

Acquisition of Morphological and Syntactic Knowledge for Early Childhood

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Abstract—This paper looked into the mental processes in early childhood's language acquisition. The way children acquire their language inherent with specific pattern based on their age and systematic nature. data analysis based on psycholinguistics approach relate with morphological and syntactic acquisition for early childhood. Morphology studies relate with a form of words, how the words can transform and understandable, and syntax as a concept in organising sentence's structure. The qualitative analysis is implemented in this paper to explain the data descriptively relate with competence oriented theory. This paper shows in each individual child has their own language mechanism in acquiring the language, based on their cognitive. So the theory of nativism and bahaviorism are come together to acquire the morphology and syntax in early childhood language.

Keywords—Acquisition, Morphology, Syntactical knowledge.

I. INTRODUCTION

The psycholinguistic as a part of linguistics study needs to be known by language learners, because it focus on mental representation and the process of language used, both language production, and understanding of language used. The human as subjects of psycholinguistics research are being important to be discussed, because in this study people can know the process of language in human, start from infant until adult. Many researches stated that new theory regarding to language acquisition or language process, include the morphological and syntactical knowledge to addressed that each individual has their own language process based on their cognitive and

Language Acquisition Devices (LAD). The classical theory from B.F. Skinner also stated the children as a *tabula rasa*, such a blank page. Children know nothing when they were born, but this theory also argued by Chomsky, he stated that children are born with their innateness, they born with knowledge of learning mechanism from their parent, especially mother, Traxler (2012).

Process of acquire language always relate with sub component of linguistics study. There are morphology, syntaxes, semantics, phonology and etc. In this research the acquisition of morphology and syntactical are being discussing to enhance the understanding of early childhood acquisition. According to Traxler in his research the process of morphem is happened to the children since they are 2 years-old, they start to produce the words in one or more words, such as *No!*, *yes!*, *more!* and etc. In this age children also start to combine the words in larger units, Traxler (2012). Morphology as the fundamental aspect in language and structure's system, which is focus on the inflection of words needs to be understood, because every individu are different acquisition in morphem or syntax.

There are 3 kinds of acquisition in children grammatical knowledge; 1) knowledge of words category, 2) morphem, 3) structure of phrase, Traxler (2012). There many language can be learnt, but people should be remebered that different language is different category also different structure. Such as Indonesian language and English, "*Ibu saya*" in Indonesian the word of *ibu* as the noun is in the beginning then followed by the word of *saya* as the possessive pronoun, but it different in English the possessive will appear in the beginning "*my*" then followed by noun "*mother*". Regardless morphology and syntax need to be acquire

correctly by child in the beginning to eliminate the error understanding of those.

Children who learn language suggest to learn category of words also to foster their understanding of addressing the utterance. They need to learn differentiation of each words morpheme, because through morpheme people also can deliver the message based on the tense or time. The example of using present tense and past tense, they will be different in word inflection, such as drink versus drank, walk versus walked. Another aspect of morpheme also connected to the subjects and verb. Such as *the books are on the table not the books is on the table*, or *the baby was crying not the baby were crying*.

Early childhood is children with no more than 5 years old, where they still need stimulate and guide from their environment to acquire the knowledge, and in this age they can be called linguistics period, Meniado (2016). Language is alive in any stage of children's acquisition, so the environments become fundamental aspect to influence their knowledge of morpheme and syntax.

This paper explains the research question about; 1) does the early childhood acquire the morphological and syntactical periodically? 2) How morpheme and syntax are acquired by early childhood? 3) How nativism and behaviorism theories work in acquisition morpheme and syntax for early childhood?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Psycholinguistics question refers to how human acquire the language, how they can cultivate their language start from the smallest unit in producing and understand the language. Here are some explanations regarding to the research focus;

1.1 Early Childhood

Language as a system in human life, will always takes place to be discussed, both the acquisition of language also the development of language. The primary learner of language is early childhood; they know nothing in the beginning, so adults are dominate in influence their language knowledge. Without any stimulation from adult either the words production or structural phrase children will difficult to acquire the language. More than 2 decade theory of child's language acquisition, called nativism from Chomsky (1981) claimed that children has innateness, children come to the world with their own language, so the children actually has

already have the knowledge of language, because parents are very dominated in their language acquisition device LAD. In the others hand, children when born already got the knowledge of language such a language mechanism.

Early childhood is refers to children under of 12 years old, according to Meniado (2016; 98) early childhood is start from 0-5 years old and in this stage children are able to acquire their own language, in their language period (1-5 years old) children try to perform the language in negating, forming, production words in small unit, use appropriate pronoun, and inflection verbs and nouns, Fromkin.et.al (2010).

1.2 Acquisition Of Word Category Knowledge

Children as a language learners systematically, they learn their language explicitly from their environment. If they hear the words pronounce by someone many times, they will easier to understand and imitateit, the baby will be able to interpret the new meaning of the word when listened in many times, before the baby 18 months. Some language acquisition theories for early childhood, such as behavioristic and probabilistic theory assumed baby learn the meaning of word through association, or small game. For the example when adult say "*Mimi*" while pointing the bottle, baby will associate something and they will ask milk to adult.

Children felt quite hard to gain and understand the new words, because they get minimum stimulation from adult, adult creativity and active stimulate are really helpful to foster children knowledge in categorization of words. The objective of children's stimulation can help them to be able to categorize between verbs, nouns, or pronouns. People say to develop children categorization of words adult can start understanding the hypothesis of innateness genetics. In this term children are innateness learners, whereas not only stimulation will influence their competence in categorization of words, but also their systematic learning regard to their LAD or cognitive asset.

1.3 Acquisition Of Morphological And Syntactical Knowledge

Psychological as a branch of cognitive science relate to the process to be investigated; language production, language acquisition; include morphological and syntactical knowledge, and the last is language comprehension, Maftoon and Shakouri (2012). Children try to produce of

words meaning since they were 12 months, and it will increase until they are 18 years, means almost 10 new words will produce in each period, Traxler (2012). Children have general competence to acquire the information both taking the words and understanding linguistically, the comparison of children and adult have quite different in random memorizing, so the children are better than adult in this hypothesis.

Morphology as the basic component in grammatical language, because morphology relate with words inflection based on the time used; present, past or continuous. Open and opened, eat and ate have different use, and it will be different use also depend on the subject, except for the past, all subject are available in the same verb. For the example; *child closedvschildren closed*. Child is a single noun and followed by past while children are plural noun and followed by past also. Acquisition of morphological system actually can be same line with innate versus acquire knowledge, Gerken, Wilson & Lewis (2005). Children acquire the morphology will be based on their cognitive process; innate claimed the children have the language mechanism when they are born, so to gain the morphology and syntax knowledge will understand systematically.

Syntax component there is a universal form, where the children always start their language production with the smallest unit; one word, two words, then will continue to more complete words. In syntax acquisition, commonly children acquire the last words in the beginning than the main word/sentence, such “don’t jump” children will absorb the last word it is “jump”, Dardjowidjojo (2003).

III. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research use qualitative descriptive approach, focus on the psycholinguistics analysis and nativism and behaviorism theory to answer some research questions designed, the researcher uses nativism and behaviorism theory from B.F.Skinner and Chomsky. In this term children language acquisition is universal based on the syntactical and morphological knowledge.

Children are acquiring their morpheme and syntax periodically, and their average length of sentence regularly improves periodically during 2 to 6 years old, Nneka&Kenechi (2012). They will start from the smallest unit to the longer words, and they will understand the word

with 2 kinds of principles. Here and now. 1) Here; means many kinds of vocabulary they got based the object around them, and it will be easier for the also to associate the meaning. 2) Now; means children unable to imagine something, so what are being observed by them at that time, which is their knowledge. Dardjowidjojo (2003).McGregor also states that child’s language acquisition has a stage process, such as; 1)pre language stage of cooing, beginning at two or three month, then followed by bubbling at six months, such as *phphphhp, mhmhlmhm*. 2) One word stage, it happen at 12 month until 18 months, such as No!,Yes!,top!. 3) Two words stage, beginning at 18 until 20 months, such as *nda,mama,papa*, 4) telegraphic speech, begin at 24 months until 36 months age, in this stage child’s morpheme and syntax are quite understandable, such as mommy bread!, instead of he/ she want more bread, so please give now. 5) Basic mastery, this stage happened around 4 years or five years old, McGregor (2009).

Children language competenceregarding to their morpheme and syntax knowledge rapidly increase in the second years of their age. Children regularly use morphological encoding in their early child, so they prefer to use regular and irregular modifier in production, Budd, et.al (2015). Morphological and syntactical knowledge are important for the successful of their speech production correctly and understand adult speech. Tense marking in morphological knowledge are happened and it should be understand by the children in the beginning, because the inflection of morpheme is suitable with the meaning of sentence. It will be different with Indonesia language, where the morphological knowledge to children is not really hard, because Indonesia language did not use tense marking, the inflection only focus on the suffix, prefix and affix, such as “*mana*” become, *kemana,dikemakan* and etc.

In Indonesian the use of morpheme is not really strict because Indonesian language does not verb based on the time (tense marking) of words. Indonesian will use the specific of the time only when they will try to differentiate the verb, we went; it indicate the time is past from go-went, but in Indonesia it will say *kami pergikemaren*, (the speaker will mention the time, *kemaren*, means yesterday), because *go=pergi*Indonesia never be changed although the time is different. The use of noun repetition to indicate the plural noun is use in Indonesian language, such as

children=*anakanak*. for children such as noun or verb have different term, children prefer to say in the last words than the words they heard, for the example, *numforminum* (drinking), *ndaforbunda* (mother), *kafor buka* (open).

Children are born with their a set of linguistic principles, their capacity as the innate linguistic parameter as space of human language possibility and space of child's exploration, and influenced from their environmental process, Crain,at.al. (2006). Behaviorism from B.F.Skinner 1957 and Nativism from Chomsky 1965 are unable separately in learning language acquisition; either it is morphological and syntactical knowledge. Children get their language mechanism since they were in their mom's uterus. Child will absorb the words since they were in mother's uterus, they will hear the words or sound from adult, if the adult was speaking loudly, Traxler (2012). Since they have a language mechanism, early children considerable their language simultaneously from many kinds of object around them, they will acquire the words both syntactical and morphological. From hypothesis analyzed can be say that nativism and behaviorism theory are work together in children's morphological and syntactical acquisition.

Children learn language morpheme and syntax in 2 hypothesis; 1) children need to hear the form of past tense before they pronounce the verb in the real condition. They will say *drank not drunked* because they usually hear adult speak *drank not drunked*. 2) Children need to memorize the past tense of verb, so they will not make an error verb, because the language input need to drill from adult, Traxler (2012).

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Language acquisition will be connected to morphological and syntactical knowledge, because morphological is primary component in learning the language form. Through morphology people we be able to differentiate words' inflection based on the time marking (walk-walked, drink-drunk), and affixation (connect-disconnect, develop-development, etc). Syntactical knowledge in psycholinguistic also happens to children when they understand the words based on the object around them. Syntax as the basic knowledge for children in learning combining the words and organize it in the new meaning. Both nativism and behaviorism theories are claimed the

language acquisition to children are be based on their theory, but the fact both of those theories were working together in acquisition of morphological and syntactical knowledge for early childhood. Children will acquire the words star from the smallest unit, such as one word, two words... and they will start to string words at the age of 2 years, Traxler (2012).

Adult is suggested to give a good stimulation for their young baby, in order to make children brain work properly in understanding words, both morphology and syntaxes. When adult spoke either correct or not it will be absorbed by the children, and it will impact to their morphological and syntactical knowledge.

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