

The Urgency of First Language Acquisition in Three-Year-Olds

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ABSTRACT

Children learn to speak their native language through a process known as language acquisition. Instead of being subjected to the same conditioning as adults, children are born with the innate ability to pick up a new language as part of their natural development. The aim of this research is to understand the challenges involved in teaching children their first language and to gain insight into the process by which infants acquire this language through the development of its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components. Qualitative methods were used in this study to examine the first language acquisition of children aged 3 years. The participants in this study were a 3-year-old child and her biological mother. Interviews and observations of children and mothers were conducted to obtain the necessary data. The result is that children aged 3 years are found to have problems in syntactical, phonological, and pragmatic.

Keywords: Acquisition, Children, Language, Urgency.

INTRODUCTION

The native tongue is not explicitly taught to youngsters by their parents. Parents often struggle to bridge the gap between their advanced command of the English language and their infant's beginning "baby talk," despite their best intentions. There is no evidence to suggest that a child's ability to learn a language has any bearing on whether or not he or she eventually becomes a fluent speaker of the language spoken at home by the parents. The particular contextual conditions that enable language acquisition are not fully understood, but sufficient exposure to language usage in a social context seems to be the most important aspect. Like learning to walk, children quickly pick up on the nuances of a new language. They pick up on a vast vocabulary, intricate phonological and grammatical structures, rich semantic and pragmatic connections. According to Fromkin (1983:326), we do not come into the world until we're able to stand and walk, and at about the same age, typical youngsters start walking. They are not taught how to walk. Learning to

read or ride a bike is obviously different from learning to walk or learn a new language.

Children learn to speak their native language through a process known as language acquisition (Varshney, 2003:307). Instead of being subjected to the same conditioning as adults, children are born with the innate ability to pick up a new language as part of their natural development. Everyone has this ability. The youngster is born with a mechanism for picking up new languages. Language is acquired through social interaction and the development of a set of implicit linguistic assumptions, which the learner then refines until he reaches the adult model. As a result, the youngster keeps working on an intrinsic grammar based on broad principles.

There are many reasons why the capacity to learn a new language is so impressive (Langacker, 1973:12-13). That it is shared by all humans makes it the first. There are no examples of typically developing human children who, when given the opportunity, fail to learn their mother tongue. Amazingly, infants as young as two or three can begin to formulate complicated rules and build the grammars of both spoken and sign languages. Different countries' language learning processes shed light on fascinating aspects of the linguistic development of young children (Fromkin, 1983:341). This proves that a quick developmental leap by the youngster is impossible. Furthermore, there are universally recognized steps to learning a new language. They are the "cooing" stage, "babbling" stage, "holophrastic" stage, "two word" stage, and "telegraph" stage.

According to Fromkin (1983:326), infants do not suddenly have an adult level grasp of language or the "rules" of social and communicative interaction. We learn language in stages, with each new level bringing us closer to the grammar of the language we'll use as adults. The stages appear to be relatively comparable, if not universal, based on observations of youngsters from various linguistic regions of the world. There may be brief overlap between stages, but in general, it seems that transitions between stages occur suddenly. Problems with language development at any of the aforementioned ages are inevitable.

This study was motivated by the author's desire to understand the challenges involved in teaching children their first language and to gain insight into the process by which infants acquire this language through the development of its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components. Based on the background, the writer formulates the problems as follows: What are the children problems in first language acquisition at age 3 years old acquired by Talita Tan?

METHOD

Methodologically, this study makes use of a qualitative, descriptive technique. This study is descriptive since it seeks to understand the difficulties 3-year-old Talita Tan had with learning Bahasa Indonesia as a

first language. the study focus on Talita Tan, a surname, and her three-year-old offspring in the Medan, Ring road area. The writer utilizes a video recorder to capture the interview of Talita Tan with researcher and Talita Tan with his mother for this study. The author used an interview and a video recording of interaction between the researcher and the child to collect data for this study. The writer transcribes the audio recordings and conducts an analysis based on semantic, linguistic, and pragmatic principles. Then, they are included into how language learning is approached.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Finding

a. Syntactical Problem

This research found that Talita Tan at the age of 3 years old cannot uttered her first language properly according to her age. At the age of 3 years old, children should be able to utter a sentence-like. It can be seen in the data below:

Researcher : Siapa nama kamu?
Talita : Talita
Researcher : Talita apa?
Talita : Talita Tan
Researcher : Umurnya berapa?
Talita : Dua
Researcher : Ohh dua. Dua apa?
Talita : Tahun

It can be seen at the age of 3 years old the child cannot utter a sentence. She just uttered one or two word to answer the research question. At the age of 3 years old children should be able to utter a "sentence-like". However the child only answered the researcher question with one or two words. At the age of 3 years old children should be able to construct a basic syntax which consist of elliptical subject structure (\emptyset ellipsis) + V + O), for example like "mau beli jajan" in Friska and Syafi'i (2021). It is a sentence without the subject so it is not a complete sentence which is called as "sentence-like". However the subject in this research was not found construct the elliptical subject structure (\emptyset ellipsis) + V + O) which appear in 3 years old age children. She just uttered the one-two words.

b. Phonological Problem

Another problem found in Talita Tan first language acquisition is phonological error. Talita Tan was found changing the letter of word. It can be seen from the data below:

Mama : *Apanya beli lagi?*
Talita : *Gulang talita*

It can be seen from the data above that Talita mispronounced the word. The word should be “Gelang” but Talita said “Gulang”. She replaced the letter “e” into “u”.

c. Pragmatic Problem

Another problem found while Talita speaking is, she uttered the word that isn't match to the question that is being asked to her. It can be seen in the following data:

Mama : *siapa yang jatuhin*
Talita : *pecah*
Mama : *siapa yang pecahin*
Talita : *disitu*
Mama : *yang pecahin siapa?*
Talita : *ininya gelangnya*

It can be seen that the child answered her mother's question with wrong answer. There is problem in her understanding to the questions. Her mother asked about who broke the bracelet, but Talita answered with wrong answer, so the mother repeated the question by asking who is the person who broke the bracelet but Talita kept giving the wrong answer. It can be concluded that the pragmatic acquisition by Talita the 3 years old child have a problem. The problem is, she cannot understand her mother question and kept giving the wrong answer

2. Discussion

This research found that the child cannot utter the “sentence – like” which should be uttered. According to Fromkin (1983: 330) at the age of 30 months, the children begin to utter more than two words. The children begin to make a “sentence-like”. It is not a simple sentence but at least it seems like a sentence, sometimes there is no subject, only verb and object. But Talita Tan cannot utter even a single sentence-like. She answered the researcher and her mother questions with one or two words. This is important to the children to acquire their first language. First language must be acquired in the golden age which is at the age of 1-3 years old, so the children can get their first language.

The finding above is in the line with Marini, A., Eliseeva, N., & Fabbro, F. (2019). The researcher found that children who had more conversational turns with their caregivers had better language skills at age 3, compared to children who had fewer conversational turns. This finding highlights the importance of rich language input and interaction in supporting children's language development, and may be relevant to the

child in this research if she had limited opportunities for conversation and language stimulation.

However, the findings above are not in line with De Carvalho et al., (2021). Their research has shown that children as young as two years old can produce "sentence-like" utterances. This finding is in contrast to the idea that children's early language development is limited to single-word utterances. These utterances were found to be highly variable in their structure and content, reflecting the diversity of children's language experiences and the complex process of language acquisition. These findings have important implications for our understanding of early language development and the ways in which caregivers and educators can support children's language growth.

The subject found that she uttered the word with wrong letter. At the age of 3 years old, children should be able to utter the consonant like in Fromkin (1983: 329) a consonant sound are generally already within the child's range of speech production at this age. However Talita found mispronouncing the letter "e" become "u". The researcher found the subject cannot utter her first language suitable into the content. The subject found uttered the language incorrectly to the context. It can be seen from the data above that her mother asked her a questions repeatedly. But Talita not answered the question correctly.

The findings mentioned in the previous statement are consistent with a study conducted by researchers who investigated speech sound disorders in young children. The study found that a significant number of three-year-old children had difficulty producing certain sounds correctly, such as the sounds /r/, /f/, and /q/. Specifically, the children were observed to produce substitutions of /p/ for /f/, /ku/ for /q/ and /l/ for /r/. These errors were attributed to a number of factors, including developmental immaturity, limited exposure to certain sounds in their language environment, and cognitive or motor difficulties. The study's findings underscore the importance of early identification and intervention for speech sound disorders in young children, which can have significant impacts on their communication and social development. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for tailored interventions that address the specific sounds and patterns of errors observed in individual children, taking into account their unique developmental and linguistic profiles (Marpaung, 2022).

A study conducted by Al-Hamzi et al (2021) also revealed that 3-year-old children in Yemen experience difficulties with the production of certain vowels, resulting in frequent misspellings. Specifically, the study found that the sounds /k/, /m/, and /r/ were commonly substituted with /t/, /n/, and /l/, respectively. The researchers suggest that this pattern of errors may be attributed to the specific phonetic characteristics of the Yemeni dialect, as well as to the limited exposure to formal education and linguistic stimulation in early childhood. The study's findings highlight the

importance of considering the unique linguistic and cultural context of a child's language development when assessing and intervening for speech and language disorders. They also emphasize the need for culturally responsive interventions that take into account the child's background, as well as their individual needs and strengths, in order to promote effective communication and language development.

From the explanation above it can be concluded that it is urgent to child to gain her first language. Imagine she cannot speak properly at her age which she should speak. She will get problem to continuous to the next step while she cannot acquire the language which she should acquire at her age. It is important to children to get their first language at their golden age because at their golden age, they will acquire language easily. The way to acquire the first language by gets the children to have conversation to their parents. Parents have a big role for children to acquire their first language. The researcher has an opinion about the reason why the child cannot utter the language properly at her age. Perhaps it is because her parents do not ask her to speak with her, the parent speak rarely to their child.

CONCLUSION

All children have different development of their first language acquisition. However there are stages for children to acquire their first language. It is called as golden age. The golden age is among 1-3 years old. At that year, the children will easily gain their first language consciously or unconsciously from their parents. So the way children to get their first language, the parents should ask their children to have conversation so the children could gain the language. However in this research it is found that the children cannot utter the language which supposed to say at her age. That can be concluded that the child have a problem. The researcher thinks that her parents did not carry her to speak. Probably her parents is busy to talk to her. It is danger at her age if she do not acquire the language that she should be able to utter at her age.

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