

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE IN EARLY CHILD'S DISCOURSE

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DOI: 10.7813/2075-4124.2013/5-1/B.17

### ABSTRACT

This article has a purpose to examine some of their hypotheses about *Appearance versus Function*, *Over Extension* and *Grammatical Relation* in the early discourse of Indonesian children. Method of obtaining the discourse is by showing selected pictures to children aged two to eight years and documented the discourse for analyses. Results show that a great proportion conform the hypotheses. Three new phenomenas were found in Indonesian children's speech; the children were more able to say passive verb phrases rather than active verb phrases. Children after the age of five years were able to distinguish the situation of objects by using the conjunction of *being* or *then*, and children before the age of five years are not able to combine two objects in the pictures with the word *and*.

**Key words:** Children, early speech, grammar, function, over-extension

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It is known that children speaking their mother tongue is not a learning process but a process of language acquisition. Dardjowidjojo [1] once said that a child acquire their mother tongue naturally, which differ from learning another language. Liu [2] also confirms that the mother tongue is unconsciously acquired in a natural situation when humans communicate with each other. The most obvious example is children acquire their native language through a natural process without arrangement, without any particular curriculum system. Whereas children learn a second language after they were able to communicate well with their mother tongue. Generally second language is studied in a state of conscious and formal in schools and courses.

Communicating as a basic human activity consists of two actions, speaking and listening. Clark and Clark [3] said that speaking and listening activities are in the field of psychological mental activity that shows the very nature of the human mind. For that reason this paper examine what a child is saying when looking at a picture, which is an speaking activity. According to Clark and Clark [3] children initially will start with a single word, and show continuity to combination of words. For example, if a child wants another cookie, in the first stages the child may say the word "more" or "cookie", but in the following stages may say "want more cookie".

Observing the structure of sentences in child speech, means researching the field of child language behavior or language process. It is a psycholinguistic field of science.. This is in accordance with the opinion of Chaer [4] who said that material objects studied by psycholinguistic science is a human behavior when using language instead of the language structure itself. This paper examines sentence structure spoken by children aged 2 to 8 years, and examining the process of drafting the phrase in sentences by these children or the process of what happens in the brains of these children. Datas are taken from the speech of the child when he or she saw the pictures that had been prepared in advance. Because the subjects are children aged 2 to 8 years, the images choosen consist of people, goods, and scenery. Any speech used by the children will represent as a respondent for investigation.

From the findings of earlier forms of speech, results are categorised and analyzed. The analysis summaries are then matched with the hypothesis advanced by Clark and Clark [3] on "the development of children's language." The finding may support a hypothesis, or it could also support more than one hypothesis. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this research works from the bottom; from the recordings and conclusions are drawn. What happened to the mental lexicon of the child when he saw the picture. What process is happening to the language mapping in children. Regarding language spoken by children, Brown [5] has stated that the child's language comprehension skills lags beyond the ability of the utterance. A child seems to understand more than what they are able to say, are able to understand the vocabulary words that form a sentence but are unable to say the complete sentence.

There have been many studies conducted where results confirmed the hypothesis that children speak with two words at the age of two years or more. Steinberg [6] stated that child's speech consists of word name, verb, and adjective. This article uses the terms "name" as "a noun". Most of the studies that have been conducted so far used English sentences. It is important to investigate the use of Indonesian language in children's speech to develop this hypothesis. Moreover the process of teaching and learning will occur optimally. The language used when children speak is called their mother tongue or first language. Native to the general state of a language used by children since they were born, so it is also named as a first language [7,8].

The aim of this study is to find the words structure in the early speech of children in Indonesia, because so far research has been done mostly using English speech. With the structure of phrases or sentences found in the early speech of children, it can contribute to their education, or teachers can respond to expected errors that children tend to make when pronouncing or writing a sentence. The scope of this study include the scope of first language acquisition. It is related to the human mind and language spoken by children, and also included in the field of psycholinguistics.

## 2. HYPOTHESIS APPEARANCE VERSUS FUNCTION AND EXTENSION

According to Clark and Clark [3], words that are spoken by children are based on a selection of objects on the basis of shape, size, motion, and so forth, but rarely on the basis of function. Children learn early about objects or everything that can move; the first word children learn tends to be a moving objects rather than places, recipients or instruments. Functional knowledge is certainly related to the role of general objects. A more specific function such as *a cup of tea* and *a cup of coffee* are more often determined by culture. This is acquired afterwards, by the time the child knows the concept's name, and talk a lot about the circumstances surrounding it. Children tend to over-extend meaning of words; all things are said as 'ball' as long it is round, such as apples, oranges, circular door knobs [3].




## 3. HYPOTHESIS GRAMMATIC RELATION TO CHILD'S DISCOURSE






When children begin to combine single words into longer utterances, we can observe how intense the grammatical relationship is [3]. Evidence that children at the stage of the pronunciation two words is using grammatical relations, is to focus on the elements of the basic structure of their utterances. Sentences are formed from two different constituents: one noun phrase as subject and a verb phrase as the predicate. Verb phrases can consist of one verb as in the phrase "*the man walks*"; one verb and a direct object as "*the man drops the stick*", or a verb and one phrase showing place as "*the man sits on the chair*". In children's discourse, in the case of a combination of such verb phrases, the grammatical relation of verb + noun appears more frequently than the combination of noun + verb [3].

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This article uses 14 children between the ages of 2 to 8 years as a research subject, and using images consisting of man / cartoon and other objects as a tool to emerged the child's speech. Pictures are shown to the children, and asked them what this picture is. The children's speech of word arrangements were typed into the list of images of Table 1 below. The next step is to draw a relationship of the answers with the hypothesis of Clark and Clark [3].

**Table 1.** Children's Words About The Picture

Picture	What was said				
	S1 Cindy, 2 year Adik (Little sister)	S2 Qori, 3 year Orang (Man)	S3 Margaret, 3 year Ngak tahu (Don't know)	S4 Ulum, 4 year Orang (Man)	S5 Arif, 5 year Uwong (Man-Javanese)
	S6 Malla, 5 year Foto (Photo)	S7 Elok, 5 year Orang (Man)	S8 Dian, 5 year Orang (Man)	S9 Elizabet, 5 year Orang (Man)	S10 Michella, 5½ year - Cermin (Mirror)
	S11 Adit, 6 year Orang (Man)	S12 Dea, 7 year Orang lagi mengaca (Man is looking in the mirror)	S13 Henny, 7 year Orang mengaca (Man mirroring)	S14 Dimas, 8 year Orang (Man)	
	S1 Adik (Little sister)	S2 Orang (Man)	S3 Orang (Man)	S4 Orang (Man)	S5 Orang (Man)
	S6 Orang (Man)	S7 Orang (Man)	S8 Orang, matahari (Man Sun)	S9 Orang, taman (Man Garden)	S10 Matahari (Sun)
	S11 Orang melihat matahari (Man looking Sun)	S12 Orang lagi melihat matahari (Man is looking the sun)	S13 Melihat matahari (Looking the sun)	S14 Orang, matahari (Man, Sun)	
	S1 Adik, bola (Little sister Ball)	S2 Bola (Ball)	S3 Orang (Man)	S4 Orang (Man)	S5 Bola (Ball)
	S6 Bola (Ball)	S7 Bola (Ball)	S8 Anak, bola (Boy, Ball)	S9 Orang main bola basket (Man playing basket ball)	S10 Rumput (Grass)

	S11 Orang bermain bola (Man playing ball)	S12 Orang lagi main bola (Man is playing with a ball)	S13 Mengangkat bola (Carrying a ball)	S14 Taman (Garden)	
4 	S1 Adik, motor (Little sister, car)	S2 Nyetir mobil (Driving a car)	S3 Orang (Man)	S4 Dolanan (Playing-Javanese')	S5 Laki-laki sama perempuan (Boy and girl)
	S6 Mobil, orang (Car Man)	S7 Orang (Man)	S8 Orang memakan Roti (Man eating bread)	S9 Main (Play)	S10 Mobil (Car)
	S11 Orang bermain motor-motoran (Man playing car)	S12 Orang lagi mainan (Man is playing)	S13 Minta kue (Ask cookie)	S14 orang makan kue (Man eating cookie)	
5 	S1 Tidak tahu (Do not know)	S2 Orang (Man)	S3 Orang (Man)	S4 Orang (Man)	S5 Anak (Child)
	S6 Orang (Man)	S7 Mama sama adik (Mom and little sister)	S8 Anak dan ibu (Little sister and Mom)	S9 Paman (Uncle)	S10 Orang (Man)
	S11 Orang dan ibunya (Man and his Mother)	S12 Anak (Child)	S13 Mau pergi (Want to go)	S14 Anak dan ibu (Child and Mother)	
6 	S1 Adik (Little sister)	S2 Orang (Man)	S3 Orang (Man)	S4 Orang (Man)	S5 Papa sama mama (Dad and Mom)
	S6 Orang ambek Adik (Man and little sister)	S7 Orang (Man)	S8 Teman (Friend)	S9 Teman (Friend)	S10 Orang bergandengan (Man holding hands)
	S11 Orang bersalaman (Man shaking hands)	S12 Orang lagi gandingan (Man is holding hands)	S13 Bergandengan (Holding hands)	S14 Teman-teman (Friends)	
7 	S1 Gakro (Don't know)	S2 Cuci mobil (Washing car)	S3 Orang, mobil (Man Car)	S4 Orang, mobil (Man Car)	S5 Anak dan babak (Child and Dad)
	S6 Mobil (Car)	S7 Anjing (Dog)	S8 Orang (Man)	S9 Bersih-in mobil (Cleaning the car)	S10 Mencuci mobil (Washing the car)
	S11 Orang naik mobil (Man in the car)	S12 Mobil (Car)	S13 Menyuci motor (Washing the car)	S14 Orang sedang mencuci mobil (Man is washing the car)	
8 	S1 Dorong adik (Pushing little brother)	S2 Belanja (Shopping)	S3 Rumah (House)	S4 (No answer)	S5 Anak, papa (Child, Dad)
	S6 Orang ambik adik (Man and little brother)	S7 Orang (Man)	S8 Anak (Child)	S9 Tak menjawab (No answer)	S10 Anak sedang sekolah lalu pulang ke rumah (The child is going to school, then go home)
	S11 Orang membawa adik (Man is bringing little brother)	S12 Adik (Little brother)	S13 Masuk kelas (Enter the classroom)	S14 Anak sedang berangkat sekolah (Child is going to school)	
9	S1 Longgoh (Sit-Javanese')	S2 Digendong (Being carried)	S3 Orang, duduk korsi (Man sitting in the chair)	S4 Orang (Man)	Adik sama mama (Little brother and Mom)
	S6 Ibu (Mom)	S7 Mama (Mom)	S8 Ibu momong anak (Mom tending child)	S9 Pelukan (Embrace)	S10 Kursi (Chair)

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Results of showing the 15 pictures to 14 children aged 2 to 8 years. and asking them what the picture is, turns out that most of their speech just mentioned the object. only. This reinforces the hypothesis of Clark and Clark [3], that the early words spoken by children are based on a selection of objects on the base of shape, size, motion, and so forth, but rarely on the base of function. Children beginning to learn about objects and everything that moves; children learning the first word tend to be a moving object, compared to place, recipients or instruments. In the present study only one child (S2) was found, although only three years old, being able to conduct the word 'metu' (Javanese) which means 'going out'- a function- when looking at figure 10 in Table 1.

Speech of children in this study also proves the expansion sense of a word, or over-extension of the meaning; most of the children from the age of two years to five years say a child as a man. Likewise when seeing animals, inflating its meaning as cats, birds, wolves. Children are still unable categorize the objects into more specific functions.

Regarding the hypothesis of Clark and Clark [3] that the child's speech consists of a verb and the direct object, proved to be true because when the child (S2, S13) see figure 4 refer to a series of words '*driving car*'; '*asking cake*'; Child, 2 years (S1) when shown the picture 8 said '*push younger-sister*'; child 5 years (S9) calls figure 12 '*cat fight*'. Similarly, when the child, 6 years (S11) to see the picture (9) said '*bobokin younger sister*', where 'bobo' means sleep and bobokin (local term) means 'making asleep'. This reinforces the hypothesis that stated the sequence of verb + noun are more often said than noun + verb. If the child is already six years he or she is able to say sentences with a "subject-predicate-object" grammar arrangement, as shown in the child's speech (S6, S11, S12) which sounds 'man eat cake', 'boy play car', 'boy play toy'. Based on the picture (11) it was found that the child, 5 years (S14) said 'binatang kejar-kejaran' ('animal chasing each other'). This proves the child has been able to mentioned the correct function of a repeated Indonesian verb.

There are new things observed, the children were able pronouncing passive verb phrases rather than active verb phrases. This is evident when the child S8, 5 year saw the picture 13 and say a complete sentence '*the child is beaten*', also for child S10, 5½ year saying with the phrase '*beaten by her child*'. Similarly, when looking at the picture 14 child S10 and S13 say a passive verb phrase which reads '*inspected*' and '*dog injected*'. Meanwhile, when the speech is in the form of complete subject-predicate-object sentences, children tend to say using active verbs such as child S8, 5 year, saying '*doctor is injecting child*'. and child S14, 7 year, saying '*doctor injects child*'. From the utterances of these two children (S8 and S14) it was clear that speech of younger children are not obviously simpler than older ones.

If the child is aged two to five years, when saying two objects in the picture, they do not use the conjunction 'and', but when they are older five years they use the conjunction 'and' to combine the images. Another novelty found was that children after the age of five years are able to distinguish the situation of the performing objects. Children are able to use the conjunction *being*, *then*. Child S8, 5 years when I show her the picture (10) was able to say the sentence '*child is peering*'; child S12, 7 years when seeing the picture (1) and (2) uses the phrase 'lagi' for the man looking in the mirror, and seeing the sun; the word 'lagi' is an Indonesian term meaning 'is in the state of'. This proves the child after the age of five years has been able to explain the situation in the picture.

## 5. CONCLUSION

First, children tend saying about images based on shape or motion, and seldom based on function. Second, children tend saying in the grammatical sequence of subject first followed by the predicate. Third, to over-extend the meaning of a word. Three new phenomenas were found in Indonesian children's speech; the children were more able to say passive verb phrases rather than active verb phrases. Children after the age of five years were able to distinguish the situation of objects by using the conjunction of *being* or *then*, and children before the age of five years are not able to combine two objects in the pictures with the word *and*.

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