Language Acquisition in the Childhood Stage: A Review

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Abstract
This paper reviews the language acquisition theory in childhood stages. Five models of baby's language development including pre-linguistic, holophrastic, telegraphic, simple sentence, and compound sentence are central of discussion. In the early stage, characteristics of language development and language learning in the kindergarten level are discussed integratedly. In the area of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Krashen Theory in Natural Approach is prevalent, prevailing frontier concepts in children language development. In the social context, language view that has closed relationship to culture is included. This way, norm, etiquette, values, and other aspects of communication are valuable to teaching children in the early stage.

Key-words: language development, SLA, kindergarten.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper reviews the language acquisition and development in the childhood stage. The review begins with model of baby's language development and the stages where language acquisition is focused. Theories on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that roots on Krashen theory esplanades how language teaching, should take place.

English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) wondered if children were born *tabula rasa* (as a blank slate). Tabula rasa believes that a child would be born neither guilty nor good nor any particular way at birth (Dworetzky, 1981:5-6). Children are unshaped and unmolded. Every behavior and manner that the child would come to posses would be acquired through interaction with the environment. In this way, the culture would determine what was written on the "slate".

Children go with five stages of language development before they achieve adult language competence. The stages among others include: pre-linguistics, holophrastic, telegraphic, simple sentence, and complex sentence. Ingram (1989) admits that the pre-linguistics development starts from birth up to the end of the first year (0-1;0). The language in this stage indicates three characteristics: babbling, unintelligent imitation, and preliminary understanding. In holophrastic stage that occurs from 1;0 to 1;6 years of age, children acquire single word utterance, using a small number of speech sounds with special meaning to express ideas in the entire sentence. In the telegraphic stage in the year of 2;0 to 2;6 children use first word combination. Here children develop two behavior of language use: word acquisition spurt and multi-word utterance. In the

simple word sentence in the age 2;0 to 2;6, children apply more grammatical sentences using more appropriate subject and object and acquisition of inflection varies in sentences. In the complex sentence stage in 2;6 … years of age, complex sentences and compound sentences appear.

In the early stage, children learn by imitating their parents, their sibling, and than their peers. According to Labov (1972:138) model role for the children are their parents up to 3 or 4 years old. In the next age up to ±13 parents are substituted by their peers rather than they begin to see the world of adults and move toward it. Children know and can do something because they get any learning from their parents. Parents as a teacher to their children, teach the children a language to teach values, norms, politeness, or attitude.

School is not the only supportive place to perform the learning. Indeed, school plays significance role in a child's learning process. Home and its environment do matter in forming the child's characters and contributes major sources of knowledge that a child might need. Goodlad (1973) in Pikunas (1976) states that home are probably the most powerful education institution, even when parents are not good teacher. Parents control most of the prime time during the critically formative years of childhood.

Children develop their major pattern of behavior before or at the time they enter the school. During the preschool years, they speak most of their time learning in their home by the guidance of their parents, their elder siblings as well their peers. They are those whom the children adopt any set of behavior in their learning process. How the parents act with each other, how they treat those within the family group, constitutes, attitudes and values passed on to and acquired by the young child. Parent's reactions to various happenings locally or in the world and to the daily routines within the home are all part of how children accept and begin to acquire their own ways of conduct with others.

In the age 2;0 to 10;0 children are in the process of imitating. This time is a sensitive period for them. They will imitate everything without considering that it is good or bad. This period gives an impact in forming child's characters and might influence their social intercourse. Here, parents have an important factor as models for their children. For a child, imitating their elder behavior is not just playing. While imitating, the children learn something. Vygotsky (1978) states that human learning presupposes a specific social nature and is part of a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them. An essential feature of learning is that it awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is in the action of interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers.

Learning in the preschool or in the kindergarten is the system of learning through playing. Learning process is taught by a group (small) and individual. The scope of learning is not just in classroom but also outside (the class environment). The pupils are allowed to choose their own interesting activity. The pupils are allowed to try, to make mistakes and the most important thing is to create something. In the kindergarten, the learning process will be given through singing, playing, expressing the

poem, writing introduction and counting by seeing the pictures according to his/her own choice.

2. LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHILDHOOD

Language is one of the most important characteristic terms of human behavior. It is socially structure of sound patterns (words and sentences) with standardized meaning. Devito (1970:7) states that language involves of symbol that catalog objects, events and relations in the world, functioning of primary tools for communication and vehicle for transmitting meaning appearing in speech. Language carries on communication with others and transmits to other people information, ideas, attitudes, and emotions. Trough language, people share experience and solve common problems in a democratic fashion. This way, language is also basis for intellectual growth because experience enlarged and enriched through language.

The language process is systematically. During the years from one to five, children learn most of complexities of their native language without any specific tutoring. Tomlinson (1985) postulates three reasons: biological factors, imitation, and conceptual progress.

The biological factors are somewhat similar to Language Acquisition Device (LAD) proposed by Chomsky. This way, Chomsky (1975) presents five main arguments. First, human are the only species that use language. Second, the brain is specifically designed to support language. Third, language has a biological base. Fourth, language acquisition proceeds in a similar way in children all over the world. Finally, learning language is far too complete to be accomplished by a child unless it is built in.

Imitation is often included among explanations of how children learn language. Imitation is obviously factor because children learn to speak their parent's language. Imitation is a strategy that some children use to help them understand the structure of language. Children seem to imitate words and structures that they are just beginning to learn. Children who are actively trying to express possession might imitate a possessive in their mother's speech. Imitation is just one of several possible strategies that children can use to decipher the structure of language.

The reason of conceptual progress is prominent in this argument. If though is the key to language, then the primary function of language is to allow the child to express thoughts that would otherwise exist silently. It follows too that more complex though gives rise to more complex language. More complex language skills seem to be linked to conceptual developments.

In addition, environment also has influence in language process and it is not so easily dismissed. It is certainly the major force in determining which language a child speaks. The environment can have dramatic effects on language. Other less dramatic aspects of the environment may also influence that child's language. How the mother speaks to the child, whether or not the parents read to the child, whether the child is born first or later, and whether the home is bilingual are all environmental variables that bias language acquisition.

Through daily interaction with other language users, children learn how to use language to convey messages, to express feelings, and to achieve intentions, which

enable them to function in a society. The language that members of a specific community use reflects the values and beliefs that re-embedded in their culture and ideologies: in the same way, the culture and dominant ideologies within learning contexts also have a strong impact on the learner's perceptions of the language learning process. Through the process of language learning, parents socialize their children into socially and culturally appropriate ways of behaving, speaking, and thinking.

Children see with a clear sight about the language facts that they are learning, by observing their parents' genuine grammar, as well the innovation they have made, as a single grammar. From the theory above, it could be said that children learn by imitating a model. Language acquisition model is a strategy theory, which is adopted by children to arrange an exact structure to learn their language.

The pupils in kindergarten are able to develop their speaking ability through conversation, which can invite anyone else to get involved. They can use language in any way, such as: by asking, by dialogue or by singing. The things around the children will give a meaning, if she/he knows their own names, experiences, and the situation when they are able to use the words to give the explanation of the event.

3. KRASHEN THEORY ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

Krashen's Theory of Natural Approach having five hypotheses that is prominent in the development of language studies. Krashen (1981:40) states that the language accomplishment process involves the natural accomplishment (acquisition) or formal accomplishment (learning). Krashen postulates the language learning into five sets as follows:

Language Acquisition and Learning Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that there are two independent systems of second language performance: 'the acquired system' and 'the learned system'. The 'acquired system' or 'acquisition' is the product of a subconscious process very similar undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language –natural communication– in which speakers are concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act. The 'learned system' or 'learning' is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process, which results in conscious knowledge about the language. According to Krashen 'learning' is less important than 'acquisition'. The acquisition indicates how language is learned in the family, social context, and daily life. The learning shows how language is learned at school where teachers, textbook, classroom, and curriculum are developed for the reference of learning process.

Monitor Hypothesis

Monitor hypothesis is the practical result of the learned grammar. According to Krashen, the acquisition system is the utterance initiator, while the learning system performs the role of the 'monitor' or the 'editor'. The 'monitor' acts in a planning, editing and correcting function when three specific condition are met; that is, the second language learner has sufficient time at his or her disposal, he/she focuses on form or

thinks about correctness, and he/she knows the rule. In the application, monitor filter indicates how knowledge on grammar applies in expressing ideas for speaking or writing. The stronger the monitor filter applies, a speaker or writer will think aloud in awkward or errors.

Input Hypothesis

This hypothesis is attempting to explain how the learner acquires a second language. So, it is only concerned with 'acquisition' not 'learning'. According to this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the 'natural order' when he/she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. The concept of language input should be at the 'i + 1' level. It means that the input of the learner just one more high than output. In learning new material, the level of difficulty of the material should be one level above the knowledge the learners have at the teaching learning process. If the materials are in the two or three level above the knowledge, the materials are hard to receive and learners will be frustrated. Conversely, replication of redundancy materials will occur if the materials are below or the same as the learner's level. The learners are boring.

Natural Order hypothesis

This hypothesis suggested that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a 'natural order', which is predictable. For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early while the other late. This also states that every acquirer will acquire grammatical structure in the exact order.   Krashen identifies average order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes into four groups: (1) ing for progressive form, plural, and to be as copula, (2) auxiliary and article, (3) irregular past, and (4) regular past, the third person singular, and possessive –s. The first order is considered easier than the next and the grammatical morpheme will be mastered early.

Affective Filter Hypothesis

This hypothesis embodies Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition.

4. LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Various theories arises which attempts to account for how children acquire language. There are three models how children acquire language, including imitation theory, reinforcement theory, and active construction of a grammar theory.

Imitation Theory

This theory claims that children learn language by listening to speech sound around them and reproducing what they learn. According to this theory, language acquisition consists of memorizing the words and sentences of some language. Because of the largely arbitrary nature of the connection between the way a word sounds and what it means, children cannot guess what the words of the target language are. They must hear those words used by other speakers and then reproducer or imitate them. Furthermore, this theory helps explain the fact that children learn language that is spoken around by parents, caretakers, and others.

Reinforcement Theory

This theory assert that children learn to speak like adults because they are praised, rewarded, or otherwise reinforced when they use the right forms and are corrected when they use wrong forms. The claim that parents and other caretakers frequently correctly their children's grammatical mistakes and praise their correct is unfounded. Such correction seldom happens, for although parents often do correct their children, their correction generally have more to do with the accuracy or truth of a statement and not its grammatical form. Adults also correct children's grammatical sentences if they are not true. This theory cannot explain where the child's rule came from or why the child seems impervious to correction.

Active Construction of a Grammar Theory

Children listen to the language around them and analyze it to determine the patterns that exist. When they think they have discovered a pattern, they hypothesize a rule to account for it. They add this rule to their growing grammar and use it in constructing utterances. When children discover that there are forms in the language that do not matched those produced by this rule, they modify the rule and add another one to produce the additional forms. Eventually the child has created and edited his or her own grammar to the point where it matches that of an adult's.

The process of language acquisition for children is built upon a variety of experiences. Through interacting with other more experienced language users, children modify and elaborate their sentences in response to request for more information.

5. LANGUAGE IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

In social context, language is a tool to communication expressing ideas, topic, context, and culture. Wardaugh (1988:1) admits that any discussion of the relationship between language and society, or of the various function of language in society, should begin with some attempt relating to the social context. Society is any group of people who are drawn together for a certain purpose or purposes. A speaker should choose an appropriate utterance for the situation when the communication takes place. To this end, some factors affect the communication.

Context

Context which involves who is talking, what are the status relationship or social roles, how well they know each other, and what the situation is, when communication take place. In speech act, the speaker has to know in applying the "appropriateness" meaning of the sentence that will be used in communication. The 'correctness" of the sentence in communication acts does not depend on the rule or grammar. To gain the appropriate choice, the speaker needs to organize his strategy in such way that the choosing of the sentence in speech acts is appropriate with the context. Language is more than discussed about the grammatical. The important thing is the considering of an appropriateness speech on socio culture context.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1985) state that communication is successful because we can, to certain extent; predict what our interlocutor is going to say. Based on the knowledge that we already have about the situation, we can anticipate the kind of meaning that will be exchange. We draw conclusions about the meaning based on our knowledge about the topic is being dealt with, who our interlocutors are, and a whole range of other contextual factors.

Setting

Setting indicates a place and time aspects in which a communication act occurs involving formal and informal situation. The formal situation refers to two forms of situation: how a meeting is facilitated by an organization and the atmosphere of the meeting, e.g. official or informal.

Topic

Topic is the matter of the discussion. This way, both the speaker and the hearer must have an agreement. The goal of communication involves the context, setting and topic. Speaker and hearer must acquire these factors.

Etiquette and Politeness

Other important factors in communication are variety, etiquette and politeness. There is a difference in the way we speak with our friends or our parents and the way we speak with our relatives, teachers, or others of professional status. The selection of variety or code is important in communication. When we speak with our friends, we use casual conversation, with our parents we speak more formal but still familiar, and with our teacher or our professor we speak more formal. In a larger scale, multilingual nations include a variety of accents, language styles, dialects and languages, each of which reflects the region and socio-economics background.

Of course, communication uses etiquette. Etiquette is the behavior system in speech act. This system has deep connection with language code, social norms and the system of culture that exists in society. Etiquette organizes about what we should say, when and how the condition of the participant, what kind of language we should use, when and how we use our opportunity to speak or interrupt other conversation, when we should remain silent condition, and how our voice quality and our physical in communication process.

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Politeness is also important in communication. In everyday conversation, there are ways to go about getting the things we want. When we are with group or friends, we can say to them, such as "shut-up!" however, when we are surrounded by a group of adults at a formal function, in which our parents are involved, we must say, "I'm sorry, I don't mean to interrupt, but I am not able to hear the speaker in front of the room". In different social situations, we are allowed to adjust our use of words to fit the occasion. Politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearers' "face". Face refers to the respect that an individual has for him/herself, and maintaining that "self-esteem" in public or in private situations.

Age, Sex, and Social Status

Age, sex and social status also play important roles in understanding language variation. The age of someone will influence his language usage. The more mature the age of someone, he will be more capable in using the words, has more knowledge in understanding language structure and more capable in lesson. The language usage in children is different with the language usage in adult or parents. Generally, parents use language to talking about life educations or advices. Different with adult; they use language to talking about life and more romantic. For children, they will use language to talking about funny story or their experiences. So, the language usage indicates maturity.

The other factor in language variation is sex. There will be different how men or women talk. It appears in situation of the conversation, topics or in choosing the words. Women talk more feminine than men. Furthermore, social status gives an impact in variation. The education level of someone will influence in choosing occupation and it will bring an impact in variation of language usage. The language usage evidences in capability of the sum vocabularies, in choosing vocabularies, and in how they express in speech acts. So, it is fact that there is differentiation in choosing vocabularies between educated and uneducated person.

Culture

Culture has a close relationship in language use. Culture is a system of communication and interaction rules, which allow a society, happened raised and preserved. The culture implies rules which exist in the society, the result of civilization, habits, and customs and as well the means of interaction or communication being used, and another non-verbal means.

6. PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Kindergarten is the school unit that enrolls 5-year-olds, in some case 6-year-olds, on a regular basis for a year prior to first grade. Kindergarten provides a continuous educational experience under the guidance of a qualified teacher and in close cooperation with the parents. Kindergarten as a center for young children is a place where children are engaged in interesting, stimulating activities, relevant to their lifestyle, not a place where children just do 'busy work'.

Government's Regulation No.27 (1990) states that preschool education, in chapter I, section I, verse I states that kindergarten is one of the preschool forms of education that provides early education program for children for 4 years old until engage to elementary school. Kindergarten school is a pre-school as the children's first formal socialization in learning. The models that they imitate are teachers and their peers. Teacher' power or force is as strong as parents, as their first introductory to the social life. Children acquire their social skills, at least as much from their peers as their parents or adult. Kindergarten helps many parents to increase their children's readiness for school. It also furthers the child's socialization with peers, a form of assistance many children from lower socioeconomic levels need. In the Government Regulation 27, kindergarten pupils are assumed to be unique and children develop through some periods. following characteristics.

. Personally, every child will extend their own reaction pattern toward the stimulation they have, and every child will develop with their own tempo and speed. Thus, the speed of one child's development does not always go in line with their friends either with his chronological age.

In addition, human is unity where its physical, cognitive, affective and intuitive development is correlated each other. A kindergarten pupil that develops through periods and every development of chronologic age will reveal some specific characteristic of development.

The first characteristic is every child is active. Learning for child is something, which is done, while playing is an arena for learning and working. Kindergarten child like to concern smell, and make voices either touch or taste. Their environment that is rich and gives a lot of mental stimulation as well could increase their learning ability.

Tangyong and Sylvia (1988) identify four characteristics of kindergarten pupils that are typical. The characteristics are unique in terms of physical, social, emotional and mental.

According to Tangyong and Sylvia (1988), physical characteristics of the children appear in six concerns. First, kindergarteners are extremely active. They have good control of their bodies and enjoy activity for its own sake. Second, because of their inclination towards bursts of activity, kindergarteners need frequent rest periods. They themselves often do not recognize the need to slow down. Third, the children's large muscles are more developed than those which control fingers and hands. Therefore, they may be quite clumsy at, or physically incapable of, such skills as tying shoes, buttoning coats, etc. Fourth, kindergarteners find it difficult to focus their eyes on small objects; therefore, their eye hand coordination may be imperfect. Fifth, although the children's bodies are flexible and resilient, the bones which protect the brain are skill soft. Sixth, although boys are bigger, girls are a head of boys in practically all other areas of development, especially in fine motor skills. So do not be surprised if boys are clumsier at manipulating small objects.

Social characteristic of children according to Tangyong and Sylvia (1988) are colored of five areas. First, most children have one or two best friends, but these friendships may change rapidly. Kindergarteners tend to be quite flexible socially; they are usually willing and able to play with most of the other children in the class. Favorite

friends tend to be of the some sex, but many friendships between boys and girls develop. Second, playgroup tends to be small and not too highly organized, hence they change rapidly. Third, although quarrel are frequently, they tend to be of shorter duration and quickly forgotten. Fourth, kindergarteners enjoy dramatic play, most of the plots they invent stem from their own experiences or TV shows. Fifth, boys and girls tend to have similar interests and do not yet clearly understand their respective sex roles.

The emotional characteristics of children are also specific. Tangyong and Sylvia (1988) assert that kindergarten children tend to express their emotions freely and openly. Anger outbursts are frequent. Because they are exposed to many new and strange situations and because they possess livid imaginations, kindergarten children may have many fears, including some highly irrational ones. In addition, jealously between classmates is likely to be fairly common at this age level since kindergarten children have much affection for the teacher and actively seek approval. When they are thirty individuals competing for the affection and attention of just one person, some jealously is inevitable.

The last identity of children uniqueness is mental characteristics. Kindergartners are quite skillful with language. Most of them like to talk especially in front of a group. For children, imagination and inventiveness are at a peak at this level (Tangyong and Sylvia, 1988).

7. CONCLUSION

The theory of tabula rasa believes that a baby is free of guilty and marks in its body. The environment has prominent role to draw the content. In the stage of childhood, a baby goes to five stages of language acquisition: pre-linguistics (0;0 to 1;0), holophrastic (1;0 to 1;6), telegraphic (1;6 to 2;0), simple sentence (2;0 to 2;6), and complex sentence (2;6 and up).

In learning a language, the baby relies upon the input from their parents. The parents are teachers for their children in the process of learning, and the children get their first education from family or at home. Model role for the children are their parents up to 3-4 years old. Parents control most of the prime time during the critically formative years of childhood. Out of the parents, homes are probably the most powerful education institution, even when parents are not good teacher. Parents control most of the prime time during the critically formative years of childhood. School is not the only supportive place to perform the learning, playing significance role in a child's learning process. Home and its environment do matter in forming the child's characters and contributes major sources of knowledge that a child might need. Homes are probably the most powerful education institution, even when parents are not good teacher.

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various happenings locally or in the world and to the daily routines within the home are all part of how children accept and begin to acquire their own ways of conduct with others.

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