An Analysis of Syntactic Development Stage in Language Acquisition Process in Children Aged 3 Years

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Abstract: This research analyzes 3 years old children to pay attention to their way of communicating by answering questions from us as researchers and how Ryuga (the child being observed) communicates with his parents. With the aim of exploring the stages of syntactic development in the development of language acquisition in 3 years old children. This will focus on understanding the sentence structures they use in communicating or speaking such as declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences. By examining these aspects, the research seeks to provide a detailed picture of the syntactic abilities of three years old children. This study used descriptive qualitative method. The results of this research found that Ryuga, who was the object of research, was able to compose meaningful sentences with the correct structure, using pronouns, and his ability to use various types of sentences such as declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences. all of them show good syntactic development in children aged 3 years in speaking. This progress is likely based on imitation and the role of the first language or mother tongue in forming syntactic abilities in Ryuga.

Keywords: Syintactic, Language Acquisition, Acquisition Process

Introduction

Syntactic development is the process by which children learn to construct grammatically correct sentences (Tomasello & Brooks, 2016). This process involves understanding the rules that govern sentence formation, enabling them to combine words into coherent and meaningful sentences. Gaining insight into this process is essential for comprehending the fundamental mechanisms behind language acquisition and cognitive development (Bowerman, 1982). Examining syntactic development is crucial for a broader understanding of how children acquire language. It reveals how children advance from using single words to forming complex sentences. This knowledge allows researchers and educators to identify potential language delays or disorders early, facilitating timely interventions (Huttenlocher *et al*., 2002).

Several theories has explained how children acquire language. Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar theory suggests that children are born with an innate ability to learn language, equipped with a set of grammatical rules common to all languages (Barman, 2012). Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development and Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory also provide valuable insights. Piaget focuses on the role of cognitive processes, while Vygotsky emphasizes social interaction and cultural context (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018; Oogarah-Pratap, Bholoa, & Ramma, 2020).

Language acquisition in children unfolds through several stages, each marked by significant milestones. Around the age of three, children experience rapid growth in both vocabulary and syntactic skills (Rowe, Raudenbush, & Goldin-Meadow, 2012). This period is critical for studying syntactic development as it marks a transition from simple word combinations to more sophisticated sentence structures. This stage is characterized by longer sentences and various sentence types, such as declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences (Sari & Ariyanti, 2024). Children also begin to use grammatical morphemes, like plural endings and verb tenses, although they may not always apply them correctly (Eisenberg, Guo, & Ghermezi, 2012).

Therefore, this age is a crucial period for syntactic development due to rapid vocabulary growth and increased social interaction. Children become more adept at expressing their thoughts, desires, and experiences through language. They engage in more complex conversations with adults and peers, which reinforces their understanding of syntax and grammar. Based on those background, this research analysis aims to explore the syntactic development stage in children aged three. This will focus on understanding the sentence structures they use such as imperative, declarative and imperative sentences. By examining these aspects, the research seeks to provide a detailed picture of the syntactic abilities of three-years-old children.

Methodology

The research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive approach, qualitative research methods are methods that focus on in-depth observation (Rosinda et.al, 2021). This method uses interview and observation techniques, this will help capture the use of syntax in the form of declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences in children's daily lives

and see whether children are three years old, providing a comprehensive understanding of their syntactic abilities. Observational studies show how children use language in everyday contexts to analyze sentence structure and grammatical usage.

The object of this research is a boy named Ryuga who is 3 years old. Ryuga lives in the Jakarta area with his two parents. Ryuga is a healthy and active child and Ryuga uses his first language, namely Indonesian.

Data collection in this research was an interview with Ryuga after getting the researcher's answers to analyze. Next is observation, in the observation the researcher only saw Ryuga playing or chatting with his parents or siblings to find out the findings which were then analyzed by the researcher.

Result and Discussion

The results of interviews and observations from this research were with the research object, namely Ryuga, who is 3 years old. With the acquisition of language and the development of syntax, we can see that Ryuga is already able to speak simple sentences such as declarative, introgrative and imperative sentences which will be explained below.

Result
Data 1
Question   : Ryuga tadi pagi sarapan apa?
Ryuga   : Sarapan nasi goleng

From this question and answer, it can be seen that Ryuga used the phrase "Breakfast of fried rice" to answer the question about what he ate that morning. This sentence shows that Ryuga is able to use sentence structure correctly, even though it is still simple.

Data 2
Question   : Terus Ryuga makanan kesukaannya apa?
Ryuga   : Aku suka nugget

In this question, Ryuga gave the answer "Aku suka nagget". Ryuga uses sentence construction with a subject (Aku), predicate (suka) and object (nugget). The use of the pronoun "Aku" shows that he has started to use more complex sentence structures by including his own identity.

Data 3
Mamah Ryuga   : Adek sini, ini minumnya.
Ryuga   : Iya, sebental Mah.
Mamah gave orders or invitations to Ryuga. Ryuga answered with "iya sebental Mah." While not completely grammatically clear, this suggests that Ryuga may not have fully mastered more complex sentence structures and is still in the experimental stage with language.

Data 4

Ryuga   : Mah mobilan adek dimana?

Mama Ryuga: Tadi Mamah taro dikeranjang mainan

Ryuga asked about the location where mom kept her toy car. Mama Ryuga gave an answer in complete sentences, telling her that the toy car was placed in the toy basket. This shows that Ryuga is able to use sentences to ask about the location of an object (mobil-mobilan).

Data 5

Ryuga   : Mah bukain Hp

Mamah Ryugah   : Adek mau nonton apa?

Ryuga : Adek mau nonton coco melon Mah

Mamah Ryuga   : Iya sebentar ya, Mamah kedapur dulu.

Ryuga asked his mother to open the cellphone. His mother responded by asking what Ryuga wanted to watch. Ryuga answered with the complete sentence "Adek mau nonton coco melon Mah", showing that he can now express his wishes with complete and clear sentences.

Discussion

The data above shows that Ryuga's syntactic development is very good. Ryuga, in answering questions as well as observations, demonstrated the ability to combine two or more words into meaningful sentences. In addition, the sentences spoken by Ryuga show simple but complete sentence patterns, indicating that his syntactic development is advanced for a 3 years old child. This development is most likely influenced by imitation, especially the first language or mother tongue, which plays an important role in forming syntactic abilities.

Judging from the first data from the question given, it can be seen that Ryuga can form simple sentences with complete clauses, consisting of predicates and objects. Even though the subject is missing, the context provided by the question makes the sentence meaningful. The ability to construct such responses indicates a good understanding of basic sentence structure, which is important for a child Ryuga's age. This sentence is a declarative sentence where Ryuga answers the question given. In data 2, Ryuga constructs a complete sentence with a subject, predicate and object. The use of the pronoun "I" indicates a person's increasing ability to refer to himself in sentences, which reflects progress in his syntactic development. This sentence also shows Ryuga's ability to express his preferences clearly. However, in the third data, Ryuga's answer, "Yes sebental mah" (Yes, just a moment, ma'am), shows his ability to carry out conversational exchanges, even though his grammatical construction is still developing, Ryuga is still experimenting with language forms. In data 4, Ryuga shows his ability to form question sentences, an important aspect in language development. Although the wording was unusual, the question was understandable and effectively conveyed his intent to find the location of his toy.

This shows that Ryuga is developing the ability to use language functionally to search for information. During this interaction, Ryuga gave clear commands to his mother

and then explained what he wanted to watch in data 5 also. In Data 5, Ryuga's use of an imperative sentence to request an action from his mother ("Mah bukain Hp") shows his ability to use language to express desires and needs clearly. His subsequent response further exemplifies his ability to form complete sentences that convey complex ideas. This shows significant progress in his syntactic development, as he can form complete sentences that convey complex ideas.

Conclusion

The data analysis on Ryuga, a 3-years-old child, highlights significant milestones in his syntactic development and language acquisition. Through a series of interactions, Ryuga demonstrates the ability to form and use simple sentences effectively, showcasing a good understanding of basic sentence structures. Ryuga successfully uses declarative sentences to convey information, as seen in Data 1 and Data 2. In these instances, he constructs sentences with clear subjects, predicates, and objects, indicating an understanding of the essential components of sentence structure. In Data 4, Ryuga effectively forms a interrogative sentence, displaying his ability to use language functionally to seek information. This is a crucial aspect of language development, highlighting his growing competence in using different sentence types. In Data 5 also, Ryuga's use of an imperative sentence to request an action from his mother ("Mah bukain Hp") shows his ability to use language to express desires and needs clearly. His subsequent response further exemplifies his ability to form complete sentences that convey complex ideas.

Overall, Ryuga's ability to construct meaningful sentences with correct structures, his use of pronouns, and his capacity to engage in various types of sentences (declarative, interrogative, and imperative) all point to an advanced level of syntactic development for his age. This progress is likely influenced by imitation and the significant role of his first language or mother tongue in shaping his syntactic abilities.

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