

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Children are human beings that often become the subjects in many kinds of researches. There are many aspects that interest the researchers to conduct studies on children. One of them is the way the children acquire their first language for they think it is unique. As stated by Kasbolah (1992 : 11 - 12), research on the language development between 1950s and 1960s showed that the children possessed unique capacities for language learning. Similarly, Chomsky (1965) as quoted by Brown (1987 : 19 - 20) stated that :

The existence of innate properties of language to explain the child's mastery of his native language in such a short time, despite the highly abstract nature of the rules of language. This innate knowledge is embodied in a "little black box" that is called Language Acquisition Device (LAD).

This opinion is supported by McNeill (1970) as quoted by Beilin (1975 : 5) who said that it was proposed that each child endowed with a genetically given acquisition device (LAD) that abstracts syntactic rules from the limited language corpus experienced by the child in accordance with the rules of an unexplained grammar.

At the first year of a child's life, he begins to practice many of the sounds and learn gestures that have meaning for others and this is an essential part of developing language (Beaver et all, 1994). During the last quarter of his first year, the infant's production of speech-like sounds begins to shift from babbling to true production. Within the next few months, the frequency of babbling disappears and the number and the variety of

recognizable utterances increases (Brown, 1987 :19 as quoted by Wijaya, 1997 : 1). As stated by Foss and Hakes (1978 : 235) that these utterances are generally short and most often correspond in their surface form to the words of the adult language, though often in abbreviated form. Although for quite a long time a baby's speech will consist only of single words, intonation and facial expression will add a lot of meaning. Of course these words do not come out perfectly at first. 'Milk' might be 'mik', and 'donkey' could be 'gonkey'(Karmiloff-Smith, 1994 as quoted by Wijaya, 1997 :2).

After the period of one-word utterances, the child come to the period of two-word utterances. In this period, the child begins to strung two words together that will make his meaning clearer. Using two words together also offers much more flexibility to a young child. Together with the use of intonation, the two word 'Mommy go' can express a question, a statement, or a fear (Karmiloff-Smith, 1994 as quoted by Wijaya, 1997 : 2). The next two and a half until three and a half years witness a remarkable increase in the length, variety, and complexity of the child's utterances. According to McNeill (1970) and Slobin (1971), the increasing is so striking that many investigators have claimed that by the age of 4 or 5 years, the child has mastered all of the essentials of his language.

The period of two-word utterances is signed by the emergence of telegraphic utterances. In this case, the child selectively omit some elements that would be present in an adult utterances. Brown and Belugi (1964) called it as the 'telegraphic speech' - the things omitted are those that an adult would omit if composing a telegram. The omission from children utterances are not only selective, but they are quite consistent. The types of words omitted are just those that were missing entirely, such as articles, auxiliary, and possessive inflection. The function words omitted are the ones that would contribute to

the grammar of the telegram, but convey much less of the meaning than the words that remain (Taylor and Taylor, 1990 : 295 as quoted by Wijaya,1997 : 3). A child might say “Not want bath” to express his feelings about having a bath.

From the above discussion, it is clear that child’s language development is a very interesting subject to investigate and observe. Knowing this fact, the writer wants to observe the telegraphic speech of 2 – 3 years old Indonesian children. The writer chooses those children because at those ages, they are assumed to produce telegraphic speech.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As implied in the background of the study, this study is conducted to answer the following problems, which are :

1. What are the elements of the 2 – 3 year old Indonesian children’s utterances?
2. Are there any specific differences in children’s telegraphic speech ?

1.3 Objective of the Study

In line with the above formulated questions, the study aims at finding out the elements of the 2 – 3 year old Indonesian children’s utterances and the differences of the children’s telegraphic speech.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In this part, the writer will mention all the theories that will be used in the study. This study is based upon the theories of the Language Acquisition, Input Hypotheses, and the stages of Language Development.

The first theory is the Language Acquisition Theory. This theory is mainly concerned with the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) which is endowed by every children in the world which enables them to acquire their mother tongue (first language). Chomsky (1959) stated that children are born with an innate grammatical representation that underlies all human language. McNeill (1970) as quoted by Beilin (1975 : 5) stated that each children is endowed with a genetically given acquisition device (LAD) that abstracts syntactic rules from limited language corpus experienced by the child in accordance with the rules of an unexplained grammar. Cazden (1967 : 152) also added by saying that biologically, human being have an innate capacity or predisposition for language learning. In this theory, the writer also includes the evidences that prove that innate capacity plays an important role in language acquisition.

The second one is Input Hypotheses. This theory claims that human acquires language in only one way, that is by understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input. Smith (in Fisher and Terry, 1982 : 69) argued that a child learning to talk is systematically trying out alternative rules to see which ones apply – that he is “testing hypotheses”, literally conducting linguistics experiments, to discover specifically what kind of language is talked around him. This opinion is supported by Muma (1978 : 153) who said that a child learns the language of his environment. The rate of which he learns his language is the result of a constellation of environmental influences. Fisher and Terry (1982 : 8) also stated that as children learn to talk, children progressively amend their language until it becomes more and more like that spoken by adults with whom they are in contact.

The third is the stages of language development. The stages are babbling period, one-word utterances period, two-word utterances period and telegraphic period. The first period starts at the age of six months and the sounds produced by the child do not have a specific referential meaning (Cooper, 1977 : 358). Babbling may enable speech sounds to develop in a preparatory way that then facilitates their integration into the child's first words. The one-word utterances begins at the age of 1 year old. In this period, the child communicates by using the single word utterances only. In addition, Bloom as quoted by Muma (1973 : 281) described that a period of successive one-word utterances is transition period from one-word to two-word utterances. The two word utterances spans from approximately 24 – 36 months (Beilin, 1975 : 345). This period is signed by the emergence of pivot grammar in the first part. The last stage is telegraphic speech period. The concept of this period is the omission of some function words which usually occurs in adult's utterances and which are considered not to be the major meaning-carrying words in the sentence.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In order to make the investigation clearer and more understandable, the writer limits the study as follows :

- The subjects of the study are six Indonesian children at the age of 2 -3 years old.
- The language, which is observed, is the Indonesian Language.
- The writer only observes the telegraphic speech that are produced by the Indonesian children at the age of 2 – 3 year old.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The result of the study is expected to give some understanding about the telegraphic speech that occurs in children language development in the two-word utterances period. Besides, parents can also put the findings of this study into practical uses for the sake of the improvement of their own children's first language acquisition.

1.7 Definition of Key-Terms

In order to give a clear picture, it was important to define some significant terms used in this study.

- a. Language Acquisition is defined as the action or process of gaining or obtaining language.
- b. Utterance is the spoken words or sounds of the children that are meaningful.
- c. Telegraphic speech is a stage where children still cannot say sentences just like the adults.
- d. Caretakers are mothers or nannies or other people whom the children are accustomed to.
- e. Conversation is a usual informal talk, especially consists of two people.