

Talking Toddler: The Psycholinguistic Dynamic of Early Language Acquisition

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Abstract

An interdisciplinary field called psycholinguistics studies how children speak about what they learn in communication and how their language skills grow as they interact with those around them, revealing psychological processes at work. The psycholinguistic perspective on children's initial language acquisition is the background of this study. The language acquisition process is lengthy and intricate, beginning when a child is non-fluent and continuing until they achieve fluency. This study aims to pinpoint the psycholinguistic processes that underlie young children's language development and how social interactions impact language learning. The study used a qualitative descriptive methodology, utilizing direct observation and parent and child caregiver interviews to gather data. The study's findings indicate that social interaction and the surrounding environment are significant in quickening language learning.

Keywords: social interaction, children, psycholinguistics, and language acquisition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many scholars in the fields of psychology and linguistics have studied the phenomenon of children's language learning. Children possess an inbuilt ability to acquire language, referred to as the "Language Acquisition Device," according to Chomsky (2006) (L.A.D.). Babies start this process the moment they are born when they can hear the noises and tones of their surroundings. Research indicates that by the time they are two years old, kids can pronounce between 200 and 300 syllables (King & Fogle, 2006). This demonstrates that even though they are still in the early stages, kids are starting to expand their vocabulary rapidly.

Language acquisition also heavily depends on social interaction. According to Vygotsky (1978) cited Mahn (2012), social context is crucial for children's cognitive development. Children acquire new vocabulary and understand language structures and communication styles through interactions with peers and adults. For instance, Hart et al. (1997) study revealed that children who conversed with adults regularly had noticeably greater vocabularies than those who interacted with adults less frequently. Furthermore, children's language acquisition is influenced by their cultural surroundings, including the language (s) spoken in their community, the cultural norms and values related to language use, and the opportunities for language exposure and practice (Kidd & Garcia, 2022; Sa'diyah et al., 2023).

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Furthermore, children's language acquisition is influenced by their cultural surroundings. Every culture has a distinct language used for communication, reflecting that style. For instance, children's language acquisition and usage may be influenced by the emphasis on using more formal and courteous language in Japanese (Hastuti & Setyawan, 2021; Kanno et al., 2022). As a result, it is critical to realize that social and cultural influences impact language acquisition and is an individual process.

Later, a child can communicate clearly and effectively using the language (Hird, 2023). Youngsters who engage with elderly individuals acquire language skills and pick up on the structure and word order of words and sentences. Kids from that generation also "learn" the sentence structure by imitating and comprehending its components when an adult says something incorrect. This makes teaching and learning the Anakana language more difficult for individuals who work in the psycholinguistic discipline (Sulaeman & Badriyah, 2024).

One of the most mysterious and challenging things to understand is how humans learn language (Aher et al., 2023). Researchers have developed various theories from different disciplines to explain how this process affects the child's body. It is generally accepted that, whether explicitly stated or not, every child successfully uses a linguistic system, even when no formal education program is in place today. Every child learns a first language effectively within a few years and without formal instruction (Al-Harbi, 2020; Puspitasari et al., 2022).

Language, or human activities involving language production and comprehension, must be distinct from language when utilized as a linguistic object. 3. The current project is a psycholinguistic object of study because language is an object of linguistic inquiry. As a result, it is possible to define language acquisition as the process of putting ideas and concepts (stored in the brain) into coherent words or phrases.

According to Yudibrata, who defines linguistics as a field of science that studies language and usually produces language theories, language can be understood through linguistics (Suharti et al., 2021). However, this is not the case when considering children as language learners. Linguists cannot understand the infant as an organism with all its activities, including the bodily processes involved in language acquisition; instead, only psychology, a related field of study, can explain the baby. Psycholinguistics, the Psychology of Language, is a relatively new research discipline at the center of this problem. This field of research looks at how psychology and linguistics interact and investigates the procedures that occur during language acquisition, including re-perception, perception, language acquisition, and language production.

Ultimately, this research aims to provide a better understanding of language acquisition in children and how social interactions contribute to the process. Understanding these dynamics is hoped to help parents and educators create an environment that supports optimal language development for children.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Psycholinguistic

The study of psycholinguistics aims to explain and explore the psychological mechanisms that enable people to acquire and use language. Psycholinguistics is interested in language structure, including fine-grained semantic and phonological information (Mehta et al., 2020; Wardhani et al., 2022). More recent research indicates that larger, conversationally based samples better predict language behavior than frequency norms from conventional sources.

The study of the interaction between language and the human mind is known as psycholinguistics. It looks at how language is represented and processed in the brain and how individuals learn, use, and understand language. The study of psycholinguistics focuses on language's structure, acquisition process, and communication applications. Psycholinguists collect data using various techniques, such as experiments and observational tasks. They examine this data to generate theories regarding language learning, memory, and self-correction. Cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics are closely related and use many of the same ideas and techniques. The four primary fields of study in psycholinguistics are phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax because they enable us to understand better how language functions in the brain and communication. Psycholinguistics is an essential area of study.

2.2 Language Acquisition

According to Demszky et al. (2023) linguists and psychologists prefer to refer to what happens to a language as acquisition instead of learning. The explanation is straightforward: acquisition has no bearing on some of the connotations that the term "learning" in psychology has come to suggest.

There are three theories of language acquisition from a psycholinguistic perspective:

a. Behaviorists

According to behaviourism proponent Skinner, a child is born with no preconceptions about the outside world or language. Instead, he is shaped by his surroundings, which are gradually conditioned by different forms of reinforcement (Jackson et al., 2022).

b. Characteristics

According to Hummel (2021) the book *Linguistics in Language Teaching*, everyone has the natural capacity to acquire a language as a typical developmental process rather than learning a language through a similar conditioning process. According to Brown (1980:21), every newborn is born with what is known as Language Acquisition Devices (LAD), which include (i) devices for differentiating sounds, (ii) tools for organizing devices to categorize and subsequently develop language units, (iii) tools for determining whether a language system is possible or not; and (iv) tools for using a language system based on language system development to create an impossible system from language knowledge that has been learned.

c. Intellectual

"Cognitive approaches" were a novel method that mentalist linguists advocated in the 1960s. Combining prior beliefs, this method emphasizes how a child's environment and language abilities shape them from birth. The idea that a child's ability to use, comprehend, and acquire language is largely dependent on the maturation of their cognitive capacities is a crucial component of this method. According to cognitive theories, how a kid understands and utilizes their linguistic environment determines how language is organized. Even though it is difficult to notice, there is a physical underpinning for this cerebral activity. This concept differs from the behavioural one.

d. Learning and acquiring a language

The most significant distinction is between language learning (LL) and language acquisition (LA). Since LA is thought of as a sub-conscious effort—keep in mind that this is

not unconscious. Any language materials can be learned at any time, from any source, and at any location. It appears to be somewhat automatic because it is free and occurs naturally. Since language learning is presumed to be a conscious endeavour, it needs to be governed by a syllabus or planned out using a lesson plan to be acquired.

3. METHODS (12PT)

This study utilizes qualitative approaches. The qualitative method used is non-interactive concept research through document collecting or analysis. Researchers find, examine, and then combine the available data to provide insight into the topic studied in non-interactive qualitative research. The primary sources for the research include books, journals, and other documents on children's first language acquisition from a psycholinguistic perspective.

Concept analysis is the non-interactive qualitative research method used in this investigation. In this sense, a concept analytic approach is research that describes or explains a concept's core or general meanings as well as its actual usage to clarify the meaning or relevance of a concept.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Language Acquisition

According to Dardjowidjojo, language acquisition is used for English language acquisition. It is the process by which a child naturally picks up a language when learning it (Hidayat, n.d.). Chaer, on the other hand, offers proof that a child's brain starts acquiring a language when the youngster starts to acquire a foreign language or their mother tongue. Language learning, or language acquisition, is typically linked to one another. A child's steps to create a second language after creating his first language are related to language learning.

As "the result of an unconscious process that is very similar to the process children go through when learning their first language," according to Krashen, language acquisition is defined. Language acquisition can also refer to how an individual learns a language or by which young children and newborns generally pick up their first language.

It follows that whereas language learning is the process by which children are formally taught a language, language acquisition is an ongoing process that entails youngsters learning to speak their mother tongue or first language.

4.2 Children's Language Acquisition Theory

1) Behaviorist Theory

The foundation of behaviorism theory is understanding and establishing the relationship between stimuli and response from moment to moment (Ajzen, 2005). Effective language use produces consistent responses to the challenge. As soon as this reaction was realized, it became a source of frustration. For example, if a child uses the term "Birankari" instead of "Besarkari," they may receive criticism from their parents and other people who understand

it. However, if an infant uses the word "mungkin" truthfully, they won't be criticized for truthfully using such a word.

The concept that people can be impacted and influenced by the deeds and responses of others is explored by behaviorism. As of this writing, this is the most commonly accepted theory that was the least persuasive in the early 20th century. Frederick Skinner, a psychologist, held that all people are influenced by their surroundings and have a common ancestor (B. F. Skinner et al., 1972). In his perspective, a reward is something that those who receive it will receive, and those who do not will not. In the case of a youngster using the proper word, such as "drink," Skinner accepted that the child would face consequences such as a fine or petition. This translated context leads to appropriate reactions to situational influences for first-language learners (F. W. Skinner, 2022).

2) The nativist theory

This notion supports chauvinism. This hypothesis says that language is unique to humans. Animals cannot alter human language. Chomsky's impact is predicated on multiple suppositions (Chomsky, 2006). First, language acquisition is inherited. Second, the development pattern of all languages is the same. Third, learning a language has less bearing on the environment of the language user. It is possible to pick up a second language quickly. Fourth, children with delays in acquiring language forms might not find helpful information in their language environment. Linguist and cognitive scientist Noam Chomsky concluded that language learning and usage should be extended to individuals raised in diverse social contexts. The speaker recommended that each group member wear an in-ear language acquisition device and take good care of it since the gadget is going through a key phase lasting around 12 years. This argument says that language is a crude and complex item that is difficult to create through imitation.

3) Cognitivism Theory

Jean Piaget proposed the fundamental hypothesis in 1954, claiming that language is the sole cognitive ability that is cognitively derived from other cognitive talents (Suparno, 2001). Piaget recognized the need for special circumstances for children of a particular age and that teaching Indonesian was a component of a comprehensive education. He precisely defined language abilities, cognitive growth, and human nature. Piaget watched young children engage in active play while researching them. Consequently, part of the cognitive development curriculum is taught in English (Piaget, 2021).

4) Interactionism Theory

According to interaction theory, learning a language is the outcome of interactions between the environment and one's mental ability for language acquisition (Gallagher, 2020). Many others, including Howard Gardner, who made this claim, disagree. According to the speaker, children possess several intelligences from birth (Gardner et al., 2008). Linguistic intelligence is the only higher form of intelligence. One element that cannot be covered is how a child's environment affects their capacity to speak a second language.

4.3 Children's First Language Acquisition Processes and Stages

The early phases of language acquisition are associated with children's language development. This is because people begin to study their mother tongue at an early age. Ardiana and Samsul Sodik distinguish between the competency and performance acquisition stage, the meaning acquisition stage, and the first language acquisition stage. Performance, semantic acquisition phase, syntactic acquisition phase, and phonological acquisition phase. Phonological acquisition rate.

1) The acquisition's competency and performance stage

When learning the first language, children learn two abstract language theories: aptitude and work ethic. Competency is the knowledge of parent tongues that an infant acquires non-severely (Arrogante et al., 2021). Three components comprise a language: semantics, syntax, and phonology, which are studied methodically. At this level of proficiency, there is an analytical process that focuses on semantic, syntactic, and phonological problem-solving. To overcome language issues, children need performance help for skills fundamental to their brains' knowledge and language development. The child's performance is defined as their capacity to talk or encode during the producing process and comprehend or decode during the receptive process. Capabilities can, therefore, be defined as "materials" and performance as "tools" that connect "materials" to the production process. It is a "tool" that links phonological expression to language's "material."

2. Phase of Semantic Acquisition

Understanding meaning is necessary before learning syntax (Mulyani et al., 2024; Setyawan et al., 2019). Semantics, not grammatical structure, is the first thing that children learn. Early on, children actively absorb information from their surroundings before they talk. The semantic features of words that they recognize are constructed (with ease) by children. Kids learn about the world through what they comprehend and absorb. Language is based on the comprehension of meaning.

Nouns are among the first forms that kids learn, especially ones that are familiar or nearby, like "family," "relatives," "pets," "fruit," etc. After that, verbs will be taught to you in phases, with broad verbs coming first and then more complicated and specific verbs. Verbs associated with daily living, such as "fall," "rest," "start running," "take a shower," "drinking," and "walking," were examined before verbs like "buy" and "sell." The final two terms, which refer to the concepts of object alteration and payment, are more semantically complex. Concepts of payment and ownership have changed.

3. Phase of Syntactic Acquisition

Healthy youngsters' first syntactic structures appear at about 18 months of age. Nonetheless, some kids begin at age one, while others begin at age two. A child's capacity to communicate in the form of a structure or sentence structure is known as syntax acquisition. A pair of words are used at the beginning of the structure. Children create a sequence of words known as the "structure of two words" to convey ideas. Kids can develop a target language to express this meaning (Kidd & Garcia, 2022). The youngster can demonstrate their mastery of a group of words and the ability to creatively modify their function by using or substituting specific words in the exact location. One such statement is, "My father is coming." The terms change according to the child.

4. Phonological Acquisition

When it comes to their language organs, newborns and adults differ significantly from one another at the phonological stage. Merely 30% of an adult's weight is comprised of the brain. The tongue fills almost entirely the small space inside the mouth. As we age, our oral cavity gets bigger. The child now has greater room to make vocalizations thanks to this growth. Basic sound acquisition is the first phonological and phonetic acquisition step. The fundamental sounds of human language are /p/, /a/, /i/, /u/, /t/, /c/, /m/, and so on, according to Jakobson and Syamsul Sodik by Ardiana. Additionally, children combine these sounds with other noises from the age of one year. As an illustration, /m/ and /a/ become /ma/, and /p/ and /a/ become pa/. Children who can make sounds will eventually get more proficient at doing so. Tools, cognitive capacities, and surroundings all play a role in this.

The following describes the phases of language acquisition in children in order to provide additional clarity on the early language acquisition stages. According to Arifuddin, there are four stages of the language acquisition process: the memorization stage, the single word stage, the word combination stage, and the language acquisition stage.

a. The Memorization stage

The sounds that kids make now are meaningless. This sound has some vowel or consonantal similarities. These sounds, however, don't allude to any particular words or meanings. From birth to the age of twelve months, this stage lasts.

b. The Single word stage

This stage occurs when the child is 12 to 18 months old. At this point, children use words whose meaning represents the whole idea. A word represents one or more phrases or sentences. Therefore, this sentence is also called the holophrases stage

c. The Word combination stage

At this point, children use words whose meaning represents the whole idea. A word represents one or more phrases or sentences. Therefore, this sentence is also called the holophrases stage

d. Language Acquisition stage

This period occurs when the child enters school or is between the ages of three and five. Children's language starts to lengthen and become more grammatically correct around the age of three or four. He now uses more than three words instead of just two. Children's language is comparable to adults between the ages of five and six.

4.4 Mechanisms of language acquisition

- a. As part of the process of learning a language, a youngster imitates the vocabulary and linguistic patterns of others who are important to him, typically his parents or other caregivers.
- b. B.F. Skinner postulated the conditioning mechanism, the process by which youngsters hear speech and correlate it with things or occasions. Consequently, nouns make up a child's initial lexicon.
- c. Social Cognition: A child learns to understand language (semantics) by cognitively understanding how someone achieves a goal through mutual understanding. The production is achieved through the imitative mechanism.

4.5 Psycholinguistic

Etymologically, the word psycholinguistics is composed of the words psychology and linguistics. These two scientific fields differ in terms of procedures and methodology.

However, both view language as a formal object. They differ only in their material objects: linguistics studies language structure, while psychology studies linguistic behavior or language processes (Murphy & Dacin, 2011).

Psycholinguistics aims to explain how language abilities are acquired during communication and the psychological processes that occur when someone utters a sentence they have heard during communication. Cognitive processes that enable us to construct meaningful and grammatically sound sentences from vocabulary and grammatical structures, as well as processes that enable us to comprehend expressions, words, etc., are all included in psycholinguistics.

Psycholinguistics plays a critical part in the language development of young infants. In addition to helping parents and teachers see things from the child's perspective as the child's language abilities grow, psycholinguistic awareness helps parents and teachers comprehend the processes that occur when children listen and speak. psychological viewpoint as a substitute remedy.

5. DISCUSSION

From the discussion above, we can conclude that language acquisition in children is a complex and multidimensional process. Various theories, ranging from behaviorism to interactionism, provide different insights into how children learn language. Although each theory has strengths and weaknesses, it is important to integrate these views to gain a more holistic understanding of the language acquisition process.

Statistics and research show that the environment is important in children's language development. Children raised in language-rich environments tend to have better language skills, indicating that social interactions and daily experiences greatly influence language acquisition. Therefore, parents and educators must create a supportive environment by providing opportunities for children to interact and communicate actively.

Additionally, it is important to consider individual variations in the language acquisition process. Every child has a different speed and way of learning, which genetic factors, environment, and experience can influence. Therefore, a more flexible and responsive approach to children's individual needs is needed to support their language development.

By understanding the psycholinguistic dynamics of language acquisition, we can better support children on their journey to developing language skills. By combining different theories and paying attention to the social environment, we can create more effective and rewarding learning experiences for children.

6. CONCLUSION

From the previous discussion, we can infer that learning a language is a multifaceted process impacted by various elements, such as social interactions, the environment, and intrinsic processes. Extant theories offer different perspectives on how children acquire language, ranging from behaviorism to interactionism. Understanding these relationships is crucial for parents and other caregivers to be able to support their kids' language

development in the right ways. We can most efficiently support children's language development by providing an environment rich in linguistic stimulation.

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