

Lexicon Acquisition in Pre-School Children

Tri Wahyu Retno Ningsih, Endang Purwaningsih, Dwi Nitisari
Gunadarma University

twahyurn@gmail.com, endang_purwaningsih@staff.gunadarma.ac.id,
dnitisari@gmail.com

ABSTRACT - The purpose of this research is determined the lexicon acquisition of children aged 3-5 years. The methods of this research are observation method and testing techniques. Observation method and testing techniques were conducted at play group and kindergarten. The test instrument uses pictures which are used to be learnt and encountered by the children in everyday life. These instruments are used to evaluate the lexicon ability of the children. The test results are saved in the video and recordings. In this test, researches recorded all observation qualitatively. The result shows that each age shows different phases. Based on the types of words, the Indonesian lexical tabulation has been acquired, i.e. nouns, verbs, adjective, and adverbs. The findings provide information about paralinguistic development phase of children in preschool age.

Key words: Lexicon acquisition, pre-school children, non parametric statistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Discovering the words of a language, and what they mean in the word, is only the first step for the language learner. Children must also discover how the distribution of these elements, including grammatical endings (-s, -ed, -ing) and function words (of, to, the) convey the further combinatorial meaning of an utterance. That is children must implicitly discover and use the grammar of their language to determine who-did what-what-to-whom in each sentences. This applies even for simple sentences like Mommy gave Daddy the milk as opposes to Daddy gave Mommy the milk. The parsing processes is therefore essential component of the language comprehension device, because it allows children to assemble strings of element in such a way as to compute crucial, and even novel, relation conceptions of the world. (Saffran et al, 2001).

The experts agreed that in acquiring Indonesian lexicon, the child collects two abstract things in linguistic theory, namely competence and performance. Chomsky (1965) separates competence and performance. He describes 'competence' as an idealized capacity that is located as a psychological or mental property or function and 'performance' involves 'doing' something with the language. The difficulty with the construct is that is very difficult to assess competence without assessing performance. According Simanjuntak (1990), competence is the knowledge of the mother language grammar (semantics, syntax and phonology) which is controlled by the child unconsciously and obtained gradually (Tarigan & Djago, 1988). This occurs at the level of competency analysis process in formulating solutions to problems of semantic, syntax and phonology. Performance is the ability of a child in the receptive and productive skills process.

Lexicon acquisition as a process of understanding in the human's language is through several stages, from capturing, producing, and using the words in understanding. Darjowidjojo (2003, p. 241) stated that the first lexicon acquisition is a process that occurs in children when obtaining their mother tongue, whereas the second Lexicon acquisition occurs when a person learn a new language after learning his/her mother tongue. In linguistics, lexicon is collection of lexeme (the unit of basic word or the smallest word in a language and usually inserted as entries) in a language. As one form of the language acquisition, the lexicon acquisition is one of important acquisition discussed (Mar'at, 2007, p. 45). Mar'at stated that the lexicon is all the knowledge possessed by the users of the language associated with words in the vocabulary of the following means. When connected with the lexicon acquisition, the development of a child's lexicon can be seen through his/ her ability to form and connect the words.

Study of the lexicon includes the word meaning, vocabulary structuring, words using and storing, word learning, history and evolution of words (etymology), the relationship between words, as well as the process of forming words in a language. In everyday use, lexicon is considered as a dictionary, synonym, or vocabulary. Initially we have little trouble in interpreting the language of children, such as when a child cries, we do not know whether the child was crying because of illness, hunger, or was it something else. But finally we can find out from the child's movements and signs pointed. In early life, children also use gestures like smiles and overhung hand to ask something. In this ways, the child is actually wearing a "sentence" the protodeclarative (language about something) and protoimperative (asked for something to be done or given to children) (Gleason & Ratner, 1998, p. 358).

The first word of a child was being produced in his/ her own language at the age of one year. By the age of 18-20 months the child has gained about 50 words, and by the age of 2 years, the child knows an average of 200-300 words (Barrett, 1995). Children begin to acquire words very rapidly, in the most carefully documented case a children learned 45 words in a week (Dromi, 1987, p. 15). Dromi said that a form deemed capable mastered by children, if the form has phonetic similarity to the shape of the adult word and steady correlation between the shape of the referent or meaning. For example, sound / tan / may be considered to have been acquired by Echa to refer to fish because it looks like and she always wears this form when referring to the object (Darjowidjojo, 2003).

Before children are able to utter a word (1-1.5 years), they are very diligent in collecting information about their

environment. Children prepare simple semantic features to the words that they knew. The words are understood and collected by the children and will knowledge about their world (knowledge of the world). Even into adulthood, the speaker just said some of the information he uttered. As explained by Steinberg (1990), that the understanding of the meaning is a basic of utterances (1990). Huttenlocher and Smiley (1987) examined the language use of children they followed from the time of their first word (around 13 months for most of the children) until the children were 2 or 2 years old. Their goals were to determine the basis on which children extend words beyond their original context and to test whether or not children extend words complexively.

In lexicon acquisition, one of the earliest forms of controlled children are nouns, especially those who were familiar with the place of residence, such as family members, close relatives, pets, fruits, and so forth. Mastery of these nouns follows two contradictory patterns. Clark (Dardjowijoyo, 1991) hypothesized that child generalizes the meaning so that the meaning stretched to encompass a wider meaning than the properly meaning (overextensions). Huttenlocher and Smiley (1987) argued that some of the previously reported instances of apparent complex extension words by children may actually have been nonreferential uses of language. For example, a child who says 'cookie' while reaching toward a cookie jar is not necessarily labelling the jar 'cookie'. They might know that cookies are kept in the jar. Since the child is in the word stage, he was about the only way to formulate a request for a cookie when no cookies is visible to say 'cookie'.

Therefore, there are things that underlying hypothesis of meaning or semantics features, namely (1) the features of meaning that are used by children which are considered equally with features semantic worn by adults, (2) because of the knowledge and experience of children of the world is limited, at first, the children will use two or three features of significance only for a word as lexicon input, (3) because the selection of the associated features based on the child's experience, this feature is actually based on perceptual information with all its limitations. The hypothesis states that children do not understand the meaning partially through the collection of semantic features, but through the complex way. Child looked at the object is moved from one feature to another feature. At first the child is looking at dog as a quadruped, so that the cat was regarded as a dog. On the other time, they look out of the fur that blanket was regarded as a dog. Another theory suggests that in acquiring meaning, children make excessive constriction (underextensions). This happens because the children lacked context example shows the use of the word. Due to lack of examples, the child is not able to attract enough features. As a result, a child could say that he or she called shoes only socks that was in the bathroom of his or her parents (Reich, 1976 in Simanjuntak, 1990).

Other evidence that children do construction meaning is when the child is introduced to some of the words that have a level of abstraction in a row, the child will tend to constrict the middle of the ladder of abstraction. For example, between

mammal, quadruped, tigers, African tigers, and panthers, children will tend to choose the word tiger that has a middle level of abstraction. Similarly, children will first recognize the word father and mother before the grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt, and others (Dardjowijoyo, 1991). Based on theories about lexicon acquisition, this study aims to discover the ability of the acquisition of the lexicon in children of preschool age.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used descriptive qualitative method. Subjects were children aged 4-6 years at the preschool level. There are two types of source data, namely (1) the primary data and (2) secondary data. Primary data were obtained through verbal tests using audiovisual, audiolingual, and reading tests on the subject of research. Secondary data were obtained through supporting documents such as photos and video recording of tests process evaluation used as a complement to primary data. Data retrieved through some techniques, namely (1) observation; (2) a verbal test; (3) interview; and (4) documents analysis. Sources of data obtained from classroom teachers, parents, and children. Instrument of collecting data are interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and document analysis guidelines.

The research process begins with the process of determining the research instrument, ie audio-lingual learning materials in the form of a CD. There are 6 options that can be tested on children. The children were asked to listen to the CD, view the images that represent each of the objects in question, and match what is seen and heard through the worksheet. For doing so, the children were given some stimulus.

The children listened to the pronunciation sample words which were heard via CD player. Children repeated words while they were looking and pointing worksheet that contains a picture in accordance with the meaning of the vocabulary learned in order to facilitate understanding. When finished listening to the CD, the child repeated the words in the work sheet, without listening to the CD again. The child had to repeat the same word object without showing out any specific object visually.

Observations were made directly in the learning process. Children were in the class with the instruments, such as CD player or a PC that contained a variety of verbal form applications test of Indonesian vocabulary. Direct observation was aimed in order to observe all the behavior and responses of children during the learning process. Researchers recorded all circumstances conditions of the learning process using audiovisual methods composed of sheets of observations that would be analyzed.

3. RESULTS

Based on observation, behavioral aspects of linguistic observed directly by researchers to see the connection between the stimulus and reaction (response). Effective language behavior in children is believed to make the right reaction to stimuli. This reaction will become a habit if the reaction is

justified so that children learn their first language. In observation that has been done shows that the stimulus provided through the stimulus got a pretty good response from children. Children's understanding of the instructions to the tasks assigned to provide information that children as research subjects have a high enough cognitive knowledge in harmony with his age. Table 1 describes the observation of verbal test using audiovisual methods to recognize objects and object names.

Table 1 Acquisition of vocabulary items in pre-school children

Age	Noun					Animals					Fruits				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4 years					-					-					-
5 years					-					-					-
6 years															

Figure 1. Acquisition of kinship vocabulary, actions, and emotions in preschoolers.

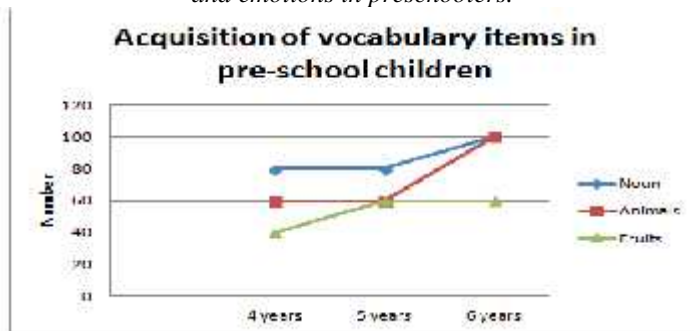
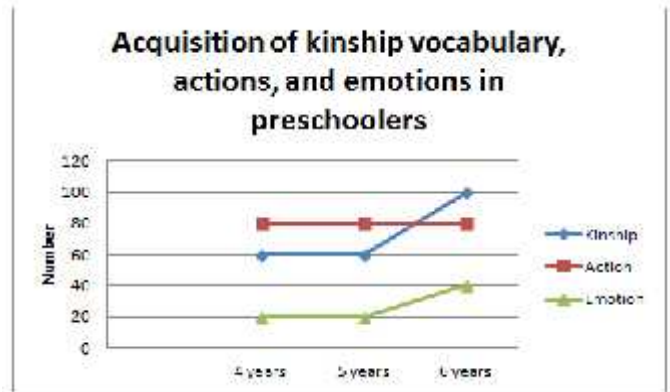


Table 1 illustrates that children at the age of 4 years has mastered four nouns, and isolating 1 noun. Figure 1 displays total number of acquisition of vocabulary items in pre-school children. Noun which asked, namely (1) ball, (2) car, (3) train, (4) cars (5) robot. Nouns that are isolated is 'robot' by children aged 4 years and 5 years. While the 6-year-old son can do the job well. Kinds of animals which instructed namely (1) cats, (2) dogs, (3) birds, (4) goats, (5) cows. Image object and the word object 'goat' and 'cow' is not recognized by children ages 4 and 5 years old. 6 year old boy managed to identify all objects and word objects of animal. Word objects of fruit, consists of (1) apple, (2) Orange, (3) Tomatoes (4) Salak, (5) Durian. Object images 3, 4, and 5 are not known by the age of 4 years, while the object image 4 and 5 are not well known by children.

Table 2 Acquisition of kinship vocabulary, actions, and emotions in preschoolers

Age	Kinship					Action					Emotion				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4 years					-					-					-
5 years					-					-					-
6 years															



In the kinship vocabulary acquisition table, information member, that vocabulary uncle and aunt are not well known by children ages 4 and 5 years old. Uncle and aunt ('bibi and paman') designations may be less commonly used in everyday activities. Vocabulary actions, such as (1) eat, (2) drink, (3) sleep, (4) go, and (5) play, well understood by all ages of children, except the word go. Through the object image test, children do not understand the image so that the expected answer is not quite right. Vocabulary verbal tests of emotions using symbols picture, namely (1) laugh, (2) cry, (3) sad, (4) fear, (5) happy. The vocabulary of emotion has not been mastered by children because it is abstract. Emotions like crying, sadness, and fear are almost the same expression and difficult to understand for children. Children may not be using the words refer to object in the word, but rather the word may be just another associate the child has to a given situation-a routinized, ritualized part on an activity and not genuine naming. Positive emotions, such as laughing and happy, quite easily understood by children. Figure 1 displays total number of acquisition of kinship vocabulary, actions, and emotions in preschoolers.

Based on observations, it can be explained that the research subject, has gone through several stages of cognitive skills in the decoding process, the phase pradedcoding or knowledge of the letter. The subject also has been able to process orthographic and phonological and able to focus on a particular phoneme based visual attention.

4. CONCLUSION

Lexicon obtained child gradually, i.e. nouns and verbs derived multilevel child, from a common verb into a complex verb. Verbs related to daily life ruled earlier than complex verbs that have semantic complexity. Ability adjective also occurs through a specific sequence. Positive adjectives are controlled earlier than the negative adjective. The improvement in comprehension comes from the ability of child to be able to pronounce all of the words and their vocabulary will also increase.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the observation of the two words construction are that the child has been able to produce the target language. The use of certain words in the same position indicates that the child has mastered word-classes and is able to creatively vary the

functions. The ability of children also showed the pragmatic mastery that children can combine the formulas of simple communication into the structure of the language. Based on observations, there are 3 reading skills in children, namely:

1. Perceptive, consider the text components, such as letters, syllables, words, and punctuation.
2. Selective, identify objects by the image and give a short response.
3. Interactive, interact between children and the media being used as an instrument

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