

# Conversational Interaction to Develop the Two-Word Stage of A Child's Second Language Acquisition

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**Abstract**—Indonesian children are mostly taught to speak Bahasa Indonesia as their first language (L1) since they were born. However, there is a common tendency nowadays where most of Indonesian parents start to teach their newborn with the thought that the best time to teach their children a second language (L2) is the same time they are learning their first language (L1). Therefore, English becomes a second language (L2) for those children. The purpose of this research is to examine how conversational interaction in a form of daily conversation used by an Indonesian parent support a child's L2 acquisition at age 18 to 20 months. In addition, the study aims to get insights into how Bahasa Indonesia as the child's L1 influences the acquisition of English as his L2 through conversational interactions. Designed as a case study, the data for this study were collected by videotaping daily conversation events and were analyzed qualitatively. Results indicate that conversational interaction are instrumental in triggering the child's language acquisition specifically in the process of two-word pairing stage. The pattern of utterances also appeared during the period of the research.

**Keywords**—conversational interaction; two-word stage; second language acquisition

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Conversational Interaction

In a broad sense, conversational interaction is defined as an all face-to-face, turn-taking, or technology-assisted forms of interaction that use language which are coping with larger different types of talk. Haugh explained the type of conversational interaction as an everyday conversation between family, friends and acquaintances, in the classrooms or workplaces, etc. [1]. In the context of second language acquisition, conversation is considered as meaningful input that can give children a quite large amount of exposure [2].

### B. Relationship between L1 and L2

The relationship between the two languages is considered important since it can define the very nature of second language acquisition [3]. Many of researchers have carried out numerous studies to understand the nature of first and second language acquisition, including the relationship of both languages. Brisbois found that the maintenance of using L1 can make such an important contribution to L2 learning and it can continuously enrich a bilingual competence [4].

### C. Interactional or Development Perspective

Piaget and Vygotsky put an emphasis on the cognitive development as a part of the language acquisition. The hypothesis is that children acquire their language through interaction with people and objects in their surroundings. This hypothesis is in line with the concept of learning by doing which implies to learn by practicing, imitating, making attempts to speak, etc., with the help of influences. In the field of second language (SLA), interaction is seen effective to improve quality of communication and language development [5].

### D. Two-Word Stage of Children Language Acquisition

The language process may differ a great deal from child to child. A child will normally go through the four stages of language acquisition. Thuresson revealed the four stages as follow [6]: *Pre-language stage* (3 to 10 months) where a child makes a lot of 'cooing' and 'babbling'; *the holophrastic stage* (12 to 18 months) where a child starts to comprehend a single unit of utterance like 'milk'/'mimi', 'eat'/'mamam', 'dad'/'ayah', 'brother'/'kakak/aa'; *two-word stage* (18 to 20 months) where a child through a process of acquiring two nouns or a noun and a verb (noun + verb), pairing two words together appear such as 'baby chair'/'duduk mau', 'mommy eat'/'makan mau', 'cat bad'/'marah kucing'; telegraphic speech-stage (before 3 years old) defines a stage where a child can process to put some words together even in incorrect order but it has the same meaning with a sentence (but it cannot be considered as sentence yet), such as 'cookie I want'/'makan mau ibu', 'toy me fall'/'jatuh mobil ade'.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

### A. Research Design

This research was designed as a case study and the data were analysed using qualitative method to explore and gain an understanding about the actual event which are happening in the natural settings [7]. The participant was an 18-months-old male toddler, hereafter initialized as IMR (at the beginning of the research, now he is 20 months old) whose L1 is Sundanese and Bahasa Indonesia. The data were collected through field note taking and videotaped conversations in everyday situation for two months long.

**B. Data Collection**

The procedures of data collection were conducting an observation in a form of daily conversation using Sundanese and Bahasa Indonesia as L1 and English as L2 with, sometimes, the assistance of baby board book, Youtube video, series of pictures, and baby toys to support building the context in every conversation. The conversations were typically much about asking questions, giving answers, giving instructions, responding the utterances, or even singing together as meaningful input which IMR needed so that he could be continuously exposed to English as L2.

**C. Procedure**

The observations were done directly through daily conversations, specifically a form of spontaneous small talks. The conversations mostly took place at home along with daily activities such as waking up in the morning, taking a bath, having breakfast, playing toys, watching videos, singing a song, etc. The techniques can be summarized in the various activities: (a) Non formal conversations/small talks (during the entire period of the observations, for about two months long), where IMR was triggered to get involved in the conversation, being asked with mostly a lot of questions such as: “*Imran, mau makan?*”, “*Imran, kita mandi yuk?*”, “*Imran mau minum?*”, “*Imran, ini gambar apa?*” (While showing some authentic pictures related to the question). (b) Story telling (three times a week from April to May), where Imran was told some Indonesian children stories by his mother or father.

**III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In the present findings, IMR’s two-word acquisition have been placed within the stages that Thuresson stated earlier [6]. However, IMR, in this age of 20 months, can only achieve the two-word stage which he can process pairing two words.

In the first two weeks of observation, IMR made an imitation as his response on the questions given. The response he made actually indicated an entry condition where he started to achieve the two-word stage of his L2 acquisition. However, this indication was not clear enough to be seen as an acquisition since IMR did not make some two-word utterances as his responses.

During the week 3-5, IMR’s responses indicated a production of two-word with the utterances appear as noun-noun and verb-noun. In this period, turned out IMR could be triggered to produce the two-word pairing when he saw a very actual event (when his toy fell). The spontaneous utterances appear as the response of what he saw, the toy fell. The actual event indicated a supporting factor to conversation to trigger a child in making a response. The response IMR made in these weeks showed an entry condition of successful two-word stage acquisition.

**TABLE I. DESCRIPTION OF TWO-WORD STAGE ACQUISITION BY RESPONDENTS**

<b>Time (week)</b>	<b>Sample questions (asked to Imran)</b>	<b>Sample utterances (responded by Imran)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1 - 2	<p>“<i>Imran, kita main yuk?</i>”</p> <p>“<i>Mau makan nasi?</i>”</p> <p>“<i>minum susu, yuk?</i>”</p>	<p>“ma-in”</p> <p>“na-ci...” (he said ‘nasi’, to replace ‘iya’/‘mau’</p> <p>“yuk...yuk” (it’s a ‘yes’ for ‘minum susu’)</p>	<p>Frequent conversation within 2 weeks had been done repeatedly. In these weeks, Imran was still doing an imitation to respond to the questions.</p>
3 - 5	<p>“<i>Imran, pakai baju ini mau ya?</i>” (showing a cloth)</p> <p>“<i>makan buah dulu yuk, mau nggak?</i>” (showing a fruit)</p> <p>“<i>mainannya jatuh ya?</i>” (pointing out a toy on the floor)</p> <p>(continued with other questions...)</p>	<p>“iyah, mau”</p> <p>“mau, buah”</p> <p>“<i>embim, jatuh</i>” (<i>mobil jatuh</i>) when his toy fell to the floor</p>	<p>Started to pair two words to respond to the questions</p>
6 - 8	<p>“<i>Imran mau baca buku sama Ayah?</i>”</p> <p>“<i>Imran makan nasi sama ayam goreng dulu, nanti baru makan jelly ya?</i>”</p> <p>(other questions are still continued)</p>	<p>“<i>Ayah. Baca, hayu</i>” (‘hayu’ means ‘ayo’)</p> <p>“iyah, ayam, mau”</p>	<p>Sometimes some Sundanese utterances appear on his Bahasa Indonesia response</p> <p>Started to respond to longer question</p>

**IV. CONCLUSION**

This essay has reported on the findings of the study on conversational interactions use on the Two-Word stage of a child’s second language acquisition. From the observations that had been conducted, it can be concluded that conversational interactions in a form of daily conversations could supportively trigger a child’s second language acquisition, specifically in this case, at the process of two-word pairing stage. The interaction in language acquisition is considered having important and effective role to engage the connection between L1 and L2. This is in line with the relationship between the two languages which is considered important since it can define the very nature of second language acquisition [3].

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