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Language Acquisition In Children

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الآية القرآنية

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

﴿الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ﴾

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Dedication

To those I miss with all my heart...

To the example of dedication and sincerity... My beloved father

To those who gave my happiness and comfort to her happiness... My virtuous mother

To those who never skimped on helping me..... My brother Ali

To those who provided me with advice and guidance... My friend Yousif

To everyone who pray me good

I dedicate you this humble work.....

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Abstract

children in acquiring their first language at age 18 months old the process deals with some stages namely cooing, babbling, holophrastic, the twoword stage, telegraphic stage, and multiword stage the research depend on the related theories, they are Lyons (1981), Varshney (2003), Chomsky (2009), Bolinger (2002), Gleason (1998), Steinberg (2003), Fromkin (1983), Bolinger (2002) and Steinberg (2003). The ideal time for learning something is begun from the age of 2 or 3 years old, by the fact that children have had the ability to bear a meaning on any input that they catch. The learning process has been begun within the process of acquisition. Based on the related theories it is clear that the children acquire the language step by step based on the development of the brain. Children acquire language is just the same as adult in acquiring the language although there will be some constraints faced by adult concern with the first language because adult has had the strong basis of the first language just than children.

Chapter one

1.1 Introduction

In the language acquisition process, children learn to produce and comprehend speech. The process started since infants and then continues through some stages until the child can speak or produce a sentence even a complex sentence. Prior to uttering speech sounds, infants make a variety of sounds, crying, cooing, gurgling.

Infants everywhere seem to make the same variety of sounds, even children who are born deaf (Lenneberg, Rebelsky, & Nichols in Steinberg et. al : 2000). The ability and propensity to utter such sounds thus appear to be unlearned (Steinberg et. al : 2000). Furthermore, it is also influenced by not only innate factor but also environments.

According to Steven Pinker (2011), “Learning a first language is something every child does successfully, in a matter of a few years and without the need for formal lessons.” The process of language acquisition is done naturally since an infant is exposed to the language. Erika Hoff stated, “In the span of just a few years, newborn infants who neither speak nor understand any language become young children who comment, question, and express their ideas in the language of their community.”

This change does not occur all at once. Steinberg (2000) divides language learning into two psychological processes that are speech production and speech comprehension. The development of speech production is divided into three stages. The first stages from (1) vocalization to babbling to speech: vocalization to babbling, babbling to speech, explaining the acquisition order of consonants and vowels, (2) early speech stages: naming, holophrastic, telegraphic and morphemic, (3) later speech stages: rules formation for negatives, questions, relative clauses, passives, and other complex structures. Moreover, Piaget dan Vygotsky (2000) describes phonology acquisition in line with child’s age development.

In addition Parents do not teach the native language to their children formally. Although they may try to reinforce their child’s verbal behavior with smiles or other ways or through the gap between their mature linguistic competence and the child’s beginning by means of “baby talk”. But there is no particular reason to believe that such ability appears on the child’s final achievement in becoming a native speaker of his parents’ language; children can pick up a language like playing a game with other children to extend their language abilities.

The specific environmental factors that make it possible for language acquisition to occur, but the primary element would appear to be merely sufficient exposure to language use in a social context. Children seem to learn language the way they learn to walk. They learn thousands of words, complex phonological and grammatical structures, semantic and pragmatic relations. As Fromkin (1983:326) said that we do not enter the world before we are able to stand and walk, but all normal

children begin to do so at around the same age. No one teaches them to walk. Obviously “learning to walk” or learning language is different than “learning to read” or “learning to ride a bicycle.”

we know that it is impossible that the child passing suddenly from one stage to another.

In addition to that, as universal there are some stages in acquiring the native language. They are the cooing stage, the babbling stage, the holophrastic stage, the two word stage, and the telegraph stage.

As Fromkin states (1983:326) that children do not wake up one morning with a fully formed grammar in their heads or with all the “rules” of social and communicative intercourse. The language is acquired by the stages, and, it is suggested, every successive stage more closely near to the grammar of the adult language. Observations of children in different language areas of the world reveal that the stages are very similar, possibly universal.

Some of the stages may overlap for a short period, though the transition between stages has been observed to quite sudden.

In acquiring the language, there must be some problems to develop children language in every stage has mentioned above.. Practically, every parent is able to know the development of their children’s language acquisition.

This research paper is based on some theories such as:

Steinberg (2003), Bolinger (2002), Gleason (1985), Gleason and Ratner (1993), Lyons (1981), Linfors (1980), Chomsky (2009), Varshney (2003), Nunan (1999).

1.2 Language Acquisition

Language Acquisition is meant process whereby children achieve a fluent control of their native language (Varshney, 2003:307). Language acquisition is the way of human being in obtaining subconsciously his/her first language to produce speech. So, language acquisition usually refers to first language. The first language acquisition here is not only to the language s/he acquired in the past for the first time for the first language but it is to the language s/he acquired and acquires for the first time for any language.

What any language she acquires in the first time that is called as first language acquisition even though she has already had the primary first language. In the other words, she/he can acquire any language as his/her first or second or third language and so forth as long as the language is acquired for the first time. This is what we call as Language acquisition that refers to the first acquisition.

Language acquisition or first acquisition or first language acquisition or second language acquisition and so forth slowly develops and in this period, listening skill is faster than speaking skill (Krashen, 1982). The process of language acquisition is always the same and it has a natural order as one acquires his/her first language from fetus to adult.

Second language acquisition is just the same as first language acquisition.

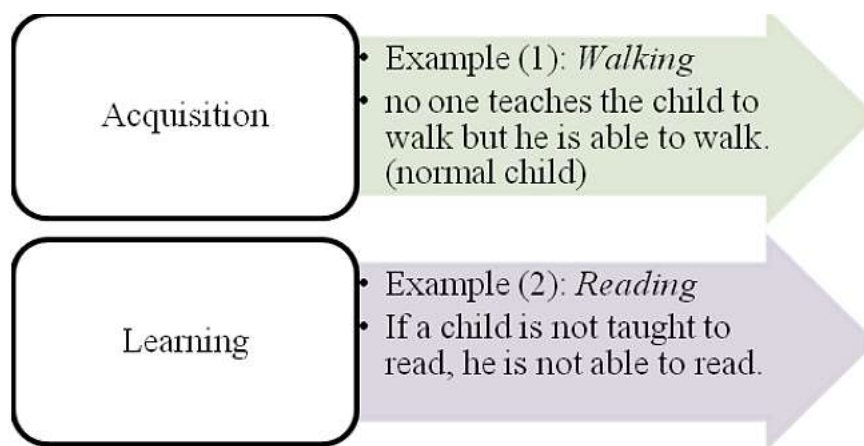
It is just the time and ages that are the difference between first and second and or third language acquisition as drawn in Conceptual Framework. Some theorists said that in obtaining any language, children tend to acquire language than adults do. In the other words that adults learn the language more than acquiring. But actually, Krashen can prove that "The acquisition-learning hypothesis claims, however, that adults also acquire, that the ability to "pick-up" languages does not disappear at puberty" (Krashen, 1982). Adults also can acquire language as the second language and they have the ability of it in gaining the success of their second language. The ability to get and understand the language is inherited genetically but the particular language that children speak is culturally and environmentally transmitted to them. Children all over the world acquire their first language without tutoring.

Language acquisition thus appears to be different in kind from the acquisition of other skill such as swimming, dancing, or gymnastics. Native language acquisition is much less likely to be affected by mental retardation than the acquisition of other intellectual skill activities. Every normal human child learns one or more language unless he is brought up in linguistic isolation, and learns the essentials of his language by a fairly little age, say by six.

According to Chomsky (2009:101-102) language acquisition is a matter of growth and maturation of relatively fixed capacities, under appropriate external conditions. The form of Acquisition and use of language the language that is

acquired is largely determined by internal factors; it is because of the fundamental correspondence of all human languages, because of the fact that “human beings are the same, wherever they may be”, that a child can learn any language. The functioning of the language capacity is, furthermore, optimal at a certain “critical period” of intellectual development. In addition to that, the term „language acquisition“ is normally used without qualification for the process which results in the knowledge of one’s native language (or native languages).

It is conceivable that the acquisition of a foreign language whether it is learned systematically at school or not, proceeds in a quite different way. Indeed, as we have seen, the acquisition of one’s native language after the alleged „critical age“ for language acquisition may differ, for neurophysiological reasons, from the normal child’s acquisition of his native language. (Lyons, 1981:252).



We know that walking is a process of acquisition. All children are able to walk without any instruction and tutoring or no one teaches them to walk.) Reading is a learning process because he/she is taught to read so that he/she is able to read. As we know many people all over the world are not able to read because they are not taught to do so.

1.3 Nature versus Nurture

The controversial between nature and nurture is explored by the ancient theories of language acquisition, that is, whether language is innate and God-given or learned by environment. Gleason (1998:376) states perhaps this is the major question that divides psycholinguistics. To what extent is language hardwired into human brain (nature), and to what extent is it learned through interaction with the environment (nurture)? Do parents teach children language, or does language simply unfold according to a genetic program? Varshney (2003:309-310) summarizes the difference between the empiricists' approach and rationalists in the following manner:

| Empirical or behavioral Approach | Rationalist or Mentalistic Approach |
|---|--|
| 1. Language acquisition is a result of experience. | Language acquisition is result of condition. |
| 2. Language acquisition is a stimulus-response process | Language acquisition is an innate, in-born process. |
| 3. Language is conditioned behavior. | Language is not a behavior like other behaviors but a species-specific and species-uniform mental process. |
| 4. Children learn language by imitation and analogy. | Children learn language by application. |
| 5. Language learning is practice based. | Language learning is rule based. |
| 6. Language learning is mechanical. | Language learning is analytic, generative and creative. |
| 7. Role of imitation, repetition, reinforcement, memory, motivation is very significant in language learning. | Role of exposure is very significant. |
| 8. Language acquisition is the result of nurture. | Language acquisition is the result of nature. |

Varshney (2003:309-310)

From the explanation of the table above, Varshney (2003:310) takes two points they are: (1) Language is a maturationally controlled behavior, and (2) child language is rule-governed, at every stage. Many types of behavior develop „naturally“ at a certain age, provided that the surrounding environment is adequate and teaching is available at the crucial time. Such behavior is maturationally controlled. Arguments as to whether it is inborn or learnt, are useless. Both nature and nurture, analogy and application, practice and exposure are important. Innate potentialities lay down the framework. Within this framework, there is wide variation depending on the environment. From the age of around eighteen months, human infants are in a state of „language readiness“. The urge for language in them at this time is very strong, and only very extraordinary circumstances can suppress it. A child brought up in complete linguistic isolation, will not acquire language. But all normal children and some abnormal ones begin to speak if they hear language going around them at this time.

According to Chomsky in Steinberg (2003:94), humans are born with minds that contain innate knowledge concerning a number of different areas. One such area or faculty of the mind concerns language.

Chomsky has called that innate language knowledge LAD, language acquisition device. It is Chomsky's belief that such faculties of the mind are relatively independent of one another. For example, he believes that innate knowledge alone is sufficient for the acquisition of language and that mathematical or logical knowledge is not needed. Actually, this is one basis for Chomsky's oft-repeated assertion that language acquisition is independent of intelligence and logic. It is important to note that knowledge which is innate is not functional or operational and it may not become so unless certain experiences stemming from the world interact with it.

Thus, experience is an essential element in the acquisition of knowledge. Its role, however, is not so much to form or shape knowledge as it is to activate the knowledge that is already innate but latent in the human being. The function of LAD (Language Acquisition Device) is to provide a person with a particular grammar (sets of rules and lexical items), given language data (sentences, in particular) of that language (Steinberg, 2003:95). For example, given English sentences as input; LAD constructs a grammar of English in the child's mind. In addition to that, Chomsky in Steinberg (2003:95) incorporates three classes of innate ideas into LAD, they are: substantive ideas, formal ideas, and constructive ideas. The substantive ideas are those ideas which appear in relations or are manipulated by operations, i.e. phonetic, syntactic, and semantic features. The formal ideas are those which express relations or manipulations, i.e. the Base and Transformation rule functions. The constructive, are those ideas which enable the mind to construct a particular grammar using the substantive and formal innate ideas, given particular language data as input.

Chapter two

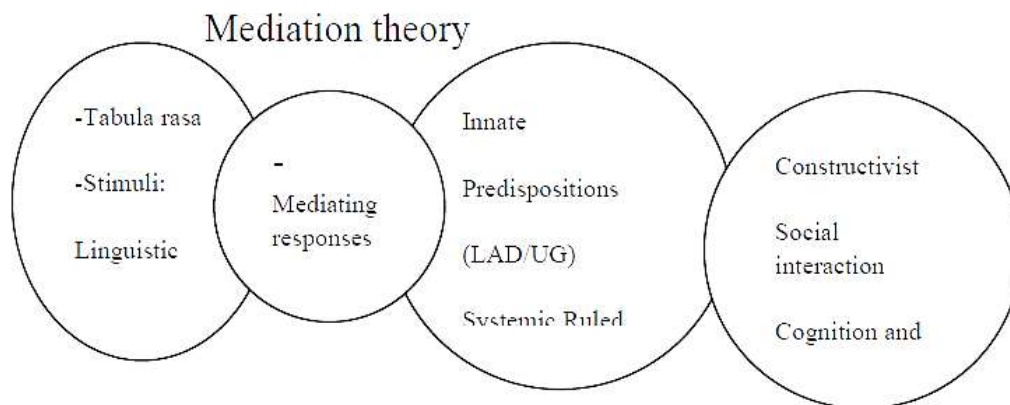
2.1 Theories Underlying First Language Acquisition

There are some different theories related to the language acquisition. Brown (2000:22) states that according to behaviouristic approach, children come into the world with a blank sheet of paper (tabula rasa), a clean state bearing no preconceived notions about the world or about language, and then children are shaped by their environment and slowly conditioned through various schedules of reinforcement. Meanwhile, constructivist makes not only the rationalist or cognitivist claim that children come into this world with very specific innate knowledge, predispositions, and biological timetables, but the children learn to function in a language chiefly through interaction and discourse. The following diagram shows three different approaches but complement each other: Behavioristic, Nativist, and Functional approaches.

Behaviorist

Nativist

Functional



2.2 Behavioristic Approach

Behaviorism is a psychological theory of learning which was very influential in the 1940s and 1950s, especially in the US. Skinner in Brown (2000: 22-23) states that language learning is a kind of behavior similar to other behaviors. Language is learnt in much the same way as anything else is learnt. It is believed that language learning is the result of imitation, practice, feedback on success, and habit formation. Children imitate the sounds and patterns which they hear around them and receive positive reinforcement for doing so.

Therefore, it is believed that imitation and practice become the major process in language development and positive reinforcement and corrections play a major role in language acquisition. Two important concepts are put forward in supporting this theory, such as stimulus (S), response (R)

S ———→ R

The term stimulus (S) refers to the reinforcement or the environment and response (R) refers to the activity resulting from behaviour changing. It is believed that stimulus such as reinforcement can produce response.

The stimulus can be in the form of language input.

When a child gets a language input from the environment, he will imitate it and continue to imitate and practice this input (sounds and patterns) until he forms “habits” of correct language use. Thus, learning in this case is seen as behaviour change through habit formation, conditioned by the presence of stimuli and strengthened through practices and selective reinforcement.

2.3 The Nativist Approach

The Nativist, also known as innatist, believes that language is not a behavior learned through imitation and conditioning as Chomsky and Miler (1957) in Chaer (2003: 169-170) states that children’s minds are not blank slates to be filled merely by imitating language they hear in the environment. Instead, he claims that children are born with special ability to discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system. Goh and Silver (2004: 19) also give emphasis that language is rule-based and generative in nature, processed and produced through complicated cognitive processes and mechanism. Children are equipped with L.A.D (Language Acquisition Devices). L.A.D is a series of syntactic universal, structural properties universally found in all languages. These syntactic structures are innate.

Another assumption of this approach is that language development follows

biological and chronological program. Just as normal children go through distinct and predictable phases of psychomotor development at different times during their early years, various grammatical features are acquired according to natural order or program. It is supported by Lenneberg (1967) who is popular with his Critical Period Hypothesis in which he argues that critical point for language acquisition occurs around puberty. Beyond this point, people who try to learn a language will not acquire it fully.

2.4 Functional Approach

The primary focus of the functional approach which is also popular as interactionist model is how language and cognitive development take place within key contexts of interaction. It means that language development goes along or is dependent on the cognitive development supported by the environment, i.e. contexts of interaction.

These contexts include care giving, play and joint adult child book reading where many communication routines occur. Such routines allow adults to provide a rich source of language input in meaningful communicative contexts. These inputs, of course contribute to the language development. Another contribution of adult – child interaction is that it provides opportunities for young children to use and experiment with language. Just like adults, children use language for particular communicative function, such as requests, refusals etc, for example, “Apa ini?” (What’s that), “cucu” asking for milk etc.

Since the language development is dependent on the child’s cognitive capacity and attempts and the quality of input, environment the child’s experience to live, thus, to enhance the acquisition of language attention to the quality of input is of a very great important.

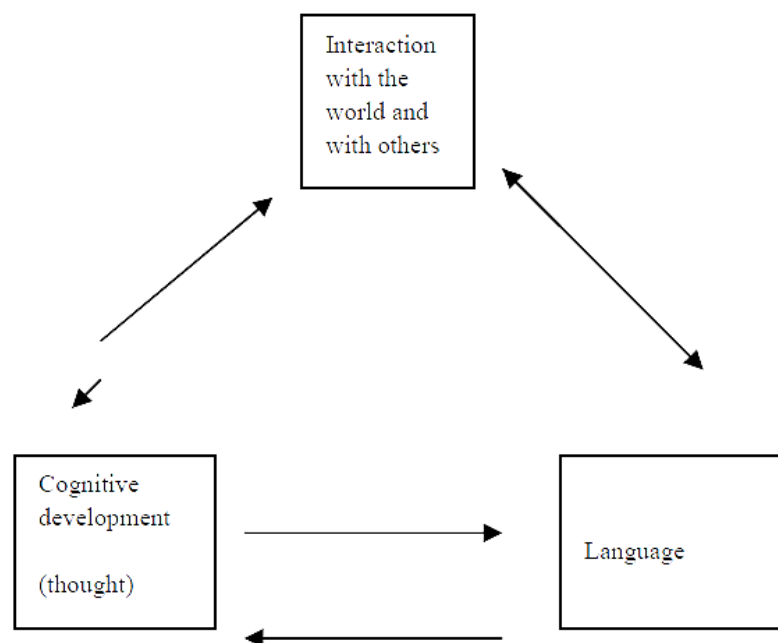
This idea is in line with Vygotskian view of cognitive and language in which it is stated that cultural and social environments and language learning are interrelated.

Children learn a language in social interactions and use it for social purposes. Secondly, cognition is also seen as closely related to language learning. Children’s cognition is developed through their interaction with their parents and other people. Adults use language to teach children about their world by talking to them about everyday routines, naming objects together and teaching them about appropriate behaviors.

However, the relationship between the cognition and the language learning gradually changes as the child grows older. Through language used by themselves and the people around them. Children learn to interpret new experiences which further develops their ability to think.

For example, children who have some control over their language will initiate questions so as to make sense of things they see or hear; they also enjoy listening to stories and talking about characters in the stories.

Therefore, by learning to use language, children in turn develop new ways of thinking about their experiences. The changing relationship between cognitive development and language can be shown in the following figure.



3.1 Cognitive Theory

Cognitive theorists believe that language is subordinate part of cognitive development, dependent on the attainment of various concepts (Gleason 1998:383). According to this view, children learn about the world first, and then map language onto that prior experience. Additionally, cognitive theorists believe that language is just one aspect of human cognition. According to Piaget and his followers in Gleason (1998:384), infants must learn about world around them, which they do through active experimentation and construction. For example, the infant crawls around the floor, observes object from all angles, and slowly develops a sensorimotor (literally, “through the senses and more activity”) understanding of the space in which she lives.

As Bolinger (2002:3) said that, acquiring a language calls for three things:

1. Predispositions, as well as physical capacities, developed through countless centuries of natural selection, People have capacities for communicating in a human way uniquely and capacities for acting such as breathing, grasping and crying.
2. A preexisting language system, any one of the many produced by the cultures of the world; Language persists through time and from speaker to speaker. We are not born with an instinct to learn language such as English, Indonesian or Chinese but we learn a language as members of the society, or we want to understand that society, or to be understood by that speech community. It means that if a language is not used in any society, it dies out.
3. A competence that comes from applying the predispositions and capacities to the system through the relatively long period during which the child learns both to manipulate the physical elements of the system, such as sounds and words and grammatical rules, and to permeate them with meaning:
A child must learn the rules before use the language creatively.

Language acquisition at age 1-3 years old occurs naturally. It is meant that a child is insensibly acquiring the language but the fact he/she can produce the language for communication.

The process of acquiring the language at the age before 5 years old is called as Golden age.

This period show the progress of language development from one stage to another.

3.2 Stages in First Language Acquisition

When human are born, he does not have suddenly the grammatical of his first language in his brain and completely with its rules. The native language is acquired through some stages, and every stage is passed near to adult's language. There are six stages in children's first language acquisition, namely:

0 – 6 months age old

Psycholinguist affirms that this stage is equal with paralinguistic.

At this stage, children are unable to produce the utterance. Children can communicate through crying, looking away, or smiling because of their inappropriateness articulator.

A child is able to breathe and drink which both may work together in order time. That is a primary function of someone's articulator provided by the nature. Besides, speaking is understood as secondary function of child's articulator provided by the nature which is completely acquired through learning process. But this process relies on sense of hearing: sound repetition produced by external factor (environment) then imitated by a child highly influenced toward their utterance production. Phonology acquisition at this prelinguistic stage can be occurred in some stages. Firstly, child speaks by shutting down the cleft in the larynx when breath out; child cries. Then he/she vibrates the cleft more calmly; this is called vowel.

Secondly, babbling by vibrating his/her mouth which is mostly closed when child produces the utterance; this stage is assumed as babbling, the child imitates the mother tongue in practicing of producing utterances.

Word can be produced by the child at the end of this paralinguistic stage. According to Bolinger (2002:283) pre-talking stage or cooing is the vowel-like sound responding to human sounds more definitely, turns head, eyes seem to search for speaker occasionally some chuckling sounds. For example, a child (at the age of 4 months) demonstrating the cooing stage of language acquisition. He is producing vowel-like sounds (especially, the back vowels [u] and [o]) in the sounds of "oh", "uh", and "ah", typical of "cooing". He still finds difficulties in producing the vowel sound [i] except when he is screaming in "hiii". Moreover in producing the consonant sounds like [b], [p], or [m], she is not able to produce them yet.

6 – 8 months age old or second babbling stage.

This age, a baby can produce more complicated and varied. Children produce the utterances by combining between vowel and consonant phonemes which is similarly with syllable, i.e. in Indonesian context: ma-ma-ma, ba-ba-ba, pa-pa-pa, da-da-da, etc.

These phonemes have the certain meaning and it may not be reused when the child can speak (producing word or phrase). Babbling is the sounds which infants produce as consonant-vowel combinations, Steinberg (2003:147). The sounds which are produced by infants but not all the speech sounds are same in language of the world such as [ma-ma-ma] or [da-da-da] and [ba-ba-ba] or [na-na-na]. Babbling is the sounds which infants produce as consonant-vowel combinations, Steinberg (2003:147). The sounds which are produced by infants but not all the speech sounds are same in languages of the world .

9 – 18 months age old

At this age, child begins and tries producing phonetic segments such as phoneme then producing word.

For example in Indonesian: utterance “bu” then “bubu” and finally this can be pronounced word “ibu”. Other example: “pa”, “empah” then a child may produce word “papa” or “bapak” which means father. At this stage a child has an initiative to communicate.

Children have their own way to create the interaction with adult. Besides, at this stage, children frequently used their gesture; like pointing the certain things. Fromkin (1983:328) defined holophrastic from holo “complete” or “undivided” plus phrase “phrase” or “sentence”. So holophrastic is the children’s first single word which represent to a sentence.

Children using one word to express particular emotional state. For example, Debby’s mother recorded the words she had pronounced during the 8 months after the appearance of her first word at 9 months (this was [adi], used both for her “daddy”) During the two weeks from 17 months - 17 months and a half, she more than doubled her vocabulary.

18-24 months

At this stage, children are able to pronounce two words or phrase. Two-word stage is the mini sentences with simple semantic relations.

As Fromkin (1983:329) states that children begin to form actual two-word sentences, with the relations between the two words showing definite syntactic and semantic relations and the intonation contour of the two words extending over the whole utterance rather than being separated by a pause between the two words. The following “dialogue” illustrates the kinds of patterns that are found in the children’s utterances at this stage. Basically, a child at this age is already able to produce the consonant sounds like [j], [p], [b], [d], [t], [m], and [n].

Telegraphic stage (24-30 months)

Telegraphic is merely a descriptive term because the child does not deliberately leave out the non-content words, as does an adult sending a telegram, Fromkin (1983:330). When the child begins to produce utterances that are longer than two words, these utterances appear to be “sentence-like”; they have hierarchical, constituent structures similar to the syntactic structures found in the sentences produced by adult grammar.

Later multiword stage (+30 months)

According to Bolinger (2002:283) at this stage is fastest increase in vocabulary with many new additions every day; no babbling at all; utterances have communicative intent. There is a great variation among children, seems to understand everything said within hearing and directed to them.

3.3 Children Language Development

Semantic is the study of the linguistic meaning of words, phrases, and sentences (Fromkin, 1983:164). Children's early utterances, consisting primarily of single words, were once considered to carry the meaning of whole sentences; they were labeled holophrastic.

It was though that children intended the more elaborate meanings of older individuals but non-semantic factors, such as their insufficient memory spans Gleason and Smith, in Gleason, (1985:152) states that this position was difficult to support because it required attributing intention and semantic knowledge to young children on the basis of a little evidence. It is now believed that young children come only gradually to understand and subsequently encode in their words of adult meanings. Gleason (1985:90) states that the processes of concepts learning and lexicalization, or attachment of words and meaning, may occur at varying rates and overlapping in time.

At times children's concepts might match those of adults, but the children might use imperfect and only partially appropriate words because they lack better words to express themselves.

To serve their communication desires, children may make a choice to use words in an analogous fashion or as semantic standing for the words they do not know. And then, Nelson et al. in Gleason (1985:90) have suggested that young children are actively engaged in the "classification and of features of objects and events" and use their single words analogically to comment upon similarities they have noticed. Additional evidence that children are using analogy comes from the fact that they are seldom observed to use words in this fashion until they acquire syntax and can explain what they mean. As Jakobson in Fromkin (1983:163) said that "language without meaning is meaningless".

Conclusion

Children language acquisition is the important process in the children language development. Parents and environment take an important part in this language development. In accepting acquiring language, the child takes time to identify the word to several times the listening process. While the words that usually fall into the category of rapid language acquisition are words which are directly related to the daily routine, the main requirement of everyday life, and nouns such as people who are constantly interacting with the child. Children acquire language step by step based on the development of the brain and the case of learning as well. In acquiring language, children do not have any constraint deal with first language interference. Children tend to just listen to and then imitate, try to utter, repeat over and over again, and need a positive reinforcement which is without any instruction or switching into the dominant language. In fact, it is needed for children who live in the context of EFL and ESL.

Children acquire language subconsciously when they have not already had the capability in understanding the situation, self, and beliefs and consciously based on the level of age and they acquire language consciously when they have already had them.

Children learn the language by using instructional reinforcement. Children need confirmation in order to get reinforcement in learning process. The best time for children to learn language is at up to two or three years old. The more words that are directly visible or concrete by the child so quickly he will be an additional acquisition of language can be stored in the organs of the brain form long-term memory that can be used at any time of the child to interact with the opposite of play.

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