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## FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF A THREE YEARS OLD CHILD: AN ANALYSIS OF PHONOLOGICAL COMPONENT (A CASE STUDY)

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### Abstract

The process of language acquisition undergone by each child in the world is more and less similar. This is because language is universal in which it is acquired through all language components namely phonology, semantics, and pragmatics. The component of phonology is more related to human neuro-biology. The process of sound produced is genetic and human biological development is not similar. Hence, the language development of human beings is not exactly the same. This paper explores first language acquisition particularly on the phonological component of a three years old child named Andi. The data is the transcripts of dialog taken from causal chat chats with the participant. A qualitative method is used to analyze the data. The findings reveal that the participant acquired vocal sounds of /a/, /i/, /u/, /o/, /e/ and consonant sounds of /p/, /b/, /m/, /t/ more dominant compared to others. He never produced /k/ consonant, fricative [s] and [j]. However, he produced nasal consonants of [m], [n], and [ŋ]. The participant also substituted omitted a few sounds. This might happen because his speech articulation has not developed well yet or genetic factor does not allow him to do so.

**Keywords:** First language acquisition, the language component

Humans use language in communication to achieve different goals. Before language is learned either formally or informally by a child, language is obtained first. The process of acquiring language in a child occurs when the child is learning a mother tongue (native language). Language acquisition is the process of children getting the ability to capture, produce, and use words for understanding and communication. Without realizing it, children get the language by listening to a lot of sounds, both in the form of words, sentences, and other suprasegmental elements that help children interpret a language. This happens to all children in the world even though their mother tongue is different. Dardjowidjojo (2000) argues that the process of acquiring languages is almost the same because the language is universal.

The process of language acquisition is almost the same for every child indicating that every human being has the same tools to understand language. According to Chomsky in Dardjowidjojo (2000) every human being has a faculty of the mind, which is a tool in the brain to understand language and the tool is carried from birth. Chomsky named the tool Language Acquisition Device, LAD, which has been translated into the Language Acquisition Tool (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). Language acquisition tools function to receive language input from the surrounding environment in

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the form of imperfect or imperfect sentences. This language acquisition tool then sorts and helps the process of structuring the language or sentences properly.

Language acquisition occurs in phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). In the acquisition of phonology, the acquisition of human language sounds follows a sequence (Jakobson, in Dardjowidjojo, 2000). Sound acquisition goes in harmony with the nature of the sound itself. The first sound that comes out when the child starts talking is the contrast between consonants and vowels. In the case of vocals, only the sounds / a /, / i /, and / u / will come out first. These three sounds, namely / a / will be pronounced earlier than / i /, or / u /, or referred to as a minimal vocal system. The acquisition of the contrast consonant aspect that first arises is the opposition between oral sound and nasal sound (/p-b/ and /m-n/) and then followed by contrast between bilabial and dental (/ p / - / t /), or called the minimal consonant system ( Jakobson in Dardjowidjojo, 2003).

The involvement of phonological components as described is more related to human neuro-biology. However, Fernandez and Cairns (2010) say that the acquisition of human language based on biological systems requires input from the environment as a trigger towards the development of language acquisition.

Some studies conducted by experts related to the acquisition of the first language in children, among others, the most phenomenal is a study conducted by Darjowidjoo (2000) on his own grandchild named Echa. The findings revealed that Echa had obtained about four hundred sixty-five words at the age of twenty-two months. The same study was also carried out by Salimi and Mehawesh (2014) from Zarqa University, Jordan. Their research aims to look at the language development of a child named Anwar who daily uses Jordan Arabic at home. The research focused on acquiring Anwar Arabic during the age of kindergarten. The findings revealed that Anwar underwent a good development of Arabic at the age of four and that the child had been registered as a kindergarten student. Both studies have found that the language environment and the surrounding social environment can influence language development in children.

Research related to the acquisition of the first language was also carried out by Shneidman, et.al., (2013). This study focused on the effects of language input on vocabulary acquisition in children who routinely spend time with one person versus many people. The findings show that children who spend time with many people get less vocabulary compared to children who spend time with one baby sitter. The findings indicate that contact with many people does not necessarily affect a child's first language development. Talking directly to the child even if it is done with the same person is important for acquiring words at the stage.

Some of the results of studies that have been done by previous researchers, there is the fact that every child in a different culture can get their first language by following more or less the same steps. This can indicate that any characteristics of the identified inputs are very important for language development and must exist in every language user community in the world. In other words, the acquisition of a child's first language that starts from the development of phonological components is not only influenced by genetic factors, such as the development of spoken devices but is also influenced by the environment. The more children grow into adults it is hoped that their language development will also improve and become productive in using language. Like the opinion put forward by Traxler (2011) that when a child's skills develop, then children become more flexible in using language properly.

From the description above it can be said that children get their first language in almost the same way and are influenced by genetic and environmental factors. But there are differences in the number of words acquired in each child. Thus, the purpose of this study is to discuss the acquisition of words in the phonological aspects of a thirty-eight-month-old child, which includes: vowel sounds, consonants, sound substitution, and sound removal.

## METHOD

In this study, the authors used a qualitative approach by describing the finding data. Creswell (2010) states that data derived from qualitative research are descriptive. The subject of this study was a child named Andi Ahmad, three years old. The language used by this family is Indonesian. Data collection and analysis consists of several stages. *First*, the data is taken by recording the child's conversation by the researcher for 14 meetings in a short conversation. The recorded data is then transcribed. *Second*, after the transcript process, the data is then classified based on the acquisition of phonology such as vowels and consonants. *Third*, the writer identifies the sound substitution that occurs in words and the omission of sounds in words. *Fourth*, observations in the form of data or findings can be analyzed and confirmed with language acquisition theory in children.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Phonological Acquisition

#### *Vocal Acquisition*

The sound acquisition is in harmony with the nature of the sound itself. The first sound that is said when a child starts talking is the contrast between consonants and vowels. In the vowel sound, only the sounds /a/, /i/, and /u/ will be spoken first. Of these three sounds, /a/ will be pronounced earlier than /i/, or /u/. These three sounds form the Minimal Vocal System. This concept was confirmed by Jakobson in Dardjowidjojo (2000) that any language in the world must have three vowels. Of the three sounds, the /a/ sound is the easiest to pronounce. In addition to the three vowels above, there are also vocal sounds [e], [ɛ], [o], [ɔ], [ə] whose difference lies in the position or shape of the lips. From the data of this study, no sound was found [ɛ], [ɔ], [ə]. This could be because the growth of sound production equipment in children is not perfect. Here are the vocal sounds obtained by Andi in 14 short conversations with researchers:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| a. vowel sounds - center - low [a]      | c. High-middle-front-vocal sounds [i]       |
| [ dah ]                    “sudah”      | [ Adih ]                    “Adit”          |
| [ ya ]                      “iya”       | [ igala ]                    “srigala”      |
| [ papah ]                “papa”         | [ Iyo ]                      “Tyo”          |
| [ mama ]                “mama”          | [ pin ]                      “Ipin”         |
| b. High back vowel sounds [u] in words: | d. Vocals - back - center [o]               |
| [ pupu ]                 “kupu-kupu”    | [ onoh ]                    “sono” /di sana |
| [ cucu ]                 “susu”         | [ bobot ]                  “robot”          |
| [ ulung ]                “burung”       | [ bobo ]                  “bobo”/ tidur     |
| [ uweh ]                “kueh”          | [ iyo ]                      “Tio”          |
| [ uwa ]                  “dua”          | e. Vocal sounds [e]                         |
|   | [ pe peh ]                “tempe”           |
|   | [ uwe ]                    “kue”            |
|   | [ te ]                      “sate”          |

#### *Acquisition of consonants*

Jakobson in Dardjowidjojo (2000) said that the first contrast that appeared in the acquisition of consonants was the opposition between oral sounds and nasal sounds (/p-b/ dan /m-n/) and then followed by the contrast between bilabial and dental (/p/-/t/). This contrast system is called the Minimal Consonant System. In the language acquisition research conducted on Andi, the [p] and [t] inhibitory consonants appeared first, but they did not appear much. Likewise, the consonant [k]

never appears at all. The fricative sounds [s] and [j] also do not appear. Nasal consonants [m], [n], and [ŋ] appear. The sound [ŋ] replaces the trail sound [r], and the lateral sound [l]. Next is the consonant sound that Andi obtained during a few brief conversations.

[ pupu ]	“kupu-kupu”	[ atih ]	“kasih” /”terima kasih”
[ tata te ]	“ kakak Butet”	[ pah ]	“kipas”
[ ma na ]	“Manda”	[ iyeng ]	“goreng”
[ tama tata ]	“sama kakak”	[ ayang-ayang ]	“layang – layang”
[ meme]	“bebek”	[ ono ]	“sono” / sana
[ du da ]	“kuda”	[ te ]	“sate”
[ bobot ]	“robot”	[ may ]	“soday”
[ uweh ]	“kueh”		

## 2. Sounds Subject to Substitution and Omission

In the phonological component, the order in which sound is directly related to the biological and neurological growth of children. The order in which these sounds appear is genetic because human biological development is not the same. Therefore, the appearance of a sound cannot be measured in years or months. But the benchmark is that one sound will not pass another sound. There will be no Indonesian children who can say / r / but cannot pronounce /p/, /g/, and /j/ (Dardjowidjojo, 2000). In addition, these sounds will appear different from one child to another. The interesting thing about the appearance of the sound associated with biological and genetic growth is that different children can also be found in the process of substitution and removal of different sounds. This can be seen in the case of Andi in sound substitution and eliminating syllables on the front of the word. The following sounds are substituted.

[ mim ]	“mobil”	→ [ l ] becomes [ m ]
[ tata teh ]	“kakak Butet”	→ [ k ] becomes [ t ]
[ tama tata ]	“sama kakak”	→ [ s ] becomes [ t ], [ k ] becomes [ t ]
[ cucu ]	“susu”	→ [ s ] becomes [ c ]
[ bobot ]	“robot”	→ [ r ] becomes [ b ]
[ yoyo ]	“telor”	→ [ l ] becomes [ y ]
[ iyeng]	“goreng”	→ [r ] becomes [y ]
[ du da]	“kuda”	→ [ k ] becomes [ d ]

Next is the sound that goes into front syllables:

[ pe pe ]	“tempe”	→ [ tem ] lost
[ mim ]	“mobil”	→ [ mo ], [ b ] and [ l ] lost
[ amuk ]	“nyamuk”	→ [ ny ] lost
[ pu pu ]	“kupu-kupu”	→ [ ku ] lost
[ te ]	“sate”	→ [sa] lost
[ mana ]	“Manda”	→ [ d ] lost
[ uwa ]	“dua”	→ [ d ] lost
[ bi – bi ]	“chibi – chibi”	→ [ chi ] lost
[ may ]	“soday”	→ [ so ] lost
[ to ]	“motor”	→ [ mo ] and [ r ] lost

## CONCLUSION

The process of language acquisition is practically the same for all children in the world, even though their mother tongue is different. Children can acquire whatever language is presented to them because the language is universal. In the phonological component, the order in which sound is directly related to the biological and neurological growth of children. The order in which these sounds appear is genetic and the development of human biology is not the same, so the appearance of the sound sequence in each child will be different. The acquisition of language that you have experienced may be different from that of other children in the world. The research findings show that the acquisition of Andi's language is that vocal sounds / a /, / i /, / u /, / o /, / e / and consonants / p /, / b /, / m /, / t / are more dominantly used. While consonants / k / never appear at all. The fricative sounds [s] and [j] also do not appear. Nasal consonants [m], [n], and [ŋ] appear. Andi also substitutes and removes sounds. This can be caused by the development of rudimentary speech instruments or genetic factors. However, the acquisition of a child's first language can develop rapidly in line with the intensity of the process of children being exposed to the language itself in an environment that is indeed supportive, for this requires awareness of parents, teachers and the community so that it is not easy to judge a child's ability in language. What needs to be done is to provide good language input in a good way to children, so that children will be motivated to further develop language skills in good ways too.

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