

# Learning Pragmatic Aspects Acquired by a Three-Year-Old Indonesian Child

Ayu Trisna<sup>1\*</sup>, Rahmad Husein<sup>2</sup>, Anni Holila Pulungan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>*English Applied Linguistics Study Program, Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan, Indonesia*

<sup>\*</sup>*Corresponding author. Email: ayutrisnaaa8@gmail.com*

## ABSTRACT

Learning pragmatic aspects is used to build harmonious relationships between adults and a child. The main advantage of this learning lies in adults understanding a three-year-old child on conversations that can improve the child's pragmatic skills. The purpose of this study is to find out the pragmatics aspect that was acquired by a three-year-old child in the first language. It is a case study for a three-year-old child. The subject of this study is a girl who can acquire pragmatic acquisition with a unique one based on the criteria that the writer founded. This research is conducted with qualitative research. The data are obtained by recording the utterances of the child by the conversation with their family. The data collected is analyzed by interactive models of Miles and Huberman and Saldana. Based on the data analysis, the result of the study is a three-year-old child acquired pragmatic and show there are seven pragmatic aspects by a three-year-old child in daily conversation, namely: rejecting, informing, requesting, promising, demanding, defending, and asking aspects' category. There Defending and asking aspects category are additional aspects found in the child's uttering in the conversation. While based on the data, the highest frequency of pragmatic aspects is the informing aspects in the context of the home. The lowest frequency is the asking aspects in the home context too. The survey research shows that a unique one from the child where she talks over and responds contextually. The child can easier acquire pragmatic in the ways they are.

**Keywords:** *Learning pragmatic aspects, Three-year-old child*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the bridge to communicate that needed in developing harmonious social relations activities. The problem in communication is needed to examine because one of the harmonious relationships is built with good communication. Children use language to act with adults in the social world; to create, develop, and sustain social relationships; and to engage with others in culturally meaningful activities. In relation to this, Meniado (2016) noted that children at a very young age (0-5 years old) are able to acquire or master it themselves. Children during their linguistic period (1-5 years old) subconsciously perform such complex tasks as conjoining sentences, asking questions, using appropriate pronouns, negating sentences, forming relative clauses, and inflecting verbs and nouns. [1]

The child will develop their own strategies for learning whatever they find relevant to learn around them, including a language. The child is much more

resourceful and creative. The psychologist of behaviorism, Pivio and Begg (1981) state that children learn to model their behavior on what goes on around them, be the dress codes, body language, and language uses, usually come first through their own utterances and later through peers in their family, neighborhood or at school. The acquisition of language is going on whenever a language is used around the children in their first language development. [2]

In the language acquisition process, children already display pragmatic competence before language production begins, evidenced by pointing on their behaviors. Zufferey (2016), a child shows his/her sensitivity to the informational needs of the addressee based on contextual information. Children learn by absorbing information through daily interactions and experiences not only with their parents, but with other adults, family members, other kids, and the world. [3]

An adult needs to think or predict about child's knowledge about the child's mindset. If the adult thinks

that they are not familiar with the child's utterance, then they will need to get more background as well as clearer information about the issue. To this point, the adult should know the context to get the information well. However, the selection of information from the context is not enough to be considered. It takes the information from the family to make the utterance become comprehensible to the hearer.

However, communicating with a child is still facing obstacles. One of the problems which often happens in communicating with a child is hard to convey the utterance of a child. This problem is the case in a three-year-old child that the writer had observed about the development of her first language.

On the other hand, the child grows up with different circumstances. A child has unique in acquiring his/her language in the ways they are. Language mistakes in relation to concepts at an early age are essential for attention because if the wrong concepts are carried into adulthood, they can affect the child's communication activity. This is what happened to a kid named NS, who is a three-year-old child. Furthermore, it became interesting, to see how the pragmatic aspects then appeared in the process of communication. As is the case study of a three-year-old Indonesian child who learns Indonesian as her first language shows.

In the development of her first language, she acquired pragmatic aspects in her daily conversations with her parents and those around her. What is unique about this child is that she obtains pragmatics with words that must be contemplated to get meaning. This problem was discovered when the writer heard a conversation between her and her mother. In uttering a sentence or word, one must have a certain intention. This child seemed to perform pragmatic aspects with intended meaning via utterance with a communicative intention in daily conversation.

Based on the observation above, the writer intends to study pragmatic aspects. It is a case study from the child who is still three years old that will be mentioned here as NS. The sample of an utterance of the subject is described below.

Context: NS is playing with her younger sister. Suddenly her mother asks her to wear a pampers because it is time to sleep.

Mother: Pakai pampers-lah kak.

(Put on your pampers).

NS : Gak mau (pakai) yang sempit.

(I don't want to wear a narrow one).

From this conversation, the utterance "Gak mau yang sempit" can be understood as a rejection sentence, but it is intended meaning containing meaning a requesting "exchange the size".

The unique one from the conversation above, this child not only acquire a pragmatic competence but also acquire pragmatic with words that a difficult one. The word "gak" shows a rejection followed by the reason "yang sempit". The utterance of NS is conveyed in suits to the context while the conversation happens. Based on the context, NS should use the word "No" to show a rejection. The utterances can be like "gak, saya gak mau" or (No, I don't want it) if she won't. Then, the child gives a reason for her answer means she wants something. Because of that, the hypothesis of the writer, the word "gak" here is not rejection, but it shows a requesting. So, the reflection from "gak mau yang sempit" means "tukar ukurannya" or (change the size). This is one example of the pragmatic aspect of the requesting that is successfully analyzed from the subject under study. When the hearer does not understand what the child means, then it will be a problem or miscommunication.

In accordance with the explanation above, this study is conducted to observe the child's acquisition of language especially the pragmatics aspects. How a three-year-old Indonesian child acquires pragmatic aspects in utterance based on the context in her first language development.

It is aimed to investigate the pragmatic aspect that is restricted to how pragmatic aspects acquired by a three-year-old child in daily conversation. The observation is doing with a casual talk; anything can be a topic of talk in daily conversation.

In the process of acquiring the first language, we certainly see the adventures of the children around us in learning to speak. Since they put out their first words (about a year old), until they produce sentences, not just passively recording and receiving new languages, they are drenched in the process of mastery.

The acquisition of pragmatics involves developing competence in the communicative uses of sentences, especially in speech acts, conversations, speech registers, and extended speaking turns, or "discourse" where utterances are judged less in terms of form than with respect to how well they meet the requirements of various speech situations (Hymes, 1972). [4]

Among the pragmatic functions, the child has the ability toward the end of the second year, like answering, repeating, and requesting, those that elicit further speech are key. In line with Hymes (1972) state that pragmatic is all about communicating appropriately in context. Communication involves language, verbal, or written, but it involves many other aspects that go beyond the words in specific speech acts. All aspects of appropriate communication are defined as "pragmatic elements." Pragmatics involves three major communicative competences.

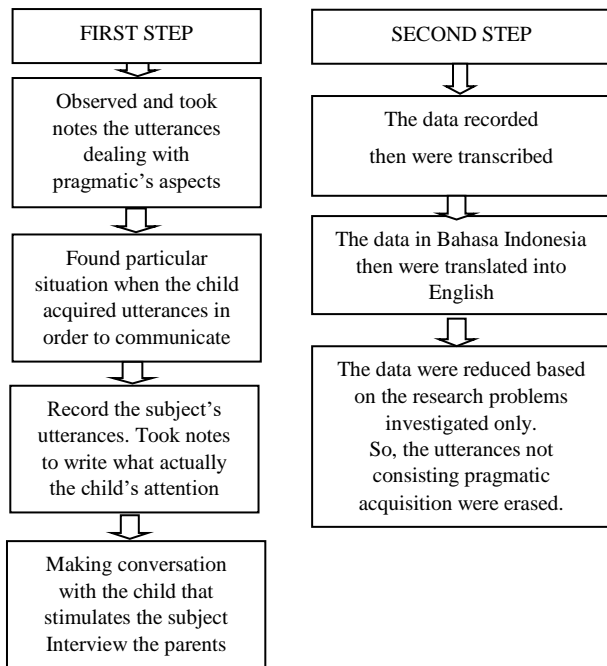
Furthermore, it also elaborated Hymes’ theories of types of pragmatic aspects he notes are: (Hymes, 1972).

- Greeting (e.g., hello, goodbye)
- Informing (e.g., I’m going to get a cookie)
- Demanding (e.g., give me a cookie)
- Promising (e.g., I’m going to get you a cookie)
- Requesting (e.g., I would like a cookie, please)
- Rejecting (e.g., I don’t like a cookie)

In addition, contexts become the most important one for the hearers in getting the speaker’s pragmatics in the utterances. On the context of the utterance, any pre-existing knowledge about those involved the inferred intent of the speaker, and other factors. In this respect, pragmatics explains how language users are able to overcome apparent ambiguity, since meaning relies on the manner, place, time, etc. of an utterance.

**2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is conducted by using descriptive qualitative research design. This research is intended to describe the problem about the pragmatic aspects acquired by a three-year-old Indonesian child. It deemed appropriate to utilize the case study research design. The data of this study are the utterances of a three-year-old-Indonesian child that refers into pragmatics aspects. The data are taken from transcript of recorded observation and field notes. Transcript of observation was obtained through daily observation in different context categories. In order to make it more clearly explanation about the procedures of collecting data, the procedures are as seen as the figure 1.



**Figure 1** Procedures of Collecting Data

**3. RESULTS**

The data of this research is the transcription of recorded observation and field notes which have been reduced based on the subject of the research utterance of the pragmatics aspects, namely; rejecting, requesting, informing, demanding, promising, asking, and defending in conversation with the ways they are in six contexts categories namely home, playing, relaxing, phoning, selling, and watching. The frequency of pragmatics aspects occurrence with different context category in the child’s utterances can be seen in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** The occurrence of pragmatic aspects in different context

No	Context	Number	Percentage (from all of conversation)
1	Home	36	55%
2	Playing	11	17%
3	Relaxing	7	11%
4	Phoning	5	8%
5	Selling	5	8%
6	Watching	1	1%
<b>Total</b>		65	100%

Based on the data above, it can be seen that the lowest frequency of pragmatic aspects occurrences is in the context of watching and the highest frequency is in the context of home. The frequency of the pragmatic aspects occurred in daily conversation of the subject being observed is shown in the Table 2.

**Table 2.** The occurrence of pragmatic aspects

No	Pramatic Aspects	Number	Percentage (From all of conversation)
1	Informing	20	31%
2	Rejecting	19	29%
3	Requesting	14	22%
4	Promising	4	6%
5	Defending	4	6%
6	Demanding	3	5%
7	Asking	1	1%
8	Greetings	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		65	100%

From the table displayed above, dealing with the pragmatic aspects, it seen that the highest frequency of pragmatic aspect is informing and the lowest frequency is greetings. In addition, contexts become the most important one for the hearers in getting the subject’s utterances.

In the data observed, informing aspect is seen as the highest aspect. It is due to the perceptual factor that sets the stages. It was building her pragmatic acquisition of this aspect. The data shows that among 65

conversations, there are 20 dialogues are classified into informing aspect. The example can be seen as follows:

Context: She went shopping with her mom, but they late for home. Then, her father asked her.

Father: Dari mananya kalian nang?

(Where have you been?)

NS: Belanja, tempat yang lama itu.

(Shopping at the place which always slows in the order)

This conversation clearly shows that what she was saying in her dialogue was showing the informing aspect. Not only did she answer her father's question, but she also briefly explained the reasons why they were late. By saying, "(Belanja, tempat yang lama itu)," she felt that her father must have understood and would not ask again. Based on the data found, it can be seen that she was able to convey information well in her way are. She obtained many informing aspects in various contexts.

**Table 3.** The frequency of pragmatic's aspect of informing in different contexts

No	Context Category	Number	Percentage (from all of conversation)
1	Home	16	80%
2	Selling	2	10%
3	Playing	1	5%
4	Phoning	1	5%
5	Relaxing	0	0%
6	Watching	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		20	100%

The table displayed above shows that the highest frequencies of the informing aspect uttered by the subject are the home context. This aspect was no found in the context of relaxing and watching.

From all of the data displayed, the informing aspect only occurs in four contexts. The lowest frequency of context category is in the context of playing and phoning, which has the same number. This occurs due to the factor of perceptual which is sets the stage.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the pragmatic aspects of the child's utterances are found in different contexts. There are seven pragmatic aspects that occurred in a three-year-old Indonesian child. There are seven pragmatic aspects acquired by a three-year-old child in daily conversation, namely: rejecting, informing, requesting, promising, demanding, defending, and asking aspects. By

comparing data with the theory, it was concluded that informing found as the highest frequency as the pragmatic aspects acquired by the subject.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Meniado J.C. (2016). First Language Acquisition: A case study of a three-year old Lebanese Child. In *Journal of Child Language acquisition and Development-JCLAD*. University of the Philipines.
- [2] Paivio, Allan.; Begg, Ian. (1981). *Psychology of Language*. United States of America: Prentice Hall. Pp. 417. ISBN 0-13-735951-9.
- [3] Zufferey, S. (2016). Pragmatic acquisition. In Ostman, J.-O. & Verschueren J. (Eds). *Handbook of Pragmatics*. 2006 Installment. Amsterdam: John: Benjamins.
- [4] Hymes, D. H. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In Pride, J. B., & Holmes, J. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics*, 269-293. Baltimore, USA: Penguin Education, Penguin Books Ltd.