, Applied Linguistics has its own role to manage language used between airline pilots and air traffic-control personnel, radio communication at sea, and so on; (5) speech therapy. It covers the incorporation of Applied Linguistics into many of the courses of professional training regarding to the treatment of patients with speech disorders; (6) lexicography and dictionary-making. Lexicographers and dictionary-making are considered as part of Applied Linguistics task; (7) translation and interpreting. The task of training translators and interpreters has now often includes training in applied linguistics; and (8) language and the professions. Strevens (1992) suggest that, the main goal Applied Linguistics in this case is to bridge the gap between the language-use and the miscommunication that is found within certain profession.

Additionally, examples of the applications of linguistics can be multiplied indefinitely. Applied Linguistics may take place, such as: a speech therapist would like to know why four year old child has failed to develop normally (AL in psycholinguistics), an expert witness in criminal case tries to identify the suspect from the statements made to the police (AL in forensic), an advertiser tries to use certain pattern of language to attract their consumers (AL in

economy-advertisement), a zoologist investigates whether monkeys have the ability to communicate like human beings (AL in zoology), and so forth (McCarthy, 2001).

The Teaching of Language

Learning process, especially in the classroom, will always involve both teachers and learners. This whole process is done naturally since both of them have their own roles. The teacher will be the one who guide the students and has a role as the facilitator as well as the source for the learning process itself. Meanwhile, the students will be the receiver. However, it is not necessary mean that the students will be passive, in fact they should be the one who actively involved in the learning process. Hence, this entire process refers to the activity which mostly known as teaching and learning activity.

However, the question emerged: what to teach to the students? Regarding to this matter, the objective of teaching, especially in language teaching, had changed. For example, the objective of learning English had changed through times. Sulistyo (2015) In the past, the mastery of learning language is much more focus on instructional materials which require the students to learn infinitives, gerunds, prepositions, tenses, and so on. In this particular case, it is obvious that mastering the language is a matter of how well the students master of all those aspects. However, this particular way lacks of functional aspect. Due to this reason, the objective of learning language changed. The students' mastery of speaking skill has become the main goal in learning English as a second language or foreign language. Furthermore, the learners will assess their success in language learning and how effective they use or speak English by looking at how they have improved their speaking skill (Richards, 2008).

Due to this shift, it is very clear that the teacher needs to frequently expose their students with meaningful and communicative activities. In other words, according to Bagarić and Djigunović (2007) the main goal of learning English much more

concern with the aspect of communicative competence. Communicative competence refers to the competence to communicate. Furthermore, communicative competence will highlight the use of language for communication (Louma, 2009). Thus, it is very clear that the mastery language will focus on how the students use their communicative competence both in the classroom and outside the classroom.

The process of teaching and learning activities in the classroom will not only be the only process which takes place. The teaching process basically incorporates with the process of assessment (Sulistyo, 2015). These two processes will always go hand in hand. Assessment has its own role within the teaching process. Assessment is an ongoing process which covers broad area. For instance, when the students say something about the materials given in the classroom, whether they ask something or just give certain comments, the teacher actually subconsciously assess their performance (Brown, 2004). Assessment can be divided into two: formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment concerns with the students' performance in the classroom in which it will give information about how far do their students acquired the materials. Whereas, according to (Hughes, 2003) summative assessment will be assessed in form of report project in the end of semester or year. Furthermore, there is more comprehensive concept of assessment in which the assessment process falls into two purposes: to diagnose the students problems within their ability to understand the materials given (e.g., in the form of remedy, reinforcement, or enforcement) and to identify how well the students get the material within the process of teaching and learning activities in the classroom as well as recognize their teaching strategies (Sulistyo, 2015).

Moreover, the assessment process is the wider area that includes the process of testing, measuring, and evaluating. The interaction between these processes can be seen as follow:
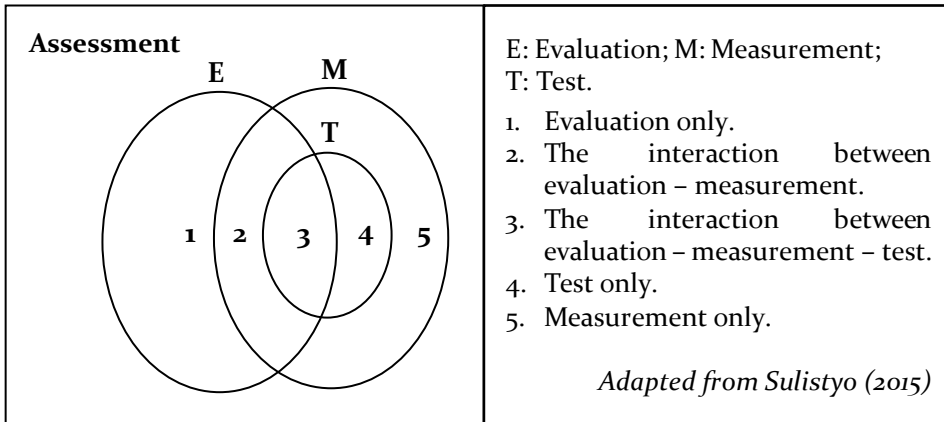
Chart 2 content (as shown in the diagram):

Assessment	E: Evaluation; M: Measurement; T: Test.
E M T 1 2 3 4 5	1. Evaluation only. 2. The interaction between evaluation – measurement. 3. The interaction between evaluation – measurement – test. 4. Test only. 5. Measurement only. *Adapted from Sulistyo (2015)*

Chart 2. The Scope of Assessment

From chart 2, as it can be seen, there are three processes involved in the assessing process; testing, measuring, and evaluating. These three processes are having the same objective which is to describe students' competence, yet they are different in the terms of definition and concept.

Test refers to a device to reveal or tap students' competence to make it observable and manifest within their performance. In other words, it is used to expose non-observable things in the students' mind in which it deals with the students' abstract attribute that covers motivation, intelligence, and competence and make it observable in their performance. Hence, it can be said that their performance will be the indicator of their competence.

Meanwhile, Measurement deals with the process of characterizing certain object, in which in this case it relates to students' competence. In this matter, measurement refers to the process of using numbers to expose the characteristics of students' competence. However, the process of using numbers itself needs to be done carefully because numbers have different scale of measurement. There are four levels in scaling the number, namely; nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio.

On the other hand, Evaluation deals with the process of making judgment based on collected data. This particular process involves the following processes; (1) Testing. administering the test is the first step to evaluate students' competence by using test items; (2) Collecting. after that, collect all of the result of the test; (3) Synthesizing. Then, the collected data need to be synthesized by using certain formula; (4) Comparing. After synthesizing the data, the score need to be compared with the standard competence; and (5) Making judgment. The final process is to make necessary judgments based on the previous result which is making comparison between the score and the standard competence.

Thus, it can be said that assessment has significant role in teaching and learning process. Through its implementation, not only do the teachers will recognize how their teaching strategies work, but also how well the students comprehend all of the materials given by the teacher. Harmer says that (2007) it also implies that teaching is actually a complex work which sometime can be very rewarding to know the progress made by the students.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, language, seen as the mean of communication, is very complex and uniquely human being. Language has been considered as one of the most significant difference which differentiate human with non-human beings. Related to the origin of the language, some theories have been proposed through-out some years. One of the things that those theories have in common is that there is an innate capacity or some sort of mental device formed within human's mind which responsible for the production of language. For such matter, the study of language, known as Linguistics, has been vastly developed to discuss and explain how language and its aspects work within the interaction done by humans in daily basis. The complexity of the language itself and its effect within human interaction serves one the most important aspects in the teaching of language. Through some development of language teaching principles, the objective of the

language teaching has been to be able to use the language properly. The language teaching process itself is not only focusing on how teacher delivers the learning materials to the students, but also covers the assessment process which includes the process of testing, measuring, and evaluating students' language competence.

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