

THE STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: EARLY AGE LANGUAGE PRODUCTION

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Abstract

Early second language (L2) development plays a crucial role in the academic advancement and social integration of culturally and linguistically diverse children. Particularly in Indonesia, where the dominant Bahasa language differs significantly from their native language (L1), these young learners often encounter challenges in acquiring L2 proficiency. Their language development in the early stages is heavily influenced by their environment and familial context. Despite these factors, lexical errors are commonplace during the initial phases of second language acquisition. This study aims to compare the stages of human language acquisition by analyzing the utterances of children aged two to three who are learning English as their L2 and Bahasa as their L1. The research methodology involved meticulous documentation of the children's speech patterns, with three participants contributing to the investigation. Utilizing tree diagrams, the collected data was meticulously examined to assess the children's language production abilities. The findings revealed that by the age of one, the children had begun acquiring their L2, demonstrating proficiency in both English and Bahasa. Moreover, they displayed the capacity to comprehend and communicate effectively in both languages within the context of their everyday educational experiences.

Keywords: human language's stages; language production; second language acquisition

1. Introduction

Conversation serves as the cornerstone of language development, offering a rich tapestry of words interwoven within broader communication frameworks. This linguistic immersion not only aids children in deciphering language but also fosters their understanding of societal norms and cultural intricacies. From the moment of birth, infants engage in exchanges that expose them to the linguistic landscape that envelops them.

Within the dynamic interplay of conversation, language acquisition takes center stage. As adults and children interact, adults anticipate responses from youngsters, encouraging them to articulate their thoughts, preferences, and needs. Through these dialogues, adults impart substantial linguistic knowledge to children, whether through

direct instruction or subtle cues. They introduce conventional vocabulary for objects and actions, spanning various domains such as food, attire, playthings, pets, vehicles, fauna, and more. Additionally, adults elucidate the interconnectedness of words within specific domains, facilitating comprehension and linguistic expansion (Clark & Wong, 2022).

2. Literature Review

One of the most fascinating aspects of human growth is the process of language acquisition. Babies pick up the language or languages of their environment quickly and with seemingly little effort (Mehawesh, 2014).

The dimensions of language learning seem to embrace the following variables: the age of the learner; his educational aims; whether he is learning of his own free will; the level of proficiency he has attained; the language in which instruction is given; and the general perspective within which he is learning (Stevens, 1973).

There are roughly six stages of acquisition:

1. Prelinguistic Stage

This is also known as "the speechless period." This phase lasts for a while now—six months or more, depending on the individual. Babies are exactly so newborn throughout this time. They are unable to communicate their emotions through speech; they can only weep and cuddle. Their only capability is to produce a variety of sounds, such as sobbing. In any case, even if they are unable to communicate verbally, babies can respond to human speech by using their eyes (Bolinger & Sears, 2005).

2. Babbling Stage

According to Steinberg et al. (2013), this period begins around six months to eight. Babies start babbling by making noises when they make mistakes. They are unable to speak clearly, although they can speak in catchphrases such as "baba," "mama," and "boo," which make references to their mother, father, and alcohol. At this point, nonspeaking deaf parents or deaf children themselves can converse. Furthermore, infants at that age are incapable of pronouncing words clearly or sentences. Sometimes newborns take longer to talk than others; for a variety of reasons, this can mean that they start talking after eight months.

3. First Words

This time period continues for a further nine to eighteen months. Theorists refer to it as "holophrastic," which suggests that the word "complete" or "undivided" is derived from "holo" plus "phrase" or "sentence". Babies start to produce words that are easier to understand around this time. During this phase, words that had a few errors during the chattering and babbling stage will become more exact, and errors will decrease. Conversely, there will be an increase in vocabulary. A small percentage of kids at this age can speak two words at once, depending on their parents' or guardians' ability (Fromkin et al., 2018).

4. Two-word Stage

Fromkin et al. (2018) state that the start of this phase often occurs between eighteen and twenty-four months. Children can currently speak in sentences that contain a significant number of words. Unfortunately, related words and grammar rules are not used to their full potential. Children say things like "me eat" rather than "I ate," "mother

sandals" rather than "my mother's sandals," "car garage" rather than "the car is in the garage," and so on. They may also make erroneous calls to their parents. Certain sounds like "sh" and "r" are still mispronounced; parents should concentrate on these errors or a kid may have speech problems.

5. Telegraphic Stage

Typically, this time span starts at twenty-four months and ends at no limit. A few researchers divide this time into two stages: "intermediate fluency," which they define as starting between twenty-four and thirty months, and "proceeding pureness," which they define as starting from thirty months to limitlessness.

Children are more pure and make fewer mistakes throughout the intermediate fluency stage. They are able to demonstrate higher level cognitive abilities. They are able to express themselves more precisely when using basic grammar rules, such as "I'm eating," "I'm happy," etc. There is a pureness phase that comes after it. According to Fromkin et al. (2018), the child is fully understood and is able to speak clearly.

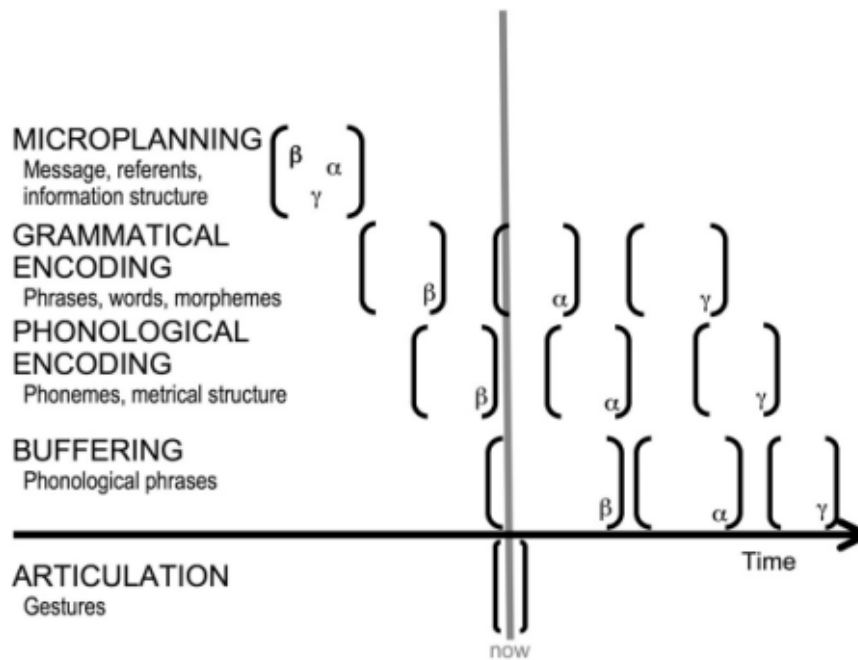


Figure 1: Language production processes for producing a simple utterances (Meyer et al., 2008)

The buffering brackets indicate the approximate quantity of buffered phonetic material. The speaker is grammatically encoding alpha while articulating the beginning of the phrases indicating beta.

Second language acquisition has become a catch-all term for what happens after a first language is learnt.

There's Gass's Model (1997), which offers a more complete picture of what happens to 'input'.

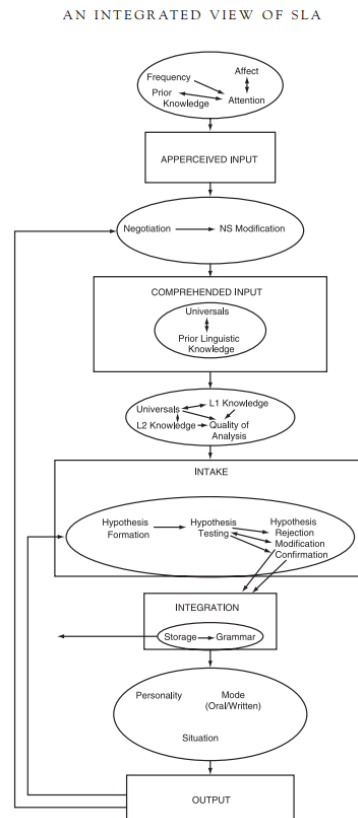


Figure 2: A model of second language acquisition. Source: From “Integrating research areas: a framework for second language studies” by S. Gass, 1988, *Applied Linguistics*, 9, 198–217.

It provides a graphical representation of the SLA model under consideration in this chapter. We begin by referring to the diagram's top. It is obvious that some form of input is required for acquisition to occur. Krashen's understandable input can be divided into three stages: apperceived input, understood input, and intake. Gass states that input moves through stages of apperceived input, comprehended input, intake, integration, and output.

The first stage is when a student initially learns a language (first language acquisition). The learners have an advantage because they are born into a language. Everyone around them is conversing in the same language. The child's first language is intrinsic. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006), "Chomsky argued that children are biologically programmed for language and that language develops in the child in exactly the same way that other biological functions develop." The environment is important in second language learning according to sociocultural theory. The environment is vital in second language learning, from speaking with others to reading a book.

A learner may benefit from being in an atmosphere where everyone speaks the second language or where they are required to talk in that second language. Additionally, when a student receives positive reinforcement for doing something well, the learner is encouraged to continue doing it correctly. The behaviorists felt that "when children imitated the language produced by those around them, their attempts to reproduce what they heard received 'positive reinforcement.'" As a result of their environment encouraging them, youngsters would continue to copy and rehearse these

sounds and patterns until they established 'habits' of correct language use" (Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 10).

3. Research Method

The study was conducted by keeping proper records of the children's utterances in the form of natural speaking and analyzing the utterances using a tree diagram to display the syntax. This study included three female children, ages 17 months, 24 months, and 28 months, who spoke Bahasa as their mother tongue and English as their second language. The data will be collected by recording their natural utterances and daily conversations in Bahasa with their parents or those around them. At other times, children's utterances will be evaluated by inviting them to engage in English discussion. The environment surrounding them or people who lived with the children influence their ability to learn a second language at early stages. After gathering the data recorder, the utterances would be syntactically evaluated using a tree diagram to assess children's capacity to create L2 in their daily spoken language.

4. Discussion

Stages of Acquisition	Year (month)	Participant 1 (17 months)	Participant 2 (24 months)	Participant 3 (28 months)
Prelinguistic Stage	0-6			
Babbling Stage	6-12			
First Words	12-18	√	√	
Two-word Stage	18-24		√	√
Telegraphic Stage	24-30			√
Beyond Telegraphic Stage	30- continues into fully developed language skills			

Table 1: the stages of acquisition and the early age of children

Based on the research results, it was found that the first participant, aged 17 months was in the first words phase.

The syntax of children's utterances have been analyzed by using tree diagram as follow:

Participant 1:

Word	Word Class
Car	Noun
Pen	Noun
Hand	Noun
Eyes	Noun
Nose	Noun
Lip	Noun
Go	Verb
Run	Verb
Sleep	Verb
Put	Verb

Table 2: List of words by the child utterances aged 24 months

The child is already able to produce verbal language, especially when pronouncing nouns. Lots of the utterance are one syllable and especially for things around her. Based on the stages of acquisition, the child is in the normal phase according to the stages of acquiring English as a second language acquisition.

Participant 2:

Word	Phrase
Drink milk	NP
Want sleep	NP
Wake up	VP
Buy	V
Lamp	N
Eat rice	VP
See you	VP
Good night	NP
Morning	N
Eating	N

Table 3: List of words by the child utterances aged 24 months

In the second participant, who was 24 months, the child was able to produce more than one noun and nouns which consist of two syllables. That child could use English to compose simple noun phrases, verb phrases, or command words. Some pronunciation errors in English were still found but could still be understood.

Participant 3:

No.	Sentences
1	Aunty, open please
2	Aunty eating rice
3	Aunty breakfast
4	Aunty take shower
5	Mother wake up
6	Papa shop close
7	Meimei drink milk
8	Meimei get dressed
9	Grandma go
10	Aunty meimei follow

Table 3: List of words by the child utterances aged 28 months

The third participant, aged 28 months, was able to form noun phrases, form simple and more complex sentences. Children are able to understand English quite well. This is because the three selected participants have family backgrounds that are able to speak English. One factor in children's language abilities is influenced by their immediate environment.

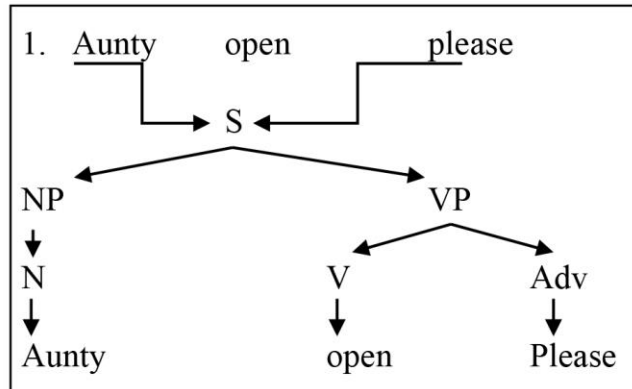


Figure 3: the analytical of child's utterance

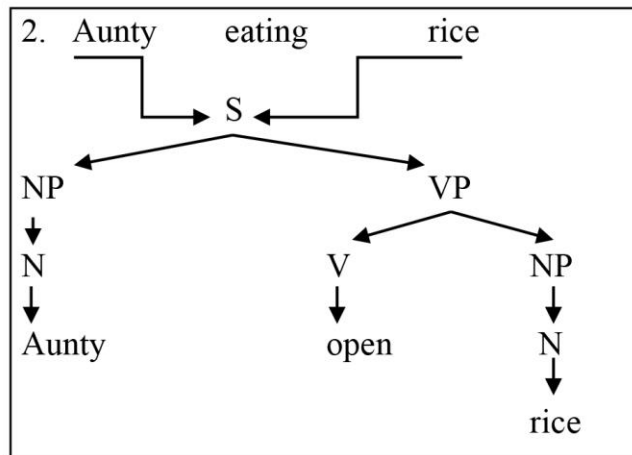


Figure 4: the analytical of child's utterance

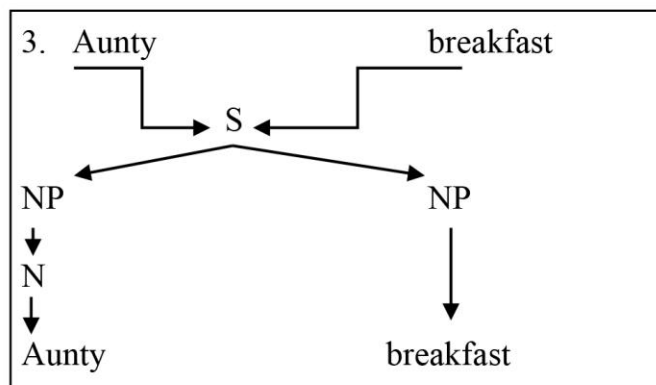


Figure 5: the analytical of child's utterance

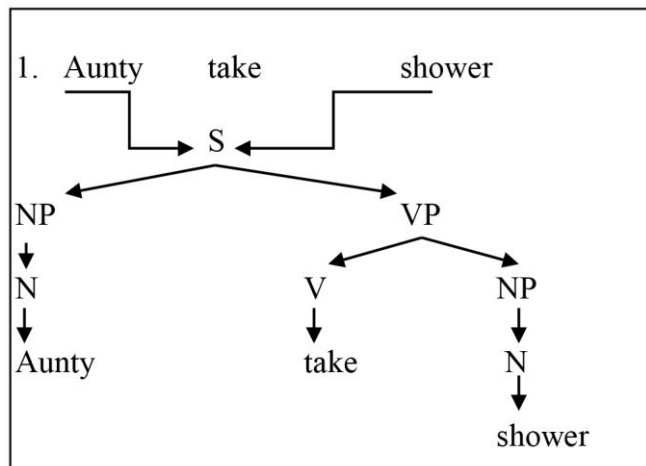


Figure 6: the analytical of child's utterance

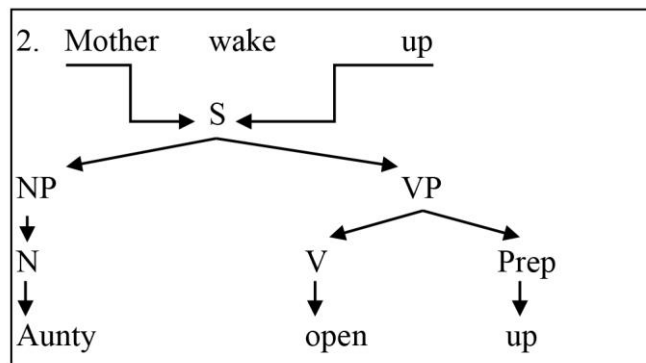


Figure 7: the analytical of child's utterance

From tree diagram above, it could be concluded the third child still made some errors to build grammatical utterances.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of a study involving children aged two to three years, it is evident that initial language acquisition in this age group occurs in distinct stages, characterized by the ability to produce a limited set of common words and numerous noun phrases during second language acquisition. This study employed tree diagrams to systematically analyze sentence structures, providing validation for its conclusions. Furthermore, the proficiency of children in speaking English as a second language (L2) was observed to be influenced by environmental factors and social interactions. All participants in the study resided with parents who were proficient in English as an L2, and these parents actively encouraged their children to engage in dialogue in both English and Bahasa. This consistent exposure to English L2 dialogue within the home environment significantly enhanced the children's proficiency in the language. Future research endeavors should focus on delving deeper into specific aspects of this study to refine our understanding of bilingual language processing models. By doing so, we aim to offer fresh insights into the process of second language acquisition.

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