

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROCESS OF A FOUR-YEAR CHILD

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The research aimed to examine the first language acquisition of a four-year-old child from a phonological, morphological, and semantic perspective. This study used descriptive qualitative research, and the subject and object were taken from a 4-year-old child. Indeed Sheza Kanaya was the subject chosen by the researchers, and they collected the data by observing her and recording her. The analysis led the researchers to the conclusion that Sheza had appropriate communication skills. For a child to develop language, parents play a crucial role. To understand their child's language development, parents should establish interactions with their kids. In addition, the researchers advise parents to teach their kids the proper pronunciation.

1. INTRODUCTION

For several decades, the age factor has been a source of contention in second language acquisition research. Researchers have investigated various questions, such as how young and older learners differ in the language learning process, which instructions are most beneficial for specific age groups, which age group of learners has the greatest success, and so on (Aydin & Ozfidan, 2014; Aydin & Koc, 2012; Spinner & Gass, 2019). The literature contains studies on the age factor that take into account the age of students, the learning environment, and exposure to the target language. Following a brief review of the factors that can influence second language acquisition, such as motivation, cognition, experience, and native language, the study considers the Critical Period Hypothesis (CHP), which is based on brain structure and neurological changes (Vygotsky, 1962). These distinguishing characteristics contribute to the gap in language achievement between prepubescent and pubescent learners. CHP supporters believe that after puberty, it is impossible to achieve native-like pronunciation. However, recent numeral inconsistencies have occurred (Hyland, 2019; Ugurlu & Ozfidan, 2015).

Children learn to produce and comprehend speech as part of the language acquisition process. The process began with infants and continues through various stages until the child is able to speak or produce a sentence, even a complex sentence. Infants make a variety of sounds before uttering speech sounds, including crying, cooing, and gurgling. Infants everywhere appear to make the same range of sounds, including deaf children (Lenneberg, Reblsky, & Nichols in Steinberg et al: 2000). Thus, the ability and proclivity to produce such sounds appear to be unlearned (Steinberg et al: 2000). Furthermore, it is influenced not only by innate factors but also by environmental factors.

As Steven Pinker (2011) points out, "Learning a first language is something every child does successfully, in a matter of a few years and without the need for formal lessons." Language acquisition occurs naturally when an infant is exposed to the language. As Erika Hoff pointed out, "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 transformation does not happen overnight.

Before they learn a second language, children experience a complex process of learning a new language. According to Chaer (2015), a child's brain goes through a process known as language acquisition when he learns his mother tongue or first language. A person acquires their first language throughout several stages, with each one coming closer to having adult-level grammar. First language acquisition, also known as the mother tongue, is a creative process in which children learn language rules based on the input they receive from the most basic to the most complex forms.

If children learn a language during the ideal or "golden period," which lasts from 6 to 15 years old, they will master it more quickly. The critical age is between 0 and 6 years old, according to



Fromkin (2010). In the first year of life, every healthy child's mind begins to develop, and this process continues until the child is about five years old. The competency process and the performance process both take place as a child learns his first language. Competence is the unnoticed process of mastering grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics). The achievement of a performance process that includes the processes of understanding and producing utterances becomes contingent upon this competency process.

Literature Review

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition refers to the process by which children gain fluency in their native language (Varshney, 2003:307). The ability to learn and understand a language is inherited genetically, but the language that children speak is culturally and environmentally transmitted to them. Without the assistance of a tutor, children all over the world learn their first language. Whereas one child is exposed to an English-speaking community and learns to speak English fluently, the other is exposed to an Indonesian-speaking community and learns to speak Indonesia fluently. Native language acquisition is much less likely to be affected by mental retardation than other intellectual skill activities. Unless raised in linguistic isolation, every normal human child learns one or more languages and masters the fundamentals of his language by the age of six.

Chomsky (2009:101-102) defines language acquisition as the growth and maturation of relatively fixed capacities under appropriate external conditions. The form of language acquisition and use The language that is acquired is largely determined by internal factors; it is because of the fundamental correspondence of all human languages, because "human beings are the same, wherever they may be," that a child can learn any language. Furthermore, the functioning of the language capacity is optimal during a specific "critical period" of intellectual development. The term "language acquisition" is commonly used without qualification for the process that results in knowledge of one's native language(s). It is possible that learning a foreign language, whether systematically taught in school or not, takes a very different path. Indeed, as we have seen, acquisition of one's native language after the alleged "critical age" for language acquisition may differ from normal child acquisition of his native language for neurophysiological reasons (Lyons, 1981:252).

Language Acquisition Theories

There are several theories concerning language acquisition. According to Brown (2000:22), children enter the world with a blank sheet of paper (tabula rasa), a clean state with no preconceived notions about the world or language, and are then shaped by their environment and gradually conditioned through various reinforcement schedules. Meanwhile, constructivists argue that children do not come into this world with very specific innate knowledge, predispositions, and biological timetables, but that they learn to function in a language primarily through interaction and discourse. The diagram below depicts three distinct but complementary approaches: behavioural, nativist, and functional.

Behaviorist Nativist Functional

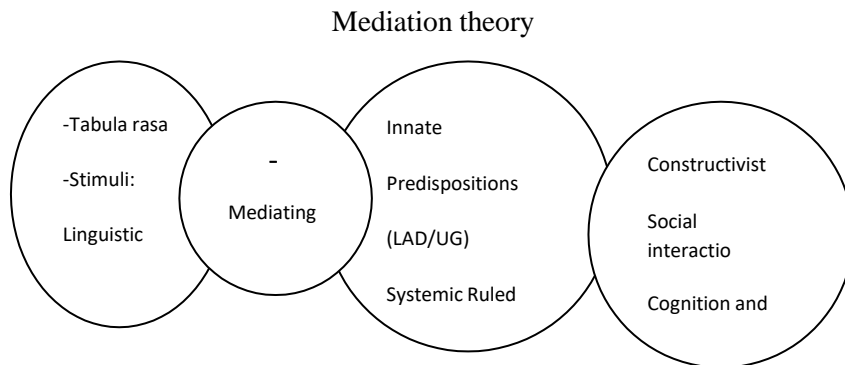


Figure 1 The different Approaches of Behaviorist, Nativist and Functional



Nativism Hypothesis

This hypothesis is based on the observation made by Lenneberg and Chomsky in Otto (2015). The findings of the observations are further explained as follows: (a) Every normal child exactly picks up his or her mother tongue if their mother introduces it and if they are not separated from their mother. (b) There is no connection between a child's language development and cognitive development. It implies that all kids can learn their mother tongue eventually, smart or not. (c) Children occasionally use incomplete, grammatically incorrect, or number-oriented sentences. (d) Animals cannot learn the language. In other words, only humans possess it. (e) Despite the fact that it depends on the development of children's maturity, the stages of language acquisition are gradually the same. (f) Despite the complexity of language structure, children can fully master it in just three to four years. It can be inferred from the observations made above that a new born baby has a tool that can facilitate quick and easy language learning.

This theory is regarded as the one that best describes how people learn languages. It is thought that humans possess a remarkable tool or device that enables them to produce or pick up language quickly and easily. According to this theory, everyone has it. It is referred to as a LAD (Language Acquisition Device) by Miller and Chomsky in Otto (2015). They claim that every child has LAD from the moment of birth. LAD is an intellectual conscience tool for quickly and easily learning the mother tongue. Language skills like phonology, syntax, and semantics are the result. When LAD is given a particular language, such as Javanese, Arabic, English, or Indonesian, LAD operates in that manner. The output of LAD will then take the form of a particular rule grammar.

Behaviourism Theory

It is also known as the tabula rasa hypothesis. It refers to a blank sheet of paper that symbolizes a new born baby's brain. The brain of a newborn is like a blank piece of paper that will later be filled with experiences and knowledge about lingual phenomena. John Locke, a prominent figure in empirics, made this hypothesis. Then it was widely disseminated by John Watson, a well-known proponent of behaviourism in psychology. According to experts, infants "learn oral language from other human role models through a process that involves imitation, rewards, and practice." In an infant's environment, human role models offer the stimuli and rewards, according to Otto (2015).

Cognitivism Theory

Jean Piaget proposes the cognitivist theory. In fact, Piaget used this hypothesis as a foundation to explain how children pick up language. Piaget did not specifically develop the theory of young children's language development. He believes that the development of language is a normal part of cognitive growth. Piaget, however, limited his research to this widespread problem. He only presents a cognitivist hypothesis that takes language into account. Piaget's viewpoint has been widened, though, by his supporters in Geneva. The theory of language acquisition in the context of cognitivist theory was developed by Chaer (2015). This theory holds that language acquisition is based on structure. Children learn these structures by interacting with their surroundings. According to the cognitivist hypothesis, deep and surface structures of language are primarily governed by universal grammar, which is a cognitive, mental process (Green, 2016).

First Language Acquisition Stages

When a human is born, he does not have the grammatical rules of his first language imprinted in his brain. The native language is learned in stages, and each stage is closer to adult language. Each stage of learning one's native tongue is completed near the level of one's adult language. There are six stages in a child's first language acquisition, which are as follows:

1. Pre-talking Stage/Cooing (0-6 months)

The pre-talking stage, or cooing, is described by Bolinger in Bertharia (2015) as the vowel-like sound responding to human sounds more definitely, turning head and occasionally making chuckling sounds. For instance, Miles (who is 4 months old) is displaying the cooing stage of language development. He is making "cooing" sounds like "oh," "uh," and "ah," which are vowel-like sounds, particularly the back vowels [u] and [o]. He still has trouble making the vowel sound [i], with the exception of when he screams "hii." Additionally, she is still unable to



- produce consonant sounds like [b], [p], or [m].
2. Babbling Stage (6-8 months)
According to Steinberg in Bertharia (2015), babbling refers to the consonant-vowel combinations that infants make when speaking. Infants make a variety of speech sounds, but not all of them are the same as those used in other languages, such as [ma-ma-ma] or [da-da-da] and [ba-ba-ba] or [na-na-na].
 3. Holophrastic Stage (9-18 months)
Holophrastic is defined by Fromkin in Bertharia (2015) as holo "complete" or "undivided" plus phrase "phrase" or "sentence". The children's first single word to represent a sentence is thus holophrastic. Children only need one word to convey a specific emotion. For instance, Debby's mother kept a list of the words Debby had said in the eight months following the utterance of her first word at nine months old [adj], which she also used to refer to her "daddy"). She increased her vocabulary by more than a factor of two in the two weeks between 17 months and 17 and a half.
 4. The two-world Stage (18-24 months)
The two-word stage consists of short sentences with straightforward semantic relationships. Children start to construct true two-word sentences, according to Fromkin in Bertharia (2015), where the relationships between the two words exhibit clear syntactic and semantic relationships and the intonation contour of the two words extends over the entire utterance rather than being separated by a pause between the two words. The "dialogue" that follows demonstrates the types of patterns present in the children's utterances at this stage. Basically, a child at this age is already capable of producing the consonant sounds [j], [p], [b], [d], [t], [m], and [n].
 5. Telegraphic Stage (24-30 months)
Because a child does not purposefully omit the words with no content, unlike an adult sending a telegram, the term "telegraphic" is merely descriptive (Fromkin in Bertharia, 2015). When the child starts to make utterances longer than two words, these utterances appear to be "sentence-like"; they have hierarchical constituent structures akin to the syntactic structures found in the sentences produced by adult grammar.
 6. Later multiword Stage (30+ months)
This later multiword stage, according to Bolinger in Bertharia (2015), has the fastest increase in vocabulary, with many new words added every day; there is no babbling at all; and utterances have a communicative intent. Children's apparent comprehension of everything said to them and within hearing distance varies greatly.

Children's Language Development

The study of the linguistic meaning of words, phrases, and sentences is known as semantics (Fromkin, 1983:164). Children's early utterances, which were mostly single words, were once thought to have the meaning of whole sentences; they were labeled holophrastic. It was thought that children intended the more elaborate meanings of older people, but non-semantic factors, such as their short memory spans, played a role. According to Gleasonfield and Smith in Gleason (1985:152), this position was difficult to support because it required attributing intention and semantic knowledge to young children based on scant evidence. It is now thought that young children gradually understand and then encode adult meanings in their words.

According to Gleason (1985:90), the processes of concept learning and lexicalization, or the attachment of words and meaning, can happen at different rates and overlap in time. Children's concepts can sometimes match those of adults, but they may use imperfect and only partially appropriate words because they lack better words to express themselves. Children may choose to use words in an analogous manner or as semantic standing for words they do not know to serve their communication needs. Then, Nelson and Gleason (1985:90) proposed that young children are actively engaged in the "classification and of features of objects and events" and use their single words analogically to comment on similarities they have noticed. Additional evidence that children are using

analogy comes from the fact that they are rarely observed to use words in this fashion frequently they acquire syntax and can explain what they mean. As Jakobson stated in Fromkin (1983:163), language without meaning is meaningless.

The Language Mechanism

Early childhood is defined as children who are under the age of five and who still require stimulation and direction from their environment to learn new things. At this age, they can be referred to as being in the linguistics period (Meniado, 2016). Since language is active at all stages of a child's acquisition, their environments play a crucial role in determining how much they know about morphemes and syntax. Acquisition It is generally accepted that there are three mechanisms involved in language acquisition.

These are how they are presented: (1) Imitation, imitating, or copying: Children are more likely to imitate what they see and experience in their environment, so parents and the surrounding circumstances are crucial. (2) Conditioning: Using this mechanism, children become more accustomed to their surroundings, allowing them to become more aware of what is going on around them. An example of this would be the introduction of the sound of a master's voice to the sound of an object's meaning through the mechanism's habituation to speech heard by children and associated with things or events. As a result, a noun makes up the bulk of children's early vocabulary. (3) Social Cognition. In this situation, social cognition is closely related to the imitation process because children learn language through directed actions or meaningful words. The semantic cognition process is already in operation because the child has understood what the person of interest has been saying.

As a result, the researchers are very interested in writing this study in order to identify the issues and examine how children acquire their first language using linguistic features like phonology, morphology, and semantics. According to phonology, morphology, and semantic factors, how can Sheza learn her first language is how the researchers frame the research question.

2. METHOD

A descriptive qualitative methodology was used for this study. Sheza Kanaya is the subject of this study. Her parents are a married couple who reside in Medan. Sheza's parents comes from a different culture. While her father is Karonesse, her mother is Bataknesse. As a result, Bahasa Indonesia is her native tongue. She is a healthy girl in terms of her body, mind, and social life. She enjoys singing, running around the house, playing cat dolls, and watching animated films. Sheza's parents were the other participants in this study. And Sheza's home served as the research site. The information for this study was obtained from listening to and observing Sheza and her parents' conversations. Data were collected while Sheza engaged in activities in her home, such as singing in the living room with her father and conversing with her mother in her bedroom. Following the data collection, the researchers plan to transcribing the recording data and analyzing it in accordance with the theories of phonology, morphology, and semantic acquisition.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The phonology, morphology, and semantics of first language acquisition were observed and examined in this study. The researchers discovered the following Sheza's utterances as below:

Phonology's form

Table 1 Utterances of Language Acquisition in Phonology

No	Utterances	Meaning
1	Antel mamih	Diantar mamih
2	Walnanya	Warnanya
3	Melah, muda dan bilu	Merah, muda dan biru
4	Kaco	Kacau
5	Hijo	Hijau

Sheza had mastered vowels [a], [i], [u], [e], and [o], as well as some consonants like [b], [d], [h], [j], [k], [m], [n], [t], and [u], according to the analysis of phonological aspects, particularly in



phoneme acquisition. Because it was influenced by the developing canine teeth, the number of phonemes was still not complete and ideal. Additionally, it was influenced by the child's first-hand experiences, especially about his or her basic needs, since nearly all phonemes were acquired in direct relation to those experiences. Suwandi's (2010) theory, according to which most kids can speak at least 50 different words and begin to construct simple sentences by the age of three, fits this data quite well. And Sheza is an expert at it.

Morphology's form

Table 2. Utterances of Language Acquisition in Morphology

No	Words	Meaning
1.	Minyum	Minum
2.	Stobeli	Strawberry
3.	Bitsa	Bisa
4.	Main	Bermain
5.	Lenang	Berenang

Sheza acquired some of the word types that could already be mastered in terms of morphology. The word "minyum" has the meaning "minum" (verb), "stobeli" means "strawberry" (noun), "bitsa" means "bisa" (adjective), "main" means "bermain" (verb), and "lenang" means "berenang" (verb). She was able to produce words, though her articulation was still not clear. The number of words that were still incomplete and imperfect was influenced by the rudimentary tongue and underdeveloped canine teeth. In the second year of life, children's language competence in terms of their understanding of syntax and morphemes increases quickly. Early in life, children frequently engage in morphological encoding, and as a result, they favour the use of regular and irregular modifiers in production (Budd et al., 2015). For them to successfully produce and comprehend adult speech, morphological and syntactic knowledge is crucial.

Additionally, it is influenced by the child's actual experiences because most of the words are acquired directly related to the experience that occurs every day, particularly in regards to the child's basic needs. Due to the fact that his father is Karonesse and his mother is Bataknesse, the child who is raised by bilingual or multilingual parents can learn two languages directly and simultaneously. To help the child imitate both languages, they converse with each other in Karonesse and occasionally Indonesian. The youngster obtained simultaneously speaking both the languages. As a result, although the child falls under the category of simultaneous bilingual, they are still learning their second language. One category for this linguistic stage is the acquisition stage. And it is pertinent to Traxel (2012) that children begin to learn words at the age of two and begin stringing words together starting with the smallest units, such as one or two words.

Semantic's form

Table 3. Utterances of Language Acquisition in Semantic

No	Utterances	Meaning
1.	Beli nanti	Nanti beli
2.	Pake tangan	Menggunakan tangan
3.	Main sama Ean	Bermain dengn Reyhan (her friend)
4.	Jajan eskim	Mau membeli es krim
5.	Nonton Diva seris	Mau nonton film kartun Diva the Series

Jucker defines semantic as the study of interaction meaning, which includes the meaning and contexts in which speeches are produced (Dardjowidjojo, 2010). Regarding the definition, the researchers came to the conclusion that Sheza had been able to communicate well and that the rules regarding the speech turns could be controlled well based on their observations of the young child. The researchers had discovered some words that had the meaning "beli nanti" means "nanti beli," which means that she wanted to buy something else. "Jajan eskim" means "mau membeli es krim" (she wanted to buy ice cream), "pake tangan" means "menggunakan tangan" (using hands), and "main sama Ean" means "bermain dengan Reyhan" (playing with Reyhan, Sheza's friend), "Mau nonton film kartun "Diva the Series"" is what "nonton Diva seris" refers to when someone wants to watch a



cartoon movie. The researchers concluded that Sheza was also capable of appropriate (connected) communication based on the aforementioned data. She had been able to communicate and had understood the conversation's meaning or message. She had a different outlook than most kids her age, who usually just cared about their own little worlds.

4. CONCLUSION

The study's findings support the notion that psychological and physiological processes have a significant impact on how children learn to speak. Because a 4-year-old's articulation was imperfect, his or her words were not perfectly clear. Articulation functions as a result. When this happens, the child psychologically experiences something concrete or tangible, such as the nature of an object or an action that will hasten the process of language acquisition, and spoken words lose their significance. A third benefit of Sheza's family's bilingual environment is that it helps the 4-year-old learn two languages simultaneously, or what is known as simultaneous bilingualism because both languages are occasionally picked up at the same time. The role of the parents is crucial in the language development of the kids. To understand how their child is developing linguistically, parents should engage in conversation with their kids. In addition, the researchers advise parents to teach their kids the correct pronunciation.

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