

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN BAHASA INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY ON 4.2 AND 1.8-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

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Abstract

This study aims at tracing the first language acquisition of two children at age of 4.2 and 1.8. This study is conducted based on naturalistic observations. The method used is the descriptive qualitative method. The observation is carried out by recording the activity of the subjects (Octa – 4.2 years old, and her sister, Adek – 1.8 years old) using a camcorder and also making hand writing. The recording consists of natural and spontaneous conversation among the two children and their father. The result of the study presents that a 4.2-year-old child seems to be able to use sentences having grammatical features corresponding to adult language and master declarative, negative, imperative, interrogative sentences, but the type of the clauses used is limited to the simple sentences. An 1.8-year-old child seems to be able to use single words to express idea but utters some words imperfectly. She omits a first consonants such as /h/, or even vowel of a particular word; reduplicate syllables; and substitute consonants /c/ with /t/, consonant /s/ with consonant /h/. It is not expected that an one year, eight months to be able to accurately produce the /r/ sound because it may be pronounced /l/.

Keywords: language acquisition, case studym, children at age of 4.2 and 1.8.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan melacak akuisisi bahasa pertama dari dua anak pada usia 4,2 dan 1,8. Penelitian ini dilakukan berdasarkan pengamatan naturalistik. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif deskriptif. Observasi dilakukan dengan merekam aktivitas subjek (Okta - 4,2 tahun, dan saudara perempuannya, Adek - 1,8 tahun) menggunakan camcorder dan juga membuat tulisan tangan. Rekaman itu terdiri dari percakapan alami dan spontan di antara dua anak dan ayah mereka. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa anak yang berusia 4,2 tahun tampaknya dapat menggunakan kalimat yang memiliki fitur gramatikal yang sesuai dengan bahasa dewasa dan kalimat deklaratif, negatif, imperatif, interogatif, tetapi jenis klausa yang digunakan terbatas pada kalimat sederhana. Seorang anak berusia 1,8 tahun tampaknya mampu menggunakan kata-kata tunggal untuk mengekspresikan ide tetapi mengucapkan beberapa kata dengan tidak sempurna. Dia menghilangkan konsonan pertama seperti / h /, atau bahkan vokal kata tertentu; reduplicate suku kata; dan konsonan pengganti / c / dengan / t /, konsonan / s / dengan konsonan / h /. Tidak diharapkan bahwa satu tahun, delapan bulan untuk dapat secara akurat menghasilkan / r / suara karena dapat diucapkan / l /.

Kata kunci: akuisisi bahasa, studi kasus, anak pada usia 4,2 dan 1,8.

1. INTRODUCTION

Like adults, children are also able to share meanings using language. How a child acquires language has been one of the topics in cognitive science. It is termed as first language acquisition. First language acquisition itself is defined as the process through which a native language is acquired. The process focuses on meanings rather than rules, but during the process, the rules of language may also be acquired. The language that a child produces at each stage of development includes grammar aspects that naturally acquired.

Gas & Selinker (2008:31) say that learning a first language is an amazing accomplishment. It is a learning task perhaps like no other. At the onset of the language-learning odyssey, a child has much to determine about the language that she or he hears. At the end of the journey, every child who is not cognitively impaired has an intact linguistic system that allows him or her to interact with others and to express his or her needs. Moreover, they (2008:31) argue that language is a form of communication, but children communicate long before they have language—at least in the way we normally think of language. There is a process by which a child acquires a language as Fromkin, et al

wake up one morning with a fully formed grammar in their heads. In moving from first words to adult competence children pass through linguistic stages.

Rowland (2014:1) argues “How do children do this? How do children acquire language? The short answer is we do not know. We are not even close to an answer”. There is no standard a child must meet in acquiring first language because a child acquires first language without studying it in a formal lesson. First language acquisition happens naturally, and it still cannot be concluded how quickly a child acquires his/her first language.

A child is blessed with the ability to acquire language. A child acquires the language in the context of the surrounding world. Adults speak to a child by simplifying the language to the level of his/her understanding. There is no pressure to learn as the process of acquiring the language is not sequenced by both vocabulary and grammar explicitly like in a formal class.

Johnston (2010:11) explains that in a matter of months, and without explicit teaching, toddlers move from hesitant single words to fluent sentences, and from a small vocabulary to one that is growing by six new

words a day. Also, some studies show agree that a child begins to produce language by sounds cries and noises. Even the acquisition happens naturally, parents' role and environment involve in the process of the acquisition as Hutaeruk (2015) finds out that there are nine problems in first language acquisition namely grammatical errors, phonological errors, incorrective utterances, imitation, repetition, correction, indicating the question, learning by experience, laziness. Meniado (2016) also agree with this. His case study of a three-year- old Lebanese child results Observations and interviews with his parents confirm that the child also acquired language through imitation, correction, reinforcement, analogy, and structured input.

To find out how children acquire language, it is necessary to look at how children use language. Related to this, this study deals with language acquisition in bahasa Indonesia of a four and two years-old- children; a case study on Octa Hutabarat and Adek Hutabarat.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Acquisition and Learning

The term acquisition more often refers to the children's mastery of a first language. It is opposed to the adult's mastery of a second language. Hence, acquisition is distinguishable

from learning. In the former term there is a subconscious and effortless process of linguistic knowledge. In contrast, learning is differentiated as a more conscious and explicitly sequenced process of 'accumulating knowledge of linguistic features such as vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar, typically in an institutional setting' (Yule, 1985:163) cited in Castello (2015:4).

The term learning includes longer process than acquisition as Meisel (2011:7) states "Returning to our point of departure, we can sum up by saying that second language research suffered longer than first language research from its behaviourist heritage".

Learning here means that the language is learnt not acquired naturally. There is no process of explicit learning in acquiring the first language as in the others regardless of whether it is the second, or third language which must be acquired after the first language.

2.2 Developmental Stages of Language

Acquisition

The process by which a child get the first language is predictable. Ortega (2013:3) states that acquisition happens in a predictable pattern, broadly speaking. This is supported by the statement of Clark (2003:25) who also argues that children go from babbling at seven

to ten months old, to producing their first recognizable words six to twelve months later. Then within a few months, they combine words and gesture, and produce their first word combination around age two. Similarly, Fromkin, et al (2014: 398) also state that children begin by babbling, they then acquire their first-words, and in just a few months they begin to put words together into sentences.

2.3 Sound

Cries and noises are the first sounds infants produce. According to Ortega (2013:3) between the womb and the few first months of life, infants attune themselves to the prosodic and phonological makeup of the language to which they are exposed and they also learn the dynamics of turn taking.

2.4 Babbling

Babbling illustrates the readiness of the human mind to respond to linguistic input from a very early stage Fromkin, et al (2014: 400). Babbling occurs around six months. It is internally driven. Lust (2006:154) argues that infant babbling reflect neither simple”motoric play” nor simple biological maturation alone, but a continuous mapping to the phonology of the language being acquired, whether the phonology is expressed orally or visually (sign language).

2.5 First Word

A child begins to utter one-word at age of one. This word is used to express complex idea. This stage is termed as the holophrastic because these one-word utterances seem to convey the meaning of an entire sentence (Fromkin et al, 2014:401). On the other hand, two-word utterances occurs during the second year.

2.6 Sentence

The third-year onward of life is characterized by using sentences having grammatical aspects corresponding to adult language. Fromkin, et al (2017:2) state that five-year-old children are nearly as proficient at speaking and understanding as their parents. Yet, the ability to carry out the simplest conversation requires profound knowledge that most speakers are unaware of.

III. METHODOLOGY

To get the data, the writer applied descriptive qualitative method. The writer did the observation by recording the activity of the subjects (Octa – 4.2 and her sister, Adek – 1.8) by using a camcorder and also made hand writing.

IV. I FINDING

4.1 Declarative Sentences

Declarative sentences, which are used by Octa to give information, presented in the following table:

Item	Indonesian	English
A	Eh, ininya. Bah dikit kali hehehehe.	Eh, here it is. Oh, too little. Hehehehe.
B	Ah, gigi busuk.	Ah, bad teeth.
C	Bapak boru Nainggolan	Your surname is Nainggolan.
D	Bapak! Bapak....bap ak...bapak. Uda sakit kakiku. Kan ada bantal.	Daddy! Daddy...daddy ...daddy. My legs has already hurt. There's a pillow. Right!
E	Dek, pegangin ini kakak.	Dek, I hold this.
F	Kau gak ikut. Kau sana!	Don't join. Go far!
G	Kau sana!	Go far!

The data given indicates that Octa has mastered simple declarative sentences quite fairly well.

4.2 Imperative Sentences

An imperative sentence gives a command. Octa uses imperative sentence^{4s.3}to express her need or ask someone to do something.

Item	Indonesian	English
A	Heppy yeyelah...	How about Happy ye..ye...ye
B	Bapa Abraham, uda.	Bapa Abraham, uncle.
C	Tunggu dulu	Wait, I will take

	kuambil bantal	a pillow.
D	Udahlah, pak. Kan ada bantal	It's enough, dad. There's a pillow.
E	Harus mau!	You must!
F	Turun ,dek! Turun, dek!	Go down, dek! Go down, dek!
G	Kau gak ikut!	Don't join!
H	Kau sana!	Go far!
I	Tunggu boboklah adek baru. Bapak.. iya..	Let Adek sleep first. Daddy..Ok..
J	Makana baliklah bapak.	So, sprawl please!
K	Tunggu bobok adek.	Let adek sleep first.
L	Tengok dek..dek...dek.. Adek! Tengok kakak dek. Tengok kakak, dek. Jinggel bles-jinggel bles Lonceng berbunyi. Soraklah.. soraklah.	Look at me dek..dek...dek.. Adek! Look at me! Jinggel bles-jinggel bles Lonceng berbunyi. Soraklah..sorakl ah.

From the data given above, it is seen that Octa is able to use various kinds of imperative sentences.

- 1) In (A, B, C, D, I, J, K), she uses a request sentences.
- 2) In (E, F, H, L), she uses positive imperative sentences.
- 3) In (G), she uses a negative imperative sentence.

Negative Sentences

A *negative sentence* states that something is not true or incorrect. Octa uses negative sentences to make sure that it is not true, or refuse something.

Item	Indonesian	English
A	Gak bisa, uda.	I can't, uncle.
A	Mana bantal ini..!!!	No.. they aren't pillows.
B	Gak usahlah. Gak maulah	No. Don't do that. You have

6. Assimilations

Assimilation refers to the effect of sounds on those preceding or following them within a word or across word-boundaries. The commonest assimilation in young children's productions is probably reduplication.

Item	Speech Production	Intended Words	English Translation
A	dingdiding	dinding	wall

The word “dingdiding” is categorized as assimilation in which Adek repeats to pronounce “di” in the middle of the word.

7. Omissions

There is a finding that is categorized as omissions, as shown in following table:

Item	Speech Production	Intended Words	English Translation
A	Aluya	Haleluya	hallelujah

Adek omits the first consonant /h/, vowel /e/ and consonant /l/ that occur in the middle of the word.

IV.2 DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that a 4.2-year-old child seems to be able to use sentences having grammatical features corresponding to adult language. There is no babbling found. Clark (2003:16) claims that holophrastic period is followed by the production of ever more complex, adultlike utterances, as they become active participants in conversation, taking turns and making appropriate contribution. The adultlike utterances are seen from the declarative,

	kakaknya. Tunggu besar kau.	to grow up first.
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- 1) The word “gak” in (A) indicates “not” to express her inability.
- 2) The word “mana” in (B) indicates “not” to tell that her legs are not pillows.
- 3) The word “gak” in (C) seems to indicate rejection.

4. Interrogative Sentences

Sentences that ask a question are called interrogative sentences. Octa has a curiosity to know something around her.

Item	Indonesian	English
A	Uda, apa itu uda.??	What's that, uncle?
B	Apa lagi.???	What else?

The sentence in (A) with words “apa” to ask what something is and sentence in (B) to ask what to do next.

5. Substitutions.

Adek is Octa's sister. She is one year eight months (1;8). There are some findings that are categorized as substitutions. They are shown in the following table:

Item	Speech Production	Intended Words	English Translation
A	titak	cicak	lizard
B	tiam	diam	silently
C	holak	sorak	Cheer up

- 1) In (A) Adek compensates her inability to voice /c/ by using /t/.
- 2) In (B) Adek compensates her inability to voice /d/ by using /t/.
- 3) In (C) Adek compensates her inability to voice /s/ and /r/ by using /h/ and /l/.

negative, imperative, interrogative sentences Octa produces but the type of the clauses that she uses is limited to the simple sentences.

The findings also show that a 4.2-year-old child is able to use single words to express complex idea but her pronunciation is not exactly correct. This may happen as Fromkin et al (2014:401) say that the child's first words may differ from the words of the adult language. Gas & Selinker (2008:34) gives examples the difference between the consonants in [ta] and [da]). The common different pronunciation is substitution as Adek (1.8) does in which she substitutes consonants /c/ with /t/, consonant /s/ with consonant /h/, and consonant /r/ with consonant /l/.

Reduplication also makes the different pronunciation in which speech production is different from intended word, such as "dinding" is pronounced /dingdiding/. This imperfect pronunciation occurs as Adek repeats /di/. She also imperfectly pronounces the first three syllables "din" as /ding/.

There is also some simplifications. Adek deletes sound for the first consonant /h/, vowel /e/ and consonant /l/ that occur in the middle of the word.

V. CONCLUSION

There are some conclusions drawn from the study.

- 1) A 4.2-year-old child seems to be able to use sentences having grammatical features corresponding to adult language.
- 2) A 4.2-year-old child has mastered declarative, negative, imperative,

interrogative sentences, but the type of the clauses that they use is limited to the simple sentences.

- 3) A 1.8-year-old child seems to be able to use single words to express complex idea but the pronunciation produced may be different from an adult's pronunciation.
- 4) A 1.8-year-old child may omit a first consonants such as /h/, or even vowel of a particular word; reduplicate syllables; and substitute consonants /c/ with /t/, consonant /s/ with consonant /h/, and would not be expected to be able to accurately produce the /r/ sound because it may be pronounced /l/.

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